

Last Sabbath we began a new sermon series entitled *Tithes and Offerings* with this being *Part 2*. It's quite an interesting subject. It's exciting being able to go back and delve a little more deeply into some of these things rather than just simply covering the basics of God's law regarding tithes and offerings; we've been blessed to focus a little more fully on the how, the why and the way that God has used this subject matter as a means of moulding and fashioning people: and it's really quite interesting, especially going back as we did last Sabbath. We're going to do a little bit of review and build upon some of those things that we covered last Sabbath in some of the accounts and then continue on. There's a lot here, there truly is.

The reason we're going back and reviewing a little bit of this and building upon some of the same examples is because there's much we can learn individually about how God works with us, of how God moulds and fashions us. The more you grow in God's Church through time, and as time continues on...I think especially in the Millennial period and all that we're going to be given, you're going to come to a deeper and deeper appreciation and understanding of the *power* of God Almighty to mould and fashion us as human beings as we choose His way of life and want His way of life and want to be a part of His Family. It's no small thing. It's quite incredible the process we go through in life of being moulded and fashioned into something to become a part of the very Family of God: and it takes *a lot of work* on our part to yield to that process and also on God's part to work with us. And He works with us, individually so, to accomplish those things. It's quite incredible and these examples are really quite incredible.

So the first account we focused on is where tithing is first mentioned in the account of Abram, later Abraham, when he gave a tenth of all his spoils to Melchizedek. And this is again how God chose to personally begin working with Abram to fashion and mould him in a greater way than what He'd been working with him before. Now we're going to go back today and look at some examples where He first came in contact with God in the sense of how God communicated to him, but this was a more personal thing that began at this point in time and He used the form, if you will, of Melchizedek as a high priest to teach him and to teach us, as we found out later on, in our own lives and in our own time.

This was the means, looking at Melchizedek, where God through His manifestation as the high priest of God began to deal more directly with Abram, Abraham. There was no one else to teach Abraham. You should think about this. There was no one else to teach Abraham. Today there is a Church established. We come into God's Church, the Church that God has established to teach, mould and fashion us, to lead, guide and direct us. Jesus Christ came along and began to teach disciples and began to work with people and to build a Church. Before that, so often through time, there were different ones called at specific period of time and worked with by God, but *especially* at Abram's time because we're coming out of the period of the flood. We're coming into several generations later now to a point in time just a few hundred years after the flood and the earth is being repopulated and God is now beginning to work with a major thrust in His plan of what He was going to build upon one individual through time. And it's really quite incredible when you consider God's plan, what He's doing and why He's doing it and how He begins with one man and one woman. Not going back to the beginning, but starting at this point in time after the flood. So again, there was no one to train, to work with, to teach those things. He received some things from Noah; he received some things from his own father in part, but not in very much depth – mostly from Noah. And now was a time when God was going to deal directly with him and to tell him what He was going to build, what He was going to make in and through him.

This is some of what we're coming in on as we go back to **Genesis 12**. Let's see the beginning of a process, keeping in mind that there was no one to teach in a powerful way the next phase of what God was going to do with mankind. Noah didn't know. It wasn't given to Noah to understand those things about God's plan. He had already fulfilled the purpose that God had worked with him in bringing mankind on through a period of time without total destruction and continuing on in the world. But now God begins to reveal *His plan* to an individual and it starts out in quite an incredible way in what God is doing.

Genesis 12:1 – Now the Eternal had said unto Abram, Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, in other words, *leave* everyone, *leave* the family you're around, *leave* the people you've grown up with. Sometimes that's a difficult thing, isn't it? Isn't it amazing what we go through when we have to make choices and decisions; and when God calls so many in His Church... we have to make decisions about family – What are we going to do? Are we going to follow God? Are we going to do what God tells us to do and put Him first? And if necessary, if it comes down to a choice, a confrontation of any kind, we chose God, because if we don't do that then God can't work with us, He can't continue to lead, guide and direct us. So often many of you find this out quite quickly when you are first drawn. You find people who aren't excited about what you're getting into. They do not like; man, human nature does not like God's way. It says, "The carnal mind is enmity with God."¹ That means an enemy to God. It fights against, it resists. And we know *this* just by being called. We see the battle within ourselves let alone within people who fully reject it because they're not being called, or because there's a stumbling block somewhere there and they just *don't want it*, they don't *choose it*, they don't *desire it*...whatever that stumbling block might be.

And so, often people have to make a choice: relatives, personal family, or God. Because if it's something physical, if it's something that lasts a temporary time and that's what we want to hold onto, then God'll let us have that. He'll let us have it; but we can't have Him and we can't have His desire for us to be a part of His Family...at least not now. It may be obviously later on The Great White Throne; and when we're shocked into and brought into a greater reality and able to see things and what we passed up, or what someone had passed up... So again, quite incredible the process we go through.

And here it started with Abram. God told him, leave family, leave everything you're familiar with here, **leave house unto a land that I will show you**. He didn't know where he was going. He'd never seen it before. "Take everything you've done – leave this place and go to where I lead you." And that's what happens to us. That's what God says, "Entrust your life to Me and go where I lead you. I'm going to lead you." And so we have to make a choice. Are we willing to step out on faith and do that? And that's our life, isn't it? We have to make choices, and it's not just one, it's many along the same path over and over again, constantly making the same choice, reaffirming that same choice.

Verse 2 - And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, so this is the first time. Noah didn't know about this. He couldn't pass this along to him. No one else could pass this information along. It wasn't on the earth. God had to give it and so God began to give it in a small portion here. And it doesn't say at this particular point in time how this was communicated fully – whether it was by a vision, whether it was by a dream, words coming into the mind, whatever God did. It just says He told him this, communicated it to him... **And I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing**: you're going to be a blessing to others; you're going to be a blessing to the world around you. What an incredible thing that God would communicate this to a man.

¹ Romans 8:7

And I will bless them who bless you, so it's going to be multiplied; "Those who receive you and are a blessing to you in your life and choose to do so and be so, I'll bless them," **and curse him who curses you**: "...and those who don't, I'll be against them." That's what God is saying. "I'll be for those and bless those who are for you and those who are against you, I'll be against them." Powerful! Incredible! And that's happened throughout time, since that time, for all that God has been accomplishing and doing for a purpose to teach mankind powerful lessons... **and you shall be a blessing and I will bless them who bless you and curse them who curses you, and in you shall all families**, that's pretty powerful, **all families of the earth be blessed**. So in other words, it's not just you, but all families; all people in time are going to be blessed in you.

So Abram departed, as the Eternal had spoken, he just did it. Says, 'he departed.' He did exactly what God told him to do. He made that choice. **And so Abram departed, as the Eternal had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy five years old when he departed out of Haran.** Seventy five years old. Now it was in his mid to late fifties when Noah had died; so there's this period of time here and now God begins to work directly with Abram.

Verse 5 - And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they went. And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanites were there in the land. And the Eternal appeared unto Abram, and said, now it says He appeared to Him...in whatever way, it doesn't say. It doesn't say how this took place, doesn't get very specific about it, just says He did it. So there are many ways that God has appeared to people; in visions, dreams, whatever, we don't know, it doesn't say – but it makes it very clear as we go through the story here about Abram and Abraham that in time He knew God. He knew when He was approaching at one occasion. He knew it was God when there were two angels there with Him. And by this time, whether it was in the mind and God let him know, I don't know, we don't know; but he knew who He was. **And the Eternal appeared unto Abram and said, Unto your seed will I give this land: and he built an altar unto the Eternal, who had appeared unto him.** So he built an altar here because it was momentous in time, it was momentous in something that had happened in his life and something to be remembered. So again here, it talks about him **building an altar unto the Eternal**.

So these stories are kind of difficult because it doesn't give a whole lot. You know, when you go through some of Genesis here...here we are in chapter 12 and look at how much time we've already gone through. And so there really isn't a whole lot in some of these accounts about what took place in specifics. And people have tried to fill in various blanks and so forth but there's just a lot that I desire to know later on. I want to hear more of the story.

So later Abram went down into Egypt because of a drought; and later on it talks about him leaving that particular region and so forth, talks about an encounter with the Pharaoh there at that particular time, the leader of Egypt and so forth. And then later on we pick up the story here.

I want to pick it up now in **Genesis 13:1 -And Abram went up out of Egypt**, they had gone down there because of the drought and so forth; **he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him**, so they started moving northward out of the south, from Egypt northward. **And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.** So again here, talking about the wealth he had accumulated through time here. God had blessed him mightily and it says... **And he went on his journeys from the south**, in other words **Tithes and Offerings – Pt. 2**

travelling north, **even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ayahee**; so again here, it's a familiar area here that they'd left, they'd gone down into Egypt, they came back into this region here; **Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Eternal**. So now he's been gone for a time; he comes back to the same spot where this altar had been built and now he calls upon God. He desires to hear from Him. We do, we call upon God. What do I do now? Where do we go? What am I supposed to accomplish?

He goes on to say, just jumping down... **[verse 12] - Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinners before the Eternal. And the Eternal said unto Abram, after that Lot had separated from him**, because he went to a particular area to live and went into the region of the area of Sodom and so forth to live. Abraham dwelt, lived in another region. It says, so God spoke to him then after this separation took place. He says, **now Lift up your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, and southward, eastward, and westward: For all the land which you see, to you will I give it**, and so He's just beginning to let him see a little bit of what's going to take place; but enough to be exciting, enough to stir him up to think this was all going to be mine, my family, those who come from me, that everything that I can see for as far as I can see, everything that I tread upon God's going to give... So that's what God's telling him.

And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth: you can't measure that and that's what it goes on and talks about... **so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered**. Incredible! Beyond understanding! And that's basically what it amounts to – beyond understanding. What God has planned for us is beyond understanding. What God has planned for us to be in His Family is beyond understanding. We start a journey in faith, we believe what God says, we believe where He's leading us and we desire that, we want to be a part of that. And so I am amazed when you go back and you see how God worked with them and how little he was really given about God's overall plan. But he chose it and everyone since that time – God has progressively given more, progressive revelation through time over the centuries.

And so as time went along God gave a little bit more...a little bit more to Isaac, and Jacob, and then to Israel, the nation of Israel and then the kings, and king David and God just gave more and more and more – *progressive* through time adding more to the story, adding far more greatness if you will to what God had planned for us. And it just continued on and on and on through the time of Christ, through the time of the disciples all the way up to Mr. Armstrong and now. And God just continues to give more and more. And now we're getting ready to step across into some of the greatest part of God's plan! There are no words to describe it, it's so awesome, it's so incredible! And yet that's the place where we are in time. We're blessed to live in that time and I'd far rather have a point in time where we have this kind of progressive revelation that everything in the past we can look back upon now and be so moved by it and be able to understand where we are toward the latter end, getting close to the *fall harvest* now. We're almost through the spring harvest, the early harvest, the Pentecost harvest. As soon as the resurrection takes place here when Jesus Christ returns we'll be there. That will be accomplished, that will be fulfilled; the wave-loaves...and God's going to accept them; 144,000 to be in His Family. And then greater things are behind that and we all get to share in that and be a part of that in an awesome way.

And so again here, going back to Abram...just a little bit in the very beginning, 'as far as your eye can see'; but also adding more to that – **as the dust of the earth, if a man can count it so will your seed be numbered.**

Verse 17 - Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it to you. "Wherever you walk, this is yours." **Then Abram removed his tent, and went and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and he built there an altar unto the Eternal.** So again, talking about an altar that he built on this occasion as well.

Then we come to the account that we read last Sabbath in chapter 14 of the kings who fought with that particular region; and you remember the account of Abram then going after them of those who'd been defeated; went to bring back their possessions, went to bring back even more than just their possessions, but other possessions as well that they had acquired as a part of this to take back with them as they conquered those kings and surely then obviously all the people that had been taken with them in order to rescue them. And it was on that return then that Melchizedek came out and had the food prepared and so forth and was going to meet with Abram to work with him a little more closely, to begin to teach him a little more, to mould and fashion him – just adding to what He was doing in his life, to work more directly with him, to teach Abraham very powerfully so.

And I think of the process we go through and we'll get to more of that as we go along here. But again, let's just pick up a few things here and remind ourselves of what was said at that time. **Genesis 14:18 - And Melchizedek King of Salem/King of Peace brought out bread and wine: He was the priest, God Most High.** As it is in Hebrew. **And He blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abraham of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth:** just to make a point here. There's a lot of the story that we don't have here, but God put in here what we need to see, what we need to grasp in the beginning of our calling, the attitude of mind we need to have toward God. *Everything is God's! EVERYTHING BELONGS TO GOD ALMIGHTY! That's the attitude of mind; because we must have great respect then and AWE of our God, because MAN DOESN'T as a whole, the world doesn't care, the world doesn't have that kind of respect.* We're going to see what the world is like in a moment here... and I referred to it last Sabbath. We're going to look a little more closely this week at it. But we need to have an attitude of mind that everything belongs to God. You know, there are things that come along, or things we're going through right now and my wife and I talk about this on occasion and whatever that God has given to us, we remind ourselves: It is God's! And so if the world receives part of it for whatever purpose and reason, God has a purpose, it's *all God's*, God is in control. And so that's the way life is and we are yielding ourselves, we have chosen to give ourselves to God, we have chosen with all of our being, with all of our might to have that kind of a spirit and that kind of a mind to honour God, because everything is His and He wants to share what He has with us. We understand that. God's way is one of giving and He wants to share it with us and we desire that, we want to be a part of that and share that with Him and share it with those that God brings along. An attitude of spirit... 'God is possessor of heaven and earth'. It isn't ours. We don't *deserve it!* And yet that's the way man lives in the world today.

I *hate* that spirit that's almost of a demanding spirit...that you *owe* this to me! It's *owed* to me! *What's owed to us? What is owed to us in life?* It's our choice to make in life, how we live life, but that attitude and spirit is a *rotten* spirit! And yet man is filled with it and has been. It's just the nature of man to become as though God *owes* us various things, or someone else owes us something, or the *government* owes us something. Here we have an oil spill... *THE GOVERNMENT OWES IT TO US TO GET THIS CLEANED UP...TO SOLVE ALL OF OUR PROBLEMS!* We don't like *one man* at one particular time in office because *he didn't solve all of our problems*, so the next four years we'll elect another man to solve our

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problems. He doesn't solve them and people get disillusioned, they go the other way... "Let's go over here... let's let THEM SOLVE ALL OUR PROBLEMS because we want what we want...and don't we pay our taxes for that? And you think of the ugliness of human nature, expecting, demanding. And yet, how dumb can we be? They can't solve our problems! Surprise, surprise!

Saw something on one of these goofy... it was Comedy Central (I know some people don't like it) and I don't really like it that much, but on occasion when I'm flipping through the dial I'll take a look at something and they went back through and showed all these presidents this past week on the Daily Show. He jabs at government and human nature; and he went back through some of the promises different presidents have made... they went all the way back to Nixon; everybody that talked about how "we're going to quit being dependant on foreign oil" by a certain date. I don't know if any of you saw that. But anyway, they went through and they gave all these years starting with Nixon and what he said and they went through all these presidents...and at the end the conclusion was, basically... "Are we just stupid? Don't we see? Don't we know?" And that's really the way we are. It's like we jump from one President to another and we hear these promises and we think we're going to get it. It's a shame how man is and what we expect.

...**possessor of heaven and earth.** God is. And we either have awe and respect of that and that's a part of our understanding, or it's not. Everything that we have we have because of God's mercy and God's grace. *We sure don't deserve it.* And the more we learn and the more we understand how we have been at enmity with God, enemies of God as it makes very clear in the book of Romans. God gave it to Paul to spell out very powerfully so. We, all human beings until they're called...and then you still have that human nature in you, are simply enemies to God. Don't choose God. Don't want God. Human nature doesn't want God. "It's not subject to the law of God and neither indeed can be."² Why? 'Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.'³ That's what rules our life as human beings; and then God calls us and we begin to bring that into control, slowly but surely, but not fully: Never fully. *You cannot fully control* 'lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.' You can't do it. You don't have the ability to do it. You don't have the spirit, the mind to do it. You're a human being; you have human nature, and you'll have those battles in you. That's why Paul said, "there's a war going on in me." Better believe it! 25 years as an apostle and he said, "Oh wretched man that I am..."⁴ That should dumbfound you to understand what he said.

Verse 20 - And blessed be God Most High, that should be our attitude. He's showing Abraham what a person's attitude should be. This is how we should think; this is what you should see. This is what Melchizedek is telling him. This is the mind you should have toward God Almighty. Is it your mind? It was Abraham's mind; God already knew that but God knew He could mould and fashion him. He was already working with him, had been working with him for a while. Look at all he did and he came back to the altar and he called upon God and his attitude, his desire, his heart was toward God because God was working with Him. God had a plan and purpose. Everything wasn't just hinging here on chance. *God knew Abram.* He knew him *long* before, *long* before he ever was asked to offer up his son. God knew him long before that. God *knew* how to mould and fashion him to bring him to that day to where it would be because of *his* choices that God would acknowledge, "Now I know you." It wasn't because God didn't know him. God had moulded and fashioned him and brought him to that day. You leave your life in God's hands; He will mould and fashion you. He will make you what you can become, the

² Romans 8:7

³ I John 2:16

⁴ Romans 7:24

potential that's there to become a part of His Family. It's an awesome thing to understand how God works with us and moulds and fashions us as long as you yield yourself to Him and have this kind of spirit and this kind of a mind.

And blessed be the God Most High, otherwise what we do in life and what people have done and what I've seen through the history of God's Church is that people just have these battles and this fighting against God and don't fully yield and submit to God! They just keep going back and forth in some of these battles because some of these things have never been fully addressed in life; and so they just war in their minds. Not a good war... they just let their human nature battle and allow them to be under the sway of it.

And blessed be God Most High who has delivered your enemies into your hand. Was made very clear here again, "God did this for you Abram." And Abram believed it. This was his attitude. He was told this and he believed it. "Yeah, I didn't do it." He fought the battle... There are things here that just aren't said that should be understood, that should be very clear because of what we've gone through in our lives. Because of what I've gone through in my life – I know exactly what took place here. There are certain things when he went into that battle that he knew that he wasn't able to do. Isn't that what you learn as time goes on here? You realize there are things that come your way, that happen in your life, that you know that you do not have the ability to do – it's not out of you; but God has intervened, God has given you favour, God has done things in your life to give you what you have to help you to see. If it's just the truth alone... you come to understand that the only reason you have this in your mind is because *you know*, or hopefully we know that we didn't figure it out on our own, that we didn't come to these decisions and conclusions because of how intellectual we are, or how good we are with the 'Strong's Concordance' or technology on a computer today where we have every Bible in the world at our fingertips. We don't figure it out. God has to give it to us. Same thing in battles and so forth. God gives us favour and God helps us; and the more we come to see that and understand that as you yield yourself to God and God receives the honour, the glory; you give God the glory, and the honour, and the thanks – awesome things happen in your mind and your mind is being moulded and fashioned. It's an incredible thing.

And blessed be God Most High who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he, this was his response; Abram **gave a tenth of all**. "I am thankful!" That's what it's saying... "I am thankful! I am grateful and I give to You that which is *all You desire*....to know my heart, to know my desire that I want Your way. I want to obey You. I want to yield to You, and I know what is Yours. This is Yours." It was a matter of an understanding here. Everything is God's and He doesn't require everything of us – only a small portion to reflect our understanding of who He is. It's all His, but how much He's given to us, how much He's blessed us. It's an incredible thing.

And again, notice how quickly Abram responded...**verse 22 - And Abram said to the king of Sodom**, so this was a particular response here; **I have lifted up my hand to the Eternal**, I have, in essence, promised to God. Every one of us did. The *moment* we came to baptism, "I am Yours to do with as you will, because my life is not good in my hands, but it's good in Your hands." That's what we're telling God. "You have the power, the ability to mould and fashion me. I don't have the ability to know where to go and how to live and what to do with my life; but you do. My life is Yours." And we *want* God to be involved in it then, to lead, guide and direct us, to tell us where to go, when to turn left, when to turn right, what to do and how to do it because we come to that in our life where we know God knows what is best. He created us, He made us for a purpose and He knows what fulfills our life. And if we yield ourselves to it we'll benefit, we'll profit. Everything is God's! And anything that's not in agreement with **Tithes and Offerings – Pt. 2**

that will come to an end. We come to believe that. It'll come to an end. So we have choices to make and God just gives us choices then along the way.

And so he said, **I have lifted up my hand to the Eternal, the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth**. He *repeated* what Melchizedek said because he believed it. It was in his being and in his mind. It shows his attitude and his spirit. It's an awesome thing. And that's how we are as time goes...God's mind, the way God is, God's purpose becomes more a part of our mind and our thinking. That's the blessing of life. What an incredible blessing of life.

Later in the sermon we looked at the example of Jacob who became Israel and the unique occasion where tithing was mentioned, again, as God worked with him to mould and fashion him. Incredible story. Isaac had told Jacob to go and take a wife of the daughters of Laban. Let's go back and read some of this. Notice what Isaac told him at this point. This is Isaac passing this along to his son now in **Genesis 28:3 - And God Almighty will bless you**, "you do what I'm telling you that comes from God and God will bless you." He listened. What an incredible thing. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Joseph, family... and how God can work with us in our lives, how God chooses and desires to work with us. It's an exciting thing, it's a beautiful thing – it truly is if we'll yield ourselves to that process.

And God Almighty... so you think of even the children and things God moulded and fashioned; because there was a purpose He was working out all the way through this entire process. **And God Almighty will bless you and make you fruitful, to multiply you, so that you may become a multitude of people**; so it's just adding to and making this bigger and bigger as we go along here from one generation to another; the story of what God is going to do into time. **And give unto you the blessing of Abraham, and to your seed with you**; so he was aware of that, he'd been told these things of what had been told, what Abraham was given by God and this communication, and Isaac and what was said and things that had been done and God at different occasions here then adding to the story and giving more. And that's what's about to happen again here – to add a little bit more, to make it a little bit stronger and to carry on into history into time. *Awesome* story if you understand what took place back then.

...and give you the blessing of Abraham and to your seed with you; that you may inherit the land wherein you are a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham. So this meant a lot to him. "God said that we're going to receive this, the family line; this is a part of what's going to come through us from Abraham, through now my father Isaac, and this is what God is telling me." And so what an incredible thing to be given to him and his father telling him this. And then the dream...because now God tells him *exactly* what his father told him and had been telling him for years. And now God begins to work with him more directly and tells him in an incredible dream; and not just in an incredible dream, but something that still lasts to this day that happened on that spot at that time! *Awesome* story! You can't write stories like this and things that have happened through time.

So let's read what Jacob did next. **Genesis 28:16 - And Jacob woke from his sleep**, so we know the occasion here; because he was obeying his father, he was going to meet his wife, to do what God had given to Abram, Isaac and now Isaac was telling his son to do and now he was out doing it; **Surely the Eternal**, so he was moved because of this dream. **Surely the Eternal is in this place; and I wasn't even aware of it. And he was afraid, and said, How fearful/awesome is this place!** He was moved in a great way by what had just happened to him. It was so real in what he saw and what took place in his mind in this dream. **This can be none other than the house of God, and the gateway of heaven**. It's hard for us to read something like this and understand how moved he was by this experience it was so real to him. Because not only had he been told these things in times past, but now something was happening to

where he saw something in such a great way that he knew this was of God. God was talking to him now and he was moved by that; not just his physical father...but more was being added to it in a very powerful way. God was now dealing directly with him and he felt that and believed that and knew that.

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he put for his pillow, and set it up as a pillar, and poured oil upon it. He set it apart by anointing it. Who would think to do that? Anoint a stone, pour oil on it. Where did this all come from? Well, there are a lot of the story of things that we don't know about. Understanding here there's something about setting apart, something that they had learned, something... we don't know, it doesn't say. But he understood something here and he did it. If nothing else than the very fact that God had inspired him to do so, communicating and moving him to do this; because he was so moved by the occasion. We don't know, it doesn't say; knowing full well, indeed he was inspired by God's spirit to do these things because this stone wasn't an accident.

What was intended for this stone and to happen with this stone was not an accident. God doesn't just do things by accident. It wasn't like, "Oh, he slept... this is where I gave him this vision. I've got an idea! Let's have those who come out of them in time, those who are going to be rulers to be coronated on top of this stone...and let them carry it for the rest of time here until My Son who's going to be a Melchizedek, who's going to fulfill the role of High Priest comes." No, God planned these things, meticulously so.

We don't grasp things like that. The world doesn't grasp things like that. It's easier for them to believe what's outside this hotel we're staying at right now, in the back... this great big thing holding up the the world – there's this Atlas. And you think people would rather believe in something that dumb. Just like God said through Paul, "would rather worship the creation than the creator..."⁵ You think, "How dumb! How dumb we can be as human beings." To want to make God into something we can 'deal' with. "I can deal with that. I can't believe everything about God, that everything out here exists because of God..." and that's one of the things that starts telling us. For us... we believe that God created everything. We believe He's the creator of all things; that's what it says in Hebrews. We believe it! But the world can't. They'd rather make Gods out of anything imaginable besides that which is true. Animals... the things that Pharaohs in Egypt worshipped; bugs, frogs. Give me a break! You'd rather bow down to things of that nature and make things of animals and so forth... how dumb! It's such insanity! But anyway... we as humans do it. It's hard to understand that which is not sound and the reality is you can't.

So again, he was moved, he poured oil on it – God had a great purpose. He had a great purpose for what was going to be accomplished through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He had a great purpose for what He revealed to Him in this dream and He had a purpose for a rock to be anointed, to be set apart in a very special way. God moved him to anoint the rock! When's the last time you thought about anointing a rock? Don't do it please!

And he called the name of the place Bethel: house, or dwelling place of God; **but the name of the place at first was known as Luz,** the almond tree. That's the area. **And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and clothing to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Eternal be my God: And this stone, which I have set as a pillar, shall be God's house:** in other words, representation, reminder of that which had taken place; **and of all that He shall give me I will surely give a tithe/a tenth unto You.**

⁵ Romans 1:25

He understood. Some of the story here... we don't fully understand all that was told to Abraham, what was passed on to Isaac. They understood – they got it! God is the possessor of all and you give a tithe back, you give a tenth because you believe, because you're thankful, because you appreciate what God is giving to you and what God offers to you.

We're going to go on past this story now, these two stories here of what we've just gone through and reviewed a little bit here, because they are, as a whole, far more important and momentous than what we can possibly grasp. And the more that is given to you, even from last Sabbath to this Sabbath, you can build upon through time; because there's a lot of power here in what God gave in these stories about an attitude of mind that we're to have toward God Almighty that so often *people just don't get* in this world. Sometimes even within the Church, we have not really grasped the magnitude of how God loves us, desires to mould and fashion us, to work with us, meticulously, minutely so in our lives, to give us more and more and more. One scripture speaks of; 'God desires to give us more so we can give away more'⁶ ...having to do with grace and the subject matter of grace. He gives us more so that we can give away more and if we understand that, it means the more that we can receive from Him in that respect, and it works in us, then it comes back – we give, we have that live within us toward others so that we can give away more. If we understand how God's working with us then it works through us to the benefit of others and that's what it's all about – so that all the families of the earth can be blessed. It has to live through us. We can't just be on the receiving end; and yet sometimes that's how people live their lives...waiting for God to give them what they feel they deserve or should have, that things are God's fault. I'm amazed sometimes when I hear that. "Why is God doing this to me?" Don't ever do that! Because that's a good time to look in the mirror and say, "Why am I doing this to myself? How did I get into this position? What am I not doing that I should be doing differently?" Because I'll tell you, there's something wrong in our thinking.

So again, the story of how God began to work with Abraham, and then this story about Jacob whose name was later changed to Israel – are powerful, truly powerful, as both are tied to their response of a *faithful* and a *loyal* response to their God. Truly is... Awesome! Faithful and a loyal response to their God by stating their commitment to give back to God that which is God's; not all...a small portion. It reflects the kind of spirit with which God can work and mould and fashion those who are committed to His purpose and His calling. And if we're not... *He can't work with us!* ...and we do nothing but fight and resist. And I've seen people do that. I've seen people do that throughout their lives – fight and resist God every step of the way. And the reality is *give your life to God; it's God's*. Choose to do that! Don't fight and resist! He will work with you, He will mould and fashion you. It doesn't mean it's going to be a picnic, but this life is not about a picnic; it's about getting through this life and choosing something that's *so awesome* and so great...and seeing a city whose builder and maker is God, and understanding what we have into eternity and not just something that's temporary. We're blessed to choose something so much greater, so much more awesome and powerful. But sometimes that's so hard to get through our seemingly thick skulls as human beings.

Let's turn over to **Luke 20**. Faithful tithing and giving of offerings to God reflects the kind of spirit one has to *have* if we truly see God, in order to truly see God – truly! Last Sabbath I referred to this parable and I want to go through it today because the purpose of giving this parable by Christ was to give, in a great way obviously, the story about Him and about His relationship with mankind and Him being the High Priest and the intercessor for mankind because he was the Son of God. But there is more in this story here and that's what's incredible about it in the subject matter here today.

⁶ II Corinthians 9:11

Luke 20:9 - He began to speak, speaking of Jesus Christ, **to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard**, in other words, God gave this world for man to live upon. In the very beginning He placed two people in a beautiful world, He put them in a beautiful garden; they didn't have to do anything. He gave everything to them – Adam and Eve. And it didn't take long and they were walking through the darker part of it trying to hide from God. It's like somehow "He's not going to see us, we're doing wrong." The human mind. And it was passed down and people have been the same ever since. And so God, it says, **here is a certain Man who planted a vineyard and let it forth/leased it out**, leased out a field, leased out a property, leased out a farm, leased out a vineyard – whatever here; **to husbandmen**, people who would work the soil, work the land, work with the vineyard, whatever... to grow and produce; **and went into a far country for a long time**. That's what God has done with mankind. Gave us certain things through time, told man to do certain things at certain times and so He's kept hands off as a whole except for what He's working with directly to bring out of all this because of a plan He's accomplishing and doing in a most perfect way; *the perfect way*.

Verse 10 - And the season, so it's going on here telling about the story, **And at the season/harvest season**, the time for reaping the increase of the land. It's good to notice that and what's being said here; at the time of the increase of the land: that should mean something to us. We have increase in our lives and what God says we're to do when we have increase in our lives from everything He's given to us... There is a time to reap from that increase and here is an occasion in this example. And so again here, harvest time. So much of the Old Testament stuff is built around the thing about harvest until we come into modern times and now we live in a different age. We live in a time when Mr. Armstrong came on the scene and the world began to change *rapidly*; things of transportation, things of modern technology that man began to go through. The first 5,800 years wasn't like that; a very agrarian world if you will, in comparison. And as time went along and technology came along things began to change. But the same principles are there. The same things are still there regardless of the kind of business, the kind of work that people do in life, the kind of productivity that's there, the ability to reap from the earth what God has given to sustain life, to be a blessing in life.

It says, **at that season**, speaking of the time of harvest, **He sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give Him of the fruit of the vineyard**: So He didn't go, He sent a servant; and through time God has sent different ones to communicate His will to mankind, especially the prophets. **He sent a servant to the husbandmen that they should give Him of the fruit of the vineyard**; in other words, His portion of the lease of the land. That's all! And isn't that what should be given? If someone has a property and they own it and they lease it out to someone... I think of Kansas where I grew up. People could go in, lease out a certain property or whatever, and they expect a certain portion – whatever the agreement was for... maybe it was hay, maybe it's so much wheat – whatever it is that you do; but maybe it's a certain percentage sometimes. What's expected?! It wasn't the individual who leases the land; it's not his property; so what's his expectation? What should his expectation be? Well, fairly, and justly so, it should be to use the land well, to make the most of it because what you're going to get out of it, the more you make out of it, the more work you put into it, the more you can receive out of it – the better off you're going to be, obviously. The more that can be produced you're going to be better off and so you give a certain percentage to the landlord, the one who leased it out to you. That's a great thing! Give you time to build up and grow with that. And this is the example of the parable here.

So He sent His servant to the husbandman that he should give of the fruit of the vineyard; in other words His portion from the lease of the land; **but the husbandmen beat him**, Whew! What incredible attitude! And this is the attitude of man toward God. They beat him! What would happen in today's world if that happened? You think he wouldn't be called upon and be dealt with, or those who did that

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have to pay a price for what they did? And the reality is – we all pay a price. Human beings pay a price for not obeying God; it's just delayed because of God's plan, for a time. So they think they're getting by with it and they continue on their merry way.

So here's a story; never understanding the mercy, the grace, the love of God - they *just don't get it*. **...but the husbandman beat him and sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. And again a third: and they wounded him and cast him out.** Just getting worse and worse as it went along here. **Then the Lord of the vineyard said, What shall I do? I will send My beloved Son: maybe they will reverence Him,** in other words, show Him respect, **when they see Him.** Someone who is more directly a representative here; My own Son...surely they'll have a different attitude. **But when the husbandmen saw Him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the Heir:** in other words, He's going to inherit the land; and if they take care of Him, do Him in, then maybe they can just take the land for themselves. **This is the Heir, come, let's kill Him, so that the inheritance is ours.** What an incredible attitude. You think of the world and the way man is...but this is the attitude of man. And so it is in a case like this. If we take it, we won't have to be paying him. **Let's take it for ourselves...** *always* been that way through time. Never give to God what is God's, never acknowledge God for who God is...that God's created us, God made us, there's a purpose for why we're on this earth and we should desire to know what that purpose is and how we can yield ourselves to it. Otherwise what happens to us in the end? But we don't even believe that.

Verse 15 - So they cast Him out of the vineyard, and killed Him. Therefore, What shall the Lord of the vineyard do unto them? In time it comes. Everybody has to pay. Everyone has to pay for their own choices in life, their own choices of disobedience to God. Some have known more directly through time what God requires, what God says, but always the attitude of mind has been to resist and to fight against Him.

Verse 16 - He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. It's a choice. And now this has, again, some specific aim at it; but the story shouldn't be lost in other things that are being said here about the vineyard and about what is God's and what God does require back: that which is just, that which is right, that which is fair, that which teaches us which we can learn from so that we can have a right spirit and a right attitude of respect and certain qualities that are good and right in dealing with others in the world around us. And surely we would be honest in this? And yet we're not.

And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. And He beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The Stone which the builders rejected, the same has become the head of the corner? So again, it was mainly about, primarily about the Son; it was about Jesus Christ, about that which God is building upon and so forth. **Whosoever shall fall upon the Stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him in powder.** So the reality is when it's all said and done nobody gets by with anything. Everyone has to answer in their time – they truly do. And it went on to say; **And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on Him;** what an incredible story! You know when we read that earlier in the series we went through about Christ and the things that led up to, finally, His dying? You shake your head at something like this. The very thing He just told them was the very thing they were about to fulfill. They wanted to kill Him. They fulfilled the parable! ...in its greatest form. But so have people throughout time; and sadly people in *God's Church* have done this very same thing! People have had the opportunity of everything given to them...and I think, "What has been given to us that is so much greater than what was ever given to physical Israel!" I think of spiritual

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Israel, what we have, the knowledge, the insight, the understanding, the ability to grow in character...the kind of character that one should have in a respect and an awe to what God has given to us. But sometimes we get so wrapped up in our own physical world and our own physical battles and we let them control us and we don't yield ourselves to God like we should so therefore God can't accomplish in us, mould and fashion in us what He desires to do because we resist and we fight!

I think of an individual not too long ago that I talked to. After reasoning with him about many things...came down to and asked him, "How can you rob God?" ...paraphrasing it. "Do you not understand you're robbing God? No, you don't work...and so you go to college/university, and you go through this process of life. Understandable. Fine. But at your stage of growth and your time, to not give fifty cents to God on a High Day? ...a quarter? I don't care what it is... whatever that amount is... Can we not obey God in the smallest of form? Can you not save up *that* much? Can you not save aside at least *that much and obey God?* So how can you serve God?"

Blows my mind to think someone's been around for years and will not obey God to do what God says on every High Day – "bring before Me an offering."⁷ Not just a tithe here... because if you're not working that's understandable. You're not required to do something you don't have. But anybody, *anybody* can come up with that. And then I told him, "You have a TV in here that's bigger than mine. You have a stereo system in here. You have certain things in here that I know you could sell to obey God. Wouldn't that be better to do that?" ...in essence... "Sell one item, one small item here and have enough to give Holy Day offerings, even if it's just fifty cents... so be it, at least you're giving to God and doing what God says you should do."

Story comes back later on, because he chose not to ever come back again, that I told him to sell his house and give it to the Church. He kind of missed the point of what I told him, didn't he? Sad how far people will go in lying sometimes to distort the things in order to justify self. Human nature is not a pretty thing; it's ugly. And we are very foolish if we don't yield ourselves 100% to God. It's not about the money! It's about our relationship toward God. Everything is God's! And if we don't grasp the weightier matters of it all, if we don't grasp what it's all about then we miss the mark. Those who have wrong spirits and wrong attitudes...they think it's about the money.

There are people who like to find fault with, did find fault with Mr. Armstrong if he ever mentioned anything about money; with me if I ever mention anything about.... "Oh, they're trying to build up their coffers again..." And what is it about? ...yeah, making fun of the prophet, "It's about the profit." P-R-O-F-I-T... "...what they can get out of it." Human nature's really ugly. People have their own fun with those things but they don't know what they're doing toward God; they don't understand their spirit and their attitude and what they're saying because they *just don't GET IT! They don't have an AWE and a RESPECT and a LOVE toward God! They're FIGHTING against God!* And they don't want to receive what God has to give to them. Think, "Why? Why fight against the One who made you? Why fight against the One who desires to give you everything? ...the universe...eternal life in His Family! Incredible; the human mind!

Let's go over to **Leviticus 27**. We're going to look at where God began to instruct the Israelites about tithing and look at some scriptures here and build upon these things and continually build upon this particular story here of things that God wants us to see and wants us to understand. He loves us. He desires to have a relationship with us, but it has to be based on right principles and choices that we have

⁷ Deuteronomy 16:16

to make and whether we really see God or strive to see God with *awe and respect* and to *love* what He's placing before us and to *acknowledge* that indeed it's all His. How blessed are we? And I think about us in the Church, how much God has given us in understanding. To grasp where we are in time? To grasp what's getting ready to take place?

Leviticus 27:30 – we're going to look at where God began to instruct the Israelites about tithing and look at some scriptures here and build upon these things and continually build upon this particular story here of things God wants us to see and wants us to understand. He loves us. He desires to have a relationship with us, but it has to be based upon right principles and choices that we have to make and whether we really see God or strive to see God with awe and respect and to love what He's placing before us; and to acknowledge indeed, it's all His! How blessed are we? And I think about us in the Church, what God has given us in understanding, to grasp where we are in time? To grasp what is getting ready to take place? **Leviticus 27:30 - And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Eternal:** It's all God's; it's a lot more than that isn't it? But see, this is all that God requires that be given back to Him directly. ...**it is holy to the Eternal.** It's set apart for holy use and purpose. There is a tithe that God has in His plan to set apart for holy use and purpose; that's what we're being told. For the Israelites, it was for the Levitical system. For the Israelites it was for that which God was going to use a system in order to teach them and to give to them certain understanding; not for a calling to be in the 1st resurrection, but to receive a better life, to receive ways of life, to receive understanding about certain principles and stuff that benefit and are a blessing to life. And then for the Church, it's always been, for us, for those whom God will call to feed, to nurture us, to take care of us, to do His work, to be able to reach out to others whom God is calling and so forth. It's all God's. Incredible!

It goes on to say; **And if a man wants to redeem at all any of his tithes, he shall add one fifth to it.** So again, a unique process here, a system of something that, in this particular case it's an agrarian society; there's certain quality maybe of seed or whatever it might be, or of animals, or of various other things that they might want to keep back in order to use because of an exceptionally... Let's take a crop for instance; there's an exceptionally good year and so they want to be able to keep this back to be able to plant, or whatever it might be, to be used for a special purpose and God says, "Fine...add a fifth to that, the cost of whatever that is. This is what you should pay in order to receive this which is set apart for holy use and purpose, and you can have that; but you must pay this extra portion." And so it's something they lived by, something they understood as a principle here.

And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy, in other words set apart for holy use. So in this particular case here, if it be the matter of measuring, here in this case of sheep, of lambs...every tenth one is God's. So it was a matter that they put out a rod and people came through, or different ones came through and they helped to herd them through – every tenth one was pushed aside, this is God's. This is how they were to do it. Notice what else it says here to teach them something. **Every tenth one shall be holy to the Eternal. He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he exchange it: and if he exchange it at all, then both it and the one exchanged shall be holy.** You don't search out what you want. "Oh, I wanted to keep that one." The tenth one in this particular case here. "This one here we're going to slip a bad..." It's like you have a hundred lambs out here – let's go pick out 10 that aren't doing too good, take it to God. Human nature. Isn't that amazing how human beings are though? Incredible here...just human nature, it just shows things about human nature.

So God was telling them there are certain things that you watch out for, that you do here, and so in this particular case here it talks about; **verse 34 – These are the commandments which the Eternal commanded Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai.** There was a system here that we don't fully understand today that they lived by, that they did, that they were given understanding of at that particular time of how to incorporate it into their lives and some of those things we didn't understand, obviously were given to Moses and God... they were taught. They were taught how to do it. We're just given a bit of an outline. That's all we're given, as a whole of some of those things that took place then that were to be passed down through time.

Let's go over to **Malachi 3** to notice that God made it very clear that there were blessings for tithing and curses or punishment for failure to do so, for disobedience. And those things should carry through in our life. If we can't understand it about something so simple, so basic, so well mapped out that is so involved in our life; because look... this is what our sustenance is all about in life, isn't it? And this is why people make the decisions they do so often. I've known of many people whose minds have been open that I've visited with throughout the years, throughout times past and their minds were open, very clearly so, to understand and comprehend the truth; but they couldn't deal with this subject, couldn't do it and wouldn't continue on because something else was more valuable to them than God and God's way of life, and God's truth. That's a choice.

Malachi 3:1 - Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight: Prophecies here in the book of Malachi about what was going to take place in time here and what things build up to through time. **...behold, He shall come, says the Eternal of hosts.** And so looking forward to the time that again here even Jesus Christ comes to this earth and those things that are going to be accomplished in time. **But who may abide the day of His coming? ...and who shall stand when He appears?** And that's a big question. That's what the second book was all about in many parts, especially for the scattered nations of Israel where people are in the countries that God has given at this end-time that have been prosperous, that have been a blessing to the earth in so many ways through time, even looking at WWII and what took place; one country that was a part of Israel began to be on the downturn at that particular time. It changed; the currency in the world was no longer based upon the pound. It began to wane and the dollar began to have its emergence because God intended that there was going to be another country arise at the very end; and that would be Manasseh and the things God promised through Manasseh and this nation and all the blessings then of all of us, peoples of the earth who live here, that are able to be blessed because of what God gave in this particular part of the world! Awesome! And we're blessed mightily! You go to other parts of the world and they don't have what we have here; and we think we did it ourselves. We think we created this, we brought this about. No we didn't! Our government didn't! God did! God gave it to us – it's that *same attitude* that God wants us to grasp and comprehend. And if He has a plan and purpose it all comes from God.

Going on with the story here...**Who may abide the day of His coming? ...and who shall stand when He appears? ...for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers soap:** so it begins with His coming, but it doesn't stop there. We understand there is more to this process that goes through a thousand years, especially toward the end of a thousand years and then in the last hundred years. It's going to be an ongoing process, it's not a onetime event; but the beginning of things as they are sped up in the world and as He comes they are sped up in a great way. A lot of the Bible talks about a time of judgement, it's about this time that's coming on the earth after 6,000 years, because God's going to take it all away from man; no longer going to be in the hands of man to govern himself. It's going to be in God's hands.

The Government of God is going to be placed on the earth. It's exciting, inspiring to understand what's getting ready to take place.

And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: He will sit there in government for 1,100 years to accomplish the greater phase of God's plan. He's been very busy for 2,000 years, but that's all about to be stepped up mightily so as far as what's going to be accomplished; **and He shall purify the sons of Levi**, again, it's not about *Levi*. It's not about a *tribe*, a Levitical system; it's greater than that! It's far greater than that! It's about what is going to be given to all human beings! ...that all have an opportunity to be purified, to become a part of something that's holy: God's Family. ...**and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Eternal an offering in righteousness.** *Everyone* in time has that opportunity; your life. The offering that God desires. What does He desire? Not just your life; it isn't your life, it isn't for the sake of conformity, it isn't for the sake of because you're pressured into something and you feel like, "What other choice..." and you begrudgingly choose it. It's because you want it! God wants what's inside – the heart, the mind, the love! Because we respond out of love to what He's offering to us; and so we respond to offer up an offering to God in righteousness, and the only way we can do that is to respond to God's calling so that we change, so that our thinking changes, so that we come into oneness and unity and agreement with God because it's the only way that works – God's way; that which is totally unselfish. That which is totally giving and we have to grow in that, but we have to choose it first.

The longer we go with what we're going through right now the more I choose it, the more I want it, the more I *loathe* what I see in the world around me, the more I loathe the way human nature is; the selfishness of human nature, how people treat each other, how people talk to each other. I loathe it! I loathe it with all my being because I've chosen God. That's what the choice is that we have. And the more we loathe it the more we will seek not to be that way ourselves! That's where it comes from; it comes in the mind that God gives to you. And so when we see it in the world we know it for what it is – sick, perverted! That anyone would look down upon anyone else and judge them and be cruel to them? How *atrocious* is human nature?! And yet that's the way we are as human beings. People constantly judging each other and looking down upon each other and treating each other badly, taking it out on someone else, being cruel. What a sick mind! The mind of man; selfish man, until we're able to come to conversion; and then a change that's beautiful begins to take place in us. I love it! I *love*! It's not that I love the battles I see that God's people have to fight, but I love the fight and I love to see that when people enter into it, and blessed to see your potential, blessed to see where it's going. And the more that we can see that in each other the more we love each other, the more we can see what God is doing, the more exciting it becomes; it truly does! The more we're able to give to others grace, mercy, patience, mercy, and time...and that changes your thinking in a very great way how you deal with others because that's what God does with me and that's what God does with you. *Patience*, mercy and time... those aren't just words, they're a way of life and that's how God has blessed me and treated me throughout my calling; and I haven't deserved it, but His love is so great that He does it; because He has a great purpose and a great plan and I'm very thankful for that, very thankful to be able to yield to that process.

And if we can grasp that more and more then we are able to pass that along to others more and more, to each other and not be judging and not be harsh, and not cut down, and not tear down, and not be hard and heartless, but merciful, patient, and filled with love. How often do you throughout the week run into people who are just hurtful and spiteful? Who have judgemental attitudes? You don't have to travel very far and see how people treat each other. You don't have to travel very far and how people look down upon each other in a community; how some people think they're better than others. I loathe

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that attitude; I loathe the spirit of anybody who thinks they're better than others. Because we don't want to be that way. You don't want to treat anyone that way. You don't want to look down upon anyone else, because if you do you're lifted up with pride and haughtiness and you don't know yourself. It's an ugly spirit; it's a spirit of Satan...and that's what God wants us to grasp. He doesn't want us to have that kind of spirit and that kind of a mind. Satan was lifted up with pride and it wasn't very long before he started chirping and that ugliness, that selfishness, that judgemental... he began to judge God and things that God did and God's plan and God's purpose. He wanted something different. Incredible!

The more we yield ourselves to God...what a beautiful process we go through. **He shall be a refiner and purifier of silver:** to purify our lives; **and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Eternal an offering in righteousness.** And so that process of purifying silver... and you heat it up and that which is there... and it brings impurities to the surface and then they're able to skim it off the top; they see it then. They can't see it until they heat it up. And we go through life and we go through trials and hardships and I see that in people's lives in the Church and things you go through and I understand. We have to go through it to be purified. It's not a picnic – it wasn't meant to be a picnic, but it is a matter of choices and if we make the right choices God'll fight our battles and He'll mould and fashion your mind and your attitude and your spirit, just like He did Abram/ Abraham, Isaac, Jacob/Israel...look where it lead them. Look what God desired for them.

Verse 4 - Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Eternal... if there's any reservation, if there's anything that holds back, if there's any regretting, or begrudgement...begrudging something of giving it to God...God doesn't want it. Any service that we would do to someone else... you ever fight a battle in giving to someone else? We learn through that process of what our nature is like – we truly do. I do, you do, and we're refined in it if we grow. Incredible! **Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Eternal, as in the days of old, and as in former years.** So again, about God's plan, His desire for that which is greater.

And I will come near to you in judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, and against the false swearers, that which the world is full of right now. The world is *full* of this! Liars, adulterers, sick perversion out there that mankind likes and is drawn to; **and against those who oppress the hireling in his wages,** those who are just greedy; those who just care about themselves. Who is that? That's human nature. At someone else's expense! That's why we have a bunch of oil out in the Gulf right now – greed. We don't care. Let's take some chances... let's take some more chances... let's cut a corner here... so we can make more out of this. And then it kind of backfires and people kind of start heading for cover and trying to protect themselves and that ole human nature coming out again. How much do we have to have our noses rubbed in it before we get the picture? Well, a lot; and a lot more. See, this is just a beginning. These are just little beginning things. There's a lot more behind this and when it starts coming it comes very fast. Just a little bit at a time here as we go along; just to kind of rub it in a little bit, to help man come to a point in time where he *finally* surrenders and has nothing to save him out of it. We're so close!

So again here **...against the adulterers, against the false swearers...** Oh, there are so many of those in this world; people who lie, lie, lie, lie...that's why God talks about lying – hating lying, loathing it. When we're not truthful, when we can't... There used to be a time when people talked about 'their word was their bond, their bond was their word.' Doesn't work that way in the world anymore. Now you've got to have thousands of pages to write a bill to pass... and they don't even read it. Now they even pass it without writing it. That's a big one! "We'll pass it and then we'll write it!" Wow! No end! A sick, sick, sick world and we just have to have our noses rubbed in it more and more and more that man can't

govern himself, man doesn't have the solutions. And so God says again here, **against those who oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and who turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear Me not, says the Eternal of hosts.** And *man doesn't fear God...*but he's getting ready to. I am so thankful that God is bringing mankind to the point where he's going to learn to fear God. I'm looking forward to that *very last day*; after the great resurrection takes place of 144,000. I'm looking forward to that day! Because without *that day* the Millennium would not be good, the Millennium would not get off to the start that it's intended to have for mankind. See, because Asia and Europe, so much of the world's still going to have to come to a point of great humility so their governments, their capitals, everything they have is going to be taken away. That one single day is going to be the greatest day of destruction the earth has ever seen; in magnitude and power in what God accomplishes. And we have no idea, even though we believe and understand, even within the Church...the power that's going to be unleashed on that day that God does Himself – God Almighty does this to mankind to bring this to an end so that *as* Jesus Christ comes back and *as* the 144,000 come with Him the attitude of human beings is going to be a whole lot different – in all the world. Israel gets humbled first, the nations of Israel, speaking of all those who live in those particular regions of the world – they get humbled first; and then all the rest right behind it in a very powerful way... one fell swoop in one day. Incredible! And if God can do that in one day with the vast majority of the earth, it doesn't take a long time for this country to be humbled. We don't have to be humbled for a period of 3½ years. It can happen very quickly and be brought together in a very concise way and thank God that's the way He's doing it.

...and who turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear Me not, says the Eternal of hosts.

For I am the Eternal, I do not change; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed. God has a plan, thank God. If there wasn't a plan and a purpose in all this and a way to accomplish it basically He's saying we wouldn't be here.

Verse 7 - Even from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances, and have not kept them. I am not dumbfounded about Israel not obeying God, but sometimes I am dumbfounded by the Church that has not obeyed God. Sometimes it's hard for us to grasp the kind of spiritual idolatry that took place in the apostasy that so many of us lived through. Because what happened within the Church is far, far worse than what *ever* has happened through time before that with mankind – far greater, far worse; because you see God gave to us the truth. Israel never had it. Oh, they had certain truth that was given to them – the law of God, the way of God – but they weren't given the holy spirit to see it, to know it. The Church was. The greater sin was upon the Church and that's hard for us to sometimes understand and that's what God wants all in the Millennium to understand, that's what He wants all of us to understand...that's what you're capable of. You're capable of...if you don't make the right choices and have a right spirit and a right attitude toward your God...you're as capable as what happened in the apostasy; to turn against God, even though you've been begotten with and you have God's spirit dwelling within you – you can fall asleep, you can let down spiritually. I'm a witness of that – see? Incredible lessons and the lessons aren't over with because at the end of 1,000 years - I am in awe of that one – that even with Jesus Christ and 144,000 having been here for 1,000 years and God's spirit able to dwell, being in people's lives, that they'd not only do the same thing but do far worse at the end. That's a biggie – truly is!

So God says, **Return unto Me**, that just means 'repent and change', "Turn to My ways! Turn from your ways! My way is the only way..." God is saying. "It's the only way that gives you happiness." Isn't that an awesome thing about human life? We go out and we want to be happy; we want to be satisfied by certain things in the world. People will turn to all kinds of things and it's like a black hole in space that just sucks everything in and there's no light, there's nothing in it and it just pulls in. Selfishness is that

way; and it's like there's this desire for gratification and people get caught up in this and they go from one thing to another because they can't have it. You don't get it that way! You get it God's way, which is the way of giving, not of getting. It's the opposite, it's the way of light; it's the way that gives. And that's diametrically opposite the way of our nature, but that's the choice we have to make when God calls us; to desire that, to want that to be a part of our life; to want our minds to be in unity and agreement with God. I hope you want that with all of your being. The more you want that, the better your life is going to be.

So going on here... **I am the Eternal, I do not change**, God's ways, the truth doesn't change – **therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed. From the days of your fathers you've gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them. Return unto Me**, repent and change, **and I will return unto you, says the Eternal of hosts**. God's merciful and if we simply will repent... and so God grants that at different times to mankind. He has a plan for doing that as well and this message here is for the end-time and for the next 1,100 years. That's what this message is for. This message that's given in the book of Malachi, the message that was given to the prophets leads up to the end of man's rule and the beginning of God's over the earth. The removal of Satan...I so look forward to that and I know you do too, with all of your being – hopefully, prayerfully. I rejoice in the day that Satan and the demons are no longer able to broadcast and harass mankind. They have caused so much evil, so much hurt, so much suffering on the earth. I can't wait until the day the door is slammed shut in his face! I can't wait for the day of his end...because it's not over with; he's let loose for a little season at the end.

And so God says, **Return to Me, I will return to you, says the Eternal of hosts. But you have said, Wherein shall we return?** Sometimes the attitude of human beings. In other words, How is it that we can return to you or we should return to you. That's the attitude if you say something to the Protestant world, the Catholic world... if you say something to Islam, if you say something to different religions of the world, "Return to God! Turn to God!" Well, that's an insult! They already are. They believe they're righteous in their lives. No they're not, not a one of them! Not Judaism...none of them! It's a reality! **And so he says, Wherein shall we return?** How is it that we're to do that? And he goes on to say, **Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me. But you say, Wherein, in what way, have we robbed You?** And He says, **In tithes and in offerings**. That tests man. What is the attitude? What is the spirit? Is it done willingly so and if so is it done because of the way God says to do it? It tests us, it tries people, it truly does in their lives. People are tried and tested, even within the Church sometimes! Don't let that one get you ever, ever, ever! This is where it begins! This is what it's built upon because this is so much in determining your spirit and your attitude toward *your God*...to what you truly grasp and what you truly see about God; His greatness, His might and what He's giving to you, what He's offering to you. It boils down to something so simple and basic because there's a spirit in this, a spirit, principle, truth that is very powerful and very much alive that works in people's lives. Attitudes that come out of this. Truly, it's an incredible thing.

So again here, He says, **Will a man rob God? You have robbed Me. But you say, Wherein, what way, have we robbed you? In tithes and offerings. Therefore you are cursed with a curse:** Who wants that? Life is tough enough! But when you know something and you don't do it how much worse is that going to be? Judah? How much worse is it going to be for you because you've known these things? And on and on it's been through time and others in the whole world as a whole – gone the whole direction, the same direction. But how much worse for the Church of God? How much worse when you have God's spirit dwelling within you? How much greater is the sin? How does God look upon that in our heart and our mind? ...when we have been blessed to be forgiven of our sin through our Passover who suffered incredibly for us, who was willing to die for us – our brother, our elder brother...and we would do this?

How great is that sin? ...in some of the most basic things of truth that God gives to us of a response back to God, of a relationship and reflects whether we truly want a right relationship with Him. If this isn't there, then we just fight God in our lives over and over again going back and forth in life; and we have battles and we wonder why do we have these battles all of our life – because we haven't obeyed God. You want God to fight your battles? There's a response and an attitude of mind that's required, a spirit in our thinking.

Therefore you are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. So again, speaking very much about what Judah had done, but it shows the way of man, it shows even that which can happen within the realm of God's Church. I've seen it through time since being in the Church; so much so that I know when someone lets down in that area I shudder inside because I know if they don't get a hold of it - they're gone! ...or they're going to fight battle after battle and curse after curse in their life.

Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My House...what a beautiful thing. To feed us – that's what it's about! It's to feed us! We're nourished from that. The more that the Worldwide Church of God was blessed to do under the leadership of Mr. Armstrong, the more that was there to serve others, the more that could be said...even to that which God was not calling...they were blessed. Those who heard were blessed. The more who could hear...if there was a little bit of reception there they were blessed, they were helped. The more powerful that could be, the greater the blessing. If mankind; it doesn't matter what of the last 6 laws... if people can be pricked in their heart of just a little bit more in their life to live what is right because of something they hear, because of truth – how much better is their life? How much better is the world? I think of all those who became 'co-workers' whose lives were enhanced and changed. They weren't 'called' to be a part of 144,000. There were many co-workers who were there, they helped and supported and believed certain things to a point, to a degree, on a certain plane...not on a plane of the point of baptism and having God's spirit dwelling within them, but to be able to share in something, to be a part of something; and they're going to be awesomely blessed. The day they're resurrected they get off to a great start; because there are billions of others the day they're resurrected where there's going to be some battles for a while, there are going to be some difficulties for a time. When you're resurrected with a certain past, a certain life there are certain things... it takes time to conquer and overcome even as you're receiving the truth and being taught what is right. But those who have a certain ability there, a certain knowledge, when they have that impregnation of God's spirit, or the reception of God's spirit in their minds, they're going to be able to see and put things together in a very quick way. Exciting! Inspiring!

And so He says here, **Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My House and prove Me now herewith, says the Eternal of hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing upon you, so that there should not be room enough to receive it.** That's where it leads...to things we cannot comprehend. It's not all in this physical life and yet there are blessings in this physical life; and most of it, and that which is the greatest is what God gives you up here, in your mind, of what you're able to see. I think of how blessed we've been in time here – that God just continues to give to His Church and give more. It's exciting! Feast after Feast, Sabbath after Sabbath... I was thinking the other day of something that Laura's father had said at one time, about some of the sermons and things I'd been writing, something that (paraphrasing a bit of the thought here but something to the effect that...) he was moved by something he saw that there was always something new. There was never a going back and repeating of things as he'd been familiar with within the Church and so forth in the ministry and the like and it was as though there was something always to build upon, something to continue to be given that was food for growth. And I marvel at that because I know how

it's progressed, how things have come, and what we've been blessed to receive of and be a part of. And that's the way God works. 50 years plus that Mr. Armstrong was blessed and it was a continual process of growth; greater and greater understanding; an exciting time – especially because of restoring to the Church so much that had been lost and not just restoring but building upon things that the Church had never had. There were things given to Mr. Armstrong that the apostles never understood. It wasn't given to them because it's about a progressive revelation because of time that God has. And so there were things given to Mr. Armstrong. That's why I understand in a great way why he was so moved when he wrote 'Mystery of the Ages'. That was the fulfillment of a *great labour* in his life. 50 plus years that brought him to be able to write something so powerful and so concise that man had never understood in *that way* before. It's one thing to be able to understand certain things in this book, to put the story together in the way that God gave it in 'Mystery of the Ages' and a purpose and a plan that God had; people hadn't understood. Never! ...to that degree and that way before except for one, Jesus Christ. But it hadn't been given to the Church to fully see and grasp that plan in that way, in that clarity. And we've been blessed to have that. And then after that, continuing growth, continuing revelation. We had to go through a very hard time to get where we are now, but that's a part of the process.

And so again, how blessed have we been? ...of things we could never dream of that God has poured out upon us. And that's why, just like at this Feast of Tabernacles this year – every time we've come to a Feast at different times I've wondered... "What's it going to be this year?" Because God has always given us more, just like He has through the year, more and more to build upon what we have. I think back to the Passover period. It was immensely exciting to me to think about the 10 days! We never understood that! The 10th day of Abib/Nisan, the first month of the year when they set the lamb apart, when it became a little more personal to them, when families decided and *chose* the one they were going to kill and you know how children are, and young people are and you have this lamb set out from all the rest...you don't think they got a little bit more attached to that lamb? ...from the 10th day to the 14th when they finally had to slice its throat...and then you're eating and probably gave it a name. You think kids don't do that? I did as a kid. I had a pet lamb. I don't know if I should tell you his name or not because some would really having fun with me, a heyday out there in internet land. Hey! His name was 'Cutie-pie'. ☺ I'll tell them myself. I went out one day in a blizzard, several foot of snow out there, he was dead, died. I got close to it; a little lamb, feeding it, it'd come running up to me. It'd hear me. You feed it with a nipple out of a little bottle, it didn't have a mother...and you get close to them. Four days? You think you can get close to an animal setting it apart? ...and you're going to cut its throat and eat it. It's kind of tough for a child, it really is. If you've never done it – trust me. It's pretty tough.

What an incredible thing to see what Jesus Christ did on the 10th day, how He was *anointed* for His death by Mary. Incredible story! How He went into Jerusalem and they put out the branches and cried out for who He was, a descendant of David. Incredible story! How He was set apart in a very special way to fulfill a job, to fulfill a role. That was very moving for me because of what God gave. I'd never known that before. I never saw that before in the same light and then God just gives it. How exciting are those things that we get? Those of you who are new, you probably thought we'd had that all along, but see, we didn't. But it was exciting to you! But I'd say it was more exciting to me, because I knew it was new. For you it was just like anything else you've received... like the book of Acts, "Oh yeah, that's true." To me it was very moving because I've wondered about different things at different times, and so it impacts us in different ways. Incredible how God works with us, moulds and fashions us.

So going back to the story here again, all about an attitude and a spirit toward God and what God is doing with us and how God is moulding and fashioning, preparing a great plan for us and yet we resist Him over and over again in our lives and don't realize what we're doing. And He goes on to say in the

story here then in Malachi, **verse 10** again; **Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My House**, in the Church of God. It's about being fed, it's about taking care of, and it comes back to us, in other words, in ways that we can't even begin to comprehend... **and prove Me now herewith, says the Eternal of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing upon you so that there will not be room enough to receive it.** And we haven't seen anything yet. The farther we grow the more incredible, the more awesome it becomes. God's plan never becomes dull and boring and once you're in the God Family and you live into eternity, we cannot grasp and understand those things that God will just continually give and give and give more to us. It's not like what I used to think as a child growing up, that once you get to a certain point that you've learned all you can and that's it. It's like... no more learning; you must get up to this point of 18 and from that point forward the rest of your life you pretty much have all the knowledge you're ever going to have. Thank God it didn't work that way. Still quite dumb at that stage...still am.

Verse 11 - And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, that which destroys, that which devours whether it be in the land, whether it be in that... but I think of the great devourer. I look forward to the time he is destroyed; I look forward to the time he's no longer around. What blessings that God is placing before us. ...**and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground;** so we look physically; that's how God works with us, we look at the land, the devourer, the insect, the blessing then of crops and so forth, the things that can happen in our lives and I think of incredible stories of things that have happened. I think of different things that happened in Mr. Armstrong's life, if you remember some of the stories of Willamette Valley and some of the flooding and some of the people who were in the Church, some of their crops that were flooded and yet their crops came out good. Others around them... you know I think of different stories of things that have happened in times and how God has blessed those who've been a part of God's Church when their neighbours around them...things that have happened to them that haven't gone well.

I think of a story not of recent time down in Australia where this hoard of locust was coming through in this particular person's farm; the locusts parted, went right around, came back together again, kept on. Her place was protected. Incredible! Incredible stories of things that continue on, that happen in time that God teaches us by and shows us and teaches us something physical to teach us something about that which is even greater.

And so again here, when I read this, yes, physical, but what about the devourer who seeks to destroy the *fruit* of God's way of life in our lives. He's the one we've been battling for so long. We have enough to battle inside here without having to battle that, but we have to battle that too; and we learn from that process, and we look forward to the time when he's no longer influencing the world. Because you can see the influence of that being upon the world and it comes at us. Sometimes your boss is stirred up; sometimes your government is stirred up. It doesn't matter what it is – they will stir things up to come at you because they want to destroy. Satan wants to destroy that which is God's. He stirred up a king to go out and kill all the children because in his perverted way, he was trying to destroy God's plan. He can't destroy God's plan...he's perverted! His mind's perverted! He's sick and doesn't know it – thinks he's great! Human beings think they're great! No, human beings filled with pride are sick and they have to be healed. That's what the Bible is about. The mind has to be healed.

And so it goes on to say here; **and I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground;** I look forward to the Millennium when he cannot destroy any longer the fruit of the ground! I look forward to the Great White Throne when he will *NO longer* be around, period, and cannot destroy the fruit of life; **neither shall your vine cast forth her fruit before the time in the field,**
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said the Eternal of hosts. In other words, it'll come to fruition (no pun intended) that God plans in your life, in people's lives. **And all nations shall be blessed: for you shall be a land of delight, says the Eternal of hosts. Your words have been stout against Me, say's the Eternal. And you say, What have we spoken so much against You?** I think of things that the Church went through in the early 90's that led up to an apostasy and I think of the words that were stout against God, strong against God and God's way.

Verse 14 - You have said, It's vain to serve the Eternal/serve God: and what profit is it... and people don't see their attitudes in that, people don't believe that, and people that went through that period of time – they don't really believe that about what they did and how they lived life. **...It's vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His commandments, and that we have walked mournfully/repentantly before the Eternal of hosts?** Sometimes people wonder. I've known of people like that. Been repentant and what does it profit, we just keep going through some of the same battles and so they just doesn't grasp.

Verse 15 - And now we call the proud happy; that's a sick thing if that ever happens; and yet I've seen it happen where people begin to look at the world as though they have something that we don't. They begin to look at Judaism or scholars as though they might have something that we don't. That's sick! And begin to look at different leaders or different individuals or people in the world who begin to think that a certain government is better than others; and this is a good government, or that's a good government, or whatever it is wherever people are...I know it's not! **...to call the proud happy...?** To look up to sports people – to think they're happy? To look up to people in music and to somehow think that they're the epitome of it all? ...that that's what you want to attain to? To look at... who are the stars in society today? Who are the ones...like I was reminded last night – that people want to wear their names on their clothes. Who are the individuals in Hollywood that people look up to and admire and want to come and pay large dollars to sit there and... and on and on it goes. Who is it that the world worships and looks up to? It's not God as a whole is it? Incredible! **...and call the proud happy.** That's what we want to attain to... No it isn't, and every once in a while you get a tweak here and there in the news of different ones and you find out; "Oh, their life isn't quite as happy as I thought it was. That marriage isn't quite as nice as they kind of made it out that it really was supposedly." And you hear different things about what people are doing; it gets out in the news and finally you get shaken a little bit – so they go to someplace else and look to someone else.

...yes, they who work wickedness are set up; that's the way the world is. Those who work wickedness...those who don't work good things for mankind; they're set up. Politics is one of the worst. Let somebody else do it for us, let somebody else be in there to give us what we want. People put up with certain things in the world. Sometimes they don't. They put up with certain kinds of dictatorships, they put up with different kinds of governments because... sick.

Then they who feared the Eternal spoke often one to another: That's good, that's the way it is now more and more. We're getting back to that, we've been able to have that, we've been able to recapture that in a very powerful way in the Church. Awesome! Beautiful! **They who feared the Eternal spoke often one to another: and the Eternal listened...** I have never seen a time in God's Church where I've seen people so inspired, moved and motivated and desirous and understand the time we live in, are excited about the time we live in – because God's given that to us, because God's excited.

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