

*Study Guide & Sermon Notes*  
**THE RETURN OF THE KING**

*The Church Sphere*

Jan 29-30, 2022

Pastor Mike

**Q1. Throughout 2022, what is our goal?**

**RECAP OF PREVIOUS EPISODES**

[Recap Slide]

AUTHOR | AUTHORITY | AUTHENTICITY

“Give God control, own your role, make life whole.”

“Make God large and in charge, take charge, fo come real good inside.”

We’re learning that God is the AUTHOR, or originator, of all authority.

When we connect with the AUTHOR, we wield His AUTHORITY righteously.

When we connect with the AUTHOR, wield His AUTHORITY righteously, we live an AUTHENTIC life.

We also know that God in His infinite wisdom has separated that authority into at least 4 major spheres, or, (being the movie fan that I am) RINGS.

**Q2. What are the 4 major spheres of authority (or rings of power)?**

[Slide: LOTR]



[Slide of all the Spheres]



God gave one ring to the INDIVIDUAL. And said, “Together, you and I will PRESENT My love, My character, My holiness, My justice, My grace, peace, and mercy to the world. For as long as we walk in love and unity, you will bear My image, as nothing else in Creation can. And you will have shalom.

Then God gave RINGS OF POWER to the FAMILY, to husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, and little rings to the children. And God said, as long as you guys walk TOGETHER with Me in love and unity, you will PROVIDE for each other. You will love and care for each other. And you will teach the children to teach their children to love God and others. And you will have shalom.

Then God gave rings of power to the Church. And He said, “As long as we walk together in love and unity, you will PROCLAIM My Gospel of the Kingdom to the World. And together we will RECLAIM what the Devil took from us. And we will re-establish My Kingdom on Earth as it is in Heaven. And you will have shalom.

And then God gave rings of power to the State. And God said, “As long as we walk together in love and unity, you will PROTECT the nation. You will be the guardian of Liberty and Justice, of the unalienable rights I gave to every human being, so we can become one nation under God. And you will have shalom.

**Q3. What was Pastor Mike’s dream the other night? And what does it mean?**

### **TORTOISE LAGOON**

I want to begin today with a bizarre dream I had the other night. One of my grandkids and I were swimming across a lagoon when suddenly we saw a bunch of TORTOISES in the water craning their necks like this to avoid drowning.

[Slide]



So you know how a group of birds is called a “flock?” Well, we found out a group of tortoises is called a CREEP! They’re also called SLOBS. But let’s stick with CREEP. So a CREEP of tortoises were all trying to stay afloat in this lagoon. Tortoises are land animals and don’t belong in a lagoon. So I

asked the Lord what this dream meant. One of our prayer warriors, Sharon, has a book on possible dream interpretations. So get this:

A TORTOISE represents a scared or frightened creature because it can retreat into its shell and hide.

A LAGOON represents being cut off, isolated, surrounded by obstacles, not flowing, and stagnant.

I shared this dream with 3 different people on 3 separate occasions without giving them my own interpretation, and ALL THREE said this is the CHURCH!

I believe that in this dream, God is giving us a picture of the CHURCH today! Many in the Church are scared, frightened, and retreating into their shells. We're in an environment we've never been in before, that we're not supposed to be in. We are cut off, isolated, surrounded by obstacles. We're not flowing, and we have become stagnant.

Well, if this dream describes you, then today's message is ESPECIALLY for you! God is calling you out of your shell and out of your lagoon and taking you to the mountaintop where you're supposed to exercise your divine authority to PROCLAIM!

*Q4. What is the key passage for the Church's ring of power? What does it mean? And what is the Church's primary responsibility?*

## **THE CHURCH SPHERE OF AUTHORITY**

Here's our key passage for today. Let's all STAND together for the reading of God's Word:

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"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may PROCLAIM the excellencies of

Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9 LW).

Today we’re talking about the Church Ring of Power: PROCLAIM. But before we get there, we need to understand what we’re proclaiming exactly. If we don’t get this right, then the Church will proclaim the wrong message! And without intending to, the American Church probably has proclaimed the wrong message.

Remember, we offered this critique for the American Church last semester:

We’ve been PROCLAIMING a “Gospel of Salvation” when we should be proclaiming the “Gospel of the Kingdom.”

***Q5. What is the difference between a gospel of “salvation” and the Gospel of the Kingdom?***

What’s the difference?

Gospel of Salvation: Accept Christ to leave Earth and go to Heaven.

But our message is NOT a Gospel where you ESCAPE your problems and go hide in Heaven. This can take various forms. We might need Jesus to give us a better job, get us out of debt, fix our marriage, fix our kids.

You might say, “But, Mike, doesn’t Jesus do all those things? Absolutely He can!” But unless we understand the FULL MESSAGE, we will end up right back where we started! We can keep on raising our hands, get baptized 100 times by a dozen different pastors, and we wind up back where we started.

So funny, I remember standing in line at baptism one day, and I see the same guy getting baptized again! I said to him, “Didn’t you get baptized already?” “Yeah, but dis time I like Pastor Wayne fo baptize me. Da odda time nevah work!”

[Slide]

“Persistence without insight leads to the same outcome.” Mandalorian  
Armorer

Some of us might be confused now. Don't we believe in SALVATION?  
Doesn't Jesus save? Absolutely! But this is NOT a salvation where you  
raise your hand, accept Jesus, and He's supposed to make your problems  
disappear. So what is our message? What are we PROCLAIMING?

**Q6. What is the essence of the Church's message to the world?**

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Our message is that Jesus is King of the Universe, and we FOLLOW HIM  
out of this world and join the Kingdom of Heaven.

This is not a Gospel where you accept Jesus into your heart so you can  
escape and go to Heaven. This is a Gospel where you FOLLOW Jesus  
OUT of the world system of darkness and chaos and join His Kingdom. And  
TOGETHER with God, we will TRANSFORM THE WORLD.

[Slide: Two Thieves]



Remember the two thieves on the cross?

Thief 1 says, “If you are the Messiah, save yourself and save us too. Get me out of this situation. Get me off this cross.”

Gospel of Salvation.

Thief 2 says, “Do you have any idea who this is? Jesus, remember me when you enter YOUR KINGDOM.”

He recognizes that Jesus is the Messiah, the King of the Universe. And in the final seconds of his life, he believed. He honestly thought it was too late for him. After all, he had been a thief his whole life. He knows he doesn't deserve to be in the Kingdom of Heaven.

But just then, Jesus does a Spiritual scan of this man's heart and is prompted to say something he does not say about any other person in the Scriptures: “I tell you the God honest truth: Today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

This thief is the only person in the whole Bible where Jesus says out loud that his salvation is 100% GUARANTEED.

What exactly did Jesus see in this man's heart for Him to make such a bold proclamation? Jesus saw that this man authentically saw the foolishness of his life where he had done his own thing. Jesus saw the absolute remorse that he had wasted his whole life in vain, useless, selfish pursuits. And Jesus saw that this man now recognized that Jesus is the King. And in that split second, the thief was no longer a thief. He had become a son of God. He will enter Paradise with Jesus that day because, in his heart, he already was in Paradise—and he didn't even know it! I'm sure that as he passed through the Pearly Gates that day, he was as shocked as some of you are right now.

Let's keep going to understand the Gospel of the Kingdom. We're going to do a whole series on this, but let me introduce us to the major themes. As I

was telling Pastor Theresa a few weeks ago, we are introduced to every major theme of the Gospel in the book of Genesis. Let's read this:

**Q7. What is the MAIN difference between mankind and the animals?**

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“<sup>27</sup> So God created human beings in His image. In the image of God He created them... Fill the earth and be its master. Rule over the fish in the sea and over the birds in the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:27-28 NCV).

To really understand this Gospel of the Kingdom, we need to go all the way back to the first chapter of the Bible. God made Adam and Eve in His image.

Notice that God breathed life into every living creature. Everybody say “Ruach.” That’s the Spirit of God. Ruach can be translated as spirit, breath, or wind. So God’s Ruach is what animates the entire planet. We’re NOT saying that fish and birds are God. We’re saying God’s Spirit is what gave them life.

The same Ruach Spirit of God breathed life into Adam and Eve. But this time, God made Adam and Eve different. God made them in HIS IMAGE. He didn’t make anything else in His image. Just Adam and Eve. What is unique about the creation of Adam and Eve? What sets man apart from the plants and animals? You could say intelligence, the ability to speak, to write, and his ability to invent are all way beyond the animal kingdom.

But there’s one way SPECIFICALLY that God says will set man apart from all the other creatures. Man was made to RULE. He was appointed MASTER of the Earth, the KING over the birds in the air and the fish in the sea.

Who is God? The King of the Universe. And God appointed Adam the King of Planet Earth. God NEVER intended that Adam and Eve would rule on

their own. God the Father would be with them every step of the way. He would mentor them, teach them how to be GREAT rulers of the Earth.

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“God’s vision of Heaven is Father and son co-ruling the Earth.”

Do you remember what RULE means in Hebrew? RADAH, which means to tread or to walk. Wherever the foot of man WALKS on the Earth, he has AUTHORITY to rule. But watch this, man must also WALK WITH GOD.

Notice what it says about the righteous:

Noah walked with God.

Enoch walked with God.

Abraham walk to the Promised Land led by God.

Unrighteous people do NOT walk with God, therefore, they misuse and abuse their authority.

Notice either way we will exercise authority. Man was made to RULE regardless of whether he walks with God or not. If you’re righteous then we will have Shalom peace. But if you’re NOT righteous, you will cause chaos, anxiety, despair, misery, and suffering.

Do you want to be a good dad? A good mom? A good child?

WALK with God.

Do you want to be a good boss? A good officer? A good teacher?

WALK with God.

If we, the Church, want to exercise our authority righteously, we must

WALK with God.

**Q8. What do we mean that the keyword “tree” is a hyperlink to a major theme in the whole Bible?**

## **THE TREES HYPERLINK**

How will we know if we will walk with God? How many of us know, if you want patience, then God will put you in a situation where your patience will be tested. If you want joy, God will put you in a situation where your joy will

be tested. If you want faithfulness and loyalty, God will put you in a situation where your faith and loyalty will be tested. This is not temptation to do evil, it is testing for godly character.

So God tested His son, Adam. This happened between the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Tree of Life represents staying connected with God. Same idea in John 15 where Jesus says the branch must stay connected to the vine or will bear no fruit. But the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil represents separation from God.

Will Adam and Eve choose to stay connected with God? Or will they separate themselves from God? This is SUCH an important TEST! If they stay connected with God, they will CO-RULE righteously with God over the Earth. But if they separate from God, they will bring division, racism, hatred, lies, and death into the WHOLE WORLD.

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“God didn’t say the day you eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, I will kill you. He said the day you eat of it, IT will kill you.”

Obviously, Adam and Eve FAILED the test. They CHOSE to walk away from God. God didn’t kill them. They killed themselves. Living separately from God is spiritual suicide. Why? Because every good and beautiful and blessed thing originates from the TREE OF LIFE.

We will be TESTED before we can rule the world!  
Will you TRUST God’s wisdom? Or trust in yourself?

So let me ask you this: Before Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, broke up the Bible into chapters in the 13th century, how did the reader follow the storyline of the Bible? We have a hard enough time trying to understand the Bible chapter by chapter, but imagine trying to read a super long scroll! How do we make sure we don’t lose the plot?

For thousands of years, before we had chapters and verses, the people of God followed KEYWORDS that were repeated again and again, so readers could follow the plot.

One of those KEYWORDS is TREES. If we follow the TREE MOTIF, that serves as a HYPERLINK throughout the whole Bible! What do TREES represent? What important lesson do we learn from following the TREE MOTIF? Two things:

[Slide]

In the Bible, TREES represent:

1. EDEN: Life in the Presence of God.
2. A TEST: Will we choose God or not?"

***Q9. How do "trees" reveal a little pocket of Heaven on Earth? How do we become Mr. Pocket?***

So wherever we see TREES, that's a little POCKET of Heaven on Earth.

Adam & Eve: The Tree of Life, living in perfect unity and harmony with God

Noah: The Ark (made of trees), was a little POCKET of Heaven on Earth—it even had animals!

Abraham: Camped by the OAKS OF MAMRE in the Promised Land, a little POCKET of Heaven on Earth

Moses: The burning bush—more on this later! Definitely another POCKET.

Jesus: Was crucified on a Tree. Jesus was a POCKET of Heaven on Earth.

Revelation: The whole world will gather around the Tree of Life again

So when you are connected to Jesus, you become Mr. Pocket! Heaven on Earth!

***Q10. How do "trees" also represent a TEST? How important is it that we pass these tests? What happens when we don't?***

But TREES also represent a TEST!

Adam and Eve: Tested at the Tree of knowledge of good and evil

Noah: Tested in the grape vineyard where he got totally drunk on his own moonshine

Abraham: Placed a bundle of wood on Isaac's back to sacrifice his son to God, only to be saved by the ram caught in the woods.

Moses: At the burning bush he almost told God, "No, I won't go!"

Jesus: In the Olive trees of the Garden of Gethsemane said, "Let this cup pass from me, but Your will be done, Father, not mine."

Can you see how these are HUGE TESTS with a LOT riding on them!

- Because Adam and Eve failed, the whole world is handed over to the Devil, who is the god of this world to this day!
- Because Noah failed, the city of Babylon is formed, a world system of dark and evil people, dictators, TOTALITARIANS that exists to this day.
- Abraham did NOT fail so the NATION OF ISRAEL was born. HUGE!
- Jesus did NOT fail so the CHURCH was born. EVEN MORE HUGE!

**Q11. What were the people of God supposed to do at Mt. Sinai? What happened instead?**

## **MOSES | ISRAEL | BURNING BUSH (סנה) | MT. SINAI (סיני)**

But we need to go back and see what happened with Moses to understand the Church's Sphere of Authority. Let's look at our key passage again:

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"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may PROCLAIM the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9 LW).

Where was the first time we see this theme? Peter is actually quoting Exodus 19:

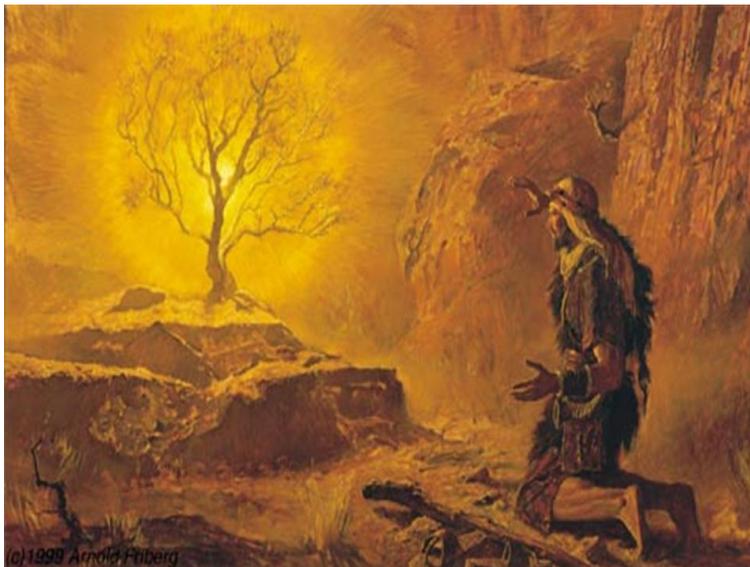
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“Now then, if you will indeed obey (Shema Shema) My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel” (Exodus 19:5-6 LW).

That is thousands of years BEFORE Jesus and Peter! What is going on here?

Let’s ask the TREES once again!

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In Ex. 3, Moses has an encounter with God at the burning bush that changes his life forever. In the ancient Hebrew, the word for bush is SENEH. And the bush is what? It’s ON FIRE! But it’s not being burned. Listen, if you get this, you will be on fire for Jesus, but you will never burn out!

So Moses brought the people to the mountain (Ex. 19). What was the name of this mountain? SINAI.

That is the same root word as SENEH.

The writer is trying to get us to CONNECT the BUSH with the MOUNTAIN.

But you can only see this in the ancient Hebrew.

Check this out:

[Slide]

BUSH: SINEH (Hebrew: שִׁנְיָהּ)

MOUNT SINAI (Hebrew: סִינַי)

This is the ONLY place in the Bible where a bush is called SENEH because we're meant to connect the BUSH with the MOUNTAIN! That whole mountain was ON FIRE with the Presence of God. The Bible says fire and smoke and lightning came from the mountain. The mountain is now the TREE!

Listen closely, Moses was TESTED by the fire of God when he approached the SENEH bush. He passed the TEST, and he was empowered to LIBERATE Israel from slavery.

Next, God told Moses to bring the people to the Mountain of Sinai where God will now TEST the people so they can PROCLAIM the Kingdom of Heaven and LIBERATE the rest of the world.

But did they pass the test? No.

When they got to the mountain, this is what they saw:

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Moses said, “Come on people, we’re going up this mountain to enter the Presence of God!” The people said, “No way, Jose, we ain’t going up there!” Moses said, “Trust me, it’s going to be AWESOME! I did it before. Let’s go hear the voice of God together! Come on!” And the people were like, “Nope. Too scary!” Moses said, “But God wants us to liberate the whole world from tyranny, slavery, and bondage! How do you think I liberated you from Egypt? God wants to use us ALL to liberate the whole planet from every dictator, every slave owner, every tyrant! No more fascism, no more marxism, no more abortion, no more mandates!” But the people became tortoises, retreated into their shells, and from way inside their tortoise shells, you can hear the echo of the people’s voices saying, “No, Moses, we’re good. You go.”

These people isolated themselves. They cut themselves off from God and the Kingdom of God. Instead of the streams of Living Water in the Promised Land, they found themselves in the wilderness—a lagoon—where the water does not flow. They remained there stagnant for 40 years, until that entire generation eventually died off.

You see, instead of the Gospel of the Kingdom, they preferred a gospel of salvation. Here it is...

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“They were saved from slavery, but they never understood  
WHY they were saved.”

Oh, they were no longer slaves, but they FAILED THE TEST of becoming a CHOSEN RACE. They never became a ROYAL PRIESTHOOD who could give light to a dark world on behalf of God. They did not become a HOLY NATION, separated from the world and connected to their God.

How bad did it get? Even Moses himself was so frustrated with them that he disqualified himself from entering the Promised Land. Imagine that! Moses was supposed to become the new Adam, the new King, ruling the

Earth with the people of God by the power of God. But instead, Moses fades into the sunset and this generation of Israel dies in the wilderness, awaiting another to arise.

Wow.

How do we avoid making the same mistake?

Watch this. Because their journey parallels our own. The journey of the nation of Israel is an archetype for the Christian life.

Remember, history doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme.

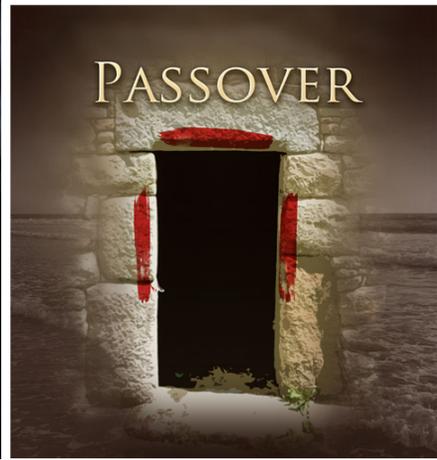
*Q12. What was their Mt. Sinai experience supposed to accomplish in the ancient people of God? What is the parallel in the Spiritual lives of Christians?*

## **PASSOVER | RED SEA | MOUNT SINAI**

So when you put your faith in Jesus, you are saying that His sacrifice for you on the cross delivers you from your sin. That's your moment of salvation. The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world.

This parallels...

[Slide]



Passover when the Angel of Death “passed over” the homes of the people of God because the blood of the lambs covered the doorposts of their houses. The next day they were set free from slavery.

Once you get saved what do you do next? You get baptized. Well, a few days after they were freed from slavery, the people of God passed through the Red Sea to escape Pharaoh’s chariots.

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They were baptized—saved from certain death and brought safely to life on the other side. And instead, it was Egypt that was destroyed.

But when they get to Mount Sinai, what does this represent? In ancient Hebrew history, this event occurred 50 days after they were saved from

Egypt. The Hebrews commemorate this day as SHAVUOT, or we know it as PENTECOST.

After we are saved and brought through the waters of baptism, we must next be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Yeah, you might receive a new prayer language, but most important of all, we will fully embrace our identity as a carrier of God's Presence and Power. The Church becomes Mr. Pockets, an expression of Eden, Heaven on Earth. And by the love and power of God, we will take the Gospel of the Kingdom to the remotest parts of the Earth. (Which is actually where we are sitting right now! Hawaii is the remotest part of the Earth from Jerusalem.)

How is this possible? The reason is because Jesus passed the ultimate test!

***Q13. What occurred because Jesus passed the test of the trees? What did His sacrifice achieve? How did Jesus inaugurate the birth of the Church?***

## **THE RETURN OF THE KING**

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In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was by the TREE OF TESTING again. The Serpent tried to get Him to hand over the keys to the Kingdom.

Jesus prayed, "Take this cup from me, Father, but not My will but yours be done." Jesus passed the test.

He hung on a tree to give us all life.

[Slide]



Check this out. Someone actually carved Jesus crucified into this Cedar Tree. Now the cross has become the new Tree of Life. We now CONNECT with the Father because of Christ hung on a tree. Jesus passed the test.

And what do you think God the Father is going to do in light of Christ's supreme sacrifice? Was He going to allow this King to be defeated? And remain dead?

Absolutely NO WAY! This King passed every test thrown at Him. So on the third day, the Father raised the Son from the dead. And the world witnessed THE RETURN OF THE KING!!!

Back to our main verse of today. Peter recognized that Jesus fulfilled what Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and all our forefathers started. Jesus

fulfilled the original plan of the Father. Now He is HEAD of the Church. The KING is also our Great High Priest.

The Church is now the Chosen, a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, a people for God's own possession who do what? PROCLAIM the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness, out of the world, and into His marvelous light!

But we need to CHOOSE the Gospel of the Kingdom, not just a gospel of salvation. We must be TRANSFORMED by the FIRE of God. Will you pass the TEST?

Remember, the people said to Moses, "That's too scary to go up there. You go!" People are still saying that today! "No, pastor, I can't hear from God, you go! I can't pray for my family, you pray. I can't even go to Church, I'm so afraid. It's safer here in my shell."

Listen, I get it. When my parents who turn 90 years old this year got Covid, I thought, "This could be it." We were as careful as we could be. I trust you are being wise and careful too. But listen to Grandpa Mike right now. You cannot spend your Christian life isolated from the Church, hiding in your homes. Becoming spiritually stagnant will kill you worse than Covid will.

When the author of Hebrews said, "Do not stop going to Church," he said that to Christians whose friends and family were being sacrificed in the arena. Some of them were covered in tar and set on fire. But they still risked going to Church because they wanted to stay on fire for God.

So friends you have a choice today. Whether you're in person or online, we all have to pass this test: Will we choose the lagoon and play it safe and risk a stagnant spiritual life that will eventually kill us? Or will we choose the mountaintop and the fire of God to change the world?

If you want to follow the King to the mountaintop then stand with me and pray.

## **BENEDICTION**

*Q14. What choice will you make today? Will you play it safe? Or will you follow your King and His Church to the mountaintop?*