

The Worst Kind of Generation Gap

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Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[0 : 00] Well, let's turn now to Judges, chapter 2. We're going to focus on verse 10 as central to the study this morning, but we'll look at some of the items that come up from the chapter round about this verse as we take in the whole of the passage and its teaching as far as possible.

So in verse 10 we read, all that generation, the generation following Joshua himself, all that generation were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.

Now these are interesting books in the Old Testament. They're very instructive books. Judges itself is not an easy book to deal with. Some of the stuff that you find in it is somewhat violent, difficult to actually present or to read through simply because of the nature of some of the passages in it.

But the book of Joshua, we could say, is phase one of the settlement of the land of Canaan by the people that God brought from Egypt, as you know, his people Israel, through to this promised land of Canaan.

So the book of Joshua deals with what you can call phase one of that settlement, of that conquest as it was meant to be. And the book of Judges brings before us phase two, the things that happened after Joshua died and after the next generation following or the immediate generation following Joshua died, the elders who outlived Joshua, the same generation effectively, but those whose lives stretched beyond that of Joshua.

[1 : 47] When all of these people had died, when all of these people had died, the next generation, the next generation, that's really what Judges deals with and what happened in the following generation.

That's summarized for us really in that verse. That generation, there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.

And through chapter one and into chapter two, then following on from that, the account you have in the main bulk of Judges, which has to do with these Judges that are named.

They're beginning there in chapter three, Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah and Barak, then Gideon, all the way through to Samson. All these Judges that are mentioned, they're not Judges, of course, in the way we normally think of a judge in a court of law.

These Judges were political and religious leaders. They were people who led the people at the time in a political and spiritual manner. And what you find is this terrible cycle, this spiral downwards in the behavior of this generation who followed the generation of Joshua, this generation who did not know the Lord.

[3 : 02] You'll find this terrible spiral mentioned summarized for us there at the end of or in this final part of chapter two, that it was a downward spiral spiritually and morally so that the Lord became so displeased with them that he showed his anger towards them.

It was a failure to drive out the people that inhabited the land of Canaan. And that failure was not caused by military shortcomings.

In verse 28 there, you'll find a reference to Israel actually being quite strong at times. In verse 28 of chapter one, when Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not drive them out completely.

In other words, there were times when Israel could have driven out these people as the Lord had commanded them. Instead of that, they went against the command of the Lord. They put these people of Canaan under forced labor so that they had them virtually as slaves.

But that itself shows you that the problem for not driving out the people was not the lack of military strength or military ability.

[4 : 26] The problem all the way through was spiritual. They were unfaithful to God. They turned away from the ways and the commandments of God.

The failure is undoubtedly a spiritual one. You find it in chapter one and verse 27 there, following on from there, the way that they failed to do it.

And then in this chapter two, you find that the failure is because they did not actually walk in the ways of their fathers. They whored after other gods and bowed down to them.

They turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord. They became mixed spiritually and morally and in practice with the very people that they were supposed to have kept separate from.

What's involved in this failure? What do we learn from the failure of this generation of Israel that we can apply to ourselves?

[5 : 35] Because there are some very, very important lessons and points to be made for our situation today as a generation of people and the generation that's following us, that's growing up in our midst, that will next be in our place when we are no longer here.

What are they going to be like? What is our burden for them? What's our strategy towards them spiritually, prayerfully, in every way in which we would want them to be a generation that pleases the Lord?

What are the marks of this failure? What are the characteristics of this failure? Let's look at that, first of all, as the main part of our studies today. The characteristics of this failure of Israel, of this generation who did not know the Lord.

Two things in that. The characteristics of this failure, the first characteristic is they lost touch with God. They lost touch with God.

It's a mark, it's a characteristic of this type of failure that a generation loses touch with God. And in that there are two things. They're a lifeless belief and for them their history was irrelevant.

[6 : 49] A lifeless belief and their history had become irrelevant. That was their losing touch with God. The second characteristic is their losing of their identity as God's people.

And there are two elements in that as well. Losing identity as God's people is they lost their sense of being separate from the people of Canaan, the pagan people of Canaan.

And they lost their identity in relation to because they were in the grip of sin. Let's look at these more closely.

The first characteristic is losing touch with God. That's what you find here in verse 10. All that generation were gathered to their fathers. There arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord.

Now that doesn't mean that they didn't know anything about the Lord. It doesn't mean that they didn't know much about the Lord. When you find in the Bible this description of knowing the Lord, it's not just the accumulation of knowledge that's meant.

[7 : 55] When you find in the Bible this word knowing the Lord or knowing even in a human sense in relationship, it's a relationship word. It's a word that has to do with knowing someone or something personally.

Knowing one another means having fellowship with one another. Knowing the Lord means having communion with God. So knowing the Lord is a description of a personal living relationship with God.

In 1 Samuel you find the sons of Samuel referred to as wicked people. They were actually in a very important position.

In regard to the temple. They were sons of Samuel. Such a godly man. But they were wicked people. And then it says they did not know the Lord. Their wickedness is united to this description. They did not know the Lord. They didn't have a living relationship with God. They were engaging in all kinds of sinful practices. Despite their office in the church you might say.

[9 : 00] And the reason for that. The underlying reason. The very root of their failure. This characteristic of their failure. Is the same as this generation of Israel.

They did not know the Lord. Now that's telling us something. It's telling us that you can have one generation of God's people. Of God's church.

That's characterized by life. By vibrancy. By a burden to reach out to people with the gospel. By godliness. By a commitment to walk in God's ways.

And yet the next generation can be very different. You can have one generation that's even concerned. To instruct and to teach. And to be models and role models and examples. For the generation rising up amongst us. And I hope speaking to myself. Surely and to yourself. Is that that's what we are trying to be. And yet you have to realize. That is possible.

[9 : 57] And it happened here. That the following generation. Are entirely the opposite. They don't know the Lord. And because they don't know the Lord. A lot of things follow on from that.

That is to their disadvantage. And to the disadvantage of the society. That they live amongst. And here is. What it actually brings home to ourselves.

When we're thinking of. Passing something on to our children. That we possess. Spiritually. When we think of the things of the gospel. The things of salvation.

The things that God has given us. In his word. Or through his word. That we've come to possess for ourselves. It's not like passing on. Some kind of family heirloom.

It's not like having some painting. Or picture of your grandfather. Or great grandfather. Or grandmother. That you want your children. And their children. And the successive generations.

[10 : 58] To actually come to possess for themselves. That's just something dead. What we are instructed.

What we are taught. From this passage. In terms of. What we need to have ourselves. And need to. As far as possible. Pray that it will be passed on.

To our children. Is spiritual life. We need to be converted. We need to be people of God. We need to be in a living relationship.

With God. And our children. Need to have much more. Than just formal. Spiritual instruction. They need to be converted.

It's our business. It's our business. To see to it. That we plead with the Lord. For that. That we take every step. To ensure.

[11 : 52] As far as we can. God is alone. The one who is able to convert them. We can't convert people. We can't actually. Bring about that change. In their lives.

That will make them. A living people. In a living relationship. With God. God. But. We have so much. That we have to do. That we are. Required. To do.

By God. In their teaching. In being examples to them. In being encouragers to them. In every. Avenue.

In every opportunity. In every means. That God has given us to use. Because this is absolutely crucial. What kind of generation.

Do you want the next generation. To be. Do you want it to be like this. In Israel. A generation growing up. That do not know the Lord.

[12 : 52] There is no use our saying. Well it won't happen like that. It won't be like that. God will see to it. Well that is all very well. But God is saying to us.

You have your own role. You have to see it. That you are doing. Your duty. Pressing your privileges. So that the following generation. Will not be one.

That does not know the Lord. There is the. First point. They had a lifeless. Belief. They believed in God. But they did not know the Lord. They believed in the things.

That God had given to his people. They practiced them. They were engaging in worship. In the temple. In the tabernacle. They were actually. Following out. The commands. Formally.

In the rituals. That God had given. For his worship. But they didn't know the Lord. They weren't in a living relationship. With him. And they weren't therefore. Able to. Really pass on.

[13 : 49] Meaningfully. To their descendants. To their children. Those things. That God himself. Had emphasized. Of a living relationship. With him. They had lost touch.

With God. Because they had a. A lifeless belief. But also. They had an irrelevant history. Or as far as they were concerned. Their history had become irrelevant. There arose another generation.

After them. Who did not know the Lord. Or the work. That he had done. For Israel. I'm sure. That these people. Had taught. The generation following them.

Of what it had been like. To leave Egypt. What God had done. In bringing him out of Egypt. By these great miracles. That he had done. What he had done. In parting the Red Sea. You just cannot imagine.

That no reference at all. Would have been done. Made to these things. By the generation. That Joshua belonged to. But the thing is. The generation following them. Had no meaningful

connection.

[14:47] With those great works of the Lord. They didn't understand their relevance. They didn't understand. Their relevance to themselves. To them as a generation. They had actually come to see.

Their history as no longer meaningful. Or relevant. To themselves. To the day. And generation. That they were now facing. That's what happens.

When you lose touch with God. As a people. You don't come to see. A meaningful connection. With your past. In the history. That God. Has brought about.

For his church. Now. Many of us. May not really like. History that much. And. That's all right. History is not. Everybody's subject. History might even. For many of us. Be. The most boring subject. On earth. But that's not.

[15:45] What this is saying. Today. It's not about. Knowing. Knowing. History. Per se. Or history. In itself. As such. It's knowing. The connection. Between.

The history. Of God's. Dealings with his people. And my life. Today. What does the exodus. Mean to me. Today. What is the resurrection.

Of Jesus Christ. And his death on the cross. What does that mean. To me. How relevant. Is it to my life. Is it an irrelevant. Piece of history. From the past. Or does it have such.

Loaded importance. And meaning. That my life. Has no basis. Without it. That's what it means. When history. Has to be relevant.

To ourselves. What is the reformation. What are the great events. Of history. In the church's experience. What are they to us today.

[16:42] Why. Should we have them. In a meaningful relationship. With our generation. Today. With our life today. Because they are God's. Great works.

In history. It's God who creates history. It's God's providence. As it works out. That gives us history. There is no history. Apart from God.

God. Doesn't study history. God creates. What we call history. And that history. Especially. These works of the Lord. The work that he had done.

For Israel. Can you imagine. A generation. In Israel. This generation. That's described. They didn't know the Lord. And they didn't know. The work he had done.

For Israel. Can you imagine. So soon. Forty years. After leaving Egypt. Or fifty years. If you take. Some more years.

[17:39] Into it. As the years went on. Certainly less than a century. It's not a long time. Humanly speaking. Here is a generation. That has lost touch.

With the meaningfulness. Of the exodus. From Egypt. When you realize. The profound importance. Of that event. In the history.

Of this people. They have lost touch. With it. They see no relevance. In it. It's something. That's just a dry. Bit of history.

With no meaningful connection. To themselves. So they lost touch. With God. And we have to see to it.

That that tells us. Something we must never do. We must never have. A lifeless belief. We must always see to it.

[18:34] That. Our faith is a living faith. Not just. A believing in things. About God. But a knowledge. Of God. Personally.

And that the history. Of God's work. For his people. Is relevant. To ourselves. And meaningful. In our lives. Today. Now. The characteristic.

Of losing touch. With God. We have to move on. The second characteristic. Is losing their identity. As God's people. And there are two aspects. To that as well. Verses one and two.

God. Through the angel. Had specified to them. That he had brought them in. Up from Egypt. And into this land. And promised. He would never break. His covenant with them. And you. Shall make no covenant.

With the inhabitants. Of this land. You see. God. Is emphasizing. This word. Covenant. And covenant. Means. Relationship. Relationship. With God himself.

[19:30] That's why. So frequently. Through the Bible. You've got the relationship. Of God. And his people. Specified as a marriage. And that's why. You've got such words.

Used. As we've read. Through the chapter. Where you find. Instead of keeping. This covenant. Faithfulness. And obedience. To God. As their husband.

Israel. Actually went. And took. The gods. Of the Canaanites. To herself. She committed. She committed. Spiritual. Adultery. She prostituted. Herself. I'm not using. These words. Ill-advisedly. That's the words. The Bible uses.

For such a thing. And one of the things. That we have to actually. Remember. Is just how. Incredibly. Obnoxious. And grotesque. And especially.

[20 : 24] To God. How abominable. The religion. Of the Canaanites. Was. This was not. A kind of. Mild. Religious. Ceremony. That the Canaanites.

Engaged in. When they worshipped. The Baals. These were the gods. Of the Canaanites. Different Baals. For different. A different Baal. If you like. For different. Country areas. Of Canaan. But Baal. Or the Baals. Were regarded. As fertility gods. In order to make sure. That the land. Was fertile. You had to engage. Physically.

This is the gruesome part. Of it. You had to engage. Physically. In sexual activities. As a people. Which were fundamental. To your religion. Canaan had. What they called. Sacred. Prostitutes. At the shrines.

[21 : 20] That were erected. To Baal. And to his female. Consort. As to Rose. As to Rose. And they regarded. The fertility. Of the land. As depending.

On the relationship. Between Baal. And Ashtaroth. And you can imagine. Knowing what. Natural. Human. Desires. Are like. How to the sinful. Side of human beings. The worship. Of Baal. Is far more attractive.

Than the worship. Of God. Because you can let. Your physical. Your physical. Lust. And desire. Loose. To your heart's content. That's what. Canaan. Was like. That's what the religion. Of Baal. Was like. No boundaries.

[22 : 19] To immorality. As God defines it. You see. That's why. The Lord uses. Such words. As is used. In verse 17. Yet they did not.

Listen. To their judges. For they. Hored. After other gods. You see. Israel. Here. Instead of being. A separate people. What they've done. Is just joined themselves.

To this people. Instead of driving them out. As the Lord. Had commanded. And that was really. To be God's judgment. Upon the abominations. Of the Canaanites. As he said to Abraham. Long before this.

Your descendants. Will be 400 years. In Egypt. For the iniquity. Of the Amorites. Is not yet full. That's the Canaanites. Once their iniquity. Became full. Once it became so.

Complete. If you like. In the eyes of God. As obnoxious. He was going to bring. His people. Israel. To sweep them away. From Canaan. And put them. In their place. Instead of doing that.

[23 : 13] And being. God's instrument. Of judgment. Upon the Canaanites. Israel actually. Left them in place. By and large. And then just. Mixed with them. They took their daughters.

For their sons. They gave their sons. To their daughters. To Canaanite sons. Their sons. Married Canaanite wives. They imported the religion. The practices. Of the Canaanites.

Into their religion. The whole thing. Became just. A hodgepodge. And a spiritual mess. If you go to Psalm 106.

As we sang. That's where you find. The description there. In the terms. In which you find it. In Psalm 106. At verse 34. They did not destroy.

The peoples. As the Lord. Commanded them. But they mixed. With the nations. And learned. To do. As they did. They served. Their idols. Which became.

[24 : 10] A snare. To them. Thus they became. Unclean. By their acts. And played the whore. In their deeds. These are. Hugely.

Serious. Words to use. Of a covenant people. That's. How God. Described it for them. Instead of being. A separate people. Now that's. A lesson for ourselves.

As well. We are living. In a society. That by and large. Is immoral. And doesn't think. Too. Much about. Human behavior. In terms of. Sexual practices. I don't need to tell you. How things are. In our day.

How is a Christian. To live amongst that. What kind of. Life. Should we have. In the midst of that. Well here is. The judges. The book of judges.

[25 : 03] Telling us. It's not to be like. This generation. Who did not know. The Lord. God has placed us. Where we are. To live a separate life. Not a life. That has. No connection. With people at all.

Not a life. That doesn't have. Any relationship. At all. With people. Who are not. Not church people. Or not. People of the Bible. Or people. Who are atheists. Or people. Who are humanists.

We have to have. An interaction with them. You can't live. In the world. Cloistered. Like hermits. In a monastery. But what this is saying to us.

Is you have a covenant. With the Lord. You're married to the Lord. Israel. We're having an affair. With the Baals. And as we'll see in a minute. The Lord was angry. Because of it. You and I. Have a covenant. Obligation.

[25 : 59] A covenant. Privilege. To honor God. To live in obedience. To God. To keep ourselves. Separate from. The culture.

Of our day. In terms of. People's. Lifestyles. In an ungodly sense. But there's something else. In losing their identity.

As God's people. Instead of being. Separate. They also. They mixed with them. But they were also. You'll notice. In the grip of sin. This is a very interesting passage. Verses 16 to 19.

Because. Not only is it. An introduction. Really to the. Main part. Of the book of judges. Describing these various judges. Or leaders. You can see. The cycle. That's described there.

God raised up judges. Then. Who saved them. Out of the hand. Of those who plundered them. Yet. They did not listen. To their judges. For they whored. After other gods.

[26 : 55] And bowed down to them. And all the way through there. You find a summary. God raises up a judge. And while that judge. Honors God. And as a leader of the people. They are restrained. To an extent.

From going after these gods. Of the Canaanites. And the practices of the Canaanites. But when the judge dies. They become worse than ever. They go back to these ways.

Till the next judge comes along. And so. You find that cycle. Or that spiral described. Now that tells you something. It says that. When you give yourself to sin. You're giving yourself to a power. Because there is a power in sin. That we need to appreciate. And whenever we willingly give ourselves.

To any sin. To anything the Bible calls sin. You're giving yourself into the grip. Of something that's not only. An enemy to your soul. And to your life.

[27 : 50] But it's a very strong enemy. It's an enslaving enemy. That's why Paul uses such strong terms. To describe grace. To describe salvation.

To describe what God does. In bringing us from sin. And into salvation. It's not something mild. As far as Paul is concerned. It's not just a little flick of the finger.

Of God that's needed. To bring you from a state of lostness. Into a state of salvation. It's a violent grasping of you. Because the grip of sin.

Has to be broken. Like a giant hand. Holding on to your life. The only thing. That can break it. Is a stronger hand. And when God sent his son into the world.

To die on the cross. And raised him from the dead. That's precisely what he was doing. He was dealing with violence. With spiritual holy violence.

[28 : 46] Dealing with sin. You read Romans. Chapter 8 especially. He sent his son into the world. For sin. Do we appreciate today.

What sin is. The strength of sin. As the Bible describes it. How necessary it is.

For God. To be in our life. Meaningfully. Or else. Sin still has a grip. On our lives. And that's especially true.

Of Israel. When they failed. To take advantage. Of a crisis. Because that's a crisis. That's specified. In the opening words. Of the chapter. The opening verses. When the angel told them.

That these people. Would be a snare to them. That their gods. Will be a snare. There'll be thorns. In your sides. They started crying. That was a mass. Outbreak. Of weeping.

[29 : 49] But it wasn't. Repentance. It wasn't. A meaningful. Turning to the Lord. What they were really. Weeping about. Was. Oh dear. This is really. Going to hurt us.

Thorns in our sides. That's going to be painful. So they began to weep. But they didn't turn. To the Lord. Lots of tears.

No repentance. We have to make use. Of every opportunity.

Every crisis. Every event in life. To seek the Lord. While he's to be found. Why does God send us. These events. Why did God leave. In his judgment. These people of Canaan. And not help anymore. With Israel.

[30 : 47] Driving them out. So as to test them. He said. In verse. 21. And 22. In order to test Israel.

By them. Whether they will take care. To walk in the way of the Lord. As the father did. Or not. Every event in your life. And mine is the same.

It's not because God takes pleasure. In causing pain. It's not because God doesn't care how we feel.

It's not because God is cruel. It's not because God is cruel. He's actually being very kind. In a sense. He's giving us.

An environment of experience. In which he is to be found. Where we reach out to him. Where we take hold of him.

[31 : 46] Where he becomes precious to us. And that's what Israel failed to do. They failed to realize. That being in the grip of sin.

Needed the Lord's strength. To take them out of it. They sold themselves to sin. And they made slaves of themselves to it. That's what happens. When you lose your identity.

As God's people. When you give yourself to an alternative. To serving the Lord. The characteristics of the failure. Then they lost touch with God. Their lifeless belief.

And irrelevance to their history. They lost identity as God's people. In being a separate people. And in being in the grip. Of sin. I want to finish with something else.

And it's something very important. But it would need a lot more time. Than we have to expand on it. The second main point. Is the continuation of God's faithfulness. And that itself.

[32 : 44] Is such a hugely important. Important emphasis. All the way through the passage. Well. Please read it when you get home. And when you get a moment. Read through and look for the evidences. In the passage. Of God's faithfulness.

To himself. To his covenant. To his word. Despite all that Israel have become. His. Continuation to. His faithfulness.

Is seen in judgment. In verse 3 there. I will not drive them out. They become. Sword. Thorns. In your sides. You'll find it in verse 20.

Down from verse 20. The anger of the Lord. Was kindled. Against Israel. You find that he mentions too. In verse 15. The hand of the Lord. Was against them. As the Lord had warned.

In other words. God had said. Here's my covenant. You be faithful. To that covenant. And you will have my blessing. You break that covenant. You have an affair.

[33 : 43] With the gods. Of the nation. You have an affair. With these pagan gods. And I will punish you. My judgment. Will come upon you. God. In his judgment.

Of the people. As it's mentioned there. Was being true. To his word. He was being faithful. To the word. That he had himself. Specified for them. God is never untrue. To his word.

If it's a word of warning. He's going to be true. To that word of warning. If it's a word of promise. He's going to be true. To that promise. God is always faithful. But he. Continues faithful.

In compassion. As well. And you know. That's one. Of the greatest things. That comes across. From this passage. It's not just. The compassion of God.

But how amazing. The compassion of God. Is in that context. In light of Israel's. Faithlessness. And unfaithfulness. And unfaithfulness. And apostasy.

[34 : 39] And adultery. Spiritually. Verse 15 to 16. You notice what's said. You find.

Then the Lord. They were in terrible distress. Then the Lord. Raised up judges. Why did he raise up judges? Why did he keep raising up. These judges? Because.

The Lord. Was moved. By their groanings. Verse. In 18. There. For the Lord. Was moved to pity. By their groaning.

Because of those. Who afflicted. And oppressed them. That's directly linked with. Their situation in Egypt. Before the exodus. He heard their groaning. What is it that's remarkable about that. Do you think.

In this passage. That it simply says. He was moved to pity. By their groaning. Well. You would expect. To read. He was moved to pity. By their repentance. By their prayers.

[35 : 39] And appeals for mercy. To forgive their sins. But that's not what you find. There were no such appeals. There was no such repentance. And yet. God is moved.

To pity them. When he hears their groanings. I don't know about you. But that to me.
Is. One of the most. Prominent. Evidences. In the Bible. That no human being. Could ever have
invented.

This God. Isn't that what you hear. So often today. The God of the Old Testament. He's just an
invention. Of past times. It's time we got rid of him.

Completely. From human thinking. From human life. And let's get rid of this word of God. As well.
From public. Life. From private life. People should actually not.

[36 : 34] In any way. Feel constrained. By this Bible. It's terribly. Old fashioned. It's time. It was just
simply burnt. Got rid of. Well.

Let me just reiterate. That. No human being. On earth. In any generation. Could possibly. Have
invented. Such a God.

As pities. Rebellious people. When he hears their groanings. Would you have invented. That kind of
God. Of course not. Not. He's not inventable.

He's above the inventable. He's God. The merciful. The gracious. The long suffering.

The patient. The compassionate. The continuance. The continuance. Of God's faithfulness. Is a
remarkable.

[37 : 38] Phenomenon. In the history. Of God's church. It should be. In the history. Of your own
life. Too. And mine. Nothing. Should be more remarkable.

To us. Than that God. Continues. To be faithful. Despite what we are. And against what we are. But
you see.

There. Is the ground. Of my hope. And yours. That this. Is the God. Who calls. Upon us today. To
put our trust.

In him. And to be faithful. To him. Let's pray. Lord our God. As we confess. How remarkable.

Your patient. Dealings with us. Is. And how wonderful. It is. To read. Of your great. Acts. In history.

Help us. In return. To give ourselves. To you.

[38 : 33] To do so. Consistently. And faithfully. Each day. Help us. Lord. We pray. To be.

Committed. To your service. In this world. Help us.

To remain. And to be. Separate. From all that is. Ungodly. And sinful. By way of attitude. And
lifestyle. Help us. To value those things.

And to prize those things. That have to do with holiness. And Christ likeness. In all of these things.

We pray that you would continue. To forgive our sin.

And to guide us. And to love us freely. For Jesus sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.