

This last series, *The Greatest of Civilization*, focused on how the greatest of mankind is so often reflected in what's been built that has lasted for hundreds and even thousands of years, but that it has all decayed and turned into ruins. In the latter part of that series a stark contrast was made between mankind's attempts to create something great and what God is creating.

Then it was stated toward the end of that series that it truly is an awesome thing to see, again, what God is building that pales into insignificance what mankind has built through the ages. That's why I love the last part of Revelation there where it goes through and talks about the temple, where it talks about the wall and it pales into insignificance, it just blows the mind of human beings to think about something that could be like that.

The point is, is the contrast, is that what God does, He puts it in physical terms, but it's something we can't comprehend. It's that which is physically impossible to be done. Mankind can't do it, but God can do it. That's the whole point of it all, showing the contrast between what man has done and God is creating something that will last forever. Awesome!

Anyway, today we are starting a new series that naturally flows with what we've covered in the last series and this series is entitled *To Build For God*.

We're going to go back again to what Solomon had to say during the dedication of the temple. We focused upon that several times in the past series, but we're going to read that again and then read the following verse that we didn't cover.

2 Chronicles 6:4—And he (Solomon) said, Blessed be the Eternal, the God of Israel, who by His hands has fulfilled what He promised by His mouth to my father David, saying, Since the day that I brought My people out of the land of Egypt, I had not chosen a city from any of the tribes of Israel in which to build house, so that My name might be there, and I chose no one as ruler over My people Israel. But I have chosen Jerusalem in order that My people may be there, and I have chosen David to be over My people.

So again here, this "I have chosen Jerusalem in order that My name might be there." It's amazing how we can read things so often, but within the Church God is bringing us more and more to grasp a spiritual creation, to understand that these things are all spiritual and what God is looking forward to. He's given physical examples of things so that we can begin to understand that which is spiritual, which is an awesome thing because it's hard for our minds to comprehend such things even with His spirit.

Now we're going to continue on in the next verse: **Verse 7—My father, David, had it in mind (in his heart) to build a house**, you know, a place of dwelling—in this case can be a temple, as well, obviously, because that's what it's referring to—for the name of the Eternal, the God of Israel.

But the Eternal said to my father, David, In that it was in your heart (your mind) to build a house unto My name, you did well that it was in your heart. Nevertheless, you shall not build the house; but the son who shall be born of you shall build the house unto My name.

So again, all this is fascinating, awesome to understand the spiritual focus that God gives to us within the Church. I want to add to this one other section that needs to be repeated as well, added to this at this time, and that's Zechariah 6. We've read this already as well, but again, it needs to be stated here in the flow of the beginning of this sermon series.

Zechariah 6:12—Speak unto him, saying, Thus says the Eternal of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH... You know, "to spring forth; to grow forth" is the definition of it, but again, the context reveals all that it's talking about here. **For he shall grow and he shall build the temple of the Eternal.** So again, this is something that began very early, as we talked about, in his life, in Christ's life, a process that began to grow in him. Then he began a ministry that lasted for 3½ years after he was baptized, and then through time, the past 2,000 years. You don't quit growing. You don't quit growing. You don't have everything all at once. That's a part of a process through time and it's going to be an exciting process as God reveals things to us.

He's not going to reveal everything to us, just as He hasn't now. As we continue forward more and more will be revealed. That makes it exciting as God teaches us and leads us along the way. It's a part of a process.

He shall build the temple of the Eternal. It makes it very clear here, The Branch, speaking of Joshua, **he is going to build the temple of the Eternal; and he shall bear the glory...** Awesome when you think of New Testament scriptures and what it says; he is going to bear the glory. **...and shall sit and rule upon His throne, on God Almighty's throne.** Again here, God has given everything, all power, to Christ to fulfill His plan until it's complete in the sense of the end of 7,100 years.

He shall be a priest upon His throne, the throne of God Almighty, and the counsel of peace, and it says here, **"shall be between them both,"** but it's **the counsel of peace,** basically, is of both, from both, if you will. It's talking about, basically here, they're one, in that respect. They're of the same mind, the mind of peace. The mind that God gave to His Son, they're the same, in agreement in unity and oneness. So, beautiful verses here.

It's just so frustrating sometimes that mankind so misconstrues them. But they can't help it because they don't know the truth, they don't know God's plan.

So let's turn over to Hebrews 9. So again, it's a bit of a review, in one respect, about some of the things we're already talked about in the previous series, but we're going to continue on there, from there, but with a specific focus as we continue on.

There is so much in Hebrews and different places, Colossians, Corinthians of where these things are magnified and what God talks about, what He gave, as basically even what we covered in the last couple of sermons.

Hebrews 9:1—Then verily the first covenant also had ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. You know, it's sad that people who read this in the world and traditional Christianity, they read certain things and they don't get the point of what's being said. They want to read something else into what God is saying, so much so that they twist and distort things mightily.

So it's just going on here and talking about the first covenant that had divine ordinances. If you go back to Leviticus, different places (it doesn't matter), but so many of these are in Leviticus, about the Levitical priesthood, it's about the work that they did around the temple, and so forth, and the meaning of some of those things or that they all had meaning.

This "worldly sanctuary," in other words, the temple that was built, a physical temple. So it began with a tent, as a whole, and eventually that which Solomon had built.

For there was a tabernacle made; in the first there was the candlestick, the table, and the showbread in what was called the sanctuary (the Holy Place), so that first two-thirds section.

So again, we know these things, but it's good to review them from time to time and think about what's being said. I think about this when I go through here and think about all the meaning of things in time that are going to be revealed to us that we don't know yet, all these things that are there, or were there. Just like one that finally hit me the other day. It was like, "Duh!" you know, but we don't know until God gives it to us, until we get to a certain point.

Verse 3—After the second veil was the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, the Holiest of Holies. So again, that partition that was there between the last third and then the Holiest of Holies, the place where the high priest went once a year. All the symbolism that's contained in there, that which separates us from God, the curtain that was rent in two when Christ was killed. Awesome, some of the things that God gives to us that has great meaning to it! What an incredible thing that took place, that God showed, He was revealing there is a way into the Holiest of Holies and he fulfilled it because that was the timing of what took place. All such meaning that God doesn't leave undone. He fulfills it; He accomplishes it so we can learn from it.

Verse 7—But into the second the high priest went alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people. The holy spirit signifying, the word meaning "making plain," by this that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was yet standing. So this is more than just physically standing. It has to do with its function, with what was being done, with its meaning and so forth and then what is revealed through Christ.

Again here, the high priest went in once a year, the veil is rent in half from top to bottom and God begins to reveal something new, a new temple, one that The Branch will build, one that starts with him. The way made possible to have access to the Holiest of Holies through him.

Verse 11—But Christ having become a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, talking about him. It's talking about what he builds and what God builds, but that's the beginning of it. ...**not made with hands.** Not physical. Not a physical creation, a spiritual one. ...**that is to say, not of this...** They translate the word "building." It's the word "creation." ...**not of this creation.**

So they're referring back to something that's physical that was built that God created in the first place, gave the creation of it all anyway so that man could even build it, but it's making a point here that there is that which has to do with the creation, that this is far greater. This is a creation that's not made with human hands, not done by mankind by any measure. It's done by God Almighty and His Son, and then 144,000, and on it goes.

Hebrews 3:1, it says, **Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling...** What an awesome thing. You know, these things ought to move us when we read them. "Holy brethren." Paul talking to the Hebrews, talking to anyone who's been drawn into the Church. Holy because God has set us apart for holy use and purpose, and we should strive to live our lives accordingly. What a beautiful picture. Hate sin, loathe sin, because that interferes with that.

...**partakers of the heavenly calling.** So few! So few! I just marvel as I write this book and think about those things and focus on those things even more so, where we are in time, what's going to happen over the next thousand years. We are so incredibly blessed. I mean, it's really hard to grasp it with the human mind that we have.

"Partakers of a heavenly calling." God looked down, for whatever reason called you, called me, drew us into His Church to mold and fashion us, giving us an opportunity above all other people in the earth. We are exceedingly blessed in that, not to take it to ourselves that we think we're something, that we're lifted up by that.

I was watching something here recently about there was this school, and it was a special school for young people, wearing certain uniforms. The point was being made in the show here that so often they carry an attitude compared to other schools around them. They're better. They're better. Parents had to pay a lot more money to get them in there, to get them this schooling. They're unique and they walk around with that attitude "I'm special."

I, candidly, think of Ambassador College in the Church - special. Special. Better. "You can't go out and date other people, you're special." You think, give me a stinking break! We're no different! We're no better. We had a great opportunity, anybody that had that opportunity. But they were taught by certain evangelists who betrayed Mr. Armstrong, betrayed God - they were taught by certain ones you're better than others. They didn't say it that way but that was basically it.

That's the exact attitude that led into Laodicea, rich and increased with goods. "I'm better." "Look at me." "Look at what we know." "Look at what we understand," and looked at the world that way. You think, that's just flat putrid. It makes you just want to barf.

Anyway, if we can see that spirit and realize we're not special. God looked down upon us. What are we? Who are we? Were we better than others? No. Corinthians makes it real clear it's because, as a whole, we weren't. We've got some rocks, sometimes a lot of rocks.

Now, a lot of people in the world have a lot of rocks and a lot of drama. But we have a lot of rocks and He called us to begin working on that, you know, to start learning how to get rid of the rocks. Focus on God. God will save us. God works with us. He's called us to succeed. He's called us to overcome. He's given us the ability. So we just, "I don't need that rock. That's just holding me back," keep focused on God. Pray to God. Share it with God.

There are things in this world that are greater than us and there are just some things you just can't carry in your life. You just have to say, "I can't carry that." "Oh, good, there's another rock. Ah, I feel lighter." It's a great feeling when we're able to do that.

Anyway, a heavenly calling. Beautiful.

...consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Joshua the Christ, who was faithful to Him, faithful to His Father, who appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses.

So back then, to place yourself in that environment of Judah, of what they had gone through, how they thought they were better and all the things that were there in their thinking. I think of what was told by Peter, that we went through a bit of in Acts, making it very clear things about David because they were hung up on physical things, the tribes, the lineage, the whatever it might be.

So it is here, "Here is a man that is counted worthy of more glory than Moses." So this was tough for some people. This oftentimes could distinguish between whether you're really responding to God and letting God lead you into greater truth, in greater growth, or you come to a point where you say, "You've gone too far!"

Because that's what happens. I've seen that over and over and over again in God's Church. My first experience, again, was when he wrote the book *The Incredible Human Potential* and they began, some began to say, "He's teaching that we have an immortal soul!" So some things become too great for people sometimes. I think of how ordaining women or things said about women that was too much for some people and they couldn't go any further.

So it has been through time, people have to make choices. So it is here, these had to make choices.

For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who has built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone; but He who builds all things is God. So, awesome story of what it's saying here.

It says, **He who builds all things is God.** So I made that comment a little while ago, that which He's given to Christ to continue then to do, to fulfill, he is giving all the glory and honor to Christ, given all power and authority to Christ, all— it's powerful—to fulfill His plan and purpose. This is part of the story.

He who builds all things is God. So it shows it starts with God. We know that. We understand that.

And Moses truly was faithful in all His house (God's house), in what he did, in his service to God, **as a servant—as a servant—for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over His,** it's not "own." That's not even in the scriptures. **...over His house,** over God Almighty's house. Christ is a Son over His house, **whose house we are.**

So it shows a house that's being built without hands that is being done by God and Christ, and that we are able to be a part of that house as well, "whose house we are." So again, what an incredible growth of things it's showing here, of a plan and purpose that God has.

...if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. There it is. I've known hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people, eaten with hundreds of people, literally, who are not with us anymore. Choices, choices, choices, choices.

"If we hold fast the confidence." What does that mean? Well, the confidence that comes with knowing that when you go before God and repent of your sins and are honest with God He forgives. Just be honest with God because God knows it all. He knows everything in your mind so why try to hold back or hide or deny or justify, like we do as human beings, things that we do? It's futile. Just be open and put it out before God. "This is what I am. This is how I think. I know You know it, but I know You want to hear it from me that I acknowledge it, that I see it and I repent of that." Then you can have great confidence because you know that as soon as you repent—you know what God says—it's gone! You don't have to carry it with you anymore.

Christ paid for that so that we could have that freedom, so we could have this kind of confidence. **...if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope,** the hope of these things that are yet to come to pass, the hope of these things of where it's going to lead us because of the truth that God has given us to see, if you hold on to that hope **firm unto the end.**

See, it just never stops. You just keep doing it. You just keep doing it. You keep fighting. You keep repenting. You keep in the battle, not to become weary of it. So many people just become weary and tired of fighting.

I think back in the seventies when I heard so many make those kinds of comments, “Well, I’m just tired of being told how bad I am. I’ll go someplace else where they don’t say that.” That’s not what is said, as a whole, but that’s what they do. They go on to something else that, “Tell me nice stories. Tell me about Jesus in a crib. Tell me about nice things that are nice little stories because I don’t want to hear how bad I am all the time.”

Man, I do. Am I excited about that when it happens? No, but I know I need it. I know I need to see what’s inside. I know I need to see what’s there so that I can know what to battle. I need to know what my 1, 2, 3... 4-5-6-7-8, some of those things, you know.

So these things are clearly showing that all the building, all the creating—because it’s about a creation—it’s about a spiritual creation. It’s not about a physical building. It’s about a spiritual one. It’s done by God, first and foremost. He set everything out. He planned it so very, very long ago, but that responsibility of building or working to create the house, the temple, if you will, of God, is given to God’s Son. All the glory and the honor and the responsibility is his. Everything has been given to him to accomplish this, to Joshua the Christ, and that we’re a part of that house, part of that building, of that creation. What an awesome thing to see, to know, to understand.

There is another area of scripture that shows the means by which God is building. Let’s turn over there. Love this one. Psalm 123:8. There is so much said about this in other places in scriptures and no one in the world has any idea what it’s about. I understand that. You have to be shown. Even within the Church there’s been, in times past, there hasn’t been the kind of understanding of some of these things because they weren’t there yet and because some were resisting anyway. Actually, many.

Psalm 132:8—Arise, O Eternal, into Your rest. That desire that is God Almighty’s and inspired this to be written. **Arise, O Eternal, into Your rest; You, and the ark of Your strength.** We’ve talked about this in times past, the ark, meaning “the gathering.”

What’s that about? Well, God is gathering it together. It started with His Son. Well, He was actually working with before that though, the 144,000, some who would be a part of that, but again, bringing it all together, but with His Son, the two wave loaves that have to do with those before the time of Christ and those afterward.

So again, this is a prophetic reference to God’s rest that is gathered together in His strength, in His power. And candidly, it’s a reference to His holy spirit and the power contained in it that is from Him; His power to produce what is being created by the holy spirit — His family.

It’s that power that God gives, that He shares, a power that’s of the mind. It’s of the thinking. It’s of the unity and oneness with God. It’s to become of that same mind, that same thinking. That’s where the power is, the might, that which comes in from His Son to us that we’re able to be a part of in a spiritual temple. That’s what God is creating. We have a process of being transformed and growing spiritually, ever to be growing spiritually.

Verse 13— For the Eternal has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation, His dwelling place. Beautiful! All over the Bible! It's incredible how much is here.

This—Zion—This is My rest (Beautiful!) forever: here will I dwell. It's not like we think inside of a building. It's a dwelling. It's a dwelling together, bringing it together. That's what the ark of the covenant is all about, the ability to bring us all together of the same mind and of the same being and to have a peace and a unity and oneness that's only possible in God and God in us. Awesome!

So we are able to partake of that rest, to be a part of that rest. This is God's rest - a rest from drama, a rest from all the evil that has been done in the spirit world, all the evil that's been done by mankind, finally, to have Jerusalem, spiritual Jerusalem. It's beautiful.

This is My rest forever: here will I dwell, with His people. We have a small dwelling when we're able to be together with each other in fellowship. This is a unique dwelling we have together. That's what it's talking about. You know, fellowship is such a unique thing to have in God's Church - the same mind, the same desires, the same purpose but with different thinking, different minds, different battles, obviously, while we're in this human life, but with a desire finally to what we're going to achieve one day where there is that absolute unity and a closeness. It's hard for us to grasp that.

This is My rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it. Incredible. So not a part of a creation that's just heard about His way of life that has been able to share in the creation itself, and other things, but now that which is a part of His own family, which is what He has desired, to have that kind of family, fellowship, oneness, etcetera.

Well, let's go back and read that one verse again that was spoken by Solomon at the dedication. I'll just read it to you. **2 Chronicles 6:7—My father, David, had it in mind, in his heart, to build a house, a place of dwelling, for the name of the Eternal, the God of Israel.** Now, we've gone through quite a bit of this. We know what this is about and what God was revealing at this time on a spiritual plane.

But the question that needs to be asked, what kind of house (temple) is in your heart, in your mind to build for God? Because, you see, we're a part of that. We've already read some of that, whose house we are. We are able to be a part of it. We're able to be a part of that creation now. Others have to wait a long time. But we're able to be a part of that process now in our lives. What an incredible opportunity, what an incredible blessing in life, something that's really almost impossible to grasp the fullness of what it's all about, the magnitude of it all.

So going through some of this I was really struck by this in a deeper way. It's something we need to ask ourselves because what are you building? Do you know that you're a part of the construction? It's not just that God's doing it to us, He's letting us share. We have to make choices and decisions along the way. That determines the construction of this, the creation of

this. The ability to be transformed has to do with choices we make all along the way, so we, each one of us, are a direct part of the building process.

So what's inside of our heart and our minds that we want to build to God? What an incredible thing to have such opportunity. David had it in his mind, in his heart to build something physical. Solomon built it. But that isn't what God was wanting. That isn't what God has desired through time. He's desired far, far more than that and it's about those whom He calls to be a part of His family.

So have you ever prayed about that? I hope everybody has. That you have the kind of heart that David had? A man after God's own heart, or a woman after God's own heart. To have that kind of heart, that kind of mind, that kind of desire that you're so thankful, because thankfulness has to be in there because you see and you know what God has been giving to you and that moves you and inspires you. You realize that you're so exceedingly blessed above all people on the earth that the Great God would reach down and draw you into His Church.

I love the beginning of that, how that's used in some verses because it's a word that means "to drag." You know, sometimes we don't come easily, but He still, He brings us on in when He calls us. If He has a purpose to call us He'll give us opportunity and give us opportunity to begin making choices. Sometimes we resist and He keeps drawing us.

Then it comes a time after baptism and so forth, or even before for some people, but primarily after that point in time we have to make choices from that point on. We've already been called. We've already had the opportunity to become a part of the Body. Now we have to work, we have to fight. It's our decision and our choice whether we keep doing that till the end of this process. Most everyone who has gone before you has quit that.

So how does all this begin? Let's go back to Colossians 2. This talks about this in a little bit different way and it's beautiful how it explains it. So many areas of scripture that talk about these things.

Colossians 2:1. Paul is telling the Colossians, **For I want you to know what great conflict (concern) I have for you and for those at Laodicea...** So he's written at different times to different areas for the purpose of striving to help them because it's not like our world today. We're so connected together by, well, even by what people are hearing each Sabbath because it's the same person, as a whole, and by the structure we have, and we're so small. Even though we're scattered all over the world, in that respect, we're very unique, but we have a technology that gives us an ability to accomplish something and do something that's unique to us.

But back then they just had their own areas that they lived in and they had different problems. They had their own unique things because of whether it be the Hebrews that Paul wrote to later, their own unique problems and things that Paul had to address, whether it be the Corinthians who came out of a very promiscuous, sexually perverted society, the things that were allowed, the

things that were believed at that time in the region where they lived, they had to come out of something very difficult. So you go from area to area and they are all a little bit different.

Just like the mail route of the seven eras of the Church that was a physical mail route, the examples of them. Each era has had something unique to them and primarily because of the age they were living in, sometimes having to do with the government around them, sometimes having to do with the kind of oppression around them. I think of Thyatira that had such a long, vast hundreds of years of existence and then Sardis that started but had the printing press and what began to happen then because of that and the popping up of Protestant churches in the world and the ability for people to have scripture for the first time, to read it on their own. If people had the ability to read and they could have a Bible or access to one different ideas that began to come out about what God was saying, different interpretations.

The more people you added to that mix you know what? The more interpretations you get. Unless they're called by God to bring them into oneness with Him, they don't have a chance. All they have is the ability to interpret by their own thinking, which is not good. That's why we have so many different kinds of churches today. That's what happened to us after the Apostasy. What happened? Without God's spirit you begin to interpret things by your own interpretation, what you think, how you think God is working with you.

I think of something I saw in a headline, which we still get in the mail from one group, and they're talking about having 25 years now and looking forward and planning for the next 25. Now, if we had that kind of time I'm not going to have that as a target in my life, I'm not going to have that as a goal in my life. "Oh, I can't wait until 25 years." I won't be around for 25. I feel very confident of that. I will not be here for 25 more years. I know that. These arteries clogged up fast. The last ones clogged up in 10 years. I'm not deceived in thinking they won't be clogged in another ten. They only have one area to get some arteries out of; out of my one arm, out of my legs, they're gone. So unless they come up with some new technology I'm toast, unless God has a purpose for keeping them open. God lets us experience and suffer through things in a physical life and learn from that process.

So what? I think of one of the groups that split off in the very beginning (not before me but later), and started their own group and they're talking about a hundred years! You think, well, I guess if you think you've got to get up to 144,000, I guess that's probably sound. But you won't be around and none of the group with you. But, you know, if you want to start planning for that.

What does that do to the mind? If you know that something is going to happen much, much later? Why do you think God didn't tell them all along the way when Christ was coming? If He told them, "Oh, it's not for another 2,000 years!" that would be devastating to a lot of people. It really would. Well, how do you plan for that one, you know? So the sense of urgency can be stirred up and magnified by the sense that you want to watch for his coming constantly.

So how long did that last? 1,900 years, and then God raised up a man to begin preparing for the end-time, began restoring truth to the Church and new truth to the Church, truth that hadn't been known and understood before as it was in his time. Because God just gave it to him, Mr. Armstrong. So, awesome, the things we've experienced and gone through.

So that's why, to me, I think of the time through Mr. Armstrong's period, that we basically looked ahead 10 years and we were admonished to do that, kind of plan ahead in your physical life 10 years but knowing that Christ could begin his return before that. That's a way of thinking. I feel that was a great asset to my life and to everyone else's life because you can deal with that a little bit.

That's why I made jokes, in some ways, about every car we've ever had, Laura and I have had, it's the last one. We truly felt like this is probably the last one, and it wasn't. We had quite a few. So it is. But I'm glad I had those goals, those markers.

Then we got down to a period of time where we realized, well, this could be much sooner. Now we're at a period of kind of bouncing around between 1 and 3½ years, and maybe even 7. But we don't know. But it's going to fall within a parameter, within a framework that fits perfectly into a specific timeline. So we have, God has given us, the ability to see some of those markers along the way. The closer ones? They're easier to run to.

It's easier when you're in a race, you don't want to think about, "I've got another 20 miles to go. Oh, brother, my body aches! Do I really want to finish this?" "I've got another 10 miles to go, 10 miles!" No, it's better if you just look at it and think, "I can make it to 'that.' That's my goal." And you do it, and you look up another one. You just keep going. That's the human mind, physical mind. Incredible.

So again here, Paul was talking to the Colossians because they had unique things that they were experiencing and dealing with and he says, "I have great concern for you" because he knew the problem and their battles. There are things that within the ministry when you have certain responsibilities and thinking about people, like Laura and me, we travel all over the best we can. Some places won't let us travel. But as a whole wherever we go, and we have reports of different things in different areas where we can't go and we hear how people are doing and the things that they're going through, and sometimes God reveals certain things and you have concerns of what choices are people going to make. Hopefully, different ones going through certain battles, they'll make it through it and they'll keep fighting. You have those kinds of things in your mind. Paul did for the Colossians.

It wasn't like what we have today where we're more knit together in the sense of technology. Back then it was from city or location, region to region, and this was in this particular region and he's speaking to them on terms of things that they're dealing with. Yet God gave that so that we could have all these things that were done in a physical plane, in part, for a spiritual purpose to teach us later on, things that were recorded for us and for them.

...and for those at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen me personally... So he knew of many who were being called in the Church who had not met him. I didn't look up the time period for this, but whether he was in prison in Rome or basically imprisoned in his house in Rome I don't know at this particular point in time, but he wrote many letters that way to different areas because he had different ones that were serving in those areas and would come back and basically let him know what's taking place. Then he would write letters to them concerning the things that he heard. This is a part of what he's talking about here.

...and those of you who haven't known me personally, so that their hearts might be encouraged. So he has this concern and he has this desire to give them those things that will work to encourage them. **...and joined together in agape,** God's love (ä-gə-pā, ever how you want to pronounce it. People get in arguments about which one to use. That's a great argument to have, isn't it?) **...and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding.**

"All the riches of the full assurance of understanding." We have more than any other. We have more than any other time, more than they had in the early Church. It's hard for us to grasp how blessed we are, how much God has given to us. And do we feel those riches? Are we encouraged by those riches, to grasp? Because we really can't be as thankful to God as we need to be unless we really grasp the riches of what He's given to us, of what He's offered to us. A spirit of gratitude and thankfulness has to be there or we don't have a right relationship with God. It has to be there to grow. It truly does. We have to have that kind of mind; a kind of mind that is thankful for what we have not just spiritually but physically, to acknowledge, "God, everything is Yours! Everything! Everything I see, everything I can experience You've made possible. Thank you for the richness of life that You've made possible. The only thing that can mess up that richness, screw it up, is me." Really! We're the only ones that can mess it up.

...so that their hearts might be encouraged, joined together in love, in God's love. What a beautiful thing, joined together in God's love. **...and unto all riches of full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God.** I love that expression, "the mystery of God," because it's a mystery to those who don't know it. But we know it, all understanding and knowledge. To everyone else God's way of life is a mystery. Even to those who think they know, the millions of traditional Christianity, millions upon millions upon millions upon millions, hundreds of millions of people who think that they understand, but it's a mystery because they haven't heard it, or if they have heard it they've rejected it because it doesn't fit into what they think.

...and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. It's in God. God has to give it. It's in God the Father and in Christ, all this hidden wisdom, all the hidden treasures, as it says "of wisdom and knowledge." They don't have it because God hasn't given it to them yet. So it's hidden in God until God opens their mind. Then they'll have the opportunity. It won't be hidden any longer.

I'm writing about that in one of these chapters here right now. I can't remember which one going back and forth so much. Anyway, talking about this mystery and also the different things that God is revealing. It's just so striking when you see the process of what God is doing and how He's doing it. You think of these things that God is going to reveal, and especially the mystery.

You know, as soon as Christ and 144,000 come back, that mystery, it's going to be the beginning of taking it away because for the first time in human history, except for a few who were called, like Abraham who was able to converse with God—he didn't know that fully, but in some instances here when he was speaking to what he believed to be the High Priest, Melchizedek— and some of these things that have taken place through time that God has done. But when God does this, the whole world is able to experience this. All of a sudden something that they have never known, never grasped begins to be revealed. That's an awesome time. That's an awesome transition in time, it really is, powerful.

...in whom is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All true wisdom, all true knowledge comes from God.

And this I say, lest anyone should beguile, in other words, “deceive; mislead; delude; attract; draw” **you**, because this word contains all those meanings, **should beguile you with persuasive words**. In other words, into something else, trying to turn you away from the Church, trying to share something with you that all of a sudden they see and are lifted up by and think this is great. Because within the Church it generally has to be something that starts within the Church or the environment of the Church. That's the way it's always been. We're unique today; thankfully, we don't have that kind of thing going on. But it has gone on in not too distant time. Going all the way back, it happened a whole lot more through Philadelphia and then in Laodicea, and these things that have taken place by ministers and people having different ideas, trying to persuade people.

So the warning is to God's Church and even within the Church then. It's not from the world because the world doesn't know the truth of God so they can't persuade people to do something different. As a whole that's just not going to happen unless they're just not with it, not with the program, not really baptized, not really receiving of the impregnation of God's spirit. But if you have God's spirit and you see the truth the only ones that are going to deceive you or lead you astray is going to be someone within the environment of the church. That's the way it's always been.

And this I say, lest anyone should beguile you (mislead you), **with persuasive words**. That's how people try to do it. They try to persuade. There's a type of persuasion that people use to try to draw someone. That's part of the meaning of the word, “to attract; to draw” someone into agreement with them. So those things have taken place massively through time, through the Church, through Philadelphia and Laodicea especially.

I think of some that early on when I thought they were on the same track. They weren't only not on the same track, they were going 100 mph the opposite direction. But anyway, I didn't know that. I think of one we invited one time to Toledo who was well known in the beginning of one, someone who stood up to headquarters, to certain individuals, and invited him to come up. He had a group up there that he was working with in Michigan so he was going to come up that way so we invited him to come to speak.

We invited him over, I know, to eat, I believe it was. But anyway, whatever took place that evening before, Friday night, and he started talking and I thought, "Uh-oh. This could be really disastrous." What came out of his mouth I couldn't believe! I realized we are not on the same track. We are not going the same direction. Where on earth did this stuff come from it was so far out? Sure enough when he got up to speak I had to battle with, "Do I stop this right now?" because a lot of the people that liked him, that looked up to him, were visiting there as well out of Michigan.

Anyway, I decided I'm going to sit through this, we're going to learn from this process, of what took place, and next Sabbath I gave a totally different sermon to correct everything he had to say because it was all off a wall. These things have happened in the environment of God's Church and they've happened so much it's just mind-boggling sometimes.

I could spend another three hours, four hours just telling you story after story after story of these things that have happened in God's Church over and over again that we've had to experience, this kind of garbage, of people that want to draw people after their way of thinking about God, of what they think how God is working. This is the way God is working.

For though I am personally absent... So he said, "I'm not able to be with you. There are those of you who have never met me, don't know me personally," **yet am I with you in the spirit.** What does that mean? We're of the same spirit! "I'm with you in spirit." There are those things that, basically, he could lead them in as far as God's spirit and knew that their desire was to follow God so there are things that could be judged, there are things that could be looked at and told to them that are of God's spirit. Those who are of God's spirit they're going to receive it. Those who aren't won't. That's just about as simple as it can get. That's always been a very simple way of knowing where someone is. Either you're of the same mind, and if something else comes out of your mouth that's foreign, well...?

For although I am personally absent, yet am I with you in spirit, rejoicing to see how orderly you are. You know, God's people, when we believe the same thing, things are done in an orderly way. It's amazing you can go from one area to another. I used to marvel at that in the Church, in Worldwide. You could go anywhere in the world, to any church as a whole—as a whole—and you're going to have the same things you're hearing. You're going to sing the same songs and you have the same belief. What an awesome thing!

...rejoicing to see how orderly you are... In unity with God. That's what it's about, orderly. That determines whether we're living in an orderly fashion in unity and oneness with God.

...and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. God has given us a belief and if we are steadfast we just keep doing the same thing, we don't fall by the wayside, we don't become weakened from it. It's a beautiful thing. That's what he's talking about here. He loved hearing about that "the steadfastness of your faith," of what you're living. You're living what you've been shown, what you've been given the ability to believe.

As you have, therefore, received Christ Joshua the Lord, so walk in him. That's what it's all about, isn't it? So if we receive that which is about Christ. It begins with Christ. He's our Passover. If we receive that into our life, the truth of those things and now walk in him, which means we walk in that same way of life that he taught in scripture over and over again, of how we should live our lives - so that's the way we should walk.

Rooted and built up... This is how we grow. It's a part of our response to God as to what we're building. "Built up in him," because there is no other way to be a part of this construction. There is no other way to be a part of this creation. So our desire is to do, to live by what he's shown us. We want to. We desire to be of the same mind, to think the same way.

I think of the sermon given not too long ago about judgment. How do we judge? This is one of the greatest things that God is teaching us within the Body. It's about how to judge. If we don't know how to judge things in life between right and wrong, between what is in unity with God and what isn't, and how to deal with people in judgment, be very careful in judgment, certain judgment. So again here, there is so much in that subject, but God is blessing us in learning how to do that. That's a beautiful thing. We should want our judgment to be God's, that we're in unity and oneness with God in how we think about anything and everything.

Rooted and built up in him. That's what this is about. That's why he talked about how he didn't judge, "I judge no one, yet if I judge I judge righteously." To some that's like a contradiction. No, it's not a contradiction! Because he showed that his judgment wasn't his but God's! What an incredible confidence to be able to say something like that, "I know this is of God. I know this is God's mind. I know it! That's my judgment because it's in unity and oneness with God." That's what we're to grow in. It's a beautiful thing.

I was thinking about that this morning, thinking, what if a lot of us are being called and molded and fashioned to learn how to do that, to be a part of that in God's government. Well, I don't know, but I could see how that could easily, easily happen, to have experience in that in a very profound way. Because that's how God works. He molds and fashions different things into different people at different time for different places within the Body, within the temple.

Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith—established in the faith—as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. This thing of thanksgiving, being thankful, being

thankful to God. It means so much. It truly does. Having a spirit and a mind of gratitude toward God, how can we have anything less?

So our prayers should constantly, consistently have things about gratitude and thankfulness to God in it. It really should. There should be something that we can think of that we're thinking of because we're thinking right, we're striving to learn how to think right. Sometimes, you know, when you start practicing doing something that you haven't been accustomed to doing, and you start practicing it, it may not feel that it's a part of you because it isn't yet. Sometimes there are different things we go through and the more you begin to do it then you begin to understand it.

Even physical things. We can be told about physical things to do that would be wise to do, and physical things that aren't wise to do, and sometimes we might make a change in that area of our life in certain things that we do, and until we start practicing it then we can begin to see it. Very simple thing sometimes in life.

"With thanksgiving." Beautiful!

Take heed so that no one rob you through "philosophy" it says here, but it's a word that means "worldly wisdom; intellect; human reasoning." Because all who have followed someone else away from the truth to something else that was purported to be truth has done this. They use intellect, their supposed great intellect because they see, they see something they want everyone else to see, as many as they can spread it to, to see the same thing. "Because if we can see the same thing we can be together in this and we need to be right with God."

So anyway, this is repetition over and over and over through time. Thank God we don't have that. The reality is it wouldn't last very long today we're so small. It would be like being in construction and hitting your thumb to where blood is spurting everywhere and your whole body just aches because you just smashed the tar out of your thumb, blood coming out from under the nail, just, "Uhhh! I think the nail is going to come off!" Your whole mind goes to that.

That's exactly what would happen if anything like that were to happen today. Anything that goes wrong, we're so small that it's known quickly. There are blessings in that, thank God.

Take heed that no one rob you through intellect. So that's what he's warning them about. I'm just repeating some of these things to show you some of the history of the Church. A lot of us don't know that history. A lot of us don't know the kinds of things that just constantly were going on in different places around the world and just got worse and worse. Through Laodicea, oh, some of the garbage that was going on a few years before the Apostasy, all the rumors that were going around.

What was amazing was at headquarters if you called out there, which probably everyone in the ministry did—I did more than once, several times sometimes—and asking about a certain thing they had heard rumor of. It's like immediately they know exactly where you're coming from by the kind of question you ask, because they know where you stand. So if they see you standing for

something that they don't like they try to appease you, "Oh, no, we're not changing that." And yet they were. Others who would call in that wondered about it and stated something that would indicate that they had wonders about it, they were wondering about it themselves, then all of a sudden, they would start getting filled with some of this garbage. Before long different ones well before the Apostasy were going haywire. That's how it works.

So Paul is warning about this, of these things that can happen. **...through worldly wisdom** (intellect), **and empty deceit.** It's a good expression, "empty deceit." Exceedingly deceitful, but they're empty when it comes right down to it. They don't have God's spirit, they're empty.

...according to the tradition of men, after the elementary ways, the basic ways, in other words, **of the world, and not after Christ.** So they're relying on something from themselves like the whole world does, but it doesn't come from Christ. It's not of God.

For in him (in Christ) **dwells all the fullness of the bodily Godhead.** The temple is being built by him and it's being built by us when we get called. But he's over it all and he's gone through every era of the Church building on the temple, building with the temple. Awesome!

Verse 10—And you are complete in him. We're incomplete out of him. That's why we talk about being out in the courtyard sometimes. If we're out in the courtyard and not inside the temple, we've got big problems. If we're not seeking to walk in Christ, we've got big problems.

We still have situations where people are sometimes walking around in the courtyard or kind of one foot in the door and, "Don't close the door. I think I've got one foot in there." No, your whole body better be in there, not just a foot, and if you're walking out in the courtyard and not living what you should be living you're not going to get by with it. It doesn't work that way. God makes it manifest. It's incredible how we are as human beings sometimes.

So you are complete in him, we have to be in the Body, in Christ, in the temple serving God, building on the temple. You can't build the temple out in the courtyard. You've got to be inside somewhere working on it.

And you are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power. He's the head. God's given it to him. **...in whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands.** It's not a physical thing that's been cut off. It's that which is spiritual in nature out of our lives that we seek to get rid of.

...in putting off the body the sins of the flesh. I love how this is stated here because thinking of mankind and how mankind thinks. Anyway. "In putting off the body the sins of the flesh." It's making it very clear here this is something else. It's not a physical thing at all. It speaks of it as it being **the circumcision of Christ,** something that is done through him. Not of the flesh, but of the heart, of the mind.

...buried with him in baptism. Again we're reminded of very basic things that we know, and it's good to review those things. He's telling them again. It's not the first time they heard this. They've heard it many times. "Buried with him," as it says here, "in baptism." So we know what that means. It means that that fool has gone under the water and he's come up not to be a fool anymore (or she), come up to walk in newness of life, not an idiot, you know, refusing and resisting God and walking around in the courtyard.

Why play games with God? It just blows my mind! We're either in this or not. What's in our heart to build to God? That's what it's all about. It boils down to what do we really have inside of us? That reveals your dedication, your determination, your conviction. It reveals everything about one. It truly does. If that is our heart and mind, to build unto God the best we can, to fight against this, wow. But if it's not in our heart and mind we're going to do other things that are displeasing to God, that hurt God because He wants us to succeed and it's hurtful.

I hate to see when I look out and see some that I know of in the Body of Christ who aren't doing what I know they should be doing, who aren't living some of the things that I know they should be living, that I know they're not fully living the truth; giving plenty of time until God makes it clear that either they have finally chosen one way or the other. That's in God's hands to reveal in His time. Those things hurt because you want to see everyone succeed.

That's what we should all desire for each other in the Body. We should want to see each other succeed. What a beautiful thing when people turn that corner. What a beautiful thing when people begin to in great earnest fight against this and make that change in their life. It's a beautiful thing. I've seen so much of that in the last year, last two years in God's Church. It's a beautiful, beautiful thing. Truly is. It's very pleasing to God.

...buried with him in baptism. So I love that expression because I see myself just putting my head back under the water, "You fool! You idiot! Drown!! Don't come back up! I'm sick of you!" I'm sick of this human nature. I hate human nature.

What's amazing about it, the more you grow, the more you see human nature, the easier it is to see it everywhere around you. It's like, "Oh, get me out of here!" But we can't. We have to stay here because there are things to be learned from that. Be careful of how we think about others. They can't help it. They don't know what they're doing.

But boy, it's everywhere and sometimes it's like such insanity in the world. Actually, that is growing more, real insanity. I mean, crazy things. Sometimes I marvel how it's so changed just in the last four or five years. It's hard for me to grasp how a human being can think that way on a physical plane. Stark raving mad! Such hatred. Such jealousies. It's just sick what's taking place in the world around us.

...buried with him in baptism, wherein you are also risen with him through the faith of the operation of God. I love how this is stated. It's like circumcision, an operation cutting off.

Basically, that's what the word is like, but it's a word that literally means "the operative power" because it's done by God, but it's the operative power. It's something that God performs. When you talk about that which is the circumcision of the heart and cutting off these other things, it's an operation of God, the circumcision of the spirit, if you will, in that respect. It's that which God has to do. So I love this.

So we are risen with him through faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead.

So again, I'm going to stop here today because there is more to cover in this that I want to tie together in what we're going to go through. So we'll stop there today and continue on with *Part 2* next Sabbath.