

Fundamentals of Belief  
#20A: The Return of Jesus Christ

Edited Sermon Transcript  
Jon W. Brisby; 9-7-2002

Good morning, brethren, on this A.M. service for the Feast of Trumpets. This is September 7, of 2002, and we are gathered together to keep another one of those priceless Holy Days that God did command and set apart for our keeping. We've taken time out of our normal lives. We've come together on this day, and we are here for a very important reason. The Feast of Trumpets is one of those very significant days in the picture of the plan of salvation that God is working out for all of His people. And so, this morning, we do want to go through and address the very attributes and elements that are involved in the significance of that day. We're also going to address it in terms of our series on the Fundamentals of Belief of the Church of God, The Eternal. It has worked out just right to address fundamental number twenty of those beliefs of the Church concerning the return of Jesus Christ. We are simultaneously going to provide the meat in due season for this Holy Day, as well as the continuation of the Fundamentals of Belief of Church of God, The Eternal. Let's begin by reading fundamental number twenty:

We believe in the personal, visible, premillennial, imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ to rule the nations of earth as King of Kings, and to continue His priestly office as Lord of Lords; that at that time He will sit upon the throne of David restoring all things during a thousand year reign upon earth and establish the KINGDOM OF GOD upon earth forever.

That is the very succinct belief that Mr. Armstrong penned decades ago concerning the return of Jesus Christ. In many ways, it's a very simple statement, and it seems straight forward. Most of us wouldn't have a concern or controversy about it at all, and yet it is amazing how many people, even of our former brethren, have begun to challenge certain aspects of that very simple teaching. We're going to address a few of those this morning.

The Feast of Trumpets does picture the return of Jesus Christ, and He is going to take possession of that Kingdom. He is going to rule this earth as that King of Kings and Lord of Lords. So, what is it that we know about that return? What can we glean, verify and prove from the Bible scriptures? Well, we want to analyze very strongly the first phrase that Mr. Armstrong wrote: "We believe in the personal, visible, premillennial, imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ . . ." What does it mean, and how do we prove that the return of Christ—that which is pictured by this Feast of Trumpets—will be personal, visible, as well as pre-millennial? What is the significance of each one of those terms?

Let's begin in Revelation 1 and verse 5:

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead [This shows very clearly that Christ is the forerunner. He is the one who came first to accomplish a goal, and yet many are going to follow in His footsteps.], and the prince of the kings of the earth . . .

We understand that a prince is one of royal lineage. He is there for a specific reason. Christ, in that office of a prince, is waiting for the fulfillment of the day when He will become the King.

. . . the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds . . .

Here we begin to see certain details that God revealed about the appearance of that very Christ when He comes to rule as King.

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

What do we find in this passage in the first chapter of Revelation? We find that He is coming to be King. We find that He is coming personally. This is not just some metaphorical appearance or an apparition. ". . . he cometh with clouds . . ."

That spirit being called Jesus Christ is literally going to come from heaven, and He is going to descend upon this earth. He is going to be visible. As it says, ". . . every eye shall see Him . . ."

Why are these things important? As time goes on, there are more and more, even of our former brethren, who have taken on all kinds of interesting ideas about the return of Christ. Some of them literally believe that Christ is going to come in a secret fashion before the time that He takes possession of His Kingdom as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. I don't understand how they can attach themselves to these ideologies, but they certainly have. I've had an opportunity to talk and correspond with a number of new contacts and new brethren who are with us who have come out of other splinter groups and different affiliations with former ministers of the Church. It's amazing to hear them talk about the kinds of doctrines and ideas that these other ministers are actually formulating in their own minds. They think they are inspired, but in every way they are refuting totally the basis of the doctrine that we were originally taught by Mr. Armstrong.

One of those things that is becoming more prevalent in certain circles is the idea that Jesus Christ has already come back secretly and is now in the process of trying to gather together His Church from the four winds. They do not understand that such ideas are diabolical to the core—totally refuting in every way what it was that God revealed through His scripture. I understand why some of them come up with these concepts. Some of them have the idea that Jesus Christ secretly returned in 1997. Why would they pick 1997? Well, Mr. Armstrong originally taught that Jesus Christ was born in the year 4 B.C., and the assumption is that Jesus Christ was born exactly 4,000 years after creation. If you assume that Jesus Christ was born precisely 4,000 years after the creation of the earth, or after the beginning of the creation of man on the earth, then the 6,000 years of mankind would be up 2,000 years after the time of Christ. Four thousand years until His birth, and then count 2,000 years from the year of His birth, and you would arrive supposedly at the end of the 6,000 years of man's reign on the earth.

If that were true, then it would certainly make sense. It certainly made sense as a concept decades ago in the 50s and 60s when it appeared that Christ might literally return in the 1970s or the 1980s. The problem is, here we are in the year 2002, and Jesus Christ still has not ascended to the throne over this earth. Still believing that it's still the best conclusion that Christ was born in the year 4 B.C.,

and of course adding one year for the year zero, then you come to the year 1997 as 2,000 years after the birth of Christ. But Christ didn't return visibly in 1997. All eyes did not see Him come in the clouds from heaven. He did not begin that war to take possession of His Kingdom, as we're going to read about. So, those who will not give up their false concepts and assumptions must manipulate the scripture to conclude that He came secretly for some special, secret work and that the visible revelation of Christ is going to come later. But it's not scriptural at all, brethren. No, when He comes in His literal Second Coming, which will be the one and only time that He comes back, it will be visible. He is coming personally, and as we read in Revelation 1 and verse 7, every eye shall see him. That's how clear and direct it is, and there's no getting around it.

Christ will come prior to the end of man's 6,000 years. Mr. Armstrong said, as a part of that fundamental we just read, that His return will also be pre-millennial. "We believe in the personal, visible, premillennial, imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ . . ." Why is it important that Christ actually comes before the beginning of the Millennium? It's important because Christ is going to rule as King of Kings and Lord of Lords for the entire thousand-year period of that Millennium. That means that He is going to be coronated and put on that throne at the very beginning of the thousand years, which is pictured by the weekly Sabbath and by the Feast of Tabernacles which is coming up very soon. He's going to be on the throne for that entire thousand-year period because the Millennium pictures that time of rest, and there is no time of rest under the dominion of Satan. Satan, my dear brethren, is still on the throne of this earth. God has left him in authority as the prince of the power of the air. So, if it's true that Christ already returned secretly in 1997, and that the 6,000 years of man ended, which is what many are claiming, do you understand what they're really saying, whether they realize it or not? If the 6,000 years of man already ended five years ago, then Satan, who is still ruling over this earth, is now ruling in the millennial period of God. Do you see how totally diabolic that concept is?

Satan will not rule during the millennial period. That is going to be a time ruled only by God, Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. So, these specific words that Mr. Armstrong used when he penned this fundamental of belief decades ago for the Radio Church of God, become all the more important and special. Before, when we read them, we just said, "Well, of course, that makes sense." But there was also no challenge to them. They become more

important now as we find more and more of those who should know better, who are actually taking exception and trying to warp and twist those basic doctrinal truths concerning the return of Christ.

No, His return will be personal, and it will be visible. It's not going to be secret, as we're going to see, and it will be pre-millennial because we're also going to read the scriptures that show the war that Christ is going to fight in order to take possession of His Kingdom. That is going to take some amount of time, and the Bible doesn't tell us how long it is. Is it one day, a week, a month? We don't know the extent of time involved in that which is called "the day of the Lord"—the wrath of Christ when He comes to take possession and to overthrow the kingdoms of this earth under Satan the Devil. We know that it's going to be a limited period of time, but He certainly is going to come back and begin that war. He is going to take possession of the throne so that by the time that He is ready, after He has subdued all of the nations, then He will be coronated as King, and He will sit on that throne as the thousand-year reign of the Millennium is ushered in. That means, obviously then, in order for Him to be ready to actually take possession and to sit on that throne at the beginning of the Millennium, His arrival on earth to begin that battle must come prior. That's why Mr. Armstrong's use of the term "premillennial" becomes ever so important.

Those who believe that the 6,000 years of man are already completed, believe that only because of their false notion that Christ was born exactly 4,000 years after creation. We already know that is a false conclusion. Since we know that Christ is coming before the end of the 6,000 years of man and that He will be on the throne at the beginning of the thousand-year reign, the only conclusion is that Christ was actually born on earth less than 4,000 years from the time of creation. It must have been 3,900 and some odd years. It was not exactly 4,000 years after creation, because 1997 came and went and Christ did not return. Christ is not yet sitting on that throne. Satan is still the god of this world and ruling, so we know that the 6,000 years of man have not been fulfilled. And yet, now we're more than 2,005 years past the birth of Christ. That only means, therefore, that Christ was born earlier than the 4,000-year mark from creation. That's the only conclusion we have. Yes, Christ will come prior to the end of man's 6,000-year reign. Satan will not rule during any time of that 7,000-year period of the Millennium.

Let's notice Matthew 24:21:

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

We don't even understand fully the meaning of this reference to shortening the days, and we don't speculate on those things that God has not revealed. Does this mean that God intervenes earlier at the end of Satan's reign in that 6,000 years? That is certainly one interpretation, but we do know that Satan's reign is not going to be extended into the Millennium. If anything, man's reign is going to be shortened, not the other way around.

Verse 23: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not." Christ was speaking to His disciples almost 2,000 years ago when they asked what would be the signs of His actual coming and the end of the world. One of the very things that Christ said to watch for was those who would start to misinterpret and twist facts concerning His imminent return. They would be saying that He was going to be coming in secret. To hear deceived people in the world say those things is one thing, but to hear former brethren and ministers who know better begin to say some of those same things is amazing indeed.

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Can it be any more clear, brethren? When that Christ returns, He is coming in a bright, glorious fashion; and as we already read in Revelation 1, every eye shall see Him. There's not going to be any secret approach of Christ. He's not going to come in the back door and reveal Himself first to the Church, as some are trying to say—gather up the Church and put them all back into one cohesive body, and then have His glorious manifestation to all the rest of the world. Not at all.

When He comes, He is going to come with power and glory, as we read, "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Can there be any more clear imagery to tell us what that arrival of Christ is going to be like? All eyes will see Him, and it is going to be a bright and glorious appearing.

Verse 28:

For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

What does this tell us? Christ shows that what comes long before or well before His appearance will be the great tribulation. Have we even been in the great tribulation yet? How could Jesus Christ have returned in 1997 or any previous year, when we haven't even begun to see those final events that are shown in Revelation and that Christ confirms here in Matthew 24 must happen leading up to and preceding His return? We have not even begun to see that which is called the great tribulation. I have heard some ask every once in a while, "Do you think we're already in the great tribulation?" And I answer confidently, "Absolutely not." That great tribulation is going to be like nothing that has ever been experienced before by mankind on this earth. Think about all the horrendous atrocities that have been perpetrated by human beings, like World War II and the Holocaust, all that occurred under the communists in Russia, and all of the other events that have happened in the annals time. None of those are even going to compare remotely to the carnage that will exist in the tribulation of the last days before the return of Christ.

So, brethren, I can tell you, we haven't even begun to see it. Not even close. That tribulation is going to come, and then, even as Christ told the disciples, as we just read in verse 29: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." Have we seen that

happen? Have we seen those great signs of the astrobodies? We haven't seen any kind of upheaval at all in the second heaven concerning the moon and the stars. So, how can anyone believe that Jesus Christ has already secretly returned?

Verse 30:

And then [only after that] shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

That's the order of events that Mr. Armstrong so eloquently described in the booklet "The Key to the Book of Revelation" and that which I covered two or three years ago in a couple of sermons for the Feast of Trumpets called "A Survey of the Day of the Lord." I went back and rehearsed those things that we did learn through the inspiration of Mr. Armstrong's ministry concerning those seven seals of Revelation. The fifth seal is the great tribulation, the sixth seal is the heavenly signs when all of those astrobodies are going to be in absolute upheaval, and then the seventh seal includes the day of the Lord and the actual return of Christ. They come in order, and one is not going to precede the other. Christ is the one who laid it out.

We've confirmed that the return of Christ is going to be personal; it's going to be visible to all humankind, and it is going to be pre-millennial. Next, we want to see that the return of Christ will also be imminent. What do we mean by imminent? Imminent means "impending, soon to happen"—not that we believe the return of Christ is happening in the next twenty-four hours, but it is a confirmation that we believe we are in the last days. When you put that in perspective of the entire 6,000 years that man has been given by God to rule according to his own whim under the sway of Satan the Devil as god of this world, then we are truly at the very end of that time. How many years? We do not know. All those who have tried to speculate on it have actually proved themselves incredibly foolish. So, certainly, Mr. Armstrong and many in the Church felt, even in the 1960s, that it was imminent. Because of the events they saw occurring, they thought it might happen and that Christ might return in the mid-1970s. Well, it didn't happen, brethren. Such speculations can only lead to disappointment and a loss of faith of the Body.



Is there any doubt, brethren, that the things that we are seeing now on the world scene have never occurred in the history of man? We are now seeing events for the first time that absolutely match up with the prophecies of those events leading up to the return of Jesus Christ. I don't have any doubt, brethren, that we are in the last days. We don't have time to go through all of those proofs and substantiations. We have done that many times, and Mr. Raymond Cole certainly has addressed those topics in many sermons in the past. We are seeing the fulfillment, even within the Church. If nothing else, the very history of what has happened to God's Church in this age is substantiation that we are in those last days. Even within that period of time, what if it were still another fifty years before the return of Christ? You see, in the history of a 6,000-year span, that would still be a drop in the bucket. You're still talking about the last decades since the re-creation of the earth. This is, in the broad scheme of time, the last days, which means the return of Christ is imminent. It's going to happen soon, even if that's a number of years away. We don't know, brethren, and we will not speculate. All we know is, as we're also going to see before we finish this morning, we have a commission to be ready, to be watching, because we don't know and God is not going to allow us to know when that's going to be; but He wants us to be ready at all times so that we're not taken off guard.

Matthew 24 and continuing in verse 44: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." If human beings could only pay attention to this and stop trying to rationalize it away. And so, someone else comes up with their theory predicting when the return of Christ is going to be. They have it all figured out with their colorful charts, and men have done this for decades now. They have tried to predict from Biblical prophecy when all of these events are going to transpire, but God simply said, ". . . in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." And so, some say, "Well, so, we can't know the hour, but He doesn't say we can't know the day." Brethren, the concept in what God is relaying through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is that He has specifically hidden the knowledge of the time of the return of Jesus Christ. He doesn't want us to know, because the just shall live by faith. They're not going to live by advanced knowledge that they derived from their personal Bible study. They're not going to figure out the end from the beginning so that they can circumvent the test that God wants us to experience. We are going to prove by faith that we can hold onto the Truth, but that return of Jesus Christ, as imminent as it is, is still going to be a

surprise when it occurs to all humanity, including those in the Church. We are commissioned, though, to watch and to be aware.

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

Here is a prophecy of the ministry of the last days—a certification that God was going to preserve faithful servants who would not contend with or destroy the Truth as it was originally revealed through the end-time servant. So, brethren, if that faithful ministry is not occurring here, then it is your responsibility to find out where it is. God promised that there would be a faithful ministry. Someone would be speaking in Truth, meat in due season, even on these priceless Holy Days.

Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

There are many who are going to be caught off guard. In the last twenty-five years already, there are many who have said, "The Lord delays His coming." Delays it according to what? According to their preconceived idea about when they thought Christ should arrive, and because Christ did not arrive when they calculated that He should have, then they conclude that Christ has delayed His coming. It's an absolute fulfillment of this very prophecy, and we've seen it happen before our very eyes.

Mark 13 and verse 32: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man . . ." Here is a confirmation, brethren, that should be without dispute. "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." Who is the only one who knows specifically when Christ is going to return? None other but the Father. God the Father only knows the end of that timetable. Do you realize that Jesus Christ Himself, who is going to be that

King, the one who is going to fulfill the prophecy, does not even know the time? Do you realize how astonishing that is? How do we, as arrogant human beings, think that we're going to sit down with the Bible and figure it out? What are we going to do—figure it out and then tell Christ so He knows? Because the Father hasn't told Him. Amazing, isn't it? If people would just think and just accept the Bible at face value.

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. [This is a piece of information that God the Father has reserved absolutely to Himself. Jesus Christ is waiting for the Father to tell Him when it's time.] Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

No, we don't know, and we're not going to know. It's going to be a surprise when we see that Christ coming in the clouds, and we hear that great trumpet blast, which we're going to see in just a moment.

For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

Oh yes, it would be so much easier for us, would it not, if we could predict the time of the return of Jesus Christ? Then we wouldn't have to watch. We could take our leisure, and then within a few weeks or months leading up to that appointed time, we could really get diligent with our spiritual lives and do the things we need to do to be ready. And yet, Christ and the Father do not want that to happen at all. It is going to be a surprise, which means, brethren, that we have to be on guard continually. We have to work on overcoming in our spiritual lives as if the return of Christ is going to happen tomorrow. We have to be diligent. We cannot faint; we cannot be weary in well-doing. We have to continue day after day, month after month, and year after year with intense preparation, waiting and preparing for that imminent return of Jesus Christ.

Next, we find that Christ is going to subdue the nations of the earth by force, and then He is going to usher in that thousand-year reign of peace. The

world and all of the nations of this earth are not just going to voluntarily hand over their dominion when Christ comes back. No, Christ is going to have to take it by force.

Let's read Revelation 19 and verse 11:

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

Anybody who thinks that Jesus Christ is just that passive little baby who was in a manger, and like to see Him in that regard, and that's the Christ that they visualize, has got a rude awakening coming when that Being returns, even in the fulfillment of that which we're keeping on this Feast of Trumpets. The Christ that's coming back at that time, brethren, is coming back as a conquering Lord. He is coming back as a warrior. He is going to fight, and He is going to forcefully, and with violence, take possession of His Kingdom.

. . . he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

He is the personification of that Word. And so, for all of those who have taken exception and have taken liberty to try and interpret the doctrine that we received, they are actually manipulating, denigrating and polluting Christ. He is that Word. He was Truth from the beginning; and He was revealed to the Church of the last days through a chosen servant, Mr. Herbert Armstrong, and we had Truth—not error. Anyone who believes that we had to change—whether it's Pentecost, divorce and remarriage, healing, or any of the other many doctrines that were perverted in the last quarter century—they have only denigrated their very Savior and called Him a liar. No, He is the Word of God, and He's coming back to reestablish that Word.

And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. [He has an army. He is a warrior. He's coming with an army.] And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule

them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

This isn't the benevolent God. He certainly is simultaneously a God of love, meekness, temperance, patience, longsuffering and compassion. And yet, this very Being, as a part of that perfect spiritual makeup of mind, is also coming as a warrior, and He's coming with business. He's going to take care of business, and there won't be any bones about it.

And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven . . .

This is incredible imagery. Think about this. This comes from that loving God, and here's a prophecy of the state of mind of that God as He is coming back to complete His mission. He is going to subdue the nations. There is no one that's going to talk back to Him. There is no one who is going to stand in arrogance to defy Him, even though they're going to try. Under the inspiration of Satan, they are going to battle and fight against Him. They're going to do their level best to destroy, and yet look at the imagery that is used for what Christ is going to do when He wages war against them.

. . . Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

This is a pretty harsh reality. This is going to be a very stark reality for the peoples in the nations of the earth.

The resurrected saints will take part with Christ in that world conquest. Who is that army that's going to follow Christ? Not only the holy angels, but also the resurrected saints.

Notice 1 Thessalonians 4 and verse 14:

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. [Bring where? Read on, and we'll find out. Verse 15:] 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 [or precede] them which are asleep. [Verse 16:] For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . .

It doesn't say that He's coming in secret. It doesn't say that He's coming first in secret to gather together and to repair the Church, and then going back up to heaven and coming down again in glory. No.

. . . the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God [It sounds to me like this is going to be a pretty monumental event.]: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

This is what's going to happen as soon as Christ appears in the clouds, as we read earlier. A resurrection takes place at this very time.

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.

At this monumental return, when all eyes shall see Him coming in the clouds—even as the lightning shines from the east to the west—at this very moment in time, a resurrection of the saints occurs. And those who have been dead in Christ for months, years, and centuries, are all going to come up out of their graves with new spirit bodies, and those that are alive in the Church—faithful members judged to be worthy of salvation—are going to be changed in a twinkling of an eye. They are going to rise up with those resurrected saints, and they are going to form the very army of God in the glory of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 15 and verse 51:

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Here is a confirmation, brethren, of the very time of that pictured by this Holy Day, the Feast of Trumpets. It is a time when trumpets are going to be blown. Because when Jesus Christ returns, there is going to be the trumpet sound of war, and He is going to make war. At the very time of that return, this great, marvelous resurrection occurs, and all of those who have died in Christ, and all those alive—those faithful ones in the Church at the time—are going to be resurrected and become part of that Family of God. Just try and imagine what glory that will be. It's even beyond the capacity of our human minds to capture.

Notice also Zechariah chapter 14 and verse 1:

Behold, the day of the [Eternal] cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle . . .

Here, we see more details about His return. We know already from what we've read in 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, Matthew 24 and Revelation 21 that He is returning. He is going to be seen in the clouds by all. That resurrection occurs, and that great army of God, of the resurrected saints, is formed. And then, what happens? Now we're finding in Zechariah 14 precisely what comes next.

For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. [Verse 3:] Then shall the [Eternal] go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and

toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

Once those resurrected saints come up to meet Him in the air, then, as an incredible, organized, powerful army, they are all going to descend back down to the earth's surface on the very Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. Try, if you can, to picture the glory of that army and what that's going to look like. These are the ones that all of the nations of the earth are going to fight against. They're not going to recognize Him as their ruler. They're not going to accept His dominion. Satan, in his last gasp, will try to destroy as many human beings as he possibly can, and he is going to lead them in that rebellious spirit to fight against their King.

Christ is coming to take His office as King of Kings. He is already the Lord of Lords, as we're going to see in just a moment. He will hold the title of King. He already holds the office of High Priest, as we will see.

But first, John 18 and verse 36: "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world . . ." Here, during His first coming, the time when He was a human being on this earth, it was not the time for Him to be coronated as King. This was not the time that He would be fulfilling all of those Old Testament prophecies to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth. That was one of the things that obviously confused many of the disciples, and apparently even John the Baptist at the time, who expected the arrival of the Messiah and the ushering in of the very Kingdom of God at that time. That's what they looked for. And so, it confused and bewildered them when they saw Christ doing all of these marvelous miracles—all of the substantiation of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Father—but not actively mounting an army to take over Jerusalem. Because they had a false concept about the plan of God, they did not understand at first what they saw. Christ had to teach it to them. When they were given the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, they began to understand and put all of those aspects of the plan of God into proper perspective. But at this time, Jesus answered:

. . . My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.



No, the time was not right for Him to wage this battle.

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Did Christ say that He was a King at that moment, standing before Pilate? No, He didn't say that. What did He say? ". . . Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world . . ." But it was still for the future. He was a Prince; and after His death and resurrection, He gained the absolute right to that office. He was born for the purpose of being King, to fulfill that specific prophecy. At this particular time, He only certified that this was His purpose, but it was not yet the time for Him to fulfill that prophecy.

1 Timothy 6 and verse 13:

I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession [even as we just saw]; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

That's what His ultimate purpose is and the reason for which all of this plan was set in motion.

Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

This is another confirmation that He is coming to take those specific offices—King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Revelation 17 and verse 12:

And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings [That is precisely what is going to be fulfilled in that day represented by this Feast of Trumpets.]: and they that are with him [We already know who is going to be with Him—the resurrected saints.] are called, and chosen, and faithful.

This tells you, brethren, that those who are going to be with Him are those who were called out and given that special understanding of His priceless Truth, even before the return of Jesus Christ. You are a part of that, brethren, if you have received that understanding. If your mind has been opened to receive these truths, then you are called. But the ones who are with Him at that time when He takes possession of His Kingdom, when He fights in battle for supremacy, are also chosen. What does that mean? It means the judgment will have already taken place. The judgment of the firstfruits will have already been completed.

They are not only of the called, but they are the ones who are chosen. It means that He will have already sifted the goats from the sheep. The ones who, by the fruits of their life, have proven that they are going to put God first and are willing to sacrifice everything in the flesh, are the ones who, at that day, at that moment of His triumphant return, are going to be chosen. By being chosen and judged worthy of salvation, they are going to be changed or resurrected from the grave and given the priceless gift of salvation in the Family of God.

". . . they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." Yes, you had better believe that the only ones who are going to be given that office in the God Family are those who will be faithful for all eternity. There are going to be no rebels in the Kingdom of God. There are not going to be any of these anti-government agents allowed to have a position in that government in order to fight and contest with God. It's just not going to happen. He is going to establish His Kingdom upon the earth. He is going to be King of Kings as well as Lord of Lords.

Revelation 19 and verse 11. We read this once, but let's read it again with a different context.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns . . .

This tells you that the dominion of Christ's government includes many kingdoms because there is a crown that is associated with each kingdom, and every nation upon the earth is a kingdom. Every nation is going to have a king. There are even going to be kings within nations, and so Christ, as the overall King—Potentate—over the entire world, will be the King over kings. All kings upon the earth are going to be under the rule of the Supreme King, Jesus Christ. That's why, "on his head were many crowns" because He is going to have dominion over many kingdoms.

. . . and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron . . .

Yes, He is coming to rule. The Kingdom of God is not just some ethereal principle or concept. The Kingdom of God is not in our hearts. No, the Kingdom of God is going to be on the face of this earth. It's going to be a world-ruling government, and Jesus Christ Himself, personal and visible, is going to be that very King. He is going to rule supreme. ". . . he shall rule them with a rod of iron . . ." All nations, all people, are going to be subject to His rule. No one is going to be able to make themselves outside of that Kingdom.

. . . and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

He holds both titles. The office of a King has to do with the physical rulership over the earth and the nations and cities that are within that Kingdom. Lord of Lords refers to the spiritual office of High Priest. Christ is already Lord of Lords, referring to His office as High Priest in heaven. He has held this office

since being accepted as the wavesheaf after His resurrection.

Let's notice Hebrews 4 and verse 14. Christ, sitting on the right hand of His Father, already holds the office of High Priest—Lord of Lords.

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. [Yes, He was perfect. That's what made Him totally unique. Verse 16:] Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

That means, brethren, that by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, He qualified to be our High Priest. He was waved as that wavesheaf offering before the Eternal. He was accepted and became that High Priest. He assumed that office, and thereby, we gained access to God the Father through Jesus Christ and His shed blood. Now we can come and petition before Him in our prayers—before the very throne of God in the third heaven.

Do you think about that, brethren, when you get on your knees to pray to God? Do you think about the fact that you are actually afforded the opportunity, the blessing, of approaching unto the very throne of God the Father in heaven, by virtue of a Great High Priest that sits on His right hand, bearing the title of Lord of Lords? That High Priest acts as a go-between by His perfect sacrifice, so that through His shed blood, you have an opportunity to have your sins forgiven, to have your guilty past absolutely blotted out; and you can come and have your prayer heard by the very God who rules all that exists. It's an amazing thing, brethren, and I hope we never forget or take it for granted. I know it's easy for all of us to begin to take so many of these things for granted, which is why we rehearse them. It's why God has us rehearse that plan of salvation every year. It is so that we can stir up that Spirit and be reminded of these spiritual truths and these things that are absolutely imperative. What a glorious plan—what a glorious image it is and an opportunity that we have. How much we have to be thankful for, that we do have that High Priest who is acting to intercede on our behalf—to wipe away our guilty past so that we can come into the presence of God the

Father.

We can have a close, personal relationship with Him as a Father. He can embrace us and hold us because we've been cleansed from our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. The Father can't have anything to do with sin. He cannot touch it or have any association with that which is sin, which is why all human beings have been cut off from God. And yet, through God's priceless sacrifice of His Son, through Jesus Christ's willing sacrifice—willing to go along with that plan of God, loving what it pictures—we do have the opportunity to receive that reconciliation with God through the blood of Jesus Christ, our High Priest. And so, He sits now in the office of High Priest. He is already Lord of Lords. He has been Lord of Lords since that third day after His burial—that Saturday evening when He was resurrected at the end of the weekly Sabbath. On Sunday morning, when He actually ascended up to His Father, He was accepted as the wavesheaf offering, and then qualified and was given that title of Lord of Lords as our High Priest. But He has not yet been King of Kings. He is a Prince, He is due, He is eligible, and He is waiting to assume the throne over the earth, but that has not yet happened.

One more; let's notice Hebrews 5 and verse 5: "So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest . . ." No, Christ didn't assume the office. He didn't insinuate Himself into that responsibility.

So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. [No, it was by the will of God the Father that Christ become our High Priest and fulfill that office. And Christ was willing. Verse 6:] As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

That's precisely the office that Christ is holding. He was originally High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, the one to whom Abraham gave tithes. That priesthood was transferred to the Levitical priesthood with the establishment of the nation of Israel. Upon the qualification of Jesus Christ, who died, was resurrected and accepted as High Priest, that high priesthood shifted back again from the human Levitical priesthood to the order of Melchisedec. That is the official office that Christ holds.

The Father is the one who is going to tell Christ when it's time to take possession of His throne. As we've already seen, Christ doesn't even know the specific time, neither do the angels, and certainly not any human beings. The Father is going to tell Christ when it's time for Him to act, to war and to take His throne by force.

Daniel 7 and verse 13:

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days [This is referring to none other than the Father.], and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Even the prophet Daniel showed an image of what that Kingdom was going to be.

Revelation 11 and verse 14: "The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly." As Mr. Armstrong taught us about the order of the book of Revelation, "the third woe cometh quickly" corresponds to the end of that plan in the seventh trumpet of the seventh seal. Verse 15: "And the seventh angel sounded . . ." So here is that trumpet blast, the last trump.

And the seventh angel sounded; 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. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and

there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

This is a picture of the time when the Father finally gives the signal. It's time. That's when He gives authority to the Son to take possession of the throne. Christ will then assemble that army of angels. He will descend. He will come in the clouds. He will be seen by all eyes. He will come as the lightning comes from the east to the west. It will be personal; it will be visible; it will be pre-millennial; it will be imminent, and He will come as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. All of those things, just as Mr. Armstrong first taught from the beginning, brethren, are absolutely going to come to pass at the end of these last days.

In conclusion, Zechariah 9 and verse 9:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

That is the dominion that Christ is going to bring to this earth when that millennial reign begins. Next time, in the continuation of this fundamental of belief number twenty, we're going to see more about what Christ will do when He takes possession of His Kingdom.