

More to Build Upon, Pt. 3

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Sometimes when we begin a new series there is often a statement made in the introduction of the first sermon of the series or at least somewhere near the beginning of the first sermon of a new series. Then it's referred to throughout the series. Now, such statements are emphasized because it's important that we keep in focus as part of the context of what's being said, and sometimes those are in those statements, that it's important to remember the reason why or that particular series or sermon is being given.

We did that this time with *More to Build Upon*, and I want to read the introduction again, or part of the introduction to *Part 1* of this series, *More To Build Upon*, this being *Part 3*. "The sermons we've already covered and will cover may well prove to be some of the most important ever given over such a period of time," referring to the fact that these began in January, beginning of the year, January the 7th, "and that the reason for that statement, that these sermons have very much to do with who will soon be sealed, those who will be chosen to live into the Millennium, and those who will not be chosen."

Obviously, serious to contemplate, to think about, to meditate upon, and understand all these as well are leading us up to the Feast this year and what's going to be given at the Feast. So, I marvel at that, of how God leads us. As a matter of fact, on the way up here Laura was doing some driving and I was able to work on the next sermon series, starting on that. I think we have two more on this series and starting to work on the next series. And again, inspired, moved, and motivated to understand that those as well are leading up to the Feast.

So, it's an incredible year in that regard, as to thinking about how we're being led, where things are leading us, and the things we're to grow in, the things we have opportunity to grow in, to become stronger in. This is an incredible time we live in, indeed.

Once again it's important that we grasp the importance of how God has been leading us from the very beginning of this year in January the 7th. He began by having us focus on a three-part series entitled *The Creation of God's Family*, even as I've been going through some of this and thinking about the different series here that we went through, one, when you think about the series and what it says, just the title alone and how the next one comes along there is a process here and a building process that's taking place.

The Creation of God's Family was the first one, which is what it's all about. Everything from the very beginning of time, everything was created for the very purpose of God's Family.

"Then we went into another three-part series, and that was entitled *Place Your Trust in God*."

“Now we’re going to begin to review what God wanted us to grasp more deeply.” So, that was in the last part that I’ve been going through and reviewing.

So, just to go back and review something, this is something, candidly, I wouldn’t want to do as a whole in giving sermons. But I’m not the one who decides. So, it’s not my preference that I would want to do something like that, go back through and review, because I’m not keen on repetition of things being repeated unless there is a purpose and a focus, and that’s what this is about. There is a need there, obviously here, that God’s revealing to us that we are supposed to review and go through the things (not all the scriptures, obviously), but condense them to a point that we think about what we’ve already been given, and that’s a building process.

Because we can’t absorb, you can’t absorb everything when you hear a sermon or a sermon series. We’re all at different places as far as our growth and development is concerned and there is always something—I don’t care where we are in that process—always something that we can build upon, that we can learn more than what we grasp.

Sometimes you can listen to a sermon six months down the road, listen to it again and you think, “I didn’t hear that.” It’s because of this building process in the mind and what God’s giving to us. And to me, that’s an awesome process that we go through.

So, the next one here that we began to review, what God wanted us to grasp more deeply about Himself, and that was in a six-part series entitled, *The Love of God*. So, we’ve gone here from *The Creation of God’s Family, Place Your Trust in God*, to God helping us and wanting us to understand Himself because His love is what we’re to grow in.

That’s why I marvel sometimes about some who always felt or began to feel especially before the Apostasy and afterward, that Philadelphia and the Philadelphian era was the greatest. And no, it wasn’t. Because they think of Philadelphia, brotherly love, and the reality is, is that isn’t what God wants us to have. We’re to have far more than that in the God Family, obviously, God’s love. That goes far beyond selfish love that brotherly love is based on.

That takes understanding to grasp those things on a spiritual plane, that there is that which is far beyond when it’s not selfish, when it’s unselfish, when it’s willing to sacrifice and give to love.

So, we’re going to go back and look at some of the scriptures that we covered in part of that series, *The Love of God*, and one that is awesome is the one in Zephaniah. So, we’re going to go through this again, some of this in Zephaniah, because even as I was going through this again I marvel what I didn’t see, couldn’t see. Because it’s a growing process even there, and it became even stronger who this is for even more so as we go through it in what it’s about.

Everything is leading up to the end of an age; six thousand years has been leading up to the end of six thousand years. And in that process, God has done different things at different times, but it's all been building up to the time that His Kingdom is going to be established on this earth, and to understand that the Messiah is to come. So, all scriptures throughout the Old Testament that talk about some of these things.

I think of the scripture that says, "He looked for a city whose builder and maker was God," and that's what it's all about. It's what God is building, and especially when you understand what that city is, and that's covered here in a lot of Zephaniah.

Zephaniah 1:1 says, The word of the Eternal which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah. So, they received certain instruction and guidance in things that they were given that they tried to, in their thinking, apply on a physical plane. But it goes far beyond that. And so much of what is written, yes, there are types of things.

I think of when Solomon dedicated the temple. David wasn't allowed to build it, but his son, Solomon, was. And you think of the things he said that he was inspired to say, they weren't for that time. But that's all he could see and that's all they could see, and understandably so. But then as time has gone along we come to understand it's about that which is far, far greater, what God is doing on a spiritual plane, what He's creating as far as His Family. This book here has so much to do with that very kind of thought, if you will.

So, it says, **In the days of Josiah the sone of Amon, king of Judah, I will,** and again, the word "utterly" isn't there in Hebrew, but it's the word **gather**, "and consume all things," isn't in there in Hebrew either. It's amazing how many of these things they try to grasp a context of what's being said, and they don't understand.

The word literally means **I will gather**, as the other words mean, "**consume all things.**" **...to remove or to bring to an end from off the land, says the Eternal.** So it's about the times, it's about what is leading up to the end of six thousand years, the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth.

...to remove or to bring to an end man and animal. It doesn't mean a literal end of all. God did that once, as a whole, and that was when He went ahead and flooded the earth, and only one family God gave to come through that. But this is talking about the need to cleanse the earth, the need because of what's going to take place, that there is going to be a lot of death with mankind and with animal life, and so forth.

...to remove fowl of the heaven, fish of the sea, because that's what's going to take place in a massive way. Not to the degree percentage-wise as happened during the flood but very high.

...and ruin with the wicked. It says, **“the stumbling blocks,”** but it’s talking about here there is that which has to take place that God is going to get rid of the wickedness on this earth, begin a process of getting rid of it with a giant leap forward, if you will. It’ll still be around but not in the same way as all because it’s not going to be allowed to continue.

Just like wars. God isn’t going to allow another war to take place during the Millennium or after. One is going to be worked with by mankind to try to bring it to pass under Satan’s sway at the very end, but God isn’t going to let it come to fruition. No more wars.

I will cut off mankind from the land. Not all, again, but vast numbers. So much of mankind is going to be cut off from the land. That’s what it’s talking about. **...says the Eternal.**

I will stretch out My hand against Judah and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Now, this one, if we don’t understand God’s plan, if we don’t grasp what these words are about when it comes to that which is spiritual, we’re going to miss the mark, and that’s what God is helping us to understand.

This is about the Church. It’s about the government within the Church. It’s about God’s Church toward the end. Because, again, even with the book of Revelation it went through seven eras in the very beginning, God telling, or Christ giving to John, if you will, those things that would happen in seven eras of the Church. We’ve gone through those.

And you think of that process of what took place. It’s, again, building up to the end just before Christ returns. We’ve had an apostasy and we’re in that unique period of time between the Apostasy and Christ’s return.

And so, He said He’s “going to stretch out His hand against Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” Again, this is all about the Church. What we went through with an apostasy is one of the greatest lessons, one of the most important things to grasp and comprehend, how it happened, how it came to pass, what developed afterward, and so forth, what we are like as human beings. There is so much; sermon after sermon that can be given on the subject.

But to understand what we have witnessed, what we went through for those who went through the Apostasy and those who have been called since then, to grasp what the Church went through, some of the greatest of lessons that have ever been given to mankind that will be taught throughout the Millennium and into the Great White Throne, what happened in this age.

So again here, speaking to the Church and its leaders, both those who are not in the Temple but in the courtyard and those who are scattered after the Apostasy. That’s what’s being addressed here. Because God has mapped everything out before He even ever created mankind. All the things through the six thousand years, the one thousand years to follow, and

the hundred years after that, mapped out so long ago. Just like anyone that's going to have a project, they're going to have some huge construction take place.

We're so meager in our ability to understand such things. But to grasp something like that, a huge high rise, all the work that goes into it, all the preparation, all the planning, it's extensive. God's is so far beyond that. How do you make that kind of comparison? But it's the only way we can grasp it.

And so, these things here predetermined before time began, what would take place that would lead up to His Son's coming back to this earth after he'd fulfilled Passover, once he was going to fulfill being the Messiah, the King of kings, the Lord of lords over mankind until it's all completed.

We come to these things here talking about what took place then leading up to the Apostasy. **And I will cut off the remnant, (the rest, the remainder) of Baal from this place.** Pretty strong words. He's going to take it out of Judah and out of Jerusalem, out of the Church, out of the ministry, out of the government that was established over the Church to serve the Church. All the things that were brought in, to use a word like this, "Baal," God says He's going to get rid of it.

Because it isn't specifically about something to the degree that we might normally think Sunday, going to Sunday or Easter, or Christmas again, though so many did that. Obviously, that's a part of what's going to be gotten rid of. But there's more because it's spiritual. It has to do with the attitude of mind and whether God is first or whether our ways are first. Because if our ways are still first that has to be rooted out and it is the way of Baal and Baal worship, because that's what human beings do.

And I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the idolatrous priests with the priests. So, the next series is going to get into this a lot more so in the sense of grasping more deeply what really took place, what transpired, how bad things really became.

This is what took place largely within the ministry of the Church. Because it had to happen there in order to spread through the Body like it did. It was a part of God's purpose to allow it to take place so we could learn, so we could learn from it, what it's like when those things happen and what we're supposed to do ourselves, and how we're supposed to do it in response.

Let me read the last part of that again. **...and the name of the idolatrous priests, and the priests. (verse 5) Of those who worship the host of heaven upon the housetops, and those who worship, who swear or take oath by the Eternal, who swear by Milcom,** a reference to Moloch, offering their children up to the sun god on an altar as they did.

Now, that's pretty hideous, isn't it, to think that human beings could offer up their own children on an altar to supposedly please their god? This was the worship of Moloch. Because that's what they did. Yet people who know the truth, who know God's way of life, who have been begotten of God's holy spirit, who have the impregnation of God's spirit, to do what they did in many cases as far as their children, the influence, the wrong influence they had over their children, a whole lot worse than being offered up to Moloch if we can grasp that. A whole lot worse.

Have to think about that. Why is that? Well, all those children, as a whole, have an opportunity to be resurrected, to live again, to live in physical life once again. There are going to be people because of what happened with the negligence of some, with the example of some and what they did before their children, that they gave them up, as it were, to Moloch, and their minds in so many cases have become so distorted, so messed up—their choice—but they got a push in many cases forward by the wrong example of parents, because they weren't living the way of life that God revealed to them. They weren't living as they should on the Sabbath day, on the Holy Days. Not a small thing. And some of them have gone too far to where their minds, their minds are set in something different, they can't be changed as much as Satan's was.

...those who swear by Milcom, again, a reference to Moloch, **of those who have turned back from the Eternal**. That's the problem. To really come to grasp more deeply what it means to turn away from God, to turn one's back on God after we've received the impregnation of His holy spirit, a calling, the impregnation of His spirit in order to be born into His Family in time, nothing greater can be offered to a human being. But to turn back? To turn one's back on God? To turn against Christ? To turn against what was sacrificed in order to give them the truth?

I think of all that God revealed through Herbert Armstrong and how many people turned their back on it, how many ministers turned their back on the truths that they received through him. They didn't know anything! And when it was all said and done and they said, "Well, he was a good teacher. I learned a lot from him." That's so irritating to me on a spiritual plane it's mind-boggling what they did.

To say something of that nature? To not know that the only thing they know that has any truth in it whatsoever came through God's apostle. That's the only way they learned it. They didn't figure these things out on their own. And then for them to turn their back on God's teacher, if you will, which they did?

There are so many fights, infighting, so much vying for power in the late 70s, early 80s, and on, that it's astounding that it happened. To realize what happened to us, we're to learn from that, of what human beings still do even when impregnated with God's spirit. Still have the

capacity, the ability to turn against God. Far worse in many ways than what Lucifer did, if we can grasp that. He was made spirit, spirit composition. When he chose what he did his mind became corrupted, distorted. He couldn't think any other way. It's impossible because of that composition of his being. But to realize what human beings can do when they have the capacity to receive of God's spirit in the mind, to have the mind to be able to be transformed, God's spirit living in them, Lucifer never had that.

The angelic realm has never had that, never had God's spirit dwelling in them. They were spirit. They were given the truth. That's all they had to have for their creation. Two-thirds remained faithful to that, and they become stronger in their convictions because of the things they've seen and witnessed.

But for human beings who had the ability to repent because there was a sacrifice that was made to give us the ability to repent so this mind can be changed on a spirit plane? It's a hideous thing when people turn against God once they've been impregnated with God's spirit. And yet the majority who have ever been called have done that. Incredible. What's their outcome? Is it just everything is going to be forgiven in the Millennium, and they're going to see what they did?

Of those who have turned back from, or "moved away from" as it means, the Eternal, who have not sought after, have not searched for the Eternal, nor inquired of Him. That's a lot of the problem right there, didn't inquire of Him. When there were problems, when there are battles, things going on, to really look at, search to God, to ask God for help, to reveal what needs to be seen and grasped, they would never have left the trunk of the tree if they'd done that in spirit and in truth.

Verse 7—Hold your peace at the presence of the LORD Eternal; for the day of the Eternal is at hand. That wasn't back in their time when this was given. This is for the end here. This is for the end of six thousand years, the day of the Eternal, a time of judgment.

I've always marveled how people, different religions, and so forth, and even somewhat within the Church because we weren't there yet, we hadn't grown to that point, but how often things that have been read about judgment and God's judgment and they weren't during those periods of the six thousand years, as a whole, except for those that are pointed out, like during the time in the wilderness, but they're for the end-time. They're for this period of time that God's judgment is going to be poured out.

Because He did in one massive way during Noah's time, but not for the rest of mankind that lived before that and for those who have lived in the last six thousand years. So, there are periods of judgment coming that are very powerful on the earth, but one of the greatest is going to begin. That's why I marvel at the Third Woe. Beautiful to understand that there are two occasions it becomes fulfilled.

Anyway, I know that'll be covered later on in Holy Days and so forth, so skip through that.

...nor inquired of Him. Hold your peace at the presence of the Eternal God; for the day of the Eternal is at hand. For the Eternal has prepared a sacrifice. He has invited... the word means "sanctified; set apart as holy." **He has invited Himself, guests.** Awesome! It's like the parables that Christ gave, went out, invited guests to the great supper, to a great supper. This word here, this word "invited" means more than invited. Yes, we understand it's invited but it means "set apart as holy." Guests.

God has called many people in the last two thousand years, and at the end-time here as well, which this is building up to, still inviting different ones along and look what's happened. Set them apart for holy use and purpose, gave them His holy spirit.

...has invited Himself, guests. Now, again here, this word "guests" literally in Hebrews means "called," those who are called. Some of these things then haven't been translated with the words that are used there because they didn't understand, they didn't grasp what that meant. Understandably so.

It shall come to pass in the day of the Eternal's sacrifice that I will visit upon the princes, the king's children, and on all, in essence, who have been putting on strange clothing. So, different leaders and so forth is what it's talking about. It talks about here then, "putting on strange clothing." Well, who does this apply to? The world already has strange clothing. They're deceived. They don't understand the truth.

But for those in God's Church to begin moving away from God and to begin clothing themselves with things that they shouldn't be, ideas, beliefs, going away from what God has given to them, that's what this is referring to. Not being close spiritually as they should be, but thinking they can come the way they are, thinking their way is okay, their way is right.

That's why we're coming down to a point in judgment and that's why I'm really moved by these sermon series and what's building up to the Feast, because I'll tell you what—and the Thunder's getting louder—tells me alone we're coming fast, we're coming up to this point in time very quickly now compared to what we have been.

Verse 14—The great day of the Eternal is near; it is near and moves swift greatly (forcefully). And especially in the context of what we're being blessed to see and understand, what this is all about even more so.

Even the day of the Eternal, the mighty shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, meaning it's a time for judgment, meaning a time that individuals have brought upon themselves. Because that comes upon everyone in time, and this is one of the major times in human history that this is going to take place.

A day of trouble and distress, a day of ravage and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm, if you will, a blast of war, as it is. So, these should all mean so much to us, to realize this is about this end-time, this is about where we are.

A day of trumpet and alarm against the defenced cities and against the high towers. So, that which raises itself up, and the context of most of what it's talking about here is about the Church and the Church that was scattered.

Not just the world. It's easy to see things in the world and the world being deceived, and yes, certain things have to take place and a WWII and the like, but you know, God's focus is still for us, it's the Church. That's what He's showing us. It's about the Church. It's what we need to see. I hope we understand that. The world is going to have its time. Those who are destroyed are going to have their time, but it's not now. So this is where God's focus is.

Then I will bring distress upon mankind, they shall walk like the blind because they have sinned against the Eternal, and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as dung. Got a little more descriptive last time, but it's why God says we need to see it as, what it's like to turn against Him. Because that's what's being addressed here. It's what it's like to turn against God. Far more serious than the world that's deceived and their end coming and then having a time later on when they'll be resurrected, as a whole.

Verse 18—Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them in the day of the Eternal's wrath, and the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His zealousness. For He will bring a terrifying end of those dwelling in the land. Again, all of this is a matter of God's love to His people and it's a matter of what is just and right.

Zephaniah 2:1—Gather yourselves together, gather together O nation undesired, before the... It's not "decree," it means "prescribed or the allotted time." So, God has a time that was set aside, the exact end of six thousand years, or at that period of time before His Son returns. That's when these things are to happen. So much of what is written in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, in Revelation, they all build up to this time.

...before the allotted time brings forth and the day, in other words, the time remaining passes as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Eternal come upon you.

Before the day of the Eternal's anger comes upon you, seek the Eternal, all you humble of the earth. It's about the Church still. There is going to come a time when people are going to be humbled in the world and they're going to cry out to God, but they're not going to know God yet, as a whole, because they haven't been taught.

Seek the Eternal, all you humble of the earth. So, that's what we're to keep doing. God first. God first! Because that needs to be grown in still within the Church. We're the only

ones, each one of us, that can answer that, whether He is or isn't. It's not just words we can say, "Well, yes, God's first." Our actions, our thoughts, our thinking, what we do, how we think, especially toward others, reveals the truth of it.

Seek the Eternal, all you humble of the earth who have worked (exercised) His judgment. I think about *Exercising God's Love*, that sermon series. That's what we're to do. We're to learn. You have to work at it.

Seek righteousness, seek humility. It doesn't just happen. You have to work at it; we have to pray about it. **It may be you will be hidden (concealed) in the day of the Eternal's anger.**

Zephaniah 3:1—Woe to those lifted up and defiled of, as it is here, the oppressing city! Talking about Jerusalem, the oppression that was caused by it, the oppression that was caused and is still being caused out here by different ministers who turned their back on God, on the apostle they knew and were trained by in so many cases.

They become oppressive. They became oppressive, and when you start teaching wrong things and you turn away from the things you knew, it's an oppression upon God's people. It turns God's people farther and farther and farther away from the truth. That's a heinous thing to God, something we have to grasp and see more deeply.

So again, that's referring back to verse 4 where it's talking about Judah and Jerusalem, the Church, the government of it especially.

Woe to those lifted up and defiled of the oppressing city! She did not obey the voice. What voice? Well, I think of the voice that cried out for a long time in the wilderness. He understood that's what he was doing. For so long the job that God gave to him, that "the gospel should go unto all the world, and then the end would come." He knew what his job was. He was moved by it. He understood Matthew 24:14. He knew that was about him. God gave him that. Awesome!

The only way anyone ever learned the truth was through that voice, through what he wrote, through what he spoke. That is the only way. It's the only way his son learned anything that was true, the one who left, the one who turned against his own father. Incredible, the things that have taken place, and that was just the beginning.

Woe to those lifted up and defiled of the oppressing city! She did not obey the voice. She did not receive correction. You know, when people make up their own mind that they believe something different like 14/15 Passover they don't think about being corrected. They just sluff it off: "They just don't understand. He didn't understand. He didn't know what the truth was. I do. God's working with me to be able to help others see what that truth is." The moment they start doing that they're cut off from God.

They're not serving God. They become oppressive to God's people because God desires His people to have the truth, to be strong with the truth and when someone comes along and moves people away from it that's oppression, and the worst kind, being oppressive, evil.

She did not trust in the Eternal. Over and over I think of what Paul said in different ways at different times, too, to remember where you learned these things, from whom you have learned these things. Because it reveals something about God, God's government, that it's real. There is a way that God works in His Church. It's not about lifting anybody up and being great or whatever. On the contrary, it's about the truth.

She did not trust in the Eternal. She did not draw near to her God. How do you do that? Well, through repentance. It's a process of repentance. That's how we draw closer to God. It's a continual fight, seeing ourselves, desiring to see self, desiring to change.

Verse 8—Therefore, wait upon Me, says the Eternal, until the day that I rise up to the prey. Well, it's what we're supposed to do. We're supposed to hang on with all of our being, seeking to place God first in our lives, in our thinking, seeking to change and grow as He works with us, and teaches us. So, God says, "Wait on Me." So, we do, looking forward to the time that these things are fulfilled. Learning in the process.

"...until the day that I rise up to the prey." We should understand what that means, "the prey." That which is going to be taken care of. One source quotes this as, "The day of My revelation of judgment." That was pretty good. Sometimes, every once in a while, there is that which comes along, and I thought, that's really what it's about. That's good.

My not "determination," the word, My judgment is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour out upon them My indignation - by anger aroused by that which is unjust, obviously. ...even all My burning anger. For all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My zealouslyness. So, that's how God describes what's going to happen at the end here.

Then I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Eternal. I think of how, especially, I think about things that are written in the book of John, when you start through the book of John and Christ talks to Nicodemus and Nicodemus can't understand how he can be born again. "Crawl back into my mother's womb? It's just all physical to him. He couldn't grasp any of these things.

Then it goes on to talk about the woman at the well. Christ talking about how, "If you don't drink my blood and eat my flesh," and to so many, it says, "many quit following him after that time," because this was hideous to them as a Jew, you know, to eat human flesh, drink human blood.

But different examples, this is one of those things that used to be talked about in the Church, “Well, I wonder what it’s going to be, what that language is going to be if it’s going to be a mixture of English or cleaning up of certain things.” It’s always, what’s so grand about English? We’ve messed up so many things. But anyway, it’s like it’s not about that at all.

Couldn’t see the spiritual part of it. It’s by how we use whatever language we speak, whatever language there is. Whether there comes a time when perhaps on the earth we’ll be united more in a single language, don’t know. We’ll have to wait and see. There may be a reason why it’s to just remain the way it is. I don’t know. We don’t know. God hasn’t shown that yet.

But this is about how we use the language we have, that it’s pure. No more garbage in it. No more wrong talking. No more deception and lies. Just the fact alone of being one Church and learning one truth, God’s not going to allow deceptive religious things to come along. So, it’s whatever comes out of the mouth of people is going to be along the lines that God has given, that it’s going to be right, pure in that respect.

...a pure language that they may call upon the name of the Eternal to serve Him with one consent. Because the truth is going to be everywhere so we’re going to be able to believe the same thing. Not that everyone will choose that but...

Verse 11—In that day you will not be ashamed for all you have done wherein you have transgressed against Me, for then I will take away out of the midst of you those who rejoice in their pride. And you will no more be haughty toward My holy mountain. God’s establishing His government, but He’s going to establish that very powerfully in the Church as well.

I will also leave in the midst of you an afflicted, “humble” as the word is (also meaning that), and poor people who will trust in the name of the Eternal. Well, God’s offered that to us, to be of that mindset. You have to work at it and so will they, but it’ll be able to be accomplished far more easily then.

The remnant of Israel will not do iniquity nor speak lies, and neither will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth. Well, that’s the way we’re supposed to be in the Church, isn’t it? And yet these things happen, and they’re not supposed to happen. But, again, God’s showing what the earth is going to be like, what mankind upon the earth, as a whole, is going to be like during that period of time, the Millennium.

For they shall feed and lie down, and none will make them afraid. Beautiful. None of the problems like we have on the earth today with the kind of oppression that comes from governments. Not specifically about the Church. Obviously, that won’t be there. But within corporations, within governments, and so forth.

Verse 14—Sing, O daughter of Zion! That’s about God’s Church. **Shout, O Israel!** It’s about God’s Church and what we’re to become. **Be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!** So, just pounds it home more and more it’s about God’s people.

The Eternal has taken away your judgments; He has cast out your enemy. So again, it’s about repentance, the ability people are going to be given through a Passover to have what we have, what the Church has had for the past two thousand years that so many have turned against.

The King of Israel, even the Eternal, is in the midst of you. You will not see evil anymore. Not like we do in the world today.

I’ll tell you what, this world is getting scary, it really is. I’m dumbfounded by how bad it is out there, how much worse it’s getting. What children are being taught in schools - pure evil. Absolute evil. Sick, sick, sick. And then the cities. I think of the frog in the pot and when it’s been boiled—I don’t know if you’ve ever heard that example—and if you do it slowly it just gets cooked. Supposedly. If it’s hot already it’s going to jump out. But that’s kind of the way, in that respect, with that kind of an analogy, that people in cities are. They’ve become used to, accustomed to gradual evil building up and they’re not appalled.

I can look at certain areas and say, “Why do you still live there?” Now, some people are moving out of certain areas of the cities or country or whatever because they want something different for their families, they want to be in a different area. When I go back to some of those areas, into some of those areas I am absolutely appalled at how bad they are, how much worse they’ve gotten over time. Have no desire to be there whatsoever. Don’t even want to be in those environments. And yet there are people by the millions living in these places. But they don’t understand what they’re in. Sad. Very sad.

The King of Israel, even the Eternal, is in the midst of you. You shall not see evil anymore. In that day it will be said to Jerusalem, Do not fear. And to Zion, Do not let your hands hang down in weakness. Be strong. That’s what’s going to follow. **The Eternal your God in the midst of you is mighty. He will save; He will rejoice over you with joy.**

I think of the sermons we’ve had before some of this, understanding what God’s creating, understanding we’re to place our trust in God. That’s what this is about, trust in God, looking to God for deliverance, and then understanding about His love even as it says here, “He will save; He will rejoice over you with joy.”

He will, as the word is, **work in you or work in His love.** That’s what He’s doing in the Church, helping us to understand that even more deeply.

He will joy over you with singing. I will gather My afflicted, as it is. **I will gather My afflicted from the appointed time.** What an amazing thing the word that’s used here, an

appointed time. Not a Holy Day in this particular case but a time that God appointed long, long ago before anything was ever created, an appointed time. He determined appointed times as far as Sabbaths and Holy Days at that time as well in His plan for mankind and what we're to be taught, what we're to learn, and so forth, a seven-day cycle and all those things, what He was going to create. But He also appointed this time at the end of six thousand years and what would take place on the earth and for the Church as well.

I will gather my afflicted from the appointed time who are of you, who have been bearing the reproach. Six thousand years people have been worked with, people have been called, worked with by God. And what He's called us to, especially within the Church, isn't easy. It wasn't meant to be easy. Right away there are problems. Problems within families, problems on the job, the way people think toward you, and your willingness to stand firm in that and hold your head up high, that can be a great battle for people. And it is. It's not easy. You have to go tell a teacher you're going to take your children out of school for a certain period of time. Heard tons of stories of things people have gone through, parents have gone through when they do that. It's not easy. But you do it because it's right before God.

And over and over again. On the job, the Sabbath, you've been working on the Sabbath, Friday nights, or whatever it might be, and you have to go in and talk to them. It's not meant to be easy. They don't love you for that. People don't love you for your choices and what you do and what you stand for. The more they learn about it sometimes the more this gnaws in their own minds and the only way they can react is against you. Because that's what they do toward God anyway, this natural carnal mind.

Verse 19—Behold, I will deal with all who have been afflicting you at that time. And I will save those who are lame and gather those driven out. And I will set them up for praise, to be praised, and famous in every land where they have been put to shame. We have no comprehension what's going to take place once individuals who live into the Millennium, who have been a part of the Church experience that, how God lifts them up, and especially those who are a part of the 144,000 as well, when they're lifted up.

For I will make you famous and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, says the Eternal. Well, awesome here, Zephaniah, what it's saying. But to grasp it's about the end-time, and it's about the Church, about God's judgment, about where we're going and why, it's awesome.

To understand it's about, all of it's about God's love. It's about God's love for His Family, for His people, and what He's going to do for them, His focus. Just to understand that this book is about this time. It's about us. It should move us to understand God's planning and His love toward us so long ago before we were ever called, obviously.

Further into the series *The Love of God* then we went on to an area in Romans 8. We'll go back over there, Romans 8:13.

It's some very sobering things throughout this series that we've been going through, and this one here especially, and it's building up to even more sobering things in the next series, and then eventually the Feast of Tabernacles.

Romans 8:13—For if you live after the flesh you will die. As human beings, we don't think that through, and even so many within the Church have never really thought this through and what that really means. Because it comes to a point where a person can so deceive themselves that they don't believe this for what is true and what is being said here because they can't see it anymore. It's amazing what happens to the mind and how people lose the truth.

Someone was telling me here recently that they have a relative that they didn't realize had been in one of the scattered groups and had some difficulty there evidently, and I don't know whether they left or was put out of that group, or whatever it might be. If they were put out then... I don't want to go there. But they went to a Church of God Seventh Day.

It wasn't too long after the Apostasy, we were in the Houston area for nearly seven years, and very close to a lot of people down there. One of the families that we were fairly close to very early on for that seven years, one of the things they did toward the end, they were very close to the minister there that was in the Church, but they knew of certain things, and it affected their thinking, but they made a choice to go to the Church of God Seventh Day. Blew my mind!

Why there of all the choices? Do you know what they teach? Do you know what they don't teach? Do you think they teach the Holy Days, the annual Holy Days? How can you leave that? How can you go away from that after all you've been taught so early on, too? How can you do that? Mind-boggling to think that could happen.

But human reasoning can lead people in all those directions to justify, to think they're right because of something they see that they feel is so wrong that it justifies making some really dumb decisions, leaving things of the trunk of the tree that we should know so deeply.

"For if you live after the flesh," self, self is right, God says "you're going to die." Means what it says. When your mind changes it's not so easy to return, even if resurrected later on and you see a world that's been totally changed after a thousand years. And you, perhaps, were in Philadelphia, perhaps in Laodicea, all that far, perhaps all the Apostasy, and you saw all these things, but you lost them, turned against God. To be resurrected later on you think it's going to be all that easy for people to just all of a sudden repent and all of a sudden agree with

God now because of what they've done to their mind? Tough things. Can it happen? Sure, people can repent. Will they?

For if you live after the flesh you will die. But if you through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you will live. That doesn't stop. As long as we're in God's Church we're striving to fight this, selfishness, "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." They're always there, always there. Differing levels, differing things that happen. But it's still there as long as you're in the flesh.

For you have not received the spirit of bondage again, in other words, for the purpose of fear. We went through that and talked about that. **But you have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father.** What an awesome thing. Sometimes we don't treasure that to the depth we should, the ability to cry out to God on a personal basis and have it so deeply in our mind that we know He is our Father and He's filled with love toward every one of us. He wants to see us succeed and He wants us to have that same mind toward one another. We want to see each other succeed.

That doesn't mean we allow for sin and tolerate sin within the Body. Because there comes a point where that has to be dealt with. So, we have to repent. But we want everyone to be able to repent and be able to be in the Body, to be able to be in God's Family. Then it boils down to, we understand, choice. But we shouldn't get in the way of that. We shouldn't hinder that. We shouldn't be an obstacle to that in their lives.

The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. All a matter, again, of the love of God and if we're really striving to exercise that same mind. Because that's what we're supposed to do, the mind of God. We're to think and agree with Him, seek to be of the same thinking, the same thoughts, the same mind in the sense of the process we go through of thinking about others. God like. The history of the Church hasn't been too good in that regard.

Verse 17—and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. What more could a human being ever desire? It can't be our way, and that's the problem. Too often we get in the way, and we want something to be our way. We want this, we want to be in God's Family, we want to live forever, but we want to do it our way. It's a brain scratcher - head-scratcher.

...heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so... It can't be our way and that's the whole problem. It's God's way. Or as the expression sort of goes "or the highway." We have a choice. We always do all through our calling. I marvel at how many people have made the wrong choice. This room should be packed today. It should be much, much larger. Should be humongous, but it's not. Incredible.

...joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, in that regard, in the sense of knowing what that love is all about, that we also may be glorified together.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which is to be revealed in us. So often we got caught up in our own physical lives and we go through hardships, and we start playing the violin, start feeling sorry for ourselves. Can't do that. We need to hold on to what we believe and what we know that God's offering us. That's what all the suffering is for.

For the earnest expectations of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. That's what it's all about. It's about God's Family. It's why we're called.

I hope it boggles everyone's mind to think that the majority in the past two thousand years have given this up, turned their back on it. Astounding!

We talked about these following verses here as we go on down to verse 29, how that they've not really been grasped as deeply as they need to be within the Church. But it takes time to grow in understanding of what God tells us and He's giving us that opportunity to grab a hold of this even that much more right now, to become more at one with Him and His thinking, His mind, His being.

Verse 29—For whom He did foreknow, He also determined beforehand to be conformed to the image of His Son. So again, a part of God's plan that in time we're all going to be able to be called - in our time, in God's time, I should say, for us, whatever that might be. Because He chooses whom He will when He wills and so forth.

Moreover, whom He determined beforehand, those He also called. So, what an incredible thing that God's purpose is to fulfill 144,000. His purpose is also to have a small portion, not very large, to live into a new age, just a few. Incredible. So few who are going to be a part of something that continues on into a new age as the Church continues on. It's not going to die out, it's going to continue on. And to be a part of that whatever, whether it's the last of the finishing touches of the 144,000 or whether it be those who live on into a new age?

So, God determined all those things and He's called people at different times to fill those in, to fill in the Temple, to fill in this phase of the Temple that's getting ready to go into, who live physical into a new age.

...those He also called. And whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. It's not just as a matter of waiting until we're finally spirit and in God's Family. That's what our desire is. That's what we hold on to. But it's understanding what it means to carry God's name now. We've been glorified. We've been given the greatest blessings over six thousand years that any human being could be given. Very few have ever been in that category.

To be called by God, to have a relationship with God, to know what we know. I think that fits in the category of being glorified already. To bear God's spirit in our minds? To know that it's in there, that He's given us the impregnation of something growing inside of us in the human mind, that's transforming the way we think because we want to think differently. We don't want to be selfish. We don't want to hurt people. But selfishness always hurts people.

That's the ugly thing about selfishness, it always hurts others! Because it wants its own way, and somewhere along the line others are going to get in the way of that selfishness and that hurts. It's never rewarding. Selfishness is never rewarding; it just sucks life out of people, creates drama, hardship. Not peace. Drama, drama, drama. That's what it creates.

God says we have the blessing of being able to be glorified, and we've already received a huge chunk of that already right now in our lives.

Verse 31—What shall we say of these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? What an incredible confidence we should have, boldness that we know these things, and we hold on to these things with all of our being. And we don't care, we don't worry about - we care, but more for them, those who are against us. We look forward to the time when they're going to have the ability to see themselves like we are blessed to see ourselves. Which isn't always fun when we see our self in a spiritual mirror and realize, "You're ugly!"

We should be able to say that about ourselves, our human nature. It's just downright ugly. Selfishness... I loathe selfishness. I hate it. I have a lot of it, we all do, but we have to be able to see it, so we know what to repent of and what the fight is. We look forward to the time of getting rid of it to where we don't have that kind of a mind ever. But as long as we're in this body we're going to have it, it's going to be there. Sometimes, just way too much. To my liking, a little bit is way too much.

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with him freely give us all things? Who shall accuse against (as the words really are), **God's elect?** Bring accusation against God's elect? Don't have to worry about that, if we're in God's hands. It's going to happen, people are going to find fault, they're going to say things about you. They can't help it.

It is **God**, and the word is not "justifies," it literally, **declares as righteous**. What can be greater?

Who is it that condemns? Gives judgment against us, God's people. Nobody except Christ and God.

It is **Christ** who died, yes, rather, who has risen again, who is at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession or intercedes for us. Beautiful scriptures.

Verse 35—Who shall separate us from the love, the agape of Christ? Well, sadly, the majority have gone by the wayside, and they've been separated. But that was by their own choices. There is a lot of power in that, isn't there, our choices, "my" choices? We can only always blame ourselves. Can't blame others for our woes, our problems, or difficulties; whatever we think in life we can only blame self, by our choices. Because we can always choose God, God's way, to do it His way. Because He has told us how to address everything in life, everything in life if we comprehend that.

So, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" God's love, agape?

Indeed, I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers. So, this brings us back to how convicted are we God is first in our life? Because that depends how boldly we can say these things, as to whether we believe this with all of our being. Absolutely nothing is going to take us away from this way of life. It's a conviction or it's not.

...nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other thing in creation shall be able to separate us from the love, again, the agape of God which is in Joshua the Christ our Lord. So again, always mentioning him because it begins with Passover, understanding we have to repent to receive of God's spirit, to receive of God's mind, to receive of God's love, and it enables us to exercise it toward others because we're seeking to do what's right in our thinking toward others, our judgment toward others, what's said out of our mouth toward others, about others.

2 Thessalonians 2. Whenever you hear that an alarm ought to go off. What's in 2 Thessalonians 2? The Apostasy, the man of sin, the son of perdition. Crazy, amazing what we've gone through.

So, we're going to revisit a portion of this concerning what happened at the Apostasy. We've already talked a little bit about that today. It's hard not to go through this particular age and not think about those things and then what followed and God raising up PKG and how blessed to have this.

2 Thessalonians 2:9, speaking of the man of sin and those who followed, **Whose coming is after the working of Satan.** What an incredible thing to think that someone who had the ability to be in the environment of the Church, to be taught by God's apostle, could go to this extreme to be classified in this regard. There's more coming in the next series about this.

...with all power, and signs, and lying wonders. Because when people begin to move away from the tree, the trunk of the tree, from the truth, and hold on to other things they want you to see or to know or to teach you that's different from what you've been taught, there is power there. It's not theirs and it's not from God. There is power that works there because

there is a being out there who would love to see anyone go by the wayside. Satan, the demonic world has wanted that from the beginning of time for anyone whom God has called.

Going through and reading a part of Job the other day here and thinking what an incredible thing it took to bring him to a point of conversion, if you will, toward the end, and how he relied upon himself and his own righteousness, and the strength of that in a physical plane but not with God. God reasoning back and forth with him. I marvel at some of these things, the power then once God is involved and what people can see and how God opens up our minds to see things that we otherwise can't see. Takes His holy spirit.

And so again here, it's talking about this "power, signs, and lying wonders" that works out there. And of course, in that story of Job, the reason I was mentioning that, is because God's kind of nudging Satan there, "See My servant, Job?" You know, that's what He does to the Church. Satan hates anyone who wants God's way of life, who lives God's way of life. It's like, "There they are, look at the choices they're making." That's for a purpose and sometimes we get attacked.

Matter of fact, that can affect your prayers if you understand some of that because sometimes we want relief maybe for ourselves or for someone else who's going through various trials. But always put in there, "Unless it's for the purpose of being able to learn something that can't be learned any other way." And sometimes his attacks and what he's allowed to do we can learn things from it.

Because God is there to help us. I don't care what we go through He's there to help us through it. You can have the worst attacks that come from even a spirit world and if you're striving to be right with God and you're looking to God for help to go through whatever trial it is God will use that to help mold and fashion you, to learn things that you otherwise couldn't even learn. So, hope you understand what I'm saying there in the midst of that then.

So, sometimes we like to have all trials, certain things taken away from us or from others, and yet it needs to be with that context, "Unless there be something in there that helps them to be saved, to grow, to mature, to be made ready, to be part of the 144,000, whatever they're being molded for, to live on into a new age, then so be it, so be the trial." In other words, "God's will be done."

We always have things we want and desire to see in our lives and in the lives of others but we always needs to have that last part on there, "Not my will but Yours be done," with that understanding.

...and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in those who perish because they did not receive agape. What an awesome thing. This isn't to the world. This was to the Church. This was to the Worldwide Church of God as an organization during the time of Laodicea and those

things that began to happen during that period of time. The love of God began to wax cold, became less and less because God's spirit was becoming less and less through that period of time.

Pride was at an all time high. That's the way it was spiritually. Lukewarmness was definitely at an all time high, being lukewarm, not on fire for God's way of life. Horrible, the things the Church went through. "Not my will but Yours be done." We learned from it. What incredible lessons we've learned to be a part of that and be here today. Exceedingly blessed.

"Because they did not receive the love of the truth." That's the history of Laodicea, people moving away from the truth that God gave through Herbert Armstrong. That's what the whole history was about, and God allowed it to happen showing what people do, can do when impregnated with His own spirit, which is worse than what Lucifer did.

...did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause, God will send them strong delusion. The word means "wandering." That's what happens to the mind. The farther it goes, the longer people are asleep, and when they've had opportunities (which so many have) to address various things of what they believe and what their organization has done or is doing that in so many cases there are points that they know the truth, or they know something is wrong but will not repent. Sad.

So, what happens? They begin to wander, wander away even from the Holy Days, but still holding on to, they think, the Sabbath because they keep the Sabbath, that Church of God Seventh Day. No Holy Days. Astounding the mind can wander that far away from the truth. That's what this is about.

...shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. You begin to believe a lie if you don't believe in the Holy Days anymore, if you believe you only have to keep the seventh day Sabbath. What's gone on in the mind? What's taken place? Or even if they go someplace else where there is a Feast of Tabernacles, perhaps, because they still think that they should keep the Feast of Tabernacles but believe in an organization that's teaching lies? How do you justify those things? But the carnal mind can because it wanders farther away from the truth and God's spirit isn't there working with it anymore. Sad.

...so that they all be judged (as the word is here), **that they all be judged who do not believe the truth.** They had opportunity. It's not about the world, it's always about the Church in these things. We either have the ability to hold onto the truth, and where we start not agreeing with it, we start thinking something else is true that wasn't given to us through God's Church.

...but well pleased in unrighteousness. How could that be? You think people really believe that they're "well pleased with unrighteousness?" They don't get it, but they are because

that's what they've chosen. They've chosen something that's not righteous anymore and they're pleased with that. That's why they left. Incredible!

We have to be able to see these things that we're going through. We have to see them spiritually so that we become stronger in spirit, more at one with God, so that we can see the things we need to really get rid of, that we still hold on to, and recognize how dangerous they are. Because they're only a hop, skip, and a jump away from what people have done through time. We can't let that happen in the smallest - what we might consider the smallest of things - because there is nothing too small if it disagrees with God. If it disagrees with God it's just wrong. It has to be repented of or else the mind will wander away from the truth, and you can't help it because you begin to be cut off from God's spirit.

You know, I don't want to see anyone have to go through that in God's Church before Christ returns, but it continues to happen. It happens constantly over and over and over again. But that's everyone's choice. God's given us all the ability to choose.

Verse 13—But we are bound, the word means "owe it." This is what we owe. We owe this, to **give thanks always to God for you**. We owe that to one another as well. We owe this to God concerning one another, that we're in the Body together. We owe that right relationship in our relationships with one another.

Then it goes on to say, **always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord**. So what's that say? That's how we should think toward each other. All of us. Not just Paul and what he's saying and how he thinks as an apostle of God that he was, but every one of us the same thing.

Because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit. Every one of us. We should see each other that way. We've all been called by God. That's why it's so dangerous for us to judge each other, to look down on one another, to find fault with one another. If there is something wrong then there's a way to address that, but so often things aren't a matter of sin, they're just what we consider right and wrong.

Because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth. That's an awesome scripture! He's given us the ability to believe the truth through the power of His holy spirit. The rest of the world hasn't. And how many in the Church have lost that? Most.

2 Thessalonians 3:3—But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you. That's what we have to hold on to, to know that God is going to establish us, help us be fully established, through all of us, as we continue on holding on to this. We have it made if we'll just do what we've been given to do.

But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and keep you from evil. A lot said there as you're going to find out in the next series.

Now, we have confidence in the Lord toward or concerning you, that you will also do the things which we charge you. I would say that's really probably realistically more of a hope. At that time, the way Paul felt and understood, he felt that kind of confidence, if you will, that you will also do those things. And when we preach, that's what we desire. But after a time and experience of what's happened in the Church knowing that that's not going to be fully true with everyone because of the power of choice, that some are going to choose something different.

So that the Lord direct your hearts into the love... So, this is what we should all want for each other, **to the agape, the agape of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.**