

## Baptism and Our Oath, Pt. 3

Ronald Weinland

December 6, 2025

Today is *Part 3* of the series entitled *Baptism and Our Oath to God*.

In this series, we are delving more deeply into the oath that we entered into. It is an oath. And when you make that to God, obviously, it ought to mean a whole lot more to us if we understand the seriousness of such a thing. We make it with Joshua the Christ, obviously, at that point in baptism. It's about our promise to keep the covenant with God that He called us to have the opportunity to decide and choose on our own, if that's what we wanted. We said yes, in essence.

So, we left off in *Part 2* by covering a lot that is contained in Galatians 3. There's quite a bit there, and I was just going through it toward the end of the sermon last Sabbath, didn't have time to really go in and explain some things in full detail. And maybe now, after a week away, we've had a chance to digest it a little bit better in the sense of what was stated. Because there's a lot there, and I think it'd be good to go back there and review just a little bit of that, and then we'll continue on from there.

It's really well said by Paul when he talks about the importance even among mankind because that's what he refers to. He says even among mankind, basically, that when a covenant is done with a confirmation, that's used to make a covenant, which is a matter of a solemn oath or one that's confirmed publicly or solemnly.

And we definitely do that at baptism because that's a pretty solemn occasion in that respect. It's serious. We recognize we're coming before God, asking for the forgiveness of our sins, and so forth, and making that agreement with God. So again, that's what we're doing when we are baptized.

I think a lot of people get baptized and perhaps don't even recognize or realize just how serious it is when you promise something like that to God. So, it's good to be reminded of that. Because the vast majority of people who have been called since the time that the Church began in 31 AD have left. They leave God. They leave the truth. They leave Christ. And to do that is not a small thing, obviously, and that'll come out more in this series as we go along. We've been hitting on that pretty much over the last several months anyway.

Let's turn over to Galatians 3:16 again, because this is where so much of what took place back in the Old Testament with Abraham began – incredible – and then God began to reveal more and more as time went on, revealed more through Moses, revealed more through the prophets as time went on, and then finally to the time of Christ, and then the Church and the apostles, and what they were given. More and more has been given to the Church.

**Galatians 3:16** it says, **Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his Seed. He did not say, and to seeds, as of many.** So, right away in this here, he's letting them know that this isn't a matter of

something about the physical lineage of Abraham. It's not about a physical nation of people that came later; Israel was established. It's not about a physical relationship; it's about a spiritual one. It's not about the seed that followed, although there were promises given to the tribes, and things that would happen. But there were a lot of promises given to other nations as well.

This is about a seed, the Seed if you will, and that's what he's explaining. **...but as of one, not to many, and to your Seed, which is Christ.**

**But this I say, a covenant confirmed.** One that's confirmed. Again, that matter of a solemn oath, one that's done verbally at that, if you will. **...before God or by God into Christ, then the law that came a hundred forty years later cannot render void,** in other words, cannot invalidate, **and do away with the promise,** the covenant, if you will. So, he's making it clear here, yes, law was added later on, but it's not something that takes away from anything that was promised, as a matter of the promise and how God works with us when He calls us and deals with us.

This is some of what he's talking about when he talks to the gentiles here. He says, **For if the inheritance were by the law,** so this is a matter of inheritance that he's talking about, **if it were by the law, it is no more a matter of a promise.**

So, he's just showing them a problem they were dealing with in the early Church, that there were so many of the Jewish world who became a part of the Church, and gentiles were being worked with, primarily—Paul was the apostle to the gentiles—and they were in these different areas...the Jews were. They were generally, obviously, the first ones to be called into the Church anyway in a particular area. Even though he went to the gentiles, he went to the synagogues, and that's where he started preaching, and then it would begin to spread into more of the gentile world around there.

He was always dealing with this matter of a mindset of the Jewish people at that time, that they felt that they were saved, in essence, this thinking, by how well they could keep the law, or something along those lines, the importance of the law that was given to Moses and the way they looked at it and what they were taught by their rabbis and so forth. And they didn't grasp, they didn't comprehend what God was doing until He began to reveal it, especially here through Paul.

And so, Paul is addressing this issue. He says it's not a matter of the law. It's not a matter of how well you can keep the law because no one can keep God's law and be righteous. No one can keep God's law and earn anything or anything is owed to them. Because we can't. That's what he's addressing.

**For if the inheritance were by the law, it's no more a promise.** Not a matter of the oath of the covenant. **...but God gave it by promise to Abraham.**

**Why then the law?** So, it's like asking, then what's the purpose of the law? **It was added because of transgressions,** because of sins, **till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made.** So, there's going to be this long expanse of time. They didn't understand that. Abraham didn't understand that. His

descendants didn't understand that. Moses didn't understand that. He didn't know His complete plan and purpose of what was being worked out. So, they worked with what they knew at that time, with what God revealed to them, just like we do in the Church today. That's why I love the expression about "the present truth," because that's changed from the beginning of time, because God continues to reveal more as time goes along. That's a part of His plan.

And so, in this case here, we're at the time of Paul, and he's explaining these things and talking about how that this would go on, this process would go on, the law. **...until the Seed should come, to whom the promises...** Speaking of Christ. Then it would be revealed; it would all come together. He's revealing what has come together at this time for the Church.

**Verse 21—Is the law then against the promises of God?** So again, this matter of the law and the way the Jews looked at it was totally off balance. Even the Jewish people who came into the Church, as mentioned last Sabbath, they had a difficult time accepting gentiles because they thought they were a special people. That's why he's making comment here, it wasn't to the seed of Abraham. You're not a special people. It's going to the gentiles as well. God's purpose is to go to all mankind.

And so, they had to get rid of this wrong thinking. They had a difficult time. Because if you're raised all your life, reared all your life and thinking in a certain way, as they were, and then all of a sudden it was different? Because you couldn't eat with gentiles. You couldn't communicate, as a whole, except by business and so forth. You weren't to have a regular relationship with them. As I mentioned last Sabbath, even the woman at the well was surprised when Joshua requested anything of her because that was not common. There were things that were forbidden by Jewish law, not even the law. Incredible.

**So, is the law against the promises of God? Certainly not. For if there had been a law given which could have given life...** That's what it's about. It's about life that God wants to give us. He wants to give us life in His Family forever. This life comes to an end. People ought to understand that. Human life comes to an end.

But then there are these crazy ideas that people have and have been taught that they have an immortal soul. You think what a hideous doctrine that Satan inspired. No human. Only one, God Almighty, has had immortality, has immortal life. Satan has continually tried to water down, take away from what is true, blind mankind to what God was doing. And here's another one of those instances then. So, you think, what a crazy thing people have lived through in different generations and had to experience.

Anyway, God wants to give us life beyond this physical life, this temporary physical life that comes to an end. Because everybody dies. That's just reality, and they don't live on. I'm writing about some of that in the book right now in another chapter. Finally got off Chapter 7 yesterday. Still a little bit of work to be done. But there's a lot of work going into this book.

It says here, **Certainly not. For if life could have been given by the law, truly righteousness would have been by the law**, in other words, by what you could do. But he goes on to say, **but the scripture has confined or shut up all under sin**. In other words, the scripture makes it clear that everyone's bound to sin. They're shut up by sin. They're in bondage to sin. And the scriptures make it clear, we all have sin as human beings.

**...that the promise by faith in Joshua the Christ might be given to those who believe**. So, that's how the promise comes to us. It's about a matter of what we've been given to see, to believe, and then it's up to us to choose it. It's just like the law. The law was added to guide and direct.

Let's read the rest just to get this together. **But before faith came**, in other words, before this process came, before the Seed came, in essence, that's what it's saying, faith in Joshua **was revealed**. Before that came, **we were kept under the law** in the sense of what it says. And it says that breaking the law requires death. So, there's only one way that can be taken care of, and that's by the Seed.

**...we were kept under the law**. Again, that word again, **shut up unto faith**. In other words, we were shut out from it. We weren't able to live by it yet until the Seed came. And then, we could begin the process if God called us and gave us the truth, an ability to believe what is true. **...which would afterwards be revealed**. So again, speaking about Christ.

**Therefore, the law was our school master**. It's like a word for "instructor" or "tutor" **into or unto Christ** (to lead us unto Christ). So, it's showing here the law isn't bad; it's revealing God's way of life. It's revealing the way of life that Christ lived perfectly without sin. Awesome!

**...that we might be justified by faith**. And so, what does the law do? It expounds on God's way of life. It expounds on the kind of mind, the kind of life that we're to live toward God. So, it just reveals more about God. But we're not saved by how well we keep it. That's what Paul is pointing out here and showing.

**But after faith has come**. So, it's talking about faith and Joshua the Christ being our Passover. I can't emphasize it enough, by going through and as you read some of these things about Joshua and the Passover, I think it should become even more clear to us how important, and the stress that God puts on, Joshua, our Passover, our High Priest. Awesome! God's entire plan is based on Him as the foundation of everything that was created. Nothing was created without that in mind, Him in mind as being the foundation of it all. Everything is built upon Him. Incredible.

The law is one of those because it's about God. It's about God's mind, God's way of life. It's what was in His mind. He was the Word of God made flesh. That mind was in Him that was of God. Things that are on a far greater scale than anything we can comprehend. We are able to experience that and grow in that from our calling to baptism, and then as we grow within the Church, but to have it to the level, to the degree Christ had it, no one has ever been given that. He was given that because He was the Son of God,

and because He lived a perfect life. Because He was of the same mind with God. He had the mind of God. Awesome!

**Therefore, the law was our school master to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith.**

Faith in, belief in, first of all. So that's why we become baptized because we believe He was our Passover. We believe He died for our sins. And because we believe what God revealed to us, that He had to suffer in order for us to have that opportunity to believe those things, and so much more that goes along with that belief. That's what we chose, that's why we were baptized, so we could be freed from sin. Not just past sin, but to start a process so that we could be impregnated with God's spirit, and from that point forward always have the ability to go before God and ask for forgiveness, forgiveness of sins when we sin, because that's our life.

The rest of the world doesn't have that because they haven't been given that opportunity yet. God has another time when He's going to offer that to the rest of the world. But it isn't in this age. It wasn't for the first 6,000 years of mankind. It's for later on. Incredible!

**But after faith has come, we're no longer under a school master.** Does that mean we don't have the law? No. We understand what the law is about. We understand why we need it, and we are to strive to live by it because it's God's way of life. But not as the Jews were. They needed it. They needed help to keep them together as a physical people that had opportunity of benefits and blessings from God intervening for them in life, but not a spiritual relationship at all. Incredible.

**Verse 26—For you are all the children of God through faith in Joshua the Christ.** So, when it says, “through faith...” very few in the world understand this. We're given to believe what is true. Our choice to live by it is what faith is. We choose to live by it. You can be given understanding and truth and not choose to live by it. Then you're not living by faith.

But for the Church, God has given us the ability to believe the truth. And we're here, and we keep every Sabbath, every Holy Day, and seek to obey the ways of God. That's what faith is all about – because we believe God, and we choose to live it. That's our choice. But the majority of people called drop that in time. They turn away from that. That's incredible to understand.

**For as many as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.** We're in the Body of Christ. We want Christ. We want God the Father to dwell in us. We understand what it means to put on Christ, to put on God, if you will. We desire to be forgiven of sins so God will dwell in us, and so we can dwell in God, so we can dwell, live in, be in the Church, be in the Body of Christ. Awesome!

**There is neither Jew nor Greek.** I love this verse, what it's saying. Because this is the battle of the human mind, oftentimes, when it comes to prejudice and how people think. Mankind is filled with prejudice. They can't help it. We grow up a certain way, we're in a certain environment, and people have prejudice against whatever. He brings out some of those differences.

“There is neither Jew nor Greek.” So, if someone thought they were better, if the Jew thought he was better, which they did, couldn't socialize with, couldn't eat with. Peter, he had to fight that. He still couldn't eat with the gentiles. It was in his mind. And Paul rebuked him for it, that thinking. Some of the other apostles as well, they had to change their thinking, and to realize they're the same as we are. We are the same as they are because God Almighty has given them His holy spirit, the impregnation of His spirit in their being, and they can become part of Elohim.

So, no one's better than anyone else when it comes to a calling like this. To look down upon someone because of nationality, or whatever it is, or race. Those things are hideous in God's way of life and the truth that's given to us.

**There is neither Jew nor Greek.** Or gentile, is what it's talking about, someone other than Jew.

**There is neither slave nor free.** Just because someone is free doesn't make them better than someone who's in bondage to someone. As it was in times past, ages and ages, for thousands of years things happen like that. **There is neither male nor female.** It's not a matter of one is better than the other. No such thing. **For you are all one in Joshua the Christ.** One. That's why I love Ephesians 4. It says there is one, in essence, one truth, one belief, one faith, as it says it, one Church, one God, one Father, on it goes. You know, there's just one – God's way of life and the truth.

**Now, if you are Christ, then are you Abraham's seed.** Because that was the promise. It was about Christ and the promise was given to Abraham. It wasn't given to Moses or through Moses. It was Abraham. Awesome!

We're saved, we're able to have the same thing that Abraham was given. He believed God, and he did what God gave to him, what God told him, whatever that was at different times in his life. And because he believed God and did that, God attributed that to him as righteousness. We get the same thing. We believe God in the present truth that we have. We strive to live by it. And that's attributed to us for righteousness because none of us are righteous of and by ourselves and how well we keep God's truth, God's way of life. We all have sin. We all need to be continually forgiven of sin. It's a beautiful thing to understand. Because you don't have to drag that around with you. You don't have to beat yourself up. When you repent before God of a sin, as far as God is concerned, it's gone. He doesn't hold it against you. He doesn't remember it. He doesn't try to remember it and use that in judgment against you.

That's what we're to grow in amongst ourselves. That's what we're to learn in fellowship, the matter of forgiveness and how we should think towards others, and how we should be careful of judging others. Because everyone belongs to God, and if we judge others in a wrong way, we're judging God, and that's a hideous thing to do.

**...then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.**

We're going to continue on by focusing on this matter of confirmation, which is done publicly or solemnly, if you will, when we're baptized, and what we agreed upon. Let's turn over to Acts 13.

A portion of the baptism ceremony, before I go into that, says, "You are here because you have chosen to acknowledge and repent of your sins, and now desire to be baptized and be forgiven through your acceptance of Joshua the Christ as your Passover and Savior." That's a big step for people when they come to that point because it's hard for people to acknowledge their nature, the way they are, the way they think. It's hard for people in the world to come to that point when they're being called, to acknowledge, to admit, "I have sin." Because they have to acknowledge where they're living wrong before God, whatever that lifestyle is, whatever they're doing.

It's not just a matter of suddenly starting to keep the seventh-day Sabbath. It's not just a matter of coming to a point where you're going to keep the Holy Days. There are other things involved in the choices we make. A lot of it has to do with how we live life in the first place. The reality is no one lives it God's way in the world. They can't. They don't even know it yet. Even those who think they know it don't know it yet.

One thing that really aggravates me, infuriates me sometimes, is when I think of (partially the South because it's stronger here), traditional Christianity, and people who talk about religion and accepting Jesus as they talk, and so forth. And yet within churches and so forth, there is an incredible amount of adultery that goes on. Think, how can you have that? How can you do that? How can you have that kind of a mindset and think that you're honoring God by when you go to church?

Even something so simple as that, a law, a commandment, and people justify. Because it's one of the greatest pulls of human nature, the matter of sex and sexual relationships, and thinking in the mind towards others. It's one of the greatest pulls because of hormones and so forth that human beings have. And thus, it's one of the greatest areas for sin, lust. It's why it says what controls human mind is "lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Pride is when you go ahead and do it because you're lifting yourself above God and what God has said we shouldn't do or should do.

So again here, sometimes we pull these things in, bring them into the Church, and some of the same things happen within the Church. All kinds of things happen within the Church, have had ever since I've been in the Church since 1969, all kinds of things that people have done. Think, "How can you do that? Well, you know the truth. You've been baptized. You made a commitment to God and should repent."

But sometimes people don't care. They get to a point where they don't care because they want something more than they want God, than they want Joshua, than they want the truth, than they want what God is offering. Horrible in what it does to the mind.

So, we come into the Church, and we acknowledge we have sin. Not only at that time, our past sins, but we realize we have a tough road ahead of us. Because it's a fight. It's a battle to fight against self and

bring it into subjection to God, to God's way of life. And matter of fact, we can't even do it on our own. We learn that. We need help. That's why when we pray, we are to pray for God's help in fighting against various things that come into the mind, various thoughts, or whatever it might be that are wrong. Nip them in the bud right there.

But too often, people don't do that, and then they go and commit what they shouldn't commit that is wrong. And by that time, it's sometimes way too late, they've gone so far that the mind becomes seared to it. They want that so badly that they give up this – fellowship that God offers us, a future that God offers us. Choices, choices, choices.

So, I want to read this before I go on in a particular section here, which I've already commented on some of it. This process here of our acceptance of Joshua the Christ, and so forth (I want to read part of this), when you accept Him as your Passover and Savior: This begins by revealing a desire to acknowledge that we have sins that need to be forgiven. We acknowledge this at baptism, but we also acknowledge that there is a continual need to be forgiven of sin because we acknowledge that we have a carnal human nature that must battle “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” We acknowledge this when we simply agree that we accept Joshua the Christ as our Passover and Savior.

It's not a one-time thing. It's an ongoing thing for the rest of our life. He's our Savior, there to help save us. Passover, because He paid the penalty not for just our past sins but future sins as well if we repent. What an awesome thing to know. As we sin, we can repent. Doesn't give license to sin because that's addressed in scripture too, but when it does happen, then if we come humbly before God and ask for forgiveness, He will forgive us. So again, it's not a one-time event that takes place at baptism.

Acts 13:13. So, we're going to consider our promise of oath that we have accepted Christ being our Savior. So, that's the focus we're going into right now.

**Acts 13:13—Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.** So that was their normal custom, which is on the Sabbath as a whole, but other days as well. But primarily, this is how they would reach people

**And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, speak.** So, it's kind of hard to place ourselves in that kind of a situation because there is a certain amount of people that come (not large) to the synagogue, and here are some people coming along who they know are from wherever (and maybe the stories of things they've heard), but coming from Jerusalem or from wherever they came, and being Jewish and not being a part of the group there, you want to greet people.

If someone comes in from here that you don't know very well from another area... Let's say someone from Australia you've never met comes in here, you're going to want to meet them, you know. Same sort of thing here. Except the way they were structured was a little different because here was one that was known to be a teacher going to different areas, and what he had to say. So, they're asking him; this is what they're doing with him.

And so, it says, **And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, speak. Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it.**

So, he always went back in history, especially the first time in an area, beginning with the basics and telling them basically why they were there, what had happened in their past.

**Verse 18—Now, for a time of about forty years, He put up with their ways in the wilderness.** They knew what he was talking about. Coming out of Egypt, forty years in the wilderness, they all knew it. They understood that.

And we should think about ourselves when we read this. How long has God put up with us? Thankfully, because we've been called, God wants us to succeed. He's very, very compassionate. He gives us great grace and ability to change, forgiveness of sins, His love, His help to change and become something different. Awesome.

So, he's reminding them of these things, but we should remind ourselves. We were talking about that a little bit last night. I marvel sometimes with the patience God has with us. He's very patient because we're not easy to go through this process and change, and so many haven't. But as long as we want to fight, as long as we want to continue, as long as we desire what He's offering us and we're willing to work for it and fight for it (because it's a battle), He's there to help us. Incredible.

**Then, when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan...** So, caused incredible destruction. They weren't totally wiped out; it's just showing that there was incredible destruction of those areas and what He allowed to take place in those nations.

**...He distributed their land to them by allotment.** He promised them a particular area, and this is a part of this story then. So, what we're focusing upon is a long process. We come into the Church, and it's not a one-time thing; it's a long process until it's over. We don't stop until it's over, and we continue on. Then we keep at it until it's over. That means to when we die as a whole, we're committed to it, we want it, we desire it with all of our being.

**Verse 20—After that, He gave them judges for about one hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.** So, we're going through the story here, and we've gone through part of this before, but again,

there are some other things we're looking at here. But he's just giving them a history. Forty years in the wilderness, four hundred fifty years now until Samuel the prophet. Incredible how long that was. A long journey.

**And afterward, they asked for a king, so God gave them Saul, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. Then (it goes on with the story) when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart.** So, God worked with David from a very young age, molded and fashioned him, and prepared him to be king.

That to me is an awesome thing to understand that God works with people. He works with situations. This wasn't just a happenstance in time. The timing was exactly what it was supposed to be, which is something hard for us sometimes to grasp and comprehend. The matter that He was working with David to raise him up to be of this type, this character that He would work with. Because of what He was going to do, He raised up someone that His own Son would be born through that lineage. This is not a small thing. So, God worked with him in a profound way, very powerfully so, to bring him to this point in time. He knew long before that he was going to be king. He was going to make him king. That was His plan. When He has a purpose like that, He does it, molds and fashions an individual accordingly. And there's a lot more to the story, but anyway.

So, it says, **He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, I found David, the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.** This isn't just about David now. It's going beyond. It's going beyond because of the story that's going to follow about a lineage, of the seed that was promised to Abraham, and His particular lineage that God was going to use in this process until the time of Christ, and what He was going to fulfill.

**From this man's seed** (it's about Christ), **according to the promise** (the promise He made to Abraham, "and to your seed"), **God raised up for Israel a Savior, Joshua.** So, he's bringing it all the way up to the present, then for them, at that point in time, and telling them, "This is the process we've gone through. We're here today." It's gone through the time of being in slavery, going up to the time of being brought out of Egypt, going through the time of being in the wilderness. Well not the wilderness but talking about the wandering they did when they had the judges and so forth until they had a king, and then all the time after that until the time of Christ. Hundreds of years.

"From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior, Joshua." So, they didn't all accept that. Some did. Every once in a while, when he was preaching, ever whom God was calling, whether it be Jew or gentile. But again, a Savior, all about Joshua. And we know these things. But it's good to focus upon them sometimes and recognize the process God has gone through, and the time God has spent and worked to accomplish what He has to give us what we have today. More than anyone else on earth has ever had. Truly.

2 Timothy 1, add to what we just read. 2 Timothy 1:7. So again here, Paul is talking to Timothy, encouraging him, admonishing him about various things because of the job that's going to be upon him and because of what Paul was going through.

**2 Timothy 1:7—For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.** What an awesome thing. We live in a world today where you don't see very much of that at all. I mean, there have been different generations of time where there was more soundness in how people dealt with matters and governments dealt with some matters.

But we're in a time now, primarily because of the use of technology, or I should say the misuse of it, that we see the world coming to a head, and we see the things that are happening between nations and what's coming. We see this insanity that's getting worse and worse and worse, where some people you can't even begin to reason with them in sound terms, things that make sense, especially in areas of government, and on it goes. And it just stands out in a horrifying way. How could the world be getting this bad? How could people be so blind? Even in a physical way, it's kind of a marvel to witness what's taking place.

But God says for those He calls, He helps give a sound mind, so we're able to make right kinds of judgments. We have right kind of thinking, and we can learn to better deal with matters of life. A lot of that is learning how to get rid of drama or to avoid drama in life because of living God's way of life. We learn about peace and how that's the exact opposite of drama. It's beautiful when we live God's way of life and we have peace and we get rid of the drama in life. Drama is a horrible thing.

He's saying here, "This is what you have. You have power." I hope we all understand that. I hope you realize there's a lot of power that's working with you. There's a lot of power that's working in you because it's a matter of thinking. And this, this is an amazing thing to conquer, the human mind and the kind of spirit and thinking we have as human beings, a selfish spirit, a selfishly motivated spirit that takes care of self first, loves self most of anything else, believes that it's right. It doesn't naturally believe it's wrong about things.

Everybody has opinions, and those opinions in their own mind are right. They're correct. That's why we have so much chaos. God gives to us power for this mind to change, for this mind to be transformed. I hope we marvel at that, that we have a mind that's being transformed so we can think differently and not be the same old way we used to be. We start getting rid of that selfishness and that wrong kind of thinking, and we learn how to think better towards others, better toward God, better toward Christ.

**...and of love.** Don't see a whole lot of that in the world in a true and genuine way. So often it's selfishly motivated. **...and of a sound mind.** To have a sound mind, to have opportunity to grow in soundness of mind, to be able to see. The more soundness of mind we have, the more you see the unsound thinking of human beings in the world around you. Truly. And we should marvel at that and be thankful.

**Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, His prisoner.** He's acknowledging here that he is confined in that respect, and he's saying, "Don't be ashamed because I'm here." Because that's how people think, and they talk. We've lived through a portion of that, and they did in incredible ways.

I was writing, going through, and reading part of what I'd already written for another chapter here about some of that, and thinking about every one of the apostles killed, except one. Every one of them by their governments. Incredible. Peter was nailed to a pole. And if it's true, it was upside down even. Paul couldn't be because of the law, because he was a Roman citizen, and because of that, he couldn't be nailed. But he was killed, nevertheless. All this history that's out there about different ones and what they lived through, and then finally we get up to about 90 AD, somewhere in there, where finally the Roman government came after John and put him on the Isle of Patmos. That's where he was given the book of Revelation.

So, I was writing about part of that because it's part of the process here to understand things that have taken place. And you think he was the only one of all the original ones that was left to die of an old age. Everyone else was killed by their government. Incredible. We have it pretty easy compared to them. We really do. But the world wasn't like that back then.

He said here, again, "do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." Because what you believe, what you've been given, is so diversely different from everybody else on earth. And you're not going to be loved for it. You're not going to be looked up to for it because they think you're nuts. You've gone too far. You're a religious quack, a religious nut, whatever. They don't understand God's not working with thousands upon thousands or millions of people today. They have no concept of that. That's not His purpose at this time.

**...nor of me, His prisoner. But be you partaker of the afflictions of the good news.** He's saying you're going to suffer. You're going to have afflictions. You're going to suffer for what you believe. And especially for Timothy, for what he was going to be teaching. Because he was a teacher and he was to go to different places and do some of the things that Paul was doing, and to help raise up and make stronger the Churches that were being raised up in those different gentile areas.

So, he said, "be partaker of the afflictions." And so, we learn that in time we're going to suffer because of what we believe, because of what we live, because the world doesn't embrace that, and it's too much for them. It was too much for us until God called us because He's the one who has to put it in the mind and then help us to see self.

Because they can't help it. That's why I love what Christ said: "Father, forgive them because they don't know what they're doing." Steven said the same thing as he was at the point of being stoned and put to death. "Father," in essence, "forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." Same sort of thing. We should understand that about the world around us. When you get upset with people, whether it be on

the job or relatives, or whatever it might be, don't. They can't help how they think. But you can. You've been given that ability and power to change. Because that's all you can change is self...with God's help.

**Who has saved us...** So again, the power that's there, God desired to save us, to help us through this process of being so few and such a huge world and so much of humanity around us that doesn't believe the same thing, and God's purpose is to bring us through this.

“Who has saved us.” So, as far as God is concerned, and what Paul is showing here, from the moment God calls us, we have an open door to eternal life, and nothing can stop us except us. That's an awesome thing to understand. Our wrong decisions, that's the only thing that can stop us. Otherwise, God has given us everything we need to go through this process.

**...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling.** Because God's in it. He has to do it. **...not according to our works.** Not because of how great we were. We can't be lifted up with pride and think we're better than others, or we were better than others and we were able to see and understand things. Because I've known of too many in times past who felt that way when they came into the Church.

**...but according to His own purpose and grace.** So, we recognize that's a part of God's plan. He's calling a few. How blessed is it to be a part of that very, very few? Because that's what God's purpose is. We see that purpose. He reveals it to us. And grace, or the favor that God gives us, the blessing of just being forgiven of sin is a matter of grace. The ability to go before God continually and pray is a matter of God's grace upon us, His love for us.

**...which was given us in Joshua the Christ—I love this—before the world began.** Incredible. We've looked at other scriptures as well that talk about this, and you think, “What an incredible thing, to think God makes it clear that nothing was created until this was determined, until Christ was determined.” Everything started with a matter of Christ. Because it's about Elohim. Everything God created is about His Family. It's about Elohim, the Family of God.

And to create that, we don't know how many billions of years all the vastness of the universe was being created. Science, different ones think that just by a big bang. You think, “Well, what laws does that go by?” How did it “bang” without law and order, and where did all that come from, this out there? It had to have a start, so where'd this bang originate? Anyway, some of this stuff is so stupid. God created it.

And it's hard for the human mind to accept the fact that there is such a powerful being, a God who can create, created an angelic realm first of all to serve Him in that process. They were given a lot of power to do incredible things that we don't fully know about yet that's a matter of creation, and all that's out there in the universe. And why create it all? It's about His Family. It's for His Family. It's a part of the inheritance God has given.

It's not just this little dot out here in the middle of one little, tiny solar system in the middle of a small galaxy. Incredible! And so, Joshua the Christ, everything was determined to be placed upon Him as a foundation.

So again, to think when this all began, and it was all built upon the purpose of having Joshua and having Elohim, and the way to accomplish that was about Joshua. And so, the angelic realm... We've gone through this many times, but I don't care how many times I talk about it; I love it. I love it. It's awesome how long God worked to create it all. And then, finally, this earth was created, time went by, beasts that were created on it, plant life that was created on it, and then God allowed a being, Lucifer, who became Satan, to destroy it.

So, they try to think of "Well, what did it? Was it maybe, all of a sudden, we have these glaciers coming down, the great weather changes, or whatever it might have been, and some kind of meteor might have hit in certain places, or whatever, asteroid. And so, they come up with these different ideas of what could cause something so swift, so quick to happen that even mammoths, you know, were in one spot and all of a sudden, they're frozen, and found.

You think no, it was an event, but it was caused by a spirit being who hated God's plan.

And then to grasp, to know, and understand what the beginning of Genesis is all about – the recreating of life on this earth because the earth was here. It doesn't talk about the creating of the earth in Genesis. What an awesome thing that you know that. Because the Protestant world who goes through Genesis and so many different groups and people, they don't understand these things and what took place at that time, that God was remolding and refashioning and setting the earth in its proper orbit to have light that could come through and making it possible for light to hit the earth again. And then beginning to put plant life on it again, then animal life upon it, and then finally human life. Awesome.

Anyway, going on. Tremendous power. So, before the world began.

**Verse 10—but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior, Joshua the Christ.** That's how we're saved. Being able to go beyond this human life into spirit life in God's time, whenever that is. We understand that's at a resurrection.

**...appearing of our Savior, Joshua the Christ, who has abolished death.** It's talking about the death penalty. It's not talking about the first death. Everybody has to die. Everybody who has ever lived has died, in times past, over nearly 6,000 years now. And we'll go through the same scenario. We, as a whole, die. It says there are only a very few, in essence (we understand that), that are going "to be changed in the moment, in the twinkling of an eye, from mortal to immortal at Christ's coming." Somebody in, some in the Church, ever who those might be. But a lot are going to die as well.

**...who has abolished death.** We understand it's about a penalty of sin, and it's about a second death. How many understand? You think about traditional Christianity, they don't talk about a second death.

They don't like to touch Revelation. They don't go into Revelation 20 and what it says about a second death. That's the punishment. Life gone, never to be resurrected again.

We have more peace. I think of the peace we have when we know what happens at death. We shouldn't fear it like others in the world do. Truly, death is just a process, and we'll have life again. But to think that something happens and people have to be concerned about, "Well, are they going to be chased about by these little guys with little pitchforks shoving you, shoving them at you? You know, they're hot, and you're in a hot place, and you're kind of jumping from one hot bed to another over lava." These pictures that people have, weird, strange.

Or they're up in the sky fishing somewhere for the rest of their life because they love fishing. "You know, old Bill, he just loved to fish, and we know he's up there looking down on us and he's fishing." That's sad. They don't have the kind of hope and the kind of understanding and the peace of mind you have when someone dies.

I don't fret over it, don't worry about it. We don't have to. It's just a process, and everyone will experience it, and they'll see loved ones who experience it. It's not a fun process, but it ought to sober us up to realize what an awesome thing that God says we can have a different life, a life beyond, a life in a different time and in a different body as well. Awesome! There's a great deal of peace and comfort in those kinds of things.

So, we're saved from a death penalty. We're saved from being in bondage to sin because we can be forgiven of sin. And the penalty for that is death for all time, never to be resurrected to life again. What an incredible thing to know. I don't know if we think that way sometimes. After a while, I feel like sometimes we begin to take these things for granted. Think no, they're to be treasured. They give us peace. The blessings God has given us to understand those things and live by them, awesome. We're not struck by death in the same way that others are.

**Matthew 1:18—Now, the birth of Joshua the Christ was as follows. When as His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the holy spirit.** What an incredible thing. Here God had given her of His holy spirit in her womb to start the creation of a child.

**Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man and not wanting to make her a public example...** Because she was getting bigger and people were going to see it. There can be an embarrassment in that because they hadn't been married yet. They hadn't come together yet. And he knew that. So how is he going to address this? It's why God blessed him, in that respect. An angel spoke to him and told him various things.

So again here, it talks about **Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, you son of David, do not fear to**

**take unto you Mary for your wife. For that which is conceived of her is of the holy spirit, and she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call His name...** Didn't say "Jesus." The word is **Joshua**. We've gone through this because that word has incredible meaning in itself.

**...you shall call His name Joshua, for He will save His people from their sins.** Which is about being saved, again, from an everlasting death penalty. Again, the name Joshua. I hope we know what it is. "Yahweh's Salvation" or "God's..." if you will, it's about God's Savior to mankind. It's "Yahweh's Salvation." That's His name. He is Yahweh's salvation. Beautiful!

So, the Joshua of the Old Testament, who worked with the children of Israel and brought them into the promised land, his name wasn't by accident. That was done on a physical plane in a physical fulfillment of something that pictured something that would happen spiritually later on with the Joshua the Christ—incredible. That was for a physical salvation, if you will, for a nation to be brought in, to be given their own land and the promises that God had given to them. This for a spiritual one.

Revelation 2. We're going to go over now to Revelation and go through some scriptures over there because, again, it was mentioned earlier on here that once baptized, it's not just a matter of repentance one time for past sins, it's about a continual process for the rest of our life. And this is brought out well in these messages, that, in essence, God gave to Joshua, that Joshua gave to the Church, that Christ gave to the Church, gave to John to write about. And so, here's one to the very first Church era, the period of time of Ephesus that all the original apostles and Paul were in. This is a period of time that they were in.

**Revelation 2:1—To the angel of the Church of Ephesus, write, These are the things said by He who holds the seven stars in His right hand.** So again, this is about the Church. It's about the Church that's going to go through a long period of time. John didn't know anything about that. John had no idea about the eras. He didn't grasp what he was writing. He wrote what he saw, what he was given, and that's as far as it goes.

And in time, different things out of the book of Revelation were given. We don't know how much in the eras that followed, but it wasn't until Herbert Armstrong that much of this then, it all came together in a very powerful way. And God gave it to him, truly, to understand what this was all about. And so, this being the first period of time.

All these seven eras of time, nearly 2,000 years were going to pass. They had no concept that time was going to pass. They were all looking for His return in their lifetime, and they all died. They were put to death, and on and on it goes.

**These are the things said by He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, I know your works, your labor, your patience.** That early Church, it was intense what they lived, what they lived through. We get a little bit of that understanding by reading about the history, or some of the things in scripture about the different apostles and what they went

through, and what Paul went through. The Church went through a lot. You know, Steven was killed very early on, just as it barely got started. Incredible.

**I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil.** So, it's showing here how they thought, what their thinking was. It's hard for us to grasp and comprehend some of this thinking, but I think of Paul and how astonished he was when some began to leave. And he said, "I marvel that so soon there are those who are leaving," in essence, "the truth that was given to them, and understanding about Joshua." So, it didn't take long, and gentiles and/or Jews at that time who had been brought into the Church in these different areas, Paul was experiencing the fact that they were leaving.

It was also at this particular time that, as time went along, that different warnings began to come out, as we know about Thessalonians and so forth, and things they thought about, and antichrist, and what John wrote about antichrist as well. That it was already happening within the Church, people who were turning against Christ. This wasn't a small thing, but it was an astounding thing.

You can imagine their thinking in the sense of all that they were suffering, all that they knew others in the Church had suffered, that they knew different apostles had suffered through at different stages here, and there were people becoming antichrist, against the one through whom they were baptized under water and made the oath that they wanted to be forgiven of their sins, and God gave them the impregnation of His holy spirit and then they turned against God, against Christ. Mindboggling!

So, put yourself in their shoes. Yeah, they hated evil. They experienced it firsthand. After all the suffering for what was right that they went through, and they saw people so easily give it up? It was astonishing to them. So, again, "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil."

And when you think about patience, you've got to remember they thought Joshua was returning in their lifetime. We're not the first. We know He's still coming. We know He's coming, but we don't know when, and we learned that in a hard way. We learned why some of those things took place because God taught us different lessons from that. Again, people who left, when God says, "Don't let anyone take your crown," and some let that happen right up to that point in time, 2005, 2008, in through there. Incredible.

So again, **you cannot bear those who are evil. Even you have tested those who say they are apostles.** Now, you have to understand here what they're saying, what he's saying, what he's writing here. It's not a matter that they said, "I am an apostle," because so many of them didn't say such things. But because they left or began to teach different things, there were different ones who rose up in congregations early on that Paul even addressed and called out, and they began to be teachers. They made themselves teachers and began to give what they thought or what they believed was true and right from God. They got lifted up with pride, thinking that God was working with them—whatever it was that took place in

the human mind—or just lusted after that power, as some did and may comment about, and they took the place of an apostle. That's what it's basically all about.

Because that's how God works within the Church in the sense of giving anything new or different, or a growth of things that are new that God hasn't yet revealed. That's how God does it. And so, this is what he's addressing here.

**Even those you have tested, who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars.** It's the bottom line. They're lying. They're not telling the truth. They're telling something different. **And you do bear,** as it is the word having to do with “bearing a burden” or “willing to carry it,” whatever load it is. ... **and have patience.** So, you bear, you're willing to bear it, bear the burden of what you have been given, and have patience. You just keep fighting. And if He doesn't come in your lifetime and you've seen a lot in the Church die, what do you do? You keep going forward and holding on to what you know is true. That's what this is about.

**...and have labored for My name's sake.** For the truth, for what was given. So it's about Christ, for His name's sake and for God, but for Christ as well, being our Passover and those things that were being taught.

**...and have not become weary.** “To grow weary; to faint; to give up” is what the word means. I've known so many who just gave up in fighting the fight. We were talking about some of that last night, in different areas, and trying to remember certain names and what happened earlier on after the Apostasy and thinking about different ones that were out here and different ones in the ministry. It's just mind-boggling what we went through during the Apostasy. So many people just becoming weary or just giving up the fight and deciding something else was more valuable than holding on to what they had, becoming weaker or whatever.

That's what happens when people begin to drift, become lukewarm, and let up. If you let up, you're going to become weak. You're going to become so weak that you can't hold on, you can't do the things you need to do, and you will give up because it becomes wearisome because you can't do it on your own. To become weak without God's power, and you're left without that because you're not seeking it, or you're sinning (which it turns to that in time and you become weaker yet), and then it comes a time where God says He doesn't extend the help anymore, period, and He cuts us off from His holy spirit. Then people do give up because they can't hold on to what they don't have the power and ability to hold on to anymore. It's a fight.

**You have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love.** So, this is an overall pattern of something that happened in the period of Ephesus. As it went on, there were people who began to leave that first love. So, he's addressing that faction of individuals who, at the beginning, had a zeal and excitement. I think, you know, who doesn't, when we come into the Church, an excitement for things we're seeing that we've

never understood, things that we can grasp and comprehend that we couldn't comprehend before. It's exciting. It's inspiring. It's motivating.

And they experienced this, but they began to lose it, that first love, which has so much to do with being thankful for what we've been given from the beginning. Things we're never to forget. Things we've been going through in this series, and even today, going through things having to do with our lives and what God has given to us. Awesome.

**Remember, therefore, from whence you have fallen.** It's making it clear here there are those who became weak, there are those who left that first love, left the truth, left, gave up, they're not in the Church anymore. And this is what they're being told. "Remember from where you have fallen." What is it? What took place? And repent.

As long as repentance is given to us, if we'll repent, genuinely, truthfully before God, honestly before God, in humility before God, we have a promise. We're God's. We have that impregnation, and we can change. God will forgive us if it's true and genuine with those who are begotten of His holy spirit. But the sad thing is, so many won't ever do that. They don't do that. They don't repent.

He says, **Repent and do the first works.** Be stirred up again in spirit. Be excited about what you have, the truth you've been given. Hold on to it. **...or else I will come quickly. I'll come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.** So, making it very clear here that there is that process we go through in life, and either we grow and continue to fight, or when it says quickly, it's not about His second coming. It's about the fact that you can have it gone in your life like that. It's a matter of a judgment that takes place, when God says no more...no more. And sadly, that's happened to people. We won't know about that till later on in time. But anyway. **...unless you repent.**

**Verse 12**, the next era of the Church behind the time of John, who wrote the book of Revelation. **Now to the angel of the Church of Pergamus write, These are the things said by He who has the sharp two-edged sword.** You know what that's about? You know what a sharp two-edged sword is about? It's about the word of God. And it slices, and it reveals things, it gives things to us that are sharp in the sense of things we can see and grasp and comprehend. The other way slices as well to those who don't want to continue living this way of life, to those who leave it, to those who don't esteem it, to those who don't cherish it, that there is judgment.

So, it's about a matter of judgment, it's about a matter of things we're given as well, of great power that's there, that God doesn't leave it just lying there. There's a purpose in everything that God has given to us when He calls us. And either we'll continue on, and we'll grow in spirit and draw closer to God, become sharper in the word of God, and the way of God, or that sharpness will take care of us, and we'll be judged by it as well.

**These are the things said by He who has the sharp two-edged sword. I know your works and where you dwell...** So, it's pretty descriptive here. ...**where Satan's throne is.** So, where do you think that was at this time? In Rome. That's where it was. That's where all the garbage was coming together. All the things that led up to what Constantine finally did in 325 AD. All the things that took place where Peter and Paul were killed, and that power that was emerging and starting to grow and change and form its own type of what they called Christianity, which wasn't Christianity at all, that finally became solidified in 325 AD through Constantine when the government then took control in formulating a church and establishing doctrine. Incredible what took place. Incredible what's written in history that people just ignore.

I'm a little blown over by that. It doesn't take much. In this age today, of technology, to be able to look up 325 AD, Constantine, and read about the history of what he did, and read about the doctrines he came up with that weren't a part of scripture, the things they changed, outlawing Passover at that time. They would kill people for not obeying what they gave and for obeying something different. Sunday instead of the Sabbath, institution of Easter at that time began to take place. Incredible.

**These are the things said by He who has a sharp two-edged sword. I know your works and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is, and you hold fast to My name.** So, that was pretty tough to live in that kind of an environment where the tide was turning against you because, being in the Church, you were seen as being Jewish, and they hated the Jews at that time. Rome was more and more hating the Jews. All we have to do is, again, read some of that history of what took place throughout that period of time. It was 70 AD, finally, you know, when they destroyed things in Jerusalem and they had around 100,000 slaves they took to build the Colosseum in Rome. That was the kind of atmosphere.

They hated that government, hated the Jews because they wouldn't come into alignment with what they believed. They wouldn't just give in. The Jewish people didn't just give in. And so there was a great deal of persecution. Anyone who kept something similar, Passover, the Holy Days, the seventh-day Sabbath, they weren't treated very well because people who don't know and don't understand equate them as being the same. "You're a Jew." You ever been called that? "Well, what are you, Jewish?" "You don't believe in Christ?" Yes, I do. They can't deal with that. It's hard.

While at camp, I have to share this with you. I went to the chaplain of the system there, prison. He worked with all three systems that were there: the camp that we had, and then the maximum security, and the minimum. I think they call it minimum security. He would go between all these.

And one time he was in the dining room at lunchtime, and so I went up to him because Passover's coming and I'd like to be able to be treated like others who were Jewish who are there who can get their matzos and...probably going too far to ask for a little bit of wine. I knew that wasn't going to go over. But at least to get matzos. And so, he started questioning me about what I believed, and he couldn't deal with it. "Well, you believe in Christ, and you do this, you keep Passover, and you keep these." He said, "We really don't have a category for you." That was his comment, "And I can't help you."

Yet they had druids, who had druid beliefs (that's what they claimed), and they gave them a part of the camp out there where they could go and have their fires and their rituals. And you think, "You'll let the druids go out there and work with them and provide them with firewood..." because I was part of the crew that had to help them with their firewood. We'd stock their firewood every once in a while. It was part of our job. And then we also provided it for the native Indians there because they had their own place of their worship where they had these hot sweat tents, things, or whatever they were in their place. But it was all a farce. Everybody had religion because of it was a kind of a farce to get around the rules.

But anyway, "I don't have a place for you. You don't fit into any spot." It's like, "Okay." So anyway, thankfully, in my particular dorm area, there was a Jewish man who had several boxes of matzos he could get every year, and he was kind enough to share me with a box and give me a box. I won't tell you how the wine came about. But anyway. But I did what I was supposed to do with a little help. A lot of help.

I've got to tell you this. Early on in the ministry, when I was first ordained an elder in Houston, Texas, there was a minister there who worked a great deal with different prison systems, with people who wanted information about the Church and so forth. This is at a time when the Church was quite large.

There were people in the prison systems who had become a part of the Church, supposedly. I never saw one come through the system who succeeded. You know, because there are scriptures that are taken out of context, "to remember those" basically "who were in prison." Well, Paul was in prison. You'd better remember him and different ones who were put in prison. But if someone's put in prison because of things they did that were bad and evil and wrong, well, that's a different story. But anyway, and the Church didn't learn that at the beginning.

But anyway, this minister sent me up to the main prison system north of Houston, into an area to do Passover service for a group there. And what they were doing in the system, he had worked with the prison system, so they would bring people in from different other prisons, and they would have to transport them there to keep Passover. So, he had quite a bit of clout with the people there to get this done because there were so many involved in this that they couldn't be seen as not making a place for them.

So anyway, he gave me a box of matzos and some towels. I had to take the pans for the people to have the foot washing. And so, he wanted me to go up there and do it, so I went up there to do the Passover service. (Who knew that later on I'd be in there and need help at that point?) But anyway, I got to tell the story. I went through the first guard station, and it's maximum security at this prison. And so, I went in through there with this box, because it has matzos in it, to give everybody a box. He had already set that up and some other things. And I had these little containers of Welch's grape juice, and they had like four

bottles in there, I think, or six. And somehow, one of them got filled with wine. Anyway, I had this with me, and I told my wife, "If I don't come back, you'll know why. They caught me with it."

So, anyway, I'm going through there, and they asked me who I was and what I was doing. "I'm going back there, back to the section where they're going to have this Passover." "Oh, yeah, yeah. Come on in." They didn't check the box. Blew my mind! A maximum-security place, and they didn't check anything. Then I went through a second security zone because this place is max. went through a second security zone, and again, some of the same things happened. I had the box there and had it ready to be looked at and everything, and "Oh yeah, yeah. Come on in." They took me all the way back into this one little area, of what they call their chapel, and we had Passover that night.

Anyway, I had to tell you the story, that even though I helped some observe it at that particular time, I never knew that I would be in need of some of the same thing. Anyway.

"...among where Satan dwells." So, it goes on here in this story about what's taking place because this is where Satan's throne is. We recognize, we understand that's in Rome because of what took place. **You've held fast My name, and have not denied My faith.** In other words, continued to live by what they believed, what they knew was true. So, Pergamos was noted for this. So, given this thinking, it's making it clear here, this is a positive thing that they did.

**...even in the days of Antipas.** Now, this is an interesting word. It means "anti-papa," "anti-pope." So, it's in Rome. It says, **even in the days of Antipas was My faithful martyr.** So, it's making it clear here, this hasn't happened yet. This was written and given to John, and it said there's going to be someone, in essence, who fulfills this role of being against the pope. God knew human minds, governments, how they think, how they are, and what they would do with what happened. Because Joshua died and was resurrected, He knew what Satan was going to do. What an incredible thing!

God knows those kinds of things that are going to come to pass, what human beings will do with what they have. He knew that there would come a time when He would need someone, He would work with someone who would stand up against the pope at that time. So, that's what it says. "He was My faithful martyr," meaning he's going to die for what he says and for his stance of being against. So, his name was called Antipas. That's why he was called that. So, the name God gave to him, in essence.

**...who was killed among you where Satan dwells.** So, it hadn't happened yet. It's going to happen a long time later, after the period of Ephesus. Incredible. Awesome.

**Verse 14—But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold to the doctrine of Balaam.** Same old story. Ideas that people have, thinking that people have primarily here Sun-day, and the worship that was done then, and the different religions that were there, and the thinking that these religions, these false religions had in the time of the Israelites. It never stopped. Those things continued with other nations around. It was throughout the Roman Empire as well.

And so, when you come along with this, here are some that begin to give in to some of the thinking and the teaching of some of the things that were rising up at that time. And that's what he said. "This is against you, that you're doing this, that you hold to the doctrine of Balaam." In essence, "You're turning away from the truth that was given to you," in essence, "about the Sabbath, and you're turning away to something" in essence "that is hideous and sick."

**...who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality.** That was physical, and he's condemning them because of something spiritual because they were in the Church. He's addressing people who were baptized into the Church. That's what this is about.

This isn't to the world; it's to people in the Church. They were making this move somewhere to go away from the truth that had been given to them. And they were doing this on a spiritual plane, to eat things sacrificed to idols. What does that mean? That which they were practicing, some of these different groups. They may not have been using the name Jesus yet. We don't know exactly when that started fully and who was using it, but this is what was happening. Some of the same stories, but changing the doctrines to match things of paganism, if you will, things that had come from some of these other religions. Because Rome had a method here of mixing it all in a great big pot so they could appease the people they were conquering and establishing a single religion, as a whole. That's how they functioned, the Romans did. That's why they were given credit for lasting as long as they did and doing the things they did.

So anyway. And to commit sexual immorality? Spiritually, it's about a relationship with God. That's the way God says it is. It's worse because it's done spiritually. When you begin flirting around with, doing things you shouldn't do with something that's totally opposite of what you've been taught, and this was just coming to pass. It was just being raised up.

We live in an age when it's already fully established with great power. But this was just starting, and that's why He's talking to them in this regard, "This is what you started doing."

**You also have those who hold to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly.** It's the same story. Repent. So repentance is a matter that continues on, of things that people in the Church were to fight. And so many didn't.

That's what's such a marvel to understand in our history, things that Christ said and warned about, that so many would be called, but so very few would ever be chosen. So few go through this entire process. The vast majority leave the Church. That's why God is showing us more and more things about the Great White Throne and what happens when all of mankind has the opportunity to be resurrected to life again, and everything is established about God's government, and all who are added to it there. After the thousand years of the Millennium, and you have this powerful process whereby people can be helped.

And are they going to change? It shows they're going to be like the sand of the sea in number who reject God. Awesome. Incredible that it could even happen.

He says, **Repent, or I'll come to you quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.** It's about judgment again. The two-edged sword, "the sword of My mouth." It's there to serve, to give, to cut through all the bull in the world, and to show the truth and give the truth and enlighten the mind. It's also there to judge and give judgment. Depends on what choices we make.

I thought we'd get it farther. I'll stop there today.

But it's incredible. As you go through these stories to the different Church eras, you see there's this battle. It didn't just affect one era. It goes on and on and on. Why? Because we're human beings, and because all human beings don't choose and embrace God, even though they start the process, are baptized, say they repent of sin, and then at some time give in to it, and cease to fight the fight that we all have to fight. That's why we're told it's a battle, and you have to fight it till we're there, never giving up, never stopping.