

Session 7: Forerunners as Messengers

I. The Need for End-time Messengers

1. John the Baptist was a messenger of the Lord to prepare the way for Christ's earthly ministry.
 - a. The gospel of Mark records this about the ministry of John the Baptist, "As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY *MESSENGER* AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT'" (Mk. 1:2-3).
 - b. The Greek word translated messenger in the above passage refers to both men and angels and carries the meaning of one sent to announce, to make known the purposes of God, and to execute God's purposes.¹ Consistent with this definition, John functioned as a messenger to prepare the way for the Lord's earthly ministry. He announced the soon coming of the Lord; he created an expectancy in the hearts of people to look for the soon coming of their Messiah; he identified Jesus as the true Messiah; he clarified the way Jesus was coming—that is, as a Lamb in His first earthly ministry rather than a Lion to overthrow Roman oppression; and he called the people of Israel to confess and repent of their sins and to turn to Christ so as to be ready.
2. Even though circumstances were different, Elijah also was a messenger of the Lord into the northern kingdom of Israel during the corrupt reign of Ahab and Jezebel.
 - a. Elijah also was a messenger of the Lord into his generation. He prophesied judgment on the land to get the attention of the people and to awaken them to the Lord; he confronted Ahab and Jezebel and their false religion; and he called on the people to turn away from Baal and Asherah worship back to the true worship of the Lord.
 - b. The story of Elijah's confrontation with Ahab after Ahab and Jezebel stole Naboth's vineyard and had him murdered further illustrates how God used Elijah as a messenger. You can read about it in 1 Kings 21. Summarizing, God sent Elijah to Ahab to prophesy the destruction of his entire family line (1 Kings 21:21-22) and to declare that God would also destroy Jezebel (1 Kings 21:23). His prophecy came true when Jehu became king.
 - c. Thus, we see that both Elijah and John were messengers of the Lord into their respective generations.
3. In a similar manner, end-time forerunners will function as messengers of the Lord to prepare the way for the Lord's second coming.
 - a. As we stated in Session 2, the forerunner ministry we are speaking of is about end-time forerunners who will prepare the way for the Lord's second coming. The following is what the prophet Malachi wrote about this company of end-time forerunners,

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Behold, I send My *messenger*, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger [*Christ*] of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He [*Christ*] is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of His [*Christ*] coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years. And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien — because they do not fear Me, says the Lord of hosts (Mal. 3:1-5, NKJV).

- b. As you can see, the events surrounding the second coming of Christ will be very difficult to endure. When Christ comes, He will deal with sin, corruption, and every aspect of society that does not honor Christ. Christians are not exempt from His refining fire and purification. In His goodness, God is raising up end-time forerunners functioning as messengers anointed with the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way so that all who will hear can prepare and endure His coming.
- c. Now that we have briefly seen the need for end-time messengers, let's explain how forerunners are to function as messengers. To accomplish this, we will first look at how the apostle Paul ministered both as a messenger and a wise master builder. This will set the stage for us to see the role of forerunners as both messengers and master builders.

II. Messengers and Master Builders Working Together

1. The apostle Paul was both a messenger and a wise master builder.

- a. The scriptures teach that Paul was a wise master builder (1 Cor. 3:10). He was also a messenger sent by the Lord to introduce the new covenant and fresh revelation into both the Jewish and Gentile communities in the ancient middle east. He was a leader in his home base at the church at Antioch; moreover, he was a forerunner missionary used by God to multiply the message of Christ into multiple regions throughout the Roman Empire.
- b. Let's look at how Paul operated on his missionary journeys. This will help us see how forerunners function as both messengers and master builders. Once we understand the overall connection between the two functions, we will dig into the messengerial role in this session and the wise master builder role in the next.
- c. As Acts 13 records, Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark were sent out from Antioch on Paul's first missionary journey. Their first stop was Salamis on the island of Cyprus. From there, they traveled through Cyprus and then on to Pisidian Antioch where they went to the synagogue (Acts 13:14). Invited to speak at the synagogue, Paul preached Christ and Him crucified to the Jews as he introduced Jesus as the Jewish Messiah (Acts 13:14-43). His reason for preaching Christ was to *function as a messenger* to invite the Jews into the new wineskin of the New Covenant.
- d. He followed this same pattern throughout much of the book of Acts. Note these verses that explain how Paul functioned first as a forerunner messenger. The passages are a little long, but important to

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lay the foundation for the pattern forerunners are to use as they function first as messengers and then as master builders,

In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren. Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands. But the people of the city were divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them, they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region; and there they continued to preach the gospel (Acts 14:1-7).

Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. *And according to Paul's custom*, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people (Acts 17:1-6).

The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds (Acts 17:10-13).

And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks (Acts 18:4).

They came to Ephesus, and he left them there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent, but taking leave of them and saying, "I will return to you again if God wills," he set sail from Ephesus (Acts 18:19-21).

- e. Paul's missionary journeys took him through the region of Galatia, to Thessalonica, and to Ephesus. Even though he went to other places too, I mention those areas because Paul also wrote letters to believers there—the books of Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Ephesians. In these letters, he taught principles of new covenant living, explained how to live victoriously as a believer, clarified issues, and corrected problems. In other words, he functioned as a wise master builder.
- f. To summarize Paul's ministry pattern, he first went to where worshipers gathered and invited them into a new way of relating to God by introducing Christ as the Messiah and the cross as the way to enter into a relationship with Him. In so doing, he functioned as a forerunner messenger. When people received his message, he then taught a new spiritual environment and equipped them to live correctly in this new way of relating to God. For example, he spent 18 months in Corinth training and equipping the church there (Acts 18:11). In his time in Corinth and his work with all of the newly

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formed churches, he functioned as a forerunner in the role of a wise master builder. Thus, Paul's normal ministry pattern was to function first as a messenger, and then, to those who received his message as a wise master builder. Both are functions of the forerunner ministry.

- g. One important side note before moving on. As we all know, Paul was an apostle sent by the Lord to plant churches throughout the areas in which he traveled. In his apostolic function, he planted many churches in untouched regions. However, his primary apostolic function was not to plant churches as much as it was to plant a new truth—the message of Christ as Messiah, the cross as the way to live triumphantly in Christ, and the spiritual environment necessary for churches to facilitate the birth and maturation of believers. The point is that Paul's apostolic ministry was as a forerunner planting new truth more than it was planting new churches.

2. End-time forerunners are to function as messengers and master builders much in the same way that the apostle Paul did.

- a. It is a little intimidating to think that we should minister in the same way Paul did. God used him in mighty ways for sure. Most likely, we will not be used in the level of power and authority that characterized Paul's ministry. Even so, forerunners are to follow the same pattern Paul employed—first as a messenger and then as a wise master builder.
- b. As God opens up doors for a forerunner ministry to us, we most likely will function first as an end-time messenger. The messenger role of the forerunner is essentially to invite the lost, individual believers, pastors, and churches into a different way of relating to God—a new wineskin based on God's eternal purpose. The following sections will explain some of the ways messengers will minister to whom God connects them. *The primary function of the messenger will be to invite people to leave old, erroneous, or lesser wineskins and to enter into a new way of relating to God based on God's eternal plan and purpose for the church age.* For those who accept the invitation, forerunners will then function as wise master builders to train and equip believers, pastors, leaders, and churches to live out the invitation given from the messengerial role.
- c. In sharing this process of how the messenger and master builder operate in tandem, we should make it clear that some forerunners might function as messengers, some as master builders, some as intercessors and spiritual warriors, and some as all of the above. No one should feel like they must be able to do all of these things to be an effective forerunner. We are speaking of a company or team of forerunners who working together operate in the pattern Paul did as he introduced Christ to the ancient world.
- d. Now that we have summarized the role of the forerunner as a messenger, in the next section we will explore several approaches to be utilized by end-time messengers.

III. Approaches of the Messenger

1. End-time messengers will speak on behalf of the Lord in a variety of ways.

- a. In this final section, we list and briefly describe seven modes of speaking that an end-time messenger might employ. As messengers are led by the Holy Spirit to speak in their messengerial

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role, the Holy Spirit might direct them in one or more of the following ways. The specific way the messenger will operate is ultimately as the Holy Spirit leads.

- b. However, the mode is also determined by the attitude of the person to which the messenger is encountering. In my years of operating as an end-time messenger, the Holy Spirit has led me to speak at times in all of the ways we list in the following paragraphs. I always prefer to speak softly and gently. Even though this is my preferred method, at times the situation required that I speak in a much more confrontational manner.
- c. My suggested approach in terms of which approach to use is characterized by several of Paul's statements in his letters. My preferred approach is to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15) and gentleness yet to be prepared to speak more strongly and directly in a way similar to Paul's letter to Timothy, "Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning" (1 Tim. 5:20). Therefore, in speaking as a messenger, let the Holy Spirit lead you.

2. Before going into detail on the various approaches, a brief review of the purpose of the forerunner call from Sessions 3 and 4 will be helpful.

- a. In Session 3, we identified five purposes of the forerunner call. We list them again to refresh our memory. You can review Session 3 if needed. They are:
 - Forerunners turn hearts to the Person of Christ.
 - Forerunners turn people to God's eternal purpose.
 - Forerunners turn people from the focus on the external things of God to an internal kingdom.
 - Forerunners turn the hearts of leaders to their spiritual children.
 - Forerunners turn the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous.
- b. In Session 4, we shared three objectives toward which these five purposes are directed. They are:
 - Forerunners are called to prepare a corporate mature man who will be made ready as God's partner for the eternal ages.
 - Forerunners are to make ready a people for the end times.
 - Forerunners are to make ready a people for eternity.
- c. Connecting the five purposes from Session 3 with the three objectives from Session 4, we can state the relationship this way: *The five areas from Session 3 in which people need to return to Christ are for the purpose of fulfilling the three objectives identified in Session 4.*
- d. With that introduction, the following presents in no particular order seven approaches end-time messengers use to call people to God and His eternal purpose.

3. End-time messengers *announce* the second coming of Christ and times or events related to being prepared for His coming.

- a. End-time messengers are to announce the soon coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptist's life message was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2). When he spoke these

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words, he was announcing the soon coming onto the scene of Israel's Messiah and calling people to respond in light of His soon coming. Isaiah's description of God's end-time messengers adds to this idea. It reads,

Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him and His recompense before Him (Isa. 40:9-10).

- b. The preceding scripture calls for messengers to get on a high mountain—that is, above the clutter and routine of life to a place where all can see and hear—and lift up their voices mightily to shout that the Lord will soon come to rule and that He will come with rewards and recompense.
- c. End-time messengers also announce specific times and seasons that the Holy Spirit is speaking to the church. As we stated in the last session, forerunners are to be a voice from the throne. As such, much of what they speak will be to announce specific works of the Holy Spirit that are coming to the church and world so that the church can prepare for what is coming.
- d. There are many issues that forerunners may be called to announce as we approach the second coming of Christ. For example, one thing we believe the Holy Spirit is speaking to the church in this hour is the call for believers to draw closer to the Person of Christ and embrace the cross. He is calling the church to leave the lesser pursuits of the world, self, and even the focus on the external things of God and go hard after the Person of Christ.
- e. As we move into progressively darker times and the glory falls on the church in a greater way, there will be many times and seasons that must be announced to the church. This role of the forerunner is extremely necessary to alert the church to what is coming so as to make themselves ready to stand strong and grow closer to the Lord.

4. End-time messengers *invite* believers, pastors, and the church into a fresh way of relating to the Lord so as to be prepared for the end times, the second coming of Christ, and eternity.

- a. John the Baptist in his messengerial role called on Israel to repent for the kingdom was at hand. In so speaking, he was inviting the Jewish people to turn away from the current way they were relating to God to a new way that God was introducing onto the scene.
- b. As we discussed a little earlier, Paul's method of birthing the New Testament church was to go to the synagogues and invite those who worshiped there into the new covenant. At times, they eagerly accepted his message and at times they did not. Even so, as a messenger his role was to invite people into the new thing God was doing in his day.
- c. Another major aspect of the call of end-time messengers is to invite the lost, believers, pastors, leaders, and churches into a fresh expression of relating to God and into a spiritual environment that will stand in the days in which we live. This is extremely important in this hour. There are so many approaches to doing church right now and so many eschatological views that will not stand in the coming days. Therefore, it is crucial that messengers invite the church to come out of erroneous and

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lesser pursuits and into a pursuit of God's eternal purpose and a view of the end times and eternity that will make them ready for the Lord.

- d. One important point we need to make at this point. We are not talking about leading people away from biblical truth into a different gospel. On the contrary, much of what is being taught in the church today is distorting and compromising biblical truth. Messengers invite people back to the truth of Christ as expressed in the Bible.

5. End-time messengers also *reason* and *explain* where the church is in error so as to *persuade* the church to accept the invitation of the messenger.

- a. John the Baptist reasoned with the people to explain that Jesus was the coming Messiah as noted in the following, "So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people" (Lk. 3:18).
- b. Paul also reasoned with those in the synagogue that Christ was the Messiah,

And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths *reasoned* with them from the Scriptures, *explaining and giving evidence* that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." And some of them were *persuaded* and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women (Acts 17:2-4).

- c. This was not an isolated instance in Paul's ministry; rather, it was his normal approach as he did the same in Athens (Acts 17:16), in Corinth (Acts 18:4), and in Ephesus where he spent three months reasoning with the Jews in the synagogue (Acts 18:4 and 19:8). The Greek word translated reasoned in these passages means to discuss thoroughly, exhort, dispute, or argue.ⁱⁱ
- d. The point for here is that end-time messengers at times must take an extended period of time discussing, debating, and exhorting others to understand the message they are inviting them to accept. At times, people will accept the invitation immediately. At other times, they reject it immediately. But most of the time, those to whom we are sent as a messenger will require us to devote time explaining and reasoning with them the message of God's eternal purpose and all that is involved in pursuing this message. Therefore, as an end-time messenger, we must be prepared to not only speak the invitation once and then move on, but if necessary, to devote much time and energy into convincing them that what we are saying is the truth and important for them to receive and accept.

6. End-time messengers also speak in a way to *create an expectancy* in the hearts of believers for what is presently happening and is coming in the future.

- a. Characterizing in part the result of John's messengerial ministry, the scriptures record the following,

Now while the people were *in a state of expectation* and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ, John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Lk. 3:15-17).

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- b. As forerunners speak in the messengerial role, their messages very often create an expectancy in the hearts of people for a new move of God and put in their heart the desire to pursue Christ in a much deeper way. Therefore, another approach of the messenger is to share the exciting message of God's eternal purpose and all God is doing in this hour of history so as to cast the vision for what is coming in order to wake people up to the times and seasons and to excite them to want to go on with Christ in the forerunner message.

7. End-time messengers also *clarify* misconceptions and lack of understanding related to Christ's second coming and the issues related to the end times and eternity.

- a. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn. 1:29). To us, this seems a very normal way to describe Jesus as He came as the Lamb to take away sins and to die on the cross as the ultimate sacrifice for mankind. However, when John went into the wilderness to announce the coming of Jesus as the Christ, many in the nation were expecting the Messiah to come as a deliverer of Israel from Roman oppression. In other words, they were expecting the Messiah to come as the Lion of the tribe of Judah to defeat Israel's enemies.
- b. It must have been somewhat of a shock to some to hear that He was coming as a sacrificial Lamb and not a mighty warrior to free Israel from Roman oppression. In making this statement, John among other things was clarifying how Jesus was coming and the fact that His coming was different than many expected.
- c. There is a real need today for messengers to clarify a myriad of issues related to Christ's coming, the end times, and the believers' role in eternity—all of which are areas for which believers must be prepared. Issues related to eschatology, the judgment seat of Christ, eternal rewards, and the partnership role the church is to fill throughout eternity must be clarified to those desiring to be made ready. A major role of end-time messengers is to bring knowledge of the purposes of God and to clarify misconceptions and lack of understanding in the lives of believers and the church.

8. End-time messengers will at times *confront* the church in order to awaken them to what God is saying to the church.

- a. John the Baptist uttered these words to the Pharisees and Sadducees as they came out for baptism,

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire (Mt. 3:7-10).

- b. Although the Pharisees and Sadducees came into the wilderness to hear his message, they were hardened in their hearts keeping them from receiving the truth of what God was speaking. In saying that Abraham was their father, they were saying that they were trusting in their old way of relating

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to God more than receiving the new thing being spoken through John. They were in great danger of missing what God was saying to His people. To get their attention, John *confronted* them in their resistance.

- c. In a similar way, Elijah confronted the people of the northern kingdom, “Elijah came near to all the people and said, ‘How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’ But the people did not answer him a word” (1 Kings 18:21).
- d. At times forerunners in the role as end-time messengers will have to confront those to whom they are ministering. When the Holy Spirit speaks through messengers in a confrontive way, it for the purpose of getting the attention and awakening a people to respond. I will use an illustration from our home church to explain. A few years ago, the Lord called our church to two years of preparation for what was coming on the earth. During the two-year period, we taught a lot on building a different type of wineskin in our lives and church. However, in the beginning of the two-year period, we spent a considerable amount of time calling the church to a greater level of commitment. The messages over that span of time were quite confrontive. God was not angry with us but He was calling us to wake up and take what was being taught very seriously. In ministering like this, we were functioning as end-time messengers calling on the church to come out of its routine and complacency so as to hear and respond to what God wanted from us. At the end of that season, we begin to build a new wineskin in our midst around the theme of God’s eternal purpose. It was a hard time in many ways, yet looking back on it, it has resulted in much fruit.
- e. Therefore, at times end-time messengers must confront believers with the fiery jealousy of the Lord who desires His people to love and follow Him with all of their hearts.

9. End-time messengers will also at times *warn* the church of the consequences of not responding to the invitation of the messenger.

- a. An example of a messenger issuing a warning to those to whom he is ministering is found in the ministry of Paul. These words are written about Paul’s ministry in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch,

And as Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath. Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God. The next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming. Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles (Acts 13:42-46).

- b. In Pisidian Antioch, many received Paul’s invitation, but some of the leaders were jealous and began to contradict Paul’s message. Paul warned them of the consequences of rejecting this God sent invitation to receive Christ, the consequence being they would not receive eternal life.
- c. Messengers must at times warn people of what might happen if they refuse what the messenger is saying. I remember in Africa a few years ago, the Holy Spirit moved on me powerfully with a very confrontive word to our mentors in Africa. The confrontation came with a warning of the

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consequences of not responding. It shook us all including me because it was totally unpremeditated. But thankfully, everyone received the word and all went well from that point onward. Of course, we must only issue warnings when we sense God telling us to do so. But there will be times when messengers must be bold speaking the truth in love to warn people of the consequences of not responding to the forerunner message.

- d. As we close this session, let us all be faithful as end-time messengers so we can build what God desires His church to be in this crucial hour of history.

ⁱ *Angelos*, Abbott-Smith Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament. PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2014 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

ⁱⁱ *Reason*, Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006, 2010 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.