

Welcome to this seventh-day Sabbath, brethren.

The end of man's self rule, of 6,000 years, is rapidly drawing to its end. It is just ahead of us. We, in the Body of Christ, the Church of God, look forward to a new government being set up at the return of Jesus Christ. We look forward to Satan being removed from influencing mankind's thinking because that is the issue with mankind. Mankind has a natural carnal mind, but the influence of Satan is now causing great distress, magnified distress upon mankind. Yet, mankind does not know that Satan influences his thinking, his thoughts. And because of these thoughts, man then acts out what he thinks, and therefore, we see the anarchy, the confusion, the hatred, the bitterness, the envy of mankind.

What will it be like on the earth during the final days of man's self rule? *Why* must these events take place? What is *our* role during these end days or this end-time?

The title of this sermon is *Man's Last Days, Part 1*. The purpose of this sermon series is to review what we currently understand about man's last days under Satan's influence, and time permitting, we will go on in other part of the series and look at man's last days at the end of 7,100 years. Because the reality is there are two parts to this. The two parts of it are, the first one, that man has an end under the influence of Satan, which is the end of 6,000 years of man's self-rule influenced by Satan. *Then* there is an end of mankind, the last days of mankind, which happens at the end of 7,100 years.

We will start by looking at this area of scripture, which is describing the time of the end of man's self-rule, the last days. If you'd like to turn to **Amos 5:1—Hear the word which I (God) take up against you**, now, God is talking to Israel, a **lamentation**, and a "lamentation" is "like a cry or a wailing," **O house of Israel**. Now, we understand on a scriptural level, on a biblical level, that this can be talking about two areas, that God can address this on a physical level, which is the house of Israel, and God is talking about the house of Israel, which are the scattered nations of Israel today, about the twelve tribes of Israel, physically. But also it can also refer to the Church of God, God's people, spiritual Israel, "O house of Israel." Now, this particular scripture is looking at something that has been taking place within God's Church on a spiritual level, but it also is prophesying about something that is going to take place on a physical level.

Verse 2—The virgin of Israel has fallen... Now, we understand symbolically this is pointing to the Church that has suffered from the effects of the Apostasy. So when the Apostasy took place in 1994 there was an effect, and that effect was that Israel (spiritual Israel) fell. But we can also look at this saying that this is about physical Israel, which is something that is going to happen in the near future. It is yet to happen.

She, Israel as a physical nation, **will not rise again**, or "will not rise no more." **She lies forsaken on her land**; she's rejected and cast down, or fallen. **There is no one to raise her up**. In other words, she

cannot raise herself up, because there is no longer government, no longer any self-government. Israel has fallen. She is laid bare. She is laid waste, she is forsaken because nobody wants anything to do with her, and this is looking at it on a physical level.

For thus says the Lord GOD (Yahweh Elohim): The cities that go out by a thousand shall have a hundred left. So this is implying that ten percent of a nation will be left, which means that ninety percent will die. **And that which goes out by a hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel.** So a minimum of ten percent will be left to form what is going to be brought on into the Millennium. So this ten percent that is left, it is going to form the Church of God in the Millennium, spiritual Israel in the Millennium. They have this potential to become part of the Body of Christ.

Now verse 4. Now we see a call to repentance, which *is* what the tribulation is really all about, because the purpose of the tribulation is about humility, bringing mankind down to be humbled by God. Because of the way man is, the way man thinks, he'll bring it on himself, but God allows it for the purpose of humility, for the purpose of repentance, granting a nation repentance. And the only way Israel has ever learned is by suffering. It's unfortunate the way man is, but mankind only learns through suffering.

Verse 4—For thus says the LORD ("Thus says the Eternal") to the house of Israel: Seek Me and live. So over this last 3½ years this will be the answer for mankind. Now, this is something that God's Church will also be discussing with mankind, those that are willing to listen, to heed. But mankind has already had this warning message about seeking God and living because it is written in the book, *2008—God's Final Witness*, because it *was* God's final witness to mankind. And, of course, we understand that mankind did not listen because mankind has always been the same. And the witness is (the evidence is) that man will not change because he has a natural carnal mind, and therefore, he won't listen and he doesn't listen.

Well, God is going to humble Israel. Physical Israel will be brought down for the purpose of those that are willing to listen, "to seek God and they shall live." They shall live physically so that then they'll have the potential to live spiritually in the Millennium, in the sense of having access to God's holy spirit, to be able to be truly alive in the mind, which is God's spirit living and dwelling in a person, begotten sons of God. And of course, the potential then is to *truly live*, to truly have *life*, everlasting life or age-lasting life in Elohim. That is man's potential.

So here we see the answer to mankind. It is to "seek God and live." So over this last 3½ years that we are now approaching, this will be the only answer for mankind. Now, we in the Church, the Body of Christ, the Church of God will give this same message, which is, "seek God and live. Repent." So during this tribulation period there will be many that will ask this very question, "What should I do? What do I have to do?" And the answer is "seek God and you shall live." It has to be genuine and sincere.

Now, I'm sure there is going to be people that will pretend or believe that they are seeking God by (so-called) physical repentance, but it doesn't mean to say they naturally will live, because of what is really going on in the intent of the heart. Now, God knows who and how many exactly He will bring through this period of great physical tribulation.

Now, this will also apply to the Churches that are scattered from the truth currently. They were part of the Body of Christ, the Church of God before the Apostasy, but as everybody went to sleep, and then we saw the scattering of the third and the third and the third, and then God has worked with a remnant, which He has been working with to this very day. Well, there is still a group out there that God will now give them the eyes to "see." They must turn and "seek God to live," physically and then spiritually. It's a wonderful thing that God is doing.

There is a time coming when they will be able to "see." Now, I can just remember back, what happened to me during this particular time. After the Apostasy, my wife and myself made a decision. It was on the Sabbath of Pentecost of 1995. Because during that week we had received a phone call and there was a particular deacon that had rung and said, "What were we doing." And we said, "Well, we couldn't go back to the Worldwide Church of God because of what it was preaching." And he said, "Well, there is a small group that is going to gather on the Sabbath before Pentecost, and if we'd like to come, we were invited." Well, we felt at that point that we needed to be in fellowship. We were quite confused. We didn't know where to really go. But it was the beginning of the forming of a group, and that group came together, and there wasn't a lot on that particular day. And then they said they were going to meet again on Pentecost of 1995, and we went back. And I remember that day because there was actually forty in attendance in Victoria, in Australia, on that particular day. And it was the beginning of the forming of a group that ended up calling itself The United Church of God. Well, at that time there was a lot of confusion. Nobody really knew who believed what. And some of the ministry had left and stayed with Worldwide, others had left and were not sure what they were doing, and others were sacked by the Worldwide Church of God and given no benefits, and they were still suffering greatly because of what was happening to them, but there were some that were *trying* to stay with the truth.

Now, I remember over a period of time, as the Church there settled, all those scattered and without God's holy spirit, it started off with a diligence to the point of wanting to restore the truth. And there was a period of time where that happened. And then everything went back to what would be considered "normal" in man's thinking, which was the Church became political. The group that I was in became political. Well, I understand that during that period of time, which is from the Apostasy up and to the forming of God's true Church, through the re-establishing of God's true Church on Pentecost of 1998. Well, Chris and myself, we remained in the United Church of God at that time. Well, over time, before our awakening, we ran into many, many problems, and one of the issues was that we were not given "the eyes to see." God allowed us to stay in that particular group for a purpose, and we learned many, many lessons during that time.

Now, I remember a particular Sabbath where somebody came up to Chris and myself and said, "Did we know that there was somebody out there that was preaching that Mr. Tkach was the man of sin?" Well, because we didn't have "the eyes to see," our response was natural and carnal, and I remember saying, "Well, that guy's got to be an idiot! What an idiot to believe that Mr. Tkach was the man of sin!" Well, that's because I was in my ignorance. That's because I could not "see." That's because I did not have God's holy spirit to be able to "see" the truth. And at that time God had not given me "the eyes to see," and we remained where we were. And this went on for a period of time until the point where God

enabled us to "see" in 2005. And I can "see" this miracle in the mind, because prior to that some truth had been given to us and we rejected it. We rejected it because we just couldn't "see" it. How could anybody believe that?

Well, once we had read *Time is Running Out*, *Time Has Run Out*, and the book then, *The Prophesied End-Time*, it changed everything. And I remember a particular sermon that was sent to us. We got sent some discs, and we looked through all the different sermons that were on that disc and there was one there that we actually listened to, and we only got 10 minutes into that sermon and we knew what the truth was. How incredible is that? We knew by just listening to that. And the reason was—had nothing to do with Chris and myself—it was God was giving us "the eyes to see" the truth. We could "see!" And I remember the sermon was along the lines of, *A Witness Against the Ministry* (I believe it was). And of course, it meant so much to us because we'd had many battles within the church that we were associated with because we believed there were aspects of the pollution of the Sabbath. There was also a minister at that time within that group that had written articles about God being a *trinity*! Well, we were battling that! We said, "Well, *that's* not right," and we were arguing. But because of the politics that was taking place at that time we were actually patted on the head and told not to worry about it. Well, we couldn't! We just said, "Well, this can't be right! This can't be God's true Church because of the *politics* of what was going on." And we came to "see," we came to understand how sick and perverted and ugly politics *is*, because it existed in the church that we were associated with and it was repulsive.

And so what a freedom we were given when *we were awakened*. So we were awakened to come to "Seek God and to live." How incredible is that! I know it means a lot for Chris and myself because of what happened to us, and it's almost like it has to happen to you so that you can understand it. Because only can a person understand something, generally, when it actually takes place.

So when God says to Israel here, "seek Me and live," well, the opportunity has to be given. The answer is, for the 63,000 that are yet to be given this opportunity, the same answer. It's the same for physical Israel as it is for the Church that's scattered, "seek God and live!" Because the only way that we can live is by seeking God and having God's holy spirit living and dwelling in us—talking about something on a spiritual level.

Verse 5—But do not seek Bethel, nor enter Gilgal, nor pass over Beersheba. Now, this is referring to, "Don't seek to protect the self. Don't look to false god's for protection." In other words, "Don't run off somewhere else to look for this protection because you're not going to find it." "Don't look to the scattered Churches for spiritual help!" So don't do these things! Why? **For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nothing.** It will be destroyed! There is only one true Church, and it is currently formed and organized and under the banner of *the Church of God—PKG*. It is the only place where God is working! It's the only place where God uses His holy spirit to give life to those that He has awakened, or those that He has called, those that He has granted repentance to. So it's no point going anywhere else because everything else will be brought to *nothing*!

Verse 6—Seek the LORD and live. So how do we seek God? Well, we seek God now by repentance. Well, it's no different for those that are in the scattered Churches, that when God gives them "the eyes

to see" (that awakening that has to take place), they have to then turn to seek the Eternal, the One True God, Yahweh Elohim. They're going to have to come out of what they believe, which is two God beings. They're going to have to come out of what they are in, the falsehood, the error that they have now developed. Because as time has gone on within the scattered Churches, they have now politicised and they have now corroded and corrupted what truth they did have. They have lost truth.

Because when you're out of the Body of Christ, the Church of God, and when you're cut off from God's holy spirit there is only one direction a person is going in - we're either moving forward or moving backwards! There is no such thing as standing still when it comes to God's holy spirit; it's either growth or *dying*! We're either coming more alive or we are dying! Well, this is exactly the same, which is now going to be given to the Churches that are scattered. They are now going to be given this opportunity to "seek the Eternal and live," on a spiritual level. And *how* will they do that? They will seek God by repentance, by admitting the error, by admitting the ill will, by admitting the politics, by admitting their intent was wrong. And it's the same going to be given to mankind that is going to live on into the Millennium. That tithe that God has spoken about, that He will bring through on physical Israel, they'll be given that opportunity.

Now, we also understand that it's not just talking about "a heritage because it's 'white,'" or it's of the tribes of Israel. It can be *any* nationality. It doesn't matter as long as they are based in the nation of Israel today, modern Israel today. We understand who those people's are, which is physical Israel, which is combined by (what would be considered in the past), as many "gentiles" living within Israel. Well, they'll have that same opportunity because of the blessings of Abraham (that have now been removed, but they have them). They have access to aspects of them now because Israel has been given these great blessings *by* God. And now God is removing His hand. Well, there are still the benefits of those things that are still in effect. Well, all the nations of the earth that live in those particular countries have that potential to be brought through as long as they seek the Eternal and repent. Because that's what the tribulation is about. Tribulation is about humility, being humbled for the purpose of repenting.

So verse 6—Seek the Lord and live, lest He (God) break out like fire *in* the house of Jacob, in other words, fire destroys, and devour *it*, and destroy it, with no one to quench *it* in Bethel. No one can help from the scattered Churches. So there's not going to be anybody from the scattered Churches that can help. The people in the scattered Churches have to come to seek God by repentance and then come *into* fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. They have to *heed* the *warning*! They have to heed the warning. So the choice is repent or die. Now, it's the same physically, Israel, repent or die. Spiritual Israel, scattered at the moment without God's spirit, they'll be given access to it again, repent (change your thinking) or die.

Verse 7—You who turn justice, well, what's "justice?" Well, "justice" is God's way of being, God's way of thinking, God's way, which is a blessing. **You who turn justice,** which is God's way of justice, God's way of being, God's way of dealing with matters, God's way of thinking, **to wormwood.** What's "wormwood?" Something bitter or poisonous or a curse. So they turn this "justice" to "wormwood." They turn it to something that is bitter. It's a curse. **And lay righteousness,** which is God's way of thinking, **to rest in the earth!** Well, what's that saying? They have gotten rid of God's thinking from any or all of their

considerations. So when they make a judgment, when they consider anything, when they talk about anything, God is not involved in it. They limit God in their life. God has no influence or affect in their life. They don't care!

Well, I've been watching many a program, when today's society is about what they call "social media." And all the TV programs are exactly the same. They will come out with a particular statement from somebody and they'll say, "Make sure you now give us what *you* think," and you'll find they send it to "hash tag" this or send it to this email or do this, and "twitter." Do whatever. And everybody has a view; everybody has an opinion. And rarely do you get two exactly the same, but they all have views and opinions. So *everybody* has gotten rid of God's thinking on *any matter*, and those that are of a religious background from the world, they might try to inject God into aspects of the thinking, but it's not the spirit of the matter, because they can't. Because they *cannot*. Because? They do not have God's holy spirit.

So today, mankind has turned justice into bitterness or into a curse and "laid righteousness to rest." They've got rid of it "in the earth." They do not consider what God thinks about *anything*, and they're not interested. And if you were to ring up, or anybody was to ring up, we were to ring up and say, "Listen, this is what God says," well, you'd soon be cut off, you'd soon be got rid of, you'd soon be considered a kook to consider what *God* thinks about a matter.

Verse 8—He made the Pleiades, which is a cluster of seven stars, **and Orion; He turns**, which is "overturns or changes," **the shadow of death into morning**, which is in pointing to the fact that God is in control of life and death. God is in control of *everything*! And when it comes to things about life and death, it is God that controls life and death. Man would like to think that he *has* got control, but he hasn't. It's God that is going to choose who will live and who will die, living on into the Millennium, who is going to die during this time of tribulation. It's God's decision because of what God is going to do with a person in their life.

Now, often we can see this as being hard and cruel, because that's the way *man* thinks. But this is all about mercy. God knows us individually and He knows what is best for us. And if somebody dies in this period that is approaching ahead of us, it's actually done out of love for them, because they'll be given this opportunity, this potential to enter Elohim in another life, which is that Hundred-year period.

And makes the day dark as night, which is like the ninth plague which we saw when Pharaoh was then rebelling against God. Well, God then poured out a plague, which He turned the day to night, where it was so dark for that period of time. **He calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth**, which means God controls the weather. It's God that has set laws in motion for the weather, but then God can, whenever He desires, to intervene and use the weather as a form of blessings or cursing's because God is in control of the weather.

The LORD is His name. It's God the Father, Yahweh Elohim that does all these things. **He rains ruin**, which means, "brings destruction," **upon the strong, so that fury comes upon the fortress**. So anybody who wants to set up forms of *self*-defence, or believe that they can trust in things of mankind, which is "upon a fortress," which is *any* form of self-reliance, *any* form of protecting self, it is God that will bring the fury against it. There *is* nothing that will protect us during these days of great tribulation

other than a personal relationship with God. Because God *is all mighty*, and we often underestimate how powerful God is, because we tend to make God human. It's a *natural* thing for mankind. But God is *all mighty*! He is all-powerful! He can do as He wills in the interest of His plan "to bring many sons to glory."

Verse 10—Going on about Israel. **They (Israel) hate**, so in other words, it's very personal because "they *hate*," **the one who rebukes in the gate**. Now, this is about... In times past where Israel would have a township, that there was a gate entrance, and there would be judges that would sit there and make decisions. Well, they at times would have to rebuke. So this is pointing to correction: "They hate correction." Israel hates correction. They hate being told that they are in sin and that they need to repent. Well, do we think, brethren, that things are going to be any different during this next period that we are facing, this time of tribulation? Many in Israel are going to *hate* what is being said to them. They are going to *hate* the correction. They're going to hate being told that they are *sinning*. They don't even know what sin is. They're going to have to learn it. And they're going to hate the fact that they're going to be told that they need to *change*, which is they're going to have to repent.

And they abhor, and that word is "loathe" or "detest" **the one who speaks uprightly**. They don't like what they are being told by God's Church. Now, "the one who speaks uprightly," can have many meanings. It can be anybody that has God's holy spirit living and dwelling in them, and God is then influencing and it is God that is actually doing the speaking. So when God's Church speaks righteousness, which is "the uprightly" who speak this, well, guess what? People aren't going to like it. Some will, but the majority won't. They won't like being told what to do. Well, that's normal, that's the natural carnal mind.

So we *know* the outcome, that when God's apostle speaks particular things or writes particular things people are going to loathe and detest it, unless they are given the eyes to "see." Well, God's prophets are exactly the same. The same thing applies. Well, it applies also, brethren, to members of the Body of Christ, "the one who speaks uprightly." They're going to be loathed and detested. So, hence, we're going to have to use a lot of wisdom. And we're going to get into that in future scriptures. But we have to use a lot of wisdom about *how* we behave during this particular time, during this time of man's last days.

Verse 11—**Therefore, because you (Israel) tread down the poor**, which is "oppress others," **and take**, which is "to fetch," **grain taxes from him, though you have built houses of hewn stone...** You are well off and you don't show mercy. You've got everything but you still go out and oppress others. This is typical of man's behavior because mankind "treads down the poor." In other words, they oppress others. Now, they oppress others through the way they live. Because of attitudes, they oppress others. They think themselves "better than" others. And they still will try to get more. They're still trying to *take* from the poor because they want to gain more for self. So they're well off, they're doing well, but they don't show any mercy to anybody else because it's all about acquiring for self.

And then God says, **Yet you shall not dwell in them**. So physically, their housing, physically, things are going to be removed from them. Even though they're outward, this system of get, the system of

acquiring, God says, "Whatever you're building up for yourself," God was going to remove it *from* them because of their attitude.

Today people are measured by their wealth, their status. The world measures people based on people's wealth, and people with wealth *draw friends*, because that's the way the world is. That's the measurement that they use. Well, people with wealth, they tend to want to gain more, to gain more security, and they can build bigger houses. Well, God is saying all of that system is going to be taken away, and yet people will not be able to dwell in those physical things that they build up because of their attitude, because of their spirit, why they're doing what they're doing.

You have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine from them. This is implying destruction is coming on Israel because of their selfishness and their rebellion against God. So this is *why* this destruction is coming. *All* for the purpose of God removing what they trust in, which is their houses and their vineyards, what they own. God is going to destroy it because of their attitude, because it's all selfish. It's oppressive. Their attitude towards others, their attitude about wealth, there's no credit given to God. There's no *glory* given to God. There's no rejoicing in what God has done for them. It's all about self. And because of this selfishness they have *rebelled* against God's word. They don't follow God's word; they don't even *consider* God's word in *any* judgment at all. God is not involved in mankind's life. Well, because of this, God says He's going to destroy it. He's going to bring it all down, *all* because He loves Israel; He loves mankind. And God is working at this time through Israel, and the other nations of the earth will have their opportunity when we get into the Millennium.

So God is working through Israel, as He does with spiritual Israel, the Church of God—PKG. He works with spiritual Israel. And He's going to bring the other nations (the other people's) *into* the Church of God, into God's true Church where God's spirit is. Physically, same thing applies. God is working with physical Israel, and because He loves them He's going to bring them down low. He's going to humble them. Now, *this* is what we face.

People that trust *in* their wealth are going to be lowered for the purpose of turning their attention to trusting in God. Now, we understand through scripture that there's not going to be too many that are going to get through that aspect. Because they are so polluted through Hollywood and all the other things they trust in, it's going to be *very* difficult to be brought down low, to have nothing, to trust in what? "To trust in *what*?" is going to be their question, because they've grown up living their lives trusting in *self* and what they have acquired. Well, when you take it all away and *fear* enters mankind's thinking, like *fear* of, "What am I going to eat today?" Fear of, "Where am I going to live?" Fear of, "I wonder if I'm going to live today." Fear of what others may *do* to the person individually. This great *fear* is going to cause great distress to the mind, but it's all for the purpose of bringing humility where people might admit, "Well, I have to trust in something greater than myself," which means they're going to have to learn to trust in God.

So what we face is a time of great distress, brethren, and it isn't going to be easy for us to go through this period. But God has a plan for His Church. And the reason we are in the Church now is for the purpose of growing in knowledge, growing in spiritual understanding, and growing in love so that we can live love to all. And we face a time where we're going to have to live love to all. And the scriptures

we're going to look at, which cover this aspect of how we think towards others, because this time of trouble is not going to be easy mentally. It may be difficult in many ways, but the one thing we do know is that we have God with us no matter what happens to our life.

Verse 12—For I know your manifold... This is God speaking. **For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins.** Now, "mighty" as far as in number, numerous. So there are *so many* sins God says He knows all of these transgressions. He knows how many they are—which is every law is broken. **Afflicting the just**, so they're causing distress on others, **and taking bribes.** This is *natural* for mankind, this "taking bribes." So "afflicting the just," so anybody else that is trying to do the right thing even on a physical level, the wealthy, those that are above them, they oppress them, they cause distress for them because of all the rules and regulations and all the others things they do.

Well, they also, "and taking bribes." Now, this "taking bribes," is very interesting. This is how politics works. This is how politics really works. "I will give you this in exchange for something else." So it's a bribe. A lot of the nations of the world, this is the *only* way their societies function. There have been many of people that have been put in jails in various countries outside of Israel where the guards expect a bribe. And if there is no bribe, well, you're staying there. Well, there are many other things too, within business, that a person cannot do business with another country or in another country or in another nation unless there is a grafting or a bribe. You have to pay a lot of money to even get contact with another business that may allow you to be able to import or export because the world is based on this "getting bribes."

Well, do we think that "taking bribes" or "getting bribes" is any different in the western world? Well, brethren, I hope we're not deceived to think that mankind in the western world does not take bribes. Being political, or being a politician, is based on bribes! It's about taking to get...it's about taking to get. It's about getting votes (getting people to like a person), all for the benefit of the person so that they can be in a position of power and authority. And of course, we understand how business works. Many a business has to then set up what's called "lobbyist's," and the lobbyist's, big groups, whether it's gun lobby's or whatever lobby's, then approach the politicians, and it's all about lobbying. Now, lobbying is political and lobbying is sin. It's about trying to persuade somebody a particular way. Well, that's not God's way. That is not God's way. God's way is God declares the truth and then it's up to the individual to make a decision. It's not about going in there and lobbying and debating about a particular matter. So we understand that this whole area of taking bribes has been a problem for people throughout the history of 6,000 years of mankind.

Continuing on...**Diverting**, "turning aside," **the poor at the gate.** Now, this is not desiring to help others because of a prejudice. So the poor come up looking for answers at the gate where the elder would sit, and they would look for some level of justice or some advice. Well, of course, they were turned away, so they would be diverted away from the answer. They might desire any type of help, but because of the prejudice or the respecter of the person, because of the *judge*, their attitude was one of pride. They were poor, and they were better off, and the poor were below them...the poor were below them. So we have to be careful, brethren, in our judgments going into this time of distress that is just ahead of us, that we are not affected by these things. We are not in this attitude here. That when God looks

at us He doesn't look at our transgressions or our numerous sins because of these attitudes that we can have. And these are the attitudes that we can have so easily without knowing it.

Now, this "afflicting of the poor," which is causing distress on others, is based on our attitude towards them and "taking bribes" can affect us, because this respecter of persons, this doing something to get something else *could* be a problem to God's people if we're not on guard. Because it's going to come down to shortages. There are going to be big shortages and people are going to want to bribe anybody because that's the way the world is. "I'll give you this if you give me that." Where God's spirit is, "I will give you this and expect nothing in return."

So it's a danger for us at any time that that can be our thinking. And, "diverting the poor at the gate," well, we have to be careful of this, that we are not a respecter of persons, because as God works with people, as the tribulation gets wound up more and more and more and we see the Thunders increase and we see the Trumpets increase in their effect, we're going to see great distress among the people. Now, we have to watch our judgment; we have to watch our judgment because we are to love all and we're not to be a respecter of person's. For example, let's just say that God begins to call somebody that is using drugs or has used drugs or coming out of prostitution or coming out of a lifestyle that is quite sick compared to other people that we would consider not sick in the world. But they are, if you understand what I mean, because it's all about the spirit of the matter, and some people get caught up in the physical, other people will get caught up in the spirit of the matter, may not fulfill the act but still do it. Well, God says we've got to be very careful with our judgment and what *standard* we apply to others. Then, if God begins to call someone that may still have prosperity (or a level of prosperity) as they're being brought low, that they're considered "better people" (is another way to put it), better people because they haven't lived the lifestyle of somebody else, now, how will we treat them? What will we do? Well, we have to be very careful, brethren, that we use the same standard to *every human being*, and that standard is we have to love them. We have to understand what love is, but we have to love them. We have to have the same concern, no ill will to them. We're not to make harsh judgments on them.

Now, often I look at this particular topic myself and consider back, that in God's Church this is exactly what has happened, that prejudice has happened at different times because people become respecter of persons because of a wrong attitude. Well, when the apostle Paul—when he was Saul and when he authorized the killing of God's people, and then he turned up as Paul to be God's apostle to the gentiles, the Church was confused and the Church had to make a judgment, because they were wary of him because they knew what he was like. "Is this not the person that went out to *kill* God's people, and now he's part of us?" Well now this is the judgment we have to make.

People of all walks of life are going to be drawn into a relationship with God, drawn into, possibly (not all) the Body of Christ early (some may be later, some may be into the Millennium), but when they come we have to be very, very careful what *attitude* we reflect towards *them* because we can become respecter of persons. We can hold prejudice or bias towards people based on their past, even though they go through the process of repentance, they are then baptized, and all their sins are forgiven by God, we don't forgive. How presumptuous and how perverted is that? That God says He is willing to

forgive based on their repentance and baptism and then the laying of hands so they receive God's holy spirit, so they can be impregnated by God's holy spirit to walk a new way of life, and they come into the Body of Christ or they have a relationship with God or they have a relationship with God at that time—they may not be in fellowship at that time because of the circumstances, but they are a part of the Body of Christ, they're begotten sons of God—and we hear about this background they had, which was not good, well, then we then set up standards within our mind. Well, that is that problem with human reasoning. This is the problem within the natural carnal mind, that it *has* prejudices and it *has* biases, and therefore, we are not to "divert the poor at the gate." We're *not* to hold things *against* others and make decisions based on their past. We are to make decisions based on love. We're to have no bias. We're to have no *prejudices* against others. We are to have an attitude that we are all members of the Body of Christ, the Church of God, and we are *no better* than anybody else. In actual fact, deep down we're probably worse because we even *know* the truth and yet we still sin. So why would we want to lift ourselves up? It's God that does the works; it's not us.

So let's consider *our* standard, brethren. Let's look at James 2:1. On the top of this Bible it says here (this is the New King James version), "Beware of Personal Favoritism." And this is all about an attitude. So this is about how we think towards others. Now, we do have these problems, brethren, and we shouldn't be ignorant enough to say that we don't. But we all have prejudices. We all have biases in different things, not just against people but about things. That's just the way we are. Well, we have to be on guard *against* this as we enter this time of tribulation, as we enter this time of man's last days of self-rule over this 6,000 years. It's coming to an end. And we know we're heading into a time of great distress, great fear, and there's going to be people that are going to have lots of different questions. Others are going to *hate* God's people. Others are going to turn to God, a relationship with God, and become begotten sons of God. How we deal with them, how we handle them, our attitudes towards them is paramount, because we have a choice in this. We have to choose to love. God will give us the power to love and give us the power to not be prejudice or bias towards anybody because of their color, because of their culture, because of *anything*. God will give us that power as long as we set our mind to love.

James 2:1—My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord of glory*, with partiality. Now, this is an attitude of being superior. Because when we look at it and just analyse it, when we look at somebody else and we consider them "lower than us" because of color, because of language, because of their behavior, because of anything, it's actually an attitude of superior, "I am better than you!" "I am better than others! Because, you see, I am this color," or "You see, I've never done that," or "You see, I've never operated like that. I've never had that thought." Well, that's just an attitude of superiority. And what it is, is that we can live that without even knowing it because we *all* have prejudices. And we just, it's a matter of whether or not God has revealed them to us.

Verse 2—For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, he's got the wealth, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man with filthy clothes, so we're looking at two different people here. Now, in society we understand that somebody with the gold rings and the fine apparel, they'd be considered, well, they're doing well, they're obviously intellectual and all these

other things of human reasoning, and they're all, obviously, well off. Therefore, we tend in our minds to build them up, that they're better. They're better than us. They're better than others. But also, there should come in a man of poor apparel and he has no gold rings and his clothes are actually dirty—so he's virtually someone that is in poverty. In other words, he comes off the streets, let's just say. So God is asking us then, how will we treat these people? How will we deal with them? What's our attitude towards them? This is what is going to happen ahead of us in the last days of mankind in this era that we're in. This is exactly what's going to happen because we're going to have to measure people based on their repentance. We're going to have to measure people based on their repentance, not on the outward physical appearance. Because that's the discernment. And by the word "measure" I'm talking about discerning. Is a person really repenting? Whether they're poor or rich makes no difference! Are they repenting? That's the judgment—repentance. Are they obeying God? Do they desire to be baptized? *That's* the judgment we have to make. That's the discernment we have to make. And it's not based on these physical things. And this is the warning here that James is revealing to God's Church.

...and you pay attention, and that "pay attention" is "you respect," **to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, You sit here in the good place.** So this is that respecter of persons. This is this *prejudice* that is taking place. This is that *bias*. **...and say to the poor man, You stand there,** so one's been give a seat and the other one is told to stand there, normally at the back of the hall because he's dirty and people have made a judgment already because there's nothing in it for them. Generally people make judgments because there is nothing in it for them. For example, the rich man comes in and a person draws to the rich man *because* he's going to get something out of it, he's going to get something back from the rich man. If we show favor to the rich man, the wealthy person, there's a potential he might like us and actually *give* us something...he may give us something. So the reason we're doing this is we're trying to get something. Well, that's not God's way. God's way is not one of getting; it's about giving.

...and say to the poor man, Stand over there, "You stand there." Why are we doing that? Because there is nothing in it for us! He hasn't got anything to give us so you can just stand over there. **...or, Sit here at my footstool,** "You're much lower." In other words, "Right down there on the floor where I can rest my feet on you," is like a footstool.

...have you not shown partiality among yourselves? Now, this, brethren, is about acquiring the praises of men. We do these things for the praises of men. Well, this is talking about God's Church. "Have we not then shown partiality amongst yourselves?" Amongst ourselves, members of the Body of Christ? Well, we're not to do this. We're not to think towards one person differently than another, because it's a false judgment. **...and become judges with evil thoughts?** That's right, because it's a bias! It's a prejudice. We favor one over the other. Now, *this* is a great warning for us, brethren, to consider going forward, that we haven't faced this to the degree we're going to face it, because *as* God's Church expands and grows during this next period of time, we have to be very guarded about our own thoughts, because the only thing we can guard *is* our own thoughts. We are the ones that have to make these discernments.

Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith? So, "Has not God called humans that are humble in this world," because they've all been humbled, therefore, they're being humbled for the purpose of repentance so that they can come into a relationship with God. And if they can come into a relationship with God they can come into a relationship with *us* because we are God's people. So God has chosen the "poor of the world," or "the humble of the world to be rich in faith," in other words, to live what we believe. We believe God. So having faith, to grow in faith, is to grow in *believing God*, and then implementing into our life to live it. **...and heirs of the Kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?** So we are to be poor in spirit, we are to be humble and teachable. If we stay close to Him and we love Him, He will keep us poor in spirit, we won't lift ourselves up and we will be humble and teachable, if we have God's holy spirit and yield to God's holy spirit. So, brethren, we have to be very careful about the decisions we make and the judgments and discernments we make.

Verse 6—But you have dishonored the poor man, the humble person. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? So isn't it the wealthy people that are trying to *destroy* God's way of life? They're not humble, they're proud. So we can look at this in different ways. We can take it on a physical level, the rich and the poor. The rich with money, the poor have nothing. Well, it's the rich, it's the court system, it's the government system, all of that is trying to oppress (as the scripture previously went through in Amos, it's talking about). It's about the oppression. That's exactly what Israel has done; it's *oppressed* people. *But*, we can look at this on a spiritual level, "Is it not the rich," the proud, "and the poor," is the humble. So isn't it the proud that have oppressed us, that put us down? Isn't it the proud that calls us ignorant, that calls us a cult, that doesn't understand it? They actually hate us with a passion? It's pride that does those things. It's people in pride.

So we have to distinguish, brethren, whether we have pride or whether we're going to stay in humility. Because if we have *pride*, we will look to honor wealth. We will look to treat others differently. We'll be a respecter of persons *because* of our pride. But if we have humility, we will *not* be a respecter of persons, because with the humility we'll be teachable and we'll allow God's holy spirit to live in us, which will enable us to love. Whether they're proud or whether they're humble, makes no difference, we treat them the same, we use the same standard towards them. That same standard that I'm applying there is love. No matter whether they have money or they don't, whether they're proud or they're humble, makes no difference; we will love them. We'll love them no matter what, which means we desire no ill will on them. We just simply desire that they repent and have a relationship with God.

Verse 6 again... **But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?** Well, that's the answer. Yes, that's exactly what. It's the proud that actually do that.

Verse 7—Do they (the rich) not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? Well, yes they do.

Verse 8—If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the scripture, You shall love your neighbor as yourself, you do well. So we are to show this judgment, this discernment. We're to live mercy to all and we're to live by faith. We have our faith in God. We understand what God is doing, and during this

time of great distress it's more important than ever that we *stay strong in the faith*, what we believe. And we are always to desire the best for everyone, whether they're rich or poor, whether they're proud or they're humble. We desire that they repent and seek God, that they seek God and live. That's our desire for *all* mankind during this period.

Verse 9—But if you show partiality, so if you show preference, if we show a wrong judgment, if we show a wrong attitude towards people based on a bias or a prejudice, which is this partiality, **you** (we, brethren) **commit sin**. Because why? Because we're not showing love. If we love one another we won't show bias or prejudice. ...**and are convicted by the law as transgressors**. We're exposed as sinners because we're failing to love, because of this prejudice, because of this bias that we have.

Verse 10—For whoever shall keep the whole law, the whole law, all of it, it's intent, the spirit of it, **and yet stumble in one point**, in one aspect of it, which is about motive and intent, **he is guilty of all**. The same penalty applies because we have failed to love. So, sin is sin, and the same penalty applies for the breaking of the 1st Commandment as it does the 10th. So we are to keep the whole law and we're not to stumble. Now, the biggest thing that we can stumble in is simply our own pride, by showing partiality. Now, we do it without even realizing it. But the danger that we face more than ever is what is ahead of us. So we have to be very much on guard about this respecter of person's and making sure that we don't stumble by being partial in judgment, having a bias or showing favor to one and not the other. No, we are to love all.

Deuteronomy 16:18—You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which is "in your towns," because in previous scripture we looked at what they did. They would have a small town and they would put judges or officers at the gates because of people coming in and looking for advice and counsel, and those judges or officers were to use the word of God as a guide in their judgments. And as we've already seen, it's something that mankind does not do anymore. They do not look to God's word. ...**which the LORD your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment**. Now, this "just judgment" is using God's word as their guide. So if anybody came to the gate and had a particular question or wanted a judgment to be made or a decision to be made, the answer, they would actually go up the line in authority until they came to a particular point, which was the High Priest that would make a decision. And if the High Priest couldn't make a decision it would go to Moses who had direct contact with God Himself. Now, there were times that these things actually happened, where people brought questions and it went up the line and Moses would ask God for the answer, and then God would give him the answer.

Verse 19. So these people that are in this level of authority, they've been allocated this duty by God. They have this authority from God to make these discernments, to make these judgments. **Verse 19—You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe**, now, the reason for this is because, why?—**for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. You shall follow what is altogether just, that you may live and inherit the land which the LORD your God is giving you**. Now, this is interesting, because this is actually so true, because it's happened to mankind and it still goes on today. Because bribes, in other words, "I will give you this if you give me that," it actually blinds the eyes of a person because they then twist their judgments. And therefore,

somebody that might have decision making power, if they receive a bribe, "I'll give you this," it will actually "twist the words of the righteous." They will change their mind. They'll actually start to speak falsehood. Because this happens in politics, this happens all around the world, that people get things because of bribes.

Now, we're aware also, of course, many large sporting bodies that have to make decisions about where things are held, what country they are held in. It has nothing to do with the fact it's the right location. It's all about this bribes. It's all about this influence, this lobbying. And of course, it then "twists the words," the outcome of the decision is twisted...it's twisted. Because of the bribe it has now changed a person's thinking.

So a person may think, "This location is the best one, by far, because of transport, because of venues, because of the weather, because of many reasons," but a nation or groups or lobbyists can turn up and they will make all these promises (and it's always connected to money, and to advantages to an individual or even an organization, but generally it's an advantage to an individual). That individual will then take on a form or a judgment or an opinion, that he will now promote the people that are giving him the bribe or the advantage. And therefore, it twists the thinking, and therefore, the winner of the country that is going to hold "such and such" is "such and Such!" Now, a lot of people in the world know this is how it works. And they will then go back and review why they failed to win a particular sporting event, for example. Well, they go back and then review what went wrong with the bribe. Why? Did they say something wrong? What did they do wrong? What didn't they promise? And they often realize that, hey, they just didn't have enough *bribe* to be able to win the person's vote. Well, that's the way the world is.

Well, within God's Church it doesn't work like that, and it's *not* to work like that going into this next period of time, during the tribulation. And into the Millennium, it will be wiped out. There will not be bribes because bribes affect the thinking.

You shall follow what is altogether just, that you may live and inherit the land. So we, brethren, are facing a time when we cannot have our judgments, our discernments twisted because of what people may want to influence us. Now, it's going to be very important on a spiritual level. God has provided the truth to His Church, and therefore, if somebody comes along that has a twisted thinking (has error because of their past as far as their doctrinal past), we have to be so firm. We have to be so strong as not to consider the other doctrine, not to be *drawn away* by this false doctrine. Because this false doctrine will pervert our eyes. It will twist our thinking because we've given time to it. So there are lots of things to be on guard about. We have to stand firm in the truth, *exactly* as God has placed in the Church. We will teach what we have been taught. We will speak what we are to speak, and not add to or take away. So we, brethren, have to be on guard so that we may live (talking about something spiritual), and that we may inherit the land (talking about eternal life).

So all of us, brethren, within the Church can look at this physically and spiritually. We desire to live physically and inherit the land—the Millennium—but also we desire to live spiritually, so at one point in time according to God's will we **will inherit the land, Yahweh Elohim** (life-everlasting), **which the**

LORD your God is giving you. Isn't that a beautiful promise? God wants to give us life! He wants to give us life and He wants to give us eternal life, or life-everlasting, or age-lasting life. That's what He wants to give to us.

Back to Amos 5. Sorry, I should have told you to hold your place there. We're going to be in Amos 5, backwards and forwards as we go forward through this sermon series, so you might want to hold Amos 5 next time when I forget to tell you to hold your place there.

Amos 5:13—Therefore, the prudent keep silent at that time, for it is an evil time. So we have to be very wise about the words we speak. We're going to have to show a lot of wisdom. We have to be *prudent* at this time. So as we come into this time of tribulation, as we come into this "time" of difficulty, and this is referring to the fact that in Amos where it's talking about this "time of great trouble," and we're going to see things taken away from the wealthy, destruction is coming on Israel, well, we're going to have to be very wise about how we handle ourselves in this time. Now, of course, we're going to be wise because we're not going to be "afflicting the just," we're not going to be causing distress on others *and* we're not going to be taking bribes. We're going to be very careful about how we answer that question. Someone comes up and speaks about offering a bribe of some type, whether it's doctrinal, whether it's physical, "We're going to be prudent and we're going to keep silent at that time, for it's an evil time." It's a time of spiritual danger at this time. And we won't be "diverting the poor at the gate," because we'll be prudent. We will be making wise judgment. We're watching our words.

So hold your place, and now let's look at this time of trouble and how we should look at it. Matthew 10. Now, it's not saying in Amos 5 that we're not to say anything, but there is a time to be silent, which is that Proverb, which we've looked at before, which is, "Answer a fool according to his folly, and don't answer a fool according to their folly." Because it all goes back to the "fool in their folly," which is: What is their intent? Is their intent to get something for self? Is their intent to argue? To put you down or to put us down, about what we're saying or doing? Well, if that's the intent, we'll keep silent. But if a "fool" asks a question with a right intent, the spirit's right, well, we would answer them because that's what God requires of us. That's our purpose in the Body of Christ, to answer, to give an answer, the right answer, according to God's holy spirit, what God has taught us. Because we are of God we give that answer.

Matthew 10:16. There is a time of trouble ahead when we will need to be very wise in how we conduct ourselves. This is not going to be what's called "a cake-walk." It's not going to be easy for us physically and there is a danger for us on a spiritual level. Although we will have been tried and tested, and the Temple will have been measured, there *is* still a spiritual danger for us because of pride.

Matthew 10:16—Behold, I send you (talking about disciples of God, and at this time, of course, it was the 12 disciples), **out as sheep in the midst of wolves.** Well, we can look at this now, brethren, for us. "Behold I," which is talking about Jesus Christ, "But I," Jesus Christ and God, "will send us as sheep." Now, we are sheep, brethren. We are followers of God. "In the midst of wolves," so this is now a physical pointing to the spiritual. They then (as disciples), as followers of Christ (sheep) are being sent out to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God. That's what they were told to do. They would have

to preach in a system that is under the sway of Satan and the sway of his demons, "in the midst of wolves," because there are people out there that are going to hate. Wolves attack and consume sheep. So that's the contrast there. One is innocent and followers. Well, a wolf works in a pack and wolves attack and they destroy the young and the weak within a flock.

Here it is. Christ is using this example of wolves and sheep for a purpose. They would have to be very careful and watchful of destructive men because the wolves really are men and they are influenced by Satan. They're not possessed by Satan, but they're influenced, under the sway of the natural carnal mind, influenced by Satan, influenced by selfishness. It is one of destruction.

Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. So what is it to be "wise as a serpent?" Well, this is something that we, brethren, are facing. This very scripture is something we are about to face. "Behold, I will send you out as sheep," innocent, followers of Jesus Christ, followers of God, "in the midst of wolves," in the midst of destructive humans. Because not everybody is going to be *for* us. There are going to be many that are against us. But God will protect us. God will guide us. And what will be will be. So what is it "to be wise as serpents"? Something that we need to now take on and think about it and be prepared "to be wise as a serpent." We can learn much from the actions of a snake. One, they sense danger and avoid it.

Now, in my youth I remember my father would go fishing, and we used to go down to an area where no one was, and basically we'd pack up a car and drive down and drive for hours and hours and we wouldn't see another human for hours and days sometimes. And we'd end up at this river side in Western Australia where there was a river and there was lots of fish and lots of other wildlife around there, and it was deserted, but there were a lot of snakes as well. Well, the one thing that we learned when creating our own tracks down to the various fishing ponds and fishing rivers was that if you made a bit of noise snakes would sense the danger and they actually would avoid us. We never came across a lot because of the noise we used to make, and we did it deliberately to make sure that *they sensed* the danger and they would avoid us. Because we were dangerous to them because in those days my father used to carry a double-barrel shotgun and he would shoot the snake if it was in our path or we came across it. Well, most snakes would avoid the danger.

So we, brethren, have "to be wise as a serpent." Now, we understand that on a spiritual level that Satan is described "like a serpent" because he slithers around, but he is also cunning. You have to be wise in the sense of being cunning. You have to know when to act, when to speak, and what to do. Well, we have to sense danger, and the best way out of danger is to avoid it. Let's not get ourselves into spiritual danger, and the way we do it is avoid it. Let's avoid those spiritual dangers.

Well, right now the same thing applies, brethren. We should be able to sense danger. There is a lot of danger on TV programs, there's a lot of danger in *life*, and there is a lot of evil in life. Well, if we're wise, we'll avoid those things and we will flee those things.

Another point is snakes don't look for trouble. Snakes don't go around looking for trouble. They go looking for food but they don't go looking for trouble. Well, same for us, brethren. We don't go looking for trouble. We have to consider our thoughts, words, and actions, and don't get ourselves into

situations where we're looking for trouble, where we're going to bring trouble and the outcome of trouble, suffering, on ourselves.

Another point is, is that we should be watchful and don't walk into trouble, and that trouble is evil, which is sin. So we are to be watchful, watch our attitudes, watch our thoughts, make sure we're not prejudice and we're not bias towards people that God is calling into a relationship with Him, and let's not walk *into* evil, let's not walk *into* sin, get involved in sin. And how do we walk into sin? By being prejudice, by being biased, by setting up worldly standards within our minds, by making discernments based on our *own reasoning* rather than the thinking of God, the way God says. And God says we are to love all; we are to love all, no matter what.

Another point, we don't proceed without prayer. So whatever happens in the future as we go forward, let's not proceed in making discernments or making judgments without prayer, without placing it before God first, because God is all powerful, God is all mighty, and God's will *will* be done. So we need to proceed into the future, during this time of tribulation, without prejudice, without bias, but with prayer. So let's not proceed any further unless we have prayed about the situation to make sure that God *is* with us and that we consider the thinking of God in all our judgments, all our discernments.

Another point, know when to speak and when not to. Now this requires God's holy spirit. There *is* a time to speak, and how much to speak, and there's a time when *not* to speak. And these are things that only God can reveal to us. Now, we've learned, I know, from experience. I know that I have, that there's a time when I shouldn't have spoken, when I did, and there was a time when I should have spoken and I didn't. Well, these are things that we learn through experience. And no matter what, if we've placed it before God and if we're not showing partiality in judgment, we're going to be able to yield to God's holy spirit so that the words spoken (which is what God talks about), the words spoken are inspired of God. So that's one way that we can be wise as serpents.

So what is it to be "as harmless as doves?" Well, firstly, doves are innocent and not aggressive. So that's something for us to take on, brethren, that there's an innocence. Well, an innocence, of course, no human is innocent. There is not one single human that's innocent other than Jesus Christ, who existed and was innocent. We're not. We're guilty of sin. But it's an attitude that we can have. It's one of standing back and not elevating ourselves as being above others, not being prejudice, not aggressive, not trying to force our opinions or our views on others. If we start to speak God's word to someone else and we get a reaction, we can see it, well, it's time to "be harmless as doves," "as wise as a serpent." It's time to *back off* and don't be aggressive about forcing our view or opinion or God's word on somebody else. They don't want it. They're not going to hear it. So why bother? Why continue? So we're not to be aggressive in attitude, the way we approach others. We're to be innocent in the sense that we don't desire any ill will to them.

Another point is we should be without ill will to anyone, no matter what the situation we find ourselves in. Now, we're all going to find ourselves in *difficult* situations. We're all... this is just a given. Because of what is coming, the humbling of mankind, we're going to find ourselves (members of the Body of Christ) in difficult situations.

If you look back at the New Testament, you'll find the apostle Peter did, you'll find the apostle Paul did; they found themselves in *many* a difficult situation. Does that mean that God wasn't with them? The contrary! God *was* with them! *But* during all of that they had to live a particular way of life. They had to live the way of love, no ill will. No matter what people say, we are to have the right attitude towards them. We're not to show prejudice or bias or ill will. We are *always* to be an example to others, of Christ being in us, Christ *in* us.

Now, this is about living this way of life. Now, in the previous sermon series that we covered, part of this was about looking after our temple, the temple which we are, which is making sure that our thoughts, words, and actions were being measured, being kept clean because of God living and dwelling in us and us having the right attitude, the right thought processes. Now, if we have the right thought processes we'll have the right words and we'll have the right example to others. We are ambassadors of Christ and ambassadors of the Government, or the Kingdom of God. Now, during this period that is ahead of us, this tribulation period, this time of humbling of mankind, the end of man's last days of self-rule, it is going to be *so important* that we remain as faithful ambassadors for Christ, or ambassadors of Christ, ambassadors of another Government, the Government/the Kingdom of God that is coming. This is going to mean a lot to those that we interact during this period of time.

Verse 17—But, so this is the opposite, this is what, the way we should live, **But beware of men**, because that's the danger. Because really he's talking about "wolves in sheep's clothing." Well, we know that men, mankind's thinking and their attitudes is what we have to be on guard against, that it doesn't influence us, that it doesn't draw us away to destroy us. **But beware of men, for they will deliver you up**, which is "to betray you," **to councils and scourge you in their synagogues**. In other words, there's going to be hate. There's going to be suffering. This is for the disciples. Well, it's no different for us, brethren. Some of us may have to face this very thing. **You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake**, because of our relationship with God, because we are members of the Body of Christ, the Church of God, the Church of God—PKG, "for *My* sake," the sake of Jesus Christ. Why? ...**as a testimony** (as a witness, to provide evidence) **to them**, to all of those, **and to the gentiles**. So it was to both. So the disciples, then, were possibly going to be bound and they were going to be taken before governors and kings (those in authority, can be any type of authority) "as a witness to them," so the lost tribes of Israel, "and to the gentiles," those who were in Israel at that time. It's the same, brethren, what is ahead of us, *to* the point of being a witness, to provide evidence *to* the 12 tribes of Israel and to the gentiles that are in those nations, because of the name of Jesus Christ, because we're members of the Church of God—PKG. Now, it is all for the sake of Jesus Christ and God the Father. That's why.

So we have to be on guard to make sure we *don't* say the wrong thing, that we don't *behave* wrongly. We have to "beware of men." We have to be on guard to make sure that we consider our condition, which is spiritual. We have to consider our spiritual condition because the physical won't matter. It's all about our spiritual condition.

But when they deliver you up, it's not "if," "but if they deliver you," but "when they do," because a lot in God's Church will be "delivered up." And we've already seen this happen to God's apostle. They

delivered him up before a government for the sake of Jesus Christ. Why? As a witness to them and to the gentiles. Isn't that incredible that that's being fulfilled in part already? Well, there's more to come, brethren, for God's people. **But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak;** now, this is great comfort. So we don't have to be distressed and worried about, "Oh, I should have said that," or "Maybe I'll say that." No, the closer we are to God in prayer, the closer that we are to God in a relationship with Him, the more we use God's holy spirit, God says He will do it for us. It's *His* Church. It's *His* work. So the work that we do is founded on how we think, whether or not we're yielding to God's holy spirit. So we don't have to worry about it. We just have to be on guard and make sure that we're yielding to God the Father and Jesus Christ. That's the key to this.

Verse 20—for it is not you who speak, but the spirit of your Father who speaks in you. So we are to prepare spiritually but don't worry. We're not to worry about the physical things, brethren. We are to be concerned about our own spiritual condition, our relationship with God, drawing close to God. And God says no matter what situation we find ourselves in this period of tribulation that is ahead of us, this destruction, this humbling of mankind, let's not worry about it, but to draw close to God, and He says here that we're not to worry about what we'll speak to others, whether it's in our local community or whether we're brought before others to give an account, because God will do it in us. "But the spirit of your Father who speaks *in* you," He speaks *in* you. Isn't that incredible? It's God who does the speaking.

Verse 21—Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father *his* child; and a child will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. So family relationships are going to be very stressed and strained. We have to be very careful about how we respond to family. And if they do cause us to be put to death because of our beliefs, no big deal, no big drama. That's just the way that it is. And we should be prepared for that, that it's about a personal relationship with God, and if it means our death, that's life. That's just the way that it is. And what a glory, what an *honor* it is to die for the sake of Jesus Christ and God the Father. That is actually a great glory and a great honor, to be considered worthy of being put to death for the name of Jesus Christ.

Now, most people won't understand that, but it is, brethren, a great honor to be able to be put to death for the name of Jesus Christ. Now, we understand, brethren, that we're put to death daily for the sake of Jesus Christ and God the Father because of our desire to sacrifice the self. We put the self to death *now*! We put the self to death now. It's a spiritual matter and it's so important that we're doing it. Because the physical death means nothing. The spiritual death means lots! So we need to put to death now the thinking, the wrong thinking, and therefore, we can die daily for Jesus Christ now. And if we lose our life on a physical level, what an honor that is that God allowed that to happen, that we would die for Jesus Christ.

Verse 22—And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. So many in the world will not like the truth. Many in the world will turn against us. Why? For Jesus Christ's name's sake because we are members of the Body of Christ, the Church of God. And we will be hated by many. Not all...not all. Some will repent and turn to God, and therefore, will become brothers and sisters with us in a relationship with God. They'll become members of the Body of Christ, begotten Sons of God. Many will

have that opportunity, many will not; they'll live into the Millennium and have their baptism and conversion take place then.

But he who endures to the end will be saved. Talking about something on a spiritual level. Anyone that continues in the faith, no matter what happens, will be granted salvation. Now, this is a key, brethren. *Anyone* that *continues* in the faith - we *believe* God and we continue to believe God and we don't give up on God. We stay connected to the vine. We stay part of the Body of Christ. And no matter what happens, whether it's tribulation, whether it's a lack of food, whether it's hunger, whether it's starvation, no matter what happens, no matter what, even if we have to lose our physical life we will be granted salvation in a time order according to God's will. We must remain under the Government of God, God governing our life.

Now, *this*, brethren, is *so important*. We must remain *under* the *Government* of God in our life! We have to be governed by God's holy spirit, God's *thinking* in our life. Our thoughts, words, and actions have to be governed by *God's* thoughts, words, and actions. We have to yield to the way God thinks on a matter.

Now, this is contrary, as we've talked about before, this is contrary to what man is doing. Man doesn't want to listen to God. Man doesn't want God in their life. Hence, God is going to intervene to humble mankind, but *to save him*...but to save him. So God is humbling mankind for the purpose of salvation because it requires humility to have a relationship with God.

So we, brethren, are the same. We must remain humble. We must remain *under* the authority God has established *over* us. And we must have God governing our life by the power of His holy spirit - that's us *yielding* to it.

Verse 23—When they persecute you in the city, flee to another. Being wise and seeking safety on their spiritual response. So this is, "when they persecute you." So if someone is out to destroy us, they were to flee to somewhere else. Well, we, brethren, we understand that if someone is out to persecute us, we just got to avoid that. Let's get out of it. Let's just flee somewhere else. Let's go somewhere else. Back out of it, there's no point. Being wise is to seek safety *in* God. So that is what is being wise.

What's the profit of speaking God's word if the hearer is not interested? Now, we've been through sermons about the natural carnal mind can't "hear" God, can't "see" the truth. I've lived in that environment where I have actually been like that myself, where I couldn't "hear" or "see" the truth. But when God gave it to me I could "hear" and "see" the truth. Well, when I was given aspects of God's truth about somebody out there saying that Mr. Tkach was the man of sin, well, I wasn't interested. I wasn't interested, and I couldn't "hear," and I didn't want to "hear." I just ran my mouth. So I belittled the person who could have thought that way, not understanding, of course, that I was referring to God's apostle at that time. That's the natural carnal mind at work. That's what happens.

Well, we face the same thing, brethren. So what's the point of speaking about God's way of life if the hearer is not interested and can't "hear?" It's all a waste of time. So we need to be sure of the way we behave.

And the most important thing out of this so far is that we don't show bias and prejudice because of the way a person looks or based on their background, because our discernments are based on God's word. And if we look at discerning about a person, it's about repentance. Is the person repenting or not? That is the discernment. Now, if they're repenting they'll become "hearers of the word" and will listen to what's being said based on what God has taught us so far. But if they're not repenting, they're not going to "hear," and what should we do? We should avoid and we should just move on. Because if they persecute us and we open ourselves up, we're just to move on.

Well, we'll finish the sermon series here at the moment, and we'll pick it up in *Part 2* next time.□