

Today we're continuing with a new sermon series entitled *Be Encouraged*, with this part being *Part 3*.

Last Sabbath we engaged in a very long preview of Part 1. There was a lot of additional information with the important points and the material that built upon the first introduction to that particular, this particular series. I hadn't planned that, but that's the way it worked out. And looking back at the past two sermons it simply goes to show sometimes then how important it is that we grasp, in this particular case, the purpose and the focus of this particular series. And that's why I believe that God gave to us, building upon some of those things and reiterating again, it's a subject that we need to have deeply embedded in our minds, especially as we're going into this final phase of the Feast season. We already had Trumpets, but again, this sermon here just before we head off to the Feast of Tabernacles. So important that we grasp this message that God is giving to us at this particular time.

We need to grasp what we've been focusing upon for the *past several months*, focusing on the fact that we've been refining and what God's been doing is a matter of refining our lives, working with us to refine the things that need to be refined and becoming more stirred up in spirit and in truth. They go together: in spirit and in truth. To be in the temple is the truth. To be outside in the courtyard is hypocrisy and a lie. And that's what God has been showing us in a very powerful way. And now that He's been showing us those things and showing us those things we need to focus upon, and that we need to become, indeed, more zealously involved in God's work and what God is doing in our lives, which is what we're doing. That's what we have been going through. And the response, to me, has been awesome, exciting. And those, you know, as far as the vast majority of the Church responding - awesomely inspiring to see that take place. And there are some awesome lessons that we can learn.

From time to time I think of Laodicea and what happened, and then a little brief time that we experienced, just a measure of that again, just a measure, not a lot, but enough to help us to see, because we are more refined, the Church has been worked with in a very powerful way to get to this point in time - which I'll speak about more at the Feast so I'll stop there.

But we need to be encouraged. It's awesome! If we respond to God, if we listen to God, God listens to us. I can't help but think of that in the book - over and over again that message that goes through there that is to us as a Church and it is to the world. And it always has been the message to God's people and to the world - we need to listen to God. And the problem has been for 6,000 years, that mankind has not listened to God. And if we will listen and respond in the way we need to on a spiritual plane that's what God's looking for to bless us in life.

And so again, it is time, as we have now entered this Fall Holy Day season, to be encouraged as we more fully grasp how God has been preparing us for this - *this* Feast and this Feast season and that which is just beyond it.

So in the past two sermons you have been given a verse in Deuteronomy that needs to be repeated again here today. You don't need to turn there. I'm just going to read it. I want to look at that at the beginning of this sermon today. Deuteronomy 31:6, if you want to just jot it down.

Deuteronomy 31:6—Be strong and of good courage. *That comes from God!* It's not an admonition to work up something within yourself that doesn't exist. The only way it can be true is with God's help by the power of God's spirit. Now, we have to put a lot of work into it. I think about Mr. Armstrong talking how that you have to do everything like you're doing it yourself, knowing full well that it's accomplished because of God, that it's God and the power of His holy spirit in your life that enables you to do it. But we have to respond and act and react in a way to what God gives to us with all of our might, with all of our being. To ask God to stir up His spirit in us, to desire to be more zealous, to *not let* a lukewarm spirit enter into our life but to fight against that, to realize that is a great battle of our human nature, especially in our age of modern technology, to fight against that. And because of time, and time continuing on as it does, that we not allow lethargy, that we not allow a lukewarm spirit to enter into our life because God *cannot use that kind of spirit*. Instead, He will separate it from Himself. We have that history. There are a lot of us lived right through it.

So again, **Be strong and of good courage**, as it says there, **and do not fear**, whatever it might be in life, whatever it is, especially in things that are coming and once we get to that point in time. You have nothing to fear, **nor be afraid of**, as it says here in Deuteronomy, **and nor be afraid of them**, whoever the "them" is, whatever "that" is in your life. There is nothing to fear. God is first. You listen to God, you respond, you do the things that He gives and He's there for you, as it goes on to say here; **for the Eternal your God, He *it is* who goes with you**. What more could a human being ask? What more could we have in life? How deeply do we believe that? How much is that a part of our thinking, that the Great God of this universe is with us? We are a part of the *Church of God, the Body of Christ!* What an incredible thing to understand, as Mr. Armstrong used to talk about, the Kingdom of God in embryo, not yet born as Elohim, but in embryo, waiting to be born. Awesome! That's all you can say.

It goes on to say, **He will not fail you, nor forsake you**. The only way there can be a problem is if we do that, if we fail to do what we need to do in response to Him, or forsake Him or His truth or His way of life.

So this verse has been followed by the importance of the title of the chapter that we are focusing upon in this series, and that is "If You Will Listen," Chapter 6, "If You Will Listen, God Will Listen." So let's get back into that section of that chapter where we have only barely started twice now. And I'm not going to go back and start at the very beginning, but we only got a few paragraphs in.

But we'll pick up with the last paragraph, I believe it is, just a few paragraphs down from the section with the heading: "The Factor in Determining Christ's Return: The Church." The Church! When these things.... As God reveals things to us like this, and even as He began after the Apostasy, to reveal to us about the Seals, that the first few Seals, the first four Seals were squarely about the Church, that's an awesome thing to come to "see." And I think of the scattered body out there that doesn't see that yet. They still look at physical things to be accomplished in the world. They don't understand that that was about the Apostasy, that it was about the things the Church would go through after the Apostasy for years and years and years to come. But it's about the Church. And what is so incredible about all that is to come to understand as God leads and guides and directs us is to come to a deeper conviction of how important the Church is and always has been. God's people, in the first 4,000 years very few, but the Church in the past 2,000 years, how awesomely important God's people are to Him, how *great* it is to be called out of this world, to be given of God's holy spirit, to be given of His life to live within us, that we begin to experience that in our being, things that others in the world have never experienced and will in time. But we get to experience it now.

So again, to understand the importance of the Church, and again, this section of that chapter we're going through, "The Factor in Determining Christ's Return: The Church." So it's important that we grasp the context of what this section is all about. It's about the change that was made concerning whether Christ would return on Pentecost of 2012 or Pentecost of 2019.

So again, that's the subject matter of what's being covered here. And it takes time to learn, to absorb everything that God gives to us. We don't see everything all at once. And I don't care what it is, you want to look at the last many truths that God has given to His Church, we are still building upon those things. God, in sermons that He has inspired to be given and some of the things in posts that have been given, still building upon those truths. And there is much more building that is yet to take place. We don't get it all at once! So often we think we do! And it's good that we're excited about what we are given, but there is so much more! And that's God's way of life. There is so much more to learn and to know and to understand and to build upon what He gives to us in refined ways that we don't yet "see," but we have to have some of the large building blocks in the beginning so that we have someplace to start. And that's how God works with us in life - and just keeps building and keeps building, and keeps building.

I could go through truth after truth after truth going way, way back of things we're still building upon. And that's God's way of life - we continue to grow. What a boring thing if we couldn't continue to grow, if we came to a point, like I kind of thought after I got out of high school, "There's no more." Pretty dumb! "What more is there to learn?" And I know there's more *knowledge* out there. But you go through college then and you start going through college and whatever it might be in life and you think, "There's not a whole lot more." And you realize, "You don't know anything yet!" Amazing! Millennia after millennia after millennia, after trillions of years even, which we don't grasp, we'll continue to learn. There are things about God we only see in such a

slight way right now you can't even begin to describe it. We have no real concept of how great God Almighty is. When we say, "Almighty," that's a very limited word in our pea-brains. Truly is all mighty. So far to go - and really, no end to it.

So the exceedingly important point to note is contained in that first paragraph, and then we'll jump on down a few paragraphs here, pick up where we left off. Again:

There is **one factor** in the midst of all this that would determine which date God would send His Son to rule in His Kingdom. The factor was the Church—His Church.

To the point. Short and simple. So powerfully true. So dropping down a few paragraphs, going to pick up where we left off, where we ended last Sabbath in this particular paragraph:

The exact state of the Church could not be foreknown due to all the suffering it would experience after the Apostasy...

Now, there is a lot there, because the reality is this isn't talking about some who had already been worked with and brought to a point of becoming a part, if you will, of the 144,000, cause that process had started. As time went along there were people who were set aside as that, that just as God said to Abraham, "Now I know you." But that is a relatively small part of the overall Church. It's not the whole Church. And how we would fare as a Body, and so forth, candidly, a lot of that was strengthened by those who will be a part of the 144,000 because of the strength, because of the conviction that God had brought them to to that point in time. But, again, we weren't fully to the point of even that being fully established yet, but (not for all), but as a whole even that was fairly well determined by God. I hope we understand what I'm talking about, what I'm saying there. But again:

The exact state of the Church could not be foreknown due to all the suffering it would experience after the Apostasy and all the spiritual tribulation that would follow.

You know, as I talked about that last Sabbath, thinking about some of these things, we have experienced battle after battle! The Apostasy was just the beginning of the falling away. It was just a beginning of a massive falling away. That was the biggest part of it as a third went back into traditional Christianity and over a few months another third - and it really didn't take them very long, as a whole, just quit. Because there were no answers. How could this happen? "If this is God's Church, how could *this* happen to God's Church?" And people couldn't deal with that. I think of some of those faces I'm seeing right now in my mind, up in Toledo, up in that area where we were, and some of that which was just blank and kind of in a daze. Because it was a shock! It was a shock to people, and to those especially who just couldn't begin to deal with it, just gave up on religion all together because if this isn't God's Church and this could happen to God's Church and because it happened, therefore, it can't be, therefore, it's not clear where God is, just gave up, just quit. A third of the Church! That's astounding when you think of our history and what we went through. And those who lived through that know exactly what I'm talking about.

Two-thirds gone. But for that last third... That's why I *marvel* at what God said. That's why He said it! When He said about the protection that had to be given to the Church, in Revelation 12 there, a time, times, and a half a time, 1260 days (whatever number you want to use), it's all the same, and He talked about Satan would not have the ability, the power to come after us. We had to be protected. That's incredible to grasp, because otherwise we couldn't have made it as a whole, as a people. In other words, doesn't mean that there aren't some that God couldn't work through and bring through and be a part of finishing what He was working on as far as a government and a Kingdom that was going to be, because that was set and that was on course, but as far as an entire Church and a body? Battle after battle. If Satan had been allowed to continue on as far as the regular body and ability to grow, that part of the Body, it wouldn't... it wouldn't be there. I hope you understand that, that power that was there. And so that's why God promised that He would give protection from Satan, because he is a powerful being. He is a powerful, powerful spirit being. That's why you want to be ever so close to God. That's why you don't *want* to be lukewarm because he can influence life around you and your life, and especially as we get, as we've been approaching this time of year. Have you experienced things around you where all of a sudden someone's attitude will change and they will come at you and do things that are just not normal? Things on the job? Things in family? Whatever it might be in life to distract you, to dissuade you, to make life, maybe, a little harder for you?

My wife and I experienced that yesterday. Asked somebody a question in a particular place of business and we got a response back. And we've seen this individual before - chipper, cheery, helpful, kind. Not yesterday. Not yesterday. Nasty, stirred up. Think, "Why?" I know why. I know why. Didn't even know what hit him. There is a spirit world out there that is very active and very alive and wants to harass. But their power is going by the wayside as far as God's Church is concerned. *And I hope you're encouraged by that! I hope you understand they don't have the power to influence* as they have in times past, in the same way, that their ability to stir you up, their ability to sidetrack you is being lessened more and more and more. And the more you grow and the stronger you become, as far as a relationship with God, the less of an impact any of those kinds of things will have on you, and you'll be able to deal with it because you understand what's happening.

Don't know if I'll tell another one that happened. No? It's when we parked the car the other day and somebody had parked behind us? She threw her hands up. She's not helping me out much. I'll let that one go for another time. Amazing how things happen sometimes in life. But the closer we are to God, the stronger we are, the more we're able to deal with things like Christ did. "Father, forgive them, because they don't know what they're doing." Tell it?

Had an individual that was the most influential in sending me away for three years. As I pulled up to go get my passport the other day he pulled up behind us and we walked into the courthouse together, and talked along the way. And I know he knew who I was. I certainly knew who he was. And I was going up the stairs a little slower so he opened up the first door for me - they're big

heavy doors - and I opened up the second and joked about that a little bit as we went in. And thought, "What an incredible thing. Only in God's Church. Not one slightest little bit of bad feeling. Not the slightest." And I know where it comes from because as human beings we're not capable of such things of and by ourselves. On the contrary, looking forward to the time going to be able to see what he did, and I know what he's going to feel like when he does, as a whole.

Do we see people like that? Whether it be relatives, people on the job, whatever it might be? I don't care what they do to you. What can they do to you? What has anyone done to you that you carry it with you that you feel badly toward them? We can't do that. We can't do that as God's people. That's what it's all about. It's about the ability to deal with things in a Godly manner by God's spirit, the way, exactly how Jesus Christ.... That's why Jesus Christ did the kinds of things he did and spoke in the manner he did. Because it's a matter of seeing things from a vantage point of God's plan, of God's purpose, of what God is doing. And when you do that, because of God's spirit, it's because of God that everything fits into its place.

And that's why you don't take things personally. Why should you take things personally? If somebody is stirred up around you and it's not normal, why take that personally? I don't care what they say or do to you. I don't care if they come up to you and are ready to pound you in the mouth, in the face with their fists because they're much larger than you and they're looking down on you and threatening you! And even if they *do that* what should our response be? Do we understand what they're caught up in, the kind of world they're caught up in and how blessed we are that we're not? That we've been called out of that? That we have the ability to see through all that and to understand that people get stirred up by something they don't grasp? They don't know yet. And that happens. It happens all the time around God's people.

So how we deal with things and how we respond to things is so important in life. That's why we've had the sermons like the matter of each one of us, we and we alone make the choices in life that we do and how we respond to things and whether we're going to be angry or respond in a bad way toward somebody else, or back toward someone else, or whatever it is. Whether someone "makes" us mad, "makes" us upset - what do you mean "makes" you upset? We make ourselves upset! We allow ourselves to be upset! That's *our* choice! We're in control of that, or we're supposed to be, aren't we? Anyway.

So again, we've gone through a lot. And there have been battle after battle after battle since the Apostasy, and thank God He gave us the protection He did to where we were finally able to be established by Pentecost of 1998. How incredible is that! Fully established as God's people once again. Going on:

The necessary strength the Church would need to have and where people would be spiritually by mid-2008 would determine how things could proceed forward in the fulfillment of end-time prophetic events.

Cause we're not just talking now... Now we're talking about a fairly good length of time from 1998 on up to 2008. And there was battle after battle after battle after battle in God's Church. And those, in so many of those battles, do you know where they were? They were from within! They weren't on the outside. They were from within with different ones who came along, different ones who associated, even groups of individuals who associated with this body, with God's Church and then something would come along. 14th/15th Passover was one right here in this area, where finally a group, became very obvious, you're not a part with us anymore. You have to make a choice and decision. What are you going to do? Who are you going to continue to listen to? See? Who are you going to continue to listen to? And then it went on and on and on.

Toledo/Detroit, had more than one occasion through that area. Wars! Not just little battles. I'm talking about great spiritual wars, of things that some people did that if I'd have been asked beforehand I would have said, "No, not them. They would never do that." Going on:

The true condition of the Church would be the final deciding factor for when God would send His Son to reign on earth. This would **reveal** whether things were to proceed to a conclusion by Pentecost of 2012 or whether seven more years could be granted to mankind and to the Church that had been scattered.

Incredible! This paragraph that we just read reminds me of some things that Christ addressed on his final night that he was alive in human form on the very day of Passover, when he was put to death. John 16, if you want to turn over there.

John 16:17, it says, **Then *some* of his disciples said among themselves, What is this that he's saying to us, A little while, and you shall not see me: and again, a little while, and you shall see me.** Now, there's a physical factor here in many ways and a spiritual factor here in many ways that is something that happened more quickly, but something that's a matter of a message that's to go on for a long, long time. So he says, **What is this he's saying to us, A little while and you shall not see me, and a little while and you shall see me? And, Because I go to the Father?** So there was a period, we understand, when he went to the Father right after his resurrection, and he had to be received as the Wave Sheaf and he came back and appeared to the disciples after he had died and was resurrected and he spend forty days, basically, with them, teaching them so many things through that period of time, things that they taught later on throughout their ministry, as a whole.

And then there is another factor here involved, just like with Atonement. Now, it's pre-recorded so I don't know what was covered, but I think of Leviticus 16 that goes through and talks about Atonement. In a very powerful way it talks about a process there and some of the types of offerings and the two lambs. One that was set aside as the Azazel and one that represented Jesus Christ, and how the high priest had to lay hands and God had to reveal to him which was which. Because even in the world the example there, we don't

know who Christ is unless God reveals it. Which is the false and which is the true? You don't... we can't know the true unless God reveals it to us. And all those examples are given. But I think of the one that follows toward, later on in the verses there that begins to talk about how he must go away, in essence, and how he was to go into the temple itself and be there, and wouldn't come back out again until everything was readied... until everything was readied. Matter of fact, if I can find the exact words here, but that's what it's talking about. Let me see if I can find it quickly.

Leviticus 16:17—And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goes in to make an atonement in the holy *place*, until he comes out, and has made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel. This is talking about a work he's been doing for 2,000 years. It's talking about his returning.

So again, awesome what's contained in there, that chapter there, that reflects the Day of Atonement and what the Day of Atonement pictures.

But again here, when they would see him again and when others would see him and when all the Church who reads such verses will see him at a particular point in time. But let's go on.

So they were puzzled by what he said. **John 16:18—Therefore they said, What is this that he is saying, A little while? We can't tell what he's saying.**

Verse 19—Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask him, so he said to them, Are you enquiring among yourselves about what I said, A little while, and you shall not see me: again, in a little while and you shall see me? Truly, truly, I say to you, That you shall weep and lament... And they did. After he died. They weren't expecting that. We can't begin to comprehend all the that they went through. They believed that he was the Messiah and the Messiah was to take away the Roman rule. But it didn't happen in the way they thought it was going to happen and Christ didn't tell them otherwise, except in parables, and except in other things. He had already told them, basically, he was going to die and be dead for three days. But they didn't know that. They didn't see that yet even though it was right there before them. Incredible. Can we relate to some of that?

Truly, truly, I say to you, That you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice. And you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. This is more than just for them. This was more. This is far more. This has to do with everyone that has been called into the Church of God and of the process that people would go through in life. We began to see Christ. We began to see God in a specific way, on a spiritual plane, but powerfully and mightily as we're going to in the future? That's another matter. And for the Church throughout, basically, the last 2,000 years they were called to become a part of the 144,000. That was their calling. It's only at the end here now that it's different, that

there are going to be those who live on into the Millennium and those that still will become a part of the 144,000. But as a whole we have to see things from the perspective of what is said and what was taking place and what has been taking place in the last 2,000 years.

So he said, "You shall weep and lament." Do you think being called in this way of life, that God's people don't have times like that? Many times like that throughout their lifetime as they're being refined? The things you go through in life as God reveals to you your mind, your character, or lack of it and the need for *His* character, for *His* being in you? And the troubles and the trials, the struggles we go through that refine us, that try us, the hardships? It was never meant to be easy. It was hard and it's been hard on God's people for 2,000 years! And all those who went before, it's been hard, but especially for the Church, especially for God's Church! Living in a world that lives opposite or contrary to God, who doesn't want God's laws and doesn't want God's way of life. So, "You shall weep and lament." We do. We go through battles.

And there has been a lot of that since the Apostasy. That's one of the times of the height, if you will, on a spiritual plane of lamenting that there ever has been. There have been times that people have gone through great physical things and horrible, horrible things through times past, even in the Church, to death... to death. And there is that, then, which the Church has gone through on a spiritual plane that has been incredible lamentation. The hardships - going to talk a little bit more about that on the Last Great Day. Carrot. Carrot.

"But the world shall rejoice." The world will rejoice. Why? Because the world doesn't live God's way of life. They live their own way. They rejoice in what they do. They rejoice in their own ways. That's what it's talking about. It's a contrast here between God's way and the trials and the troubles that God's people go through, the weeping the lamenting that you will go through in your life as you change, as you have sought to draw closer to God or fight with some of the battles as God has called you and has helped you to see the things in you that need to change, and then your struggle with it, and then some of the hard trials that you sometimes go through. It's not easy! It's not easy.

That's why, because of what we have gone through to this point in time, *you should be EXCEEDINGLY encouraged* in the power of Almighty God, *to have brought to you this point in time! Because this is no small thing*, brethren! This is *no small thing* that God Almighty has done! Because God has done it as we have, as individuals have responded to His guidance and direction in our lives. It's awesome, more awesome than you can see at this point. But God's wanting you to see more of it and He's wanting you to experience more of it and to understand more of it, to see it more on a spiritual plane so that you *are* encouraged, so that you *are* lifted up by an awesome relationship that you're able to have with Jesus Christ and God Almighty and where He is with you that He is with you, that you

have nothing to fear because your God, Almighty God, is with you *wherever you go!* Powerful! How much more powerful could it be to know such a thing? To *believe* such a thing? Knowing is one thing, but to believe it means... and you're living by faith. You're living your life then because you believe it. You're living your life in a way because you do believe in it. It's being reflected in your life. And you're beginning to experience a kind of joy that is unique. Not the full joy yet, but a lot more because you "see" beyond the weeping and the lamenting and you grasp it's purpose more deeply in your life than you have ever grasped it in the past. You grasp those things far more deeply than you have ever known in times past. You see now more and more in your life the importance of why we go through such things to get us where we are.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, That you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice. And you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." That's where we are! After 2,000 years it's where God's Church, we're on the edge of that period of time where we're beginning to experience more of that now, where we can grasp and understand *why* such things were necessary for us, *why* we had to go through some of those things. And now it's being turned. The process of turning, it is starting. It's already started, turning that to joy now in our lives as we get closer and closer because we "see" and understand what's getting ready to take place on this earth.

Things haven't happened yet. Things are being held back. That little ole measly, little hurricane that went up the coast is nothing, absolutely nothing. It's not a Thunder; it's a hurricane. It's just a normal, old hurricane. Okay? Not a Katrina, just a normal, old hurricane. Incredible. There's a lot to come and this isn't it.

When a woman is in child labour she has sorrow, because her hour has come. But as soon as she has delivered the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. And now, therefore, you will have sorrow. Not just for them because of him dying, what he was telling them goes way beyond that. It's to God's people through time. It's to the Church. It's what we're going to have. We're going to experience those kinds of things. But what we need to see and grasp in a very powerful way is that we've gone through the majority of that already. It's behind us. A majority, a vast majority of the sorrow and the lamentation, if you will, the lamenting is behind us. Will there be some more in front of us? There'll be some. But you better be strong. You *can* be strong. You *will* be strong. You *will* be encouraged the more that God is in you, the more that you see where you are and why these things are taking place and what's about to happen.

And now, therefore, you will have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and no man can take your joy from you. What an awesome thing to understand, that there is something in all of us. You know what? How God has worked with you, the truth that He's worked with you, the things you see on a spiritual plane, the truths that

you grasp and comprehend, nobody can take that from you. Isn't that an incredible thing? Nobody can take that from you. It's yours! Between you and your God and your High Priest, Jesus Christ. They've given you all the things that you have been given to this point in time, that have made you who you are, that have brought you to this point to go forward in what you have yet to go forward through, to make you of the strength that you have. I look forward to going through some more of the book and talking about some of this and the strength as we go through some of this right here, the strength of God's Church and where it was by 2008. And that's kind of piddly compared to where we are now. And I hope you see that. I hope you're beginning to see that, because we're a lot farther than we were then. Have we experienced some things where we need to learn some lessons? Sure. A little bit of lethargy, a little bit of letting down, whatever that was, to whatever degree. Because it wasn't great, but it was enough to see this isn't good and this isn't spiritually healthy. Now, some, it varied in people's lives. Some it was very, very little. Some a little more. Everybody has to judge that on their own, where they were. But it happened for us to be reminded, "This is not good. This is not healthy." And thankfully, it didn't last too long, because we know what can happen if it lasts for a long time.

And so we rejoice of what we come through, of what we see, and we're able to build upon and grow in a way, on a level, on a plane that far exceeds where it was before. Incredible, where we are. I hope we're encouraged. I hope we "see" where we are.

Going on, **verse 23—And in that day you shall ask me nothing. Truly, truly, I say to you, Whatever you shall ask the Father in my name, He will give *it* to you.** And so we begin to learn something that Jesus Christ spoke in different ways at different times even, but basically about the Church and about the establishment of the Church and what he speaks of in other places as well in scripture here when he talks about this process of something would take place in us, that we are to ask.

And in times past I always feared that, not that anyone acknowledged it fully, but it was like you could pray about anything in your life and God would give you that, whatever it is you desired and wanted in life. And it's not what it was about. Because people would pray about and talk about certain things they were praying about, and even fasting about and asking God to work out in their lives, to give to them. And this is really not the context of what is being described. If you go back to chapter 14 where a lot of this begins, where this conversation begins he talks about the helper, the paracletes that's going to be given, the holy spirit, and talks about how he and the Father are going to dwell in us and we in him and a power that we're going to be able to experience as human beings in the Church, in the Body, and talks about those things that we're able to ask. And it's all about that. It's all about the holy spirit. It's all about that which transforms the mind. It's not about physical things we ask for in our life.

Now, we do ask for and seek God's help in our life in various things in life, whatever it might be on the job or in family or maybe many physical things in life we ask God's guidance and help in in making decisions about - whatever it is! But this is about spiritual growth. This is about receiving of the holy spirit. This is about something that changes within our being in our minds that God desires because it's His will to transform us, to make us into, to bring us to a point where we can be born Elohim, into His family. And so it's about *that*. And when our desire is and we're praying about - as we do for the Feast - that the sermons be inspired, that we be able to *hear* what God gives to us, or on the Sabbath, or whatever it is, so that God is more involved in our lives in our spiritual growth. That's what this is about! A desire, a *zeal* that we desire to draw closer to God, to become more at-one with God just as we talked about in the fast in Isaiah there and going through those verses and where God says, "Is this the fast that I have chosen?" And it goes on to show, "No!" The fast that God has chosen is that we, in essence, utilize His holy spirit to change, to cry out to Him, to *acknowledge* what we are, to *acknowledge* where we're in bondage and where we're holding down others or we're trying to control things in people's lives and be controlling rather than trying to just control self and fight against things that are wrong in our life. And on and on it goes. Not pointing the finger, as it talks about. Of learning to look at ourselves, looking to examine ourselves and changing.

God wants to help us. That's what God's doing. That's what He wants to give us His spirit to accomplish - to make such changes. It's why fasting and what it says in Isaiah is so powerful. Because it's being freed from those things, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," that tend to control human beings, whereas we're to learn to control those things, to take control, to make the choices, to be responsible for those choices.

So in that day you shall ask me nothing. Truly, truly I say to you, whatsoever you shall ask of my Father in my name He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. So when was that going to begin? Pentecost 31 A.D., and it's still going on. In his name. We approach God's throne, we pray, just as we heard the prayer here in the beginning of services, "in the name of Jesus Christ." That's acknowledging and understanding that the way into the Holiest of Holies, as it talks about in Hebrews, is through Jesus Christ. That we're able to have our sins forgiven, that we're able to receive the impregnation of God's spirit. And from that point forward we have access, the way into the Holiest of Holies through the blood of Jesus Christ. That's what it talks about in Hebrews. Beautiful.

And so he's telling them this, those things that will be answered, those things that will be given to the Father, done through Christ. Because it's all about repentance and change and growing and conquering and overcoming and being filled with the spirit of Almighty God so He can dwell in us, so His Son will be able to dwell in us and we in him. That's everything

he's talking about here. And the kind of joy that you're able to have because of that, no matter what you go through in life, no matter the weeping, no matter the sorrow, no matter the hardship He is there and He is with us wherever we go. And the more we can see that and the more we can understand that the greater our joy, the more encouraged we will be.

So, Whatever you shall ask the Father in my name, He will give *it* to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. That's what God desires in our life. This is on a spiritual plane. Doesn't mean you're not going to have weeping and lamenting at times and hardship, but to see through all that? To grasp what God is doing in your life? To see it in a big picture and why certain things are necessary?

These things I have spoken unto you in proverbs; but the time is coming when I shall no more speak to you in proverbs. They weren't to be given everything right then and there. They didn't grasp what he was saying. They only began to grasp some of it after he began to visit with them and talk to them during that forty days. And then what followed that? *A lifetime of growing and overcoming, a lifetime where God continued to inspire and lead and guide those apostles*, to lead and guide and direct the Church, and all the things that are written in this book that we have available to us that we don't fully grasp and comprehend yet. But we continue to come to "see" them more deeply as we grow. And the more we grow the more we "see" them. And, frankly, there are a lot of things they wrote that *they never understood all of it*. Awesome! Because God has revealed them in a progressive manner through time. That's the way it's been. They didn't even grasp all that they have written. And neither do I grasp all that I have written. And neither do you. Be careful! Be careful. I think of *2008—God's Final Witness* and different comments I heard through time, and I think, "Nothing has changed. It will all come to pass, except the time," and the changes of some of those things on certain nations, that they're going to be allowed to have as a result of what's taken place. But as the outline, as to what's going to take place, it's all there.

"These things I have spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time is coming when I will no more speak to you in proverbs, but I will show you plainly of the Father." And that's something we just grow in. And Jesus Christ does it because Jesus Christ is the one that gives us what we have in the Church at any moment in time by the will of God, according to God's purpose and God's plan and God's timing.

At that day you shall ask in my name: and I'm not saying to you, that I will pray to the Father for you: for the Father Himself loves you. In other words, God Almighty is going to hear your prayers. Because you come to His throne, you have what? You have access to the Holiest of Holies through Jesus Christ, through his name. That's why he's talking to them like this. Because to this point in time they're used to talking to him, but he's letting

them know something is changing here. "Something incredible is taking place and you don't grasp it yet because I'm talking to you in proverbs, but you'll come to see it more and more as time goes on."

...for the Father Himself loves you. If God calls you He has chosen to love you at this time. That's what it's all about. He can't yet love the world as He loves you. Does He? He loves mankind. He loves His creation. But He's not loving them yet, if you understand. That has to do with a calling. The ability to have a relationship and love expressed, they're not receiving that yet because they don't know God, they don't understand God. They don't have what you have been given. Sometimes we just fail to grasp how awesome it is what we have been given. The depth of gratitude that we have is highly lacking because of our carnal nature. It truly is. But the more we grow and the more we can see those things, to understand the love of God?

I said last Sabbath it wasn't till around 1981, '82... and I think it was '82, after I was ordained. Had two different ordinations, both years. And I wasn't able to tell God the Father, "I love you," until after that time, at some point after that time. My feeling is it was 1982. All that time since being baptized in 1969, because I was screwed up. You are screwed up when you're called. You are, as a whole, as a human being. Your mind is messed up. God has called you to have your mind transformed, to be changed, to become something different. I was messed up, dysfunctional. Were you? You've been coming out of dysfunction ever since God called you! He's teaching us how to *function* properly according to *His* ways, according to *His* plan, according to *His* love - not man's love, not man's way. The more we learn about God's love and God's way you can't compare the two. They're night and day. That's what He says. Night and day. Darkness and light. How awesome it is, the process we go through.

That's why no one can be called in two weeks time, die in an automobile accident and then be in the great resurrection at Christ's return. Firstfruit. It's impossible! Impossible! And yet the Church believed that at that time. I've used that example before. It's impossible! It takes a long time to fight this fight. It takes a long time for a spirit mind to be transformed spiritually, a spirit essence in the mind to be transformed, to become something different than what it is, from the way of selfishness - get, as Mr. Armstrong would explain it - to the way of give. That doesn't happen overnight. It doesn't happen just because you go down under the water and say, "I'm sorry. I was wrong. I want You. I want Your life in me. I want to live my life right." That's only a beginning, because the vast majority of those went by the wayside and eventually turned against God, turned against Christ. The majority over 2,000 years who have been called have turned away, because, "It's just too hard. I'm tired of hearing how bad I am," or whatever it is. Or because of someone else out here and they get pulled toward them.

Sex! Sex! Sex! That's what the world.... It's sick! Styles and things that are out here, so much is done because of that. Advertising! It boggles the mind! You look at certain advertising and you think, "What are you advertising? What is it you're really advertising?" After a while you kind of figure it out. "This is a toughie. What is...?" You know, "Get that woman out of the way and maybe I can see what's behind her that you're actually advertising!" And then that *screws up people's minds! Women's minds and men's minds!* You think it doesn't? Oh, it's done a... This modern age has done a number on people! And I'll tell you what, it's going to take a long time to get cleaned up once they come along in the Millennium period. And those who get resurrected in the Great White Throne, it takes a long time to get that mind turned around and be right with God, fully right. Takes a *long* time.

It's a battle that has to be fought, waged, a world that tries to pull you to something else, and something so basic as that. And that's really not so basic because it's one of the primary urges of human beings. That's how God repopulated the earth, because of what He gave to men and women. When used right, it's beautiful. But because of human, carnal nature isn't used right in the world at all, *ever*, as a whole. Always sin involved because of human nature. Hopefully we understand that. Hopefully we're mature enough to understand that, to grasp that. And on and on it goes. And that's just touching on something that's very basic, easy to see - should be easy to see.

"...for the Father loves you." And do you love the Father? It might take a little while to really be able to say it. You may. You may love everything that you see to a certain point in time. But to truly tell God, "I love You," because of what's in your being and what's in your mind and what you "see?" It's an awesome thing, it truly is. In spirit and in truth. But that comes with understanding that God loves you first. To understanding the kind of love that God has to give you His way of life to where you go through maybe years of seeing things about God and His laws and His way of life and why and how those affect human life and why and what it's all about and what the real spirit is that's involved there. Because that's a spiritual thing. And the more you grow in that and the stronger you become. Doesn't happen overnight. Not in one year. Not fully in five years. Not in ten. You will grow in it the rest of your life in God's Church.

"...for the Father Himself loves you." And the more you come to see that and the more you grasp that, how important the Church is to Him, which means how important *you* are and everyone else in the Church is. And as you come to "see" that and believe that more with all of your being you will have a better and a more perfect attitude toward *everyone else in God's Church!* And you will *fear* to ever speak ill, evil, wrong, or think wrong toward *anyone* in God's Church! Truly! So, said a lot right there. Truly have. Because that has to do with how we really "see" God and how we think about God.

...for the Father Himself loved you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from God. We come to a deeper conviction of that as time goes on. We come to see and understand things about our Passover. We come to see things about how blessed we are to be able to have access to the Holies of Holies at any time. And a lot of times we just simply have to first say, "Father, forgive me. Forgive me of (whatever it is) that I might have full access to Your throne. And thankfully through Jesus Christ I *know*, I know I'm forgiven and I know You're listening." Not only listening, but desirous to give us what we ask when it's on a spiritual plane. That's awesome! Awesome! Awesome!
Awesome!

Going on in the book. So, again, I'm mentioning some of those things because it's about what we're able to grasp and what we're able to "see" about how much God loves us, about the Church. It's about the Church! That's why it was such, to me, an incredible revelation when God showed us the first four/five Seals were fully about the Church and not about the world! And that should mean something in a very powerful way - how important the Church is in God's plan. And after we've gone through all that we have in the Apostasy and God's revealed all those things, it's still about the Church! Because it's about Elohim. It's about what God is molding and fashioning. That's why *we really don't* fully grasp, as a whole, those of you who have only been around for a year, two years, five years, six years, eight years, ten years what it will mean to live on into a new age, what it will mean for you to be at the foundation, the beginning. You're the Church that goes on into that age. You represent the Church that goes on into that age, and you cannot grasp the honor, the importance, the *awesomeness* that goes along with that. How *blessed you are!* How blessed you are, above any people, as a whole, that have ever lived on this earth, save for the 144,000, because they'll already be there. But to live on in a physical body, physical life as a Church? Never been a time like it and there never will be again. You are awesomely unique.

Going on in the book:

After the Apostasy in the Church, God began to prepare and work with the remnant from the scattering that followed that destructive event. This remnant Church would continue up to the coming of Jesus Christ, and God had predetermined that His Son could return on either Pentecost of 2012 or 2019.

And I hope there is not another date involved. I really, really do. But I'm ready to go forward whatever it takes. I really am. And I hope you are, too. Now, I believe it's 2019 with all my being. And I'm just being truthful with you. I believed it was 2012 as well, *with all my being*. Looking forward to the Last Great Day. You know, God is working with us in such powerful ways, awesome ways; it is so exciting. And the more you "see" the more exciting it becomes. But we live in some incredible times. Going on....

Now, when I made the comment I just did, I hope it's nothing like what took place back in 2000... what was it, '10? '11? '11. I hope there's not even a little smidgen of that, not a little bit of a heart sinking feeling whatsoever. See? I look back at that, I think when I was giving that sermon I saw people just... They were gone. And later they were gone. There were some that were gone then and they were gone later. It was like, a little bit like "zombie land." I don't know how to describe it. Going on:

God's primary desire and plan from the time of that Apostasy was to send His Son to return on the Pentecost of 2019.

Now, we're learning through all this and God is teaching us a lot of things through all this. And you know what a lot of it is about? Just like what the book brings up. Hopefully we can grasp it. It's about God. It's about God's mercy.

Even though it was God's desire that His Son return on the Pentecost of 2019, it would remain **unknown** whether the Church would reach a level of spiritual strength necessary to accomplish a greater purpose for this addition of seven more difficult and very trying years.

It is amazing what we have gone through. As I was going through a little bit of this and thinking about the Apostasy and just coming up to 2008, that's a long period of time. We experienced a lot. And those of you who went through all that? There is so much history there. There have been so many things that have taken place it staggers the mind! So much that God has revealed! Going on:

Although it was known that the Church would survive and continue all the way up to the coming of Christ, it could not be known what spiritual level of strength it would be at by mid-2008. This was the point in time that was necessary to make a final judgment as to when Christ should return.

And candidly, this still may be all about the Church and for people to learn from, for us to learn from, and for people in the future to learn from. It's about the Church. It's about God's love for His purpose and His plan and for us when we're called to participate in it.

By mid-2008, the Church was highly focused on the return date of 2012, and everything in their lives had been geared to that moment in time. Since the Church's spiritual state hadn't been judged before this and the date for Christ return was still unknown, God had been preparing His Church for the returning of His Son to be on the Pentecost of 2012.

And we were prepared. Going on:

However, if God were to move the return of Christ forward by seven years beyond this, and accomplish what would need to become fulfilled on a spiritual plane in the Church through that period, it would require a very strong spiritual level of faith, trust, and conviction on the

part of the Church. This is because the addition of seven more years would bring a very heightened level of persecution, trial, and hardship upon God's people. For the Church to endure and accomplish all of this it would require it to be at a very specific level of spiritual growth and development by mid-2008.

And that's what God's revealing to us and helping us to understand, what we've gone through. And frankly, to be moved by it, to be *encouraged* by it. It is *awesome* what we have gone through and we need to grasp that. This is not a small thing that's happened at the end of an age. There really isn't a time in the previous 2,000 years you could compare to this. There's never been a time when there was an Apostasy. Did the Church suffer at different times? Yes! It became weak. We look at what happened to Sardis. Did they know what they were going through by the end? Pshew! They were dying out. The truth was dying out. They weren't spiritually strong. God had to revive the Church to bring it up to accomplish something at the end of an age - Philadelphia. Raised up Mr. Armstrong to do it, a man filled with incredible zeal and drive - *incredible* zeal and drive! Makes us all look pretty puny compared to what he had and what he was able to do.

God had judged and established a **first date** of 2012 for Christ's coming, and He would make certain that the Church would survive spiritually to that point in time. For the Church to be able to experience what it would endure beyond that time, its spiritual state could not be judged until mid-2008. That date would be the optimum time whereby such a judgment could be made as to whether the Church could accomplish what would be required of it in order to fulfill a much greater work that would lead up to the Pentecost of 2019.

Just to make it through the past three years as a Church, and because of *all* that came down, all the mockery, all the things... And you know what it does? Helps to build within you? Who cares! What's important? God. Jesus Christ. What God says. Where God leads. It doesn't matter what the whole world says. It doesn't matter! It doesn't matter what people say. And it helps to strengthen us, if we go through a process like that, that we become far more deeply convicted and settled in a reality that what God says is what is important. And He leads us to be able to go through such things. So the more we see this, the more we see what's written here, the more we grasp it the more you will be encouraged, the more you will be strengthened spiritually. Truly! Going on:

To make this judgment, there were specific things that God would do...

Do you know why? Because 2008 is one plane of spiritual strength we needed to be to by that time. But we have passed that up so much so it isn't even funny to be where we are today. *That's* what you need to see. *That's* what you need to grasp, where we are today. Have we gone through some things where God has shown us areas that we need to focus upon in our lives to adjust, to make right? Absolutely, in very powerful terms, in many cases! Especially as parts of the body have been cleansed from the Body that insisted on staying out in the area around the temple, in the courtyard and wouldn't make the move and the change to be in the temple. But during that entire time there's been a continual refining of what is *inside* the temple, and a strengthening.

And much of what we have been going through and seeing through sermons and changing in our life in the past several months has been what has brought us up to a much higher plane. We were at an incredible plane at that point in time, candidly, it's just that we had to be brought to see certain things that need to be refined a lot more.

Do you know that's an awesome thing? The more you grow there are things that God helps you to see in your being, in your mind that you can't see until you get to a certain place or have certain experiences in your life, and then you get to a deeper area of your mind. I hope you understand what I'm saying. It's not just dealing with some of the things that are out in the peripheral, but you get to a place where you're dealing more fully with where it all starts - in the spirit, in your mind, in your being, in the most deepest recesses, if you will, of your being and what makes you who you are. And the more you're able to really see some of those and address those in your life, because that you can see them, how incredible is that? So that you can make greater strides spiritually? That you become stronger in spirit, more deeply convicted? What is your level of conviction now compared to what it was at any point in the past? Several months ago? 2012? 2008? What is the level of your conviction now? Where are you spiritually? As a whole I know where the Church is and I am encouraged. I am *inspired*. I am *moved* by the power of God Almighty's spirit to accomplish it, to do it. Because it's about God! It is about God and how He works with us and what He's done in our lives. And that's why we should be encouraged. If we can see those things then we can be deeply encouraged and motivated to go forward in a way that boggles the mind!

We're ready. As a whole, we're ready. We've been made ready to go through what needs to be done to finish what needs to be accomplished. We really are. That is no small thing. It's powerful. It's mighty. It's exciting.

... If the Church was not at the necessary level of spiritual strength and development it needed to reach by mid-2008 then God would proceed with the **execution of His judgment** against the world that He had already established.

That's what the witness of Mr. Armstrong was all about. That was a witness. I hope we understand that. Mr. Armstrong understood his commission. It was very much about what the Philadelphian era was to do, and it happened, powerfully so. **Matthew 24:14**, read it like it is. **And this gospel of the Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, what the Kingdom of God is, shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.** *The Plain Truth?* The circulation? The broadcasts? But especially *The Plain Truth*. That was the primary tool that it went out to the world. It truly did. Mightily so! No one listened because no one could. Hope we understand that. But mankind is judged by his choices and he's left to himself because he thinks he's great. And when the truth comes along what does mankind do? When it's gone into so many languages, *The Plain Truth*, I don't remember the number of languages it went out into, but it was a lot! A lot into different parts of the world, throughout... Well, all over the world, incredibly so.

And then it went to leaders in different parts of the world to fulfill these verses. ...**preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.** That's what happened. And then the end would come, it said. And that's where we are. That's what was to follow, the end of an age.

So that was a witness. And that work that was done throughout that period, over fifty years, but primarily in the latter half of Mr. Armstrong's time and work that was being done in Philadelphia as it went out. But then what followed that - an Apostasy, Laodicea, lethargic spirit, declining of the Church, destruction of doctrines until finally they were attacked, powerfully so by Satan. It makes it very clear Satan is the one who did it. I hope you understand that, too. He was the power that did it, swayed human beings to do what he swayed human beings to do for so long, to rebel against God. So he was the primary power behind it all. Others yielded to that process, made choices themselves.

And then God raised up a *final* witness, 3½ years. Time, time, and a half a time of something that was to be accomplished. And that is what led us up to 2012. And yet there was more to be accomplished. But regardless of what would happen that witness was there and it's the same as it's always been, God just showing mankind it doesn't matter what happens on the earth. So, looking back, the things that could have happened but didn't happen then. That witness, very powerfully so would have been something that mankind would have to address. But they still have to address it because it's still there. Still reject it. Won't listen. Keep wanting to get into the Last Great Day's sermon.

So again, the world had already been judged through a witness that was established through Mr. Armstrong and a witness that was established through a remnant. Had already been judged as to what was deserved. And so had the Church that had been scattered. Not much was going to come through it - not in the scattered Church even.

.... Since the Apostasy, God's Church had gone through great upheaval and unrest. These were such turbulent times that unless one had experienced it, one cannot begin to fully appreciate it or understand the depth of what individuals in the Church had gone through and were continuing to go through.

That's why I can't give, and no one who went through it can give to individuals who have been called since, what that was like. We can talk about it. We can share stories about it. But you don't grasp it. You don't grasp what fully took place. You can't. There are experiences that unless you experience certain things you don't know it. You could have knowledge of it. You could believe it. You can know it by what you're told. But what it does, what the experience is like? You can't know it fully. Now, that's important and that'll be talked about later.

... one cannot begin to fully appreciate it or understand the depth of what individuals in the Church had gone through and were continuing to go through. That which the Church was experiencing was on a spiritual plane of **great spiritual tribulation**. It is something that can

only be grasped fully by actual experience. God has declared that no one in His Church has ever experienced anything of such magnitude before and that no one will ever experience anything like it again.

It's unique. Everyone through time has something unique. Those that are going to be a part of 144,000, they all have something very unique that they have experienced in their lives in time, a unique relationship with God. God worked with different ones in different ways. And that history and that life and whatever that is in the building that God has created and built that we don't fully grasp yet, all for a purpose, all by design, all made to fit in specific places that we will come to see through time more and more and more. God's going to show us those things in time, what He did, more and more. And a lot of that you're not going to know it during the Millennium. You're not going to know it through the Great White Throne. You're going to come to understand those things later on in time because they're not that easy to understand. They're not that easy to grasp and comprehend, what the Great God did over such a long period of time through so many people. There is much to learn and it's exciting. It'll be awesomely exciting the more you learn. Going on:

It is one thing to suffer on a physical plane, as so many in times past have done, but to suffer on a spiritual level such as this is altogether another matter.

Nothing has ever happened like this on a spiritual plane and God says nothing will ever happen like it again. Not even in the angelic realm. This is far greater than what happened in the angelic realm - far, far greater. *Far* more important. *Far* more meaningful! And you lived through it and you're here today. That is so incredible. That is so far beyond understanding that all we can do is cry out to God to help us to grasp it more, to see it more, to be thankful more, to embrace it more, to be excited by it more, to be encouraged that we are here today.

Look at all that's gone by the wayside and you're here today! How encouraged are you? How *thankful*? Because a lot of that has to do with how thankful are we for what we have, for where we are? That by the *grace of God* each one of us is here. Because He has a plan for *you*! Do we see that? Do we see that He has a plan for *you*? For me? For each and every one of us as we yield to Him in that process? That's what it's all about! So blessed! So blessed. It's hard for us to grasp how blessed we are. I'm just telling you, it's exceedingly difficult to grasp how blessed we are. Ask God. Ask God to help you to see that more, to really "see" it more. And the more you do that and the more you "see" it your life is going to be a lot stronger. It's going to become stronger and stronger and stronger. So again:

It is one thing to suffer on a physical plane, as so many in times past have [in God's Church], but to suffer on a spiritual level such as this is altogether another matter. All of God's people in times past have suffered on a spiritual plane in spiritual tribulation, but it has not been to the extent of this or of a magnitude such as the Apostasy produced.

Nothing like it.

The Church was nearly destroyed after December 1994 when the Apostasy occurred, but God was not going to let that happen. However, He was going to allow great devastation on a level that was unprecedented. Over a full 6,000 years, this event alone will serve into the future as one of the greatest examples and teaching tools *ever*. This will be used as an example throughout the Millennium as a sober reminder and warning to future generations, as it contains incredibly important spiritual lessons that all must come to see and understand before entering God's Family.

At that time in 1994, those who attended services in God's Church numbered about 150,000 people, of which 96,000 were baptized adults. By 2008, the Church was decimated, and very few remained. After that Apostasy in December of 1994, two-thirds of the Church went by the wayside, and the remaining one-third was scattered as a result. Of that one-third of the Church, most eventually settled into four larger groups (organizations), and the rest were dispersed into over 600 other groups. In the midst of all these groups was the one group that God used to raise up His remnant Church that had been prophesied long before by the prophet Ezekiel.

When the Church was scattered after the Apostasy, during the first prophetic period of 1260 days, it was protected from Satan just as God said it would be.

To me, that's profound. Something that God designed. He designed that for a purpose. Because the Apostasy, to allow human beings, human beings who are impregnated with God's holy spirit to fall into their own trap of what it is when you begin to be lifted up with pride on a spiritual plane as a human being before God. No longer humble before God, but lifted up with pride, rich and increased with goods, looking to self more than looking to God. And over time by becoming lethargic and letting down and coasting and becoming lukewarm to see what human beings impregnated with God's spirit are capable of doing. *Exactly...* Exactly... Well, it's incredible what's taken place through time, but I'll stop there. More sermons.

After this period ended and into the years that followed...

Because this primary, the primary purpose of this sermon right now is indeed preparing us for this Feast season and it's preparing us for sermons that are going to follow, and it's preparing us for a work that's to follow and it's about being encouraged! Not being down ever spiritually! Never moping! Never being discouraged by any battle you go through - I don't care what it is you go through! Who are we to mope around and say, "God, this isn't fair! This isn't fair! Look what I did because of 'this' or 'that' or 'whatever.'" Be careful. Be careful. We need to see the bigger scheme of things and what God is doing in our lives by giving us what He gives us and the opportunity we have and how what we have is more precious than anything else in life. *Awesome!* So incredible what God has placed before us and what we're able to be a part of because there aren't many

who get to experience what you do in 7,100 years of life. Not many. You're it. You're it! Everyone has different things, but this, this is in a high peak, in a high part of the mountain of Almighty God and what He's giving.

So again, this sermon series is very much about being encouraged, about being able to see where we... what we have come through, to understand this is not a small thing. And that what's still going on is still about the Church, and it's *always* been about the Church and it's about God's love because *He loves us*, each and every one of us. That's why we're here. That's why you're able to see the things you do. How great is that? How great is it that you can "see" what you see? Some of the most simple things out here? An Apostasy occurred! And even the Church that is scattered out there, they can't acknowledge that simple, basic thing! To think they're going to have to become bigger? They have to know that they're not going to be alive to see it because of the rate of growth that they have, or lack of it! Sad! Sad, on a spiritual plane.

What do *you* have? What have *you* been given? What do *you* see? How much do we cherish what we have? How stirred up are you by what you have? How much do you truly get down on your knees and say, "Father, *thank you!* *Thank you* for what I see! All these truths! And I see what's happened to others! And it's because of Your choice and because of Your love and I'm just thankful to be a part of it. You don't need me, but I'm thankful You've blessed me to be a part of this!" God could have used anyone, different ones out here, and molded and fashioned them to bring them where you are today. But He's blessed you and He wants to work with you. He's determined to do that. Do we grasp what we have? Do we grasp the relationship with the Great God of the universe? It's hard to grasp that kind of love, brethren, it really is. So few of us given so much... so much!

When the Church was scattered after the Apostasy, during the first prophetic period of 1260 days, it was protected from Satan just as God said it would be. After this period ended and into the years that followed many of the smaller scattered groups began to fall apart and go by the wayside. The larger groups had struggles and divisions, but became settled into their own routine of continuing a "work" that they believed was a continuation of what Herbert W. Armstrong had been doing through the Worldwide Church of God. These not only "settled in," but they drifted into a much deeper spiritual sleep, a kind of sleep from which only God can awaken them—in His time—at a time that is now fast approaching.

And so for all of you who lived through those things and were awakened out of a spiritual sleep... I think as a whole you understand how blessed you are. Why? Why me? That's something people ask sometimes when they're first called. Why me? Why not a brother, a sister, a friend, someone else that we know that live a whole lot better than what we do, or whatever it might be. Why me? And that's not the question. It's just a matter that it's a matter of God's purpose for whatever reason and to be thankful for it, to embrace it, to latch on to it and one day we'll be able to help those others, whoever they are, that we thought why not them. It's a matter of gratitude and

thankfulness, not knowing the reasons why but just thankful. Just be thankful and embrace it and thank God. Thank God that you're here. Going on:

However, for God's small remnant Church, the spiritual battles and attacks were growing more powerful. During most of the time that followed the start of the remnant Church on Pentecost of 1998 (exactly 1260 days after the Apostasy), the Church had been whittled down to less than 300 baptized adults who had experienced the Apostasy.

And that fluctuated up and down, up and down, but always kept in a certain area, as a whole.

Over the years, many more came along and entered into that fellowship, but many also left. The battles were far too much for most people. If all who had come along had stayed in the remnant fellowship, God's remnant Church would have been many times larger than what it was, but that was not to happen. It was just too much for too many.

And a lot of that's the way it's been for 2,000 years. Many have been called and very few, in essence, chosen, brethren.

Prophetically, God has revealed that He offered over 3,000 people the potential to become part of this remnant Church.

I didn't understand that for a long, long time. I believed it, but I didn't understand it. I believed what it said in Ezekiel but I didn't understand what was taking place. And then finally it's like, duh! Just because people are given an opportunity doesn't mean they embrace it. Just like the 63,000. That's why I know what I know. That's why you should know what you know. That just because God offers that doesn't mean they'll receive it. Just because nations and peoples in a magnified way are going to be offered an opportunity to be humbled, to see things, to "see" things - not through physical eyes but through something that God gives in the mind, to be able to "see." Not all the truth, but to "see" this is the end, this is the end of an age. To believe, to be able to "see" it's Jesus Christ that's returning. God is going to take control. To believe some of those basic things because of what they hear, to be able to come to that point and to repent? That wasn't so before 2012, or from that point of 2008, actually. That wasn't going to be offered. But to be offered now.

So we understand. It doesn't mean that nations - maybe no one will. And yet maybe God has a purpose in something He's working out to dumbfound people as He did with what happened in Nineveh. I don't know. Because God did that. It's written there for a purpose. And I've come to see in a short length of time here toward the end that there is just an awful lot back here of events that took place in the first 4,000 years that are for us at the end. To be all brought together. Because He's going to do things in such a massive way, such a powerful way on the earth, this is the period of time that's going to be spoken of more than any other. Do you "see" the time in which you live? This is the period of time the Church will talk about. What can a spiritual Church throughout the earth come to grasp and "see" more and have need of more than to understand

what happened during the Philadelphian and Laodicean and remnant period of the Church of God? Incredible. So again, would have been a lot more - God gave that - but they didn't choose it.

... This history has been needful in order to help a person come to understand why the spiritual state of the Church could not be fully known by mid-2008.

The battles. You see, after Pentecost of 1998 Satan wasn't held back any longer. He wasn't held back any longer and there were some incredible battles. And the primary place he was focused was right here with this body. Attack after attack after attack after attack. Going on:

This history has been needful in order to help a person come to understand why the spiritual state of the Church could not be fully known by mid-2008. The Church would have to be of a necessary spiritual **strength and faith** that God alone could "measure" by that time.

You know, just as God did with Abraham, "Now I know you." That's written for all people through time after that, to understand that there are things that people go through, that God brings individuals through, to where it comes to a point in time where that *must be said* on a spiritual plane, "Now I know you." You're there. You're there. With God's spirit, with God's help to grow to that point in time, to where it was already determined no matter what was to come afterward - his wife dying, marrying, having many more children. Awesome! That he would be a part of the 144,000, because that was what was basically said, spiritually. He was there.

The Church would have to be of a necessary spiritual **strength and faith** that God alone could "measure" by that time.

There is that which is in the mind. God knows where we are. He knows the level of transformation that has taken place and how much we're yielding, how much we've yielded and how much we need to continue on, where we are in the scheme of things and the growth on a spiritual plane. God knows where we are. But there are things where we are tested at moments in life that determine whether that continues on now or later. There are things we're brought to at moments in time, because testing is very much a part of our spiritual growth and development. And everyone who has ever gone by the wayside has been tried and tested in various forms of life - sometimes by their own doing, sometimes by things that have come upon them that God has allowed to happen within the Church or in their environment. And what is their choice then? Because it's only then that a choice has to be made: Where are you? What are you going to do? Is God first? Amazing! Truly amazing. God has shown us a lot about judgment and about some of those things in the last few years. And we're just scratching the surface. But it's exciting to me, it truly is.

...that God alone could "measure" by that time. That would determine whether the Church could be moved forward to the degree necessary in order to accomplish a far greater purpose in extending great mercy and life, both within the world and the Church that had been scattered.

I don't know if that's where I stopped. Anyway, that's where we're stopping now. Did I read that twice? I probably did. But anyway, if we did, I guess we just need to see it twice. I'm going to stop there and begin with the next part where it starts here that God knew the kind of devastation, that particular part. We'll leave that to sometime after the Feast.

So again, be encouraged, brethren. Really focus on that at this time, even before you go to the Feast and throughout the Feast, to really ask God for help to see where you are and where He has brought the Church to at this point in time and to ask for help to be strong spiritually in your mind, in your being, in faith, and to be encouraged. It all goes together. And *that* will bring about far greater rejoicing at the Feast, which God desires to see in all of us.