

## Preparing Ourselves Spiritually – Pt. 1

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March 10, 2012

It may not seem like it at times but we are moving rapidly through this final end-time that can be best described biblically as the final 'Half a Time' if you look at a period of time of 'Time, Times and a Half a Time'; we are in that final 'Half a Time' obviously, or a period that's classified that way.

This past Thursday on the 8<sup>th</sup>, just the other day here, we entered the fourth day - I thought it was Wednesday, but it was Thursday - we entered the fourth day of symbolically circling Jericho; and on next Sabbath we'll be exactly half way through this final period, or symbolically 3½ days through our marching. That's an incredible thing! So, we're already almost half way through and realizing that at some point here toward the end, even if it's on the last day, things are going to happen tremendously powerfully on this earth and the things that we have been looking forward to, and God's Church has been looking forward to for a long, long time.

I thought I'd also mention, by the time we have our Church wide fast at the end of the month we'll already be a few days into the *fifth* day of symbolically marching, or circling if you will, Jericho, and then we'll be observing Passover just a few days later. So things are moving rapidly forward and I know sometimes it seems like when you're anticipating something the more you anticipate it it seems like the longer it takes to get there. I hate to think of some bad analogies but I think of when I was a kid, certain things you look forward to (before the Church), seemed like some things are so far off because you're anticipating. Anyway, a lot of you probably know what I'm talking about.

But again, since we are rapidly moving toward the Church wide fast, Passover, and then the Feast of Unleavened Bread it's good that we begin preparing for these. And it's always wise to be preparing ourselves spiritually for those things that are ahead, especially in this season of the year in the first of the Holy Days coming up and *especially* Passover, even more so. It's an observation we keep that is a commanded assembly but it is not a High Day. Awesome! Because you can't enter into God's plan, be a part of that until you receive the Passover, until you receive the process of baptism, if you will, and that which is pictured in the beginning of why Jesus Christ died for us, so that we could have all of our sins forgiven, and then we're able to enter into God's plan because at that point in time we have all of our sins forgiven and we have hands laid upon us and we have the impregnation of God's spirit – so the process begins - and we begin to enter into God working in us, moulding and fashioning, that we're a part of God's plan then. And that's an awesome thing to me, how God established and has set up everything so incredibly beautiful, really is. It's awesome! There is no other way of describing it...and everything means so much, everything fits together in such a powerful way. And the closer we get to the end here and the more that God reveals, the more perfectly we see things fitting together.

We're going to have a sermon today that's entitled *Preparing Ourselves Spiritually – Part 1*. We're going to begin today by taking time to go over a subject that I've just completed writing a topic about, that I just mentioned in the announcements, that has already been added to the 'Topics' section of the 'FAQ'. This new topic is entitled, 'Night To Be Much Observed'. Now, the reason we're going through this is because there have been some questions about some of it that has come up, about a uniformity we need to have within the Church, of understanding the meaning of it, some things regarding it, and it's also good because it fits into the subject matter of what we're covering today, preparing ourselves spiritually. And so there's a tremendous message in understanding what this period of time is all about.

## Night To Be Much Observed |<sup>1</sup>

There have been some questions regarding uniformity in how we observe what is traditionally referred to as the "Night to be Much Observed." In the past, part of that tradition was to get together in groups, small or large, and have a meal together as the primary means of celebrating this occasion. Yet there was no religious service and most often no mention of the meaning for why people were gathering together that evening.

That's been my experience in the Church of God ever since I've been baptized in 1969, that we would get together on the night - it would be after Passover day, the beginning of the night of the 1<sup>st</sup> Day of Unleavened Bread which has been traditionally called the 'Night To Be Much Observed'. And in that particular picture of that time people would get together in groups, sometimes in large groups, sometimes in a home and invite a lot of different people in to observe this particular night. But in my experience (and I may be wrong) I do not remember a single time that anything was ever done as far as a service or anyone making mention of, in the sense of talking about why we were together on that night.

Now, previous to that, sometimes things were said in sermons or whatever, that we're approaching the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or approaching Passover, and we prepared for that. So that's why I mentioned it in that context, that it never was a religious service, that it never was something where anything was basically said about it, it was something that you would remember perhaps or know from sermons you heard. So that's why that's stated in that fashion.

It was most often observed after sunset once the 1st Day of Unleavened Bread began.

Let's consider what God told the Israelites that led to this traditional observance in God's Church.

The Israelites sprinkled the blood of lambs on their doorposts in observance of the Passover as God instructed. The following day (daylight portion of Passover on the 14th) they prepared to leave Egypt, and then after sundown on the 1st Day of Unleavened Bread (15th) [the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup>] they began their journey out of Egypt.

It is made clear in Deuteronomy that they left Egypt by night, and the only night this can be referring to is the beginning of the 15th of Abib.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the beginning of it, that evening.

This account is about the Feast that began directly after Passover, once animals were killed during the daylight portion of Passover in preparation for keeping the first night of feasting after sundown on the 15th.

And this is quoting now Deuteronomy 16...

"Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover [this holy day season begins with the observance of the Passover and then the killing of animals on Passover day that were used in sacrifices and feasting once the 1st Day of U.B. began] ....

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cog-pkg.org/faq/topics.aspx#toc>

So again here....

“Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover....unto the LORD [Eternal] your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD [Eternal] your God brought you forth out of Egypt by night [this is the night of the 15<sup>th</sup> that begins the Feast of UB, the same night God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt]. You shalt therefore sacrifice the passover [not the Passover lamb, as it was not sacrificed]...

It was eaten by people, it wasn't something sacrificed. To me it's amazing how ministers in God's Church could get this stuff so fouled up and begin to think when it talked about a Passover sacrifice that they couldn't grasp and comprehend what was taking place as far as the sacrifices were concerned. The Passover was *never* a sacrifice! God says it was *His Sacrifice* given to mankind. It's *His* sacrifice. God was willing to sacrifice His own Son. Jesus Christ was willing to sacrifice Himself for the sins of all mankind, but it was never something that was offered up on the altar by individuals, by the Levites or anything of that nature. So sometimes I truly get a little perturbed, worked up, that people got so far off course, that an evangelist in God's Church taught students (they weren't ministers yet but students) in his classrooms about a 15<sup>th</sup> Passover and got things so messed up about things like this that are really so simple and so easy to understand. Incredible what took place, what we've gone through in God's Church! I get a little worked up when I think about these things.

You shalt therefore sacrifice the passover...

Not speaking of the Passover night and the lamb. This is Unleavened Bread that they're working toward, the sacrifices during the day referred to as the Passover sacrifices, or the Passover sacrifice, if you will.

You shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the LORD [Eternal] your God, of the flock and the herd...

That there should tell people exactly what it's talking about! I hope you understand that deeply. There are people who read this and get Passover mixed up with Unleavened Bread! You think, "DUH! When it says *the herd*... you weren't allowed to have any of the herd on Passover night." It was always a lamb that had to be set aside four days previous to this, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Abib, and then on the 14<sup>th</sup> it was to be killed and eaten by the people in their homes. This is talking something different that's done at the temple when you sacrifice of the flock and of the herd, speaking of cattle then.

So it says...

...of the flock and the herd [clearly a reference to animals used in sacrifices and feasting once U.B. began], in the place which the LORD [Eternal] shall choose to place his name there [this was not in their homes as with the eating of the lamb on Passover night, but in Jerusalem in and around the temple region].

Not in different cities throughout Judea, this is a Holy Day in Jerusalem at the temple area where you had to do this, 'in the place God chooses to place His name'.

You shalt eat no leavened bread with it [with the feasting during these days],

Then it gets very specific...

...and for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, even the bread of affliction, for you came forth out of the land of Egypt in haste, so that you might remember the day when you came forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life" (Deu. 16:1-3).

Tremendously powerful meaning here of something that began clear back then, the very beginning of when Passover was given to the Israelites and the meaning of the Days of Unleavened Bread and so forth – coming out of Egypt.

During the daylight portion of Passover, the Israelites prepared sacrifices and animals to be used for feasting. For them, the time of sundown that leads into the first night of the Feast of U.B. was indeed a most memorable time that readily reminded them of their deliverance from sin.

Now reading from Exodus 12:40-42:

"Now the season of dwelling for the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass,

Think that God does things in an orderly fashion, perfect in timing?

...that all the hosts of the LORD [Eternal] went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD [Eternal] for bringing them out from the land of Egypt,

And they did, as long as they obeyed God didn't they? As long as they obeyed God it was a Night To Be Much Observed, it was the first Holy Day of the year, it was the beginning of it all, it reminded them of how they were able to keep these observances before God year after year after year, the very first one. After the Passover was over, that day at sundown they began to feast and they remembered...as long as they were faithful to God in keeping these times.

....and this is that night of the LORD [Eternal] to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations" (Ex. 12:40-42).

Indeed, as the children of Israel were to observe the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread from generation to generation, the first night of feasting together (after sundown that began the 15th of Abib) carried with it special meaning and special remembrance (or observation) of God delivering them out of Egypt.

Obviously, God's Church does not observe the practice of sacrifices or feasting as the physical children of Israel did. The Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread carry deep spiritual lessons that God gave to the Church. We reflect, both privately and very often in sermons, upon the spiritual meaning of our Passover and our deliverance out of Egypt during the night (spiritually in this world, in this first age of mankind).

See, those things that were given to the Israelites were extremely physical in nature, of something they were to follow and observe. For us it has far deeper meaning because it's on a spiritual plane as

everything about the Holy Days, the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, you want to talk about Trumpets, Atonement, all the way through – incredible spiritual meaning *and* physical meaning that's contained there as well as far as those things do with prophecy and what God is doing with mankind and salvation. But it has so much deeper meaning to us because it's on a spiritual plane, and that's why we're addressing this in the context of this sermon, 'Preparing Ourselves Spiritually', because that's what has been taking place for some time now, even more so in this end-time.

Ever since the apostasy God worked to bring us back on course, to establish us, to restore us again in that respect, of a remnant that was to continue forward to the very end. And He's made us stronger and stronger through time; and in this last period of not quite 3½ years yet, as we've covered in the previous sermons here about Daniel and so forth, Jesus Christ has been refining, has been putting the finishing touches, has been '*strengthening the covenant with many*' because it's not just for us now, just as it was during the period of time when He began that, in the midst of the week when He was cut off, it said He was going to strengthen the covenant with many for seven days, seven years. He was cut off in the midst of that in 3½ years, but He strengthened the covenant. And we talked about that then in the last sermon. Of all those things He gave that pushed the Church forward in a very powerful way, into the next 2,000 years, and those things that have been built upon and refined through the apostles, and then Paul that even God inspired and delivered more through, and then John, as we talked about, and then Mr. Armstrong bringing that picture together in such a powerful way.

Well, He's been finishing the finishing touches of that seven days, that 3½ years in this final 3½ years. He's been strengthening the covenant with many, because it's not just about us, it's about the *many* who are about to come into the Church! ...the *millions* who are going to go into the Millennium, the *billions*! And so that *covenant* is being strengthened powerfully with truth and things that could not be given before that God is giving now, that Jesus Christ is giving now; and how appropriate – just before He returns. I don't know about you, but to me things like this are almost...they almost leave you speechless, they truly do. It is so awesome to see what God is doing, to see why He does the things the way He does, the inspiration, the power that's there – it truly is incredible! It truly is! There is just no other way of describing it! And this is a good example of something as well that's being refined for the Church, if you will, *strengthened* for the Church to better understand.

We've learned a lot of things in recent time that has strengthened various aspects of things we didn't have fully together yet because it wasn't God's time yet. Just like understanding what dwelling in booths at the Feast of Tabernacles means. We learned some great lessons there in a period of time when we did some of the things we did because God was teaching us something very powerful, when people were to stay at home, not have a sponsored Feast site for four days. That taught a powerful lesson to God's people, it truly did, about what it really means – because it's *spiritual*, it wasn't physical, it wasn't something like the Israelites did when they build this little booth out in the back yard, or back there somewhere where they were to go out there and think and contemplate and think about God's purpose and what God was doing with what they understood at that time, and the fruit that they were to put there and so forth, that they were able to eat while they thought about these things – as a physical kind of ritual. And then in God's Church through time God gave us something to hold onto, that as people transferred to various sites that became their temporary dwelling. And it *was* a temporary dwelling but that wasn't the spiritual meaning of it yet! Awesome! And then God gives us the spiritual meaning, what it means to be a temporary dwelling; it's about us, it's about mankind, it's about what God does in our life to bring us through all this to a point in time where it's a *permanent* dwelling for all eternity, which is one of the last truths - not *the* last truth, but one of the last seven, one that Jesus Christ has given to us toward the end-time here.

There's coming that time when we will dwell in God and God will dwell in us for eternity, never with any kind of interruption as we've had in our physical lives. Because every one of us, *everyone in God's Church* experiences interruption of the flow of God's spirit! Every time you *sin* you experience the interruption of the flow of God's spirit in your life, where you're by yourself and you're only going on memory and what you know at that point in time until you repent, and then when you repent that flow begins again; and it's God's desire to *always* dwell in us, but He will not dwell in sin. That's why Jesus Christ had to die. It's the purpose of Christ's death. That's why when you read the last things of instruction that Jesus Christ gave before He...on that night, John 14, 15, 16, and in through there, about His great desire, that finally, He told the disciples, 'Believe you Me...' 'You have seen the Father!' 'The Father dwells in Me and I dwell in Him.' And now He revealed, '...and now We will dwell in you and you will dwell in Us.' Temporary dwellings until we get everlasting ones, because 'eternal' means backward and forward, eternal, which we cannot grasp; but everlasting, from that point forward *into*, I guess you could say, eternity, isn't it.

Going back here and reading some more of this:

Obviously, God's Church does not observe the practice of sacrifices or feasting as the physical children of Israel did. The Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread carry deep spiritual lessons that God gave to the Church. We reflect, both privately and very often in sermons, upon the spiritual meaning of our Passover and our deliverance out of Egypt during the night (spiritually in this world, in this first age of mankind).

We observe God's holy days in a spiritual manner and not in a physical one, except in those things that God specifically tells us to do in a physical manner (i.e., partaking of unleavened bread and wine on Passover night and the eating of unleavened bread for seven days).

*Specifically* commanded.

As with our observance in all of God's holy days, God's people often eat meals together, but such things are not commanded and not on the 1st night of the Feast of Unleavened Bread either. That was strictly a tradition. Our observance is a spiritual one and a private one between each of us and God. This word for "observed" in the expression "night to be much observed" of Exodus 12 is a word that is only used once.

Which we've had sermons before on this...

It means "night watch as in a vigil."

Sound familiar? It is a tremendous message Jesus Christ had over and over again for the disciples, a spiritual one.

It means "night watch as in a vigil." The spiritual lesson should not escape us, just as Jesus Christ told us of the necessity of always keeping vigil and watch over our spiritual lives...

That's why this sermon today that we're entering into, again, 'Preparing Ourselves Spiritually', deeply connected with this new topic, in that respect, and this subject.

The spiritual lesson should not escape us, just as Jesus Christ told us of the necessity of always keeping vigil and watch over our spiritual lives, especially in the "night" of this world.

We are to be of the day and not of the night as Paul said we should be: "You are all the children of the light, and the children of the day. We are not of the night, nor of darkness" (1 Thes. 5:5).

The conclusion is that it is good when people choose to have special meals together on God's holy days. It is a choice. It is a choice to come together on the 1st night of the Feast of Unleavened Bread to share a special dinner, but it should not be treated as a time of "religious observance" of and by itself, nor something that must be done after sundown. The period of time that is referred to as the "Night to be Much Observed" is not a commanded assembly. It is the beginning of the first annual holy day in which we do have a commanded assembly before God.

Hopefully that clarifies things and add a little bit more, in that respect, to our understanding of what God desires of us, that which is given to us on a spiritual plane of the meaning of coming out of Egypt, 'coming out of the night', of that process we do and how we do it, because it's done with *vigilance*, it's done with being *watchful* of ourselves; because so many have gone by the wayside, and we all have at one time or another that were before the apostasy because of being cut off from God's spirit, of not being watchful, of not doing what we should do.

That's why that incredible example there in Matthew 25 of the parable of the 10 Virgins is so incredible, because it talks about five who are wise and 5 who were foolish. And in times past the concept, the idea was that these five that were foolish were basically the Laodiceans and the five who were wise were the Philadelphians and that the Philadelphians were doing the right thing... but God condemned all ten because they did not watch, they fell asleep spiritually. And then it talks about those who entered and it doesn't say just the wise did. We know who it was! It was those who repented! So you can be wise in some of the things how you live your life at times, you can be foolish and very *unwise* at times, but when it comes down to God's purpose He calls, He works with both. Obviously the wise strive to be wise in how we live our lives spiritually, especially after we've learned some hard lessons like that.

I wanted to go through that because it has so much to do with preparing ourselves spiritually, of understanding why we do these things each year and especially because of where we are in time right now, to understand even more so. *Because this is it* - this is what thrusts you into a new age! For some it's already set, those that are sealed; for others it's a process of something you desire. You *desire* to live in that age, you *desire* to be a part of that age, you *desire* to be a part of that time, you want to live in that world, you want to be there when Jesus Christ returns! And that is your desire with all of your being, hopefully and prayerfully, and to understand that to get from here to there... because... Something that just rips me up, and I knew it would happen to the end, *still* is happening, that even to the end you've got to fight for this! Even when God gives you the opportunity, you've got to fight for it, you've got to want it, you've got to be *thankful* to God for what He's given you.

That's why we're headed toward the fast we are. It's a special, unique fast indeed, of thanksgiving to God. ... and people still going by the wayside and I think, "How many weeks do we have? Eleven? ...and you won't fight anymore? You're this close and you won't fight anymore?" ...not even in the most remote possibility that just *maybe...MAYBE May 27<sup>th</sup> is absolutely right?! ...that just maybe all that you've sacrificed for...* can you not do it for eleven more? I think of the time when Christ came back and He said, "Couldn't you stay awake just a *little bit longer with Me?* Couldn't you have *watched just a little longer?*" ...before He went into all that He had to go through in that night. "Couldn't you have done it just a little bit longer?" ...it's that same sentiment!

This is at the very end! Can't you do it just a little bit longer, fight a little bit more? That's God's plea to us, truly is, especially now. And I know it isn't over...I know it isn't over. The longer it goes...if it's in the last day, if it's half way through the last day of the marching symbolically, that you have the evidence, that there will be those who can't wait that long, those who become side-tracked, those who become discouraged, those who will panic! I think, "Why?" This long... can't you just wait a few more days in faith asking God for help to hold on? Anyway... human nature is a marvel, it truly is. The human mind is a marvel.

So, as we approach the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread I find it ever so interesting that the timing of questions regarding this subject have come up because it has much to do with what we just covered. To prepare ourselves more fully spiritually for this season of the year we need to grasp the magnitude of the period of time that we are now entering, and the lesson or spiritual message contained in what we've just read in this new topic, if you will.

Let's turn over to Luke 21. Again, I'm speaking of the word we just focused upon in the phrase 'Night to be Much Observed', that word 'observed' which means 'night watch', or 'to be vigilant in the night watch', because if you're not vigilant while you're in the night watch...and again, the example there is of someone posted as a sentry, as a guard around a city, the gates, the walls of a city, and here they are at the gates and they are to keep watch for enemies, for that which would come in to take from them, to take from them what they have, sometimes to take everything away, to take your life away, whatever it is. And those lessons should not escape us. So more than ever we need to be vigilant and understand the need to become more spiritually alert and focused on what God and His Son are doing in the Church and in the world.

**Luke 21:29 - And He spoke to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they are ready to shoot forth you see and know of your own selves that summer is now near at hand. Likewise, when you see these things come to pass, know yourselves that the Kingdom of God is near at hand.** So again, those things in Matthew 24 and here in Luke that we have seen in God's Church; we have already experienced so much of it, especially starting with the apostasy and now with added knowledge and understanding that those things were even recorded in the book of Daniel let alone 2 Thessalonians 2 and other places, talking about 'that which withholds' or 'holds back' the timing, the final timing of the end-time, of the Messiah's coming *as* the Messiah this time, not as the Passover...but as He said, as a lion to take control of this earth, of God's Kingdom.

**Verse 32 - Truly I say to you, This generation shall not pass away until all is fulfilled.** Those things that we have gone through in God's Church that began with some of the shakings that started in the 70's; when it talks about 'earthquakes', the shakings that took place in various areas in the Church around the world and people left in different Church areas, and it shook the Church. But it wasn't happening everywhere, it was building up to a time when it would happen everywhere, to an apostasy later on.

**Verse 33 – Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away.**

**Verse 34 - And take heed to yourselves,** that's a constant thing in our life – constant – **lest at any time your hearts become...** now some of these things are a little awkward in how they're translated, and especially using old English words and so forth – like it says here, 'overcharged with surfeiting', better translation today, **weighed down** by being disoriented or distracted, just like kind of being in a stupor from drunkenness. But here, to them, it's like a physical thing. No, it's more than that, it means more than that, it's that which can happen to you. I've seen it happen to so many, where people become disoriented, *distracted* by other things.

And even this ...**and drunkenness**, better translation, '**even with intoxication**'. See, so often when we read things we read them physically, and that's not what God is talking about. Now, physical things can, obviously, do this. But on a spiritual plane is what God is...there's more being encompassed here, more being brought in, that the reality is that you can become intoxicated with the ways of this world that can distract you from being able to see what God has placed in front of you – various pulls, various things can pull you away from and you become intoxicated with that. That's what fills your life, with something that really shouldn't fill your life! And that can be all kinds of things that are out here! Anything that distracts you and pulls you away from the truth, doesn't matter what it is, those are the things you have to battle, those are the things you have to be alert in, those are the things you have to desire with all of your being, constantly going before God and saying, "Father forgive me...*forgive me...*" so that He will continue to dwell in you and help you.

So you've got to fight the fight and continue fighting all the way through. That's what it's talking about. And God's blessed us with the ability to repent...*if you need to, of the same thing several times a day and seeking to conquer and overcome it!* But don't give up the fight, because that's a fight and it's a battle; it's a battle in the mind! And God will forgive you and continue to work with you. If your heart is right before God and you *really* want His way of life, He will bless you in these things, as He has done so often for so long for all of us who continue on.

So, **and take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts become weighted down by being disoriented or distracted, even with intoxication**, in the sense of this world. There's another word in the Greek that comes from 'pharmakia'; it's like 'pharmacy' – being drugged. It's a word that's used in the Greek language here in one of the areas, I think it's in Revelation even, and what happens to people in the world. It's like being drugged, people, on the things that are out here, their lives, to where they can't see, they can't hold onto, they can't comprehend what is right in front of them.

... **and the cares of this life;** that can weigh you down, it can disorient you. The cares of this life can become so great that... How do we plan beyond...? What if it *doesn't* happen on May 27<sup>th</sup>? What am I going to do after that? What am I going to do job-wise, money-wise, bank-wise, dollar-wise, euro-wise, pound-wise, whatever it is-wise...? Well, that's between you and God. For me, it's after that day, it doesn't even make for good toilet paper, it's pretty rough. And some of that foreign stuff is just *really* rough because it's plastic now. Up in Canada you can see through it now in parts of it, and the new currency you're coming out more and more is its more plastic now. At least a dollar bill after a while of rubbing...it can be a little softer, but anyway, this stuff here is plastic, it's not good. I don't know if it burns even. How could you even start a fire? What good would it be?

So, where is our hope? Where is our focus? Where is our desire? Where is our *heart*? And that's between every person and God, each individual and God. And you know what? In the Church there's an incredible variance there from one end of the pendulum to the other, truly, and I understand that, and a lot of that has to do with sometimes in cases time and how long we've been in God's Church and God works with us in those things. In others... sometimes it becomes a little more difficult, but God's very merciful.

**Verse 35 - For as a snare it shall come upon all them who dwell on the face of the whole earth.** Boy, does that mean more now than ever before, a snare, a trap, when it's finally sprung. Looking back, planning, trying to be wise, not knowing because God hasn't shown all those things. Just like I've always talked about, we don't know the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet until the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet sounds. *We do not know when, where, how, specifically what* until it happens; then we'll know. And thankful it hasn't been there, yet.

**Therefore watch**, that word: **Therefore watch**... that word that has to do with a sentry on guard during the night watches; that's where it came from, the night watches. They'd use the daytime portion, they'd use the hours. You told time at night time by the watches, the first, second... it's like periods of time around the clock, just like the daytime, first hour, the second hour - in the ninth hour something happened to Christ - in the third hour... anyway, talking about some of those things they spoke of 'the hour', but at night it was referred to as a watch, a certain watch - first watch, the second watch, the fifth watch, the eighth watch. Same period of time, just at night-time because it had to do with something they needed to do. And we're living in the night, but we are not *of* the night, we're not to be of the night.

**Therefore watch and pray always**, a relationship with God! There is our strength! A relationship with God, that we look to Him - first of all that we look for one of the most important things that we have to have in life on a continuing basis is forgiveness of our sins. Because we're filled with sin. Our physical carnal life is filled with sin! That's what controls the human life. People aren't in control of their lives out there, they're in Egypt, they're in bondage, they're in slavery. We're *being* freed from it; we're not free from it yet, we're coming out of it. It's like the example of coming out of Egypt, but we're not out of it yet until we're out. You're not there until you're there! That life is not dwelling in you eternally until a change comes, *then* everlasting; God can dwell in you, will dwell in you and you in God. But until this happens it's not there as long as you're in a physical body.

**Therefore watch and pray always**, in other words you watch your own life. You're fighting the fight, you seek to be alert to things, you ask God for help to be alert to things in your life and what's going on around you and help in the battles that you're addressing. Only you know your battles inside and out - God knows them far better than you... Go to Him. Jesus Christ knows - go to God - His desire is to help you in those things, to fight them, to work on them.

**Therefore watch and pray always so that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.** How much more meaningful is that today than two years ago, ten years ago, twenty years ago? We're *there*! Now, it's always had meaning - always been important because of something that always must be done - but how much more now? Because now, we're almost there to the time He's coming back! Incredible!

It's about a relationship with God, about being spiritually alert, being on guard, so that indeed we can be there, so that indeed you can be in the Millennial period and one day hear Him at a Feast of Tabernacles, or at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or on Pentecost. Because He can get around, okay? In one day He can give many sermons in many different parts of the world where people are gathered

together...and the 144,000 as well. That's what's beautiful about what's coming, the ability to teach, the ability to preach, that first of all comes from God in a very powerful way without error, without fault, without weakness, without mistakes. I make mistakes... talked about that last night. Every once in a while, I know what I mean, it doesn't always come out of my mouth. I get going a hundred and ninety miles an hour when I'm supposed to be going a little slower but I have much I want to say and I get going too fast and sometimes the wrong word comes out. We make mistakes, human beings. We make mistakes, we're not perfect. No matter what our job is it's just a reality of life.

**1 Thessalonians 5:1 - But of the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly well that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.** So, for the past almost 2,000 years this has been the message in the Church, from the time that Paul wrote this and even before, obviously; but because Jesus Christ talked about these things. So again here **...yourselves know perfectly well that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them,** this is a lesson to be learned individually in your own life. When you get to a point in time when you don't feel there's need to battle anymore and you feel that everything is fine – I've seen this a lot – when you get to the point... there's another expression (I wish that it would come to me, that's used in the New Testament), but it's a wrong kind of confidence, and sometimes an overconfidence of where we think we are. It's the attitude of Laodicea, 'rich and increased with goods' – peace and safety – you're doing pretty good and you can easily see other who aren't, but yah, there's some sin there that you're still battling at different times but you're doing pretty good. Peace and safety here, everything's going along pretty smoothly. Dangerous trap! And we understand this is also something in the world that happens toward the end-time. But it's a good lesson in there individually as well.

**For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them,** and that happens to people too, individually in their life, that attitude and frame of mind that's so dangerous; but even for the world around us it's exactly the way it is. That's why I think of where we are now. I think of this country. I think of the parallels of what happened in God's Church before the apostasy and even after the apostasy and things that happened like a repetition the second time around, this thing of going back to sleep again, *choosing* to be asleep. Terry Wrozek was talking to me the other night here and he was talking about one individual that comes to him with world news you can't get here in the States. You've got to find things; you've got to search in order to find out what's really happening in the world. You might find a few reports about Syria and when people hear about the possibility of someone going in and making a strike on Syrian soil they don't understand the rest of the story that's not being told out there – Russia – that this is not a small thing, that others might understand in government, but basically people don't know and they don't really care to know.

Anyway, he was talking about this one individual (not a member of the Church) that has come up to him at various times and wants to know and wants to talk about these different things out there and bounce them off of Terry, and I think that's how the story goes anyway, and some of these world events out there that he can see different things. And then this other person that works there made the comment, "I don't want to hear anymore!" to this person that's telling them that, "I don't want to hear any of that! Don't tell me these things while I'm around," basically. And that's a real life experience of *exactly* the way it is in the world as a whole. This country here, people don't really want the truth... What do they want? "Everything is getting better. As we go along prices are going to start getting better. Yeah, we're having a little bit of a ripple right now because of some things in the Middle East with the oil, but we've had high oil prices before and we'll get them back down. And the stock market, oh, it's really looking good now and last year was a *great year* and it's going to get a whole lot greater." Attitudes that are out

there, of people willingly wanting and choosing to believe a certain thing. And that's the way it happened in God's Church – and then sudden destruction. Peace and safety... peace and safety – that's what people want. That's what people want to believe in, peace and safety; and anybody that promises them that that's who we want in office.

**Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them as child labour upon a woman; and they shall not escape.** So in the world we understand that, as well as learning the lessons individually in our own lives of how easy things can happen, how quickly they can happen with certain attitudes. But again here, speaking of the time we're in and where we're headed.

**...as child labour upon a woman; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief. You are all the children of light, and the children of the day:** so this is the context of all that verse that we just had in the 'Night to be Much Observed' topic; **we are not of the night, nor of darkness.** So that's what Paul was saying, '**You brethren are not of the darkness that the day should overtake you as a thief**' – so it *shouldn't* for us. We shouldn't be caught off guard! We shouldn't have that kind of mind and attitude.

**Verse 6 - Therefore let none of us sleep, as do others;** who *choose* to be spiritually asleep, who *choose* to be asleep to what is really going on around them in the world, **but let us watch**; more so because this is spiritual for us! **...but let us watch and be sober.** That was a strong part of the message at the Feast this past year, at the end, to be sober-minded, to be sober. That's what this is talking about, sober-minded in how we think about things that are going on around us, the final phase, the final push forward.

One more section here in 1 Peter 4:7 – things about being alert, being watchful because we live in the night in this world. This world is very much in the night. We're getting to a point now where it's going to be thrust into daylight in a very powerful way, but the first 6,000 years hasn't been so. **1 Peter 4:7 - But the end of all things is at hand:** now, look at when that was written. People had to live their lives understanding. I think of Mr. Armstrong, always had a sense of urgency – *always* had a sense of urgency! Any period of time you want to read any of his writings... he was blessed and gifted with that! Truly was! When he wrote in the 'Pastor General's Report', when he wrote in the co-worker letters, anything that went out on a constant basis – all those capital letters – sense of urgency, wanted to *drive* the point home and that's how he did it. When he spoke he had a sense of urgency! And that's healthy for people, that's healthy for God's Church, to have a sense of urgency, to understand we need to plan perhaps 5 and 10 years, as he said. Used to be 10 years then it got down to 5 and 10 toward the end of his life, always looking ahead. But understanding the times we live in and how quickly things can happen in the world if it's God's purpose and God's timing. There was always this sense, this urgency of being on guard, of being alert. That's what it was! And I think of everything that God has given to us in the last period of time, especially the last three years or so, even in preparing the ministry, a type of a sense of urgency, if you will, of a preparing and a planning that we've gone through, because we've been going through that, to keep us focused. We need those things in our lives and God has blessed us mightily so we can keep focused and keep at work, and if we didn't have those things... if it's not much going on there, especially in times like this, it's *easier* to lose what you have. It truly is! So we've been very, very blessed, and a lot of this is preparation for a lot of you who are going to live on into a new period of time.

**But the end of all things is at hand: therefore be sober and watch unto prayer.** He's telling you how you do it! It's what we read about in Luke – watch, pray always. It's this relationship with God, being

watchful. The way you stay spiritually alert is by this relationship you have with God, by the attitude you have toward what God gives to you and your response to Him and how you live your life and what you're doing in your life, and then talking to Him about it, praying to Him about it, sharing your life with Him, opening up to Him. He knows you anyway; He wants you to open up to Him.

**...and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity/agape...** Now, of and by yourself *no* human being has this! It's from God. It is of God's spirit! The source is God. We human beings don't have agape in our lives. You can't go out and work it up! You can't work up the love of God in your life, like so many in the world think they can do it. It's not real, it's fake! This is real when it comes from God, when it lives through you and your way of thinking toward others; and how you think toward others is something that comes from God. And as we draw closer to the end, and as a desire becomes stronger this must become more and more a part of your life. It will be a part of your life to the end of your life, something you'll grow in, to learn to have, to grow in, having and exercising charity.

But here it says, in essence, **above all things have fervent charity**; work on this! Above all things focus on this! Because you know what? It doesn't matter how much you know. It wouldn't matter if you knew the exact day, the exact place; everything else that you might know is of no value if you don't have this. *This* is what it's all about.

That's why it says in 1 John 4:8, 'God is agape.' God is love. It describes God. Everything that comes from God is about love, *His* love, not human love, not selfish love, because ours is selfish. *We are selfish!* That's why I marvel that there are people in the ministry who couldn't grasp this, of what Mr. Armstrong said, the most beautiful love you could see in human life that he gave an example of, was a mother's love toward her own child. And even today in this world, and we see it in the world where that isn't what it should be so often. But he said that's an example of something he could think of that would be the most beautiful in life, but it's selfish. And that's hard for people to understand! Because you don't love other people's children the same way. God does! God's love is different! That's His being! *Awesome!* So we still have selfishness in us. That's how we're motivated in human life so often, we can't help it. We're in bondage to it. And God is letting us experience in the Church more and more as we grow, a different kind of love, a unique kind of love, a willingness to sacrifice for others. Jesus Christ set the ultimate example in that, a willingness to sacrifice your wants, your needs, your whatever it might be, your time, for others to make their life better, to help them to enjoy something better. So you don't do what you might otherwise would have liked to have done in order to help someone else. *Awesome!*

And so he says, **verse 8 - And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity/agape**, speaking of agape love, **shall cover the multitude of sins**. What a powerful thing! What an awesome thing! **...will cover the multitude of sins**. Now, most of it is covering our own because so often without this we're sinning in how we think about others, even in the Body. When we think wrong thoughts and we're harsh in judgment to others and we're not merciful.... Because you know what? God is filled with mercy, He's filled with grace. That's what grace is – grace is something we receive from God; first of all that He would work with those who fight against Him. That's how we're described in scripture, all human beings, because of sin. We fight against God, we fight against Christ. We do, that's the way we are. That's what it talks about back in Romans, 'for if when we were enemies we were reconciled...' because that's what it's talking about, we were enemies! We weren't embracing God and saying, "Oh, I love the clean and unclean laws! I love the Holy Days! I love the Sabbaths You're telling me about!" We didn't start out that way until we came to repentance, until God helped us to see those things and embrace those things. *He* helped us to embrace those things! *He* opened up our mind

and brought us to a point where we could be more of a humble spirit, to where we would embrace those things, because He was calling us; and one of those words having to do with calling has to do with the word 'drag'.

The first time I had heard that was when Terry Wrozek was speaking in the Toledo/Detroit area and was talking about that particular word and its origin, having to do with being 'drug'. Because we don't always just run toward it. Sometimes we're being kind of drug along because we're kind of kicking and hollering and sometimes we don't really want to make the change because we want to hold onto something else, like, "No-no-no, don't take this away...!" And we want to hold onto it! And then finally we begin to understand and we begin to see why He's calling us and drawing us and we begin to get rid of those things we were kicking and screaming about and whatever and we start walking willingly and running willingly toward Him.

**Use hospitality toward one another without grudging.** I love these! I love how these are stated here because it shows, it reveals, the human mind in a very powerful way. Because, see, we're talking about love, fervent love toward others, which has to do with sacrifice if we really understand it, because it has to do with sacrificing our will and our way in order to give to others, sometimes to *forgive* others, to not hold things against others because of things they've done in the past. Because we've all done things in the past. And if you remember those things and use that against them and it's a rubbing sore to you then it's *your battle*, it's not even *theirs*; it's *your sin*. And so that's where the multitude of sins begins to get covered.

So this thing about grace, what I was talking about, it's what we receive from God, the blessing of being called, the blessing of the forgiveness of sin, the blessing of putting it, as He says, as far... Isn't that what you want God to do? To forgive and "Please... please...please don't remember this. Put it away so it's not even brought back to remembrance." And that's what God's desire is. That's why it says our sins are like as far as the east is from the west; to remove it, to get rid of it, that it never come back; until you sin again and then you've got to ask for the same thing again, you've got to humble yourself again and ask God to have mercy on you again. But it's that mercy that God wants to give. That's what grace is about. And if we're just on the receiving end of that we're not growing; but if it's living through us to others and they're receiving the benefit of patience, mercy, *forgiveness* in our attitude toward them – because we don't even have a right to forgive, if you understand. We have no right to hold something against *anyone*, that's between an individual and God, and sometimes you have to think that through to understand what that means.

**Use hospitality one to another without grudging,** you know what the word in Greek means? **...without muttering;** it means without muttering, murmuring. In other words, you're going to sacrifice, you're going to give, but there's a little murmuring going on in the background [grumble, grumble, grumble], you don't really want to do it and "I'm going to do it because I kind of have to because it's the Church and we're all in the Church..." So it's an attitude that God is addressing and it just really describes human nature sometimes.

**Use hospitality toward one another without grudging, without murmuring and muttering. As every person has received the gift:** What have we all received? The gift? God's spirit. God's spirit! To become something different, to change. **...even so minister (administer);** you don't want to administer *self* to others because self is selfish and you're really not giving if you're administering... anyway, you want to administer what comes from God, this grace, patience, mercy, forgiveness, love, sacrifice, in order to help them in their life being richer and better. That's what it's all about. **...even so**

**minister/administer the same one to another**, so the perfect example here is that not only are you doing this toward someone else but they're doing it toward you. It's reciprocated. It's something that works together as a body in a harmony that's there, but you know what, you have to do it even if the other person doesn't – perhaps for whatever reasons, perhaps a certain weakness they have in a certain area or perhaps of age and time in the Church or whatever, and more is expected of you. To whom more is given, to whom you have more for a longer period, more is expected of, and so we should be giving them more. That's those things we learn from this.

**...even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards**, isn't that a beautiful thing. God gives us certain ability, certain things that we grow in, and this is like being a good steward of whatever it is that God has given to you, not receiving it selfishly, not just being on the getting end and wanting that from others, expecting others to give and whatever, but ourselves learning how to do that and sharing and whatever it might be.

It even says it **...as good stewards of the multiple grace of God**. Because it's like a multiple of things included in grace that we receive of God, that's to live through us to others. It can't stop here or we die on the vine, we're dead. We must produce fruit. And that's what God's spirit is about, that's what grace is about, that it lives through us to benefit others, and then it goes through them and lives to others, and it just multiplies and multiplies and multiplies - that's God's way, that's God's spirit, that's God's Family.

The reason this is being mentioned right now is because as you go through this and talk about this thing of watching and being alert and it's in the context of 'watch and pray, be sober' in verse 7 – this is what the thrust of the sermon is about. In preparing ourselves, *this* is what we do, isn't it? It's a matter of understanding here, the practical applications even more so is in our relationships! It's not just in the battle of fighting against our own human nature in preparing ourselves, that's a part of it, and being sober-minded and understanding what we are before God, but of *living* what God is giving, has given to us, even more so...and how much more as we approach Passover? Because Passover is about the Body of Christ. Instruction from Paul in 1 Corinthians 10-11, especially 11, in through there when it talks about the Passover. The instruction given there is very powerful when it comes to understanding the Body and how we partake of Passover. Because partaking of Passover is not just a matter of trying to understand what the bread and the wine is all about, when you partake of it on that night, but its understanding what it means in the Body, the Church, our relationships with one another. Powerful what it means!

So, now as we continue in this sermon about preparing ourselves spiritually we're going to go back about a year to look at the messages God was inspiring for the Church and move forward to where we are now, only looking at certain highlights that apply to what we're now going to cover in the context of preparing ourselves spiritually.

I think of our name - I was thinking about that this morning - and what we've been doing, especially in the last three years, of what God has been having us do, 'Preparing for the Kingdom of God'. Preparing ourselves spiritually has so much more meaning even now as we draw closer and closer to those things, and the name that God has given to us – because God inspires names, truly does, for periods of time that are added to, or given to, to have focus, added focus, if you will.

Jesus Christ has been leading and guiding us in a very powerful way during this final end-time, and to see where we are as we approach a very important and meaningful fast that we're approaching toward the end of the month here, that we'll have just before Passover.

I want to go all the way back to the Sabbath just prior to Passover last year. I was kind of dumbfounded when I started being focused on this and seeing this and being reminded of what we did a year ago at that time. I had almost forgotten it was on Passover day even, and then even a little more surprised, dumbfounded, by some of the things that were said back then.

While in New Zealand last year on April 16 I gave a sermon entitled, 'A Passover Fast', and we're going to begin looking at some of what we covered in that particular sermon, reading parts of that and focusing on that and then kind of moving forward here. And by doing so you get a clearer picture, because I've done this a lot over the years, going all the way back to the apostasy at different stages and just seeing where it is that God has led us - because it's like the Red Sea. I talk about this a lot, in knowing where to go, what do we do next, where do we go, open up the way so we can know the way, and don't know what to give unless You give it. And so those things have happened constantly for many years - and then as God has done those things to go back then and look maybe a year or two years sometimes and see where He's taken us. It's absolutely *astounding* sometimes. I find it awesomely inspiring because living it so close first hand like that and then the blessing of giving that in sermons. And going back and having a picture then of seeing what God has been doing you learn more, you see more. It's an awesomely inspiring thing.

And so is this in going back and looking at things you don't *fully* grasp at the time. How many times have you perhaps gone back and listened to a sermon from a year or two years ago and you hear something and all of a sudden, "I didn't hear that before!" Or "I didn't see that to that same degree before." Because we've grown more and now it means more and we didn't get the full impact at the time. And that's the way this way of life is. The more we grow the more God gives to us.

Some of those things that sometimes we don't really comprehend fully, where we're going, how He's leading us... I found this in even reading my own writing, what I wrote; and I'll go back and read something and say, "Now I understand it." And same thing here in sermons - all of a sudden the impact hits you even more. I found this interesting in going through this. Inspiring! So we're going to go back and look a little here.

Beginning in the introduction of that sermon saying:

This sermon is being given to guide us into the kind of focus we need for the upcoming fast that begins tomorrow after sunset as we begin to observe Passover. The only thing we will partake of during this time is the bread and wine of the Passover service...

What an incredible Passover that was! And how that even escaped me that we fasted last year! And thinking about the meaning of that at the time - the only thing we partook of was the bread and the wine during Passover.

...for those who are baptized. This fast is for baptized members, it is not needful that children or teens participate. What an incredible picture to partake only of that which *fully frees us from spiritual Egypt*, to only partake of Jesus Christ who died for us so that we can be forgiven of sin, so that God our Father and Jesus Christ Himself can dwell in, live in us.

So we are entering a unique fast on Passover. It will be a time to humble ourselves in a very meaningful manner. Let's consider that meaning...

So we turned to Exodus 12. I'm going to read this again:

**Exodus 12:5-6** - Your lamb shall be without blemish, [meaning no sin because of who it pictured; it pictured Jesus Christ as our Passover until that actually took place,] a male of the first year: you shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: 6 And you shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. 7 And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. 8 And they shall eat the flesh in that night,

Again, when you read things like this... I'm sorry, but I think of all that we've gone through and one of the biggest things that was given to us right after the apostasy was this, the strength of the meaning of Passover being on the 14<sup>th</sup> day and *none* of it in the 15<sup>th</sup>. That's one of the first things that God had blessed us in addressing, over and over again, so much so that people were wondering why, even asking the question, "Why are you making such a big deal out of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>?" Incredible! That's how blinded and asleep the Church had become, *not understanding* how important these things are about Jesus Christ and what He fulfilled *exactly* the way God said, because if He didn't He wasn't our Passover!

Just as much as if He didn't fulfill the three days and three nights... and a world that makes it a day and a half of it, not even a full day and a half! They want to go from Friday at sundown to Sunday morning and say that fulfilled it. "What it fulfilled is that *that Christ* that you worship, that you observe is not *the* Christ, he is not the Passover! You don't even call him the Passover! You like to refer to bunnies and everything else that lays eggs. You like to tell your children that bunnies lay eggs and you can go out and have a fun time on the lawn and behind trees and you can find *eggs*! Isn't this exciting!" It just makes me want to puke thinking what it does to children. Makes them disbelieve in what is true. To believe in a Santa Claus...any wonder that as children grow up and they... "Why believe anything that's out there?"

Thankfully that's all about to be gotten rid of, and I think of some out there listening today; sometimes people listen and they get so upset and they get so mad. You just go ahead and get upset and mad at me, I don't really care! You won't be upset much longer. In essence, just enjoy it while you can, live in your own little shell and be that distorted in your thinking that *hate*. That really reflects God in you, doesn't it – if you have anything that you call Christ in your beliefs and you want to say, "Oh, you're just evil and you're wicked and you speak of hateful things and you want to tear down Christmas and Easter..." Yeah, I do! I am so thankful they're about to be torn down! Hurrah! Hooray! Bring it on! And you want to get upset at God. You don't think you're getting upset at God, you think you're getting upset at me. Too bad! I'll get out my little one inch violin and play you a song here in a minute. God says ...'You mock Me, I will mock you!' And that mocking is about to come on this earth, truly. Such attitudes, such rank attitudes toward God, they've got to be changed. Man has to be brought to humility.

I think of the audacity of man to stand up before God and to do something else, to say, "I'm not going to listen to you." Well, they don't think they're saying that but they are! Incredible! Stick an obelisk up in Washington D.C., *right up the middle – right at the end of the waterway – let's just stick a BIG OLE OBELISK up there in the middle* and point it up toward God. That's the way the country is. And if you

don't know what an obelisk is you need to go look it up in your Wikipedia, or whatever, learn a little something, you don't take my word for it anyway, you don't listen to me. I'm talking to certain ones out there right now, I hope you understand that, I'm to the other church, some who like to listen, who like to tear apart, who like to find fault, perverted, distorted, twisted minds, lying minds and spirits. I'm so thankful that's all about to end, that God's going to humble it all.

And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it, (verse 8) and they shall eat the flesh in that night; **[not the next night when God takes them out of Egypt, because they left Egypt by night.]**

They were commanded they couldn't leave the houses at night time! Moses didn't leave! Aaron didn't leave! Unlike the story 'The Ten Commandments' when it's put on TV and people watch it and it's a nice meaningful... some people are very moved by it, but again, not everything is correct in it, because Moses and Aaron didn't go back before Pharaoh that night, they stayed at home. Emissaries were sent to them to tell them to get out of Egypt, Pharaoh said to leave Egypt. They didn't see Pharaoh's face again. That's what Moses said, "You'll not see my face again, Pharaoh" and he didn't, because they had to stay in their homes all night, and that included Moses and Aaron. They couldn't leave until the daylight portion of the morning. So they didn't leave Egypt by night.

...and they shall eat the flesh in that night roasted with fire,

...in the fire, in other words, so often – incredible – the things we learn, the things that God shows us on a spiritual plane. We go through fire. Fire is about trials and tests and being tried and refined in the truth, the gold that's heated up and brought to a point that it's so great that the impurities rise to the surface. *Then*...then you can see them! Isn't that what God does in our life? It'll happen your *whole life* until you're changed, that there will be times the gold is heated up and the impurities...that's when you take opportunity of the trial, to address the impurities that God reveals. Because before that you can't see them, they're deep down inside. You can't see it! What you see on the surface is gold, until it's heated up, then it brings the impurities to the surface and then you can deal with it.

And that's the way it is in God's Church! There are things in your life that are buried so deep you can't see it until it's heated up and then all of a sudden now you see it, and then you have a choice to make, are you going to address it and repent of it and ask God to help you get rid of it? Then the battles begin, continues really because it's a fight all the way to the end.

...roast with fire and unleavened bread; **[without sin.]**

That's what God desires in our life, that we become without sin. But only one was without sin...

...and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. **[Used to indicate the struggle of human life that sometimes is a little bitter]**

Sometimes what we experience it's not pleasant is it, it's kind of bitter, relationships sometimes are bitter because of people that don't want God's way of life and people who are close to us. And when you're called, every area we go to, there are people who are in different situations out there and some who just don't want you to be a part of this, you're a different person now and you're not the one they

knew you before as and they don't like what you've embraced and you're embracing in a stronger way. It's kind of a threat they think to their relationship and their friendship or whatever, and they just don't understand and they don't want you that way, and they don't want it themselves and they sure don't want it to be a part of you! It's kind of bitter sometimes what comes your way. That's just the way it is. Sometimes on the job, it's just kind of bitter because of your beliefs, what you hold fast to, and it's a part of your life, something to be expected.

Then dropping on down, **verse 11 – In this manner you shall eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, your staff in your hand;** always prepared, always ready, on guard for whatever comes your way, because when you're weak that's what the roaring lion seeks. He seeks you when you're at your weakest state, to attack you, and he attacks you enough as it is in this world that's out there. But when you are in your weak state, you don't want that ...**with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste: it is the Eternal's Passover.** That's what He gave to mankind. It's His sacrifice to mankind.

And then it was said in that sermon:

This will be the last great Passover observed together by God's people before Jesus Christ returns.

I'm glad I was wrong about that. Just to let you know, that just because of my job doesn't mean that I'm always right or that God helps me to be right at all times. That's why I love the scripture that talks about 'the present truth', because there are things that God gives to us. And I think of a couple things that He's given to us since that time, but with everything we could see at that time it was hard to think how we'd made it that far without anything happening, without the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet blowing. And it was like, because you know what, we hadn't addressed this five-month thing, let alone the year and a month and a day thing; and then God shows us what the five months was all about and He hadn't shown that to us until recently. But as we've gone along we now understand why we're blessed to have another Passover, but back then it was like *we know* five months ahead of time, somewhere at least, something's going to happen; so another Passover possible...? It was present at that time until God revealed more, thankfully.

Anyway, I'll read it again:

This will be the greatest Passover observed by God's people before Jesus Christ returns as the Church will not be able to keep it in 2012 in such an organized and safe manner as we are this year.

Hopefully that's still not true, and I believe that it's not. But again, we don't know, we don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. You don't know what's going to happen next week! I feel that we've organized, that God's blessed us in this, but He has blessed us a lot in things sometimes just to keep focused and keep moving forward.

I forgot to plug one place. We have all these different sites coming up that people are going to go to different areas and I know some are going off to Hawaii this year for Passover, and I think, "What a horrible place to get stuck in." ☺ Wouldn't that be tough? Some of you are laughing here because you're going to be there – matter of fact, about six of you, right? ...that are here? Seven! Seven today, two that are actually here from Hawaii and they are dragging a bunch back with them. Yeah, that would

be tough up there in Kona with all the fruit and the bananas... just don't get close to that volcano. That's the only negative up there, but I know God's people are going to be protected through wherever God leads and takes them.

So again, going back to that sermon and repeating some of the things that were there:

And what is pictured here for us is that we are now, on this Passover, being prepared to be thrust out of Egypt over this period of 'Time and a Half a Time'.

Now, that's going all the way back a year! So we were looking at that point in time of 'a Time and a Half a Time' as far as time and counting biblically is concerned. And now we're down to almost a half of a 'Half a Time'. We're in the last 'Half a Time', but we're almost down to – didn't I say next week (?) – that we're down to half way through? Awesome! It's not going so slow!

So saying there that...

...thrust out of Egypt over the period of 'Time and a Half a Time' that is now before us that we have just entered.

The reality is that we are really getting ready *now even more so* to be thrust out of Egypt after this coming Passover. Awesome how things have great meaning and great power to them and what God gives to us.

Going on in **verse 12 - For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will strike the firstborn of the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment:** God's going to do it again in a very powerful way on this earth. He's going to execute judgment against *all the gods* of Egypt. Think of all that's worshipped out there that's not of God, even in what's called Christianity, traditional Christianity in the world around us, things around the world, anywhere you look, the confusion - doesn't matter where you look.

He goes on to say, **I am the Eternal.** And so again, we have entered the time that God is executing judgment to thrust all mankind out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.

**Verse 13 - And the blood will be to you for a token upon the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you when I smite the land of Egypt.**

Then going on, quoting in that sermon a little farther saying:

There are great reasons why God has led His Church to grasp the greater meaning of Egypt being likened to sin and Pharaoh being like unto Satan.

Through the Passover, Israel was delivered from Egypt and the power of Pharaoh. What a beautiful picture. We're about there! Pharaoh is like unto Satan – we're almost there! By the time we get through this Passover he doesn't have much time left. To me that's one of the greatest, most awesome things that's going to happen as far as what's going to be removed from this world. As soon as Jesus

Christ returns He takes care of Satan and the demonic world and they no longer have influence over mankind for *over* a thousand years! ...beyond the thousand years!

So going on in the same one, giving what was given in that sermon:

Mankind has been held captive, enslaved to sin, to spiritual Egypt. The very root of the word for Egypt is a word in Hebrew that means “to bind - to confine - to besiege - to shut up - to enclose - to lay siege,” and even “to show hostility to - to be an adversary toward.”

What an incredible thing that pictures Satan and his system, because that’s the system, that’s what’s out there, himself and what he has been doing and also his system, and also likened to Babylon and so many of the things that picture that.

We are now entering a time when the world is going to begin to be delivered out of Egypt, out from the bondage of sin. It will happen in the remaining ‘Time and a Half’ that we’ve now entered.

And then Romans 8 was quoted here and we’re going to spend some time just going through these two verses here; Romans 8:15-16, because you see, what I’m reading now applies to us more now than it did even a year ago. Truly does! And if we see a picture here we’ll see exactly how God’s been leading us *since that fast* in an even greater way.

**Romans 8:15-16 - For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.** And so, so much of the picture, so much of the focus is about bondage and captivity and what God is blessing us to come out of, that season of the year we’re entering again now. **The spirit**, speaking of God’s spirit, **itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:** so again, how blessed is mankind now to be brought to this time, a temporary time of suffering, yes, but a time of being thrust out of Egypt, freed from the power of Pharaoh and Egypt. It is a matter of God’s mercy to bless mankind with the ability to enter into His Family begotten of His spirit.

And then continuing in **verse 19 - For the earnest expectation of the** - and the word is ‘creation’ not creature. It’s about the creation, it’s about mankind, but it’s about God’s plan for mankind and His creation and what He’s doing. Why the creation exists is about mankind! It’s about mankind being able to become a part of His Family. Everything out there, but specifically about mankind and what God is doing. **For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.** And so the first great part of that is going to be during the 144,000, when they’re resurrected at Christ’s return. That’s just the beginning.

**For the creation itself was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope,** things that we *have* to learn that we can *only* learn in a physical human body, because we can change, because the mind can be moulded and fashioned as we dwell in a physical human body. In a spirit body, like in the angelic realm, it was set. That’s why when some chose and made choices and decisions to go against God they, as God said to Satan, ‘You have perverted your mind, you perverted your being, you perverted your thinking...and that can’t change.’ What an awesome thing that God made us this way so He can mould and fashion the mind; we can repent and begin to think differently - it’s not set! And then when that impregnation of God’s spirit comes and that

process begins to work, God moulds and fashions and works with it, to mould and fashion...it's a work in progress.

You know when a child is begotten there are laws of life that follow, things that take place that happen in the growth that are just a part of something. But with us, when God calls us, there's actually actual involvement of God moulding and fashioning as we're growing in the womb, working with us, moulding and fashioning us. That's an awesome thing to understand, to bring about change, to help the mind become something different, whatever it is that He is moulding and fashioning with the Body, just as He (but in a far greater plane) has made the universe. You look out there, you see things coming back from the Hubble Telescope and you look at how awesome it is some of the things that are there that are just mind boggling. We can't comprehend them, the vastness, the greatness of it.

And then we think of ourselves that are even greater in what God's doing, because it's a greater thing that He's doing in human life, because we resist Him! The universe, He brought it into being, but it doesn't resist Him, and it's beautiful, orderly, all different, and every one of us if we yield ourselves to Him, He makes us different, unique. We're not all a bunch of yellow pencils. I thought it was great last night when in some of our conversation we were talking about some things and someone brought up the concept, the understanding that there are different cultures that are going to continue to exist around the world, different styles, different dress, different ways that people do things. God isn't going to take all that away. He's not going to make us all the same! That's the spice of life, because we're not the same and we have different things that... anyway, what a beautiful thing, incredible!

**For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope, Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty/the freedom of the children of God.** There's great freedom in God's way of life, there truly is. Man thinks it's restrictive – it's not. Awesome freedom, awesome liberties within the truth, within one way of life that God has said can be lived. It's the *only* way and so far above and beyond the ways of mankind and the ways of Satan.

**Verse 22 - For we know that the whole creation groans and travails,** that word 'labour' as in labour pain, as it says, **labours in pain together until now.**

And that now [as I mentioned in that sermon] has continued for nearly 2,000 years. But we have arrived; we are entering the greater time of deliverance for mankind into the liberty/freedom of the children of God.

So anyway, *awesome!* God set the stage for us over a year ago, of something we entered into a fast about as we focused upon these things of the subject matter of what Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread are all about. And then I think of where we were led over the following year and I think of the Feast of Tabernacles. What an incredible Feast! I think of some of the themes and some of the things God has given to us at different times throughout the many years, and this one here, quite incredible, because it was the *entire focus* of the Feast. So, going to take some time just to reflect on some of these things, because you know what? We can't grasp, even as we went through those sermons at the Feast, it is *difficult* for us to grasp the *excitement* that God has in ways that we can't even begin to comprehend but He lets us experience it to varying levels. And as we grow and get closer, again, to various growth levels, if you will, in this as well, God wants to share this with us because He is awesomely excited about where we are.

It's hard for us to grasp what He has seen in preparing for this - we don't know how far back – when He finally gave up peace. He gave up rest. He gave up the way of Jerusalem, if you will, and allowed something to come on the scene for the sake of His Family, for the sake of a creation of a Family, to share with for all eternity, to dwell in for all eternity, of things that we cannot even begin to comprehend fully yet that we'll grasp and comprehend far more fully once we're changed. But we have varying levels of excitement about this and comprehension of this and a picture of this. And as we get closer to it it becomes greater and greater – but again, to see how God moulds and fashions us, how Jesus Christ has been leading us, to me I find this very inspiring!

We're going to take a glimpse at some of these just a little bit. The first sermon that God inspired to be given at the Feast was entitled 'An Historic Feast'. We went back to the beginning in Genesis and we moved forward in a plan that God was working out for mankind. In the midst of that sermon we came to this:

God is preparing once again to deliver Israel...

Now, what do you think God's more excited about? What happened back then in Exodus and working with Moses? That was exciting and that was inspiring because of what God was giving, but it wasn't for what it was going to picture and looked forward to and foreshadowed what was going to happen in the future, because that is the greater excitement to God. It's like the sacrifices and offerings and Levitical system – it had things that can be learned from there but it isn't what it was all about by any measure. Far more exciting was the fulfillment of those things as it talks about in the book of Hebrews and it just gets richer and richer and more exciting as we go forward, and so is all of this as we grow.

Reading from that particular sermon:

God is preparing once again to deliver Israel but on a far greater scale and not just a physical nation of people.

*Finally*, the first great phase; and kind of a duality, if you will, because it isn't just a matter of deliverance in what it means about Israel, it's the first great resurrection of the firstfruits, 144,000, the first part of God's great harvest, the smaller harvest but the first part, but then something that's opened up for the whole world, finally, the Millennium, God's government here.

I was just thinking about what I mentioned a while ago about Jesus Christ – to think you're going to have the opportunity one of these days at some Feast site or at some Holy Day, to be able to be there in a crowd to see Him, to hear Him teach. Awesome! Powerful!

Then we read Exodus 19:1:

**Ex 19:1** In the **third month**, after the children of Israel had gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day they came *into* the wilderness of Sinai.

Consider the timing of this event. It was just before, and especially on or through Passover that God began His great deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. That was the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the **First Month**. Then during the days of Unleavened Bread they began moving out of Egypt and finally through the Red Sea on the last day.

Finally! So there's a process that began, Passover, the blessing of receiving that, the beginning of a journey out of Egypt, encamped by the Red Sea, and then finally on the Last Day God opened up the way for them to leave Egypt.

Then they moved into a new region, toward Mt. Sinai. ...**The timing?** [Awesome!] In the Third Month and right up to the **Day of Pentecost** at Mt. Sinai.

They were taken from captivity and delivered to this special moment

An awesomely special moment! That was, but what it foreshadowed was greater by far!

—this Day of Pentecost at Mt. Sinai, but did not—COULD NOT—grasp the deliverance of freedom given to them.

Speaking of those taken out of captivity; they did not grasp what was really given to them. Because, as we went through in that particular sermon, God gave His law, He began to give the way to true freedom, the way of being delivered out of Egypt. Because it wasn't the physical deliverance that it was all about, it was about what God was giving in His law and a way of life to be lived that frees you. 'The truth shall set you free' that sometimes is quoted out there in the world even by sometimes not the best of sources – even in the military. But the reality is it has beautiful meaning, awesome meaning, and this is where, this is *how* it's accomplished.

We mentioned then...

**Ex 20:1-2** And God spoke all these words, saying, 2 I *am* the LORD your God, who has brought you out of the land [**land, ground – from a root of “to be firm,” as “grounded”**] of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. [**“out of the house” – habitation, dwelling place of — bondage, enslavement**]

It means so much more where we are now. That's where we are now. This is what all this was about; it was about bringing us to this point in time and God desiring to bring the entire world now – because He's only worked through a few. I think of the first 4,000 years, there weren't very many that God worked with in the Bible, truly. The vast majority were worked with from Pentecost on in the past 2,000 years, and now this excitement that God has of where we are, and the excitement Jesus Christ has in what He's giving to the Church 'to strengthen the covenant with many' because that is being strengthened, that truth is now going to go into the Millennium and the Great White Throne in a very powerful way and be built upon mightily so.

Then He goes on to say, **You shall have no other gods before Me**. So again, explaining how the law shows the way to peace, rest, freedom that God wants for all mankind, and we're about to be thrust into that for the whole world. What an awesome time!

It's difficult sometimes to grasp some of these things, what is pictured in Pentecost. But I think of the next Pentecost, the most awesome of all...because *every Pentecost* has truly foreshadowed what's getting ready to happen, because it involves so much. We've always understood that, coming out of Egypt, the law, and then God on the Day of Pentecost giving His holy spirit and showing us how to live

this way of life, that you can't live God's way of life and God's mind and God's law without His holy spirit. And then to understand the first phase of God's plan, the firstfruits and how this is going to be given now to mankind in a more powerful way, that they're going to be here to teach the world, powerfully so for a thousand, one hundred years. And so many more added to that during the last hundred years – most likely from what God shows, billions, not just millions, because that's a far greater harvest. And then the ultimate one as a part of that. So we have Unleavened Bread, Pentecost and all the way toward the end there of all the things that take place all the way to the end.

I'm wanting to quote some more of what was said in that sermon:

We are NOW at a time when God has determined to begin working with a spiritual Israel once He has taken everyone out of spiritual Egypt and into the greater fulfillment of His promise to Abraham—to a promised land/grounding that is not one of dwelling in bondage/enslavement, but IN freedom...

A 'grounding', that word that God says, "I have taken you out of the grounding..." You've been grounded in Egypt and He wants to ground us in His way of life, in Israel, if you will, and what it means, which has to do with 'prevailing with God' if we understand the meaning of the word, which we'll get to a little bit later here....matter of fact it's right here, that's what I said next in that sermon:

...in freedom and even more specific —IN God's...

Talking about what we're being given in that grounding.

—IN God's free spirit as the true "prevailers with God"—Israel ...**a spiritual Israel.**

So again, it's hard for us sometimes, we go through and we repeat these things or think about these things but we need to strive to do so and ask God for help to *drink in* the sharing that He wants to give to us, the excitement He has for this period of time we're in and where we are and what He's been giving to us. Because ever since last Passover to this Passover here, it's been a very meaningful time to God to share with us, to bring us to this point, because we have a little bit of time, just a little bit of time left and then Pentecost – the ultimate of all Pentecost's indeed.

And then the second sermon stated:

Yesterday, in the first sermon I have given at this year's Feast, we covered how this is indeed **a most historic Feast**. And God has begun to share more fully with us the greater significance of delivering Israel out of Egypt.

A theme over and over and over again! And the reason we're going through this is because when God gives a theme at a Feast there's much to be received, truly, *especially* in this, what's being given here. There's much still to be received out of what was given to us last year at the Feast because of where we're headed, because *this* is God's focus and you want the same focus, you want the same drive and enthusiasm in the sense that you can receive from God's spirit – or a request for desire before God to receive of that.

And that's why we have a unique fast coming up here at the end of the month, because I mentioned today that it's about thanksgiving. Fasting is always about humbling ourselves before God, but at this fast it's a unique fast as well, added to the fast of last year and the fasts we've had before that, all a process of where God's leading us and they have all been that, if you go back and look at them. There's much to be learned. But from last year now to this year and an incredible focus, to think about what it means to be thankful for everything that God has given to you, for everything of where you are in time, for everything in how God has worked things out in the last few years especially, to focus on *why* God has worked them out this way and to truly desire to ever be more thankful to God, more grateful.

Because the more you see what God has given to you the more thankful you become, the closer that relationship is. Truly is. The more you understand your own human nature and how merciful God has been, how much grace God has given to you, truly the more thankful you can become; but we'll focus on some of those things as we go forward here.

Going on in that sermon:

We are to grasp—understand—the significance and deeper meaning of “Israel”—of the purpose and meaning of the very name that goes FAR beyond a limited, narrow view of a physical people. This sermon today is entitled: **“The Truth About Israel.”**

And then dropping down farther in the sermon:

Toward the end of yesterday's sermon, we focused upon the deeper meaning of “Israel” concerning this time that is now upon us, as God leads people “out of spiritual Egypt” of bondage into the promised land of the Millennial period... into a new nation... “spiritual Israel.”

The first Israel, the first nation did not “prevail with God”...

Isn't that an awesome thing when you look about that history of Israel? They didn't prevail with God, they were not a good example – that's the lesson! You have to have God's spirit to prevail, to begin prevailing, and then you have to have it in you for eternity, into life everlasting to enjoy eternal life with God.

The first Israel, the first nation did not “prevail with God” – they did not live up to the name given them. So as we discussed yesterday, Israel and the whole world must be brought face to face with how their “ways” have ALL failed and that their ways only bring oppression, suffering, and eventually – destruction.

This means that they will be brought to see that only with God can they truly triumph, succeed, become truly effective in living life fully, to gain the mastery of life—of HOW to live by **“prevailing with God”** — by becoming Israel—a new nation, spiritual Israel.

Let's turn over to **Isaiah 42** and finish this portion of the sermon here today because at least we'll finish two of the sermons and you can think of some of those of last year before next week. But again, it's a process here, and what we're talking about here today too is if you can grasp a hold of it, strive to grasp a hold of it, is to understand that this is all a part of a moulding process, as we talked about earlier. God

has moulded and fashioned the universe and He's moulding and fashioning us, and what He moulds and fashions in our mind and what He's moulding and fashioning in time here is also awesomely unique that we're able to share and witness and be a part of. And if you look at a course of events like sermons, like what God has been giving to us, then you see a clearer picture and we begin to grasp in a more excited way, candidly, what God is doing in us and in our lives and what He's sharing with us. It becomes greater and something, candidly, we become more thankful for. You become more in awe of what we have, you truly do. And it's something you have to pray about and ask God's help for receiving and drinking in fully.

We're just going to look at a few verses here before closing; again, all in the context of this particular sermon here, 'The Truth About Israel' (they did not prevail with God) and what God has been doing, and what God is doing now and where we have almost arrived.

**Vs. 5-8** Thus says God the LORD, He who created the heavens, and stretched them out; He who spread forth the earth, and that which comes out of it. He who gives breath to the people upon it, and spirit to them who walk therein [**God has given all the same**]

As I was going through and talking about Israel, I think about things that have happened in the world and sometimes how people even within God's Church have mistakenly put too great a value upon maybe being a part of Israel. They were there for a purpose to learn this is not the way to do it. That's what the lesson is. And what God is showing mankind is that Israel is a *name* for everyone to become a part of, to fulfill something on a spiritual plane, not a physical one, because that wasn't good enough, that wasn't what God wanted. What the Israelites did was not what God wanted! On the contrary, they all had to be taken into captivity and God had mercy upon the Jewish people because they still kept the Sabbath, the knowledge of the Sabbath and the Holy Days and clean and unclean meats. They kept those basic things that God had given to them, though they didn't grasp their meaning, but they kept them. And so God brought them back in great oppression to rebuild through the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, and there are certain things they've held onto through time but not what God wants.

That's isn't what God wants; Jesus Christ condemned it all! He condemned the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the Zealots and all the others who claimed to be of God! They weren't of God! That's what Christ said, "You're not of God; you're of your father!" And they didn't like what He was saying. "You are of your father, Satan." Boy did they hate that! They didn't live right! But sometimes if we're not careful as human beings we can take pride in the wrong things! Be lifted up by certain things; oppress others in the world because of a distortion about God and what they think is of God.

So I think of some of the oppression in this country that we've lived through, things that aren't too far back in our history, and especially in the south and how people abused and misused what they call Christianity, to be a *superior race*! And you want to talk about wanting to vomit?! ...and causing so much oppression! But that was of Satan; that was what Satan likes! And some of that, candidly, even carried partially, because we didn't fully come out of all that, even in God's Church. It's a matter of growing and understanding what God is doing for *all mankind*. No one's better than anyone else, and to have those attitudes is disgusting!

That's why I'm so thankful that God is freeing and showing a freedom that's to be given to women. For 6,000 years an oppression that is so sick and so perverted, so distorted in the minds of human beings, just because of strength. That's how women have been oppressed, because of human strength. If women were made stronger... physically...?? Because it's what a lot of it's about – it's about control and

keeping in control. What a sick world! Truly is! I hope you're sickened by this world and by what you see and by the oppression, because you see, it's affected both minds.

I marvel sometimes, even in the environments of God's Church, of things I see, of men who oppress women who've been oppressed, and women who can't get free of it! *Even in God's Church* they can't *free themselves* from something God says you're free from! *You don't have to live like that! You have choices! And you can say, "NO, I DO NOT CHOOSE TO LIVE LIKE THIS, to be oppressed."* That's not love! ...distorted perverted love that people think... and to be loved they think for it to come in a distorted way because that's all they've known about, being loved is in a distorted way, and so they grab a hold of that, sometimes how they've grown up! I look forward to the time people are just freed of that garbage and that filth and perversion, I truly do! And I hope you do! And the more you men see that the more you'll flee from that kind of thing, that you won't want that in your life! And the more you women see and understand that the more you'll flee from that kind of oppression! ...to not live under such things!

We're almost there, but some still struggle with and choose to live under oppression. *You're not supposed to! Live God's way of life!* Stand up for what is true! Hold onto it! Embrace it! *God's freeing you!*

I hope you ache inside, because when I think about this subject I *ache* inside, and I *loathe* and I *hate* oppression. I loathe and I hate captivity and those who seek to place it upon others, controlling attitudes, controlling minds. That's why I hate sheriffing with all my being, not just in the ministry, but in families. It is about control, it's exercising a control over people's lives, to do it *my way*. Where is agape in that in God's Church? Because I've seen a lot in God's Church where it hasn't been lived in families, in marriage, and so forth. Thank God we're almost there, out of Egypt!

And that's what God's been showing us over the past year in a magnified way – almost out of Egypt, and how much do you embrace that? How much are you excited about that? I'm excited about what God's been giving to us, I truly am! To be freed, to *hate* prejudice of the human mind toward a different sex, toward a different race, toward a different area of education, toward a different part of the country, toward a different part of the world, toward whatever it is that people have prejudices towards – none of it is of God. It is one hundred percent plus of Satan the devil! That kind of a mindset, evil, wicked, sick, perverted, distorted – and we want to flee from that as much as we can to come out of Egypt, we truly do, to go back to what we started in the beginning of the sermon today.

Going back to what we started at the beginning of the sermon there in that third set of scriptures; I believe it was 1 Peter<sup>2</sup> wasn't it? ...above all things, because this is what it's about, being watchful, being alert, preparing ourselves spiritually, 'and above all things have fervent charity among yourselves', and that means being freed of captivity, that means being freed of these prejudices that people hold onto sometimes that we're being blessed to come out of, especially in God's Church.

I get a little worked up over these things. You need to be worked up in your spirit and in your being toward God, for the excitement of a freedom that He's about to give to this world and an ability to fully shed all these things that keep people captive.

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 4:8