

The City of Truth, Pt. 2

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Today we're continuing in the new series entitled *The City of Truth* and this is *Part 2*.

We touched upon a scripture last Sabbath that had that particular phrase, if you will, in one of the verses there, and we'll come to that later on in the series. But we're continuing on and building upon the things where we are, and at this point this is now the third series, if you will, of sermons that's had a focus on truth. Again, awesome to see the things that God has given to His Church, but things that He desires us to see and to understand more deeply.

The first series was entitled *Healing, Believing, and True Faith* which got into matters of truth later on, and when you think of true faith the things that should come into our mind are that it's a matter, we have to have the truth first of all, the ability to believe it, but we also have to live it. That's a whole different matter. In this particular sermon today we'll get into some more of that kind of thing as well.

God has obviously called us to be healed – healed in our thinking – like that particular series that we went through *Healing, Believing, and True Faith*. It's a matter of our minds, our thinking, and that is accomplished as God begins to give us the ability to see, to believe His word, which is a matter of His truth.

God's desire is that we choose to live by His word. So, it's not just a matter of having the ability to believe, but it's the choices we make, and we have to make those choices on a continuing basis day after day, week after week as to what God has given us to see. That has to do, again, with this matter of true faith.

Then we completed the second series after that one about *Healing, Believing, and True Faith*, where we delved even more fully into the matter of truth, *Elijah, Elisha, and More*. There is actually more to build upon in some of that, but we're going through a different particular title now, *The City of Truth*.

So, let's turn over to John 1 because we need to go back and review some of that. Because, again, in *Elijah, Elisha, and More* we continued to build upon what God did on a physical plane working with Israel through two prophets, revealing, in essence, through whom it was He was working. All of that was done a long, long, long time ago in preparation for the end.

Just the name "Elijah" alone and what it means and what God was planning and preparing for to reveal in the end time, and we talked about "an Elijah to come" and so forth. Sometimes we can minimize the importance of certain things that are given, but God is helping us to understand more fully the importance of why He gave those particular names.

Those examples back there in the Old Testament are for the purpose of that which was physical that we can see what God was doing, but to learn spiritual lessons from it, which is what we've been focusing upon.

After that, I think about the "types" that were there, of God revealing truth to us, and that being to spiritual Israel, if you will, not to a physical nation.

We're going to go and build upon a few verses that were given clear back eight years ago in 2016, again, in the sermon *The Virtue of Truth*.

John 1. Again, we're doing this to build upon what was given clear back then with a stronger focus, in that regard, and if we learn from that we understand that God has a building process and not everything can be absorbed, received, understood in the mind when we first hear something. Until we have a time period to go through to choose to apply certain things concerning what was given at a particular time, whatever that might be, then later on God gives more. He builds upon that even more so, gives us more to understand. That's an awesome process.

What is difficult sometimes to grasp is sometimes it can be years later. If you look at a lot of things we've been given since the Apostasy, that's how it's worked. We've been given certain things and then they've built upon several years later where God gives more, several years later and God continues to give more because it's a process whereby we have to go through different experiences and seeing what we retain, seeing what we're growing in, blessing us, and helping us to grow, and then He can give us more. We can't receive it all at once, things that are on a spiritual plane.

John 1:5—The light shines in darkness, and the darkness doesn't comprehend it. Awesome, when you know that this is talking about God. It's talking about the things that God reveals. So, we have physical examples of things we can see in the world, but to understand it on a spiritual plane, well, that's what we're supposed to do. That's what God has given us the ability to do.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came to witness or for a witness to bear witness of the light. In essence, to tell about that Light that was coming, speaking of Christ, speaking of the things that were going to begin being given to mankind. Four thousand years have gone by and there are things they never comprehended, never understood, obviously, that God was going to begin revealing now at this moment in time.

That's an awesome thing to think about, four thousand years of history, of mankind upon the earth, and now God had waited until that point to begin revealing things on a much broader scale, more about the purpose of why we exist and what God is doing in our lives. Not just with individuals now but with the Church and what that means. It just goes on and on and the farther it goes the more exciting it becomes.

...to bear witness of the light, in other words, that which is of God, which is given to mankind or going to be given to mankind, **that all through it**, the light, or him—we understand it's about Christ but "it," there

is a duality here—**might believe. He was not that light but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light which lights every person who comes into the world.**

So, there are scriptures that talk about, and we'll read some of that today, that everything was built upon Christ. That everything that was determined in God's plan and purpose, for what He was going to do, how He was going to do it is built upon that chief cornerstone. So, that's why those different examples are given throughout scripture and different expressions to help us to get the point. They're expressed in many different ways as the word "light" and many other ways of communicating to us, to minds that are very limited.

And yet, God begins to give us His spirit to grasp and understand things on a spiritual plane. And in the beginning, He gives us knowledge, He gives us the ability to believe if you will, but we don't understand it yet. We don't grasp the things that God gives us as He begins to draw us. We don't really see it spiritually fully yet. We understand it, He gives us an ability to see it, to understand various aspects of it, but for it to be in the mind to where we have made a choice that this is what we want, it's not fully there yet. That comes with time, of something that grows within the mind.

So, it's an awesome process we go through from the moment we're drawn and called by God, and this process we grow in.

That was the true light, which lights every person who comes into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him. Well, we understand that isn't the word. It's the word for "through." "Through him." Just like what we talked about a moment ago, or I was talking about, in essence, the cornerstone, everything was established and built upon him, that Elohim couldn't be created, couldn't exist without Christ. That was the major part of all creation. He is the major part of all creation, of what God is doing and why God is doing it. That's what it's talking about here.

"And the world was made through him." So, it's not looking back at the creation itself and saying, well, he was there and some of the things that have come into our minds in times past because we're limited in our thinking and our ability to see and understand. God has given a long space of time to bring us to a point where we have been able to grasp more fully what this is all about and what is being said here because there was a time the Church would look at this and recognize that, oh yeah, the two in the godhead. No. But we had to go through time in order to learn some of those things, different experiences to learn those things. In time, God's time, He gave that to us.

...and the world did not know him. So again, speaking of Christ. He preached, did the things he did; they didn't know him. What an awesome thing to understand that you can't know him, you can't grasp who he is unless God reveals it to you.

That's why I love the two goats that are used on the Day of Atonement in Leviticus, Leviticus 16, and it goes and talks about two goats. The reality was that it had to be shown which is the azazel, which is the

one to be cast into the wilderness to be separated from mankind and which one was to be killed. And you think, God has to show that. God did back there.

The “type” that was given of something very physical that they did, and here it is when he came God has to reveal. No one can know who he is unless God reveals him. What an incredible thing! The only way you were able to know and understand was because God began to draw you, work with you, and reveal it to you as He did with the disciples. He began to draw them, work with them, and then became the apostles.

He came unto his own, and his own didn't receive him. So, all those who were supposedly religious at that time, those who were the Zealots, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, they didn't not only not know him, but they fought against him. They wanted to put him to death because he was a threat to them. They hated him!

What an incredible thing to think about the human mind and how it works. So, just because they were Judah, Jews, he was a Jew, they didn't know who he was. They couldn't.

But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God. Incredible! It has to come from God, that power, the ability to continue in a process once called, to be able to continue in a process that can work in our minds and our being to transform us, to change us to become the sons of God.

...to those who believe on his name. It starts right there, starts with him. It starts with the light; starts with Christ.

...which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Accomplished by God's will, by God's purpose, by God's plan. Mankind had no part in it. Mankind is offered the opportunity to become a part.

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father. Incredible. The only one born of a woman, begotten by God, the Son of God. Awesome!

...full of grace and truth. John bare witness of him and cried out, saying, This was he of whom I spoke, He who comes after me is preferred before me, for he was before me. So again, not in existence. It's not talking about that. Because these things have been misunderstood in times past, of what it was talking about. Again here, it's about a part of God's purpose, a part of God's plan. “For he was before me.” Obviously, when we understand that everything was built upon him, everything. Everything in God's purpose, everything in creation because everything had to exist exactly like it was to come to the point that this could be offered to mankind, and it had to happen to Christ as well.

Even of his fullness we have all received, and grace—not “for” really—it’s **because of grace**. So, it’s really saying a lot here. The more we come to grasp what grace is, the more we understand the process when it talks about “full of grace and truth,” it’s what comes from God. It’s what’s offered to mankind.

God begins to give truth, begins to give grace, begins to give favor, begins to give the blessing of the forgiveness of sin, begins to give His love which is something that mankind doesn’t grasp nor understand except that God’s spirit begins to work in them. Then they begin to see it for how great it really is. Then on and on it goes, all these things that God gives to us in the very beginning.

God is filled with grace and truth. That’s Him. That’s His way. He offers it to mankind. It’s through Christ that we’re able to receive it all. “He is full of grace and truth,” the Son of God.

John bore witness of him and cried saying, This is he of whom I spoke, He who comes after me is preferred before me for he was before me. So, if you look at God’s plan and God’s purpose there’s a place where people fit in the sense of those God was going to work with in the first six thousand years, different periods of time, doesn’t matter who it was. It was all planned out. Noah? It was all planned out. It wasn’t done something at the last minute, “What am I going to do?” God saying, “You have to know how to build this ark; I’m going to destroy everything.”

No, it was all planned. All planned before anything in the universe was created! Because why? These things are the most important of anything that exists! More than the universe because it has to happen in a certain way, it has to work in a certain way, and God has planned it out meticulously so in a fashion and in a way we cannot grasp.

Our minds can’t fully grasp how great God really is. That’s why sometimes then people don’t even begin to give the credit and the honor and the glory to God for the things He has purposed throughout time in order to bring about His Family. There is so much that has gone into this. That’s why even right now sometimes even we in God’s Church don’t grasp this is the most important thing to God right now! His Church! More than anything else in the world it’s about His Church, it’s about those with whom He’s working with now!

So, if you look at any point in time, that’s where God’s focus was, upon what He was working in. The world is just going on and sometimes He’s intervened and done various things and brought certain things about, but as a whole the primary focus has always been on those He’s working with. Primarily, those who are going to be a part of 144,000 and now plus that are going to continue on in a new age in the Church. If we grasp that importance it helps us to understand how important we are to God.

We’re not living just dull lives out here from day to day and just waiting on Christ’s return! We’re a part of something that’s far greater than what we can grasp! That’s what God wants us to see. He wants us to understand more of that. To do so in humility and meekness of spirit but to be fully aware of how important this is with God.

Verse 16—Even of his fullness we have all received, and grace because of grace. There is a lot said there that's not simple to understand. Basically, it's saying in a very condensed fashion here, "This is the way of God, to give grace." It is God. It is God's desire for mankind. It's who He is. It's how He functions.

When we understand that His love being given – that's from Him. That's His grace. His desire is to see us forgiven, to see us to be able to become more at one with Him. That's His will. That's His desire. That's Him. It's grace. He wants to give us mercy. He wants to give patience to us because He knows how we're created. He knows what we were made like. He knows the carnal human nature that we have from birth. It's the way we are!

Grace is a very powerful thing if we grasp and understand it. "And grace, because of grace," because it's grace, because it's God. It's how God functions. It's how God lives. It's His being. That's why truth reveals God. Everything that is true reveals God, the mind of God, the being of God. That's how we learn to love God more and more. The more we see, the more we understand, the more we embrace and hold on to, the more we're able to love God because it's God.

For the law was given by/through Moses. So, even after so long a time, finally a carnal physical people growing to a point where God began to work with them. He was going to start working with them now as a nation. His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob because of that plan and how God was going to bring it about, leading up to that which is spiritual when Christ comes and beyond.

But huge changes began to take place there, and so mankind, as a whole, when they look at things like the law and Judah, and looked to Moses in the fashion that they do (because that's where it basically stops for them), it's about the law. Then they write more about the law. They write books and books and books. The Torah and all the things they have, you know, in dissecting the law and putting it in a framework that they feel better about, not what God gave. Anyway, another matter.

"The law came through Moses." Just a beginning of a revelation about God, a beginning of a revelation in a more powerful way how mankind is to live. And how did Israel fare in that? I mean, you look at those forty years. That's Israel. That's mankind. Forty years being separated and worked with by God, being provided manna, being provided sustenance. Forty years of seeing things that they were able to witness. Never getting it because it's a matter of God's spirit. Only a few saw things in a greater way that God worked with and molded and fashioned who are going to be in that first resurrection.

"The law was given through Moses." In other words, we look at that and we realize it was only able to be received in a physical manner. They couldn't understand it spiritually. You know, Christ finally came along after four thousand years of mankind and showed what some of those things meant. They're spiritual! But they were taken physical because that's as far as the mind of human beings can go if they receive that, to the degree they will receive it, the law. Not even beginning to understand the first four.

But they didn't do that very well, did they? Not even in the wilderness. God is to be first, no other Gods, on and on it goes. Don't commit adultery. They didn't understand. They didn't care in one respect. Then Christ came along and showed what that meant spiritually. Don't steal. Everything that God gave. Don't kill (murder).

So, "The law was given through Moses," just received on a physical plane. It couldn't be received spiritually at all.

...and grace and truth. Grace and truth—God. It's about God Almighty. It's about the way God is. It's about the mind of God. It's about the desire and purpose and plan of God. It's about the will of God. So, grace and truth, how God functions, how God works with mankind, desires to work with mankind, wants mankind to understand how He works with us, what He offers us, and how we can attain to be in His Family.

But grace and truth came through Joshua the Christ. Because it was in him because of what he taught, what was revealed through him, what was given through him in a very powerful way. Incredible! It's only able to be received in a spiritual manner, in a spiritual way because it's of God's spirit communicated to the mind. Not on a physical plane where human reasoning gets involved, it's just a matter that it's given to us and it's opened up to where we can see it and say, "Oh yeah," and then choose whether we want that, whether we agree with God.

Because many have disagreed with God. Many who have been called to this way of life have disagreed with God eventually. Maybe not right away even, but at some point along the way they came to a point in time where something happened in their life, where things began happening in their life where didn't agree.

So, John the Baptist, who fulfilled the first "type" of the very meaning of Elijah, "the Elijah to come," he did bare witness of Christ's first coming. Christ drove that point home. We're going to spend a little time looking at that.

Matthew 11:1—Then it came to pass when Joshua had made an end of giving instruction to his twelve disciples, he departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. Now, when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ... So, here John the Baptist had already been put in prison. He's about to lose his head. Incredible! He's about to be killed for what he did. They hated him. **Now, John, who had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples to ask of him, Are you he who should come, or do we look for another?** Now, he did this in large part out of duress and stress. But he did it because he knew his situation. He knew what was taking place.

Joshua answered and said to them, Go and report to John those things which you have heard and seen: That the blind receive their sight, that the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the

dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. Beautiful! That's all he had to go back and tell him...or the two had to go back. That's what he gave them to go back and tell him.

And they are blessed, whoever they are who will not be offended in me. Again, I'm sure that probably struck him in one respect, but gave him a peace of mind to go through what he had to go through as well.

Then as they departed, Joshua began to say unto the multitudes concerning John. Christ knew what was going to happen to him. Christ. Knew. Full. Well. What was getting ready to take place in John's life. He was the Word of God. He had so much of what God had given to him of the mind, His mind, from the Father. Things we can't really fully comprehend. But he knew.

He asks them concerning John, **What did you go into the wilderness to see?** Now, he's doing this because there were a lot of people – a lot of people – who went into the wilderness and were baptized by John. It was a baptism of repentance, not going any farther than what we do. It wasn't into God's spirit, but it was of water, and it was beginning process here of revelation.

What did you go into the wilderness to see? In other words, "What were you expecting to see?" That's what's being asked. "What were you expecting to see when you went out there to see John?" **A reed shaken in the wind?** And so, it starts out here basically asking. You know, there are people who are just negative, and so some, especially religious leaders – you can understand the motives and reasons why they might have gone out there – it's to find fault.

If thousands are going out there to be baptized, large groups of people going out and this is being spread around, this wasn't a quiet thing. They knew about John. He could talk to the multitudes about John, and they'd heard of John. They knew what was going on. Well, the religious leaders all that much more so. That's why they hated Christ so much because it continued on, that message continued on, "He's the Messiah." Because that's what John was talking about, the Messiah. "Better repent! He's coming! He's here!"

A reed shaken in the wind? In other words, "Going out and looking for fault, that maybe someone who could be easily shaken, someone who's weak? Is that what you went out to see?" **So, what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft robes?** Is that what your expectation was? In other words, someone who's wearing exceptionally fine clothing, expensive clothing, is that what you went out to see?

Look, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. So, what did you go out to see? And then he gets down to it. **A prophet?** Is that what you really went out to see? **Yes, and I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before your face,** speaking of Christ, **who will prepare your way before you.** This is written to and about Christ and John who was going to be this messenger – at least the first to fulfill the role of Elijah. Awesome!

It shows how important Christ's coming was. It's about Christ. It's about what God is doing and the revelation that God is giving at this particular time through Christ as he was preaching these things. Awesome! Because it magnifies, it helps us to see how important this message is, how important John was. John is about to lose his life. But they had no idea of the importance of John, and they certainly didn't have any idea of the importance of the one he was proclaiming was the Messiah.

So, he quotes the prophecy, "Yeah, more than a prophet." **Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist**, in human life, not referring to himself born of God and a woman. "There has not been one," in essence, "greater than John the Baptist." So, to that point in time. Awesome!

Notwithstanding, he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he. So, do we understand what it's saying? Once you're in Elohim that is so much greater. What we're to become is so much greater than anything in human life. Yes, he was great, greater than anyone born to this point in time of women, but ever who is in the Kingdom of God, ever who is born into Elohim, is much greater. That should be easy to understand.

Yet, from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence. Now, this in time, through time has caused people a lot of difficulty because of the Greek words that are used and how they're translated and so forth. It says, **and the violent take it by force.** So, in some respects, rather poorly translated.

But you know, after going through this and knowing what it's talking about it's hard to find other words to express certain things here. It's more of a matter of understanding what is being said here and the potential, the type of it because there appears to be a definite duality here in what it's discussing.

How? Because we understand what's taken place through time, especially in those things in the last two thousand years and the battles that have taken place, and on and on it goes, and the things that have happened by a false christianity that has arisen.

I'll just go into some of this in **verse 12—From the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent taken by force.** Now, in the Greek language the word translated as "suffers violence" literally means "to use power in the sense or strength to forcibly or aggressively lay hold of something." So, in respect, we understand that there are two aspects of this, truly, as far as what can be fulfilled in this matter.

So, in most cases here this has caused more confusion because translators have erred in the context and have focused more upon the word for "violence," and "violent" because it carries a certain connotation with it. When you understand that really isn't a good word to use in this case, it's a matter of seizing something, using strength and force, the reality is it's a two-way street.

For those whom God draws and calls they have to use strength and power, and in a type of an aggressiveness if you will, in a battle and fight that they have, but understanding that that help and that strength and that power has to come from God in order to do it, in order to become part of the Kingdom of God.

The other aspect is what man has done. Those who give the appearance of, presume, give the appearance of grabbing hold and grasping hold of things that Christ had to say, look what they did with it. When you look at the world and what they did, there is some violence because they killed a lot of people.

When you look at what they did with a message that was there and the truth that was there that God had given and you look at what happened in 325 A.D. that became so bad in that respect, they seized upon certain things, but they did it their way by their own thinking and their own understanding of what they wanted the message of the Kingdom of God to be. They rejected things that were given to them or that were said, but they made it into something that is hideous.

And so, the truth of God's Kingdom in a respect has suffered a lot. The word "suffer" does come up in a moment, but right here it has to be understood by context. So, we understand some of those things.

To grasp, to comprehend that people who kept Passover they were to be put to death. That's what the Roman Empire began to do. If they wouldn't keep Sunday and they kept the Sabbath, they began to be put to death; they began to be hunted down and put to death.

So, a true message that was out there wasn't able to be received. Incredible. So, it has a duality to it, and we are able to understand that because of experiences that have taken place in the environment of God's Church through time over the past two thousand years.

Yet, from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven has been aggressively laid hold upon, even by the forceful. So again, you have to see it in two different ways here in the context of what's being talked about because it applies to both. For the world, we can grasp what they have done. For the Church, we can grasp what we have to do and how we're to lay hold of it, seize it with all of our being.

I think, what a sick thing that so many, so many have not seized hold of what God has offered them and given to them. The Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of Heaven. Elohim! To be in God's Family! To not treasure that and to recognize what that really means. Instead, they get pulled by something physical in the world, to go back into something physical on a physical plane and no longer a spiritual relationship with God. It's mind-boggling how that can happen.

So, more of a correct translation if you will, again here: "Has been aggressively laid hold upon," some doing it in the wrong way, in an aggressive manner, because if you don't live by that, that's pretty aggressive to start killing others to live your way.

But for people who are called, who choose God's way of life, who want this, you can't do it with Laodicean spirit. You can't do it with a lukewarm spirit. That's why God made it clear; that's why the lesson is there in history, in time. That's why God gave it. So that those in the Millennium and those in the Great White Throne understand you can't do this half-heartedly. You can't do it in a lukewarm spirit not knowing whether you're hot or cold! We're either hot and desire God's way with all of our being and are willing to fight for it because we grasp what He's giving, or we're not. It's as simple as that. Awesome!

So, both aspects fit into here. "They lay hold upon it even," as it says here, in essence, "by the strong or the forceful." Not to the weak. Not to those who aren't convicted. And when it's talking about us, when we apply that part of it to ourselves, to our own lives, we can't do it half-heartedly. You can't do it in a lukewarm spirit. You have to fight for it. You have to be on fire for it. The only way to do that is to be close to God, to recognize what you have been offered and to fight, to fight against this world, to fight against the things that pull against you, that pull at you, or whatever.

"Even by the forceful," which is what this word means here in the beginning of this, "the strong, the assertive, the determined." I love that, expressions that could be used here in that Greek word, "the strong," "the assertive." That's not standing back. That's not being lukewarm. That's pushing. That's working, willing to take a stand, willing to stand up when no one else will, if that's the case. "Assertive," "determined" and so forth.

"The forceful who have seized it or upon it by force." By strength if you will. So, literally, that's how that is translated. They have to seize it, to seize hold of it.

And yet the world seized a hold in the wrong way and are very aggressive in how they do it, and they make it very hard for others.

I think of when *the Plain Truth* used to be put out on newsstands in stores and different places and some of these people out there were pretty aggressive and fighting against it. They didn't want others to hear about this. They didn't want that "Armstrongism," or whatever it might be. Sometimes they'd just pull the magazines out and go throw them out. Other times, they'd take the rack as well, bend it up so you couldn't use it again, and go out and throw it away in the trash. So, a lot of them had to be replaced.

It shows you the mind of people. Those being called by God. Those who aren't. Those who have an air about them of being religious, who give the air or the representation that they have received what God gave, not true. So, we have these two things fighting through time.

Verse 13—For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. Until he came. **Indeed, if you will receive it...** "If you will receive it." Because it's a choice when God gives us that. Here it was being offered by what was being said, stated here, **And if you will receive it, he is Elijah who was to come**, speaking of John.

He's using all this to go through and explain about John, how important John was in God's purpose, in God's plan, and the fact of what he was fulfilling, the first portion of Christ's coming to be Passover, if you will, and later again more to be fulfilled about Elijah.

Then it says, **Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear!** Because the reality is when it's all said and done the only ones who can are those who have God's spirit in them. They're the only ones that can grasp what Christ is saying even about John. You're the only ones that can grasp what we're talking about here today in that respect on a spiritual plane. Awesome! And there's more to it.

So, he went on to say, **But unto what shall I liken this generation?** So, this is a part of the story. It isn't a new subject; it isn't a new part of the story. It goes along with what he's already talked about.

But what shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another saying, We have played the flute for you, and you didn't dance; we have mourned or lamented to you, and you didn't mourn. In other words, it's using some expressions here to say, in essence, the way it so typically is in the world, "You're not acting like us. You're not doing the same things we are. Why are you different? What's wrong with you?" How people judge and so forth.

"Have you been acting like children," in essence. What he's saying here is, "Have you been acting like children who expect others to do as you say, as you do?" Because that's what peer pressure is like. I think of so much today that's on social media and people feel that they have to be like that. They have to do that. They have this pressure in this thinking. And so, if you don't do that what's wrong with you?

For John came neither eating nor drinking. When it comes to God and what God reveals, here John came along and so you see in what is written about John, not flamboyant in any way whatsoever, living very meagrely in what he did. For a purpose, by design of what God had him do.

...and they say, He has a demon. See, in their minds, "If you're a prophet, if you truly are the one talking about a Messiah, if you truly are giving a message here and people are to repent, then you ought to look like it." Isn't that funny how people can conjure up in their mind of what somebody should be like, what their appearance should be like?

It's like, "What did you expect to see? How are you judging this before you ever went out? Really to see a prophet and to hear a prophet? Because if you did, you're going to have a different attitude, see."

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say... So, here is one who came along, and it's showing a different lifestyle, if we know how John lived, and now Christ coming along and how he lived and it's saying, **The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a man who is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors.** I mean, you can't get any worse in what you're saying here and what they're saying and what they're expressing, and so this is how they reacted. So, it's like, if he's doing those things they're justified in what they say then.

That's why it goes on to talk here, **And wisdom is justified by what's brought forth.** In other words, they make their judgments and what they see, they are clear in their mind, "Something is wrong with you; you're a glutton and a drunkard, you know. You can't be like that. If you're the Messiah, you're not going to live like that. You're going to come to us. You're going to be like we are except even that much better." Amazing how people think.

And John? "He would have been a lot different in the way he talked to us, in the way he treated us, and the way he would welcome us."

Then he began to rebuke the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done because they did not repent. So, went throughout the region there to different cities. There were those who were being worked with. There were those who were being given an opportunity to be drawn in part, but most weren't, when you look at the places he went and some of the things he said in various cities. He said, "Because they didn't repent." They would hear certain things but didn't really receive the message and didn't repent, didn't accept who he really was.

And the miracles? Rejected them fully. How could anyone? If you see something done on a physical, in a physical plane, people healed, lepers no longer lepers. I mean, what's going on up here in the human mind? That's what he's basically saying here, "What is wrong with you?" "Look at the people, what they're like. Look at what they did when they had these things preached to them and done in their cities."

The reality is, just like we talked about at the Feast, this matter of judgment is a lot stronger than we've ever grasped. Truly is. Truly is. That's why you have to fight for this way of life. You have to embrace it with all of your being. You have to agree with all of your being. Because where we don't, we're in big, big, big trouble. We really are. The vast majority have gone that way through time even in the end-time.

Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon... Because the reality is the only way those things could have happened is that God did it through him. They should have been able to see that on a physical plane, but they wouldn't even accept it on a physical plane because of their prejudices, because of the way of their thinking, because of their haughtiness in large part.

For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. That's saying a lot, and it's the truth. If in certain places these things had been done, in areas of what we could call gentile regions and areas, not of Judah, not of Jews and so forth, but of others, they would have repented. They would have been sobered by what they saw, by what they witnessed. They would have realized there is power here that we don't grasp and comprehend, and indeed, would have repented in sackcloth and ashes for their behavior.

That's why it's a marvel what happened with Jonah. Awesome, what took place at that time, being spit out by a fish, huge, enough to hold somebody in there for three days and have gastric juices working on their body. You know, it doesn't take long to be in an acidic base and things change, skin changes, it begins to change things. He was spewed out and the last thing he wanted was to have any sunlight on him, on his body. That's why one of the situations later on, he had the shade and God took it away and he was not a happy camper, if you remember the story of Jonah.

And yet when people saw him, they saw this bleached-out skin, which I don't want to do a test on that to see what it was like. But by his very appearance. There must have been as well some who witnessed some of these things that took place because this message was spreading throughout a city. As he would go along, and people would see him, changes took place – just on a physical plane.

Would the Jews have done that? Nope. That's what is being said here. Those who are supposed to know of God, those who are supposed to know the scriptures and they won't even begin to honor it because they have their own preconceived worked-up ideas about what God is like, the Torah, or whatever it might be, and all that's required of mankind to live supposedly a certain way.

But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. That's an astounding statement really because they're going to respond more quickly when they're resurrected than the Jews of that period of time. I don't know if we grasp that or not.

It's like some of the things that God has been showing us. Sometimes people who are so zealous for a certain way, the more zealous they are, the harder it is to receive even the truth from God because they really don't like it. It doesn't fit into what they think it should have been like, and so much so that they're willing to reject it. There are going to be vast numbers. It's going to be shocking, it really is. Because sometimes we don't grasp how deep haughtiness like that can go, that kind of pride, how deep it is.

That's why I think of the scattered Body, and there is so much out there it's going to be very, very difficult, very difficult to repent and accept what God has done and what God is doing. It really is because they expect something different in a different way. It should be in their organization. And if it's not, it's rejected because "We're the ones who are right. We're the ones that have been doing 'this' and 'this' and 'this' and 'this.'" That's not what it's about.

Even you, Capernaum, which are exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell, burial, in the ground, death. That's what it's about. For if the mighty works which have been done in you had been done in Sidon, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.

It's because of the mind, and that mind is already known. He knew their mind. God knew their mind, what their mind was like. You can go so far with your mind in that kind of thinking, in that kind of wrong thinking in life that God already knows what people will do. You can go too far. Sometimes you can go so

far to the edge that to be able to come back, it's not a small thing. It's closer to the area of impossibility, even when you're given the opportunity. What a horrible thing.

Verse 25—At that time Joshua answered and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes.

So, just driving the point home that that's God's purpose, that's God's plan, and it's the only way that it works. The truth cannot be received, grace cannot be received by a mind that is so filled with pride it will not change, it will not repent. That's the problem because that's required.

And so, it's revealed to babes, to those who are willing to be of a poor in spirit, of willingness to look at themselves and see what we really are and acknowledge it and admit it before God and be thankful that God is offering us something so great. We have to be of a humble spirit. That's why pride is such a vile, evil thing. Yet the majority of my time in God's Church and the things I've seen have been about pride and haughtiness.

Even so, Father, for so it was well pleasing in Your sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no one knows the Son but the Father. Neither does anyone know the Father except the Son, and to whomever the Son will reveal. So, there are those things then given to Christ to finish, to do a work that is awesome, and it's about the Church. But all things have been handed over to him, but he has and knows the will, the mind of God. He's going to accomplish and fulfill those things.

It would be good to follow up some of these things said here. Again, just driving home the point here of how important these things have been in time, in their period of time, and he was talking about John and he was talking about what was given to him to accomplish and to fulfill and to understand the importance of it in a physical carnal world that couldn't receive it, in essence, as a whole, except for a few who are being drawn and called to begin a process of being prepared for Christ, the message that he would bring, the Messiah.

Those who could come into Jerusalem, as it were, toward the end and crying, "Hallelujah!" Crying, talking about David. "He's the Messiah! He's come!" Incredible, what took place, how people were moved. And some of those, when they were around on Pentecost, became part of the Church. Awesome!

Those are the most important things to God at this time. The rest of the world, that importance comes when they're resurrected. Then they're going to be given opportunity, for those who are given that opportunity.

So again here, going back to this matter of grace and truth because that's where we began with some of this that through Moses the law came, but grace and truth came through Christ. God is revealing Himself. It's through Christ. He's the chief cornerstone. Everything.

Let's turn over to Acts 4. So, grace and truth must have God in them to indeed be true. Everything in our lives must have that in it to be true, which goes back to that one series about true faith. Because these things go together, truth and grace. You can't separate them. They are God. They are about the mind of God, the being of God, how God functions, how God works with us.

So again, truth being very much about the mind of God, His ways, and grace is about how truth is to work or can work in our lives. There's a lot said there.

Acts 4:32—Then the multitude, so this is at the very beginning after Pentecost. **Then the multitude of those who believed were of one heart.** God was working in a massive way, Christ was working in a massive way, to draw people into the Church, and this was a beginning for them. It was a unique beginning, never to be repeated again.

Then the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one life. So, a very moving thing is taking place from the time of Pentecost on because nothing like this had ever happened. God was pouring out His spirit in a very powerful way on those who were teaching and upon those being drawn at that time in things that they were understanding and seeing that were incredible to them. They were deeply moved by what was taking place.

Neither did anyone say that any of the things they possessed were their own, but they had all things in common. So, very unique here in what they were experiencing.

It goes on to say, **Even with great power the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Joshua. And great grace was upon them all.** It's going through a story here talking about how things were beginning, how the Church was coming together at the very beginning, and basically, they were pooling everything they had. It'll go on into it in a moment here, more of it, "and had everything in common." It was not just a matter of ownership, in other words, "what I have," we're going to use this and we're going to start doing what Christ has given us to do. There is a work to be done, in essence, is one way of saying it.

It shows here as well that, as it says, "The apostles gave witness of the resurrection of Joshua." So, there was tremendous power that was working through them to help them to understand what had just taken place. I mean, what a marvel after all this time only seeing things on a physical plane as far as Judah was concerned, having Passover as they used to observe it, and now being shown something different. When it finally clicked, "He was our Passover!" Now, they lived that. We learn of it, and it happened in the past, but they were living it real time and it was very moving to them. God gave them that to see, to feel, to experience.

That's an awesome thing about God. When you're in various time periods and so forth and God pours out His spirit, the things that God is going through He shares where He is and where His focus is and

what's important at a particular moment in time, whatever that might be, and this was very moving to God.

After all that time, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We hear those words, but we don't grasp them to the depth and the power of God, God Almighty, who felt these things in a way that we can't even begin to grasp but can only try to appreciate, of how that was moving to Him in such a way.

Because look how much time had elapsed. Billions? We don't know when He started planning all this, of how His Kingdom was going to come about and that He was going to have a Son and that His Son would have to give his life. His only begotten Son. Awesome!

These were continuing because now the Church was beginning, something else that God had looked for so long to take place. He had been working with individuals for four thousand years, but now a body of people are going to be worked with in a new and an expanded manner. Very moving to God, and so it was to the people because this was given to them to experience and to feel.

Even with great power the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Joshua. And great grace was upon them all. What they lived, what they did, reflects that. It reflects a uniqueness of mind experienced in a certain way that is magnified many times over what human beings would normally do. Because God was there; God was working in them to bring this about. They were so deeply moved; this is what they did. They began to live grace toward one another on a plane that was unique in time.

Because, you see, grace isn't something we just receive from God. It's something that has to live in us. Not just the truth. Without grace, the truth has no great value. It's just truth. But to live it, to exercise it in our lives toward one another and toward God, that's on a whole different plane. That's what we're to do.

...and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them who was lacking; for as many as possessed lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the apostles' feet. "This is yours to do this work." ...and they distributed then as people needed. That's what it goes on to say, **and distribution was made unto everyone according as they needed.**

They were very moved by what they were living in. Now, what's sad is in one respect, they had battles. There are those who had battles with some of this as time went along because a lot of time went on. Because there were things they believed at that point in time and what they were looking to was what we're still looking to: The coming of Christ. What a blessing we know we're in the end time. They didn't know that. They didn't know what the Church was going to have to go through for nearly two thousand years. They didn't have an inkling. And yet they lived this in a very unique way.

Can you imagine? That's why Ananias and Sapphira, they lied. They didn't give all. They acted like they had, and this is why God let them die at the apostle's feet. A great fear then fell upon the Church of what it means to lie to God. There has not been that kind of fear in the end time because there have been a lot of people who have been willing to rob God, to lie to God, to cheat God, to turn against Christ. A lot of people since I've been in the Church.

I think about a "type" of this that took place when we first began. I'm just going to say it. I'm not going to give any names but just to let you know. Some people don't realize what was done by some. When we'd gone through the Apostasy and we'd experienced what we had, there were many as they were awakened who gave large, large portions of what they had. Large portions. Tens of thousands of dollars by things they sold, by things they did, and so forth, some hundreds of thousands to begin this work.

To me, that's very sobering. We have never had to worry in the way that they did during Philadelphia because a work before them was unique and there was clear message given as to where everything was to go. I'll be candid with you, today, I've had problems with knowing where to place things, where to put it, because there's one thing to be wise in what you're doing, there's another to just throw it away.

Anyway, so I just thought I'd share that with you. That kind of experience was experienced in part by some and a lot more to the story. But I'm humbled by it, things that took place.

Romans 5:1—Therefore, being justified by or because of (as the word means), **faith...** So, we understand that. Hopefully, we understand that, that we're given the ability to believe and then our choice is whether or not we live it and do it, the truth, what we've been given to believe. That is what faith is.

And so, we're justified because we live by faith then because of choosing to live by what God has given us the ability to believe. There have been so many who quit doing that at some point in their life or never did it fully like they should have and they're not here today. Horrible!

Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God. It's an awesome thing to understand this, because before, and a part of the story of Romans is as well, that because of sin and so forth, there was no peace because the reality is it's the death penalty until it's forgiven. Until sin is forgiven, we're under the death penalty.

So, that's why in the Great White Throne when people are resurrected there are going to be those who won't repent, and they have to die for it. That's as simple as it gets. Perhaps into the billions, we don't know, but very likely.

...we have peace with God through our Lord Joshua the Christ. So, what an awesome thing that there is a peace we can have in God's Church through the forgiveness of sins that is unique in a way that it's something spiritual. It's of the mind. It's of the thinking.

...because of, as it says, “by or because of” **whom also we have access to faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.** We receive so much from God. The patience, the mercy, the love, the ability to be forgiven of sin, and on and on it goes, this massive grace from God. His patience.

And not only that, but we glory in tribulations. Well, trials, troubles, sometimes until we’ve had a chance to really think about it, and then measure it, then we recognize the importance of it because it’s through things we experience that are hard that God’s always with us and He doesn’t prevent things in our life from happening. Sometimes. But as a whole, no.

We might pray about it and want to be relieved from a certain thing, and sometimes the answer is no because what we’re going through is exceedingly valuable, because God through His spirit can work with the mind then to help us to see and to grasp things that we otherwise couldn’t see. But it’s sometimes, at those points, that some make choices and decisions to do else wise. To those who fight for it, who want it, who desire it, who are crying out to God to receive it, they’ll receive it. They’ll go through it. They’ll succeed.

Because the greatest thing is being changed in the Kingdom of God, in Elohim. It doesn’t matter what we go through. It doesn’t really matter at all. God will use it to help mold and fashion us. Whatever He allows because God allows it. God loves us and we’re very much in His hands, but He allows things to happen so that we can grow, so that we can learn. And so, we understand this. Sometimes then when we look back we glory in.

That’s why I’ve made so many comments in times past that I didn’t enjoy going through certain things. When I got out of that car, that prison, and had to go into a minimum-security area to be prepared to go into the camp, the most horrible day of my life in battles in the mind, in so many things I don’t even want to go into. But I experienced it. But I wouldn’t trade it for anything in the world, wouldn’t trade any of that time period for anything in the world. Wouldn’t trade anything that has happened before that or has happened since that’s been hard and difficult. Because it’s about what God is doing in the mind. Because there is that which is unique to each and every one of us and where God is working with us and how God is working with us that’s in His hands, and that’s where we rest. That’s where we’re thankful and place our lives – before God. What do we have to worry about? Not a cotton-pickin’ thing.

...not only that, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation produces patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope. We have to go through experiences. We have to have these experiences in our life otherwise we couldn’t grow. What an awesome thing to understand that because that gives peace as well.

Anyway, jumping on down to **verse 8—But God commends...** I love the word, what it means here. It’s a word that means in the Greek “standing together with,” stands together with. **God commends His love,** stands together, gives us the blessing of standing together with God. He stands with us.

That's why Paul talked about "Who can be against us?" If you know that and believe that?

But God commends His love—His love, agape—**toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood...** So, we know these things, but beautiful. **Much more then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.** In other words, from death, the penalty for death, for sin. In other words, God's grace must work in us in the truth, if you will, through us.

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God... When I read something like that you know what hits me, just slaps me upside of the face in a horrible way? **For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.** I think of how many have chosen to go back to be enemies. How many? And if we grasp what was done, we should grasp and understand how horrifying a thing and serious a thing this is before God and the judgment of God.

Now, there are matters of weakness, there are matters of deception, and certain ways of things of judgment, but so much that has been done in the past has been by choices. And when someone chooses, when they have opportunity to do something different, to believe something different and they turn against Christ? That's why I love the scriptures, "Can he be killed again?" Can you put him to death again? It's pretty serious.

...when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. I love those verses because that life has to be in us. That's how we're saved. It's through his life, the life of God the Father, and Christ living in us. That's why we're to pray for that life every day. I mean, I need it every day. You want that from God Almighty. You know that anything that gets in the way has to do with sin, so you always want to be forgiven of sin.

...we shall be saved by his life. In other words, if we understand who he is, it's by grace and truth living in and through us. Not just the truth, but it's by grace. It's how we respond and live the truth. So much of it has to do with how we live toward each other, how we live toward God, how we live toward each other, how we think about each other. Because we have to become the same way, desiring to have God's love, meaning not anything of selfishness of our own. We always have to fight that every day of our life. You have to fight selfishness every day of your life. If you're not fighting selfishness? Because it's there. It's just the way we are carnally as human beings. It's a battle. It's a battle. It's a battle in thinking.

We have to be willing to be in those battles and ask for the help, that grace, to live in and through us toward others. The truth we're given and how to live life, and so much of it has to do with judgment as well, has to do with the Body of Christ. I think of Passover and when we take Passover and what it means, whether we grasp what we're doing, whether we are repenting and wanting to repent and recognizing the importance of the Body of Christ as it talks about because in times past that was looked at more physically than it was spiritually, the Body of Christ and how we are with the Body of Christ and

how we see the Body of Christ. It's God's children, God's Family. And so, very, very careful in judgment if there is any.

...much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life. Now, not only that but we also joy in God through our Lord Joshua the Christ, through whom we have now received the atonement. This is how we can be at one with God. We can't just receive grace without it living through us. We're not at one with God if we're not living it, if we're not living the truth and how we're supposed to be toward one another because that's God's desire for us. He has done these things for us, to us, and we're to have the same mind, then that must be lived toward others. There are times you just have to cry out and ask for help to do that the right way.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world... So, we understand what began in the very beginning because of carnal human nature, just the way we are. **...and death by sin. Even in this way death passed upon all mankind, upon which all have sinned.** Everyone. There is no one that doesn't have sin. I feel that there are times that there have been some within the Body who have felt that they don't sin. That's horrible. Horrible, horrible, horrible.

For until the law, sin was in the world. The point being, sin is always—that's what's being shown here and said basically in a unique way—sin has always been in the world. They already talked about that, starting with the first man and from then on sin has been out there.

"For until the law, sin was in the world." So, just because the law was given later on, well, sin was still there in the world. It always has been.

Now sin is not imputed where there is no law. The point being — Paul talked a little differently sometimes, explained things a little differently — but the point being there has always been sin as God's law has always existed.

Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those that had not sinned after the multitude of Adam's transgressions, who, it says here, is the figure of him who was to come. And so, there was that first man, Adam, and the second. We know that analogy that's given or that "type" that's given in scripture. Through the first, it's death. Through the second, it's life.

For if by one man's offense death reigned through one, much more they who receive abundance of grace. And the gift of righteousness shall reign in life through one, Joshua the Christ. So, it's making the first man, Adam, the second man, Adam, as it's talking about here, and again here, death has reigned because that's the way we are. We have carnal human nature and only until God begins to pour out grace upon us and we can begin to be drawn into the Church, begin to be drawn to a point of choice of baptism, going under the water, having hands laid upon us and the impregnation of God's spirit and a process begins.

I'm going to stop there. We don't have time to go on. So, anyway, awesome story here about grace, and to grasp it more and more about what it means, that God's mind is to work through us and how people are treated, how we treat one another, and how we treat God. Next Sabbath.