

Welcome, everybody, to this Sabbath. Over here in Australia at the moment it's rather cold. Where we live we've had a lot of rain, and fortunately our rainwater tanks are now full, whereas when we first moved into this property there was only about 3-4 days water left. And I had a company to see whether or not they were able to refill the tanks and it was rather expensive, and he did say to me, "Well, it's going to rain in a few days," and so I put it off and yes, it hasn't stopped raining since. And now we have that much water and the paddocks are full, the bottom area of the property is quite wet. So rain, rain, rain every day and virtually every night we get rain. At the moment the rain's stopped and it's very, very cold. We're getting mornings of 2°C and 4°C, whereas we know in Canberra they're getting -1° and -4° and -5° and even colder.

The title of today's sermon is *Count the Cost*.

Once a person has been called by God they have to count the cost. There is a cost to our calling. Now, we believe that we make that decision and we're called and we count the cost. The reality is that we don't really count the cost just once. The reality is we have to continue to count the cost. And we're heading into a time where we're going to have to count the cost of where we are in the Body of Christ, the Church of God. Because there is a cost involved.

Now, what God refers to about counting the cost is that to follow God, to follow Jesus Christ, there is a cost to us. Now, that cost is based on a comparison. We can follow the world and we will pay a cost there. But if we follow God we're going to have to pay a big cost because of what the world will do to us. The world and it's system will punish us. We will be at a disadvantage compared to the majority. Now, the majority aren't called. There's only a few that are called into this relationship with God. And because of this calling there is going to be a cost paid. And in this sermon we're going to look at that aspect of counting the cost.

Now, when we're first called, yes, we count a cost, what it's going to cost us. But we don't have the eyes, the spiritual eyes to really "see" the impact of that cost. The world is going to punish us. The system will punish us. Because obedience to God in this world, we're going to pay a cost for all obedience.

So let's look at Luke 14:25, because here Jesus Christ goes into the counting of the costs that we're going to have to pay in this world. When we refer to "counting the cost" we're really looking at blessings for obedience and the fact that God will provide. We have to learn to stand up against the world. We have to learn to stand for God. We must put God first.

So when we look at counting the cost, really what we're saying is that we have made a decision to stand up against the world. Because that's what we're going to have to do. We have made a decision to stand for God no matter what. No matter what happens in our life we are just simply going to be for God. We're going to follow what God is giving to the Church. We're going to follow Jesus Christ. And we do that by the way we live, for example.

And the other aspect of this is that God will provide for us. Now, we go through this aspect of counting the cost, having trials in our life. God says they are good for us because they all work to our spiritual good. Well, God does say in His word there is a blessing for obedience and that God will always provide. Now, we don't always see it. When it comes to counting the cost we don't always see the outcome of our decision.

Now, I have known in life that once a person makes the mental decision to do something, which is this obedience to God and the stand against the world, often they don't actually have to face the various trials because God already knows what they will do. God knows them and there's no point putting them through that test or trial. So this counting the cost is about standing up against the world.

Luke 14:25—And great multitudes went with him (Jesus Christ). And he turned and said to them, If anyone comes to me... This, firstly, requires a calling from God the Father who calls us into this relationship with Him, and then we will be obedient to Him. ...**and does not hate**, which is "to love less by comparison," or another way to look at it is to have a different priority. So we have to have a different priority. ...**and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.** Now, this is referring to a priority. Now, we understand that "to hate," which is about a priority. We have decided to put God first no matter what. What it means is that we would love God before yielding and giving into our mother and father, wife and children, brothers and sisters; in other words, anything to do with the world. We will not stand up against God, we will stand up against the world, the world's system.

"...and his own life also." What is that referring to? Well, this is referring to the desire that we have where we have set our mind to sacrifice ourselves to give up our own life, give up our own desires for the benefit of others. Now, if we're not willing to give up our own desires, well, we cannot follow Jesus Christ, we cannot be in obedience to God. "...and," also, "he cannot be my (Jesus Christ's) disciple," or a student of God. Putting God first is counting the cost. We have decided; we've worked it out that we want to obey God. We're going to put God first no matter what. Well, there's a cost that's going to be incurred. There's a penalty for obeying God and that penalty is the world's system. Satan's system will punish us. We'll be at a disadvantage. But the upside of it is the reality, the truth of it all is there is no cost involved at all because God is with us. And what God has promised, what God has outlined for us if we stay obedient, we stay in the truth, well, there is no comparison to the two. There is no counting of the cost, really, but in this world's system we are going to pay a penalty. We do count the cost. And that's what Jesus Christ is outlining here.

Verse 27—And whoever does not bear his stake... Now, that is really referring to the burden or the test and the trial that's going to be upon us. We have to bear it. We have to carry it. It's individual. Other's can't carry it. We have to carry it because this is about a battle for the mind. It's about our minds. Well, whatever comes our way we have to bear what come to us. We have to carry it individually. We're going to carry our own stake. ...**and comes after me**, which is to follow Christ, whatever God places in the Church, whatever Jesus Christ places in the Church, "comes after me," Jesus Christ, **cannot be my disciple.** So if we're not going to carry the burden

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of this way of life, which is this obedience to God - if we're not going to carry it, if we're not going to bear it - well, we're not going to last. Well, counting the cost is about bearing what God is putting before us, what the world's system is going to do to us because of it. And there is things that the world does to us because we have put God first and we have set our minds to follow Jesus Christ no matter where he leads us, where he leads the Church.

For which of you, intending to build a tower, same as building a house or building anything, does not sit down first and count the cost. This is where counting the cost comes in. We sit down and we work out and say we're going to build a house. It's going to cost this much money and there is a contingency and we work it all out and we say, yes, I can get the finance, or I've got the finance, we can build it. And we have a plan to build it. So that's counting the cost; we work it all out first. **...whether he has enough to finish it.** So we would sit down in our mind and say, yep, we can do this.

Well, when we're called and then we get baptized we do work out and say this is what we desire, but deep down we don't understand the true cost. It's like building a house. We might have all these plans and do it but we have a small contingency because things aren't always what they seem. Things get more expensive in the middle of it or something goes wrong, or there's different weather conditions. So there's a hundred things that happened when building anything that we didn't actually work out exactly what it might cost. For example, the nails or the screws or the timber might be more expensive than what when we first planned. So this counting the cost is an ongoing thing. It's not a once only thing.

The reality is we count the cost on a regular basis. And what is ahead of us, we have to look at this again and continue to count the cost. Because what is ahead is great difficulties, and we're going to be placed with carrying the stake or bearing the burden of living this way of life in a present evil age. Because this world's system is against us. Whereas in the Millennium and the Hundred-years it will be easier because there is not a world system that is against us, so the penalties will be different because obedience will be simpler. It will be easier. But there's still difficulties because of the natural carnal mind, and there's always these aspects of pride that will rise up within the natural mind that will sometimes go against God, even though it's very clear that the whole government and the worlds system is heading in one direction. But people are people; we are individuals and we then have to then work things out ourselves. We have to bear what is in front of us, what we have to carry; we have to bear it. And we know that we have counted the cost to this point in time.

Continuing on in **verse 29 ...lest, after he has laid the foundation,** in other words, he's started the work; which is like being called into a relationship with God. We're part of the Body of Christ, we've been baptized, we've had hands layed on us by a true minister of God, and now we're part of the Body of Christ, that's the foundation. **...and is not able to finish it,** in other words, gives up half way through their calling, or early on in the calling, or even after 30 or 40 years of this relationship with God, of working and counting the costs, paying the penalty of this worlds system that placed on us because of the obedience, and can't finish the calling. **... all who see it begin to mock him,** which is turn around and mock the Church. Because they mock the individual and say, "Oh, look he went off with this cult and he started these things. And look, after 4-5 years he's

just given up. Isn't he blessed to get out of it. Isn't he lucky to get out of that cult." When reality is it's a delusion to say those things, absolute delusion. To give up on a relationship with God, to give up on a relationship with members of the Body of Christ, begotten sons of God, that's the delusion. You have to be quite deluded to be willing to walk away from what God is offering.

So we have to count the cost once, second time, third time, continually. Our life is about counting the cost.

Verse 30—saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish? In other words, he did not continue to put God first. He was led by pride. Pride led him away, took him away from these things.

Now, this counting the cost is about setting a priority. God first no matter what.

We'll pick up verse 31 in a moment.

Let's have a quick look at different aspects of this beginning of counting the cost. The first major thing that is impacted in a person's life is obedience to the Sabbath. Now, there is a cost. We count the cost - are we willing to rest on the seventh day as God said? We rest physically. That impact is going to be in the fact that we cannot have the employment that we may desire, which is part of this giving up of self. We have made a decision to stand against the world, stand against the world's system, stand for God, and put God first.

I remember back, first called into the Body of Christ, and having this relationship with God that I had set my mind that, yes, I was going to not work on the seventh day Sabbath, which you have all done. We are Sabbath keepers. People coming forward are going to have to make this same decision, willing not to work from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. Applying for jobs makes life difficult. So what jobs we can have is now changed. Because most people work on a Saturday. And from a retail point of view, I can know from history, that 30% of all transactions, as far as retail income, happen on a Saturday, a day that God has set aside as holy, that we're supposed to keep. Well, the world rejects it. Well the first cost is this very fact of keeping the Sabbath, because now employment becomes more difficult.

The last part of my career I worked for many a Jewish companies, and it was quite interesting, really, because not one of them was actually Sabbath keepers, yet they were all owned by Jews and run by Jews. And many of the time I'd go to an interview and we would start going through the process and they would turn around and I would say, "Well, one of the things you need to be aware of is that I don't work on Friday nights or Saturday." And they know about the Sabbath and the aspect of some knowledge - they don't really know it, but they have knowledge of these things. And they'd say, "Oh, are you Jewish?" And I'd say, "No, I'm not Jewish, but I don't work, I keep the fourth commandment. I keep holy the Sabbath day." And they'd go quite quiet. And a lot of them would just simply, the interview would be over within minutes because they realized they were retailers, that their trade was based on Saturday's. They did that. They worked on a Saturday and here is somebody that is not a Jew turning around and saying they were Sabbath keepers. Well, there's many of times that happened to me.

And in the end I found it easier - this is me, personally, you don't have to do these types of things, it's not necessarily wise for some people and could be wise in other people, depending on what you're applying for, what type of work - but I ended up putting it in my resume up early. Because I was, in the end, quite tired of going to interviews and go for an hour and then at the end I'd raise this topic about Sabbath keeping and they'd go all quiet and within two or three minutes I was out the door and never hear of them ever again. So I said I'll put it up in my resume up front, that I was a Sabbath keeper and that I would no longer be able to work Friday nights and Saturdays. Therefore, I knew that when I was going to the interview that at least they were aware of my position. And in actual fact, I fully believe that God blessed me for that obedience and God provided career jobs for me where I was the only person amongst 30,000 people that was actually a seventh day Sabbath keeper. That caused a lot of issues with other people but that was their problem.

Other jobs I obtained because I was a Sabbath keeper, because I was willing at that stage to turn around and say to them, "Yes, I won't work on a Saturday, but if you need anybody on a Sunday I'll be there." Whereas all the others they'd say, "I'm not working Sunday." That's their day. And I would say, "Well, I'll be there." Often I obtained jobs because God blessed me from the fact that I was a Sabbath keeper.

Well, there is a cost involved. For anybody that is called into a relationship with God this is a cost they must be willing to pay. They have to count the cost. "My income may go down," but there's a strong opportunity your income may go up. So you have to work this out and say, "I'm willing to do this." So if it does go down, I'm willing to stand for God. God will be first no matter what happens to me. And in the end I came to the conclusion that if they didn't want me, that's fine, because it was their loss. Not that I was anything special, but I realize if they don't want me, well, they don't want me. Why would I want to work for a company that didn't want me? Whereas anybody that wanted me and the skills that I had, well, I was happy to serve and to do the best that I could.

So, the first cost that anybody is going to have to count is this obedience to the Sabbath.

The next one is tithing. Where people are going to have to count the cost of this calling and say, are they willing to stand for God and stand against the world's system? Because the world's system involves taxes, where people are paying 20 - 30 - 40% tax on their income. Well, on top of that there is a 10% tithe which is paid after tax, but it still has to be paid because it belongs to God. We wouldn't want to rob God by taking away 10% that belongs to Him. Because God blesses us in the beginning to have *any* level of income. But there is a cost to this. There is a *cost* to obedience to God in this world's system. It's called paying tithes, and therefore, a living standard may be less. Not always. I've lived through this, only from personal experience, that I found that any time that I was obedient to God - I committed to paying 1st Tithe, committed to paying 2nd Tithe, and when we first came into the Body of Christ we paid 3rd Tithe - that God always made up for it. So, although we were paying 30% and giving 1st Tithe, saving 2nd to go to the Feast, and paying 3rd Tithe every period of time as it came around, well, God always blessed us. We never went without. Well, if we did that was a decision we had made because we had counted the cost of what it was going to cost us to obey God.

But in saying that, I also had counted the cost of what it was going to cost me, and my wife did the same, if we *did not* obey God. Because the reality is it's a wrong perspective. Because when we look at things we often look at it just on a physical level. We cannot afford *not* to obey God. We cannot afford *not* to be seventh day Sabbath keepers. We just can't afford it because it involves our spiritual life. We cannot afford *not* to support God's work! Because 1st Tithe goes to God's work, whatever that work may be. Why would we want to not pay 1st Tithe? The natural mind looks at self, whereas if we have a right thinking we would *desire* to pay 1st Tithe. Because who would not want to be aligned and in alignment, of one mind, of one spirit with the Creator of the universe who created all things, the Almighty God? Who would not want to be in unity with the Almighty God of the universe?

We can demonstrate it by Sabbath keeping. We can demonstrate it by paying 1st Tithe. We can demonstrate it by keeping 2nd Tithe because we see the spiritual component. We don't see the physical component. The physical component is we take 10% for God, for God's work. We pay another 10% - we hold it back so that we can go and hear what God has for us during seven days and the Last Great Day, the eighth day. That's why we save 2nd Tithe. It's not a holiday, it's Holy Day time. We go there to hear what God has, to be fed spiritually. Now, who would not want to do that? Well, if we don't do that, if we're not faithful in our 2nd Tithe we've lost our perspective of what 2nd Tithe is all about. 2nd Tithe is part of this counting the cost. We've counted the cost. The cost is if we don't save 2nd Tithe we will not hear and not have the *fellowship* with God's people during those eight days. Now, what a cost is that?! How tragic is that really? Not to be in fellowship with God's people because of our unfaithfulness?

Now, there are others that haven't been granted assistance and various other things that happen in life due to age or health, well, that's understandable, because God will bless accordingly. But where we are disobedient, that's a different aspect.

What Christ also goes through here, another aspect, is family. Because this is the great pressure that happens. People say they count the cost, but we have to be willing to count the cost if we're living with family or have close relationships with family or even friends, that we have to be willing to stand against the world, which is against our family's thinking, and we are to stand for God and put God first no matter what. That is counting the cost. It's about our ability to stand for God. That's what it's about. It's about our ability to stand for God no matter what.

Now, family, as Jesus Christ outlined here is a big issue. **Verse 26** again, **If anyone comes to me, to Jesus Christ, they have to put God first, and does not hate**, or which is "love less" as a perspective between God and family. Because we can love our family, and we do, but we have to love God more. We have to put God first. **...and does not love less his father and mother**, in other words, direct relationship. This is a great pressure for some people. **...wife and children**. Why? Because when a person is married they have a wife or a husband, for example, they then have to pay a 1st Tithe. Some do have that capacity due to income levels. Well, if we're working we would be paying 1st Tithe, whether it's male or female. And it says here we have to put our priority first. Now, this will cause a problem in a marriage because someone giving 10% to a Church group. That's the way they look at it. They don't see it as you're giving your tithe to God, which is what is required. It's an act of obedience. They can't see any of that. They just see you're

giving money to a Church group and you're saving 2nd Tithe for a holiday. That's what you're doing. "And you're leaving me out of it." And therefore, there's going to be tension around this ability to pay tithes.

Well, it says here, **children, brothers and sisters, yes, and (on top of that), his own life also.** Because not our life is going to be different. We're now Sabbath keepers, we're paying tithes, and we are going to keep the annual Holy Days. We're going to take time off work. We're going to have to declare this in our work environment at some point where we turn around and say, well, we want this time off because we're going away to keep a Holy Day, or different words that may be used, but we need extra time off. It's not just a matter of I don't work Friday night and Saturday, it's "by the way."

Now, for me, my personal experience, not that everybody should do this by any means, it's up to the individual how they count the cost and how they work it out. I found, personally, that while I was in the interview, and if I believed it was going quite well and they'd got past the Sabbath issue that I was able to raise up and say, "By the way, I normally would always need two weeks off during the period of September/October because that is a special time for me and I go away." And sometimes they hear you and other times they don't hear you. And sometimes people balk and other times people don't balk. And I came to the conclusion that if God desired me to have this job that these Holy Days would not be an issue. And in the end, if it ever came up as an issue I would normally just turn around and say, "Well, it's not really a problem for me because I won't be here. It'll be a problem for you because, you know, you're going to have to handle it because I just simply won't be available during that time." Now, that was something that I managed to do. I believe that God was with me in those decisions and I never ran into any period of time in my working career where I was not given Holy Days. There was times people put up barriers, but, simply, I was not going to be there and it was not going to be my problem. And they used to throw up all different sort of scenario's to me and saying, "Well, what if the retail store burned down." And I'd say, "Well, you'd ring the fire brigade and someone will come put it out. But I won't be here to put it out."

So there was a lot of ways to handle it and I'm not saying, by any means, you do it this way. But I found that once I had counted the cost and I was willing to pay the cost, which was, if people don't want me because I'm a Sabbath keeper, people don't want me. If people weren't going to allow me to have the time off, well, that was their problem. It wasn't mine. Because I was going whether I had employment or I didn't have employment. It wasn't my problem. And putting God first, counting the cost, knowing that if I did get the sack because I was a Holy Day keeper or a Sabbath keeper, it was their loss. Because it wasn't my loss because I knew that God would be with me whether I earned a hundred dollars a week or whether I earned a thousand a week. God was going to be with me.

So those experiences that I had taught me that I needed to stand for God no matter what and that I needed to stand up against the world no matter what. Now, these decisions that I have made to this point in time, I also realize that there's more decisions coming. For example, as we go into difficult times, and maybe there is an income coming in to different people's lives, will they save their 1st Tithe and 2nd Tithe faithfully when things are difficult. So when we look at this

it might sound easy. There are people that have been in the Body of Christ, and are in the Body of Christ that don't always have the opportunity (because they don't have a fellowship around them) where they have to save their 1st Tithe for 2 or 3 months because they're in another country where there is no church and no ministry. And they may have to save their 2nd Tithe for the whole year and it's not monitored, but they would then send in their tithes when they have set up that timing according to what the ministry has ruled for them. Well, that is a test. It's counting the cost. You have to do it faithfully when you're not being monitored.

Now, that's a big thing for a lot of people because if you're not being monitored who knows what you're doing? Well, the reality is God knows. God does know whether you're being faithful or whether you're being unfaithful. Well, these are things that are coming forward when there may not be the opportunity to have a ministry to be able to send money in or there may not be banks around, but we may have some level of income. We have to then stand against mother and father, brother and sister, as it says here, all of these reasons of why we would want to spend that tithe that belongs to God, that we will be tempted and tested, to say, "Well, you've got this 10% over here. Surely you'll pay that bill over here, the electricity bill that's due. Surely you'll use that money that you've put aside to pay that electricity bill?" Well, they are things we have to look at to say, are we willing to count the cost now, to consider it? Well, the reality is we should have made up our minds in this area.

But counting the cost is something that's going to happen all of our life. Because we've counted the cost and we're willing to put God and Jesus Christ first and we want to be a disciple or a student of Jesus Christ. We want to learn of God's way.

Verse 31—Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not first sit down/does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? So the odds are against him. He's only got ten thousand, he sees an army coming of twenty thousand, well, he'd have to sit down and say, "Well, what am I willing to sacrifice here? What am I doing to do? I'm going to count this, count the cost. What's it going to cost me? It could cost me my rulership. It could cost thousands of lives." Well, you have to work it out to say am I going to stand or aren't I. For us it's about counting the cost in the sense of we must set a priority in our life, which is God first. That's the counting of the cost. The cost is it's going to cost us. This world, this world's system, whatever we do in obedience to God by putting Him first in our life we will pay a penalty. Because it's the world's system. It's Satan's system. It's not God's system. Therefore, Satan is against God's Church. Satan is against us! And he will punish us in every opportunity because this is the world's system. This is the world's system. It's his system. It's not God's system.

Verse 32—Or else, while the other is still a great way off, so he's look at this and he sees the army way over there and he think, "Well, I'm going to get beaten because I cannot fight against 20,000. I've only got 10 [thousand]. He's counted the cost; it's not worth what I'm going to have to pay. It's not worth what I'm going to have to pay and the lives of all the men, and I'll probably lose my rulership so maybe the best way is..." **he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.** Because he wants peace. "Is there another way around it. Let's do a deal. Let's negotiate our way through this." Well, there is no negotiation with God's way of life. We're either Sabbath

keepers or we're not. There is not another way to negotiate around it. No, we stop work physically Friday night to Saturday night. We stop spiritually on this day in the sense we stop and listen to what God has got for us, what God is going to give to us. He's going to feed us on this day. This is the day, and the seven annual Holy Days.

There is no negotiation around 1st Tithe. It's what the ruling of the Church is based on the income levels and certain government supports, which are not tithable, because government support is like a 3rd Tithe. But on certain incomes when we have got incomes and all that, it's not a negotiation saying, "Oh, I'm not going to work my way..." No, there is a tithe to be paid to God to support God's work. And when we stop and think about it, why would we not want to support God's work? What sort of mind do we have where we would think, "Oh, I'm going to cut back on my 1st Tithe because, uh, I've got this bill and I've got that bill." What sort of thinking is that? It's not the mind of God, because obedience is what God requires. God requires obedience within our thinking. We've worked it out. The cost is that if we disobey God there is a cost. It could cost us our life! That's the cost. Disobedience to God could cost us our life. And I say, "could cost us," because it's based on our level of repentance. But if we're willful and refuse to repent it will cost us our life.

Verse 32—Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions for peace. Resolve the matter another way. **So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all, that is actually *all*.** You have to forsake all, which includes what the verse was saying down there about we have to actually, "his own life also." We have to be willing to sacrifice ourselves. We have to be willing to give up ourselves. It's painful process, but that's what God requires of us, to give up all, put God first no matter what. And when we give up ourselves we're putting God first, we're choosing God against our own selfish desires. **Whoever does not forsake all that he has, that is everything, cannot be my disciple.** Now, if we have a spiritual mind we will come to understand that we have nothing worth holding on to - nothing. There is nothing in this world physically that is worth hanging on to. There is nothing worth hanging on to within our own nature. The natural carnal mind is worth nothing *compared* to what God is. We have nothing to hang on to. Why would we want to hang on to things that are of no value? Surely we were desiring to give up *everything* for God.

Verse 34, which is really continuing on in this same vein. **Salt is good.** With God's holy spirit we become good, because only God is good, therefore, having God's mind places us, we are good. "Salt is good." Yes, it is good if it's got the flavor. Salt is good for cooking. It adds flavor. God's spirit in us is good. That's the only value we have. If we have God's holy spirit we have a value. Without God's holy spirit we have no value.

Salt is good. But if the salt has lost its flavor, in other words, it's tasteless, **how shall it be seasoned?** Well, we can't season anything because there's no salt; it's got no value and it's got no flavor in it. Same with God's spirit. If we've lost God's spirit, *how* are we ever going to enter Elohim? We can't! It's impossible! *How* are we ever going to do righteous acts? We can't, there's no righteousness in us except if God lives and dwells in us. So without God's holy spirit what value have we? So all of those that decide to turn against God, to be disobedient to God and not have a relationship with Him, who sit down and think they've counted the cost and decide to go for the **Count the Cost**

world, to go for the world's system, to put themselves first and other things before God, what value is all of that? Absolutely none. It's lost its flavor. Without God's spirit there is nothing. It's dead. It's worthless. It's all passing away. What a waste of time seeking those physical things out. They're all temporary. They'll pass away. Just like all the jobs and careers that I've had - they're all temporary, they've all passed away. And looking back, unless God was in them what's the point of them? It's just a means to the end. It's income to spend - still don't have anything. You have money. It passes, it's gone and then what happens? You die. It's basically all worthless, those physical things.

There is a level of why we should work, and that's about our motivation. We work to support a family. We have God's spirit, we work for God, first of all. It's a way to grow spiritually. With God's holy spirit we are put in situations or environments where things can be difficult and we have to use God's spirit as a guide to make decisions. But to pay 1st Tithe is a wonderful, great blessing that we can grasp hold of and do. Paying 2nd Tithe is a great opportunity if we see it spiritually. Marvelous opportunity! And we should rejoice before God and be thankful for the opportunity that we can earn an income to be able to support what God is doing, support God's Church, support the ministry, support the very work of God that is going to take place in this world, but also support the work of God in others.

Because when we support a ministry and the ministry use God's word as their guide powered by God's holy spirit, we have an apostle and he feeds us what God gives, what's needed for the Church, well, paying tithes helps because we're feeding others. Because God's spirit is there, it's poured out to the benefit of others, and it's up to them what they do with it and how they hear it. It's based on what they do individually. But by paying 1st Tithes it actually enables an opportunity for others to hear the word, the preaching of the gospel, the good news of the Kingdom of God. And going forward as God calls people, as God awakens people, our tithes, the tithes of God's people will benefit. The monies given as a support of the work by (so called) co-workers or those that may not be in the body at this time but are being drawn to it or God is using to fund what is going on within His work, these are marvelous things and we should desire to be part of these things. We should desire to be motivated to give to God, because *that's* what's important. The rest of it is going to pass away. But to be part of a work that enables people to be able to hear the word of God? How blessed are we that we are given that opportunity by God? Because God's given us this potential, this opportunity to share in the work of God. We can share in what *God* is doing. And God allows this for His people, to be able to share in His work, to share in what He is going to do in this world. How blessed are we that we can be part of this?

Verse 35, referring back to the salt - **It is neither fit for the land or for the dunghill, *but* men throw it out.** Because it's worthless. **He who has ears to hear, let him hear!** So we have to be flavored. We are the salt of the earth, we have to be flavored, which is we have to have God's holy spirit. Because if we lose God's holy spirit what happens to it? It's thrown out on the land, it's as good...just put it on the dunghill because it's no good, in other words, the rubbish pit because it's worthless.

Well, we don't want to be that way. We are valued by God. We are worth something to God. We are His Family, begotten sons of God. So the most important thing in our life is this priority. We **Count the Cost**

count the cost, and the cost is we stand against the world, we stand for God - God first no matter what - and we have this ability to have God's holy spirit, therefore, we are of value to God and we are now, because of this, able to stand, to stand for God. We're able to bear what is placed on us because we know what it's going to cost us. And if we have true spiritual eyes the cost is nothing, because it's just the world. The cost can be our spiritual life. That's what's really at stake. So we have to count the cost. Do we want to be in a relationship with God or do we want a relationship with the world, which is temporary and passing away? Now, if we have spiritual eyes, because we've already made up our minds what we're going to do and we've already counted the costs, no matter what it costs us physically we'll put our spiritual life first. Because the cost is our spiritual life! That's what's at stake, our spiritual life, the chance to be part of God's Family. *That's what's at stake here.*

So we want to count the cost now. Physical things don't matter. Doesn't matter what people say. Doesn't matter what people do. It doesn't matter if people reject us - mother and father, wife, children, brothers and sisters, all of that - it doesn't make any difference. Jobs? Doesn't make any difference. It doesn't matter if they throw us out, if they won't give us employment. Who cares? It doesn't really matter because God will be with us, and that's the key. We want God first. We put God first no matter what.

So what does it really mean to put God first no matter what? **Exodus 20:1—And God spoke all these words, saying...** it's going over the 10 Commandments. **I, the Eternal your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt,** it's referring to Israel on a physical level. Well, this has happened to us. We have been called and brought out of the land of Egypt, the land of sin. We've been called out of bondage. Now, that's what our calling was about. We've been called out and we are now to be grounded in a new way of life. We've left this other way of life because we've counted the cost. What's it really going to cost us? Well, it costs us physically, but that's all irrelevant. Now, we've been called out of the land, **out of the house of bondage.** We are in the bondage of our minds. Our minds were held captive because of the way we thought. We thought of selfishness. We thought of self. We didn't think of anyone else. Everything was about self even though we weren't aware of it and we didn't understand it. "The land of Egypt." We've been called out of the way of Satan's system, this bondage that we're held in because we were part of a system, Christmas, Easter, working seven days a week. That's that whole system. It's holding the mind into bondage because the mind thinks it can't break away from it because it doesn't really want to. It's actually quite happy in its own misery.

You shall have no other god before Me. Which is about a family relationship. Now, we're not to have any other relationship before Yahweh Elohim, before the Eternal. No other relationship. Well, this goes back to this what we put first. Our number one priority has to be God. And if we haven't got God as our highest priority we have another relationship, and it's going to be with the world or with the natural carnal mind of selfishness, or these other things. We may put, for example, our family as a priority before God. We won't do 'this,' we won't do 'that,' we won't be Sabbath keepers, we won't pay our 1st Tithe and keep our 2nd Tithe, and many other things. We won't do those things because we're willing to have another relationship. Well, God says here the first sign of having a genuine relationship that we have counted the cost, is that we will have no

other relationship with any other family before our relationship with God. There is one true relationship. We will put Him first no matter what. Well, that's that counting of the cost.

Verse 4—You shall not make for yourself any graven image—or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the sea; you shall not bow down to them or serve them. Which is about giving credit to something else.

Because if we have an image, whether it's statues (which is what it normally talks about in sense of the way the world looks at things,) you're not to have statues. Well, there's lots of other things on a spiritual level that we need to think about. And they are what we put as a priority - in other words, what we hold up as an idol - before God. We're not to serve that! Well, what can that be? Well, that can be work environment. We can be workaholics. I've been one. I'm fully aware now of what the impact and the ramifications of being a workaholic is, and that was my carved image. It was my work. I put my work before God. I put my work before my family. It was what I worshipped. That's what I served; I sacrificed my time for it. In hindsight, how stupid was I? How stupid was I to do that? Well, it's something that you grow in. Over time for me it has been something that I looked towards. It's something that I've learned. And now I realize that that was all just stupidity and foolishness.

Another aspect of this is we can give credit to something else. Because the biggest idol that we have is our own selfishness. We're first. We're first no matter what because that's our own selfishness. And we have this image of what we are and we serve ourselves. So, we serve ourselves because we put ourselves first. So there's lots of idols in our life. We have to look at them. They're not just physical things, they're spiritual things. And it's all about this priority, about what we put first.

Continuing on, **verse 5—For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations to those who hate Me,** or "do not love Me." Basically, "don't put Me first."

Verse 6—but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. Which is this obedience that is required. Counting the cost is about obedience. Because when we count the cost it's whether or not we're going to obey God, put Him first, or we're not. And it's quite simple, really. God is either first, or He's not. Our family is either first or God is first. Our work is first or God is first. It's about what we choose. And we all have to do it. Everybody in the body has counted the cost. Well, we have to continue to count the cost, because there's always going to be a penalty while this present evil age exists. While Satan rules and this man's system of government rules there is a cost...there is a cost.

Now, for example, one of the costs is having to pay tax. If a person's in the world they can lie, cheat, manipulate, and be deceptive when it comes to taxation. Being part of the Body of Christ, the Church of God, being a begotten son of God there is a cost in doing that because we're in God's Church and the world exists and the world's against us, but we're honest. So we're open and honest about our income. We're open and honest about our tax deductions. Therefore, we pay a penalty and it's called, we pay tax, we pay tax honestly. Now, if there's rules that say you can claim this, well, you can claim it, because that's the rule. But outside of that we shouldn't be

trying to dodge things or manipulate things or be deceptive. And we shouldn't be signing documents that aren't right. If something is wrong we wouldn't put our name to it.

So this is a cost. Others can go out there and rob and steal from the government and be deceptive. We can't. We are part of the Body of Christ. We don't want to be deceptive, therefore, we're going to pay a penalty, and the penalty is because we're honest. The penalty is because we're open and honest, therefore, we will pay a cost because of it.

Verse 7—You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the Eternal will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain. Now, this is not just swear words or blaspheme in the sense of using God's name and the name of Jesus Christ in vain. This is also about the way we live our life. Because we are a part of the Body, we are to honor God by being honest. So we carry God's name. We're part of the Church of God - Preparing for the Kingdom of God, therefore, the way we live our life to others is whether or not we honor God. Now, if we're lying and manipulating and doing things that are evil we are breaking this commandment because we are taking God's name in vain. Because people look at us and say, "Oh, they say they're part of God's Church, yet they're lying, they're manipulating, they're having really bad attitudes all the time," all of these things that brings a bad reputation to God, where God's Church is, which is God's Church. Therefore, the way we live, the way we treat others, we have to be very careful that we're not taking God's name in vain, which is by our bad example. We have to be guarding this and watching it. So it's not just about words.

Verse 8—Remember the seventh day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do your work, but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the Eternal your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your man servant, nor your maid servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. For *in* six days the Eternal made the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore, the Eternal blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. Which is set it aside for holy use and purpose. And we understand it's just not physical. It's spiritual that it was set aside, so that God would feed us on this day, that God would pour out His thinking, His mind through His spirit so that we had a chance to grow, to listen, to take it on board and implement the change that is necessary within our life.

So those first four commandments *are* how we set God first no matter what. No matter what is happening! Being honest - there's a cost in being honest. There's a cost in being honest. Because most people lie, manipulate, and protect their image. Well, we're not there to protect an image, we're not there to lie and manipulate, we're there to be honest, to represent God in everything we do. So the first four commandments are important for us to look at ourselves and measure: Are we putting God first no matter what? Because that is about a relationship. The first four commandments is about this relationship that we have committed to have with God in obedience to Him. And obedience is connected to counting the cost.

Because if any of these points that we are missing here, in the first four commandments, well, we haven't actually counted the cost properly. We're deceiving ourselves. Because we count the cost that we're going to do these first four commandments no matter what it costs us physically in this

life. This coming out of this way of the world, this land of Egypt, the house of bondage, coming out of it, as we withdraw from it, well, mother, father, all those people, people turn against us. Work environments turn against us. And because we won't follow the system, the images that have been set up by the world, Christmas and Easter, which is all this falsehood, we don't want to have anything to do with that. We've drawn away from all of that. Well, we pay a penalty. The world pays a penalty on a different level. We pay a penalty now and it's generally on a physical level. But spiritually God will bless us because of the obedience.

And we don't take God's name in vain. We don't use the same language. We don't behave like the world. Therefore, there's going to be a penalty paid. And we keep the seventh day Sabbath, therefore, there's going to be a penalty paid, because the world is there to punish us because of our obedience to God.

Mark 10:13. Jesus Christ explained what it really means to put God first no matter what. **Mark 10:13—Then they brought young children to him, that he (Jesus Christ) might touch them,** which is to bless them and to talk with them. **But the disciples rebuked those who brought them,** because the disciples were being protective at this point. **But when Jesus saw it, he was greatly displeased and said to them, to the disciples, Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the Kingdom of God.** This is referring to the aspect of being childlike when we're first called, being childlike every Sabbath. Because this is about humility.

Little children have a level of naivety. They have a level of teachability. And they have a level of humility. Now, that's why God says, "For such is of the Kingdom of God." Because the reality is the only way to enter God's Kingdom is we have to be like little children. "Let them come to Jesus Christ," let us go before God the Father and Jesus Christ because we have to have this attitude of being teachable and being humble, therefore, we will listen to God. Because if you've ever come across an arrogant child you know that it's impossible to talk to them because they already know everything. And if there's no humility and there's a lot of pride it's pointless trying to deal with them because they already know everything and there's no point. And normally it happens when the child turns 9-10-11-12-13, depending on the child and the upbringing. In today's modern age children are becoming more proud-filled and more difficult to handle and unteachable younger, because they already know everything. Whereas in times past, because we didn't have the technology and things were different and family environments were different, these things didn't kick in until they were well into their teens, this arrogance and this pride. Whereas now a days it's a lot different because of TV and other things.

Verse 15—Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it. So unless we are humble, unless we are teachable, like a little child should be, we will not enter the Kingdom of God. "Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God," which is about the information, the truths, what God gives about Himself, when God's way of life is taught, which is about this receiving of the Kingdom of God, receiving what God has for us on the Sabbath day, receiving what God has for us during the Holy Days. If we do not receive it "as a little child," with this level of humility and teachability. If we're not humble and teachable, we "will by no means enter it." We cannot enter the Family of God. We cannot enter Elohim if we are filled with pride and unteachable. Therefore, it is so important to continue to work on

ourselves, to have this humility, to have the mind of God, to see our true status, what we're really like, who we really are. If we do not see the natural carnal mind, and if we do not see ourselves in our selfishness, we will not be teachable because we already know everything. We can't "see" what we're really like. We can't see our attitudes. We can't see our pride. And if we can't "see" these things we cannot enter the Kingdom of God. We've got to be able to see our true condition, our true state. And when we compare it against God, then we can have humility because we can see we're nothing. We are absolutely nothing. We can see the plan of God. We can see what God is doing about one way of life - the natural carnal mind versus His way of life - and then we have to choose. If we haven't got humility and we're not teachable, we can never be given Eternal life.

Verse 16—And he took them up in his arms, put *his* hands on them, and blessed them.

Verse 17—Now as he was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before him, and asked him, Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? Which is a direct question about, "How do I enter Elohim?" really, is what he's saying. **So Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God (Yahweh Elohim).** Because only good comes from God and only God is good. And Jesus Christ was the Word of God. Jesus Christ was a man who had the mind of God, who thought like God. So he knew that only good came from God, therefore, he could never be considered "good teacher," because it was coming from God, even though he was a good teacher in the sense of he could teach good, it had to come from somewhere else. It came from God because there is only one that is really good. The source of it all all comes from Yahweh Elohim.

Now he continues and give him the answer about this priority that we have about putting God first. **Verse 19—You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery.** This is about relationships with one another, which is also about this relationship with God. Because if we have a true relationship with God we will love one another, and therefore, we will do no harm to others and we'll be working on our selfishness, we'll be denying self. Well, "Do not commit adultery," is about denying selfishness. The natural desire within mankind is to commit adultery. It's natural to desire, to look out and to desire something, to take something to self. "Do not commit adultery."

Do not murder. Do not hate. Don't have ill will to others. **Do not steal.** Don't take from others to get to self - based on pride. **Do not be a false witness.** Don't lie about others. Don't have ill will towards others. Don't hurt them. But don't bear false against them. In other words, don't say things that are untrue. And even if things are true there's a time not to say things. In other words, don't do any harm to another person. Don't try to pull them down to lift self up. **Do not defraud.** Don't steal. **Honor your father and mother.** In other words, respect authority. So this is the last part of the commandments, because we've covered the first four. Now it's covering the rest, which is about our relationship with others, but it's still working on self, the way a person thinks.

Verse 20—And he answered and said to him (to Jesus Christ), Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth. Now, he would have had a physical application here because he never had the ability to implement these on a spiritual level, because if you're not called and you don't

have God's holy spirit you cannot keep the commandments in spirit and truth. You might be able to respect authority and do these other things on a physical level, but not on a spiritual level.

Verse 21—Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor. So this is about, now, a priority. Was he going to put himself first or put others first. ...and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up your stake, and follow me. Now, this is what we read before about "bearing the stake," bearing whatever come your way, whatever you have to carry. Whatever burden or test or trial, it doesn't make any difference, during it, what do we have to do? Follow Jesus Christ, follow the instructions of God's word.

But he was sad at this word, and went away grieved, he was upset and offended, **for he had great possessions.** So what it really is saying here, he had a priority in his life. That priority was himself and his wealth. It was about his job, his career, everything that *he* believed he had created around him. He wasn't willing to *give it all up*, to give it up for something else. He wasn't going to give it up for others, but to give it up and follow God, follow the instructions of God the Father, Yahweh Elohim, follow Jesus Christ? Keep the first four commandments, set God as priority number one - God is first no matter what! Well, he wasn't able to do it. He was upset because he just couldn't do it. He actually did count the cost, in a way. The cost was he had to give up his lifestyle. He had to give up himself and follow God. Obedience to the first four commandments, obedience to the six other commandments - in other words, obedience to the 10 Commandments. He had to do it all. Could he do it? Well, he counted the cost, and in himself he couldn't do it. He was upset because he just couldn't do it. He didn't have it within him.

Well, we, brethren, have been called to give it all up, to give up everything and place God first.

Verse 23—Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God! Which is really saying it's not because the person has wealth that they can't enter God's Kingdom, but it's about this thinking that they have. They have a wrong priority, and the reality is they're breaking one of the first four commandments, which is about this idol. Their priority is riches. Their priority is wealth. And it's an idol to them. They just can't give it up. They can't deny themselves. They can't give all that up for the purpose of entering the Kingdom of God.

We've been called. We have to give up *everything*, whether we've got something we think is of value or not. Makes no difference. It has to be gotten rid of in the sense of willing to sacrifice it for the benefit of others. So we give up on ourselves. Our biggest sacrifice is giving up on ourselves, what we desire, what we want, our self-protection, the image that we have. All of that has to go. Here it's talking about a priority. We must have a right priority in our life. Riches and wealth, they're not bad within themselves, but if we make them a priority in our life before God they then become a problem.

Verse 24—And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches; it's about their priority, what they trust in. It's their self-worth. ...**to enter the Kingdom of God!** Because they're relying on

something else. It's a priority to them. They are protected by their wealth. They think their wealth will get them through. They haven't got the will within them to give it up.

Verse 25—It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man, who is physically focused, to enter the Kingdom of God, because he can't do it because his priority is wrong. Riches are his priority. Wealth, protection of self, guarding against self, trusting in something else. Trusting in self-reliance is one thing, because, really, riches, although it's money, it's simply about a priority. A person's real value is what a person gives or sacrifices to God. That's the real value. So, value isn't in the riches, the value is when a person is willing to give up for the benefit of someone else, to give up to benefit another person. That's the real value. That's what God looks at, the sacrifices that a person is willing to give.

Having a wrong priority about physical things will cost us entry into the Kingdom of God.

Verse 26—And they were astonished beyond measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? Well, they're saying, "Boy, this is too hard! To give up everything?" If "it's easier for a camel" - it's huge - "to go through an eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God?" **But looking at them, Jesus said, With men it is impossible, but not for God.** Because God could put a camel through the eye of a needle if that's what He wanted to do. ...**for with God all things are possible.** Because if a person has the right priority God can give them the Kingdom of God, because they're teachable and they're humble, they're obedient and they're willing to put God first no matter what. Well, God can take a human and place them as spirit beings into the Family of God. That's incredible! Considering you're putting a camel through the eye of a needle, taking a human with the natural carnal mind, that if that human sets as a priority God first, he counts the cost and continues to count the cost the rest of his life, that he's willing to count the cost, put God first no matter what, suffer physically (because of this present evil age), if a human is willing to do that and chooses God motivated by the power of God's holy spirit, that God will take this worthless object and make it valuable by placing them in the Kingdom of God giving them eternal life with God's mind? How does that compare to placing a camel through the eye of a needle? *All* things are possible to God! God will take physical human beings that have a natural carnal mind that is naturally hostile to Him, God will place His spirit into them, He will give them the opportunity to choose to obey, He will give them the opportunity to place God first no matter what (that's they're decision) and if they do and they endure to the end God promises that He will take that physical human, He will take them and change them into spirit beings in His likeness with His mind, gives them eternal life where they can never sin again. There will be no more sorrow, no more tears, and they will live in Elohim with the mind of God, a mind of sharing, a mind of giving, a mind of love. How incredible is that? Well, that's what's really at stake. That's really counting the cost.

Physical temporary pleasures versus eternal life and pleasures. What's the comparison? One's temporary - physical pleasures. One is eternal life with spiritual pleasures forever. Well, that's the counting of the cost. We have to count the cost. We put God first no matter what. I choose God no matter what, is what we have to learn to say within our minds. "I choose God no matter what it is physically that's going to take place around us, no matter what the penalties are that Satan and this world's system dish out. So we're unemployed for a period of time. So we give first tithes

to support God's work. What's the cost of that? No cost at all. Far better to have the Great Eternal God on our side than to be against God. Far better to be with God in unity of God, supporting what God is doing than to be against Him and fighting against God like Satan does.

Verse 28—Then Peter began to say to him, **See, we have left all and followed you**, which is really about this priority. This is something we have to do, forsake all and follow Jesus Christ. Peter's saying, "Well, this is what we've done. We've forsaken all and we've followed you." **So Jesus answered and said, Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house (home) or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands**, no matter what it is, anything physical, **for My sake**, which is about putting a priority in our life - God is first. That's the priority; for the sake of God, this relationship we want to have with God. ...**and the gospel's**. So anything we do with supporting the work of God about the Kingdom of God, about salvation, getting behind the work, paying our tithes, giving offerings. And we do all of this by putting God first, supporting God's work. What does Christ say? ...**who shall not receive a hundredfold now**, because it's not a physical focus. These people have a spiritual focus and the reward is immeasurable if we have this spiritual focus now, about priority number one is God and God's work - that is the priority in our life no matter what happens around us. No matter whether family turns against us or we can't get jobs. Whatever it is, it doesn't make any difference, we will receive a hundredfold now because it's about a spiritual blessing that will come upon us. God will enable us to see more spiritually.

Continuing on in **verse 30**—**who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time**, because it's spiritual. —**houses**, because we have a roof over our head, we have a House, the Temple of God, the Church of God, the House of God, we're part of it. So we've been given a house. We have a House now, a spiritual one. ...**and brothers and sisters**, members of the Body of Christ, **mothers and children, and lands, with persecutions**. Yes, we have all of that. We're members of the Body of Christ, but it's all going to be given to us what? With persecutions. Yes, we will have people hate us. Surprise, surprise. Well, Christ said, "If they hate you, they hated me first." They hated Jesus Christ. Well, if we're following Christ, guess what? They're going to hate us too. But is it a big deal? There's no drama, doesn't really matter. It's all temporary. It's all passing. ...**and in the age to come, eternal life**. So we're going to have persecutions, guaranteed. It's a guarantee; it's a promise. We're going to have it because we have a different priority. This present evil age hates us. It has to because we're different, we're part of God. The world is not part of God. "And in the age to come," which is future, which is what God has promised, "eternal life," in Elohim.

But many who are first, those who are first in this world now, **will be last**, because it's all about this priority. The last are spiritually poor. They don't have anything. They're first in the world, they're carnal. Well, they're going to be last. **But the last**, which is those that are willing now to give up on themselves on a spiritual level. Those that want to put a priority now on the spiritual, focus on the spiritual now, put God first, and to have counted the cost correctly, about what the true cost is, **they will be first**, spiritually. Because their priority is right. God first.

Luke 9:23—Then he (Jesus Christ) said, **If anyone desires (wills) to come after me**, which is to follow God, follow Jesus Christ. What do we have to do? ...**let him/her deny himself/herself, deny self, and take up his stake daily**, which is every day all the time, not to stop. Whatever

comes our way we're to bear what come our way knowing that God is with us. ...**and follow me.** Deny our selfish motives, the inward man, these pulls and desires, and put God first. We have to bear, to carry the burden of being in the Body of Christ. Because there are burdens to carry. It's just the way that it is. It's not going to be easy. It's not easy street. People will hate us. People will turn against us. We won't be able to get the employment we want. There's certain aspects of our life that are going to be different. But it's nothing compared to what God has offered us or is offering us. We have to deny ourselves. We have to deny what we want in life and put God first and to take up his stake daily. We've got to be examples of the Body of Christ, examples of God's way of life for the rest of our life every single day and "follow me," follow Jesus Christ, follow the words of God, what God places in the Church and the direction He is leading us.

Verse 24—For whoever desires to save his life, has a physical focus thinking it's all about physical, **will lose it.** If we've got the wrong priority and we're looking at the physical we're going to lose our spiritual life. **But whoever loses his life,** which is gives up on himself on a spiritual level, **for my sake,** for the sake of Jesus Christ and this relationship what we have with God and Jesus Christ, **will save it,** on a spiritual level. So it's about this priority. We're either focused on the physical or we're focused on the spiritual. If we're focused on the spiritual we will put God first, we will count the cost, we will bear the burden of being part of this relationship we have with God because we're going to have to pay a penalty. And we're willing to pay the penalty. And when the penalty comes to us we simply what? We smile and we understand what's really going on. We suffer for Christ. We suffer for God. We suffer because of righteousness. We suffer because of righteousness. We suffer for righteousness' sake. Because to be righteous is to have the thinking of God, God in us, the Word of God living and dwelling in us. Well, there's going to be a suffering.

Jesus Christ was the Word of God. He was walking righteousness because he had God's mind. He suffered! If we're walking in righteousness, if we're walking with the mind of God, we're denying our selfishness and we have God's thinking, the Word of God in us, there's going to be penalties, because the darkness will punish. The darkness will try to encroach on us. It will try to distract us. Satan's way of thinking is about destruction and about having priorities, lifting one's self up in pride, not willing to suffer for the benefit of others, not willing to suffer for God... not willing to suffer for God. Because life in this physical world is about suffering. We suffer for righteousness' sake. Not because we are righteous, we suffer because we put God first. We put God first, no matter what happens. No matter what suffering comes our way we will take it. We will stand up against the world and we will stand for God. That's what we have determined. We have counted the cost.

Verse 25—For what advantage is it to a man if he gains the whole world, all physical, physical focus. But what's the point of it all because it's all temporary, it's all worthless, and it's all going away. We have to have aspects of these things to survive, and God provides, but we have to remember it's all temporary. And if we're willing to rob from God, what sort of thinking is that? It's really a stranger thinking when you think about it because it's all temporary, it's all passing away. When really, we want to be in line with God, we want to be in unity with God, we want to be at

peace with God. So why would we rob Him? When you think God is great, He is almighty, and what's Satan - temporary. Satan is temporary as well.

For what advantage is it to a man if he gains the whole world and is himself destroyed or lost? Well, what would be the point? What would be the point to put physical first when really we will lose our life if that is the case. We'll be destroyed. We are to place the spiritual first.

Verse 26—For whoever is ashamed of me (Jesus Christ) and my words, which are the words of God, **of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when, when? ...he comes in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.** Well, we understand when Jesus Christ returns and sets up his government that people are going to have to set a priority in their life. It's going to be the same one we have to choose. They're going to have to count the cost like we have to count the cost. But there's going to be different rewards for them because it's going to be a lot easier. Because Sabbath keeping will be easier! Now, that doesn't mean to say that everyone is automatically going to want to keep the Sabbath. Tithing will be easier, but it doesn't mean that everybody in the Millennium will want to give 10% of their income. They still have a natural carnal mind, they will still want to manipulate and calculate things so that maybe they're not giving quite what they should. People will still want to be deceptive. People will still have the natural carnal mind. People will still want to have a wrong priority. Because it's natural!

So life in the Millennium will be easier, but it's still a matter of counting the cost. They're going to have to sit down and count the costs. What does it really mean to follow God, to obey God? Well, it's about being honest. It's about being sincere. It's about being humble and about being teachable and about enduring to the end. It's about God is a priority, God first. They're still going to have to do it. And the Hundred-years will be similar. Not exactly the same, but similar. The natural mind will still exist. People still are going to have to set a priority in their life because all the blessings that are going to be there and the wonderful world that's there, it's going to be, probably, in another way a little more *difficult* to stay focused on God first, because familiarity does breed contempt. Because people become familiar. Everybody is keeping the Sabbath. Everybody is paying their tithe. Everyone is doing second tithe and there's Holy Days. Well, the natural motivation is to become lazy and to let down. Because that's just natural. That's the natural mind. People are still going to have to stand there and work things out and set God as a priority. God first no matter what the perceived cost is... no matter what the *perceived* cost is.

John 10:1—Most assuredly, I say to you, Jesus Christ speaking, **he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.** Now, the reality is there's only one way to enter the Kingdom of God, and that is through obedience to God. It's a spiritual way of life. So it's God's way first. It starts with Passover and continues through those various days to the Last Great Day. It's about God's plan of salvation. So the only way to enter into Elohim is "through the door," which is through Jesus Christ - starting with Passover. If we try to go another way we can't get into the Kingdom of God because it's somebody trying to do it another way. It's a different way than what God has outlined. So "they are the same as a thief or a robber." They're taking to *self*, trying to do it *their* way rather than God's way.

But he who enters by the door, which is God's way through Jesus Christ, **is the shepherd of the sheep**, which is referring to Jesus Christ who will guide and direct us. It's through the Church. The only way to enter Elohim, since 31 A.D., is through the true shepherd, through Jesus Christ, who is leading the sheep, which are the sheep, which are the brethren in the Church. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, leads the Church. And the sheep in it, us, we follow because we follow the good shepherd.

To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep (us) hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. So this is about this following. Remember previously we looked at the various scriptures about the things we have to do? We have to give up and follow Jesus Christ, the good shepherd. Because Jesus Christ is shepherding us, guiding us through the Church to an outcome, to the true pastures, which is spiritual life. Jesus Christ is leading his sheep to the good pastures. Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, is leading us to eternal life *IF* we're humble, we're teachable, and we're willing to listen, we're willing to follow, we're willing to put a priority in our life as God first. And the priority is always God first no matter what that cost is, that physical perceived cost. Because although it's a perceived cost there's a greater cost in not following God.

When Jesus Christ was referring about counting the cost, we might lose mother and father, well, those things are irrelevant, absolutely irrelevant, because we would rather lose all of those things physically than to lose a relationship with God that will lead to eternal life. So unless we've got the right priority in our thinking, unless our minds are very clear about what it is we're giving up we could be giving up our spiritual life in Elohim. That's what we could be giving up. How tragic! How can we compare those two things? We really, we can't. Why would we want to give up Eternal life with Yahweh Elohim, to have the mind of God, to be eternal, to live in peace and joy forever for the sake of a temporary pleasure? Taking a bit of ridicule from others? It's nothing. It passes by. What others think of us is totally irrelevant. Who cares what somebody thinks of us? Who cares whether our mother or father, our brothers or sisters, our wife or our children, or anybody thinks of us, thinks we're kooks, thinks we're wacky, thinks we've lost our marbles, we're in a cult? Who cares what any other human thinks compared to comparing what God thinks of us.

Humans are temporary and will die! God is eternal and almighty! He has the power to create life, to give life and to take it. Humans have *no power at all* in comparison to God, none, nothing. There is no comparison if we have a spiritual mind to see.

So when we refer to counting the cost, what is the cost? Well, the cost of not following God could be eternal life, because some may be given an opportunity to reconsider what they had thought by having that opportunity, some may not because they're already set their mind against God, and therefore, they won't be given that opportunity. Those that are willful in rejecting God won't be given that opportunity, because it's the unpardonable sin. They refuse to repent. So what people are giving up, really, is this relationship with God. And to give that up is a tragedy. To give up a relationship with God compared to something physical that is temporary, that can bring nothing to a humans value? So what people think of us, brethren, is totally irrelevant, and really, deep down, who cares what another human would think of us compared to what we should worry about what God thinks of us.

Well, we're concerned about what God thinks about us in the sense of we want to have a relationship with God. We want to yield to him because we have this humility and we know who we really are. We know our true value. We've seen it because God revealed it to us. Not that we took it to ourselves or see it because of who we are, it's we see it because God gives us the eyes to see. Because only God can give us the eyes to see spiritually, what our real value is.

Verse 4—And when he brings out his own sheep, and he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. They believe what God places in the Church. They know his voice. So when we hear the truth through God's true Church - the Church of God-PKG is the only true Church of God on this earth - well, therefore, if we have ears to hear we have a humble spirit and we're teachable, we will hear what God the Father through Jesus Christ is telling us. We will hear it. And when we're warned, we'll know that it is God warning us to wake up, to be active in our spiritual life, to believe the truth.

Yet they will by no means follow a stranger. So we won't be led off by false doctrine and physical things, strangers, strange doctrines, things that people in the world make up and they're not coming through God's Church. Because the truth only comes through God's true Church. It's the only way truth comes. There is no truth out there. If there is any aspect of a truth it's only a minute part. The depth of the spiritual understanding is simply not there.

So someone can be a Sabbath keeper, but the truth of the Sabbath isn't there. They might rest physically, but they're not resting spiritually. They're not listening to God and being humble and being teachable.

We, by no means, follow a stranger, which is anything to do with false doctrine. Because there is only one true Church on this earth at this time. One true Church. There's only ever been *one* true Church since 31 A.D.. Only one. There's not ten or twenty. There's one. There's one faith, one doctrine, one spirit. There's only one way of living the truth, and there's only one God, and it's about a person setting their mind to obey that one God. ...**but will flee from him**, from this false doctrine. Because we know where God's Church is we will flee anything that is set before us as representing God. We will flee from sin. ...**for they do not know the voice of strangers**. Because we know it's not coming from God.

We know there is one true shepherd and there's only one way that we can enter eternal life, and that is through the true shepherd, Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. We have to set our minds as a priority. We have to count the cost of this way of life. Yes, there is going to be penalties to be paid because of the choices we make on a spiritual level. We are going to put God first no matter what that penalty is. And there's many of penalties because we live in this present evil age. Obedience is required by God. Counting the cost *is* about obedience, and the true cost needs to be calculated. If we focus on the physical we will lose our spiritual life. If we focus on the spiritual we will gain a spirit life.