

Baptism and Our Oath, Pt. 2

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Today, we are continuing with the sermon series, *Baptism and Our Oath*. This is *Part 2*.

Last Sabbath, we began the first part of this, and in this series, we are delving more deeply into the oath that we entered into with God and Joshua the Christ at baptism. I think this is a good exercise to go into, to realize a greater sense of importance, if you will, that we should place on it in our own minds of what we said to God at baptism and also understanding the importance of the oath that God made with the covenant that He wants to enter into with us. And if we agree to the same, to that covenant, then our word and what we say should be taken not with a grain of salt but with a seriousness that goes along with it because it's for life.

Last week, we ended by covering the actual words of the ceremony of baptism and a couple of scriptures that directly relate to that ceremony. We need to begin today by going over that ceremony again, so I'm going to read it again. There's really a lot said here in a short couple of paragraphs.

You are here because you have chosen to acknowledge and repent of your sins, and now desire to be baptized and forgiven through your acceptance of Joshua the Christ as your Passover and Savior.

So, that's the beginning of the oath that we're taking, that we have taken, that we took. Again here, not to be taken lightly, but to understand the seriousness of what we're entering into, what we're telling God.

And again here, some of this has varied through time, but it's been very close to all this. Some of it's been streamlined a little bit in the sense of how it states certain things. But this matter of your acceptance of Joshua the Christ, the world talks about all you have to do is accept Jesus as your savior, and you'll be saved. Well, that's not true. Their idea of what it means to accept that, to accept Him, is not at all what God reveals in scripture and what Joshua had to say Himself. But they can't help it because they don't really understand the commitment they're making. They don't really understand God's purpose and God's plan in the first place.

So, we're different. When we're called, we're given the ability to see it, to grasp it, to understand it, and then it depends on our individual choice. It says:

Because you have repented of your sins, which are transgressions of God's holy, righteous laws, and have accepted Joshua the Christ as your Lord and Master, your High Priest, and soon coming King. I now baptize you in water and then in the spirit through the laying on of hands by God's ministry.

So again, there's a lot of information here in just a short few sentences, if you will, that are very meaningful. We say a lot when we say those things, and sometimes I think we don't really grasp what all we've said fully. But that's why we're going through this. Going on:

This baptism in water is for the remission of your sins through the power and authority of Almighty God and His Son, Joshua the Christ. You are burying the old self, and you're coming up out of the water to live a new life. That new life will be made possible through receiving the gift of the impregnation of God's spirit to dwell in you through the laying on of hands.

Again, awesome what God has offered us — the ability to come out of sin, the ability to be freed from sin, the ability to start that process, and a transformation of the very way we think. We've been given so much.

By water and by God's spirit, you are being baptized into the very name of the Father, in and through the Son, through the power of the holy spirit – and this is by and through the authority of Joshua the Christ.

So, we looked at a couple of scriptures here. I'm going to review them quickly here again.

Matthew 28:18. Because this word “being baptized into” is important. It may not seem that way, but just looking at it, why quibble over a word, whether it's “in” or “into”? But in **Matthew 28:18** it says, **Now Joshua came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.**

I marvel at that one because it's an incredible thing to grasp, to comprehend that God has given everything to Him in order to bring about the rest of His plan for the next 1,100 years, and before that, the past 2,000 years, as far as those that are called, those whom God calls, and then gives to Christ. And then the process begins of a change as we yield and desire, if you yield to and desire God's way of life.

Again, He's expressing this about the power, the authority, He has as the Messiah. He hasn't taken on that full responsibility. He's our Messiah at this point. We've received that. But as far as the world, that still hasn't happened. Not until He comes as King of Kings and establishes God's government on earth. But I love the way it expresses it in scripture, that once it's all done, all the way through, and everything that opposes God is destroyed – in the spirit world and of humanity and those who don't want it, that's it. All that will be Elohim will be there at that time, after that 1,100 years – and then it speaks of that authority and that power given back to God Almighty.

So, it's just a type of formality to show how God is working and the kind of power He's given to His Son to accomplish His plan and purpose. It's all God's anyway, but we understand there's a process to that in government.

Christ said, **Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations or in all nations.** So, “of all nations,” meaning that this wasn't just those disciples, it wasn't just those He was speaking to, but it's prophetic in

that regard for the Church for the next 2,000 years, of what was to take place. That there were to be those who were going to be called by God to be brought into the Church and this is the process that the ministry, the Church would be involved in, baptizing those who are brought to God, who are brought to Christ.

So again here, **making disciples in all nations, baptizing them...** Not “**in the name of the Father,**” again, that might seem like quibbling over words a little bit here, but the reality is there's a lot more to meaning sometimes than words, and to grasp and comprehend here what is actually taking place, being baptized into the name of the Father. It's into the Church of God, into His name.

That's why when it talks about in scripture that we're not to take His name in vain, the most common thing and the first thing that people learn about is cursing. You don't curse. You don't take God's name in vain. But it's a whole lot more than that. It's about our lives, and it's about how we live, and that once we're given that name, we are a part of the Church of God. Then again, it means a whole lot more than we're not to take that name in vain in how we live our life and what we're supposed to reflect. We are the Church.

So again here, **into the name of the Father, and of the Son,** and literally, “into” as well, because it's about the Body of Christ, and to understand what that means. A part of the Body of Christ, a part of the Church of God. Awesome! A relationship that we can have with God and with Christ because of that.

...and of the holy spirit. We understand that's the power that enables all this, God's spirit, the holy spirit. Again, something that we should really marvel at, that the angelic realm was never given access to that. It was never God's purpose to give them His holy spirit. And most of mankind has never been given His holy spirit. But to think that we can have something from God of that power and that might and that thinking? Because it is God. It's the nature. It's the way. It's the thinking of God that's given to us in an awesome way.

...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. So again, Passover is pivotal in that, and yet the world ignores it. That's why I think in writing this book, some of the things that are being written in Chapter 7 here, especially, and understanding how little can be grasped without God's spirit, and yet how much has been given to God's Church to comprehend in this area. I think what's happening with some of this writing is that it's helping to give a stronger stress, if you will, a reality on how important Passover really is, Joshua the Christ really is. But of the day as well that we're to observe year by year by year and that which hasn't been done as a whole by the world, never has been anyway. But even taken a little too lightly by the Church. But we don't know what we don't know until God gives it to us and helps us to grasp and comprehend the greater seriousness of what's taking place. Passover is pivotal. Nothing else exists unless we start there and build upon that cornerstone.

So again, “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.” Passover was one. What an amazing thing to read through John 14 and not grasp that Christ was doing something unique here. I feel

badly for individuals who don't comprehend what was taking place that night. You know, you see these paintings, The Last Supper, twelve disciples with Christ. You think, "That is so shallow!" They don't even understand that it was Passover and eating the lamb that was being observed. Incredible!

That last meal that's referred to and given it, by traditional Christianity, they don't comprehend. They're not taught this was eating the Passover lamb. They were obeying what was given, starting with the Exodus, and what God gave in Leviticus 23, of what to observe on a particular day. He was making it very clear that after He had eaten and the disciples had eaten, then He instituted a new symbolism, drinking of the wine and eating of unleavened bread—Incredible!—that was to be done from then on. The institution of that which is a matter of the new covenant, God's promise to mankind, and how we'd be able to enter into it.

We begin with baptism by accepting Joshua the Christ as our Passover and High Priest, as our Lord and Master, as our Messiah, and a process can begin within us then at baptism, but through the forgiveness of sins and receiving the impregnation of God's holy spirit. Awesome! And then, every year we're to obey the keeping of the symbolism that's involved there, to be reminded year by year by year of the importance of what we committed to, of what we said, and what should be in the forefront of our mind, of the importance of Joshua the Christ in our life. That's why God gave it to us. Every year, we're to be reminded of Passover through those symbols. Awesome!

Then He says, **And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.** So be it. It's the way it is.

Acts 2. We looked at this a little bit here, too, so we'll read that. I'll read that. Acts 2:37.

This is the account when Peter was inspired after Pentecost there to begin, and the holy spirit was given to them, and incredible things began to happen. They began to say the things they did. Peter, it's recorded some of the things he had to say. And so, he told them, basically, that they were guilty of killing Christ. And yet they weren't there specifically at that place where some of this took place, the beating and then the trial and then being hung on a pole, nailed to a pole if you will.

Peter was telling the story to them, and they finally understood — those who were being called. There were several thousand that day that came into the Church that God called. Awesome! It talks about how many were baptized, a large number in one day. And here is a process that began in their lives. They were being called. They were able to understand something that they never understood. They understood their sins killed the Messiah, killed the Christ, that He was the Passover Lamb. Awesome.

I've mentioned this at times past when you have a new truth, perhaps, and all of a sudden a light goes on in your mind, that all of a sudden you can see something you couldn't see before. That's an incredible moment when God gives His holy spirit, and all of a sudden, you have that "aha" moment, spiritually, that God lets you see something.

So, it could be a new truth. It might have been when it was revealed about the importance of Joshua instead of Jesus. Perhaps that Yahweh Elohim was the God of the Old Testament, and it wasn't Christ. That there is not a third member or a second member of the godhead. That Christ had a beginning. He was born of Mary, and that was His beginning. He didn't eternally exist.

Even in the Church, God allowed us for several decades to believe that, to believe that Joshua the Christ and God the Father had eternally existed together. Because the whole part of the Trinity had not yet been dealt with because only God can give that, only God can reveal what is true. And so, God gave His own time, if you will, to reveal that.

You think of that Feast in 2005, and all of a sudden, there were different levels, different stages for different ones throughout the Feast, to where they had that “aha” moment. “Now, I understand.” I think of one, especially. I've mentioned this before. It wasn't until the very end, when Melchizedek was spoken of, and the answers were given, what that was all about, and he had that “aha” moment. But he stayed until he had that moment because of his experience before of truth that he knew had been given but he hadn't seen this portion yet.

So, everyone had different moments in time during the Feast. Not right away in all cases by any measure. Not in the first sermon, not in the second or the third, even though we had several sermons leading up to the Feast, preparing people for that moment. But it was in God's time. And so, God lets us experience those things. Why? And in different ways. Why? Because it's our moment. It's something that we know took place, that God gave us the ability, His spirit, to see something at a particular time, and those things we should hold dear.

That's why I hold dear to me the first night when I went home, as I mentioned, from college, sat down at 10 o'clock at night, being told about the Sabbath, the Holy Days, the migration of the children of Israel, and I knew it was true. Yet how can you explain that to someone? It's not because of research or study or even reading the scriptures. I heard it, and I knew it was true. That's an awesome thing.

It's just like these individuals here. All of a sudden, they knew that their sins killed Christ. They understood there had to be a Passover who had to die for them. And so, they wanted help. That's why they said what they did.

Acts 2:37—Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart. To understand all of a sudden. It just happened 50 days before, 50 plus, 53, whatever it was, and He's put to death so they could have this ability and opportunity.

It says, **they were cut to the heart**—they saw what they had done—and **said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized into or unto**, if you will, **the name of Joshua the Christ for the remission of sins**. So, it's not just “in the name of” in a sense of authority because that's kind of an idea that some have had. It's

in His authority. Well, yes, but this is more than that. It's into something, into a relationship with God Almighty, into the Body of Christ, into the Church of God. Because we're not in the Church of God, we're not in the Body of Christ till this takes place.

And you shall receive the gift of the holy spirit. The promise, God's promise. **For the promise is to you and to your children and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord God will call.** So, God will give the calling, but it doesn't mean it's always accepted. It will go unto different ones, it will be given to different ones, but not all will choose it. That's the reality of life.

So, just to carry this a little bit further about this matter of "in" or "into," we're going to continue on from where we left off there. Mark 13. Just to give an example here of how words can sometimes be used and how words are important. How we use them, they're important, especially in God's truth and God's way of life.

Mark 13:13 it says, **Now you will be hated by all for My name's sake.** We come to learn what that means in the Church, that we have experiences of people who hate us because of what we believe. There will be different occasions, different times in life, where that will come out. You really can't live long without experiencing this: Someone is going to make it pretty clear that they don't love, they don't like what you're doing, and they don't like what you believe.

And so when people are called and come into the Church, so often, things begin to happen. Friends that people had before begin to change because they're not the same and they don't have things in common anymore. Whether it be in family or other friends, or business associates, and so forth.

He says, **You'll be hated by all for My name's sake. But whoever endures to the end shall be saved.** Now, this word translated here is, in most cases, a place, and this word "to," but "to the end," but in some places it's "in." But it makes a big difference if you put "in" here. Most of the time, it's just "to" or "unto." And that's correct because we have to endure "unto," "into" the end. It's not just if you put the word "in" here. That's what the purpose of looking at this is. If you use that word as it's translated, things about "in" the Body of Christ, however it says it here, "in the name of" the Father or "in the name of" the Son, it doesn't carry the same weight.

If you say, "in the end you shall be saved," well, that's like you don't have to worry about anything until the end. It's like this thing at the end when you're in bed, and you're about to die, and someone comes in and throws a little water on you, and all of a sudden, you can be saved because it's in the end. No, we're to fight to endure all the time until it's over with "unto" the end, "into" the end, if you will. It's the same meaning of the word.

...shall be saved. As it says here, **baptizing them in the name of the Father,** as I just said here, talking about that. So, again here, it may not seem important, but things like this are often times very important.

Acts 8. Notice what it has to say here about this process of baptism.

Not all people have the same desire or the same feeling towards certain words and how they're used in scripture. I do, because that's just me, I guess, or perhaps what's been given to me. But small words like that can mean a huge difference in the way the world of traditional Christianity looks at things. They read through things as a story flow and not realizing every word, if it's translated properly, has incredible meaning to it. It's the way God operates. That's the way God works. Everything has great meaning, and we can grow in that to understand more and more of the importance of what God has to say.

Acts 8:14—Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they all might receive the holy spirit. For as yet it had fallen upon none of them.

So, again here, it adds a little bit more to the story of what had taken place. They went up into Samaria, and because they had heard that, again here, that they had received the truth. And so they sent them up there for this purpose to see where they were to help them in whatever way they could. **...when they had come down, they prayed for them that they might receive the holy spirit. For as yet it had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Joshua.** Incredible!

They didn't know and understand. They accepted what was true about Joshua, that He was the Passover, and they believed those things, and they wanted to be baptized to be forgiven of their sins. They wanted to repent and start that process in their life. But this is why they had come there, were there, because it was very clear that the holy spirit hadn't been given to them yet, and that they hadn't had that done to them in the sense of what it says here. **Then they laid hands on them that they might receive the holy spirit.**

So this is where we come to understand that one has to have hands laid upon them, that this is a process whereby God gives as a ceremony that they're being impregnated with His holy spirit by the hands being laid on by the ministry, if you will. So, again here, sometimes there is a little bit here, a little bit there, and until it's all put together, we don't understand everything.

That's why all these things have been revealed to Herbert Armstrong very early on, about the importance of the process of baptism and how God's spirit was given to people once they're called. It's very clear in talking to people whether they see it or not. You know, it's a unique experience to see someone in the very beginning whose mind is beginning to be opened up, and they see truth, and they begin to believe it. And you know that the only way they can see and know what you know, the things you know, or of the things you know, is because they've been called to see it and then it's up to them to make a choice of what they're going to do with it. And if they want to be baptized, because that's part of the process, and believing as well, then they follow through with it, and they ask for baptism. And then, after they come up out of the water, hands are laid upon them.

It also reveals, in a very powerful way, just like the matter of anointing, government is one of the hardest things for human beings to come to grasp and comprehend fully. It's one of the battles that continues, can continue in the mind for a long, long time, even within the Church. I think of our past and the evidence of that in such a powerful way, of what happened before the Apostasy, all the way through, especially, the period of Laodicea, how many in the ministry did not comprehend government and yet sat in classrooms being instructed by evangelists, and so forth, and teachers that were there at Ambassador, and in many cases by Herbert Armstrong himself in the early years, and they never got it.

Because somewhere along the line, they had to see some of it, they had to grasp it. But at some point, something else began to happen in the mind. When God begins to take away His spirit, that can be lost. Sometimes it's a lesson that just takes time to learn it deeply. But it's one of the most important things that we have to learn. God has all authority, all power, and must be in agreement with Him on everything and understand that we're to do everything the way He says it, and that that's the way to happiness and fullness and meaning, true meaning in life.

We can't get it any other way. People try to have that sense in their lives by different experiences out here and think they're going to receive a certain happiness or fullness in life by the things of the world, and it doesn't give it. It doesn't yield what God says we're capable of receiving through obedience to Him.

That's a process we have to go through, then, once we are baptized of choosing and making choices unto the end because that's a process that's refined in the mind in an agreement with God, that we know that He is the only one that can give us real peace. The world doesn't have peace because of selfishness because human beings are selfish. Even when we're in the Church, we still have to deal with it. It's a part of our nature. And a big part of the battle that's won is in knowing that "my nature is selfish. There's my battle. I'll always have it until I'm dead or changed, whichever happens." Because a few get to experience that here at the end, what an incredible thing.

But it's hard for the human mind because there are things that are appealing in the world that we want to do or think we want to do or need to do, and we don't realize whatever experience you can have in human life is nothing compared to what God is offering. And that's in the mind, a belief and an understanding, or not. Anyway, it can't be given. It's through the power of God's spirit. Only He can give it and offer it, and it's up to us to receive it and to become convicted only God's way works. Only God can give real peace. And who doesn't want peace?

Because everything that human beings want, if it doesn't agree with the way of God, it just brings hurt. It brings suffering. It brings drama, drama, drama. Every bit of drama is the result of trying to receive something you can't have, or wanting something that you can't attain to because it's not the right way. Because you're doing something wrong. Your thinking is wrong. You're not getting what you want or think you deserve. Drama, drama, drama. Or the way you think someone else should be doing

something or whatever. All you can control is self, when it's all said and done. You can't control others. You can't change others. But we have to learn those things, oftentimes, the hard way. But it's a process that God offers to us.

What an incredible thing to grasp and comprehend God's Family and why He chose the name Jerusalem, the City of Peace. That there is a time when we can have peace, when we can have relationships that are rich, far richer than anything you've experienced in this life, far richer than anything you've ever experienced even in God's Church. We begin to have a taste of that in God's Church.

We are Family, and we learn that, we understand as time goes on, as we grow and conquer self. There are less and less prejudices. Because human beings are filled with prejudice and judgment. That's the way we think. And to get rid of all that, to accept people as one? God has called us to be one, to be one Family, and to appreciate that and embrace that. Instead, what do we have to fight? The Church still has to fight sometimes.

A matter of women and men. You think after everything that's been said, that would all be resolved. No, because we have battles or there are battles with some or many or whatever. I don't know. But there are still battles. And sometimes it's this mindset of men toward women. It exists. It exists. It's sick in the world in many regards, in how people treat one another and think toward one another. That's why I think of the struggle when you look back in time of what started to change, especially in World War II, that women held down the jobs. You know, they weren't welders and didn't go to work in plants as welders. They wouldn't have been accepted. But in World War II, there was a need. And all of a sudden, they were welding. You know, something that generally a man would have thought only a man can do.

You know, you think of some of these stories you see on TV sometimes. I don't know if you've seen some of them, but I think they're awesome.

And then the workplace, the prejudices are still out there today. They're in the world. Men receiving the higher pay oftentimes because of their jobs and women doing as much or more work who aren't receiving the same. Why is there that inequality? Because of that sick mentality still. It still exists in the world. But it shouldn't exist in the Church.

Racism shouldn't exist in the Church, but I have known it to exist. I've known of people when they came along, and it can take sometimes a few decades for them to get their heads screwed on right, so that that's gone because of maybe how they grew up and what they had learned.

So whether it be a matter of sex, differences, men and women, or race or education, there are so many prejudices in the world, and those are the things that cause hurt, pain, and suffering. But when we can accept one another as God's, as God's Family, because we see each other more for who an individual is than other things that human beings judge by, oh, it becomes a far more beautiful world.

That's why we can't yet fully grasp peace. God gives us a taste of this in the Church of what it's like to have peace. I think of someone who wrote recently, and I feel so badly for them, but you can't help them, and it had been years and years and years since we've heard from him. He got caught up in drugs. Drugs ruled his life, and couldn't kick it, couldn't break it. And eventually, was not a part of the Church, obviously. He went back to it. And he was making comment that the best days of his life, in essence, in the friendships and the true feeling of a sense of belonging, was in God's Church when he was here. You think, well, how sad.

But that's true because we experience things here. I could give example after example like that, of individuals and how they have felt sad. But what an awesome thing that we have a Family and that we can see each other that way. To me, it's beautiful.

So, to get rid of the prejudices, men and women, maybe sometimes how women feel toward men or men feel toward women, or whatever. Because there are problems in the world on both sides, and people have been hurt by so many things in life.

But what an awesome thing to be freed from all that. Just to have peace, which involves a real concern and care for one another. Peace isn't something that just happens. That's why I love when it talks about "blessed are the peacemakers," because you have to make it, especially when you're in this Body. It's up to us how we do it, what we do to accomplish it. Instead, in the world, there are more drama makers than peacemakers. Really! You look at the world – drama, drama, drama! I can't tell you how much I loathe and hate drama because it's the opposite of peace and what God wants to give to us. But that's what's in His Family. That's what's in the Church. As we grow, it becomes stronger.

So this matter of government, going all the way back to that, and understanding that there is order to things. There is a way that God works, and we either believe God and what God offers us and fight for it because we want that, and we don't want what human nature produces, or not. But if we have to learn it, so be it. If we have to experience it, so be it. God will let us do it, experience it to the fullest, whatever that means. Because He doesn't force anyone.

And so, here's a situation where they realized people's minds had been opened. They'd come to baptism; they wanted baptism. But they knew they hadn't received the impregnation of God's holy spirit yet because God had revealed to them this is how it's done – you have to lay hands upon. It's a matter of government. It's where God's ministry is.

Calling on the elders of the Church when you're sick is a matter of obedience to God. Not for sniffles and every little thing that comes along, and I'm just not feeling as good today, and don't know if I'll go to work or not. I'm not making fun of this, but I'm showing that there's balance in how we learn this.

No. If you're sick, if you have the flu, if you have COVID, and you can't get out of bed, or you're having a hard time and you know you shouldn't be at work or something of that nature, or you have something

wrong internally or whatever it might be in life, and you ask for anointing because you're commanded to do it, to seek it, to obey God, it's a matter of obedience to God, of doing it His way. You don't have a choice. You have to call upon the ministry.

And not only that, but you have to call on the ministry that has been assigned to you. Sometimes people have had trouble with that. Perhaps a jealousy or whatever it might be, or some other feeling of judgment, or because the person's a woman and you're a man. Things like this happen. They have happened because there are things that people have to fight inside. And they will until they conquer that disobedience to God because it's not in agreement with God and the way God says to do it. Anyway, so, hopefully you see what is being said here.

This is a matter of the laying on of hands of God's government. God shows how He works. There's a way He works. That's why I love, I think it was Timothy, when Paul told him, "Remember through whom you learn the truth." In essence, paraphrasing what was said. I may be wrong about the example. But anyway, that's what was said.

"Remember through whom you..." Because so many in God's Church forgot that. Can we grasp the history we went through of what happened and the feeling, even within the ministry? The vast majority of ministers who lost sight of that, that they learned everything they knew because of what God gave through Herbert Armstrong. That is really an absolute no-brainer. But they lost it because something happened to their brains, their thinking. They went amok, off base, off course, and they lost God's spirit because of it. Fell asleep or simply lost God's spirit.

That's why I think of how we used to think about certain things. God didn't give us the full story yet. The Millennium, the Great White Throne, they're going to be a utopia. No. Works. There's a lot of work to be done, a lot of work. Especially in the Great White Throne. You think of all the people and things that people have lived through all their lives, all the atrocities of life, and everybody's going to be resurrected, everybody that has screwed up minds. Because we as human beings, until God calls us, we really have screwed up minds – without God, without purpose, without design, without understanding.

And some people, that goes so far it just boggles the mind, how far those things can go, what people can do, what human nature can do, how people can treat each other, how evil, how cruel people can be toward each other as human beings. It's hard to grasp sometimes. Wars, the atrocities of it. What happens to the minds of people who go so far in some of that stuff that it warps their mind, it distorts their thinking. People come back from wars in many cases because they've been a part of something that is so atrocious to them, of what they see, that it's hard to function in life. That happens a lot. And only in the modern age has it really been addressed in the sense of realizing some of these things that people carry are for a lifetime...of how to deal, how to cope with life because of what they've experienced.

And yet war is glamorized. Toys are given to kids this time of year, this jolly time of the year that I loathe so much because you go out to eat and it's already jolly, jolly, jolly. I hate that music because a lot of it's catchy and it gets in your mind. There's that one, especially. It's *Feliz Navidad*. I don't know why, but that has such a ring to it, and the words, it's just like it gets in there. It's like, argh! But they're hard to get out of the mind. You hear them this time of year anyway.

Then they laid hands on them, and they received the holy spirit. Beautiful picture.

1 John 5:13—These things I have written unto you who believe in (into/unto again), the name of the Son of God. To understand what that means. To understand what God has given to us when we grasp why He died, how He died, to understand the purpose of it all, and what it means for us individually, the ability to be forgiven of our sins individually, and on and on it goes.

...so that you may know that you have eternal life. Now, John, I love the writings of John. Because he was able to speak about God's love, agape, in a way that no one else has been given to write about it. And especially by the time 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John were written, some of the most incredible things about love and about what comes from God that are written, inspiring in a very powerful way. This is a part of some of that.

So he says, "These things I have written to you who believe in (into) the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." What a confidence to have, to know that you have made this choice and nothing can take it away from you except yourself. And if your mind is set and you seek to keep it set and you cry out to God because you're convicted you need His help every day to hold on, to keep it, to dress and keep, to keep His way of life, to be on guard, to be watchful, and you realize one's own human weaknesses of what we're like and you know that you're going to keep doing this because that becomes you because of your convictions. You're never going to stop. You're going to keep fighting. You're going to keep praying. You know what your weaknesses are. You know your own human mind. You're asking God for help to conquer it, and you know you have eternal life in front of you. Beautiful.

It's why I still think back, very early on, of a family when I was talking to them. They were in the Church, they'd gotten baptized, and I talked about being in God's Kingdom and being in the first resurrection, and it was like, "Well, how can you believe that, that you know, that you feel like you know that about yourself? How's that possible?" I thought, "Well, why wouldn't you after everything God's given, by everything we know? That's where we're going. That's where I chose to go. That's where I want to be."

How much do we want that? And if we if that's in our minds, God makes it possible. It's all open for us. Again, nothing can stop us except our choices. Isn't that amazing? I think of all those who quit choosing that somewhere along the line.

"So that you may know..." He talks about this in other places there as well in 1st John. **...so that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe in or unto the name of the Son of God,** and

what that means for you. In other words, it's about being encouraged. It's about a confidence you can have, a knowing that God has given us the ability to have.

I know. We all have to say, "Do I know? And how do you know? Because of your choices because of what you're convicted and committed to do, that candidly began at baptism but should have become stronger and stronger over time.

So, let's look at a few other things here that are mentioned about baptism that are in themselves unique. Baptism is an awesome thing that God has given to human beings. Incredible, how many have never experienced that. Incredible what John the Baptist did and that was only a baptism to repentance. And yet God moved people to desire that because He was preparing something.

John the Baptist was all about preparing for Joshua and His coming into Jerusalem at the end and what He would fulfill. It's what it was about. God began to work with a lot of people long before Christ began to teach, long before He began to do the miracles He did, or at least a time before. People were going out to John the Baptist to be baptized in the river Jordan by the hundreds upon hundreds upon hundreds and thousands over time. Incredible! Because God was moving them to do so. That's why Christ said, talked about raising up stones, that if God had to, He would raise up stones, in essence, to glorify His Son. Here God prepared a people.

I think of things that have to happen toward the end here that will happen as time goes on. God is preparing a Church, but He's preparing more than that. This world is getting ready. It's being prepared. And as time goes on, we'll be able to look back and say, "Now I understand."

Acts 1:4—Now, speaking of Joshua, **being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father.** So they're referring back to the promise in the Old Testament, especially in Joel, as it talks about God's promise of His covenant to give His holy spirit to humans, to human life.

...which you have heard from Me. That Christ spoke about, which they didn't really comprehend. So much of what He had to say, they didn't comprehend. All the things He said there at the very end, that last night in John 14, 15, and 16, they didn't yet grasp and comprehend all that. When He was saying this, they still weren't grasping and comprehending it yet because they hadn't received the holy spirit yet.

But He was telling them these things. He said, "You've heard these things of Me. There's a promise." He was getting them ready for Pentecost. He came back and was with them for 40 days to prepare them for Pentecost, and for many other things, and for the work they'd be doing later, to give them the encouragement, the boldness, the strength by what they witnessed, by what they saw. A human being resurrected, immortal now, given immortality. Incredible! This was never known before.

...he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which you have heard from me. For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized in the holy spirit. Not just “with” but “in.” So, there's a baptism, being baptized into the water and coming back out of it. But to be immersed in the holy spirit, that's what baptism, that's what the laying on of hands is about – being immersed in the holy spirit. God gives us the impregnation of it and a power to see and know things in a bolder and stronger way than ever before, that we can keep, that we can have. Awesome.

...shall be baptized in the holy spirit not many days from now. I think of the scripture that's used by traditional Christianity when they read the one about being baptized by water and with fire, and they want the baptism of fire. You think, "No, you don't." Do you know what baptism means? It means immersed in, into, in it. That just means you can receive of the holy spirit and be baptized into it. But if it leads to the other, where there's fire, that means you didn't do well. You chose the wrong things. That's what happens at the end. It's about a punishment.

Acts 8:12—But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Joshua the Christ, both men and women were baptized. Now, this is just a simple verse, but not really understood well in many respects by the Church through time. That there is something that God is offering men and women, and it started here.

Because society in the world has always been established in a different way. Old Testament Israel was set up in a different manner because of the world and men, and so forth, and the way God had administered then certain things with the nation of Israel. And then, when this time came, the time of Christ then and the Church becoming established, was the beginning of a change. Because men and women were not able to worship in the same way. Now they were to worship in the same way together in the Church, together, be taught together in the same place. Not having to separate, not having to be separated. Things began to change.

So, it's a very important statement that's made here that's often times just read right over. “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Joshua Christ, both men and women were baptized.” So here again, showing God's plan and God's purpose.

Christ made very clear that in God's Kingdom there is not man and woman. All will be Elohim. It isn't a matter of sex and differences in that regard that was established for the period of 7,000 years because of procreation because of human life that could continue on. But that comes to an end at exactly the end of 7,000 years and won't exist in the following hundred years. No more human beings born. Incredible.

Only those who have died over the past period of time, over the previous thousands of years can be resurrected. Babies, yes. Young children, yes. Incredible. But no more birth from that point on during that hundred years. Because it's about God's plan of what God's going to do. Incredible.

There's only a certain amount of time He gave to create a Family, to bring a Family together of a certain size. Whatever God has designed, a lot more about that that God knows than we could ever begin to know, obviously. We haven't been given it anyway.

But I love that verse because a change began to take place nearly 2,000 years ago that involved men and women and the way they should be viewed – both in the Church of God, both to receive of God's holy spirit. And only toward the end here has God even magnified that more because we're almost to the point of the Millennium. Awesome.

Acts 10:44—While Peter was still speaking these words, the holy spirit fell upon all those—this is speaking of gentiles—**who heard the word.** Now, we can read this as a story, but it's rather difficult for us to grasp everything that was taking place at this time in the thinking of other people who were here. Because this was profound. As much as both men and women being baptized. That wasn't a normal thing. That wasn't a normal thing that both men and women were included and were able to be in one group together when it came to worshipping God.

So again here, **While Peter was still speaking these words, the holy spirit fell upon all those—**speaking of the gentiles who were there—**who heard the word. Then those of the circumcision who believed were astonished.** The Jews who were in the Church, they were astonished that all of a sudden, gentiles were able to do things, know things, and see things that they did. Because gentiles were looked down upon. They weren't of God. That was kind of the concept of Judaism, obviously. “To be in association with us?!” That was their thinking. They had things to conquer.

That's why I've mentioned things about Peter. He had battles because of that because it was so steeped in his mind all of his life. And he was young! But from his young life, he took these things with him, these feelings of what he had been taught in Judaism and brought it into the Church, and so did the other disciples as a whole. Except for Paul. Paul was unique. God made it very clear to him from the very beginning, a unique calling he had, a unique purpose he had, and he was unique in his lineage as well, and the things he'd been taught.

Then those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the holy spirit had been poured out on the gentiles also. So, the point is here, who did this? If you can grasp that, then you've got it covered. This came from God. And who's going to argue, who should argue with God? If God gave His holy spirit to the gentiles, who can say a word against that? It shows God's purpose then. And yet, some had problems with it.

For they heard them speak with other languages and magnify God. Their experience was this only happened on Pentecost to some of them because they experienced that. They experienced what it was like to speak in other languages on that day. God gave them that power. But God did it here so they could learn this in a profound way. “Look, I'm giving My holy spirit also to the gentiles.” So, this had to be showed to them, and shown to them, at different times in different ways.

Paul had a tough job getting this across with the acceptance that they should. So, you talk about prejudices? They had prejudices. They weren't totally accepting of gentiles. And yet God made it clear He's going to the gentiles. He's giving His spirit to the gentiles. They're being called into His Family.

Who wants to argue with God? How dumb is that? Instead, with humility, one should learn from what God is doing: We are one family. We should see each other as God's children. But they couldn't do that yet. They hadn't grown to that point. They couldn't grasp that. That really is a marvel. It shows how deep human nature can be, even once we're called and receive the impregnation of God's spirit.

So, they had problems with these gentiles. They looked down upon them. They didn't see them on a par with them, not even spiritually. So, they had to get some things taken care of in the mind, some repentance to do, some thinking differently that needed to be done. Just like everyone who comes into God's Church, everyone has to start thinking differently and get their prejudices nipped in the bud, judgmental attitudes, of how human beings can be.

“Then they were astonished, as many as were with Peter, because the gift of the holy spirit had been poured out upon them, and they were able to speak in tongues and magnify God.” I love that. You know, “This is what God’s doing!”

Then Peter answered, Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the holy spirit just as we have? Pretty good question. So, he was able to see this at this point in time. He grasped this. He'd already begun to learn some things because of what was happening, what God was doing.

So again, here's kind of a reverse of the other. The other example, at one point there was that individuals hadn't had hands laid upon them yet. They had been baptized, they had made a choice, and they were able to see certain things, and they had to have hands laid upon them. But now the case is that God was making it clear He's already given them His holy spirit because they're speaking in other languages, but they hadn't been baptized yet. So, a need to go through the formality because that symbolism of repentance and accepting Joshua the Christ as their Passover, their Lord and Master, their High Priest still had to be done.

Then he commanded them to be baptized in (correctly used here) **the name of the Lord.** Because it's about the authority of Joshua the Christ. That's why this one's a different word now because it wants you to recognize there's authority here that's to be carried out because something has already been done by God's authority very clearly so. The holy spirit's been poured out upon them already, and now, the authority here, that this requires a matter of baptism as well because it has to be entered into an agreement before God that they repented of their sins and accepted Joshua the Christ as their Passover and the High Priest. Incredible.

Then he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days. So again, here, the story as it goes on here.

Let's turn over to Galatians 3. **Galatians 3:13—Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law.** Now, traditional Christianity loves this because it's like, "See, we don't have to keep the law. We're not held down by the law. The law has been done away with. It was nailed," as they say, "to the cross." And you think, "Oh no, it's not what it's talking about here."

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law." It wasn't that the law was a curse, but the inability to keep it ended up being a curse because it requires the death penalty. That's what this is all about: the penalty for breaking the law.

So again, **has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree), that to the nations the blessings of Abraham might come in Joshua the Christ, that we might receive the promise of the spirit through the faith.** So again here, it's showing a process of what we have to have as human beings. There is that which we have to have forgiven of us so that the death penalty isn't over us. It refers back to that which Joshua went through. But we also understand that as God reveals to us that we have to go under the water to put to death the self and to come up out of that water to live a new way of life. But it's through the one who indeed was put on the tree, nailed to a pole, for us, who received that curse to Himself so that we could be freed from it. Awesome.

"That to the nations a blessing of Abraham might come in Joshua the Christ, that we might receive the promise of the spirit through the faith." So it's what we believe, what God has given us to believe and live by.

Brethren... Now the rest of this verse is not quoted properly. It says, "**I speak after the manner of men.**" But it's saying here, "**Brethren, speaking according to mankind or the way of mankind, even of mankind in a confirmed covenant, no one can make it void or add to it.**"

This is a point here that has to do with the process of Joshua the Christ, why He died, and so forth. But it's showing there's a covenant connected to this. It's making it clear here that even with mankind in a covenant that's confirmed, or the way it's confirmed (so that's why it's referred to as a confirmed covenant here), once it's made, once it's given, no one can add to it or take away from it. Neither can anyone do that with God, God's law, God's way of life, God's covenant with us. It can't be added to nor taken away from. It is exactly what God says.

So it goes on to say, then in **verse 16—Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his Seed.** Interesting, of what it brings out here, **He did not say and to seeds, as of many, but as of one.** So if people aren't careful, as what the Jews did, they were the descendants of Abraham and thought

themselves great and greater than others. That's not what it's about. They didn't understand the promises that were given. They didn't comprehend what was being said here.

It wasn't a matter of the blessings that were going to be given to the physical nation of Israel. It was about a Seed and everyone else who could become a part of Abraham or receive of the promise given to Abraham because of that one Seed. So that's why it's saying it this way.

Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his Seed, singular, what would follow in time. **He did not say, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to your Seed, which is Christ. But this I say, a covenant confirmed...** So again here, understanding the importance of this is a matter of a covenant relationship that we enter into to receive God's holy spirit, to be in God's Church, to bear the name of God, to bear the name of Christ, the Body of Christ.

...a confirmed covenant before by God unto Christ. Then the law, that came four hundred and thirty years after... So again here, he's making it clear here this is a promise that's made about Christ, through Christ, to Christ, and to all who would become a part of this process. "And the law that came four hundred thirty years after." It's being shown here that here is Abraham, but it wasn't for four hundred thirty years later that the law was given, the commandments were given, and so forth.

...and then the law that came four hundred thirty years after cannot render void... or meaning to invalidate. Because it's a confirmed covenant that God made. **...cannot render void** (invalidate it) **to do away with the promise. For if the inheritance by law...** Again here, **it is no more by promise.** In other words, if it's by the law, making it clear here, it's not a matter of you can receive God's promise because of how well you keep the law. Yes, we realize the importance of God's law, and we realize the importance of living by God's law, but that's not how the promise is given to us. It's not the way we receive the promise that God told us we can have or is the covenant that people can enter into through Christ.

For if the inheritance were by the law, in essence, **it is no more by promise**, in other words, by the oath of the covenant, **but God gave it to Abraham by promise.** It says a lot there; in many respects, quite beautiful in how it expresses it. It's a matter of a promise that was given to Abraham. That was the covenant agreement. And it's about faith. It's about believing God and choosing to live by what God says. God attributes that to us for righteousness. It's an awesome thing. It has never been about how well we keep the law. Are we to keep it? Is it in force? Yes. But that's not how we're saved. It's because of what He gave to Abraham and told Abraham and told to us.

Why then the law? So Paul is asking here, "Then why do we have the law?" If the promise isn't through that process of how well we keep it, of keeping it, the law that was given 430 years after God gave the promise to Abraham. That's why it's saying here nothing can be added to that covenant that God made. No one can take away from it nor add to what God promised to Abraham.

It was added because of transgressions, because of sin, **till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made**. It was about Christ. It starts with Him, the process that begins with Him. The Seed is about Joshua the Christ, through whom God's spirit would be given, to whom, through whom we can become a part of God's Family in time if we yield ourselves to the process. Paul is just explaining this because of the Jews. The Jews had the concept that they were saved through the process of obedience to the law. And yet they couldn't keep it.

Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, because of sin, **until the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator**. Now, some of this is kind of awkward and not real clear in what's being stated here, but again here, when the law was given, and talking about a process of Moses being worked with and the law that was given by God telling Moses to come up to the mount and be given then to Israel.

So, **verse 20** goes on to say, **Now, a mediator does not mediate for one, but God is one**. So, I'm going to be really candid with you. I don't know what that means yet. Those two verses there are a little obscure; I know what it's talking about in the sense of indeed a covenant, a confirmed covenant that was given to Abraham that would come through a Seed, knowing that's Christ, but there are still things here that God has yet to reveal fully all that this means.

We understand much that took place when the law was finally given and what that's about.

So, it goes on to say, **Is the law then against the promise of God? Obviously not**. If we live it, we fulfill. If we live God's way of life, obey God. Matter of fact, it boils down to even about a matter of love, that all the law is based upon that understanding of how we think toward one another, how we live toward one another, how we live toward God.

Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life... In other words, if there is a law that you could keep that could give eternal life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the whole point is we aren't righteous. No one can be righteous. Only one was, and that's Joshua. He lived without sin, totally unleavened. Incredible. Everyone else has sin.

So again, hard sometimes for human beings to acknowledge we all have sin and sin killed Joshua. That's why He died. So we could have the opportunity to enter into a covenant relationship with God, to be saved.

But the scripture has confined all under sin... That's what it says. God makes it clear in the Bible through scripture, everybody has sin, every human being, save one, the Son of God.

...that the promise by faith in Joshua the Christ might be given to those who believe. It's a beautiful thing. God attributes righteousness to us as He did to Abraham. He believed God, and it's made clear that that was attributed to him for righteousness. He wasn't righteous. He tried to live, he wanted to live

God's way of life. He wanted to keep God first in the forefront and live that way. But he still had sin, had carnal human nature. But because he believed God and obeyed God in those things, strove to do it anyway, strove to obey God in everything, because he obeyed God, when God gave him something specific to do, like go here, go there, he did, he went, it says, and that was accounted to him for righteousness.

It's revealed that same thing is true with us. If we believe what's been given to us, that God gives to us, and we strive to live by it, which is what faith is, God accounts that to us for righteousness. We know full well we aren't. We know full well we've got things to take care of that are in our thinking that are wrong that we do, that we say, that come out of our mouth sometimes, or whatever, and we have to repent.

But thankfully, because of this process we go through, we have the ability to believe certain things, and we strive to live by it, God accounts that for righteousness. Awesome. Be extremely thankful indeed.

That the promise by faith in Joshua the Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up (enclosed) unto faith, which would afterward be revealed.

So, I want to read the rest of it here because this is what it's all about, about the law. Without that, there would not be the kind of order, with the nation of Israel, even, as they were able to attain to at certain times, depending on their leader, like king David, who was different than Saul. And because of that leadership and what was taught, or different prophets that came along, the people would respond to those things in a positive way. But as a whole, it wasn't good.

Therefore, the law was our school master; it's an instructor to bring us, as it says here, but it's really "a school master," "a tutor," if you will, "an instructor." The law instructs us in the ways of God, how we should live toward one another, how we should live toward God. It's good. **...that was our school master into/unto Christ.** In essence, to help us to understand, to comprehend what we have, what Christ represents, the unleavened bread of life, and that we're to become that way. **...that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a school master.** Why? What does that mean? It means, because you believe God. You believe the importance of the law and living by it. You understand it, that it teaches us about God.

We're able to come to comprehend God better because of the law, how God thinks of how life should be in our relationships toward God, toward one another. You know, human beings don't know how to have right relationships. They don't know what a right relationship is with God, as a whole, until God calls them and opens up their mind to things that are true. And then they can begin to understand all the fallacies that they've been taught throughout their life.

People enter into marriages, and they don't know what that relationship should be like. You know where they get most of their ideas about marriage? TV, movies, music. Who is taught how to have right marriages? Or maybe from their parents. But oftentimes those aren't good examples in this world.

So, it's amazing how we are as human beings.

How to rear children, relationships with your own children. We learn to experience through time, especially in God's Church, because God shows us, and by His law, of things that are good and proper, and things that are wrong. How to have right relationships. Not to have drama. Because whenever we break those things about relationships, they cause drama. And the more we're in unity with how God shows us how to live, the more beautiful life is, the better life is, the better the relationships are.

We as human beings are an absolute mess. But God has a purpose for us being created. It's to the time we're drawn, called to have a relationship with Him, have a relationship with His Son, and have that relationship with one another in a right way, in a sound way, with right kind of thinking. It's a beautiful thing when lived right. And the more we can live it right, the richer life becomes in getting rid of the human obstacles, self, selfishness.

Verse 26—For you are all children of God through faith in Joshua the Christ. Beautiful! We're “all the children of God through faith.” Because of what God has given us to believe. We understand this relationship. We comprehend why God has created us. We understand what He's offering us in His Family. And because we believe Him, we choose to live this way. We choose to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. We choose to keep the Holy Days. We choose to keep Passover. We choose to keep the weekly Sabbath. We choose to fight this carnal human nature. On and on it goes. God attributes that to us for righteousness.

Not that we do it perfectly. That's why He does that – because He knows we can't. But if that's what we strive for, if that's what we pray about, if that's where our minds are, God blesses us, gives us great patience, favor, help. Incredible.

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. That's what we're to do, walk in newness of life, put on Christ, become of the same mind. You know, scriptures talk about that. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Joshua.” That same mind, we want that. We want to think right. And that means toward one another and toward the world, toward what God is doing. On and on it goes.

This sums it up: **There is neither Jew nor Greek.** Not in God's Church, not in God's calling. That's what this is about. Jew is better? No. So that's why it was stated this way, so that they could understand in the early Church. There is neither one as far as God's concerned. He's calling both. He wants both in His Family.

There is neither slave nor free. Can you imagine different ones? Because this happened. When different ones who were bound, in bondage to someone else, were called, and how they were treated, and how they were looked down upon. But if God calls them and they're able to come into God's Church, be baptized, and so forth, they're to be received as everyone else. Be thankful that you had a better life. Because this happened to people. There were slaves who were called.

There is neither male nor female. Did that have to be said? Yes. Has it been learned fully? Was it fully learned during Herbert Armstrong's time? No. There are a lot of prejudices between men and women. God has started to correct that during this final period, to get minds right, to help people see what they're supposed to see, to think right toward one another, men toward women, and men toward men, even, women toward men, and women toward women. Because there's a lot of judgment that goes on in life in these things, to get rid of that: **There's neither male nor female.**

You are all one in Joshua the Christ. What could be more beautiful? We are all one, one Body, one Church.

Now, if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed. So, "if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed."

So, it's gone through a whole story here to show that the promise... As it says, **and heirs according to the promise.** The promise, the covenant, was made with Abraham. It didn't come through Moses; it came through Abraham. It's more than the law; it's an incredible promise. It's a matter of faith and how we live our lives. Beautiful.

Anyway, we'll stop there for today and continue with the series next Sabbath.