

Fundamentals of Belief
#13B: The Holy Days Depict God's Plan

Edited Sermon Transcript
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We are going to continue this very long series on the Fundamentals of Belief of the Church of God, The Eternal. If you will remember from the last time I was here with you, we began the first sermon on fundamental thirteen, which has to do with God's annual Holy Days.

This has already been a very long series. I know it is more than fifty sermons, although I haven't kept up with the exact number. Knowing that there are twenty-six fundamentals in our beliefs, we will only be at the halfway point once I complete this topic. So we probably have at least another year and a half of sermons to go before I finish this series. The good thing about it is, I know what I am going to be speaking about. Since each fundamental is different, there is a good amount of variety. Each fundamental addresses a very different aspect and topic.

Fundamental thirteen is concerning God's Holy Days. Let me read it verbatim, once again:

We believe the seven Annual Holy Days as given to ancient Israel by God through Moses, kept by Christ, the Apostle Paul, and the New Testament Church, as evidenced by the books of Acts and Corinthians, are to be kept today. The sacrifices, which were added, are not to be kept on those days nor any other day of the year. During the spring festival of seven days, leavening in any form is not to be eaten, as Paul instructed the Corinthians.

Last time, we went through and looked at some fundamental concepts that I wanted each one of you to have before getting into the specifics on the commands to keep the Holy Days. Rather than jumping right into the commands in the Old Testament and the typical justifications that we all learned long ago about why the Holy Days have not been done away, I began by asking the question, "What is the value to begin with in God's Holy Days?" If we understand their value and relevance to us, I think it makes a much stronger case for the fact that they are not done away. If we can prove and substantiate—which we will do—that the Holy Days picture something in the future that has not been fulfilled, then they are not antiquated, out of date, and they certainly have not been done away.

We recognize that the content and the meaning of God's annual Holy Days answer all of the important questions that have plagued mankind for generations. They answer the difficult questions that mankind has never been able to answer effectively about why he is alive, what his purpose is on the earth, and what is the explanation for all that he sees going on around him on this earth today.

Men want to come up with a conjecture out of their own minds and, under the inspiration of our adversary, want to tell us that man is basically good. We just have to work out the rough spots to achieve our own perfect society—to have that utopian existence upon this earth. Who really believes that? They claim it and have nothing else to hold on to, so I guess they hold on to it regardless. Is that what we really see happening in the world today? Do you really see a world inhabited by human beings who inherently are good and only experience bad, evil, and trouble by virtue of the environment that we live in and are raised in? Is that what we really see?

Every once in a while, you will hear someone honestly admit that every experience of humankind on the face of the earth bespeaks the inherent sin and transgression in our very hearts and minds by nature. That is one of those concepts—understanding the real nature of human beings—which is explained in God's annual Holy Days.

Those things are not explained and admitted in any other faith. They are just not there, but God's annual Holy Days do give the answers. They give the answers about why you see all of the violence, murder, abuse, hate, war, misery, and agony existing today—the answer that says it is not an indication that God is failing. Those who believe that God is out here right now trying to save the world, locked in this combat with Satan for the souls of men, certainly have to believe that God is failing. There are a whole lot more "non-Christians" on this earth than there are even those

who claim the name of Christ, let alone those who claim the name of Christ and do not exhibit anything close to the orientation of Christ's mind.

If I had to turn to the explanations of other religions to understand what is really happening on the earth and what God is working out, I would give up religion altogether. I categorically would reject it all, because they have no answers that explain what we are experiencing and what has happened in the history of man.

The one set of tenants that accurately, fully, and comprehensively tells us what God is truly doing on this earth is explained within the content of God's Holy Days—the weekly Sabbath and God's annual Holy Days. Those of you who have had your minds opened to understand that truth, which was a miracle in and of itself, have embraced those things we learned, beginning decades ago through the ministry of Mr. Armstrong. You have a pearl of great price, which helps you put everything into perspective.

No matter what devastation you see, no matter what trying and horrendous circumstances are upon this earth, you do not have to be troubled. You can put it into perspective, and you know how it fits into the overall plan that God is working out. God's plan is not narrow and short-sighted. It is not just for today. It is an expanse from the very beginning of the time God set this plan in motion. From the creation of the earth—the time that He re-created the earth and placed man upon it—He set in motion His will to save us over thousands of years.

Last week, we mentioned the other key doctrinal concept that the world does not understand, which is pictured in that which we learned through the Sabbath and the Holy Days. It is the understanding of the times of salvation—the fact that God isn't trying to save everyone on the earth right now. Only a few have been given the opportunity to understand the truth at this time. Most of the world is in ignorance. They cannot understand and will not understand until God chooses to open their minds.

For the most part, men are doing things according to their own will. They are doing that which is right in their own eyes, seeking to achieve their own utopian society. God is proving, by the failed efforts that they have had and will continue to have, that they cannot create their own society. They cannot have goodness or success outside of the very laws of God. They are writing the lessons right now. Those of us who understand are not in despair. We recognize that God's will is still being carried out, even in the midst of all of the horrendous things that are around us in this world today.

So last time, we saw that this world despairs to explain the things that are going on around them. However, for the Church, all of those who were called and placed into the Body of Jesus Christ, and those being called and having your minds opened even now, those commanded Holy Days of God provide the answer to man's greatest questions.

For review, let's turn to Colossians 2:16. This is a scripture that we are going to come back to in a future sermon before I finish this topic. It is one of those contested scriptures that people want to argue about, but I want to use it in a different way at this particular moment.

Colossians 2:16–17:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days [So we are speaking of Holy Days, new moons, and Sabbath days.]: Which are a shadow of things to come . . .

The Holy Days are included in that list of things which picture something yet to be fulfilled in the future. We are not talking about something that is past, that has been fulfilled already. It is not just a distant memory of the past. We are not talking about a set of commanded observances that are only for the Jews, because they look back on historical things that occurred centuries ago in the lives of Israel and the Jews. When we are talking about God's Holy Days, we are speaking of something that represents the future, not the past. Something that looks forward to show a blueprint of what God is working out on this earth. If those things have not been fulfilled yet, is there not a good chance that God still requires and intends for us to keep them—to continue to look forward to the picture of that which He is carrying out on this earth?

Obviously, man has not been saved yet, has he? If we understand the truth, human beings have not been changed into immortal spirit beings, and they are not living in the Family of God. All of those things have not been accomplished yet. Those are the very things pictured by God's annual Holy Days. They still look forward and foreshadow that which is yet to be fulfilled.

What is it then that they foreshadow? What is that great Master Plan that is revealed through God's Feast Days? Well, let's now begin in Leviticus chapter 23. Having laid the groundwork, we are ready to walk through the commands in

Leviticus 23 for the keeping of the Holy Days. Today, we are going to go through the overview—the synopsis—of the plan of salvation as pictured through the Holy Days. We will see how well I can do that to get this within the time. We are not going to be able to stop and go into great detail on each one. Obviously, we give the details of each one of those, as meat in due season, at the appropriate time throughout the year for each Holy Day. We want just to cover synoptically an overview of that entire plan and the answers that plan gives as a pearl of great price—that which the world is blinded to understand.

Let's begin in Leviticus 23:1–8:

And the [Eternal] spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the [Eternal] . . .

We find out right away that we are not speaking of the Feasts of Moses, the Jews, or the Israelites; we are talking about something that is the possession of the Living God. They are His Feasts. He made them and created them; therefore, they must be significant.

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the [Eternal], which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts.

God emphasizes, lest anyone has any doubt, that they are His possession. Why? Those days are the blueprint to show exactly what God is doing and what He is working out for purpose in the lives of men upon this earth.

Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest [the scripture we went through recently in covering fundamental number twelve on the weekly Sabbath and its significance], an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the [Eternal] in all your dwellings.

We looked at the significance of that weekly Sabbath day, the seventh of every weekly period of days, having been hallowed and set apart by God as holy—His day. As you will remember, we showed from Genesis that He kept it first. He established the Sabbath as holy by keeping it Himself. He rested from His work of that recreation. He hallowed the seventh day, and we went into detail to show that the Sabbath day was not just a command that we were ordered to keep for the sake of

showing we are willing to obey. Yes, that is part of it, but even more significantly, it is because that weekly Sabbath day, week by week, pictures the future also, just as we read in Colossians 2.

It pictures the future, that coming Millennial reign of Jesus Christ upon this earth. Every single week that we come before Him in holy convocation, we are picturing and looking forward to the fulfillment of the return of Jesus Christ and the marvelous government that He is going to establish one day upon this earth. We have that hope, and by keeping the Sabbath day, we look forward—not backward, but forward—to that ultimate fulfillment.

Then, what do we find next? Verse 4:

"These are the feasts of the Lord, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons." Ok, so now we are coming to a different classification of observances and holy convocations that God has commanded. The weekly Sabbath is that Holy Day that falls once in seven days all year long—approximately fifty-two days every solar year. Now, in verse 4, we are talking about a totally different classification of days—holy convocations which are to be kept in their seasons. Last time, we went through to show that those seasons were created for the Holy Days, not the other way around. God created the seasons in order to earmark the Holy Days, because it requires those seasons—spring, summer, fall, and winter—in order to help picture that which God is doing. It relates to harvests—the spring harvest and a fall harvest—representing the very call, growth, and salvation of men from this earth. It is all pictured within the concept of seasons. God set the astrobodies in motion specifically to highlight those things we were going to need in order to picture that plan of salvation.

We begin in verse 5 with the first command—the first part of that Master Plan revealed through God's commanded annual Holy Days—the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread:

These are the feasts of the [Eternal], even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons. In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. But ye shall offer an

offering made by fire unto the [Eternal] seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

Here first is the command for the Passover, and then the Days of Unleavened Bread with a holy convocation on the first and seventh days. These are two high Holy Days, and something called the Passover.

So, if you just picked up the Bible, began reading Leviticus 23, and you read about a Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, it would be very difficult to put together the significance of those things for us today in this age, wouldn't it? They seem to be ancient days of antiquity.

Many people rightly understand the significance of Passover as picturing and foreshadowing Christ. The problem is that they believe Christ is the end of the plan. All that call themselves so-called Christians believe the plan ends with Christ. When Christ came in the flesh, lived, performed His ministry, died on the stake, was resurrected and became our High Priest, that was the end of the plan. Now, all we have to do is run around the world, preach the gospel to every ear that will hear us, knock on every door, convince every human being to say the magic words, "I accept Jesus Christ as my personal Savior," and then you're in the club. You have it sewn up; salvation is yours. You will go up to heaven when you die, sit on a cloud, play a harp and be with the Lord forever. That is what you are told.

They believe Christ is the end of the plan. They think that His death and fulfillment as the Passover Lamb, which is what He is, is the end of the story. All we have to do is scramble and make sure we get in before it is too late. Then we will avoid going to a hellfire where we have the potential—if we reject Christ and don't say the magic words—of dying in torment and burning forever and ever under the pitchfork of a devil in a red suit and horns. Those are the images you would be led to believe are true about what God is doing. Not so. The command to keep the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread is the beginning of the blueprint. Christ is first, because there is not even the beginning of the start of a plan to save man without Christ's sacrifice.

So it is that which began the explanation we heard through a chosen servant in these last days, which was unlike anything else we heard. You know it was unique. Yes, other ministers and religions had little tidbits of it. They might have had a certain understanding of a particular element, but not a single one of them could put the whole picture together. They could not show you the beginning from the end and

put it in terms so that the Bible is spelling out from Genesis to Revelation, in a harmonious mosaic, the very plan God is working out. There was only one man who did that, brethren. There was only one servant in these last days, and that was Mr. Armstrong.

We were taught that Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread are the beginning of the story. It comes first. Its command in Leviticus 23 certainly did apply to the Church, as well as to the ancient Israelites, because it pictures the very way that God is choosing to save man. Christ is that Passover Lamb. You don't need to turn to it because you know it, but in John 1:29, John the Baptist said, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that Christ was the Passover Lamb. That is what he called Him when he saw Him approaching—the Lamb that takes away the sins of the world. He recognized that He was that Lamb. Also, 1 Corinthians 5:7: ". . . Christ our passover is sacrificed for us . . ." Was Christ the Passover Lamb? You better believe He was. The command for the keeping of the first Passover is found in Exodus 12. No need to turn there; we go through that every year during the Passover season. Exodus 12 is where God commanded the symbols that were required of ancient Israel in order to begin this memorial and to picture that which Christ was going to do.

The Israelites were commanded to take a lamb on the tenth day, to find one that was without blemish, to keep it until the 14th, and then to kill it in the evening. We have already gone through this explanation. That means the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th day of the first month, according to God's calendar. They were to slay the Passover lamb, roast it with fire, not breaking any of its bones, and they were to eat it and to burn in the morning anything that remained.

It was a physical emblem that pictured something phenomenal that was going to happen generations from that point in time. It pictured the coming of Jesus Christ as our Savior and Messiah who would live perfectly that way of life in the flesh and die as our sacrifice, signified by that Passover lamb. He would be resurrected out of the grave three days and three nights later. He would ascend to the heavens to be accepted of the Father and to become our Great High Priest.

We were taught that this was the beginning of the plan, the start of that which God was accomplishing to save mankind. That is why it is followed by, and contained part and parcel with, the Days of Unleavened Bread, which start the night of the 15th. The Passover is the beginning of the 14th, followed twenty-four hours later at sunset by the beginning of Nissan 15th—the beginning of the Days of Unleavened Bread.

The Days of Unleavened Bread picture what? If you read Leviticus 23 by itself, you probably wouldn't know. Who, outside of those called to the knowledge of the truth, understands the significance of the Days of Unleavened Bread whatsoever? Leavening, brethren, represents sin.

Let's notice Galatians 2:17. When we were called into the Church, we became knowledgeable of the fact that, if Christ is the beginning and He died for us because of our sins, we cannot continue living in sin and think we are going to be His. That is what these other so-called Christian groups want you to believe. Once saved, always saved—a continual state of grace. Everything comes under the continuation of the shed blood of Christ; so, no matter what you do, what transgression or sin, it is automatically under Christ's sacrifice. Once you say the magic words, "I believe; I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior," then you are under this continual state of grace. His blood naturally washes away your sins as you commit them. Not at all.

Galatians 2:17–18:

But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners [What is a sinner? A lawbreaker. Sin is the transgression of the law. If we are found to be lawbreakers after we say that we want Christ], is therefore, Christ the minister of sin? [Is He condoning sin? Is He condoning lawbreaking after that?] God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor [a lawbreaker].

The Apostle Paul was very clear. Although he is the apostle that is quoted as being the one who did away with the law, time and time again throughout the epistles of Paul, you find him saying, "God forbid, God forbid, God forbid that the law is done away."

Christ's sacrifice pictures the beginning of the plan—our need to have Christ, a relationship with Him, His power and His strength working with us if we are going to accomplish God's will. As we learned, brethren, the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed is to take away our past guilt from sins in the past. We do not justify continuing to live in a way of sin in the future, thinking our sins are automatically washed away. Not at all. We have to continue to go back and ask forgiveness for the sins we commit. Yes, when we are not living in a way of sin, not pursuing a lifestyle of sin, not trying to transgress or justify transgression of His law, then He is ever willing

mercifully to forgive us and to wash away our sins under His shed blood. There is a huge difference between that which is called nominal Christianity and what we were taught.

That tells us why the Days of Unleavened Bread are so important. Being true Christians, we begin to walk in a way that requires us to do what? We must put away the lifestyle of lawbreaking that we have been pursuing before, and we must believe that Christ is the Savior and desire to embrace Him. To walk in that way of life means that we turn and accept the very laws He ordained and personified. Remember John 1:1; He is the word made flesh. He is the one who gave the Ten Commandments. Those Commandments preexisted the time of Mt. Sinai. All of those laws were in existence from the very beginning. He is the one who personifies that very law—all of them: the statutes, judgments, and commandments. If we have a respect and a love for Christ, we don't continue to walk in a way of life that repudiates those things and besmirches the very things that God loves.

When we accept Christ, we begin to walk on a different path. It is different from that which we walked before. We don't justify our sins now by saying they are automatically under the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Yes, He forgives us as we stumble, make mistakes, and say, "Forgive me." Seeking forgiveness, however, is a recognition that we did something wrong. We did what? We broke a law; we shouldn't have done it. Therefore, calling out for the shed blood of Christ to cover us and to renew our relationship with the Father is something we have to do continually going forward.

The Days of Unleavened Bread—that command we just read—picture the requirement for us to put sin out of our lives, to change and to go the other way, to begin to walk differently than we walked before. Within it all, brethren, is the critical concept of understanding what the nature of man is. You must understand that God created mankind separate and apart, totally opposed to the mind of God; that what we are by nature—you and me in our hearts and minds—opposes every good thing of God. If you know and accept that, then you understand something the rest of the world does not.

This world is being inundated with concepts of humanism. Humanistic, rationalistic thought says that we are good by nature, and the solutions for all of the problems of mankind are found within our own selves. It is within our own natural capacity of mind to solve the world's problems and create that utopian society.

That which is pictured by the Days of Unleavened Bread conversely says that man is separated, reviled, despised, and subject to every evil according to our natural natures. We don't have time to read it, but you can read Romans chapter 3 and see how Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, described human nature—that which we all possess and are guilty of: ". . . there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Our righteousness by nature, brethren, is as filthy rags. That is what we are, and it is only those who recognize that fact who have an opportunity then to keep appropriately the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. We recognize what we are in comparison to the God who made us. We come to realize we are so vile by nature that we need to change and we need a different Spirit and orientation to govern our lives.

Then, we understand the future significance of the Days of Unleavened Bread. It becomes so much more than a memorial of something that happened back in Egypt when the Israelites first walked out and became a nation. We recognize that it does apply to the Church. It is our requirement to accept Jesus Christ as our Savior. That doesn't just mean in name only, but to begin to apply ourselves to overcoming the natural self—to put out sin, to examine the self to find all of the hidden intricacies, the idols of mind and heart that reside, which we protect and shield, to admit what they are and begin to work to put them out. That is why He used the symbolism of leavening. It is an agent which is very difficult to eradicate because we use it so often in our homes. The very process of the symbolism, requiring us physically to remove leavening from our homes once a year for a seven-day period, reminds us that we must put sin out of our lives.

Notice 1 Corinthians 5:6–7:

Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us . . .

This is a direct relationship to being able to accept Christ as the Passover Lamb. It requires us to put out the spiritual equivalent of leaven from our lives.

"Therefore let us keep the feast . . ." We will read this again when we get into the technicalities of substantiating that the Holy Days have not been done away. Here, Paul commanded a Gentile church to keep the Feast:

Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Who is the source of truth? Only God, only Christ—the Word made flesh. That is truth. That means we have to put out what we are by nature, and we have to embrace Christ. Christ has to begin to live within us from that time forward. We continue to fight the flesh every day of our lives as long as we draw breath in these bodies. Those natural, carnal natures are with us and seek to control us. We have an adversary who knows exactly how to play upon those weaknesses; so it is a continual battle.

Those who are approved of God are those who recognize, first and foremost, what they are—separated from God by nature, opposed to Him in every way. We realize that we need another power—His power—to give us the potential to come into a close relationship with Him, which we could never achieve on our own.

The Days of Unleavened Bread, in concert with Passover then, are the first building blocks pictured in those annual days.

What is next? Keep your finger in Leviticus 23; we will be here all afternoon.

We have discussed the Passover service, which is not, in itself, a Holy Day. It is a very solemn service, pictured by the New Testament emblems that Christ initiated in replacement of the lamb. The foot-washing service is to show our humility and our willingness to serve one another and sacrifice the self. The bread pictures the broken body of Christ which specifically relates to His role as our healer. We can call on Him in times of need to heal our afflictions within these bodies. The wine pictures the very spilt blood of Christ that covers our sins and that we call upon for forgiveness in order to restore ourselves to that relationship with the Father and our High Priest.

You can read John 13 and Matthew 26 to find the institution of those New Testament symbols which, after Christ came and died in the flesh, correspond to the fulfillment of that which was pictured specifically by the Passover lamb. It continues to be relevant and points forward to the significance of Christ for the Church.

In Leviticus 23:9–12, 15–16 and 21, we find the next critical Holy Day in the plan:

And the [Eternal] spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof [We are speaking of a harvest.], then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest . . .

Now, we have the symbolism of a harvest. Something is pulled out of that particular harvest which is called the firstfruits—a specific sheaf of that firstfruits harvest.

. . . unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the [Eternal], to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the [Eternal]. (Verse 15) And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days [So there is something significant here about a fifty-day count.]; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the [Eternal]. [The command for an assembly and a solemn service.] (Verse 21) And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you . . .

Here now is the third holy convocation that we find in the plan. First, the Passover service, which is not a Holy Day, but a holy, solemn convocation. It is where we renew ourselves in the commitment to accepting Christ, the real Christ, and everything that He pictures. It is followed then by the Days of Unleavened Bread with holy convocations on the first and seventh high days. These are holy convocations, days that are set apart—annual Sabbaths. Now we have the third holy convocation on a high Sabbath day, which occurs after a fifty-day count in this case. In Deuteronomy 16, it is a forty-nine day count, but both counts arrive at the same day that God has set apart for this special holy convocation.

And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

Seems to me like God intended for this convocation to continue, don't you think? ". . . it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations." What was the significance of this Holy Day? Pentecost is that day

which represents the gift of the Holy Spirit. It signifies the acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Great High Priest, as the first of the firstfruits—the wave sheaf. It was a small cutting from the firstfruits harvest that was waved before the priest and accepted of God. He was the first to receive the reward—that reward we all seek.

Pentecost has so much significance. It is the day probably most significant for the Church today. It is that day which represents the firstfruits harvest, the spring harvest. We begin to recognize, through Pentecost, the difference in God's plan as He makes distinction in the times of salvation. He chooses distinct times to call people to a knowledge of the truth and set them on that way, giving them the opportunity to have a relationship with Christ. If His plan was to call everyone in the entire world at one time and give them saving knowledge, then you would only have one huge, gigantic harvest pictured here. What do we have by God creating the division of the seasons within the annual year? The spring harvest and the fall harvest—the distinction of a spring harvest, which is much smaller, to that of the fall harvest that we have every year around the world.

Those in agriculture absolutely recognize those principles. God used them to picture the way He is choosing to save mankind. So what do we learn from Pentecost? It pictures the firstfruits harvest, that which represents the Church today. It pictures those few who, out of all the billions on the face of the earth, have been called to understand and have that relationship with Jesus Christ. We are those who are at risk now, based upon what we do with that knowledge. We have everything to gain and everything to lose, brethren. We have the ultimate relationship at stake—to be a part of the firstfruits harvest, pictured by Pentecost, with eternal life in that God Family. If we fail, we will be rejected and burned. Pentecost has so many symbols, all of which we can only begin to go over this afternoon.

Let's begin in Acts 2:1. The fulfillment and the significance for the Church today is much different than that which is kept by the Jews. They basically count Pentecost as a memorial of the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. That is the real significance to them, something that happened generations ago. They do not begin to understand the significance going forward—as we saw, ". . . a shadow of things to come . . ."

Acts 2:1–4:

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come . . ." That means the fifty-day count was completed; and therefore, they were all assembled to keep that day which God set aside as a holy convocation.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy [Spirit], and began to speak with other tongues [or languages], as the Spirit gave them utterance.

This was the very first time—on this day, Pentecost—that the Holy Spirit was given to dwell within the minds of human beings. Yes, for generations the Holy Spirit had guided and directed the activities of the patriarchs—those chosen men that God had used. However, this was the first time that the Spirit was given as a gift, that which could become a part of a human being, guiding and directing his very mind and heart. It could not have been given prior to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That is why Passover has to come first. Christ had to die. He had to become qualified as our High Priest. So Christ, pictured as that wave sheaf, as a part of the command for Pentecost, had to be harvested first from that harvest of the firstfruits. That firstfruits harvest represents the Church—those few in number out of the entire population of the world and all the human beings that have lived and died over the last several thousand years. That firstfruits harvest pictures those who are called to the knowledge of the truth and given their opportunity now.

Christ was the first of the firstfruits, the very first one who attained that promise and reward. He lived perfectly in the flesh, died, and was resurrected. Having been resurrected and accepted of the Father, in the very picture of the waving of the wave sheaf, He became the first of the heirs. We will go into all of that in much more detail for the day of Pentecost, so I resist getting into too much now.

He is the first, and it is by His qualification and receipt of that eternal life—after having lived in the flesh and received that reward—that we look forward to receiving the very same reward as heirs with Christ. It is through the Church—becoming part of the Body of Christ—that we have that opportunity.

Christ was part of the firstfruits harvest. He was a part of those who were called and given life-saving knowledge. He was a part of that Body. He was not

separate and distinct from it; Christ was part of it. His sheaf, representing the wave sheaf, was cut out of the firstfruits harvest; He came first. Following comes the harvest of the Church, all of those in whom dwell His Spirit and in whom Christ is living and having part, even right now. If you were called to a knowledge of the truth, if you have been placed within His Body by virtue of being baptized, then you do have Christ living and dwelling within you, motivating you now. The Days of Unleavened Bread tell us we need to overcome and put sin out of our lives. Pentecost represents the gift of the Holy Spirit and the power by which we can, for the first time, achieve that very goal.

It is not just enough, brethren, for a human being to decide they need to change. Human beings cannot change on their own, and they certainly cannot become godly. It requires a miraculous intervention. Something miraculous occurs when God opens the mind and calls, and we respond to the call, accept Christ, and become baptized. By surrendering ourselves to Him, He gives and imparts to us the gift of the Holy Spirit, just as He did on the first Pentecost after the death of Christ.

It pictures the opportunity to receive that indwelling power by which we can walk forward and begin to overcome our natural, carnal natures that are opposed to God. We can put on the way of Jesus Christ Himself and live after His example. What a beautiful picture it is. What a picture it is that is hidden from the majority of human beings who walk upon this earth today.

Acts 2:38:

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy [Spirit].

We have to repent first, recognizing that a change has to be made. We have to do something different than we have been doing, that which is pictured by Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. Then, receiving the Spirit through baptism gives us the power actually to be able to act upon that way of life and begin to make those changes. That is the first part of the blueprint of how God is choosing to save mankind. It is all incredibly significant; and the reason we continue to keep them year after year is to portray that picture, because it matters. It matters in everything we are doing now and everything that is coming in the future.

The truth is hidden from the world. Let's notice 1 Corinthians 2:7. That is the other major fallacy in the minds of most human beings who think they can pick up the Bible and figure out what the truth is. All they have to do is read, use their concordances and Bible helps, study a little Hebrew and Greek, and they can know the truth.

1 Corinthians 2:7–14:

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery . . ." Here, a called and chosen servant of God is speaking that which he calls a mystery. Why is it a mystery? Because most people don't understand it. They can't understand it.

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory . . .

Who? Those whom He has called and made a part of the Body—those who are a part of that firstfruits harvest, pictured by Pentecost.

"Which none of the princes of this world knew . . ." None of the great, powerful men, the sages, or the learned understood these things, because that is not how you come to understand real truth or, let alone, have a close relationship with God. It has to be a gift.

Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

That is everything we are talking about with these Holy Days, brethren—a picture of those secrets that God has kept from most men and has revealed only to a few. Those few are the only ones who understand the depths of that which He is working out to save mankind.

"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit . . ." Because we were better, more worthy? Not at all. God is the one who makes choice. In fact, we know that He intentionally has selected the base things of the world to confound the mighty. That means we shouldn't revel or glory at all in the fact that we have been called. If anything, it should be a further understanding that we are the least of worth on the face of this earth.

If you are faithful, brethren, if you embrace these things and act upon them, then you will have the opportunity to be of those who will confound the mighty by the very action of God to use us in His service. What a glorious opportunity.

But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit [that Spirit that was given and pictured by Pentecost]: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him [Men understand physical things by virtue of the natural orientation that God has given them, which is part of the spirit of man.]? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

There is a distinct separation. Man cannot delve into the things of God unless God allows it. It is arrogance on the part of human beings to think that they have all knowledge at their disposal if they want to pick up the Bible and figure it out for themselves. It will never happen.

. . . even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

That is what this calling is all about. The fact that you understand the very plan and picture of salvation portrayed in the weekly Sabbath and annual Holy Days is because God miraculously has opened your mind. He has given you an opportunity that He has not given to anyone else on the face of the earth at this time. How priceless and special are you? Not because of your or my inherent worth but because of God's choice to use us. It is that which has made you a part of that firstfruits harvest—those first given the opportunity to understand and receive that reward. It is distinct from the later great fall harvest, when most of the millions and billions who have lived on this earth will have their first opportunity. These are pictured by the division of those seasons.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak [those chosen servants who are speaking the truth, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit], not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy [Spirit] teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him . . .

Someone who is not called to understand God's plan or purpose and with whom God is not working right now thinks the Holy Days, the Sabbath, and everything that we are doing is absolute foolishness. They cannot understand their significance or value whatsoever.

. . . for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The spiritual things of God cannot be discerned without the gift of the Holy Spirit—that Holy Spirit which was given to human beings for the very first time on the Day of Pentecost after the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. After He qualified as our Great High Priest, was waved before the Father at His throne and was accepted, He opened the way for those whom He would call in His appointed time, who would be received into that fellowship of the Church. They would be called into that very Body, to become the flesh and the bone of Jesus Christ in the flesh.

James 1:18:

"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures [or creation]." That is the significance of Pentecost in the plan—the calling of the firstfruits.

Moving on, back to Leviticus 23:23, we find the first Holy Day in the fall—the first convocation commanded of God in the fall season.

Leviticus 23:23–25:

And the [Eternal] spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the [Eternal].

What could this be? What could be the significance of this command if it has relevance for the future? If it is not just a memorial of something past, how does this play into the blueprint of that which God is working out in the future for man's salvation?

Turn to Revelation 11:15. If you read all of these chapters, you find the symbolism of those things that are yet to transpire. We are approaching a period of time marked as that which is called the day of the Lord. It is the very return of Jesus Christ, that mighty God, who will take possession of the governments of this world. It is a time when our adversary Satan the Devil will no longer have dominion. He only has dominion now because God has allowed it. He is not locked into a battle with God for the souls of men. Satan, who was created as an incredible, powerful servant of God, became a rebellious being and rejected God's will and law, making him an adversary. He has been left in place under the authority of God to carry out his nefarious work on this earth, but he is only here as long as God allows him.

Satan is not locked into a battle against good, as these false eastern religions believe. They believe in this concept of yin and yang, where good and evil powers balance one another and both absolutely are required. That is all false. He is under God's authority and, for God's purpose, has been allowed to continue to deceive mankind for reason. He is here to aid mankind in pursuing their own way of thinking—to prove in time, over six thousand years, that man's way ends in misery, heartache and every evil thing. He is there for a reason and being allowed specifically for that reason, brethren. Man has to learn by his own hard experiences. Because he is a free moral agent, God is allowing him to write those lessons apart and separated from God according to his choices, just as our ancestors Adam and Eve who chose to rebel. They had the very same nature you and I have.

Mankind is writing those lessons and will continue to write them for a period of six thousand years. However, at the end of those six thousand years, Christ is coming back to take possession of this earth and to save us from ourselves. He is going to establish His Kingdom upon this earth, and every nation, every person on the face of this earth, will be governed under the laws of God.

No longer, brethren, will it be a time when we are the exception to the rule and considered the foolish. A day is coming when the word of God will be expounded around the world, and there will be no other religion allowed. That deceiver will be taken away. This is all represented by this fall Holy Day called the Feast of Trumpets, which pictures the coming of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 11:15:

"And the seventh angel sounded . . ." This is the seventh symbolic trumpet of seven trumpets that are part of the last and final seal leading up to the return of Jesus

Christ. With the seven trumpet plagues, one by one, God is getting the attention of the people of this earth, so that they know specifically that they are opposed to the God who created them. They begin to reap horrible penalties to prepare and to soften them for the return of Jesus Christ.

And the seventh angel sounded [this final trumpet plague, right as Christ is taking possession of His Kingdom] and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

That is what this Feast of Trumpets, commanded in Leviticus 23, is all about. It pictures the time when that very God is going to come back and take possession of His Kingdom—His throne—upon this earth.

1 Corinthians 15:51–53:

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed [Something else happens on this very auspicious day.], In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump . . .

This is the very same trump we just read about in Revelation 11. At the very return of Jesus Christ, something else happens.

. . . at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

What is that change and to whom does it apply? Hearken back to what we just found concerning Pentecost and the firstfruits harvest. Those who were set apart, called for reason, and given the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit were called to be a part of the Church. It is those who have that life-saving knowledge and have fulfilled their responsibility, even in the flesh now, who will receive their reward at the very moment that Christ comes back.

1 Thessalonians 4:14:

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the

word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

We are not going to come first, if we are alive at the time that Christ returns. Those who have died in a right relationship with Christ, who were called, placed within the Church, and were part of that firstfruits harvest, are going to be resurrected from the grave on this very day that Christ returns. He is coming to take possession of His Kingdom. At this very moment, at the very same time, the saints are going to be resurrected.

. . . we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God . . .

That is the significance of the blowing of trumpets on this Holy Day commanded in the seventh month on the first day of the month, as we just read in Leviticus 23:23.

. . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first [those of the firstfruits harvest—pictured by the spring harvest—who were given that saving knowledge in their lifetime]: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Then what? Are we all going from there up into the clouds, into the stratosphere to heaven? No, it says Christ is coming down to take possession of the earth. He is dethroning the adversary. He is coming to establish His Kingdom on this earth. Those who are resurrected, given their reward of salvation, and join Christ in the air are going to descend with Him in Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives to take possession of the kingdoms of this earth. That world-ruling government will be established—not what man has determined of his own making, which he is trying to bring about as a counterfeit under the inspiration of Satan. Jesus Christ and all of those of the firstfruits harvest will establish the real world-ruling government that God is going to ordain. All of those who have been called and put into the Church at this time—that small harvest, that small percentage of humanity—will receive their reward with Him at that time and usher in the beginning of a thousand years.

Back to Leviticus 23:26–32—the next Holy Day picturing what God is working out on this earth:

And the [Eternal] spake unto Moses, saying, Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the [Eternal]. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the [Eternal] your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.

Here is the next commanded Holy Day. What is its symbolism? What does it mean—that which the world does not even begin to understand? The Day of Atonement pictures the time when Satan the adversary will be put away. As Mr. Armstrong used to explain it, Atonement means At-one-ment. It means, for the first time, man will have the opportunity to be reconciled to God. It will be an opportunity that has not existed since Adam and Eve rejected that God and separated themselves from Him by their disobedience. For the very first time since that moment, man will have an opportunity to be reconnected with God, his Maker. Under that government of Jesus Christ, the adversary who has tempted us to reject God, even as he did in the Garden of Eden, will be separated and taken away where that power can no longer influence mankind against his responsibilities.

Leviticus 16, which we will not have time to read, tells the story, the symbolism, and the specific commands that were a part of the Day of Atonement. You recognize that it is a fast day. "Afflicting our souls" means we fast. We do not drink water or eat food on that day, from sunset to sunset. It is a solemn and holy day that pictures the transfer of responsibility for all of the sins of the world onto the head of that adversary who has incited our own human natures into fulfilling every evil work. All of the sins of mankind will be placed upon the head of that adversary, and he will be bound and taken out of the way.

Revelation 20:1–3 tells us the very fulfillment of that which is pictured by the Day of Atonement:

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years . . .

He is not bound right now. He has been allowed to run loose and do every evil, despicable thing upon this earth in influencing men. Here is a thousand-year period in which that demonic power is going to be bound, set aside, and unable to tempt mankind.

And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

That is part of the plan; we will talk about that in a moment. It is a period when Satan will be bound and taken out of the way as Christ descends and takes over, establishing His government upon this earth. Without that supernatural, evil power, men will be taught for the first time the very laws of God, and all human beings will have their minds open to receive the truth. They will be able to compare that which they did on their own under the inspiration of Satan in the previous six thousand years—all the misery, injustice, and horrific consequences that resulted—to that which God will do when He establishes His laws as the rule of the land.

That leads us directly into the Feast of Tabernacles next.

Leviticus 23:33–36:

And the [Eternal] spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the [Eternal].

Here we have another seven-day Feast, just like we had a seven-day Feast in the spring with the Days of Unleavened Bread. Now, we have another seven-day Feast in the fall.

On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the [Eternal]: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you . . .

Ok, so we do not have just seven days; as it turns out, we actually have an eighth day. We have a holy convocation on the first of seven days, and then there is an eighth day on which we also have a holy convocation.

. . . and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the [Eternal]: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein.

So in this fall Feast, we actually have an eight-day period. There is a Holy Day on the first day of seven days which is called the Feast of Tabernacles. Then there is something about this eighth day that isn't really specified too much here in Leviticus 23. The eighth day is a solemn convocation, a Holy Day, in which we do no work; we keep it as a high Sabbath day. I wonder what that could represent. It absolutely slays me, the number of people who accept the explanation that we had for the Feast of Tabernacles and that which we call the Last Great Day. They still accept the very picture of what those days mean as we learned from Mr. Armstrong, but they reject Mr. Armstrong as having been an inspired servant. You can't have it both ways. If you believe in the veracity of the explanation that matches beautifully, harmonically, and perfectly with the Holy Scriptures, then you have to accept that he was inspired of God. Either that, or you have to put away everything you think you know about the plan of salvation, because no one else taught it but Herbert Armstrong. They just didn't.

What is the meaning? What is the picture of this seven-day Feast? It is that thousand-year reign, brethren, after Christ returns and establishes His government. Satan is bound and put away, and now the remaining human beings upon this earth and all who will be born in the next thousand years will be taught according to the laws of God. They will have their minds opened. They will no longer be deceived. No longer will that knowledge be hidden as it has been for all of these generations. For the first time, all human beings will have their minds opened to receive that truth. This earth will be refashioned and reformed physically and spiritually according to God's laws. It will become the paradise—the utopia—that man has sought, that which he could never achieve under his own auspices, according to his own rationalizations. It can only be achieved by obedience to God's perfect laws. That is what this thousand-year period called the Millennium is all about, and it is pictured by the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Isaiah 11:1–10:

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots [That is Christ.]: And the spirit of the [Eternal] shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the [Eternal] . . .

This is who the governing Ruler, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, is going to be upon this earth at that time.

And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the [Eternal]: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the [Eternal] . . .

That has not happened yet on this earth, brethren. It is certainly not talking about a historical event that happened before. There has never been a time when the knowledge of the Eternal has been extant upon the face of this earth. No, it has been hidden and continues to be hidden. This is talking about a future time yet to come, pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles.

. . . for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the [Eternal], as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek [We are talking about all nations, not just physical Israelites.]: and his rest shall be glorious.

"His rest"—the rest that comes from obedience, acknowledgment, and fulfillment of His perfect laws and commandments, everything that He embodies and always has embodied from the very beginning. For the first time, that will be the law that will rule; that will be the government upon this earth. That will be the way that things are done.

For the first time since the days of Adam and Eve, men will have an opportunity to experience perfect harmony and a glorious life. Even in the flesh, upon this earth, under the perfect and immutable laws of God, they will have that chance. What a perfect and glorious picture that is.

I will let you read Micah 4:1–4 on your own because I am running out of time. That is another scripture which shows the beauty of that which is to come during that Millennial reign pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles that we keep every fall. It shows the great time of Christ's rulership upon this earth, when Satan is put aside.

What about that mysterious, solemn eighth day—that Holy Day that follows directly after the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles? Leviticus 23 didn't give us much information. If you just picked up the Bible and understood the significance of that by yourself, I would have to say that you were very unique and special. No one did it. The only way Mr. Armstrong was able to understand the significance of that eighth day was because he was given it as revelation. He didn't think it up on his own, and no one else wrote about it. No one else understood it, brethren. You cannot find anyone else who understood this entire marvelous plan from beginning to end the way we learned it in the Church.

What is the significance of that eighth day—that solemn, great day of the Feast—which we call the Last Great Day? Turn back to Revelation 20:11–13:

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

What is that all about? The answer is a part of the perfect blueprint, brethren. It will be the majority of humankind's first chance, those who lived and died from the beginning without saving knowledge, having never been given the chance to

understand the truth. For the first time now, they are resurrected from the dead, after the conclusion of 1,000 years of Christ's reign on this earth where the people have lived with the knowledge of God for the first time, under the direction of a spiritual government which includes the saints who were part of the firstfruits.

The earth will have been totally transformed back into that which is very much like the Garden of Eden—a glorious, beautiful creation, having been redone under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the power of God under Christ's leadership. Billions are going to be resurrected at the end of this thousand-year reign and, for the very first time, given their chance to understand the truth. They will have their chance to understand the truth they never understood for their entire lives—whether it was back in one of the first generations before Noah or one of the last generations before the return of Christ. Everyone in that six thousand-year span who lived and died, never having the truth, are going to be resurrected from their graves and given their first opportunity to receive that life-saving knowledge.

For a period of time, however long that is, they will have a chance to live and to prove themselves. Knowing the truth, having access to the Holy Spirit, and according to their willingness to submit themselves to God, they will have their opportunity to be judged according to their works, just like the firstfruits.

Notice there were two books. ". . . the books were opened . . ." That first book which was opened, brethren, was the Bible. The books, the Holy Scriptures, the knowledge of God's way of life is opened to their understanding for the first time. They never could understand it. Yes, they had Bibles; some of them did. They read them, but they didn't understand them. For the first time, the books will be opened, meaning their minds will be opened to grasp the truth.

". . . and another book was opened, which is the book of life . . ." This means their opportunity for salvation was never opened to them before. For the first time, their names are written in that Book of Life when they are given their opportunity also to qualify to be a part of God's eternal Family.

So, given this period of time to live in the flesh, to pursue that way of life and to qualify, even as you and I have to qualify right now, they will have their chance to prove whether they will love God enough. They will have to prove they love Him enough to subdue the self, put away the carnality of their natural minds and begin to live according to God's laws, willingly submitting themselves. God must know

whether we will be obedient. He will not give eternal life to any human being who has the potential of rebelling at any time in the future, as did Lucifer in becoming Satan the Devil.

Our learning now is a crucible of trial. Those billions who will be resurrected after the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ will also have their chance to build holy, righteous character. God will prove by their fruits whether they can be trusted to be faithful for all eternity. He is not going to give salvation—eternal life, an immortal body—to another being who ultimately might become a devil.

Satan and his demons will be locked away. They will pay the ultimate price, because they have immortal bodies, and they will not be destroyed. They will live in restraint for all eternity, but God, as a merciful and loving Creator, will not have any human beings pay that ultimate price.

Anyone who fails to embrace that way of life and who rejects the truth will be taken mercifully out of the way—that which we call the final or third resurrection. That final conflagration is when all things that are physical upon this earth are going to be destroyed and only those who qualify are going to be given those immortal bodies. They will be born into the very Family of God, not as sub-beings, not as angels, but as members of the God-Family. They will rule with Jesus Christ under the ultimate authority of God the Father for all eternity. For what creative work, we cannot even begin to fathom. The Bible doesn't tell us. It doesn't reveal what is going to happen into the eons of the future after the completion of this plan. What a remarkable and glorious plan it is—to know that God is working right now for the salvation of humankind and there will be a glorious spiritual family that will go forward into time.

It will be a marvelous family of billions and billions of sons of God, not angelic servants—not sub-beings that have been created to serve at the throne of God—but family members, sons. We all have that potential to rejoice, to live in harmony with God as a son, an heir to all that He possesses in heaven and earth. That New Jerusalem is pictured in the final chapters of Revelation; you can read them on your own.

Brethren, that is the plan of salvation, the truth that we learned from none other than the chosen servant of the last days who taught all of those things. That is the significance of the Holy Days. We keep the Holy Days every year. We repeat them

to remind ourselves of every step in that plan as God has ordained it. How significant and beautiful it is, if we are part of those who have been called to understand it.

Next time, brethren, we will finally get to some of those specific commands, and we will address many of the attempts of others to say that those Holy Days are done away. We will get into some of those specifics, and we will talk about the substantiation from the Holy Scripture for the keeping of those Holy Days—next time.