

The title of this sermon is *They Followed*. They Followed. Before we go into this topic it would be an advantage if we just established some facts. And if you'd like to turn to **Matthew 4:17**, and this is just at a period; John the Baptist had been placed in prison. **Matthew 4:17 - From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, repent: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.** In other words, a change is required because the way to the Kingdom has now arrived. Jesus Christ is the way to the Kingdom.

**Verse 18: And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishermen.** So that was their work and of course there has to be a mindset to understand the next verse...that they had a particular mindset; **And He said to them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.** So this 'follow me' is what the sermon is about. The sermon is about following Jesus Christ, following God and what is required in that. And that's what we're going to go into today. So, **follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.** In other words, **follow where I am going and I will make you**, talking to the disciples, **fishers** – the ability to catch men in the sense of support them and help them...**to bring them into a unified state.** So there was an opportunity there. And going... **And immediately they left their nets, and followed Him.** So how many of us would do that. You're in the middle of your work, panel beating or whatever and somebody comes past and says, "Leave what you're doing and follow me." Not too many in reality. So there had to be a state of mind that they were looking for something. They were aware of the prophecies in the Old Testament, alright? So they then followed. So it requires a state of mind.

So this is exactly the same as a calling that God has given to us which is, "Follow me." Follow me. And of course the choice to follow is part of our calling, and we're going to look at that.

**So immediately they left their nets, and followed Him. Verse 21 - And going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; He called them. And immediately they left the boat,** so they left their means of support of employment, **and their father**, a requirement to leave family. Does it sound familiar? Some have had to leave their employment because of a calling; some have had to leave family because of a calling, **they left their boat and their family, and followed Him.** So the question really begs now for us. Who are we really following? Here, it was clear who they were following.

So let's have a quick look at **John 10:30**; we're just going to touch on this. **John 10:30 - I and My Father are one.** So, if we are following Jesus Christ we are following God the Father. If we're following God the Father we're following Jesus Christ because clearly here from scripture they are of the same mind. There's no division involved at all. So Christ and His Father are in complete unity, one in purpose, mind and intent: in complete agreement in all matters. The point being if we follow Christ we are in fact following His Father, the Eternal God. So that's something important when we go through the rest of these scriptures, to look at it. It was God the Father who chose the disciples. It was God the Father who calls and then they followed the lead that was provided.

**John 14:9**; we're still going on this point about who we are really following here. **John 14:9 - Jesus said to him, which is Philip, Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father;** now this, of course, is not about a physical sight. This is about actions and words so that everything Jesus Christ did and said, it was the same as God the Father doing it

because they were in complete unity. **You have seen the Father so how can you say, Show us the Father?** So Jesus Christ was the word of God, had the mind of God dwelling in flesh. So if you're following Christ, you're following God.

**Verse 10 – Do you not believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak of my own: but the Father who dwells, or lives, in me does the works.** So the credit was given to God. Now there's an interesting scripture which we won't turn to but remember the disciples... I think it was Peter's shadow, or something like that had happened and the people were staring at Peter and he said, "Why are you staring at me, that I did something?" He diverted all the attention and the credit back to the source of where it came from, which is God. That's where all the credit goes to for we as humans by ourselves – we can do nothing. Like Jesus Christ said, "I can do nothing of myself." The glory always goes back to God.

**Verse 11 - Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the works' sake.** ...or the evidence, the work itself; the evidence was there that God was doing it. It's God's power that did these things. It was God that did the miracles, but it was done through Jesus Christ. So Christ and His Father think and act exactly the same. So if we follow Christ, we are in fact following the lead of God the Father and it's important to have that as we go forward.

**Matthew 8:18 – And Jesus here had cast out some demons and had healed some people. Matthew 8:18 – And when Jesus saw the great multitude about Him, He gave the command and departed to the other side. And when a certain scribe came to Him, and said Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.** Now that's a statement that we basically make at baptism. That's a statement we made at baptism. **I will follow you wherever you go.** Now this was of course looking at a physical level here but we spiritually have made that same commitment.

**Verse 20 - And Jesus said to him, foxes have holes,** relaying something here physical because that's the only thing he can understand at this point – physical, **foxes have holes,** they have a location to rest, **and birds of the air have nests;** again, something physical, **but,** now something spiritual is put in, **but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head.** In other words, it's not about a physical location. If you follow Jesus Christ, this is not just about something physical. Jesus Christ had a home to go to, but He's saying He had nowhere to lay His head. He's talking about something spiritual. In other words, there is no rest when you enter a spiritual battle. You know, there's no, I'll just have a rest here. ...**foxes have holes,** go and have a rest... but in God's Church once you are called and the mind battle begins there is no rest. And when we rest, we've got problems. We've stopped the fight. We've stopped the battle. So could this person follow? Do you really want to follow? ...me? Jesus Christ is really saying...you sure you really want to follow me? - because this is not going to be easy; because there is no rest when it comes to a spiritual battle.

**Verse 21 - then another disciple said to him, Lord, let me go first and bury my father.** So now we're looking at something completely physical. It's about a priority. This person wanted to 'get my life in order and then I'll follow you'. I'll get things organized first. Well, when we're called, it's something we have to face – it's about a priority, physical or spiritual. One of them is going to be a priority in our lives and at different times these things do happen. Sometimes the spiritual isn't a priority then due to pressures or whatever, we tend, because we're physical, to put physical things ahead of the spiritual. Now, most that have been awakened can testify to that quite simply. It is about a priority. The things of God that are important become second! ...and therefore going to work, missing prayer or study, gotta go to work, gotta start at 7:30, get home at 6:00 – very tired. I'll do it tomorrow. I'll get my prayer done

tomorrow...because it's about priorities. So the question is: What is it going to cost you to be a disciple? That's the question... What's it going to cost you to be a disciple?

**Verse 22 - But Jesus said to him, Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead.** So how can that happen? How can somebody dead bury their own dead on a physical level? Well, they can't can they? Someone physically dead can't bury the dead. He's talking spiritually to them so they can't understand again of course. So let the spiritual dead, if you're spiritually dead – well go and bury your own – do whatever you want to, because if you're going to put a priority that God is second in your life and you put the physical first... that's what Jesus Christ is saying. So these people couldn't follow because Jesus Christ... unless you're called, and have God's spirit to understand spiritual language and matters: they couldn't. They just simply couldn't understand it.

So, **He got into the boat and His disciples followed Him.** So His disciples at this stage are still following. They're following where Jesus Christ is leading.

**Luke 9:61** - this is just an addition to Matthew 8. **Luke 9:61** – so this is a bit more added to that previous scripture. **And another said to Him, I will follow You; but let me first go and bid them farewell, who are in my house.** Now that, the Greek word there is 'follow one who proceeds; join as a disciple.' So here he's saying, I will follow you as a disciple, but let me first go and bid farewell to my household. Again, this is about priorities. What is the priority? **But Jesus said to him, No one, having put his hand to the plough, something physical, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.** So, brethren, once called, baptized, have received of God's spirit, we have put our hand to the plough. We have started a work. God has started a work *in* us and we have to work. We have to work. We have to discipline the mind; the battle in the mind over a lifetime.

We were talking to someone earlier about enduring to the end. When I was first called in God's Church I thought I understood what 'enduring to the end' is. I had no idea what 'enduring to the end' was. ☺ Because I was actually looking at it physically. 'Enduring to the end' is a spiritual battle to the end. It's about not giving up and that when you fall, you get up, you repent, you take it to God again. 'Enduring to the end' is *enduring* to the end, and it's a battle. It's not an easy path. So we can't look back because when we start to look back, it's like when they came out of Egypt looking back... looked back at the physical. Well, I had a good job then and I gave up my job because of the Sabbath. You start looking back. I had all this, all of these physical things... and you can't look back. God requires that once you've put your hand to the plough we cannot look back at anything physical because actual fact, in time we come to see the physical is worthless – absolutely worthless. It's worthless and that's something that grows in our mind that we begin to see.

So once called we should not look back and desire the things of the past. And if you examine ourselves; if we look back at what we've desired – we desired sin. We were comfortable in our sin...and when we look back, we actually become complacent with it all and think, oh yeah, it wasn't too bad. No, we were riddled with sin, but we couldn't see it. So we're not to look back and desire sin and the things of the world.

The main point here is – Will we follow no matter what? And that's a relevant question for everybody in God's Church, no matter how long we've been in the Church. Will we follow no matter what? And I've known people that have put their hand to the plough and will not follow no matter what. What is the cost? **EVERYTHING!** *Everything* physical... everything physical could go. That's the cost and what should we count that as? Nothing! Absolutely nothing – temporary, passing away, it's not going to be around

much longer? So what... there's no cost. It's about a state of mind of understanding the cost looks terrible and it's to lose a wife or a husband or a child or a family, or a job –it looks so bad, but Jesus Christ is saying here it's about priorities and when you think about the timeline we're in. What is it we're giving up? It's all going to go! It looks bad from a physical point of view, but if we understand the spiritual connotation, and if we're spiritually minded, we should be able to count the cost and know that yes, it may require everything physical.

So what will it take for us not to follow? It's another question: What will it take for us *not* to follow? When I first was called in God's Church...and I'm a person who survey's things. Sometimes when I'm asking you questions you don't know what I'm doing, but... because often I find that there's things I'm not clear about and I find I ask about that and ask about that, for example: Niagara Falls. I had the opportunity that I could I go there. So I thought... well, I don't really know what it's like. I know it's a big hole in the ground, so I'd survey some people. So I'd say to this one, you've got to go there – it is amazing! Another person says, it's a waste of time, it's a hole in the ground – see? So when I came to God's Church I could not grasp why somebody would leave God's Church – being newly called. Had the truth, was excited by it all... Why would this person leave God's Church? And I'd ask somebody and I got a variety of answers. Mr. Armstrong said it was about government. Now, I thought I understood what that was about. Back then I looked at government as being the ministry. That's what I thought. So as I went on, people would leave and I'd say, "They've got a government problem." Yes, in part that is true but as I went on further and I kept on thinking about this topic... It is about government, but more importantly I learned about anti-Christ and that actually answered my question. Why does somebody leave the body of Christ? Why does somebody leave God's Church? Because God the Father and Jesus Christ are no longer living, dwelling, in them. *Government!* They reject the government of God in their life. Can you see the difference? And that's something that has taken me years of asking questions. Now I fully understand why someone would leave the body of Christ. Because of sin and sin cuts them off and God the Father and Jesus Christ can no longer live their life in them. The truth can no longer dwell in them and if truth doesn't dwell in them – we're back to where we started – the natural mind: and we'll make our own decisions with the so called wisdom that we think we have – based on our own priorities.

So, have we counted the cost of following God? And that's all of us. It's something that we need to continually check in our own minds. Is it something that is said that will shake us? Is there something that's said that shakes us? Well, that's when we really need to start checking our mind – where we're really at. The need to hear God's voice and to follow His voice has never been more important in God's people – never more important. And this is about 'enduring'. It's never been more important to hear God's voice. History shows that God has provided the lead for His people, but they have not always followed, they have not always heard His voice and followed. The main point is that God does provide the lead. The question is: Will we follow? That's very straight forward.

Since 31 A.D. God appointed apostles and prophets to teach and lead His people. So in this end-time will we hear God's voice? And I'm harping back on this because I know that at certain times where I thought that I was doing reasonably well as far as unity of doctrine... but sometimes things are said and done that it does make you pause a little. And then I had to examine myself and I realized what the problem was. The problem was me – fortunately God gave me the mercy to see that – the problem was me. But *why* did that happen to me? Why did I balk? Just even if it was for a short time? Why did I balk? And when I look back and examine myself, I found the answer: and the answer for me was that *IF* I was not continually battling the battle in my mind and changing, I became set in my ways (because I wasn't changing) so something comes that requires a change of thinking – I resisted that change. Why?

Because, see, I wasn't changing every single day and so I found the answer in myself: something that hopefully everyone listening and present here will also look at. The reason we fail to change is because we're not repenting daily and changing our mind to God's mind. We're set in our ways, you know, its set! And any change comes along, "What do you mean? It doesn't fit with what I've got written down here! I've already got it all down! – all truths!" When reality is: it's progressive truth – okay? Present truth. Present; what we know now is what we know now. But more... when God's Church stops growing and God stops revealing things; wouldn't that be a tragedy? ...with no growth? Just dormant? Like some of the groups where they've locked in truth as truth and that's it... now no more is going to be added! No further change in other words.

The question at this end-time is will we follow the lead? When we don't follow the lead given to God's Church, what we are really saying is (and I'll say it personally), When I don't follow the lead given in God's Church, what I'm really saying is, "God, I don't agree with you!" That's what we're really saying. When we don't follow the lead, we're saying to God, "I don't agree with you and Jesus Christ!" We just simply don't agree. We're going to do it our way.

Let's look at **Genesis 19**. Past examples can teach us a lot. And this example of course was the background of Abraham and that two angels had come – angels manifested as men and God sent the two angels down to take Lot out of Sodom and Gomorrah. So **Genesis 19:1**, we're going to go through this story from the point of view of 'following' and just how we act as humans. **Now the two angels, of course manifested as men, came to Sodom in the evening; and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom: when Lot saw them he rose to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face towards the ground;** so it's a sign of respect. And of course he doesn't know they're angels. He thinks they are two men and he knows what Sodom and Gomorrah is like so he is concerned for them.

**Verse 2 - And he said, hear now, my lords, please turn in to your servants house, and spend the night, and wash your feet,** so here is Lot trying to actually protect them. He thinks they don't know what Sodom and Gomorrah is like, what they're really walking into, **then you may rise early, and go on your way.** In other words this is a short stay and get out of the place; like, get out of here. **And they said, No; but we will spend the night in the open square.** Well, Lot's not going to have this. There is no way you're going to stay out in the open square because it's not safe. **But he insisted strongly; so they turned to him, and entered his house; then he made a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.** Possibly a period that it was Unleavened Bread, in that period of time. **Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter surrounded the house,** now the cities were, of course, not like the cities of today. They were smaller and certain areas like most cities have certain proclivities where certain people congregate.

**Verse 5 - And they called to Lot, and said to him, Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them carnally.** That's added, but intent is, they were looking for a sexual relationship with these men. **So Lot went out to them through the doorway, and shut the door behind him,** So Lot's gone out to confront them and he's closed the door behind him. **And he said, please brethren,** so when you say brethren, it's part of the community. Lot saw himself as part of the community and they knew him as part of the community. **...do not so wickedly.** So Lot knew, very well, what their intentions were. **See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man;** so they were virgins, **please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish: only do nothing to these men; since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof.** So here Lot's clearly saying, "Hey listen, I brought these guys in here because I knew exactly what behaviours you were going to demonstrate towards them." So, you know, this is exactly what I thought – here it is being fulfilled.

And so Lot knew what the men were like and you might say, well, putting the two daughters out... I don't know whether you know... I've worked in certain industries where there is a proclivity to homosexuality and homosexual men have *no interest* in women. They just don't think about women as a normal man would. So presenting two daughters, which we think... whoa, how could you do that? They were not interested in two women, it wouldn't make any difference to them and so Lot knew that as well. And I'm sure he was simply thinking differently than probably the way that we would think today. But if you know how that community operates, there is no desire at all – zero – towards a woman. None.

**Verse 9 - And they said, Stand back. Then they said, This one came to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge:** In other words, you come down to our community and here you are – you're judging us. That's all you've done since you got here, telling us we're wrong. **Now will we deal worse with you, than with them. So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door.** So they thought, well, we'll sort you out. Its Australian language, "we'll sort you out." **But the men, of course being angels, reached out their hand, and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great: so they became weary of trying to find the door.** So God intervened here to make sure that Lot and whomever was in the house was actually protected.

**Then the men said to Lot, Have you anyone else here? Son in law, your sons, your daughters, or whoever you have in the city, take them out of this place:** So, that opportunity would be natural for a father to want to protect his family and his extended family. And so this opportunity was given. God provided Lot's family with an opportunity, with an opportunity – it was open to them. **For we will destroy this place, because of the outcry against them has grown so great before the face of the Eternal; and the LORD has sent us to destroy it.** So God was going to destroy it. **So Lot went out, and spoke to his sons in laws, who had married his daughters, and said, get up, get out of this place; for the Eternal will destroy this city. But his son in laws seemed that he was joking.** Does that sound familiar? We should be able to relate to this. Other than being insane, people just think, well, you know, it's not going to happen, it's just not going to happen. But I'm sure Lot was as zealous as some of us have been in telling others, "You need to do something. You need to do something." And yet got fobbed off.

**And when morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry,** so Lot is even sort of dragging his feet here – similar to a calling. You know, we can drag our feet, even with a calling. "Oh, there's no real rush." No, in actual fact there is. **...saying, Arise, take your wife, and your two daughters, who are here; lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city. And while he lingered...** You can see that he's not really wanting to leave family behind. Should ring a bell? We don't really want to leave family behind. It would be so much easier for us if we had family with us that could understand what we were talking about. But that's not God's will at this point of time. But that doesn't mean that we should linger; we should do the opposite. We should be *more zealous* now than ever because of the time we're in – with our relationship with God. *More* in the way of our zeal – towards God. We shouldn't be lingering.

So, **the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters;** in other words, dragging them literally, having to drag them out to get them out of this place. **...the LORD being merciful to him:** So it was God's mercy of course that did it. God dragged them out – had to send someone to drag them out of this world. Same as what God does with us. We have to be *dragged* out of sin because sometimes we're comfortable in it and we're not in a big hurry to get out of the sin that

we actually do know we have. We become comfortable with aspects of sin and we don't address it aggressively.

**Verse 17 - And so it came to pass, when they, the angels, brought them outside, and he said, Escape for your life; do not look behind, nor stay here anymore.** So that's our calling. We're to come out of sin. We're not to go back, not to look back – and it says; **escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.** Well, what is God's mountain? The Church: the body of Christ. Here is a safety. The sermons are spiritual safety. The protection is association with the body of Christ, the Church of God. Fellowship, unity, it's about the body of Christ that God has set up for us as a place of protection as long as we're willing to leave behind the world – we can be protected with a relationship with God. So we're not to stay in the world; we're not to look back at those things; we're to escape to what God has given. The Sabbath is a place of safety in a way for us. The fact that we can come here and be fed and protected. This is the place where you can be fed and protected by Sabbath's observance.

We're to follow the lead God gives in His Church. Now, if we don't, like Lot was told – you will be destroyed. If we do not have that relationship with God; if we're not going to fight the battle; if we're going to look back and go back to choose that choice, that's the outcome. You will be destroyed. That's the answer. It's black and white from the scripture: we have choices and those choices are everyday.

**Verse 18 - Then Lot said to them, Please no, my Lords:** and I won't go through the rest of that because basically Lot did everything to try to resist going all the way. He wanted to go to another city, somewhere closer, a little bit more convenient. Human nature.

**Exodus 13** – this is a recording of Moses coming out with the children of Israel, coming and leaving Egypt. In **Exodus 13:17 – then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines,** now what that really is saying is that there was an easier path to go. There was a path called the 'Path of the Philistines' which took them into the promised land, but God did not lead them in a way that they thought was the most logical way. Does that ring a bell? God is leading us, but it's not clear exactly what direction we're going to turn to take another direction. Will we follow whatever way? Because the path we think is right is not necessarily the right path because there could be dangers on the path where we think we should be going. So there's examples spiritually here. ... **although it was near; for God said, Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and they return to Egypt:** So, if they went that way they would see battles and this is going to be a bit hard... like "I don't think we should go this way because we get all this fighting and I don't really want to get into fighting and battle, so I think we should just go back." Well, it's no different for us brethren, we're going to have to face the battles and those battles are progressive and ongoing. They don't necessarily stop. And of course if they saw that, it's all too hard, "let's go back to where we were before. Let's go back to the sin because this battle in the mind is difficult." It is a difficult battle.

So in the beginning of our calling we are not shown everything at one time about the battles we face because we *would* turn back. If we really knew the battles we'd have to face. So God in His mercy reveals sin to us progressively. Progressively, because as we see things, the requirement on the person who sees the sin in their life is that we need to battle that particular sin. But for somebody else – God is revealing something else unique to them, and they're required to battle that sin, but it may not be *your* sin, but that's their sin and that's in the mind and therefore God reveals it in His mercy progressively: that we see things. When I look back in my life, and I can see sins that I thought I was battling years ago, and I'd say, I don't know how much I was really battling those sins. I was aware of them and did I really

battle them with zeal and you know, really fight the fight? Well, no, I don't think I did. I don't think I really fought as hard as I should have done, but the opportunity is now to fight harder. And we all can fight harder against those sins that we know we have in the mind.

**Verse 18 – So, God led the people around by the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt.** So it's interesting that God is not the author of confusion and that He adds to the truth in an *orderly* manner. And it's the same with how God reveals sin to us. It's in an orderly manner, so that growth can be orderly. A child cannot become an adult overnight by giving them extra food. It has to be done in an orderly staged way because God is a God of order. And so sin is revealed in an orderly manner so that we can deal with the sin that we are aware of; and other sins that we have we are not aware of them, although others may be aware of them. We're not necessarily aware of those sins – but God reveals to us in an orderly manner and the way He sees.

I was talking to Mr. Weinland about something that happened to me. I was in Melbourne, Australia and I was heading to the post office and there was an older gentleman ahead of me and there was quite a line at the post office and so I started to walk quickly to get ahead of him and then I checked myself and said, "no, that would be wrong." So I slowed down deliberately because I thought, "no, no, I'll let him go before me." This other person came along on the inside of me and jumped in front of me. Now I'm 3<sup>rd</sup> behind the line and I stood there and I thought of how ugly that was – that attitude looks so ugly. And I looked at him and I thought – that is the height of selfish, that is ugly... and then I thought – that's Wayne! I just saw myself. God showed me what I was going to do, you know, pride – get ahead – it was ugly – and then I saw myself and I was shocked. Sometimes that's how God works; simple things. But I thought whoa... it's terrible to see it and really did shock me. The person ahead of me didn't have a clue of course. He wouldn't look at me. He knew what he did.

**Verse 19 - And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had placed the children of Israel under a solemn oath, saying, God will surely visit you; and you shall carry my bones from here with you.** Which they did. **So they took their journey from Succoth, I think it is, and encamped in Etham, at the edge of the wilderness. And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light;** so we need to turn that into a spiritual matter because that's just, simply is physical. Lessons for us: the Eternal went before them. God is leading through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ gives truth to the Church in an orderly manner. The children of Israel, physically, were required to follow the lead that was given through Moses – right? But God in a pillar of a cloud led the way. That's how they knew where to go. God led them so that they could know where to go to! We too have a choice to follow. God is leading the way in His Church. Will we follow? **...and by night...** so in the darkest times, in darkness, there is light and that light is the truth that God has revealed to the Church. If we *EVER* begin to struggle, if we *EVER* have doubts – which at certain times doubts can enter. That's one of Satan's biggest tools, doubt. Go back to the truth that God has revealed. That is the pillar, the foundation that the Church is built on – truth. I've gone over the government sermons and there is *always* something there to learn. God does not abandon His Church. He has got government. God is leading the Church through Jesus Christ and there is leadership in God's Church and I know that as far as government is concerned that I am the issue – whether I will choose to follow – because it is a choice. **...and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light,** so spiritually God gives us light. We have light to follow. We have truth to follow and as God gives us truth there is a way if we're just willing to follow. So, **to go by the day and night:**



**Verse 22 - He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, or the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.** So, God leads us. He will not abandon us in those matters.

**And then they said to Moses, (in verse 11) Because there are no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt so with us, to bring us out of Egypt?** So here now doubts entered in. Now here we are, we've left and we've left all that behind and starting to look back... this is difficult! This is not as easy as I thought it was going to be. Well, our calling is not. Our calling is not easy. It wasn't meant to be easy because we've got to fight ourselves. That's the real battle. We've got to fight ourselves.

**Verse 12 - Is not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians?** It's like telling God, don't reveal anymore of myself to myself – I'm reasonably comfortable with what you've told me so far. Don't tell me anymore. No, it's a progressive journey. It's a journey for life. It's about enduring to the end. End of **verse 12 - ...for it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than it would be for us to die in the wilderness.**

**Verse 13 - And Moses said to the people, Do not be afraid,** to God's people – God is saying to His people. "Do not be afraid in the time we're in."...**stand still**, in a sense of not spiritually standing still, but we can see God in the Church. I believe, I hope brethren that you can see God *in* the Church; that you can see God in the Church and that you can see Jesus Christ in the Church. You should be able to see that. ...**and see the salvation of the Eternal, which He will accomplish for you today.** God is going to do what God has said He would do. We have to stand still in the sense of stay with the body of Christ. *Stand* with the people of God; stand still - God *will* deliver us. God will do exactly as He said, **for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will see again no more forever.** God will do what He said He will do. **The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.** We have to allow God to work in us, but we have to desire that. We have to desire God to fight the fight in us. We cannot overcome sin by ourselves, on our own effort. The desire to not to want to sin and to flee sin has to be in us – then we're allowing God to fight the fight for us. God will do *it* within us; He will do it in us if we allow Him.

**Verse 15 - And the LORD said to Moses, Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel, to go forward:** to go forward... and that's what God is saying to us – Go forward! **But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel will go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: Israel, and I will gain honor over Pharaoh, and over his army, and over his chariots, and his horsemen.** This, the glory will be given to God. We can give glory to God because it is God that does it.

**Verse 18 -Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the Eternal, when I have gained honor over them, over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.** So at that point of time, how will they know that the honour will be given to God? They're all dead. It's something that God did for the purpose of a resurrection. They will be resurrected to know what God did through them and they will come to understand the glory goes to God, that God is the one who fights battles. There's no point resisting God because God will win. So they await a resurrection and they're going to know that God gained something over them, but they can only know it in a resurrection.

**Verse 19 - And the angel of the Eternal, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them, and stood behind them:** In other words, it is God that provides the protection.

We looked at those physical examples of following: that if we follow - God will protect. Today we have an opportunity to hear God's voice and to follow the lead He is providing in the Church. This is a lengthy part of scripture that I'm going to go through because it's interesting to look at the questions that Jesus Christ did ask. This is concerning the healing of the blind man which was a physical encounter that the Pharisees were trying to come to grips with. In **John 9:14 - Now it was the Sabbath when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.** So basically, there was a man that had been blind from birth and Jesus Christ had made some clay and put it in his eyes and he could see. **Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, He put clay on my eyes, I washed, and I see.** So the blind man is now given the credit to Jesus Christ. **Therefore some of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.** Well, that was their understanding of the legal side of what they thought keeping the Sabbath was, but in reality they weren't actually keeping the Sabbath because unless you're hearing the truth on the Sabbath – what's the purpose of it. It's a rest – physical rest: but unless you're being fed spiritually, which they weren't, then they weren't keeping the Sabbath – but here they are in their hypocrisy accusing Christ because they looked at it physically. Working... healing a blind man on the Sabbath was work – doing good was work to the Pharisees. So they said he couldn't be from God.

**Others said, How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?** So now there's contention coming between the groups saying, "Well, hang on a minute, how can somebody that's not of God heal somebody," therefore if someone's a sinner, how can that happen? How can God be working through a sinner? So it's causing confusion for them. **Others said, How can a man who be a sinner do such signs? And there was a division among them.**

**Verse 17 - They said to the blind man again, What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes? And he said, He is a prophet.** So this is really going to go down well of course, once you have seen that. You're starting to say to the Pharisees that He is a prophet. Now, course he was blind from birth, physically. We were blind from birth. All of us were blind from birth, spiritually. We were blind, we could not see spiritually – so this miracle that Jesus did here can be seen as well – what a miracle. The miracle that God is doing with *us* is far beyond anything physical: far beyond because we were totally blind, deaf, mute, at birth, spiritually blind. So the miracle that God has done for us is far greater. To be able to open the eyes spiritually, which you can't give to anybody else. Impossible! You cannot give something spiritual to anybody else. They either see spiritual matters or they don't. It's very black and white. You're either blind, or you can see.

**Verse 18 - But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called his parents to him who had received his sight.** So you have people saying, we don't believe you were actually blind and so we'll get your parents in here to talk to them. **And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, whom you say was blind from birth?** You can see the doubt there, they're trying to discredit them. "That's what you say. He says he was, but you say it too, well, we're not really convinced." **How then does he see? His parents answered and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:** now, same for us. We know who we are, we know we were born blind, but we know we can now see. Can you convince anybody else of that? You can't, can you? It's just not possible. You can't. We were born blind spiritually. Only God can open our eyes to see spiritually, only God can heal the mind.

**Verse 21 - But by what means he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know: he is of age; ask him: and he will speak for himself.** So now the parents have diverted it back to

their son. **His parents said these things because they feared the Jews:** So they didn't want to get into debate; and there's a reason here; **for the Jews had agreed already,** so here we go - preconceived ideas, fixed in their ways, not able to change...they've already agreed to what they were going to do here. Pointless talking to them because they've already agreed what they're going to do. **...that if any one confess that He was Christ,** if they confessed that that's what it was, gave Him credit, **he would be put out of the synagogue.** In other words they'd be cast out as a family. So the parents are now feeling threatened by the Pharisees by saying, well if we go too far with this we're not going to be able to go to the synagogue anymore as a family. This is like... whoa, we'll back off, we'll put this back on our son – let him answer it. **Therefore his parents said he is of age...**

**Verse 24 – So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, Give God the glory:** now we do, okay? We do give God the glory for opening our eyes. We do actually do that. **...we know that this Man is a sinner.** So now they're trying to discredit Jesus Christ. **He answered and said, whether He is a sinner or not, I do not know: one thing I know, that, though I was blind, I now see.** Now, that should ring bells to us spiritually. I know that I was blind. I know that and I know that I could see and then I know I was blind again and then I know that I can see and no matter what you Pharisees out there in the world say, you will not change my mind. That's what he's basically saying. I know that I couldn't see; now I can. I was blind from birth.

**Verse 26 – Then they said to him again, What did he do to you?** So they're saying, well, what did Chris do? **How did He open your eyes?** So again, they're going back to the physical: they're just looking for the physical trying to solve it. **He answered and said, I told you already, and you did not listen:** that sound familiar? No point. True? They're not going to listen. **Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to also become His disciple?** Now you're really offending them. **Do you also want to become a student and learn from Him?** Whoa, what do you mean – we know everything already!

**Verse 28 - Then they reviled him,** well, that's human nature isn't it? When reviled you revile back, you know? We've got to get the upper hand, last word. Jesus Christ... when reviled He reviled not because when we revile back to get the upper hand what has entered? Pride. Pride will revile back, upper hand, last word. That's human nature. **And they said, You are His disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.** Somebody greater and you can follow Him, but we've got Moses. **We know that God spoke to Moses: as for this fellow, we do not know where he is from. And the man answered and said to them, Why, this is a marvellous thing, that you do not know from where He is from,** now your rubbing it in – true? You know everything! This is incredible that you don't know where Jesus Christ is *from*. That's like a red rag to a bull isn't it? **...and yet He opened my eyes.** Well, now you're really getting into it, you want to fight. **Now we know that God does not hear sinners: but if anyone is a worshiper of God, put's God first, and does God's will,** is obedient, **He hears him.** God hears those that put Him as a first priority, are obedient and follow – God will hear your prayers. **Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.** Now brethren, same for us. A lesson we need to learn also. We can do *nothing* unless God does it in us. It's not human effort. It's human desire, a desire of the mind; we need to desire for God and Jesus Christ to live in us but it is them that does the works. It's God that does the work in us – in and through us. That's how it happens.

**Verse 34 - They answered and said to him, You were completely born in sins, and you are teaching us?** So here again, this is a battle of pride, you know, put down, put down, put down, belittle, belittle, belittle. **And they cast him out.** Exactly what the parents said would happen because pride is unteachable. **Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, Do**

**you believe in the Son of God? And he answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe Him? And Jesus said, You have both *seen* Him, and it is He who is talking to you. And then said, Lord, I believe. And worshiped Him.** So for us it's the same. Do we believe God? How do we believe God? We believe what God gives to the Church. And in that we see truth and we should through truth see God. We should be able to see God in the Church.

**Verse 39 - And Jesus said, For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see; and that those who see, may be blind...** so taking that from a spiritual connotation: because if you're looking at that physically, it gets confusing and that's why the Pharisees and no one could understand Jesus Christ. ...**for judgement I have come into this world that those who do not see,** Wayne is one of those who didn't see, but because of Jesus Christ and the Passover, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, I see, you see; but before that we couldn't. And those who see, those who *think* they see may be made blind. They can't see. The Pharisees thought they could see but in actual fact they were blind and the more they went into it the blinder they were really, the blind leading the blind as scripture says. We did not see before we were called and the world can't understand what we see. And it's a marvellous miracle and it's a great blessing to be able to see spiritually.

**Verse 40 - then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, Are we blind also? And Jesus said unto them, If you were blind, you would not have sin; In other words, there were things that they knew that they could see working out, that they could see certain things. They could see sin. They could see it. There were many of the Pharisees that in actual fact knew that Jesus Christ was sent from God. They knew it, but they seared their conscience and went against what they knew. They went against what they knew! The evidence was there. You know, God provided the evidence through miracles that Jesus Christ was from God; they knew it; but they still went against it. Why? Power, authority, don't want to get cast out of the religion I'm in and that's what they did but they did know. If you were blind, you would have no sin, but now you say, We see; therefore your sin remains.** They were guilty - because some of them did see and they knew exactly what they were doing.

Let's turn to **John 10:1** which I think is the next part... yep, **John 10:1 – Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheep fold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.** Here Christ is now going to expound upon something that is spiritual in nature which... and yet it's put into physical terms about shepherds and sheep.

**Verse 2 - But He who enters the door is the Shepherd of the sheep.** So Christ is the Shepherd of the sheep; and we of course are the sheep. **To Him, the Shepherd, the doorkeeper opens; and the sheep hear His voice: and He calls His own sheep by name, and leads them out.** So this is about following. Now, in Australia of course, we have large flocks of sheep and sheep when they go somewhere, I don't know whether you know, but in certain pastures there is generally one particular lead sheep that walks off and when it goes, if you've ever seen sheep tracks at all, they're narrow. They're only 1 sheep wide. And so one will start off, the rest will stay there, then one will follow, one will follow, one will follow, one will follow and in certain paddocks you can see like a kilometre of sheep all in single file following the lead. One sheep leads so the farmers learned that when they want to round sheep up they use dogs and horses because it was near impossible without that extra help. When sheep are scattered, like the Church, sheep scattered and they go everywhere and they're in confusion and they don't know where to go. They don't know where to follow. So what they do is once you know the lead sheep, all you simply do is catch the lead sheep and start walking with the lead sheep and all the rest will follow because that's the simpler way rather than trying to herd them all up and, you know, chase them all around the

countryside. So, that was too slow... in today's society of course they use motorbikes and dogs, it's just... push them in a pen.

So we're called sheep and if you know sheep – it's a good name. Sheep basically don't think a lot. Sheep, as an animal – they don't think a lot. They tend to go in packs or herds, you know, if one sheep falls down a cliff, the other sheep doesn't necessarily stop and think... Wow, that sheep has fallen down the cliff; that must be dangerous. Nooo, we just try to walk past it, we go on the path, we might fall... because they don't overly think. They need to be led. The reality is sheep need to be led. And God in scripture calls us sheep, but it's understandable because we need to be led, we do need a shepherd, we do need protecting. And a good shepherd is someone who protects and so we do need that because without it, without a shepherd... I've been without a shepherd, when I was asleep, and it's hopeless.

**Verse 3 -To him, the shepherd, the doorkeeper opens; and the sheep hear His voice: and He calls His own sheep by name,** so, God and Jesus Christ know us individually – personal relationship. God knows what we think individually. God knows us individually and has a personal relationship with us and hears our prayers on a personal level. He calls us by name, even though we're part of a flock, we're called by name and leads them. Jesus Christ leads the Church. That is one of His responsibilities, that God gave to Jesus Christ - was to lead the Church. So, it begs a question. And I do feel sorry for some people, I really do and my heart goes out to some people because: we, brethren, first and foremost, must have proven to ourselves (not to anybody else) where God is. If we have not proven that this is God's true Church, I personally am distressed for you. Can you understand where I'm coming from? If you don't believe this is God's true Church; if you do not believe Jesus Christ is the head of the Church and leading the Church through an end-time prophet; if you don't *believe* that deep down into the core of our being – how can we follow? We can't follow Jesus Christ. God is working through Jesus Christ in *one location*, not in hundreds of locations. But it is something that has to be grounded into the core of our minds and our spirit! Convinced to the core of our being! Because if not, I will guarantee that you're going to have a trial, because it's something very basic that we must prove to ourselves. *This* is where God is. Something we personally, individually must prove; because if we haven't gone that far, to understand those basic scriptures that *prove* where God is... the truth is one part. The truth, understanding the truth, where God is and how God is working – we are going to face a battle – because this is about enduring to the end, not just enduring but enduring to the end, whenever that end may be. Some earlier than others, some much later, but this is a continual road of enduring to the end. So it's something I would encourage everybody in their prayers to pray about because God needs to reveal His Church to us. Those baptized, we've done that I believe, but there are many people out there that are sitting on the fence and don't really know. And one of the reasons is that they have not taken the time to prove where God is. You know, you can prove from scripture, with God's spirit, where God is. It is a core foundation to enduring to the end, to believe where God is.

**Verse 4 - And when He brings out His own sheep, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice.** Do we know the voice of our shepherd? Do we know the voice of Jesus Christ in the Church? God willing we do, and that we can hear it, that we hear God's voice. The blind man had proof in himself. The blind man had proof in himself about Jesus Christ and no matter what the Pharisees said you couldn't take it from him – true? Because he says, hey – you can say whatever you want to, *I know* what happened to me. Same with us brethren. We should know, within ourselves where God is working, how God is working and what God is doing with the Church, how God is leading the Church. We should see it.

Just something in passing. One of the things that I have found a personal advantage was that sometimes you can't actually see necessarily exactly what path the shepherd is taking. Willing to follow, but you don't know whether it's going to be a rocky path, are we going to pasture? You know, where are we going? And one way was I've looked back at sermons in certain periods of time. By looking back at those sermons I can see where God the Father and Jesus Christ have been leading the Church – what God gave at that time. So you can look back and say, oh that's where we've been. Can you see? But we actually don't know exactly the path that's around this next corner – where will it take us? We don't know and we're not required to know. We are sheep who are supposed to follow in a single file, orderly manner in unity of doctrine, belief, faith in our leadership, faith in the leadership Jesus Christ gives to the Church. We believe. When you look at faith, faith is simply really and Mr. Weinland's covered it... Faith is not just believing Jesus Christ existed, faith is *believing* God! *Believing* what God gives to the Church and at times, there may be things that balk in the mind a little... but God is leading the Church faithfully through Jesus Christ and an end-time ministry. And we need to prove to ourselves where God is working.

So, we hear His voice. How do we hear His voice? Well, we hear God's voice in sermons that are given every Sabbath. We come here to be fed – that's how God leads the Church. It's done on a Sabbath basis because that's why God set up the Sabbath and the main purpose of the Sabbath is to feed the flock spiritual food. The shepherd will lead, come together in a group no matter where you are, come before the shepherd, the shepherd will feed us – guaranteed. Spiritual food is in every single sermon in the Church of God – PKG: but whether we eat, well, they say you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. Sheep are very similar. Can't make sheep do things but you can set an example. Whether the sheep want to eat or not, that's their choice. We have a choice. We have a choice every Sabbath whether or not we will eat spiritual food.

To follow means we believe the truth given to the Church by God through Jesus Christ. God's word is our guide. We follow the truth. To hear His voice is to believe what is said. We believe what is given to the Church.

**Verse 5 – Yet, they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him: for they do not know the voice of strangers.** There have been times where people have followed strangers. I've witnessed that myself... that put their hand to the plough, started the work, but they heard a voice of a stranger and generally that voice of a stranger is through the Internet where much pollution exists. And when it comes to spiritual matters, other than the Church of God – PKG, it is polluted. But some people hear the voice, but they shouldn't... because what does it say? If they're God's people they will flee from that, don't even click on that. It's a pointless exercise. There's no truth there. There is no truth there. God's not there, why would you want to? When you use just analytical base logic: if God is not there, why would you bother? But human nature is human nature. ...**and they do not know the voice of strangers.** Well, let's hope brethren that we all follow the lead God gives and that we won't go listening to voices of strangers. We should flee anything that involves sin. We should not listen to Satan's inspired leadership which is in the world churches. If God is here, He's not there, but again, something we have to prove individually. We should flee anything that even looks like associated with sin. We shouldn't be involved in it.

So if God is dwelling in us, Jesus Christ is living their lives in us and through us, we would not be even tempted to even want to go down those paths of looking at that rubbish that's out there.

**Verse 6 – Jesus used this illustration but they did not understand the things that He spoke.** So he was talking about spiritual things and they were looking physical – sheep, shepherds, trying to... what do you mean, sheep following shepherds and good shepherds? **Then said Jesus to them again, Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.** The only way is through Jesus Christ. **All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers:** so there was no way for all this through the Pharisees, there was no way to enter the Kingdom of God – no way to have eternal life through those religions. **...but the sheep,** the sheep are those who are called by God and have responded, **did not hear them.** So we can go back in time and look at certain men of the Bible who didn't hear the false shepherds, they didn't hear those voices.

**Verse 9 - I am the door: if any one enters by Me, he will be saved,** not 'is saved,' as the protestant world teaches, not just saved by automatic osmosis... say "I believe" and your saved. It says, **will be,** it's a process of time; takes time.

**Verse 10 - The thief does not come except to steal, to kill, and to destroy:** by false doctrine. So the only thing out there is something that will kill you, destroy you and take something from you – that's the only thing that's out there – false doctrine, that's exactly what it will do. **I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.** For the Church, through Passover. **But the hireling, he who is not the Shepherd, one who does not own the sheep,** so we've been purchased. We are owned. We've been purchased. We are owned. The hireling, you hire him and he'll do a bit of a job but when the pressure comes, hey, he's going to leave. When it gets real tough he's going to leave, he's going to go to another Church where the salary's higher. **...he sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.** Because he's not really interested in the sheep. He is not loving the sheep. He doesn't love the sheep; because the only way a person can love the sheep... how can the sheep love each other? God's spirit has to be dwelling in us: agape. Without God's spirit we cannot love and if we do it's human selective love. We will choose whom we want to love and others we won't, we'll just say, "well, no, I don't want a relationship with those people. I don't want to love them." No, we're required to love everybody in the body of Christ and if we're using human reasoning God is not there. If we're going to choose who we're going to love – God... we've got a problem – choose who we love... There's a saying in Australia, "You've got to accept me warts and all." I've got a couple of warts; you've got to take them as well.

**The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.** That's exactly what the false ministry is about. They don't care about the sheep, not really, it's more about the power, the prestige, the money and the so called perceived honour and respect that goes with the role.

**Verse 14 - I am the good shepherd, I know my sheep, and am known by my own.** God willing – we know where God is. We know our shepherd – Jesus Christ – we know Him. We have a relationship there through the Church.

**Verse 15 - As the Father knows Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.** Something Jesus Christ did, something we also need to be doing, which is sacrificing of self – it's all in the mind about what we discipline, what we give up for the sake of others. Other brethren in the sheep. We are to sacrifice ourselves for the benefit of others. That is part of our calling and that's part of the mind discipline that takes a lifetime to learn.

**Verse 16 - the other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them I also must bring,** and we are part of that, future people, people out there that are going to be part of the future flock that God has not brought them at this point in time to the body, to the protection of the body of Christ, the Church of God. They've not been brought to it. **...and they will hear my voice;** so how do we know? They're going to hear the same voice we hear and you know what they're going to do? They're going to believe and they're going to follow. That's very basic. **...and there is one flock,** there's only one flock brethren. There's one flock, there's one Church. There's a leadership in the Church. It's that's, it's one flock **and one Shepherd,** Jesus Christ. One Shepherd. And there's not hundreds of flocks scattered everywhere all trying to do their own thing.

**Verse 17 - Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up.** It was in God's plan. This was predetermined, exactly what would happen. This was predetermined; it's exactly as it was planned out that it would happen. It was all part of God's plan.

I want to drop down to **verse 25 –And Jesus answered and said, I told you and you do not believe: the works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness/evidence of Me.** So that's why I say do we see God in the Church? Do we see Jesus Christ *in* the Church? Well, we should brethren. We should see it *in* each other. We should see love between each other reflecting God; how God would behave, how Jesus Christ would treat people. That's how we see God in the Church. It's because of our behaviours and our words. At times we do say things – not necessarily always knowing that it offend others or creates anxiety to others. Often unintentionally, not even knowing that we said those things. But we, with God's spirit, should know that it wasn't wilful. We should never take offence; we don't have the right to take offence at that, but we should know that that person actually loves me but they don't understand my full situation and we just move on. No offence taken as we don't have a right to take offence.

So we should see God and Jesus Christ in the Church and I really pray brethren that you do and I know, I've experienced God and Jesus Christ in the Church – experienced it. You know, the love of the brethren is a wonderful thing and it's difficult to explain to others. We were having a quick conversation before about Philadelphia love, brotherly love and what that was really like in the era of Philadelphia and you have to experience that... it was like a brotherhood, it was a bond of unity, bond of fellowship, but to say it was really deep spiritual – no it wasn't. Whereas now, we actually have the ability to do both, have agape, Godly love *and* brotherly love and it's a wonderful blessing to be able to live that life, to have that love in the Church.

**Verse 26 - But you do not believe, because you are not My sheep,** So, another sign. If somebody doesn't believe, they're not part of the flock, which means God and Jesus Christ are either not living in them, or cease to live in them – again goes back to my question about: Why do people leave the Church? Well, they're not part of the flock. They choose to leave the flock – basically.

**Verse 27 – My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me:** I think you understand where I'm coming from brethren, the need to follow.

**I John 4:6** – I beg the question as I started – which I have to answer myself – see, when I'm speaking, I'm actually talking a lot about myself because I have to do the study on this topic myself to ask the question: At what point won't I follow? Then that begged another question: so if you ask again, At what point won't I follow? I have to ask the question: Why *won't* I follow? And the answer is – it's what's in



here up in my head. It's a spiritual matter – it's not physical. It's got nothing to do with physical. Following has got nothing to do with the physical – this is a spiritual matter that we all have to answer the question. After long periods of time you have to sometimes recheck that we really believe this is where God is? And once you believe this is where God is, no matter what is put to you should not be a problem – or to me. If this is where God is; if God says to turn to the left and walk through that... all the water piled up, well, we're going. No use looking back because I'm going ahead. So I'm begging the question for all of us to ask that same question. Is there a point that we won't follow and I've seen people that have stopped following and that's what triggered some of this. I've seen people that have stopped following and I'll also say: the reason is that Jesus Christ and God the Father are no longer dwelling and living in them – living their lives in them. It's a spiritual matter. But if you back track it long enough, here is a sin, unrepented sin that has been there for a long, long time – an unrepented sin, or a sin that they gave up on within their lives – they gave up the fight. And so something comes along... that's not really why a person leaves the Church...because of a new truth about Yahweh Elohim is the God of the Old Testament and, you know? That's not why people left. They didn't leave over that doctrine! We shouldn't deceive ourselves that that's why...or such and such. That's not why. No! People leave because of sin, unrepented sin. They've given up the battle, and that's just one thing they don't agree with now because they're relying on their own minds. All the decisions are based on what I think or what they think, not with what God's giving. So, it's something that just doesn't happen like that (snap) because somebody's left the Church. It goes back a fair way and it's been over a process of time – that they've hardened their mind to it.

In **I John 4:6 - We are of God:** that's if God is dwelling in us, **he who knows God hears us;** it's talking about the government of God – listening to John, would hear what he's got to say. ...**he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.** So what John is saying is that if people wouldn't listen to what he had to say, talking about the truth, they weren't of us. It's a black and white thing. We could, that's how you can tell. Someone in the truth? They'll believe what we believe. They'll believe Church doctrine. That's how we can tell somebody knows. If not... a different spirit – their own spirit, not the spirit of God dwelling in them, because that's what it requires. We know the truth and it is the evidence that God dwells in us. And I'm going to say that again...

We know the truth and that is the evidence that God dwells in us. If we're living the truth, the truth is in us and we live it, that's the evidence, that's how you can prove and see God in the Church. Through that.

**Matthew 19:16 - Now behold, one came to Him and said to Him, Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do, that I might have eternal life?** So there's the question: "What do I have to do to gain this eternal life?" **And so He said to him, Why do you call Me good? No one is good but one, that is, God: but if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.** Which is all of them; all the instructions, it's not just about the 10 commandments, its *all the instructions*, all the *commands* that God gives about a way of life. **And he said to Him, Which one? Jesus said, You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, and You shall not bear false witness, Honor your mother and father: and, You shall love your neighbour as yourself.** So summarizing the commandments. **And the young man said to him, All these things I have kept from my youth:** now that's a total lack of understanding – true? If we say we've kept the commandments from our youth – warning – warning – warning! We haven't got a clue what we're talking about. So, here, you can see, he's obviously looking simply physically; he's rested from sunset Friday night to sunset Saturday. Very basic commandment keeping and when he hasn't killed anybody – he actually physically hasn't killed anybody. He's hated everybody, but hey, that's not killing. So you can see he's very physical and he doesn't really understand at that point.

**And the young man said to him, All these things I have kept from my youth: what do I still lack? Jesus said to him, If you want to be perfect/mature, go sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven: and come follow Me.** So to follow God, we're going to have to believe. In actual fact it's not a requirement to follow that we would sell up everything physical we have. You don't have to sell up everything we have and follow. It's not required. This is talking about a spiritual matter because Jesus Christ knew who the young man's god was. What Chris was saying was a challenge to him... Well, what you have to do, because you loved your money and your wealth sooooo much, and you've put that first priority before God and you say you're doing really well, but the only thing I require – just sell everything and come and follow me. Whew! You can see shock to the brain... you're challenging his god... the thing that *he* trusts in is now being challenged. You want to get rid of what I trust in and follow you? Spiritually brethren, the same for us. We'd best give up the god we have – whatever that may be, it doesn't have to be money. It can be a lot of things. The biggest god we have is our self and our own selfish pleasures is what we try to satisfy first, that's what we put before God.

**Verse 22 - But when the young man heard the saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.** That was his idol. Easy to say I will follow: but doing it – slightly different.

**Verse 23 - Then Jesus said to his disciples, Assuredly I say to you, That it is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.** Why? Well, it's about what is his god. He wasn't willing to give up his God. It's what he trusted in the most, that thing that protects us. You know, moving and building a bomb shelter, that's really what we're thinking if we're thinking building a bomb shelter or moving to the mountains, we're looking for physical. But the protection is spiritual. This is about a state of mind and if God decides to take our life, or end our life – so be it. It's God's will's done. It's not about that physical protection – moving may not help. You could be moving to somewhere worse, or you could build a bomb shelter and someone leave the door open.

**Verse 24 -And again I say to you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.** What he's really saying here: it's only God that can get you into the Kingdom of God. God has to *give us* eternal life. We can't of our own effort do these things spiritual. God has to do it. God has to fulfill it *in us*. It's God that does it. It's not hard for God to give us eternal life, but we have to go through this process and He's willing to give it. He *desires SO MUCH* to give it, but we have a choice whether we really want it. Will we do what's required – to do it?

**Verse 25 - When his disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, Who can be saved?** You imagine getting an eye of a needle and pushing a camel through... well, none of us are going to make it. Well, that's the point. **But Jesus looked at them, and said to them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.** Yes, it's by God's great power, His mercy towards us that makes it possible. **Then Peter answered and said to him, See, we have left all, and followed you;** well, we read that earlier. Yes, they did, they left and they followed – so Peter is still looking at physical here when he's asking this question. **...and therefore what shall we have?** So he's still looking quite physical. Well, we've left everything so what are we going to get out of this basically? **So Jesus said to them, Assuredly I say to you, That in the regeneration the Son of man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on the twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.** So it's spiritual. The answer is spiritual. When Jesus Christ returns and sets up a the Kingdom of God, the government of God, spiritual government over a physical earth – that they were going to be given levels of authority in a spiritual government. That's what they were going to be given for following. Well brethren, if you go through Revelation and what is said to the Churches, you know, basically 'He who

has an ear to hear', God is saying, "If you follow me, there are rewards at the end." Now, we're not in it for the rewards so to speak but God says, No, if you follow me, you commit, put me first, God first no matter the cost physically. If I leave everything like John, Peter... they left everything physical...to follow, and they didn't even really understand where they were going. Sound a little familiar? We don't fully understand everything; where we're going. There's tonnes of scriptures in here we don't fully comprehend. They've been hidden from our eyes spiritually. We often read them and they're physical and then later on in God's time He reveals it and it's exciting to see something spiritual – especially after many, many years of reading the same scripture and you go, argh... idiot – why couldn't I see that! You can't! Spiritual in nature. Blind, blind, blind and even with our vision that we have it's only partial; really, our spiritual vision is partial, really, when you really look at it. We don't see all things spiritual – not at all.

**Verse 29 - And everyone who has left houses, and brothers, or sisters, or fathers or mothers or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.** What a beautiful promise! What a beautiful promise from the creator of the universe that He delivered through Jesus Christ. Follow Jesus Christ, who's leading the Church: the promise is... if we have left homes, which many have done... if we have left family, which many have had to do... if we've left lands, which I know people have left. Some people have actually sold up and moved, in times past, to where the Church was. They sold all their possessions and moved closer to where there was a congregation. People have done those things. Well, there is the promise. And it was all done for God's sake and My names sake, Jesus Christ said, the name of God. We did it for the Church of God – God's people... **shall receive a hundredfold**, so we can't count the physical brethren at all. We cannot count the physical.

So what is required?

**Luke 9:23** - following should be exciting to all of us and when it's not, if we dig deeply there is a desire in us to lead. Following should be exciting and when it's not deep down there is a desire in us to lead. If you can understand what I'm saying. There's an issue within us, deep in us. We may not even see those things, but they are. Somebody once said to me about following like a blind sheep, you know, you're just following like a blind sheep. Well, I'm not blind, but I'm happy to be a sheep because that's what God calls me – I'm a sheep – I'm happy to follow. And the best way for me to lead is to follow because if you're in that line following the Shepherd, the best thing you can do is to lead the person behind you by following the one ahead of you. I hope I haven't lost you. It's a line. So the best thing that I can do for you, brethren, is to allow God and Jesus Christ to live in me and therefore God will lead through me as He does all of you – He leads – and therefore our example is so important because then others *can* follow. Like Paul said, 'follow me as I follow Christ.' Well, that's what we all should be striving to do. And the only way you do it – you follow by leading. You let God live in you – you lead by setting a fine examples for others. We watch what we say, we watch our mouth.

**Luke 9:23 - And He said to them all, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself.** To follow, we're going to have to deny ourselves. We're going to have to deny the selfishness that lives in us. We're going to have to battle that mind that nobody else can see the thoughts, but we're going to have to enter that battle daily, we're going to have to deny ourselves; **and take up his stauros**, that word is, which is a stake, it's a burden. You have to take up that burden that you're going to have to carry with you, **daily, and follow me. For everyone who desires to save his life will lose it:** so going to the physical, **but whoever loses his life** we should lose our life daily, sacrifice for others. We should lose our life daily: not what we want – we're going to sacrifice that self and give to others, **for My names sake**, it's all done for God's sake, that's why we're doing it. It's what God requires of us, that's what

we're going to do. And it's God in us. We deny the self and do it for others, **will save it**. The only way we can save our life, spiritually, is to deny ourselves...is to sacrifice it and if we're not going to enter into the battle to deny ourselves, it can't be saved. We cannot be given eternal life, because we've made a choice that we're not willing to fight our own nature and that was the purpose of life. The purpose of life, created the way we are is that at some point in time God will require every individual to fight the same fight that we've entered – just a matter of timing. We're just so blessed to being called now.

A final scripture, **Revelation 14** I might have time for one more after this... **Revelation 14:4** – talking about the 144,000 – those that are going to enter the spiritual family at the return of Jesus Christ on the Day of Pentecost 2012 – it's not far. There are 144,000 that have been trained over time. What did they do? This scripture... that's why the title is 'They Followed'. That's why. **Verse 4 - These are the ones**, this is the 144,000 that God has moulded and fashioned, who have entered the same fight – we've fought, we're fighting...the battle of the mind, **These are the ones who were not defiled with women/false doctrines/churches; for they are spiritual virgins/virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.** They followed *during* their life – spiritually. It's not saying that when Jesus Christ comes back that the 144,000 are going to be gathered in one pack just following wherever Jesus Christ goes. It's *wherever* Jesus Christ *leads spiritually*, they will follow. That's what they've been trained to do. They've trained their life of following where Jesus Christ was going –where God was going and they followed spiritually. So as a spirit being, the excitement of following, what's going to be given, what Jesus Christ gives to them to follow, that they're not going to have doubts or, they're just going to go, "Yes Sir." You know? "Let's do it!" You know, it's so exciting! And they won't want to be higher or greater. They'll want to follow. They desire because they've been trained to follow their whole life. They've been trained to submit. They've trained themselves. They've denied themselves to follow where God goes no matter what the cost, you know? Put in hot oil... pshth – doesn't matter. Not that I want to do that, but hey, doesn't matter, it's physical. We're going to follow wherever the Church goes, wherever God leads the Church we're going to go. **These were redeemed among men, being the first fruits of the Lamb.** It's exciting isn't it? They are the first to have gone through a lifetime of denying themselves.

I'll close with this one. In **John 6:53** - now this is a classic example of people that see physically and why we can't follow if we're not careful... because it's a mindset – spiritual verses the physical. **John 6:53 - And Jesus said to them, most assuredly, I say to you, Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you.** Shock, horror to the Pharisees because drinking blood in the Old Testament is not permitted, it's sin. They're thinking physically. Unless you drink My blood and eat My flesh... oh... this shock, horror – we're not going to follow you are we? ...because you're way out there – like... you are way out there – no one's ever come across long before and... drink blood and eat flesh – human flesh. Nobody! And here you are saying you're of God? And you're telling us to do this?

**Verse 54 - Whoever eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has eternal life;** of course He's referring to Passover, **and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, abides in Me,** this is about a relationship, it's about a relationship, **and I in him.** It's about Passover. Now this is totally *foreign*, totally foreign to them.

Drop on down to **verse 63 - It is the spirit which gives life; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.** If we want to be fed we need to be at Sabbath services. We need to be at least listening to the Sabbath's sermon because that's life, **the words that I speak, they**

are life, not mine... words of God. They are the life! That's what keeps us alive. We drink in the word of God. That's what gives us spiritual life.

**Verse 64 - But there are some of you who do not believe. And Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, Therefore I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted to him by My Father.** Now we understand that and Mr. Armstrong taught that quite strongly and it's impossible to have a relationship with God unless He calls us first – to see spiritual matters.

**Verse 66 - From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked with Him no more.** That's right. Why? Looking at the physical. It was just too hard what Jesus Christ was saying. It is just too hard and they've turned back.

**Then Jesus said to the twelve, Do you also want to go away?** Asking them 'do you want to leave now that I've said something difficult for you to understand'? Do you want to leave? Do you want to run back? Go back to where you come from? Go back fishing? **But Simon Peter said to Him, Lord, to whom shall we go?** Fantastic statement! Spiritually, answer the question – **Lord, to whom shall we go?** Where do you go? If the truth is here – where do you go? Back to error. It's the only thing you can do. To leave the body of Christ is to go back to error. Where do we go? **You have the words of eternal life.** This is where it is brethren, this is the truth. ...**You have the words of eternal life.** So a disciple *knows* where the truth is. These disciples knew where the truth was. They knew where the truth was and so why would you leave if you know where the truth is. And that's what Peter said: well, why would we leave? Where would we go?

**Verse 69 - Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.** So for us brethren it's the same question. We can follow. We can follow the lead that God is giving to the Church. The question boils down to: Have we really proven to ourselves, *within* ourselves that this is God's true Church and if we have done that and we have evidence of God and Jesus Christ living in us and in other members of the body...God says there's only one Church. So if other members of the body have God and Jesus Christ living in them, this is God's true Church. The evidence is there before our very eyes. Where else would a person go other than where God is working in the Church? So the 144,000 have followed. The challenge for us: to endure to the end is simply – follow. Follow the lead that God is giving to His Church.

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