

Our Hope In A New Covenant

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Feast of Tabernacles Sermon

Welcome to the Feast of Tabernacles 2020. What a year it has been so far! And I say “so far” because it’s still, of course, not even over yet and there’s been so many things that have happened already.

I think a lot of us have been in awe of what we’ve seen transpire this past year and just think about all that’s happened since we were here at the Feast last year. You know, Johnny Harrell always has this saying of how we are going to have a front row seat, speaking of the things that are going to be taking place here in the world, and I think now more than ever we can say that that’s right on point.

It’s inspiring to see how God is working with the world right now, but it’s not really such a pretty sight. And unfortunately, that sight is only going to get uglier as time goes on. For the world, 2020 has been a rough year. And, probably, for a lot of you listening out there, it’s been rough as well. We aren’t exempt from the problems that plague this world.

But these events that are playing out before our eyes are part of the process that is needed to humble this world. Just look at the coronavirus. In reality, it’s not the most dangerous virus that could have hit us, but it is just enough to start dismantling this house of cards that is the world economy. As you know, most people, they worship money and they like to collect it. And whenever you start to impede that then tempers can flare. With the virus and everything too, we’ve seen what happens when people get confined to their houses or apartments for an extended period of time. Some people have just gone nuts after they’ve been released, so to say.

Who would have thought that we’d be seeing people literally fight one another just because one person is wearing a mask and the other isn’t! It’s really insane how people are acting now. I saw a video the other day of a guy, and he was going around a store and removing all of the social distancing stickers that were on the floor. The manager and workers were trying to kick him out, but he just kept going. He must have taken, I don’t know, twenty or thirty of these stickers off the floor with a scraper. And this was, apparently, his last stand and he just kept screaming how he was liberating the people. Crazy things like that.

So, this guy, he apparently cracked, and we’re seeing that more and more, people are cracking and this world is beginning to crack as well. It really hasn’t taken too much, if you think about it. All this discontent and anger, it’s been building for years. A lot of times people are just looking now to have some kind of excuse that they can blow off all the stress that they have. It kind of reminds me of like some young punk that’s going around and he’s trying to start a fight with someone just for the sole purpose of taking out his aggression. We are seeing that more and more happening now, these full-grown adults and

people that you would think really should know better than to do things like that and to act in that manner.

A lot has been taking place behind the scenes now between nations, and things are really heating up out there. It's getting very difficult to keep track of all that has even happened this year. I remember before there were fires in Australia and then a few other things, and then all of a sudden all that had happened in the first couple months there was forgotten as soon as this coronavirus started happening. But there's been a lot of other things that have been happening throughout this year, and a lot of it just goes un-reported.

We know that we have to search for the news. It's just now it seems, in some ways, that it's even become more difficult to find the news because we've just been beaten over the head with COVID news after COVID news. And really, it seems as if there is nothing else happening in the world from some of these, you know, CNN or Fox News, or whoever it is, you know, it's like just reporting on COVID, COVID, COVID, and I'm sure we're all pretty sick of hearing about it.

But with all this that's going on the world right now, all this discontent, you see all these protests that are happening and rioting. It's not just in the U.S., it's happening all over. You wonder, "Is there any happiness to be found out there?" "Is there any hope?" And we know, of course, that there is.

So, the title of today's sermon is *Our Hope In A New Covenant*.

So, "hope." When I hear that word, I often see a picture in my mind of Barak Obama standing at a podium when he was running for president, and having the word "hope," you know, sprawled across his podium there in big bold letters. And "hope" was one of the words he used for his campaign slogans. When I saw that I remember thinking at the time what a farce because I knew that he wasn't going to deliver on anything that he was saying.

But a lot of people had hope and they gave him a chance; especially young people, they had hope but it was a false sense of hope. Many actually thought that he could deliver change, though. In fact, he even had another slogan. It was "Change we can believe in!" And then, of course, his other famous rally cry was "Yes, we can." Never really mentioned anything specific about what they were going to do, but everybody thought, "Yes, we can!" He got a lot of young people to back him with enthusiasm.

At this time, when he was running for President, I was in the University and I was in the liberal arts department at that time, and everybody there was pretty left leaning. I remember talking with a few of my friends and challenging them a bit, I guess you could say, and asking them why they thought that this guy was going to be different from any of the other politicians before him. Some of them would actually get pretty offended for me even asking such a question because they had bought into this whole hope and change we can believe in and all that stuff. So, they kind of took it, I think, as if I was raining down on their little hope parade that they were having.

But anyway, thankfully, we know that no politician can deliver on their promises. Unless they are following God then they're not going to be able to deliver. No man is capable of governing another person. It's as simple as that, and so, we are waiting for Christ to return, so that he can actually deliver on some real promises.

To the world, they don't know where to place their hope. They don't know where to look. So, the cycle keeps on repeating itself.

Knowing that politics has always been the same, and that politicians are unable to deliver on their promises, I was a little curious about other Presidential slogans. We all know that Trump ran successfully with his slogan of "Make America Great Again." I knew that this wasn't the first time that this slogan was used so I started looking it up and seeing what some other past presidential campaign slogans were, and some of them were pretty interesting.

40 years ago, in 1980, Ronald Reagan used the slogan "Let's Make America Great Again." So, pretty much the same thing. It's just recycled again. But he had a quote from back then and I'll read it to you here. He said, "For those without job opportunities, we'll stimulate new opportunities, particularly in the inner cities where they live. For those who have abandoned hope, we'll restore hope and we'll welcome them into a great national crusade to make America great again."

That sounds pretty much like rhetoric that could be used today, and it's not really too different. The problems that he's addressing there are pretty similar to problems that we have today, and so you can ask yourself, what has really changed? Well, the reality is nothing. The reality is also that we are just unable to solve our problems. We have the same ones. And instead, what happens is time goes by and our problems keep growing and they get more complicated and then they get harder to solve.

Here is another campaign slogan. This one was from Bill Clinton in 1992. He had "For People, for a Change" and "It's Time to Change America." Same things again. I guess this one wasn't so specific because he didn't really specify the change, but for him, I guess, he became president, so that was a change. So, I guess from a politician's standpoint that's not a complete lie.

Well, let's see here. In 2000 we also had Al Gore with the slogan "Leadership for a New Millennium." This one I think is kind of funny because you have the history of the past six millennia. Not too sure how those were too different, so yeah, this is kind of mankind's way of burying the head to the true history of what human history has been.

So, man's way is that of getting, of being selfish. We all know that. Now, we aren't looking out for one another very well. I want to read a little paragraph here that's from Herbert Armstrong where he talks about the give and the get way.

He says, "There are two main ways of life - two basic principles, two fundamental philosophies. One is the way of GIVING, the other of GETTING. One is LOVE, the other LUST. One believes it is more

blessed to give than to receive. The other insists that acquiring, taking, accumulating, through the ways of competition, leads to progress and happiness. The one way is God-centered, the other is SELF-centered. The one accepts the golden rule, the other says, 'Do it to others before they do it to you.' The one is the way of the divine nature; the other, the way of human nature. The one is the way of humility; the other, of vanity. This world- all civilization- this world's society- is based on the hostile, competitive, SELF-centered way. It has produced every wail of human woe. It is the way that now threatens the extinction of humanity. This all means one thing. Man, full of human nature, is utterly UNABLE to solve his problems. He can only worsen problems and create new ones. By the 'knowledge' and efforts of man, this world is doomed and hopeless."¹

Yeah, I think that quote is pretty spot on. You know, one politician comes into office, they make things worse, they don't really solve anything, and then the next one comes along and makes things a little bit, yeah, worse again and doesn't fix anything. You do that over and over, and you put it on a global scale, and this is the kind of world that you get from that.

If you go back in time and read about how our earth has been polluted over the years - how our food is being poisoned - how nuclear proliferation has continued to grow - we're all dealing with the same problems that we've had from 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago and even more. These problems are only growing, like I just read. As Herbert Armstrong stated, mankind "can only worsen problems and create new ones." If we could just learn that one small fact alone.

So how long will the world continue to put its hope in these leaders that don't offer any real solutions?

Recently, I saw a campaign slogan in the U.S. and this campaign does give me a little bit of hope. The slogan is "Settle for Biden." Yeah. It's real. I thought it was a joke when I first heard it, but it's actually real. I went to their website and it was pretty funny. It has in big bold letters on the top, it says, "It's Time to Settle." So, it seems like all those people that were voting for Obama before that had all this hope and everything, now it seems like they've lost it a little bit because they're just telling people, you know, "Just settle for this guy because they're not going to get any better."

That's a good thing to a certain extent. They're being humbled. They're getting there. But, yeah, it goes on to say here, "'Settle for Biden' is a grassroots group of former Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders supporters who recognize Joe Biden's flaws but know that our nation will not survive four more years of Donald Trump. Biden isn't fantastic, but Trump is far, far worse. Join us in our mission to (begrudgingly) put Joe in the White House."

Yeah, this is pretty much comedic genius right here. It doesn't get much better than that. But they're serious!

So, we can see something slowly is happening. Perhaps some minds there are slowly beginning to be molded. The world has to lose whatever hope it has left, and it has to lose

¹ Armstrong, Herbert. "Hope for the Future." *The Plain Truth* Dec. 1977: 1, 45. Print.
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it so that it can be open to what God is offering us. God is merciful, but He's not going to fight with us and He's not going to make us choose Him. That is not how Elohim can be reproduced. But what God can do, and what He will do, is to bring us to the point so that we can actually hear Him.

So, the world is about to finally hear what Christ actually preached. They are going to hear his message of the gospel and the good news.

As I mentioned earlier, the title of the today's sermon is *Our Hope In A New Covenant*. Because the covenant is what we should have our hope in. Not only is the new covenant a legal agreement with God, but it's an agreement that we can "take to the bank," so to say. The covenant details what God has promised to those who obey Him.

In many ways, if you look at it, the Bible is a legal document. I mean, we use these terms "Old" and "New Testament," and these are legal terms. You know, if you go to buy a house or an apartment these days then chances are there's going to be covenants in your terms, or that will be part of your terms essentially. Nobody forces you to agree to them, but in general, these covenants are put into place so that they can keep some kind of peace between neighbors.

So, God also doesn't force us to agree to His covenant. But as we will see today, it's a pretty good one to agree to.

So, let's start out here by looking a little bit in the Old Testament. There are many contractual covenants that were made in the Old Testament, but for today we're just going to look at two of them.

Let's first turn to Exodus 19:3, and we're going to have a look at the covenant that God made with the children of Israel.

Exodus 19:3, it says, **And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now, therefore, if you will obey My voice, and keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine.**

God is making it clear that if they obey Him that they will be a special chosen people that are set aside. He is the creator of everything including the entire earth, but He was still willing to make this deal with the Israelites if they would just obey Him.

Then let's skip over to Exodus 24:7-8, and this is where we can hear about the "sealing of the deal," so to say. **Exodus 24:7**—**And he took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people. And they said, All that the LORD has said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold**

the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you concerning all these words.

So, here Moses ratified the covenant with blood. These types of covenants are also known as a marriage covenant, and what it did was it married God with the nation of Israel. But this was only in a physical manner. The Israelites weren't being offered salvation or anything spiritual at this time. It was strictly a covenant based on physical laws for them. They weren't being able to even be given help to follow these laws in a spiritual manner at all.

And how did this all work out? Well, we know the story. It didn't last for too long, at all.

After this, the Israelites continued to grow further away from God and they began to reject Him. Eventually, they even wanted to have their own king just like the rest of the nations, and instead of having God rule over them.

God does not make us do anything. He lets us choose. And when we choose, we will make mistakes. Because our ways are not His ways. But our mistakes also make for a good learning experience. Our learning is what is needed for us to complete this part of His plan of His creation. It's a symbiotic type relationship, and it's a type of teamwork.

So, God let Israel have a king and so started one of the biggest lessons that mankind has had to learn. Mankind alone is not capable of solving its own problems. When we think we know, we usually don't, unless it agrees with God. Look at Adam and Eve eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They took it to themselves to be able to discern what was good and what was evil. That is something, though, that only God can do. That is exactly where Lucifer failed before; he thought he knew better than God.

But getting back to the Israelites here, they broke the marriage vows of the covenant, and God allowed them. He allowed them to have their own king. He knew exactly how it was going to turn out. He allowed the Israelites essentially to set themselves up for failure. Even king David, who God called a man after His own heart, had his own failures. Of course, he repented quickly, but he was in a physical carnal body just like we are. It shouldn't be a surprise to us because we know that we have been made incomplete. God knows our weaknesses, just as He knew David's, and He is able to see what our true potential is.

Then we fast forward a few thousand years and we look at where we are today. Mankind is still learning the same lesson. Hope is still being placed in the world leaders to solve problems that for them are unsolvable. Just think of the presidents or prime ministers of the world now.

Let's take the U.S. for example. I think the population is around three hundred million. That is definitely a lot of people. And what kind of people do we get for these positions of our politicians, especially as president?

It seems kind of crazy to me to think that one person out of three hundred million thinks that they are the best suited for this particular job. I mean, really, what kind of a person

can think that they would be the best candidate? If someone actually believed that then they should probably be put in a hospital because they would be displaying signs of being an egomaniac. So, to think that you are not only the smartest person in the room, but to think that you're the smartest person in the entire country? That's pretty crazy.

Look at the first king of Israel, king Saul. He started off as a pretty humble guy and look what he did. So, imagine, you know, if you start off with an ego where that's going to land you? Well, this is exactly what happens, and you see what these politicians have been able to accomplish.

So, we have seen that the Israelites were unable to keep up their end of the deal with God in the covenant that was made through Moses. Now let's look at the covenant that was made with king David.

David wanted to build a house for God to dwell in, and let's turn over to 2 Samuel 7:12 and let's see God's response to him. **2 Samuel 7:12—And when your days be fulfilled and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, which shall proceed out of your bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. But My mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established for ever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.**

Here we have a new contract, but this time it is unconditional. The promise of a kingdom that will be established for eternity and David had no idea to the full extent of what God was actually promising him. I mean, how could he? He wanted to honor God and build a house for Him. It kind of makes me think of David as a child, to a certain extent, that, you know, wants to please his father but is so limited that he doesn't even know how limited he actually is. But his heart was in the right place and he had the zeal to serve God in the only way that he knew how.

David was really innocent in the sense of not understanding the magnitude of God and His plan. Obviously, he understood that God created everything, and he was in awe of everything that God had done, but he knew so very little compared to what God has even revealed to us up until now.

Now we understand the magnitude of these promises and this covenant, this contract, how much it reveals more for God's plan for mankind. And something to remember with God's word is that it is truth. Whatever He says is binding. So, if you think about it in a contractual sense, He is going to fulfill His side of the bargain. He must.

Let's jump down to verse 24 and we'll take a look at what David's response was. **2 Samuel 7:24—For You have confirmed to Yourself Your people Israel to be a people unto You forever: and you, LORD, are to become their God. And now, O LORD God, the word that**

You have spoken concerning Your servant, and concerning his house, establish it forever, and do as You have said. And let Your name be magnified forever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of Your servant David be established before You. Therefore, now let it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before you. For Thou, O Lord GOD, have spoken it. And with Your blessing let the house of Your servant be blessed forever.

So again, a house was going to be established forever. David said, “Let Your name be magnified,” “let it grow.” That’s exactly what God had in store for His plan.

Now let’s turn over to Jeremiah 31:31 and we we’re going to look at a new covenant that was prophesied. **Jeremiah 31:31—Behold, the day comes, says the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they broke, although I was a husband unto them, says the LORD.**

God here is really showing, laying out a short history of what happened with the Israelites. He says, “I brought you out of Egypt” - performed miracles and brought them through the sea, made a covenant with them, and after all of that, they still failed to hold up their end of the deal. As it says, God was the husband to them, and they still were not faithful.

But this shouldn’t be a surprise. It wasn’t a surprise to God. God knew they would not be able to faithfully keep the covenant. But He still made it. Why? For a lesson! As carnal human beings we’re unable to faithfully live as God has instructed us. If we could, then there wouldn’t be any sin and we know that’s not the case.

Something is indeed missing. We are incomplete creations. But God has had a plan for us to become complete since the beginning.

Let’s continue on here in **verse 33—But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says the LORD, I will put the law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.**

You know, reading this I think of all the ways that the New and the Old Testament are connected. For us it is just one book. I find it interesting how traditional Christianity, they’re always trying to get rid of the Old Testament, and how Judaism, they won’t accept the New. Because when you just look at one of them, whether it’s the Old or the New, you are only getting a very small picture and this is a perfect example.

This covenant spoken of here is a new marriage contract. We know that Christ is the mediator of that new covenant. He is that crucial part of the plan that is going to be able to

fulfill this verse here in Jeremiah. It is through Christ that we are able to have God living through us, guiding us in our actions. But right now, we are still an embryo in our development. And in the Church, we are able to start imbibing of that spirit now, but we are still far off from what this scripture pictures.

God says we will be His people and He will be our God. That is what the first covenant was about as well. But there were problems with the first covenant as is stated in **Hebrews 8:7**. I'll just read this to you real quick. You don't need to turn there. It says, **For if there had been nothing wrong with the first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.**

The problem has to do with the fact that we are carnal physical beings. We are filled with human nature that resists God and God cannot be around sin. So, what kind of a relationship is possible there if God can't be around, essentially what we are then, sinners, what kind of relationship can we even have? That is one of the reasons why Christ is necessary in this plan, to act as the mediator, a go between, so to say.

Notice what else it says back in Jeremiah 31. It says, He "will put the law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts." In other words, it's going to be second nature for us once we become part of the God Family. God will be living through us via Christ, and we will know the way of God. It will just be inside of us. No more having to analyze our actions and figure out if we are sinning or not, we will just know, and it won't happen.

Then the last part of verse 37 shows again, how Christ is a pivotal role in the covenant. It is through him that we have the chance to be forgiven of sin. That frees humanity from death, which is the price of sin. So, we can see that Christ is literally the way for us to be made complete. There is no other way.

So now let's look at the new covenant. We will turn over to Hebrews 9:1, and here we'll start out with an outline of what the old Levitical high priests performed. **Hebrews 9:1— Then, verily, the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.**

So, starting out here right away we see that these services they performed were a divine service from God, but they were performed in a worldly sanctuary. In other words, the service they performed was given to them to by God, but it took place in a physical building. These services were, therefore, limited and incomplete. God is not limited, as we know, to only dwell in buildings. What these priests were performing was a physical service that pictured something spiritual that would follow. All of what the Israelites performed was physical, and they had to follow the services and the law to the letter.

They followed guidelines that were given by God. In that sense, the guidelines were a little similar to those guidelines that parents give to a child. As a kid you are taught to do certain things, and usually it's before you even understand their importance. Because that is how you learn. You learn to clean your room (or hopefully you do), and it's just something you

have to do. Maybe you struggle keeping it clean, as I did, but through repeating it day after day hopefully it strikes a chord with you and you understand its importance. You understand how a dirty room or a dirty place can affect how you think and feel, and in the end, these types of physical guidelines can guide us in what we need to learn.

That's the type of thing God was giving the Israelites here - physical laws and guidelines that they had to follow. And they didn't really know the reasons for following them a lot of the time.

The term "children of Israel" here almost has another meaning than when you think about it, of what they were given. They didn't understand the full importance of the rules and guidelines. It just wasn't given to them yet.

Let's skip down to **verse 9—Which was a figure to the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.**

The present truth for the priests was clearly limited. Their gifts and sacrifices in the old system were unable to make them complete, not able to atone them in a spiritual manner. They were not able to be made perfect as pertaining to the conscience. This word here for "conscience" in the Greek, it also carries the meaning of "being able to distinguish between good and evil." Kind of like, again, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As human beings, without God's spirit it's impossible for us to discern what is good and what is evil. We must have God's spirit. That's what these first few scriptures are pointing out - that the old sacrificial system was incomplete.

Now verse 11 contrasts with the first 10 verses of this chapter to show that Christ is that missing link. So, let's read now in **verse 11—But Christ being come a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building.**

This is showing how through Christ the building of a spiritual temple is possible. We know that he is the head cornerstone of that construction.

Let's go to **verse 12—Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.**

Skip to **verse 15—And for this cause he is the mediator of a new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.**

So, eternal inheritance was promised to the seed of Abraham. And, also important, is that we could not have eternal inheritance without eternal life. Eternal life is not possible without the redemption of our sins.

Verse 18—Wherefore neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God has enjoined unto you.

So, like we just read a little bit ago, this covenant had to be ratified with blood. But unlike the one that was made through Moses, this one was ratified with the blood of Christ who was perfect before God.

Let's go to **verse 28—So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.** So, he is coming back, and he is going to establish a kingdom on earth and show the way to salvation for the rest of mankind.

Let's turn over to the next chapter here, **Hebrews 10:9—Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He takes away the first, that He may establish the second.**

We know here that he is talking about the sacrificial system. And thank God you know that truth, because traditional Christianity uses this verse to say that the old covenant was done away with. And by doing that, again, they're missing half of the story. They only have bits and pieces of God's plan for mankind. It's kind of hard to put the puzzle together when you only have half of the pieces.

That's why it's important to know about the physical things that were performed in the Old Testament. The physical laws and services represent spiritual matters that we can learn from. As Christ mentioned in Matthew 5, he did not come to destroy the law, but rather to fulfill it!

Let's read that real quick. You don't have to turn there but you can jot it down in your notes if you'd like. It's **Matthew 5:17**, and he said, **Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.** The word "fulfill" here means also "to make full" or "cause to abound." That is what was prophesied in Jeremiah. The law was magnified and made greater. It was taken to a whole new level.

Then **verse 18** it says here, **For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the law, till it all be fulfilled** (completed). For what it's worth, the Greek word that is being used here for "fulfill" is not the same as it is in verse 17 and verse 18 in the previous verse.

But in any case, these two verses, the words of Christ, they can't be any clearer. The only thing that changed was the sacrificial system and it was in no way destroyed. Christ showed that he was the way into the Holiest of Holies. Before, it just hadn't been revealed.

So again, everything was growing. There was no destroying. Hebrews 9, as we just read through parts of it, gives a step by step account of how this was accomplished. It can't be any clearer.

We in God's Church still keep the law. We don't cherry pick the 10 Commandments like traditional Christianity does. Even they have a hard time saying that it's okay to murder or steal. But that one about the Sabbath, that one is just a little bit inconvenient. It clashes with their Babylonian roots. And, you know, Satan, he's the head of Babylon and he doesn't want people to turn to God and he doesn't want them to change. He is called The Destroyer and he wants to destroy all of God's creation. The creation of Elohim is God's most important creation. So, if traditional Christianity can say that the old covenant was done away with, then there is no need to change. They are just saved.

There is this stupid idea that in the Old Testament that they were saved by works but that in the New Testament we are saved by grace. That's really a dumb, dumb lie. That's one of the reasons why traditional Christianity is so lazy. They don't believe that you actually need to change. You can just come as you are and stay that way.

Yeah, it's a pretty great deal for them, actually, because nothing is required of you. You just get all these awesome promises and you get to go continuing on living life however you want to. And, yeah, you just got to remember to come back. You got to tell the priest what you did during the week because, you know, those guys are kind of lonely and they like to hear about all the fun stuff you got up to during the week. Then you're like, "Ah, well, ok, that sounds easy enough. Is there anything else?" Then they're like, "Well, yeah, the priest will probably give you some beads to play and then you can play with your beads and go on doing some, you know, mind-numbing prayers. But don't worry, after you do that you come back and you can just do it all over again. Sin as much as you like!"

Pretty crazy, but that's pretty much how they are. In some ways I'm also pretty surprised that there are so many people that go to these churches, because, if you think about it, if you aren't changing, what's the whole point of it then? Not really sure, but anyway.

Traditional Christianity doesn't believe in the metamorphoó transformation that is supposed to take place in our minds. That happens by working together with God in a synergistic and co-working type relationship. And so, that's just sad.

Just think on a physical level how stupid that is. Imagine a parent that just gives their children everything without requiring them to do a thing. You know what that is called? Spoiling your kids! Spoiling them, like when food spoils and then it starts to rot. Then after a while, starts to smell. Anyone that's around can smell it too.

So, look how well that's worked out for the last couple generations in the western world. Spoiled brats grow up and become full grown adults. You see with all these videos all over the internet right now, you see them. You see them throwing temper tantrums. You see them mashing up stores. You see them getting into physical fights. And, of course, they're

always demanding to speak to the manager because they've got to see the manager. They're important! "Don't you know who I am?!" So, you get my point.

But thankfully, that is not how God's plan of salvation works. God is not going to spoil us.

But back to that statement about the Old Testament being saved by works. Well, that part is also really dumb, because they were never even offered salvation even through works. They were only offered material blessings for their obedience.

Let's take a look at what is required though. Because there is no such thing as a free lunch. So, let's turn over to **Romans 6:1—What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?** So, we have God's grace and favor. Does that mean that we have a license to sin?

Then in **verse 2** says, **No. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know you not, that so many of us were baptized into Joshua the Christ were baptized unto his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.** So, clearly the answer is no, we don't have a license to sin.

Then in **verse 7** it says, **For he that is dead is freed from sin.** That means that after our baptism we are freed from our past sins. We come up out of the watery grave and we can walk in newness of life. But baptism is the first step to be able to enter into the new covenant.

Skip down to **verse 23**. It says, **For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Joshua Christ our Lord.** That way is being made for us through Joshua the Christ. Through Christ we can have God's spirit living in us, once we are baptized. God's spirit living in us is the beginning of having His law written in our hearts.

But we are not yet born again into a spiritual body. In this carnal body, we can still sin. We can't help it. And when that happens, God's spirit cannot be around us. But thankfully, we have a mediator who is Christ. We can pray through Christ and be forgiven of our sins, then God's spirit can come back into our lives. That is how this whole process works until we are changed into a spiritual body and we can have the spirit without interruptions.

Okay. Let's turn over to **Romans 8:1—There is, therefore, now no condemnation in them which are in Christ Joshua, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.** So, this is similar to what we just read about the wages of sin being death. If we walk after the spirit, then we are not condemned to an eternal death.

And the next verse states that clearly. **Verse 2—For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Joshua has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.**

That old law was weak through the flesh, as it states there. This is similar to how the old covenant is spoken of as having fault. It is not that the laws themselves are in error or anything like that, it is just that they were incomplete. Sin, which is the transgression of God's law, is a spiritual matter that happens in the mind. The 10 Commandments were all very physical. Even if you kept those commandments to the letter, you could still sin. The spirit magnifies the law and takes it to the intent, into our very thoughts.

Let's turn over to **Matthew 5:21**—**You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, and this term here is just an Aramaic word that is a derogatory name to call someone. It's basically like calling somebody worthless or stupid. And whoever shall call his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council. But whosoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.**

This is mentioned again in 1 John 3:14-15. You don't have to turn there; I will read it to you real quickly here, but you can jot it down in your notes if you'd like. It's **1 John 3:14**. It says, **We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that does not have love for his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.** So, the law is magnified. It is sin to hate or tear down your brother in any way. It's even sin if you don't love him.

Back in Matthew 5. Let's go back there and let's drop down to verse 27. **Matthew 5:27**—**You have heard that it is said by them of old time, You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you, and here it comes again, this magnified approach, That whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery already in his heart.**

We see that this influence of the law extended into the intent, the thoughts, and the attitude. It's in the mind. Again, this is the same thing that happened with Satan. The iniquity that was found in him was not actually his act of rebellion. It was the thought or the idea. To merely think of rebelling against God, that was already a sin. And for sure, before he thought about a rebellion, he had many other thoughts that were wrong and against God.

Sin starts small, and before you know it the results can be catastrophic. That's why the symbolism of leavening is used for the Days of Unleavened Bread. It just takes a tiny amount of leavening and boom, it's puffed up.

So, the Old Testament law of God is still very much relevant today as it ever was. But with the new covenant that law has been elevated.

Let's take a look again at some scriptures over in Romans. So, we're going to go to **Romans 7:7**—**What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not**

have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, You shall not covet.

It's the same for us. But again, magnified. What would we know about spiritual idolatry, for example, which is, you know, putting anything above and, you know, before God, if the law had not said, "You shall not make idols"?

Let's skip back a few pages to **Romans 3:20**. It says, **Therefore, by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for the law is the knowledge of sin.** Again, how do we know what sin is unless God reveals it to us? Human nature will not teach us. Our human nature is evil. It's an enemy of God.

It makes me think of someone in the world when you hear people say, like, "Nah, I don't need to go to church to be a good person." Oftentimes they say that because they've seen people that are supposedly religious, and these people, maybe they treat other people bad. On the other side too, they've seen people who aren't religious and treat people a whole lot better than the so-called ones that are. That is really too bad. The world's hypocrisy has turned off so many and made them unable to hear God's word. Especially in this world we live in now with so many false pagan versions of Christianity that preach the name of Christ but not his message.

But back to this statement here that I've heard before of "I don't need to go to church to learn how to be a good person." Well, how are you going to know about how your human nature is unless it's pointed out to you? How can you work to overcome it? And the reality is, you can't. In God's Church we get to hear how bad we are, and as Wayne Matthews often says, we love it. The world doesn't want to hear how bad it is. They don't want to change. But we do. The only way to change and become something better is to understand first how we really are.

Learning the way of God is really a long process. That's what makes the God Family such an amazing creation. To begin with this carnal, selfish being, and then have it be transformed into a member of the God Family seems almost like an impossible feat. But that is what we are creating together with God. You can think of it as our first collaboration of many more to come.

With Christ's coming and establishing a new covenant we have real hope. The gospel (the good news), it's not just the plan for mankind, but it's also a guide. We start off by learning about the physical, like children, not understanding why. But slowly it makes sense. Now, unlike the children of Israel, we can have some of God's spirit living in us if we obey Him. But that's still such a very small amount. After we are baptized we are still like embryos in the God Family, but with time we learn more, and some day we will have the law written in our hearts, as it was prophesied by Jeremiah.

Oftentimes we see any laws, or just laws in general, as being restrictive. They do, after all, tell you what we should and should not do. And being selfish as we are and wanting our own

way, we don't like being told what to do. But God's law is not restrictive. It's actually the opposite. It frees us from our own ignorant ways. It's a way of being that leads to happiness and fulfilment. There should never be any reason why we don't want to live by them.

They should never be seen as a burden. If that ever happens then we need to ask ourselves why. Chances are it's simply because we're wanting something else, our own way. And if we want our own ways, we will suffer.

God's guidelines should be comforting to us. He is the creator of everything. He knows us inside and out. Don't you think that God knows what is best for us? Don't you think that He knows what will bring us joy? Think about that during this Feast and think about what it means to rejoice in His laws.

Let's look at one final commandment that Christ gave us shortly before he died, because it's a good one to meditate on here at the Feast. Again, this one really shows the direction that God's plan is working towards. If we just had this one law, we could almost get rid of all the other commandments.

Let's go to **John 13:34**. It says, **A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.**

Now, it's easy to quickly read over this and not realize the magnitude of what Christ is saying here. The world takes this to be some kind of fake love that has to be somehow worked up. They think that Christ came to save us from that mean Old Testament God who dealt harshly with those who disobeyed Him. He is seen as this long-haired hippy wearing sandals who just went around saying "Peace to you," and "Peace to you," and just telling people to have this fake kind of love for one another.

Thankfully, though, we don't have that fake image of Christ, and we know he and His Father are working together. There is not a different spirit in Christ than that of God. That is what we see in the scripture, because the word for love here in the Greek is "agape," and that is Godly love. That is what we are to have towards everyone.

So, what is Godly love then? Well, in the simplest of terms, it is a type of love with God in it. But what does it mean to have God in it? Literally, just that: that God's spirit is in you so that you can produce that kind of love. And how can we have God's spirit living in us? Well, by being baptized and having the impregnation of God's spirit, the logos, His very being living through us.

Some read this scripture and think, well, if Christ was giving this commandment to love one another then there must not have been that much love before, especially looking at how they think about the Old Testament and how God was so harsh back then.

But Christ is indeed giving this as a new testament, because before Christ there was no way that a carnal human being could have agape love. The way had not yet been made. But now we have been shown the way into the Holiest of Holies.

That same commandment is broken down earlier in **Matthew 22:36**. He says, **Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Joshua said unto him, You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**

Again, the word for love that is being used here is agape. We have this channel, so to speak, that is open between us and God with Christ being in the middle. We are essentially commanded to have God's spirit in us. So that entails that whenever we sin and we cut off that flow that we repent as quickly as possible so that we can have it flowing through us again. As long as we obey God, He gives us His spirit freely. The problem is that we are still in this physical carnal body that fights against Him.

Let's go to **verse 40**. It says, **On these two commandments hang all the law of the prophets**. So, if we just have God's spirit flowing in us so that we can have agape love for God and those around us then we will automatically be keeping the old commandments at the same time.

Why? Well if you look at law, what are they all about? They are about us deciding what we think is right. They are about keeping us from our own selfish interest that are built into our human nature. God's love is an outgoing love and is based on concern and the well-being of others. The law that God gave is not some willy-nilly law that He just felt like giving. No, it is based on a designer that designed us and knows what we need in order to live up to our highest potential with maximum happiness and satisfaction.

Now, as Herbert Armstrong would speak about before, the world has philadelphia love, brotherly love. Oftentimes, not even. But that potential is there. The closest thing to agape love that we can find in the world would be the example of a mother and her love for her child. But that is still very far away from agape love because that mother doesn't have love for other children and certainly, not for all children.

I once heard the advice that you shouldn't be friends with someone that doesn't want the best for you. And if you think about it, that's pretty good advice. I mean, just think what the world would be like if people actually had outgoing concern for their friends. Because sadly, many friendships lack that. People get jealous all the time of their so-called friends. Sometimes people just have "friends" that they want to keep down so that they can feel better about their own selves. There are lots of toxic relationships like that out there. So, just think if people could rid themselves of such an influence how much happier would the world be?

But the problem with this statement of, you know, not having friends that don't want the best for you, is that it only works if those friends know what is best for you. Even if their intentions are the best. Now, they might know some things that are good for you, but in their own ignorance (the ignorance of this world), they might lead you astray. Only God really knows what's best for us. So, your friends, if they really want the best for you, in that

sense, then they need to have agape love. If they have agape love, then they really can know what is best for you. They won't ever unknowingly lead you down the path of sin.

We should think about that within the environs of the Church, because we do have agape. We should have concern for others and want them to continue in agape. This Feast makes things a little difficult since it looks like we are going to be pretty spread out. Maybe we only have a handful of people that we are able to meet with this year. Or maybe we are by ourselves. But we still have the technology to be able to stay connected. So, let's not forget to use it and to be there for one another as an encouragement and to be able to have fellowship with one another. This Feast season is commanded to be a joyous occasion and we need to make sure it is no matter how spread out we may be.

So, after going through all of what we have today we can see how we are moving forward within God's plan for mankind. We are actually starting to experience what Jeremiah prophesied concerning a new covenant. We can have God's spirit living through us. If we were not physical carnal beings then we could have God's law written in our hearts as it says, and we would fully know God. But this carnal body causes us to sin, and just like a radio or satellite signal can have an interruption, so the same happens with God's spirit coming into our lives. Every time we sin, there is an interruption of His spirit until we go back before His throne and repent. But thankfully, this is a temporary situation and it will soon change.

We know that the Church is the bride and Christ is the groom. However, the marriage has yet to take place. Preparations are being made. We are still in the engagement period. Both Christ and the those in God's Church are still heirs. But that inheritance is also coming soon.

Our hope lies in this new covenant, because without it, we know what our fate would be. As we have read today, the real hope and the real gospel is about the completing of our own transformation, that one day we will have God's law written in our minds and that everyone will know God. We won't have to teach anything about God. When that happens the law will be in all that are in God's Family. The written physical law will be completely obsolete.

Our hope lies in Christ who is the mediator of this new covenant. It is only through him that God's plan for His family can be completed.

In closing here, let's turn over to **Romans 8:18-25**. It says, **For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God**. Another way of stating this from the Greek there is **Anxious and persistent expectation of the creation waits for the revealing**. I think that we would all agree that "anxious and persistent" is a very accurate way to describe how we feel.

Verse 19 says, **For the creature (creation) was made subject to vanity**. This word for vanity in the Greek means "void of truth." So, what does it mean that we were made subject to not having truth? Well, we know that all truth comes from God. So, we were made selfish, allowed to go our own way, the opposite of God and the opposite of truth.

It goes on and it says, **not willingly**, so not because God wanted us to be without truth, **but by reason** (because), **of him who has subjected the same in hope**.

By creating us void of truth, God has allowed us to live our own lives for the past 6,000 years. And without God, without His truth, we have really screwed things up. If He had made us without this selfish nature and subject to His truth then we would have automatically obeyed Him. But what kind of a creation would that have been? Well, one that's devoid of any kind of characteristics or diversity. It would be like a family of robots. It would be quite boring. That wouldn't be such an amazing creation, would it?

But since we were not made perfect from the beginning, we have been allowed to make mistakes and errors, and go against God. Now look at how the world is. It is totally messed up and it's no secret. People aren't happy, and they know it!

This is why people have hope - they want something better. They just don't know what they actually need. They see that this world is screwed up but don't understand exactly why. And, thankfully, in God's Church we know why.

So, in the world people have hope that things will get better, but it's in a very physical way. Look at all the politicians and their slogans that try to capitalize on the hope of the people. So, people put their hope in men that don't deliver or make their lives any better.

But we know God's ways. We know His truth. We see the problems in this world, and we know why. So, we also have hope, but it's a different kind of hope. It is a hope based on the promises of a new covenant, a hope in the creation of God's Family that will get rid of this world's problems.

Let's go to **verse 21. Because the creature (creation) itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty (the glorious freedom) of the children of God.**

Verse 22—For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now, and looking at this world, that is a very true statement. That's true now more than ever.

Verse 23—And not only them, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. It's not just the whole world that is in pain, but it's also us as we watch what's happening. It's tough to watch even though we are somewhat removed from it. We just want to get on and get through all this as quickly as possible.

But this is a process that is occurring, and it just takes time. Just think of how it must have been for the angelic realm who have watched mankind make one wrong turn after another for thousands of years. It is indeed a painful process to watch.

Let's go to verse 24—For we are saved (made complete) by hope: but hope that is not seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for what we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.