

There are so many lessons to be gleaned from this season of Passover and Unleavened Bread; and each year God blesses us with growth and understanding and deeper appreciation of His plan that's outlined through Passover and these Holy Days, and all the Holy Days. God gives us the overview of the meaning of these times and then He also gives us a unique focus from year to year in all the meaning, lessons, truths and greater fullness that can be gleaned and built upon as we are moulded and fashioned by Him as we grow.

Every year God just gives us more and more and more; and more understanding in the meaning of these days. As a matter of fact, during Passover service this year something else was given that I didn't know, had never understood; it's exciting, as we continue to go forward God blesses us in growth. He moulds and fashions us; and certainly so much of it comes from this season of the year and from the Pentecost season and the Feast of Tabernacles season as well. Those are the main highlights of every year.

For this season of Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, we're going to be given inspiration in these days with the focus on *sacrifice*, because this is the beginning of God's plan whereby we are able to be saved. And there is much to be said about this particular subject. This sermon today, on this first annual High Day, on this the First Day of Unleavened Bread, is entitled *Sacrifice – Part 1*. We're going to have several parts of this series to take us all the way through these days.

Thinking about this Passover...an incredibly great Passover we were blessed to have this year, one that's going to go down in time as incredibly unique for us, just as the first Passover that was observed in a very physical manner by the Israelites as they sought to be able to leave Egypt, as they were working toward that end and all the analogies of those things that go along with where we are in time and what God is doing with us as we heard in the opening prayer; that desire to be able to leave Egypt, that desire to be able to leave this world and to go into a future time here, a time of continuing growth with a quantum leap forward because the whole world gets to come under the truth. And Satan being removed, no longer the power of what the type of that is, of being Pharaoh, beginning to begin that great process whereby the whole world no longer in ignorance.

It's almost hard to imagine! All the false religions that are out there, all the things that have so confounded the minds of man - they're not going to be there any longer and truth is going to be everywhere, and that's just an incredible thing to grasp and comprehend what's getting ready to take place.

I was also moved during Passover service as we are just beginning to get into that period of time, because of taking only of the bread and of the wine and the symbols involved in that; and for those who are baptized to do that only and having nothing else because of a desire to humble ourselves before God for a specific purpose because of where we are in time. Very, very moving, and has far greater meaning. This Passover here has been very moving in that respect and I was thinking about this particular song that we sing at the end of the service. I made comment about it because of what it says and as we go through this particular sermon series you're going to come to understand that in a deeper way. The song we have traditionally sung year after year at the end of Passover, because it talks about that entire Passover period of the foot-washing, the taking of the bread, the taking of the wine, and

then it talks about how they sang a hymn, and we traditionally then follow that same example. But this is the song, as a whole, that we've always sung, 'In Thy Loving Kindness Lord'. I mention that because you may want to go back as we go through this sermon series, we may even talk about the words even as we go into the series, I don't know yet, but again, the words say a lot, it means a lot, there's a great deal contained in what is said about sacrifice; and of course that being Psalm 51 that's being covered there.

God's plan of salvation begins *with great sacrifice*, and it has through time; what God's plan is all about from the beginning to the end. God's plan of salvation begins with sacrifice and we grow by learning, by living the spiritual reality contained in the deep meaning of sacrifice.

We're going to begin today by going back to a beginning that discusses the meaning of Passover and all the Holy Days. We're going to go back to Leviticus 23. Passover is the beginning of God's great plan of salvation. It is not a High Day. And to me, I'm so moved by that whenever I think of it because Passover stands by itself in Leviticus 23, it truly does, because it's not a High Day. God set it apart being unique and being special; because what we learn is you cannot enter into God's plan, you cannot enter into the meaning of those things contained in the rest of it if you don't have the Passover. The Passover is where it all begins and it begins with *great sacrifice*. And the meaning of that should not be lost on us by any measure.

Passover is very much about sacrifice and when I began to focus on the preparation of this particular sermon I wrote down in my notes here, "As I'm beginning to focus on what God is giving me to give in this sermon series in this Passover season I am struck by how far God has brought us as a people, as His Church, as *HIS* Church. Truly, where we are now, what we have come to, the Passover we're observing, where we are in time is very, very moving." And the reality was... thinking about that in prayer this morning, looking out over a beautiful area out of the ocean that is here. Couldn't help but think it's one of the most beautiful areas I've ever seen because of the high buildings you have here, and this particular hotel is so high that you have an incredible view of a great beach in Queensland and the awesome ocean there that...the sounds and so forth, the tranquil atmosphere that it gives, and what an awesome place to thank God, to look to God, to pray to God... and couldn't help but be moved deeply by a reality of where we are.

God has brought us to where we are! God moulds and fashions us, and we are at greater unity and oneness with Him than we have ever been; God's Church. That's why it's a progressive revelation through time. If you think about all the people through time, we have a difficult time understanding how blessed we are. We don't grasp that to the depth that is truly there, because the reality is as you live your life day by day its spread out and you're living in the here and now with what you're accustomed to, with what you're familiar with. That's why I mentioned here recently then, maybe this past Sabbath (I don't remember exactly when), but thinking about all the new people who come along... your focus on things, your *custom*, as it were, by how God is leading you is *much different* from when I came into the Church in 1969, much different from those who have been in Worldwide and had a different experience. And we live at a time now where so much has been given to us as far as truth is concerned that you receive a diet that no one else in time has ever had.

You've been able to drink in of things, eat of things, partake of things that *no one else in time* ever has, except for one... and that's Jesus Christ, because *everything* was given to Him. Everything that's written in scripture, everything in the Old Testament, it was His mind, it was His being, the Word of God made

flesh. And so we're not even talking about that, we're just talking about human beings as a whole who've had two human parents, not having God as a parent as Jesus Christ did.

But for all other human beings through time it is hard for us to grasp.... Abraham didn't have a lot. When you read this Bible and you read what's there, he didn't have knowledge that God gave through Moses, through the law that was given, spelled out as it was. They knew that there was law. God gave to them certain understanding of things; but all the Holy Days, all the things that were there, the *deeper* meaning in those things, being led out of Egypt, all the things they began to do at that particular time, he didn't have all because it happened later on; and God gave more understanding as time went forward about what it was all about. Even Abraham didn't understand... he didn't even *begin to understand*, yet he believed it deeply, of what God was going to give through him and through his lineage in time. He had no concept of the time involved though; several thousand years ahead before things would come to pass that were promised to be given to Abraham, because he didn't understand the spiritual implication, the depth. He didn't understand about a 'specific seed' that was going to come out of him to save all mankind. *He didn't grasp those things!*

And then you go on to Moses, things that Moses did not know, did not grasp. He was given a lot, but there was so much he was not given. And so each has been judged by what they have been given, by the 'present truth' that God has given at that moment in time and how they respond to it, their belief, their faithfulness in what God has given to them in a relationship with Him.

And so I marvel when I think about things like this, because *we should marvel*, because we *really* do not grasp the depth of the riches of what we possess at this time, at the end of 6,000 years, the amount of understanding and insight. But it's because of where we are, not because of who we are individually; we're not greater than anyone else who's ever lived. On the contrary, it is a matter of God's plan and what He is doing and why He's doing it and why He's giving these things in greater ways at this end-time.

And so we should be moved by that to understand that when you come to the time of Christ, the disciples were then given so much more in the teachings that Jesus Christ gave to them...and they didn't even understand them until the Day of Pentecost, and then all of a sudden those things started coming back in their mind, they just started *flooding* into their minds. They began to see spiritual things that they never grasped before. It was a very moving time for them. But what they had was nothing compared to what would happen within another 50-60 years in the Church, because within *that* period of time we have the latter books of the Bible that came along, things that Paul wrote much later to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to the Ephesians, and on and on it goes.

And then John continued on and lived longer than all the others and was the last then of the apostles, and wrote the book of John, 1st John, 2nd John, all the way through, and Revelation; and you think about those things that were given to him and especially insight that he had. He was given understanding of things on a spiritual plane that Peter, Paul, and all the others didn't have, because it was progressive and he lived beyond them and God poured out more upon him, to candidly give a boost and to give us things that were going to be needed at the end-time. So it's awesome!

And then Sardis nearly lost it all. And then Philadelphia came along and God brought along an apostle to begin from scratch, to begin revealing more to him over a period of 50 some plus years. And through time then Mr. Armstrong was given more and more and more and he wrote a book at the very end of that, 'Mystery of the Ages'; powerful, powerful, powerful – bringing everything together in such a concise way that had never been done before. People didn't understand and grasp the depth of what

was there, and yet we weren't fully there. Just like in the trinity, we'd come part way out of it, but not all the way. And so God has just continued to give more because of where we are. It's to God's glory that He has brought us to where we are now, to where we see things, we understand things and we're in greater unity than any other time, with *more* of the plan and purpose of God.

So you cannot grasp, but you should strive to in thanksgiving to God and gratitude toward God, to be deeply humbled and thankful for how much you *have* been given and how much you *have* received, because any of those people would have *so loved to trade places with you* if they had ability to choose. Every one of them through time... every one of them!

And so as I said, as I was preparing this, "I am struck with how far God has brought us *as a people, as His Church.*" *His* people indeed!

So as we go through this sermon series it's probably going to be mentioned from time to time about God's Church now, just before His Kingdom is brought to this earth...because that's why this is given to us in a greater way and so much more after His Kingdom comes that's going to be given to us. Again, it's about 6,000 years of progressive revelation that has brought us to this time now and to all that God has given us to bring His Church to where it is today.

All those who are new need to remember these things, to be able to focus upon these things because the Church hasn't always had this. We are blessed because we *do* have it and we need to understand the riches, the fullness of the truth that God has given.

Leviticus 32:1 - And the Eternal spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say to them, Concerning the feasts, it's not the word for 'feasts'. Isn't that amazing? And we haven't known that as a people as a whole, truly haven't known that. It's a word that means 'appointed times, appointed meetings'. The word for 'feasts' comes in later on when we start talking about the Days of Unleavened Bread. The word there *is* the Hebrew word for 'feasts' and 'feasting' before God. This word isn't. And because of that the *power* of what is given here, in times past, hasn't been received to the depth it should. These are *God's* appointed times, that which He set up from the beginning of time, appointments He made for mankind for the next 7,100 years when He set everything into motion, beginning with the Sabbath, when He rested...and all that He gave.

And so **These are the appointed times of the Eternal**, didn't come from man, they come from God, **which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations**, they're holy because God's in it. For the Church, it's because of God's spirit that is in them. God pours out more of His spirit at this time during High Days than any other time of the year. Not from Sabbath to Sabbath as a whole like that and to this degree. God gives us more that we can drink in of because it's a festive time for God to give to us so that we can drink in more, be inspired more, be excited more about what God is doing, about the overview of everything that God has given to us.

...proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My appointed times. So He drives the point home! These are the Eternal's! He says, **these are My appointed times to you.** But the world doesn't care! The world doesn't care that God has set up times for us to observe, to have, whereby we can learn about Him and draw closer to Him. On the contrary, they want *their* own appointed times. Sick, sick, perverted, filthy world! Amazing what Satan has done, truly!

Just like today, Johnny was talking about a news item that came across the news, and when I turned on my computer today the first thing on MSN (I think that's what it was) was the same article. It's about how they have found an older calendar that shows that Jesus Christ...concerning the Passover, that particular night everything was on a Wednesday evening. So how does the world take it? Well, now they can adjust their Easter. It's going to help them to better adjust when they have Easter. This is going to help them a lot they said. And then another article after that is '5 Ways to Decorate Easter Eggs'. Sick, sick world. They don't come to grips with 3 days and 3 nights. I mean, how awesome is that if they'd come to terms with that one...that *my*... hmmm, maybe it wasn't Friday that He died? 'Good Friday' that they call it? Sick, sick, perverted world! Thank God it's all going to get straightened out.

Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, So God starts with the beginning cycle of what we're to learn from that began from the very first week that He gave to mankind; **an holy convocation;** a holy convening of His people, a time that God's people are to come together to be taught by God. **You shall do no work therein: it is the Sabbath of the Eternal,** it's God's, given to us. All the Holy Days, it's God's, given to us, His plan, His purpose given to us...**in all your dwellings.**

These are the appointed times, again, not 'feasts', **these are the appointed times of the Eternal, even holy convocations...** these first four verses are awesome and they're totally lost to the world. **These are the appointed times of the Eternal, even holy convocations which you shall proclaim in their...** isn't it amazing, human nature, human beings; all of a sudden they translate the same word as '**seasons**' all of a sudden they don't call them 'feasts' anymore because they didn't understand and because Satan was behind the scenes, and all the things he's done to twist and distort... **which you shall proclaim in their appointed times.** So that way you know that when you come together on Passover, you're going to be taught about Passover. When you come together on the Days of Unleavened Bread you're going to be taught about the Days of Unleavened Bread, because God commands it, because that's what God's spirit does. He inspires greater knowledge and understanding about those days and things He wants us to focus on as He moulds and fashions us.

So at Pentecost He's going to give us sermons and information about Pentecost that has to do with Pentecost. When we get into all the other Holy Days, when you talk about Trumpets or Atonement or the Feast of Tabernacles, the Last Great Day. The Last Great Day you know there's going to be a sermon specifically about the meaning and the fulfillment of that day. Not as one time when I heard a sermon by a scattered group when it was just starting - incredible - gave a sermon about homosexuality on that Last Great Day, and you think, "What does that have to do with the Last Great Day?" Nothing! And besides that it was perverted as all get out! That's happened in the scattered church of God after the apostasy, showing how weak people became, how perverted they became. And I might as well add it too, this individual is now one of the main leaders of that organization. Incredible, sick world!

Verse 5 – He begins to break it all down...starts with the Sabbath, a rotation week by week by week; every seventh day we set apart and God teaches us. But annually, we come to this then - **In the fourteenth day of the first month at even;** and again, I've mentioned this, the word '*bane ha erebyim*' in the Hebrew meaning... it's a different word than 'evening' that's used over and over again in Hebrew having to do with when the sun goes down, when night begins, when a day begins. That's how God has us count time. The day begins at night when night comes. When the sun goes down and the night begins, that's how God has us count time. And so at this particular time here it begins at a specific moment. But this word has to do with 'between the evenings', 'between the two evenings' if you will, very specific. We keep the Sabbath 'between the evenings'. We keep the Holy Days 'between the

evenings'. We know what evenings they are! The Sabbath we know we keep from the evening of the 6th day, when the 6th day is over, as soon as it's over and night time begins to come because the sun has gone down we keep it all the way through until the sun sets again. It's simple for us. But here it has so much more meaning because you don't find this same expression used over and over again about the Sabbath and other days as much. It does get very specific about Atonement, but that helps us to understand even more fully the importance of what God says when He says 'between the two evenings'.

Because there was so much to be fulfilled by Christ in the entire day, starting at night, starting at sundown all the way through; He was going to fulfill that entire day. It wasn't just the evening. And in times past, even in the Church of God people haven't understood, the ministry didn't grasp the importance of what this was about, of the fulfillment of what Jesus Christ was going to fulfill in that entire period. They didn't grasp and understand the ancient Israelites and how they observed the Passover and what God gave to them, *and* the First Day of Unleavened Bread. They didn't grasp the preparation work that went into the sacrificial system and all the sacrifices that were going to be sacrificed up to God that began before sundown; of the work, of the killings that took place of animals because they had a Feast day coming at the end of Passover and they had a lot of feasting to do all that next night. That's how they generally observed it – deep into the night. And that's important because the beginning of it begins with what pictures Jesus Christ and what He gave to us and the Passover service itself and the deep meaning of that, but Himself fulfilling it then in the afternoon when He died as our Passover. Incredible!

So again, here's where it all begins; and notice here... **In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Eternal's Passover.** It's sad, people can't learn because without God's spirit you can't know the depth, the meaning of these things; and only by being a part of God's Church and remaining *in* it and continually having a supply of God's spirit and not being cut off. Because when you're cut off these things are lost. And by having the blessing of being able to remain in, to continue in, as we talked about on Passover night for those of you who are baptized; we read through those scriptures in John 14, 15 and 16, that word that says 'to abide in'. Some places in the same reading there in English, the same word is translated 'to dwell in, to abide in, to remain in'. I think there's one scripture in John 15 that talks about 'remaining in'. "And if you *continue in* My love..." that same word 'continue in'; it's the same word 'to abide in, to dwell in', and yet people lose meaning of those things. They don't grasp the deep meaning of what God gives to us and that this **is the Eternal's Passover** here. It's God's Passover that He gave to us. It's not what *we* gave to God.

That's why it's different from the sacrificial system, in part; shows what happened but it is different in that respect of showing the difference between the sacrificial system which has a lot to do with what we're covering here today. The sacrificial system...sacrifices...they went through the motions of something they *never* understood.

And you grow in deeper understanding of that as time goes on, what the importance of those things were, what they reflected, what God desires, what it's all about: *sacrifice* that began with God Almighty. God Almighty sacrificed for His creation in ways that we have a difficult time to grasp and comprehend. *This was the Eternal's sacrifice* that He gave, His Passover that He gave to mankind. And so here's where it all begins: **the Eternal's Passover**, not mans. It is what *God* has given man and not what man gave to God. And this is so basic and so important to understand: nothing that man sacrificed made the Passover possible, but what God sacrificed for man.

Let's notice back in Exodus 12 where these things began to be given in a greater way as far as the beginning of a fulfillment and meaning in a very physical manner, but again teaches a great deal. Again here, the taking of a lamb as we have discussed now, because this is that season of the year to focus on these things, to understand what was taking place.

Exodus 12:5 - Your lamb shall be without blemish, I'm still moved by how they went out and picked out the lamb four days before this on the 10th. On the 10th day God told them to go out and pick out a lamb from the goats or from the sheep, and in families children are involved, and it's easy to get attached to this little lamb. Amazing! But it should teach us great things about understanding that this is supposed to be a personal relationship between Jesus Christ and us, and what it means that He was sacrificed for us; that closeness we should have that *should*, as we grow, convict us more and more with that same attitude and spirit on a spiritual plane of not wanting to take that sacrifice lightly, of a friendship, a closeness. That's what Jesus Christ said; it's a matter of being friends. 'I am your friend.' A *close* relationship, our *elder brother*; that relationship He desires to have. And so we should have that and that should help us then to understand we don't want to take lightly that sacrifice; and yet we find ourselves sinning. We find ourselves bringing a piece of toast to eat on the First Day of Unleavened Bread. Now that's a physical thing, but nevertheless it shows how easy it is by the lessons that can be learned from those things, of how we *think* in our lives, or *fail* to think in our lives.

Your lamb should be without blemish, a male of the first year: picturing Jesus Christ without sin; **you shall take it out from among the sheep, or from the goats: And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation shall kill it in the evening.** Again God used that word, 'bane ha erebyim' – 'between the two evenings', because the meaning goes deeper than just the lamb being (this lamb) being killed at the beginning and what that pictured and what Jesus Christ gave in the symbols of the bread and wine and what actually happened later in the day when He was affixed to a stake, a great pole, when He was impaled on a pole, not on a cross. That word there is totally messed up in the Greek language. He was straight up and down on a pole, hands above His head, nailed one to another; nail went right through them, as with the ankles. Not spread out like that at all! Incredible how the world perverts that, how *Satan* has perverted and distorted all that. And so people wear a cross around their neck and you think, "How disgusting! How perverted!"

And so you shall kill it in the evening. So again, great meaning in the night time portion of Passover and when Jesus Christ instituted the symbols of the Passover and what it was all about.

Verse 7 - And they shall take of the blood and strike it on the two side posts of the upper door posts of the houses, of their... the word is 'dwellings', and it's very meaningful. We have blood, we drink of the symbols of that blood whereby we're able to be saved. Awesome to understand of how we are delivered in our individual lives, in our dwellings; because when you understand what God refers to when He talks about each one of us individually, we have a dwelling. We have a *temporary tabernacle* in human life, and that's not what it's all about, it's about where it can take us when we receive of God's spirit in our life dwelling in us, being able to be begotten of that in our mind, in our being, and that which can begin to happen in the mind that one day can be put in a different body, in a spirit body. Awesome! Awesome to understand that!

So here they were to sprinkle this in their dwellings, and we do the same thing *every year* when we drink the symbols of what it pictures, the blood of Christ. We *partake* of that in our own lives showing whereby we're able to be forgiven of sin, being reminded year by year by year. It is by *that* that we're able to continue to have a relationship with God.**wherein they shall eat it.**

Verse 8 - And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, so they're to eat the flesh roast with fire – again the lessons we learn from those things, what it means, **and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.**

Verse 11 – And thus shall you eat it with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, your staff in your hand and you shall eat it in haste, it is the Eternal's Passover. Again, it's God's, God Almighty's that was given to us; and it even gets more specific down in verse 25....

Verse 25 - And it shall come to pass, when you have come into the land which the Eternal shall give you, according as He has promised, that you shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass when your children shall say unto you, What is meant by this service? That you shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Eternal's Passover; It is *His* sacrifice, the Passover is. **It is the sacrifice of the Eternal's Passover who passed over the houses/the dwellings of the children of Israel in Egypt/in captivity,** and the same thing happens to us on a spiritual plane, that we are blessed that our sins are able to be forgiven. We have a Passover whereby we can be forgiven. By His blood, through His blood we can be forgiven of sins and come out of Egypt. It's a long process; it's a lifelong process coming out of Egypt.

So again **...who passed over the houses/the dwellings of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our houses/our dwellings.** Meant a great deal to them obviously, in a very physical way, but how much more when we think of our dwellings, and we're delivered. And so when we go into the greater meaning of this period of time that's yet ahead of us and we have these things more fully fulfilled even within our lives, how much more meaningful this becomes as time goes forward?

Verse 11 – Thus shall you eat it with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, your staff in your hand ...eat it in haste, it is the Eternal's Passover.

Verse 25 - And it shall come to pass when you have come into the land which the Eternal will give you, so there's that which you're to tell them, what is meant by the sacrifice... **It is the sacrifice of the Eternal's Passover, who passed over the houses/the dwellings of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He struck the Egyptians, and delivered our houses/dwellings. And the people bowed their heads and worshipped.** Worshipped God. And it should be moving to us, and we worship God and we thank God for what He's doing in our lives and what He's getting ready to do for this world at this time.

This period of time has even greater meaning for the world because we're at a time now when this is going to be fulfilled in a far greater scale than it ever has been. This was a very physical thing that happened to them and now we're at a point in time where it's going to be physical and spiritual, in that respect, because Israel, the scattered nations of Israel and the Gentile world is going to be delivered. The entire world is going to have that opportunity of... (and I use the word 'Gentile' because of that which is used in Hebrew. It just means 'those who are not Israel', of that lineage, which is not what's important, the whole world has that opportunity)...of being able to become a part of the Israel of God, of the Church of God. And so there's a great time here of taking out of captivity that's taking place.

And that's why I mentioned that this fast that we had on Passover is going to become far, far, far more meaningful in time, it's going to be taught, it's going to be referred back to in time. We don't grasp what we do sometimes. We don't grasp what God is going to do....

Just like I think about the children of Israel when they went into the Promised Land, the physical Promised Land, and all that happened during that time period. They didn't grasp the magnitude of what was going to happen in the future, that people were going to be able to look back at that time and be able to learn great spiritual lessons, that they were going to be moved and motivated by the things that God did as they passed across the river there, as God stopped the waters and gave something as an inspiration to them and to Joshua; an awesome thing as the waters of the river were held up, because it was in flooding season, and they were able to walk across on dry ground very similar then to being able to remember back to the time when they were brought out of Egypt and now they're actually fulfilling a part of that blessing on a physical plane, they're coming into the Promised Land. They marched around Jericho as they were instructed...and who would ever grasp that all that is going to have *even greater meaning for us today*. Marching, going around the city seven times, bringing it down.... All these things throughout the Bible that have to do... whether it be Jericho, whether it has to do with Babylon, the different names that are used... Egypt! All these things God gives to show His deliverance and His power to deliver His people.

And so that example itself; you know people have looked back on that in the Church of God in the past 2,000 years, on that example and they've been moved by that. We have been moved *more* because it's more about *our* time than any other time because of what's happening, the marching around and finally on the last day and the things that God Himself does, finally, on the last day the seven last plagues, and He brings down the *whole world*, the rest of the world that hasn't been brought down yet; He brings down the rest, Russia, China, Europe. He says He destroys those who are destroying the earth, and it's going to be massive. We live in awesome times!

Before we continue on it would be good just to look at the word 'sacrifice', the definition, especially as we are focussing upon it in this particular sermon series. In religion, again, the common thought or meaning is 'that of something offered up as an animal in a sacrifice generally upon an altar to some deity'; and that's one part of a definition. That's the most common thought when people read of sacrifice in the Old Testament, as an example.

But all that was to lead up to a far greater teaching and lessons that should be gleaned from this, from sacrifices. So the definition of sacrifices that we come to understand and embrace in this is; 'to forfeit or give up one thing for another thing considered to be of greater value. The giving up of something valued or important for somebody or something else considered to be of *more* value or importance'. And that doesn't even really begin to grasp the depth for God's Church and what we're learning about the meaning of 'sacrifice' but that is a beginning and the understanding of where God leads us then. As we go through this we're going to use those definitions over and over again, to focus upon them, to think about them, because it affects our live mightily and it's a great teaching that God wants us to grasp even more so at this particular time.

So as we come to understand the matter of sacrifice more deeply we learn that it reveals the most basic phase of God's plan for salvation and reveals God's great character and His very mind and purpose. So we begin by learning from the outline of God's appointed times in Leviticus 23 and by the instruction of the first Passover, that **this is the Eternal's Passover** and the Eternal's *sacrifice*.

Let's turn over to John 3, because you see, *everything* begins with God Almighty and He moulds and fashions and teaches us and He blesses us with His mind. He blesses us with His *mind*, His *Word*, the logos, different things that are used there to show a unity and a oneness of mind that is happening in

our lives; that oneness, that unity, that there is no other way, there's only God's way - perfect in every way.

John 3:12 – Jesus has been talking to Nicodemus. Nicodemus came to Him by night, didn't want to be seen by the others, and he was supposed to be a great teacher of Israel. And this is a part of what Jesus Christ addresses here and we come to this point. He already told him about certain things that have to take place but Nicodemus could only understand something on a physical plane, he didn't grasp it. And so that's what Christ was telling him, "basically Nicodemus you don't get it."

John 3:12 - If I have told you earthly things, in other words about things that are physical, specifically about things that must happen to physical mankind, because He just told him what must happen to mankind; you have to be born again. He {Nicodemus} says, "Well, how can a man once he's old climb back into the womb to be born again? This doesn't make any sense..." And so He says, **If I have told you of physical things and you don't believe it, then how will you believe it/be able to believe it if I tell you of heavenly things?** So in other words, "You *can't* proceed forward. I've told you this has to happen, you have to be born again, something has to happen in your life and yet you can't even begin... so how can you understand the spiritual part of that?" That's the problem. **So how can you believe it if I've told you of heavenly things**, in other words, that which is spiritual, of God's spirit.

For no man has ascended up into heaven; isn't that amazing? In the whole world, in the world of traditional Christianity, the Catholic church...now they don't always believe you necessarily go to heaven, or to 'hell'. They think you can get caught someplace in between even. But it says here that no one has ever gone to heaven. **No man has ascended up into heaven...** Incredible! And yet that's a basic teaching of the Catholic church and of all the churches that have followed the same way; all the Protestant churches in the world teach the same thing, people go off to heaven. And you ask, "Well, did David? Surely a righteous man, a man after God's own heart, a *prophet* of God... *Moses*? How about him?" Nope. Jesus Christ Himself said, **No man has ascended into heaven**, and yet the world teaches such stupidity, such defiance of what is plainly written here by the very words of Jesus Christ. Incredible the arrogance of mankind! That's why the Catholics really don't want people to read the Bible anyway, just kind of have the catechisms and those kinds of things and leave the rest to the priests and they'll tell you what it's all about. If you have a question, just ask them, and most of the time if they don't have an answer, which is a big answer, "It's just a mystery." Incredible! A 'Mystery' because Satan's made it one to mankind.

For no man has ascended up to heaven but He who has come down from heaven; His Father, that portion of Him was of God, not of another human parent, but it was of God! The only one to *ever be* the son in that context, in that regard, in a fulfillment of God's plan, to fulfill that role, the very Son of God. And it says here...**even the Son of man who is...** it's not '*in*', but '**of** heaven. In time He would be *in* heaven, but it's **who is of heaven**. That shows His origin, where He came from, His origin came from God the Father, the Word that became flesh.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that's an awesome story, the serpent that at a time of Israel's rebellion, and all these poisonous snakes were killing thousands of people, Israelites, because of their rebellion against God, and finally they came before God and asked God to save the people and to forgive them. And God says, "Make this pole and wrap a serpent around it, and stick it in the ground and everyone who comes up there to look upon that, after they've been bitten, won't die, they'll live." And it worked! You know, when you get bit by a poisonous serpent and people are dying by the thousands it's not hard to obey that one, to say, "If that's

all I have to do and I can live..." and then what happens to the human mind? It takes it to a point it shouldn't have taken it. Now all of a sudden they think this symbol has some kind of mystical power about it, something that heals and so let's make copies of it; and after 700 years this pole is still being worshipped and carried around by them and it became a problem in Israel. And God said, "Grind it up, destroy it!" And they didn't destroy it! And so today you see an ambulance driving by, hospitals, they still have a pole with a serpent on it because it has this symbolism of healing. No, it was only for one time! One time, but mankind takes it a step farther! Incredible human nature! Blindness, foolishness...

And so Jesus Christ said, **as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness**, this is what it's referring to, in order to be able to live and not die, **even so must the Son of man be lifted up**, referring to His being impaled on the pole, on that stake, and so that people would have to look to Him, meaning that He died for us. He spilled His blood to the earth for us when that soldier came up and rammed that spear in His side and it said, 'out came water and blood', and after that He died. That's why when they came around to break the legs of all three of them in order to satisfy and make the Jews happy, so they could have everything done before sunset, before they go into their periods of holy time, that this can all be wrapped up. And so they came around and broke the legs and they came to Christ and He was already dead and they were surprised by that. And it says, because a soldier had come by and pierced His side with a sword... His blood had to come out.

We're saved by His blood, that's how He died. When your hands are like this up there {raised above your head with one hand upon the other} and they use their legs to push themselves up because that's the only way they could breathe. Not like this {spread out to the sides of the body on either side}, you can breathe like this! That itself should teach people something! But when your hands are up there... just do that sometime and see what it's like when you're hanging down like that. If you're not able to push yourself up that way then in time you would suffocate. And so they broke the two thieves' legs and they died because they couldn't push themselves up anymore to breathe. It's so basic and so simple, but man doesn't want to believe those things.

So He says He has to be lifted up. And so he {Nicodemus} couldn't understand this, and really only after one comes into the Church could people, even the disciples, begin to understand these things.

Verse 15 – So that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. Whosoever believes that He died for our sins, that He is our *Pass Over*...of what the Passover means, that we're saved by His blood.

Verse 16 - For God so loved the world, His *purpose*, His creation, what He was doing, something greater that was to be accomplished through all... **that He gave**; He sacrificed! That's what it's about, it's about giving. **He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.** So in order for mankind to receive God's eternal life He had to *give* His Son as a Passover. *His Son as a Passover*, as a sacrifice to save mankind. He never sinned. He had no sin in His life because He was the Word made flesh. And because of that, eternal life was *absolute for Him*, not deserving of death, not at all, but God gave that... and the meaning of it again? 'To forfeit or to give up one thing for another thing considered to be of greater value'...and purpose... 'the giving up of something valued or important for somebody or something else considered to be of more value and importance', and it's God's Family. It's the ultimate of salvation, of bringing mankind to that point in time, of what's going to be given. Sacrifice! Sacrifice... sacrifice... sacrifice....

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn/judge the world; it wasn't the purpose of coming at that time, **but that the world through Him might be saved.** Greater purpose, greater value, otherwise man cannot be saved, couldn't be saved. Everyone would have to live a physical life and just die because everyone has sin. **He who believes on Him is not condemned/judged:** in other words, receiving of the execution of judgment in their life; has an opportunity for eternal life, **but he who believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.** Referring to God's Passover sacrifice, what God gave to mankind.

Verse 19 - And this is the condemnation/judgment, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. Isn't that amazing? That people don't want exposure of sin, they want to represent something that's better than what they really are, they want people to see something... all human nature is that way. It's that way in politics, it's that way in religion; people will wear this robe and this thing on their neck and come across as being 'pious' to others and try to reflect that. They want people to see a certain image of something that is righteous and just and yet you find out, like in the Catholic church, some of the perversions that have gone on en masse, and not just recently but through time. There are things that history has uncovered about what different ones have done, what *popes* have done – horrible, sick, perverted – and yet they're so easily able to forget all the history and not talk about it too much. All human beings are just like that as a whole. We have this image that we want others to see. We don't really want them to know what we're like all the time. Amazing!

Verse 20 - For every one who does evil hates the light, and who does evil? Human nature, all human beings. That's why people *hate the Church*. That's why people hate the truth as a whole, until they're brought to a point of humility; and God is beginning to do that more. Every time that God has brought people into the Church He's brought people to this point in time; He's had to humble them so that they would receive what He had for them. He's worked with them individually to accomplish that: God the Father and Jesus Christ have.

And so it says here... **For every one who does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light,** I've experienced that over and over since becoming a minister in God's Church and knowing that there are times that people in the congregations wouldn't even want to come up around me because of a guilty conscience, because of things that they were doing, because they didn't feel right; and so they wouldn't even want to come up around the minister because there are things that people, as a whole, sometimes when they're doing those things they try to hide. And it's like I know, and I don't know. Now, sometimes I have because of that very reaction, that things aren't right, things aren't good. And if you can't have a right relationship with God's ministry I know something's wrong between you and God.

For every one who does evil hates the light and doesn't come to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved, the word that means 'exposed'; and further than that, it means 'to become convicted'. They don't want that. I remember first coming into the Church and I remember, like most of us make the giant mistake of wanting to share everything we have with people we love; and I remember the first time that there was a gathering of some of our relatives at our place and I was going on and on. Because there was this curiosity, "What is this you're doing?" It wasn't just a matter of answering one or two questions; it's a matter of, "Let me give you the *whole load*." We tend to do that. And so we want to dump the whole load. They didn't ask for the whole load but they seem to be excited to a point; and then the relationship started changing and you realize in time, you grow in time to come to

understand that you know that if they accepted it all they have to address some things in their life – the first one being the Sabbath.

Because if you really believe all this you've got to address the Sabbath day. You've got to make a choice. If you really want a relationship with God this is big stuff, because the world is geared toward working on the Sabbath. The world is geared toward sporting events on the Sabbath! That's a big thing! Wayne was telling me here in the news... and I've been dumbfounded by how much it really is. Sports is a *big* thing in Australia! I thought it was in the United States, but I think it's a bigger thing down here! It's just about different ones and what they're doing and it's their lives and it's like, as human beings do so often, they live their lives through others. I've even had people get mad at me when I've talked about how that they wear these names on their shirts because that's the image they want to project, a certain team, or a certain individual. Fine! If you want to do that, fine, but you know, I don't like it. And people get mad at me sometimes even in the environs of the Church for mentioning such things. I don't get it! We want to project something. Incredible.

And so here again, human beings that don't want things exposed about themselves, about what they really are; and it means you have to change, it means you have to... what's that big word? Repent! Everything that these days picture; yes, in order to be saved! But people don't grasp the need to be saved. They're about to get a big, big belly full of that one because they're going to be brought to *fear*, and it's only when people begin to fear and have that feeling that *nothing* can save them...*but* "If there is a God...they *might*..." Isn't that amazing how deep that is in human beings, and why things have to happen the way they do at this end-time over and over and over again, not just once or twice, but over and over again so that people are brought to their knees and STAY on their knees. And those who won't, well we know the answer to that one too. That's where we are in time. Shows how deep pride is in human life.

But he who does truth comes to the light, wants to receive what God has for them, wants to go before God in prayer and learn. You know what prayer reflects in a very powerful way? Where we are spiritually. God knows where we are, but it's through this process that God helps us to grow and we come to know where we are. We come to learn a lot through the process of prayer and a relationship that we have with God, and a unity we have with God.

But he who does the truth comes to the light, so that his deeds may be made manifest, made clear, made visible, **that they are wrought/accomplished in/by God**. In other words, the only way we can change and grow, because those of the Church are brought to that, we're brought to the point where we *want* the light because we *want* what is wrong to be made clear and visible to us so we can repent of it and so that we can become more like God, so we can have more of His mind and His being, His character *in* us. And so it's a process we go through. This is explained by Jesus Christ Himself because this is where it starts, because He is our Passover, and it begins with an understanding of what it is to be a Passover and what it means, of what God sacrificed Himself, what He gave to mankind as *His* Passover, and Jesus Christ's own response to that as well. Reveals much, doesn't it?

Something that God has brought us to, which is truly awesome, is to understand where we are in time and the unity we have with God because of the very things we have talked about in many sermons now up to this point in time, especially in the last couple of months; going from a period of time of two periods of great fasting that were done in January of 2009 and bringing us up to this period of fasting now and a continuation now in our own lives in understanding of the unity and oneness we have with God in a greater way where truly through growth and through seeing these things we have come to a

point of grasping in a deeper way the mercy and the love of God; and that what happens on this earth is a matter of *mercy* and *love* of God, truly is, in a very powerful way. It's not easy, but it's truly a sacrifice for the right reasons as a part of God's plan as well in a very great way.

1 John 4:8 – He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. So we should understand as a part of that then God's way is totally giving. Sacrifice has been God's way, it truly has, through time. God has sacrificed more than we can ever comprehend, truly has. He's given of Himself *more* than we can ever comprehend. That's God! It's something *we* have to learn, something that was in Jesus Christ and His willingness to do what He did, but it's something we learn through time of what it means. I have spoken of this in times past, but haven't understood it to the depth that I understand even today, that to love God's way means sacrifice. You have to give up something to give for a greater purpose, to give to others. And with us as human beings it's about self; but that was never a part with God. It's not about self with God. It's not about selfishness with God, never has been. We have to fight that though because it *is* about selfishness with us, and so there are things we have to learn how to sacrifice and grow in understanding of the spiritual part of that so that the love of God can grow in us in a very powerful way.

...for God is love. It's just God, it's the way He is and it's the way we need to see Him in everything that He does, everything that He's allowed through time has been a matter of His love. And so often in that love that we have not recognised nor seen, nor focused upon, is this matter of sacrifice, of God's giving to us in very great ways, in ways that we haven't really comprehended nor grasped, nor comprehend at all.

Verse 9 - In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Sacrifice; that's what He's talking about. Something greater, more *important* in time.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, that's been His drive, His focus, His being, His desire, in ways that we grow in and we learn in, and we have been able to do that even more in the last couple of years and in the Feast last year as an example, and before that. We grow in these things; we come to see God more and more and more as we grow, as we mature. It's an awesome process...and these things of love, how incredible that we come to understand that as we go forward in time as well, greater and greater that we grasp the magnitude and the love of God toward us and what He has done and what we're to become like.

...in the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation/sacrifice, in other words. To be sacrificed, that's what this means. **...to be the propitiation for our sins/to be sacrificed as our Passover**, another way of saying it. That's what it was all about: sent His Son **to be the propitiation for our sins**, to be sacrificed for *our* sins, as our Passover. Incredible! 'To forfeit or give up one thing for another thing considered of greater value,' indeed! And from the beginning God's purpose has been His Family! ...that everything in His creation *be of the same mind*.

At last year's Feast we got a glimpse of that in a way that's helped us to put things together, to see things on a scale that is far greater, indeed, depending on where we are in our growth as well – because it takes time to grow in things. Learning more of that meaning that we're going to repeat throughout this sermon, 'the giving up of something valued or important for somebody or something else considered to be of more value or importance'. And that really doesn't even capture it all fully, does it?

It's nearly impossible for mankind to grasp the kind of love that God has for His Family, for His creation and what He has been doing for so long. It has been a matter of far greater sacrifice than any of us can truly grasp, but He's giving us a bit of a glimpse of it today, and now for a purpose because it's a part of moulding and fashioning that He's doing in us. And so God through the power of His spirit that He gives to us begins to make it possible for us that we can begin in a very small way (in a very *small* way), to grasp such things while in this human life with His spirit about God, about *His* sacrifice, what He's given.

And it's important for us to see that because that endears you more and more. When you realize, when you understand the sacrifice that has been done to give to you, then that should by itself in a spirit of gratitude and thankfulness generate a *great* response and a fondness and a closeness on a spiritual plane that is so awesome indeed.

Let's go over to Genesis 1 to the very beginning. It's a very short verse that we're going to focus on. And the word isn't 'the' here ('in the'). It's not even in the Hebrew in that respect as a part of the language, but it says - **Genesis 1:1 - In a beginning God created the heaven**, and the word is even in the Hebrew here, **the heavens and the earth**. And again, at this last year's Feast we understand that in a deeper way than we ever have, that that which is considered to be heaven is not just restricted to that which is in our atmosphere or in the universe, but is in God's very heaven as well; that God created things there from the beginning as God's purpose unfolded. And so we've come to understand that 'in a beginning' and that time that has gone on through time, things that God has done as a part of a creation that's been ongoing. It didn't stop, it's a continuing process. That's why we just recently (I think last Sabbath even) read about some of those things in Romans and talking about the word there that sometimes is translated as 'creature', but it talks about 'God's creation'; and it's referring to us and what's taking place. We're an ongoing creation of God; God in our minds creating godly character, a mind that is in unity with Him that is awesome! And again, at the Feast we focused on those, but we only understand that in part.

Then we come to more understanding as we talked about even during the Feast, something that happened from the very beginning. Incredible! God began to create things in the very heaven itself, on a spiritual realm, before anything physical, before the universe was here, before the physical universe was created, and there was an angelic realm created and there were things within the angelic realm created that the angels were a part of and could see and could function with and so forth.

Ezekiel 28:11 - Moreover the word of the Eternal came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus and say unto him, Thus says the Lord Eternal; speaking of this being, this one angelic being... **you seal up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.** The pinnacle! The pinnacle within the spirit creation, of a being that God *loved*...that God loved. Everything that God has ever done, everything that He's ever made, created, brought into being, God has loved.

...you seal up the sum, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You have been in Eden, and as we brought out during the Feast in the Hebrew, having to do with 'a place of pleasure, of fullness of life – that which gives a fullness of life', and speaking of **the garden of God** here. There was that which God used the same name, that same thing to show where man was placed in the beginning and then man sinned and had to be taken out of there. And here *this* being, at the very beginning of all this, that which God created, a place for the angelic realm to be, and for this being even more so to be in the very presence of God more than the others in the function, in the job, in the responsibility that was given to him.

Incredible to understand and to grow in understanding of these things, that in the beginning of the creation of mankind the garden of Eden was a very physical creation and a place of enjoyment and pleasure where God took care of all the needs of the first two who were created and placed on the earth. And then this one where all the angels were first created in God's very presence, from His presence. In this creation (amazing to understand), *God knew what would transpire by giving, by granting, by allowing beings to have free moral agency.* That wasn't easy. We don't understand – *that wasn't easy for God to do!* It was a *GREAT SACRIFICE* on God's part to do this and we fail as human beings to *grasp that*, truly! And yet God is *blessing* us to begin to grasp that; that God *knew* that His own creation would turn against Him *because* of this one thing, by giving free choice to independent beings.

And so He was willing to *sacrifice*, to give this while knowing the choices such beings could and would make, of what it would come to. *God was willing to sacrifice peace!* Isn't that amazing what we've gone through? *...was willing to sacrifice peace in the Garden of Eden*, in the beginning of His creation for a greater purpose through time. Again, 'to forfeit, to give up one thing for another thing considered to be of greater value'. We have no concept and God is really only now blessing us to come to understand something so deep, that He has sacrificed for us over and over and over again. And that should endear us to Him far, far greater, truly should.

'The giving up of something valued or important for somebody or something else considered to be of more value or importance.' Incredible! *From the very beginning God knew* what would transpire. I can't even begin to grasp that, in so many parts, to know the power you have to create millions upon millions (... we don't know how many, billions? I don't know, doesn't say...) of angelic beings in a spiritual world knowing full well that the purpose of it would lead to something greater in time, that it had to be this way, that you're willing to sacrifice things going awry, things going astray because of that free choice that was given to beings knowing what they would do and knowing what *this one* who was given so much more than all the others, lifted up higher than the rest, of what would happen in time even with him because of what *he* would come to do when he came to *see* things that he did not like of God, when he began to be jealous because he got accustomed to a position, a place. It's incredible to understand; and yet God was willing to go through that. Think it's been easy? Not just a short lifetime of human beings, but to go through something like this for thousands and thousands, hundreds of thousands of years perhaps? We don't grasp, we don't understand.

We have a basic understanding of certain things, of knowing about the prehistoric world and how long things must have been for certain things to have been accomplished and done, and then the earth being without form and void for how long? Nothing able to live on it, for it not to be inhabited, and finally God to come along one day and begin to separate the firmament and to allow the sun and to put things back in their proper orbit and the sun to come through so that it would sustain human life and vegetable life and animal life once again on the earth, or for the first time in the specific creation of things that were put on the earth. But to know how long all that went and to understand that this is sacrifice on a continuing basis from God for something that's far greater. That wasn't easy! We can't even begin to grasp! That. Was. Not. Easy. To see beings who were trying to destroy everything you have done? ...that hate you? Incredible!

We don't generally think about God like that, do we? ...about what *He* has done for us.

Verse 13 - You have been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, the sardius, topaz, the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, the carbuncle,

and the gold: the workmanship of your tabrets of your pipes, it's a word here that really has to do with 'settings' in terms of use with jewels like a gemologist, or someone who does jewellery and the settings there. And this is what it's talking about, how beautiful he was made and what he reflected and what he was. It's like the terms of a jeweller who does the workmanship and the craft. ...**that was prepared in you in the day that you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; and I had set you so:** God says, "I placed you there." ...**you were upon the holy mountain of God;** 'mountain' is used as a matter of government. He was at the top, in the upper part of that government. ...**you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire;** in God's very presence.

You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, till iniquity was found in you. Because He gave him free choice. You can't begin to grasp the hurt when that finally happened that that did to God. He knew it was going to happen, but it still hurts. Sacrifice isn't easy, it hurts! It truly does! It's not a good feeling!

By the multitude of your merchandise/your trafficking/your trading, the way he functioned, the way he dealt with the other angelic beings; **they have filled the midst of you with violence /injustice/ oppression/wrong ways/that which is evil and you have sinned:** For evil to be around God, is so contrary to God...that was not easy. That's why when sin enters into our life God won't be there, we have to repent of it and it's only because of that that God will.... and God *desires* to be in us, to dwell in us. It's an awesome thing to understand! That to be in the presence of that, for that to be around, that was not an easy thing, it was *great sacrifice*. ...**therefore I have cast you as profane out of the mountain of God:**

And God's own Church, if we understand, in time came to a point where He had to cast it out, *spew it* out of His mouth. The example is given of one of vomiting! *Vomiting* is not a pretty picture. I've done it, it's not a pleasant thing! Get it away from you, get that *sickness* out of you! And so that analogy is used that's very descriptive to the whole Church because we all experienced it that were a part of Worldwide after the apostasy; and God began to bring us to repentance in different places, at different times, and different ones.

He says, **and I will destroy you,** little did we know the full meaning of all that. And so God tells him it's going to come in time. ...**O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.** Not just from God's presence, but the fulfillment of it all.

So none of this was easy, it came as great sacrifice by God for that which indeed is far greater to be accomplished through time...and we hadn't even got there. Look how long before we finally got to a point in time where God began to work with and deal with mankind now for the past 6,000 years. So this sacrifice was only the beginning, truly. Then God created the first two human beings and He knew what would happen with them. Give them everything. Parent's, human beings, we all learn in human life what it means to sacrifice, things you do to give; and we see things in human nature through parenting, through life as well, and then we begin to learn that in other life as well because it's just a part of human nature, of what human beings are like. And there are times when it hurts! And sometimes, as one becomes older and children go and do certain things, we hurt because we hate to see *them* suffer. It hurts! Sacrifice hurts! And sometimes you hurt inside waiting....

Then God created, again, the first human beings and they too turned against Him, yet He knew they would. But He was willing again to sacrifice the beauty and peace of His creation for the eventual development of something far greater.

Genesis 3:22 – incredible verses here - **And the Eternal God said, Behold, the man has become as one of us**, like unto Him, like unto Elohim is what it's referring to here as words are used in scripture in places and so forth, but this is Yahweh speaking this. And again here, in Hebrew it can be very difficult to translate some of these things into English, but making it very clear here that the man has made himself as God, has raised himself up to a level of being likened unto God, in the sense as it says here, **to know good and evil**: to determine what is good and evil. That's the way mankind's been for 6,000 years; people decide for themselves what's good and evil and what they can do and what they can't do and what they'll justify and what they won't justify and on and on it goes – good and evil. ...**and now, lest he put forth his hand**, won't listen to God of what's good and evil, but they decide for themselves and set up their own standards. That's the way human beings do in their religions and their beliefs and their governments and everything else; how much they'll tolerate, how much they won't tolerate, but not listen to God.

...and now lest he put forth his hand and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live forever: So God's showing that man in this state cannot have access to the Tree of Life. God made it very clear that man in that state and that condition, man can't have...just like the Church: you want to disobey God, you want to become spiritually weak and lukewarm knowing that God doesn't accept lukewarm, that you're either on fire for His way of life, you desire His way of life, you're crying out for His way of life, there's no middle ground... or you go the other way. And so the point being is even those within the Church of God – cut off from the flow of God's spirit! This is what happened to Adam and Eve, they were not given that benefit to be able to grow and to mature spiritually on a spiritual plane through their life so they could be born; they have to live again in a physical body. They have to be resurrected to live in the last hundred years to be able to receive that, to continue on with that, or whatever was happening in their life at that time.

Therefore the Eternal God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. From the earth. **So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim's, and a flaming sword...** God wasn't going to provide everything for them anymore, now they had to work; now they had to begin to suffer because of disobedience and life was going to be more difficult for them because of that. That was just the beginning. And so God set a way to block the way, to keep the way of the Tree of Life, so they wouldn't have access to it. And man hasn't over the last 6,000 years except for a few which God has called through time to work with individually, and especially in the first 4,000 years. And then finally in the last 2,000 years, because of the Church in an organized fashion, *in* the Church, far more were able to be worked with and moulded and fashioned through time. It's an awesome process.

But again, that wasn't easy for God. The first two that He creates, the first two beings to see what they would do and how they would respond and how *quickly* in physical life... He knew what they would do by what He gave to them as much as He knew what Satan would do and what would happen in the angelic realm. But God was willing to do that for a greater purpose, to see what His creation would do. And then what followed that as man was given such long life spans, we learn more from that as we've talked about in past sermons.

Then we come up to the time of the first great Passover when God was going to begin working with Israel as a nation and deliver them from the grasp of captivity of Egypt and of Pharaoh, (because it was through Pharaoh). And it wasn't until the time of King David that God began to give much more meaning and understanding about what sacrifice was and the true meaning of it because it wasn't really

given back in the time when they left Egypt, it was a physical thing they went through. But finally, by the time King David came long God began to give more, began to reveal more, even though it wasn't understood fully. Just in part in the Psalms and different places here that David wrote as a prophet of God, God began to reveal things about sacrifice and things about the Messiah; and here from a man who was known as one after God's own heart.

So God began to reveal through the prophetic writings of David the importance of sacrifice. Psalm 51 is very spiritual in nature, very powerful, and you grow in understanding of that in time within the Church. And we're growing more right now in time of understanding that in a deeper way than what we've understood in times past. And so again here, God began to reveal the importance of sacrifice and how such would come to mankind, again, through the Messiah who would come first as our Passover and then as the Messiah.

Then we come to a point in time when the true Passover came; not talking about a physical one back in Egypt, but now in the lambs that were killed year by year. They weren't sacrificed, they weren't like the sacrifices that were put upon the altar, but they were killed. And then the true Passover came and continued on with the sacrifices of God.

John 10:1 – Truly, Truly, I say unto you, He who does not enter by the gate of the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, amazing, **the same is a thief and a robber.** If you don't do it God's way and if you don't yield yourself to doing things God's way...if those who in time (because this is prophetic in nature), that come before God and especially now once the Church begins after what Christ accomplishes what He does. He's telling them what is going to be done through Him, by Him, and so forth, and talking about this in a very prophetic manner; that any who try to come some other way... there's only one way and it's *through the Passover*. That's how it starts! It's through acceptance of the Passover and the acceptance of Jesus Christ *as* our Passover; and He makes it very clear here that anyone who's ever tried to do it any other way, or would try to do it **the same as a thief and a robber**. Because then it's just about self and what you can get out of it.

The Catholic church...it's about what they can get out of it. Those who lead, it's about what they *get* out of it. With other religions and those who form them, it's about what they *get* out of it! And so human beings have become quite accustomed to that, so much so that that's the way people see most of those who call themselves religious, especially those whom they don't like, even me included. It's because they recognize there are certain things in human nature and, "Oh, its just what you can *get* out of it." And I understand that! But there's only one way, only one truth.

When people want to recognize certain things about human nature, they're willing to acknowledge it, when it benefits them. Amazing, but they won't seek to recognize it in themselves or what they believe. Incredible!

Verse 2 - But He who enters in by the gate is the Shepherd of the sheep. To Him the porter/gatekeeper opens; and the sheep hear His voice: and He calls His own sheep by name, and leads them out. It's a beautiful picture here. **And when He puts forth His own sheep and He goes before them,** talks about Him going before them, He goes before them, **and the sheep follow Him:** it's a beautiful picture of the Church and what we're to be like, a humble spirit, a willingness to follow as He leads us and not having our own self-will, but again, that attitude and spirit that was very much present in the Lamb, the picture of a lamb, and a Lamb that was willing to sacrifice Himself, a Lamb that didn't fight and didn't resist and was willing to go to slaughter, just as those killed for all that time period

before on Passover. They were *killed* to be able to observe the Passover year by year by year. They didn't fight and they didn't resist and when they heard a voice they recognized they might have come running.

I had a lamb one time as a pet. I was about 10 years old and started feeding it with a bottle and if it would hear me or see me it would come running. It didn't matter how far away, as soon as that lamb saw me it would come running. You think that some cases like this that people didn't have this in their lives when they went out to pick out the lambs? And yet it's hard for us to grasp, to comprehend, to imagine as a lamb grows and you get closer and closer to it as people do; because for a lot of people it's very easy to get close to all of them. We had cattle, milk cows, they all had names. We knew them! You think you can't tell cows apart in a pasture? Yes you can! Now they didn't come running when you called their name, they'd come running because they'd want relief a lot of times, milking time. But a sheep, a lamb, it's amazing, they hear your voice and they'll come to you, especially when there's that close relationship and how they're able to receive pasture and they're led to pasture and just because it's a routine thing for them; they don't fight and they don't resist. All the things we can learn for ourselves and our lives, the way they're to be, and Jesus Christ gives this about His Church, about those who truly follow Him.

And when He puts forth His own sheep and goes before them and the sheep follow Him for they know His voice. Someone else comes along – they don't follow that. Amazing how that works! Someone else comes along and they don't go charging after them or go following after them because there's one they've become accustomed to. That's how it works! **And they follow wherever He leads. And a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him: for they do not know the voice of strangers.** Beautiful! Beautiful picture here, beautiful picture for God's Church and the way it should be for God's Church and why it's so important not to listen to strange voices. Because there's a way that God works and the way that Jesus Christ works within the Church – always has. There's a form of order, a form of government if you will. It leaves a bad taste in some people's minds sometimes because of the way 'government' and how government is used so often in the world and even in churches sometimes, in organizations and so forth – but not in God's Church where Jesus Christ is the head of the Church.

And so Jesus Christ leads and we follow and then there's a way that we follow and there's a way that His voice comes to us and the way that God the Father speaks to us through His Son; and whatever He gives the Son He gives it to us. And the apostles even spoke of such things, that what they've been given they give. That's the way it works. **...and a stranger they don't follow.** What a blessing and what a lesson too, because too many follow different ideas, sometimes their own, sometime something they've heard someplace else, something they read in a book, something they've heard someplace on the internet or whatever, and you think, there's a reason why we teach the things we do, for people to be cautious of not opening yourself up to 'other voices'...how that that can destroy you. If you follow a different voice, if it's not from Christ people don't realize what that'll do to them quickly. You get cut off from God so quick you lose what you have and you're gone. It just recently happened to someone! Incredible how fast that can happen. What you had is *snatched from you quickly* and all of a sudden your mind is gone when it comes to the truth! Lessons after lesson after lesson.

But going on here, this is focused about Jesus Christ and what He did. **Verse 6 – And Jesus spoke this parable unto them: but they did not understand what things were which He spoke to them.** They didn't comprehend it. We understand it today. You understand it once the Church is formed and becomes a functioning Body; we're able to be a part of it. **Then Jesus said to them again, Truly, truly, I**

say to you that I am the door of the sheep. There's a way to come before God's presence and no other way; one way.

Even in the scattered body it's been lost, they don't understand. You can't have several different groups and organizations and governments and everybody somehow being worked with; because some think that. There are some in the different groups who think that somehow God's working with us all but in His own way. You think, "*Come on, give me a break!* Isn't that what the Protestant world teaches? Did you learn that from the Protestant world? That's what they teach! We're all kind of doing all the same thing... and I don't agree with you, and I don't agree with the Catholics and I don't agree with the Seventh Day Adventists or I don't agree with Baptists or whatever, but... you know, the Church of Christ, we're the one." But somehow they'll still teach that we're all kind of the same and God's working with every one of us in His own unique way.... Oh, let me barf! And the same way in the scattered church! Give me a break!! There's only one way.

There's only one way that truth comes to people, and people have to come to that... and that's what we've been praying about, that love and mercy be poured out upon those that can be saved. And it's not going to come easy but by a willingness to sacrifice, a willingness to *pray* in that context, understanding the pain and suffering that will be there, but to understand the fruit and the result of it can come in no other way! It *is* God's love, it *is* God's mercy that the church be rattled to its core, or that which *was* the Church, that's scattered today... that they be rattled to the core of their being in order to *shake* them up, to *wake* them up, and hopefully because of how this has been done, it'll happen by the thousands. What an awesome thing if it could happen by multiple thousands instead of just a little over 3000. Wouldn't it be awesome if maybe 10,000 could come out of all that? That would be awesome! It would be awesome if more, but knowing human nature I don't know, we'll have to wait and see what God does because God's the one that's doing it.

And so He says, **All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep have not heard them.** And so if we understand what has been given to us and strive to remain faithful to it and seek to obey God and seek to be close to our Passover and our Father then we have this guarantee in our life.

I am the door and if anyone enter in by/through Me, then they shall be saved, the way to eternal life, the way to God's Family, the way to be in God's presence. **I am the door;** Jesus Christ is. God made it very clear, 'and through Jesus Christ...' Jesus made it very clear that you have to be called of God the Father and then given to Him, given to Christ. Awesome thing to understand! That God the Father does the calling, He does the drawing and gives us to Christ; we're able to become a part then of the Body of Christ, the Church of God. **I am the door and if anyone enter in by/through Me, then they shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.** That's what we do Sabbath by Sabbath, Holy Day to Holy Day – we find pasture. We have been given so much pasture at a time when, in essence, there's spiritual drought everywhere.

The thief comes for no other reason but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: because it's all based on selfishness, not on sacrifice, not on giving. **I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good Shepherd and the good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.** He was telling what He was getting ready to do. He was showing here a oneness and agreement with His Father. He knew He was the Passover. He knew what He was going to do. He knew how agonizing it was going to be. All He had to do was go through and read different scriptures, especially in Isaiah like we did on Passover night, some of those that get very specific about the beating, His body so marred like it was, beaten up beyond recognition as we come to understand; ripped, skin ripped off of His being.

We can't comprehend, but He knew full well what He was going to have to suffer and was willing to do it. Willing, *desiring* to do it!

I am the good Shepherd and the good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But he who is a hireling, in other words, does what they do in order to *get*...and even within the Church that's happened, **and not the Shepherd whose own the sheep are not**, if we don't have that spirit and attitude ourselves within God's Church than we're not a part. We have to be able to *see* one another in a *unique way*. *We are* our brother's keeper; that we do love each other, that we *are* willing to sacrifice whatever it takes... *whatever it takes* to love someone else, to give to someone else, not to scare someone else off, not to chase someone else off, not to offend someone else, not to sin against someone else. On the contrary... but to be willing to sacrifice so that we can all continue to go the same direction because the battles are great with everyone. It's not easy. We all come out of different things and the patience and the mercy we should show first and foremost in life – can't put a price on that – and that requires sacrifice so often because the way we would do it so often is different from the way God or Jesus Christ would do it. And we have to yield ourselves to the right process.

...whose own sheep they are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep; How many times, if I could go back and repeat it, I would have done things differently at the end before the apostasy. I was too weak. I came to a point where I was too weak and I didn't stand up and fight in some of the things I should have fought in a far greater way, truly. Too weak; and that can happen to any human being with God's spirit, indeed. With the right conditions it *will happen* because we're weak and we need God all the time, all the time in our life, truly. We need to be on guard spiritually all the time. We need to be led by God all the time, truly.

As it says here...**because he is a hireling and does not care for the sheep**. If we don't care for one another, if we don't have love toward each other, which means to sacrifice, a willingness to sacrifice on our part, our feelings, our emotions, our way, then something's wrong with *us* because it's about love. It's about that which God began to do, that He gave to His Son that He willingly did that we in turn learn from and willingly do for a greater purpose than ourselves.

Verse 14 - I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. What a beautiful thing! Fellowship! What a beautiful thing we have when we get to know each other and have that bond that is there. Awesome; made possible by God. **As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep**. Awesome! For all mankind it's what He was willing to do. **And there are other sheep that I have, which are not of this fold**: in other words, of the disciples right there that He was beginning to work with. There are others. **...and them I must also bring, and they shall hear My voice**; what an awesome thing in the Church, that we've been able to hear, the ability to hear spiritually, to hear that voice is something you can't give to people. It's like with interviews when they've asked me, "Well, how do you know what God has given?" And what can you tell them? How can you explain to them how God's spirit works in the mind and we have this spirit in our mind that is human and that which is God and God communicates with that which is in our mind and it's not by voices. No, we're not hearing voices! Incredible, you can't give this to people, they don't understand. How do you know when you open up the Bible or you hear something, you read a book or you hear something and all of a sudden you see something you could never see before. How can you explain that to people? You've experienced it! That all of a sudden you see the Sabbath, you see the Holy Days, you see the plan of God. You can't figure it out! And then God just gives it to you. Awesome! It's what God does.

...and they shall hear My voice; that's what this means, and there shall be one fold, not 500 different ones split off after an apostasy, not agreeing with each other, going in different directions, doing different things. ...and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. And that's Jesus Christ! And we're all either at one with Him, growing at one with Him, following Him... there's not 500 shepherds out there!

Verse 17 - Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again.

He had that power; He already knew it! He knew what was given to Him. He lived a perfect life in the sense of righteousness before God, without sin as our Passover, and a willingness to go above and beyond to sacrifice *Himself*. And He even said at the end for our benefit, so we could learn from it, knowing that this was going to be excruciating, what He was getting ready to go through. He said, 'Father if there be any other way...' Think He didn't know? You know when He prayed...we can't comprehend this...it's one thing to go through something excruciating where things like this have happened in people's lives, something like this could happen in people's lives, but to do it because you think it, because you haven't gone through it yet but it's so real in your mind that it's as though you're going through it because you have the mind of God in you, the Word is in your being and the things that are said are as real as they're happening. But they haven't happened yet so He knows in a way that we can't even begin to comprehend what He's getting ready to go through, and it says...and He has perspiration come out and blood in the perspiration because it's so, so powerful? But yet that overriding mind that is willing to say, 'Father if there is any other way...but not My will, but Yours be done.' Incredible sacrifice, a willingness; and it's hard for us to grasp and comprehend what He went through. We *can't* because we've never had anything that real in our minds. I'm thankful for that. We believe certain things to a part but we can't comprehend and that's good, I'm happy about that. But He did for a greater purpose. It was so real to Him, perspired blood; blood came out with the droplets of sweat. Astounding! And yet that mind, that desire to continue on because He was of God and God's way is sacrifice. He's done it for so long; and Christ His Son followed in kind. It was Him.

And He said here, **No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it up. I have received this commandment of My Father.** He believed God. He knew that He had the power in His life by what He was living that He was going to be resurrected after three days. He knew it! As real as what He believed He was getting ready to go through He knew this too. But when you're in human flesh, you don't like to suffer. We don't like to suffer. And sometimes we don't like to suffer for each other in the Body, in the Church, but we must.

It's not about making things easier for us. It's not about making things easy our way, it's what God is doing in *His* way moulding and fashioning each and every one of us. And we must give room to *God* to do His work and not get in the way; and we can help whatever we've been given through the Church sometimes to help facilitate that and to help that along as long as we're yielding fully to God's spirit living in our lives and not getting in the way. And sometimes we do get in the way and we have to repent of that.

And so again here, this definition of what Jesus Christ followed: 'to forfeit or to give up one thing for another thing considered to be of greater value.' He did, powerfully so! 'The giving up of something valued or important for somebody or something else considered to be of more value or importance.' Absolutely! It's His mind, His being; it's the way He was! And in time, thank God, God blesses us to begin to grow in that same thing. It's a beautiful picture, truly is. And so we see this mind in God the Father and we see this mind in Jesus Christ.

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