

**Coming to Know and Trust God #1;
We Must Come to Know Him**

**2010 Feast of Tabernacles, Opening Night
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Well, again, a wonderful good evening to all of you for this opening service of the Feast of Tabernacles, and what a privilege to come into God's presence for this service. And what we are doing is literally coming into the presence of God. You know, when we have that opening prayer, we ask God to be here among us, and it is not a flippant or cursory thing that we are doing. He has placed His name somewhere, and He has said He will be there among those. And, so, we are making this offering to Him tonight in the belief and the hope and prayer that He is inspiring all of us now in this assembly before Him. And now we begin this auspicious keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days, plus, then, that eighth day we call the Last Great Day. What an incredible privilege.

Well, as many of you who have been a member of this remnant body now for a number of years are aware, I do like to have a theme. I've copied that over from the habit of Mr. Raymond Cole who usually provided his Feast sermons according to a common theme for all of his messages. I will be giving you eight messages again this year, beginning with the message this evening, and I do have a theme. And if you want to give those sermons an overall title, just call it, "Coming to Know and Trust Him." What does it mean to come to know God and to trust Him? And, you know what, I'm afraid that may sound like a superficial, simplistic kind of statement. And there may be some who are thinking, "Well, okay." But I'm hoping that if I do this right—with the material that I have prepared for you—you will come away from this Feast with a deeper sense of what it really means, not only to come to know God, but to know Him so well and to appreciate Him to such an extent that you love Him.

Now, it's very easy for human beings to claim, if you ask them, do you know God? Do you know the Lord?: "Oh, yes, I know the Lord." Ask any so-called Christian out there in the world, and they will tell you, "Oh, I know Jesus Christ and I LOVE the Lord." But what I am telling you, brethren, is that most human beings have a very superficial "love" for God, and they don't know Him at all.

Now, is that just my assessment? Am I just kind of "dissing" everybody and saying they don't know what they think they know? I'll let you be the judge of that, because I'm going to give you some texts tonight and we are going to look at what God says about the topic. That's the only thing that counts, not what Jon Brisby tells you. We are going to look at what God has to say about His relationship with humanity and what it really means for a human being to come to know and to trust Him. And I hope it is something that will be greatly beneficial to you.

We are here to celebrate the soon-coming Kingdom of God upon this earth. That's what the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles pictures in that awesome Plan. But why should we celebrate the Feast? Why should you and I have a hope—have any enthusiasm whatsoever for the idea of Jesus Christ coming back to rule upon this earth as the King? Have you ever stopped to think about that? Why would you even want it? How do you know that His government would be better than the governments we have on the earth right now? Do we just assume it? Do we take it for granted that maybe anything is better than what we have now? Isn't that the kind of sentiment we have?

You know, we kind of have that going on in our country right now with the political environment in which we are disenchanted with the current political party that is in control. What do they do? Every time the next election comes up it's "throw the bums out." Well, are we sure that is not kind of the orientation we have in thinking about and hoping for the return of Christ and His government? Do we really want Christ to rule on this earth, or do we just want to "throw the bums out" today? Why do you want Jesus Christ to rule? Are you sure His rulership would be better? How do you know? Maybe He's just another tyrant. Maybe He's just another individual who is going to use the office for His own self. Maybe He doesn't care about the people at all. How do you know? Well, it all comes down to His character, doesn't it?

Do you really know Him? Do you *really* know this Christ Who we believe is going to be the supreme Ruler upon this earth in His Kingdom for a thousand years and beyond? Because He will be the final King that ever sits upon the throne. Do you know Him? Do you have confidence in Him? Do you trust Him? Hopefully, I'm going to put that to the test in the minds of all of you so that it potentially stops being just a superficial agreement and perhaps becomes something that has a little bit more depth and substance to it.

Let's begin by noticing that our salvation requires that we come to know *and* to value God. The whole idea of coming to know and trust God is not a superficial thing—it's not a *nice to do*, it's not a *should do*—it's a *must do*. He *requires* it of you and of me. Let's notice it in Deuteronomy 6. Deuteronomy chapter 6 and beginning in verse 1:

Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it.

God really does care about our actions—our follow-through: our *doing*—the action of doing what we say we believe in.

. . . that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

What is His motivation—this God we serve? It is for our good, because He wants your days to be prolonged; He wants you to be blessed; He wants you to inherit that Promised Land; He wants you to have every good thing. That is His desire.

Verse 3: "Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee." Why? Why keep the commandments, statutes and judgments? Just so that He can make us jump through a bunch of hoops to see if we will? Because He gets pleasure out of seeing us toil and sacrifice? Is that why He gave us commandments? Now, doesn't it feel that way sometimes? And I know, because there are a lot of people in the Church of God at large who seem to treat the

commandments of God as a burden. They toil and they grind under the "weight" of the commandments of God: "Why, O God, do I have to keep these commandments? They are so hard and they are so grievous to me." Is that the way you view it? Well, *there* is your first hint. How do you view the God who gave us those commandments? How do you view His purpose? We are going to learn about that.

Here God is telling us what His motivation is. Now, the question is, do you believe it? He is saying, "I gave you these commandments for good, because I want your days to be prolonged; I want you to be happy; I want you to be rewarded." But, now, you see, you and I are in the position of saying, "Is He telling us the truth? Why did He really give us those commandments?" Do you believe what He is saying?

Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

He says He wants you to have the blessings of a land flowing with milk and honey. Now, you and I understand that for ancient Israel that was a physical promise of a physical land. For you and me, who are a part of the Church of God—spiritual Israel—our goal is not a physical possession on this earth, it is a spiritual Kingdom: being born into the very God Family and ruling with Jesus Christ. That's the Kingdom that we seek to inherit, and that is the Kingdom that He seeks for you to have. Do you believe that? Do you believe He is sincere when He says He wants you to have all of the glory of the God Family—sharing it with Him for all eternity? Do you believe that?

Verse 4: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD." Oh, and He is going to emphasize that. We are going to see a number of texts in that regard. It seems to be important to God to emphasize that the buck stops with Him. He is the Creator; He is the Sustainer—the only one, there is no competitor with Him. There is no alternative creator, there is no other god to which you or I can go. This is the one we've got—the only one. And whether we think He is a good God, or whether we think maybe He is not a good God, the first principle He emphasizes is that "I am the one. I am it." And the first step that He requires of you and me is to come to acknowledge that very principle.

"Hear, O Israel: The [Eternal] our God is one [Eternal]." As Mr. Armstrong taught us so many years ago, this is not saying there is only one Being. But we have all of these former ministers of our parent organization who are now out there challenging this very doctrine on the nature of God and saying that there is only one Being—like the Jews teach. Not, as Mr. Armstrong taught us, that it is one Family with multiple Beings. Two that we know about are the one we call the Father and the one that is Jesus Christ. Now, was Jesus Christ a created Being or was He really pre-existent from the beginning? We know that He was pre-existent and that He was in the beginning with the one who became the Father. And these ministers want to fight about this now, which is absolutely a fulfillment of a prophecy of what the church would do in the last days. But I'm not going to get into all of that. I'm taking for granted that the audience to which I am speaking believes the fundamental principle that we are talking about one Family. It's cohesive; it's unified; they don't hold different principles. You don't have the Father and the Son each vying with one another, trying to get His way. You and I have no other alternative but to accept the one Way which they represent.

"The [Eternal] our God is one [Eternal]." Verse 5: "And thou shalt *love* the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Now there is a monumental command, because what this God is saying is that "it is not only important for you to acknowledge that I am—that I exist—or even that I am the most powerful Being in the universe who created all that exists, but I also require you to love me. I require you to love me." Do you love Him? What's the proof of it? It's not the superficial profession that so many make. Not at all. But, make no mistake about it, this God that we worship, this is what He requires:

And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.

Now, is He going to force you to love Him? Is He going to force me to love Him? Is He going to hold us down and make us love Him? No, because He made us all free moral agents, and He requires you and me to choose. But what He said, very clearly, is that if you want to be a part of the Kingdom—if you want one of those positions forever in the Family of God, which He greatly desires you and me to have—it's going to require you to come to love God. It's going to require a love for Him. Now, it's your choice and mine whether we love Him or not, and He is

not going to force you against your will. But that will make all the difference in the world whether we will be there or whether we will not, in that day.

How can we truly love anyone with all of our hearts whom we do not know? Is it possible? God requires us to love Him. Well, just think about it on the human plane: Is there a human being that you don't even know that you can really love? Well, no. If you have never met me and you don't know me personally, and I walk up and I say, "Do you love me?" You would be lying if you said, "Yes, I love you." If you don't *know* me—and I mean really know me—how can you claim to love me? How could I claim to love you? We understand it on the human plane, then, don't we? It's no different on the God-plane. How are human beings really going to *love* God if we really don't know this Being? Human beings make a profession, but it is all hollow unless there is substance to it.

So He requires us to come to love Him. What's our first step in coming to really love Him—which means to appreciate Him and value Him? You are going to have to know who He is. You are going to have to understand who and what this God is—what He represents and what makes Him tick. Isn't that true? Once you come to *know* the real God, *then* you and I have the choice of whether we like Him and what He stands for, or whether we really don't.

Isaiah 45 and verse 5. Isaiah 45 and verse 5. Let's notice that the world cannot come to know God of its own accord. Human beings, by their own choice, their own volition, cannot just decide that, "I'm going to get to know God." Now, most of them don't believe that, and that is one of those doctrines that gets us in *big* trouble as part of the true Church of God in this age: the belief that salvation is not open for all human beings to come to Christ on their own terms. If you hold a doctrine that says that God has only chosen to open the minds of a few in this day and age, out of the whole world of millions of people—that only a few, right now, have that opportunity—they will call you prejudiced, racist, bigoted, and everything else. But that's what the Bible says. Until God opens the mind of a human being and offers that relationship, he or she cannot conceivably come to know this God, let alone come to appreciate and love Him. They may have a desire to know Him, but it takes a call to have that relationship, period. Isaiah 45 and verse 5:

I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me.

Even to Israel whom He called—ancient Israel as a type of the New Testament Church—He said, "You know what? You didn't know me before I introduced myself to you and gave you the opportunity. You are just as blinded as all of the other people in the world—all the nations. You may have bowed down before things you thought were God; you may have had a desire to get in touch with the spirit world, or to come to know the Deity that created and sustains all that exists, but you didn't know me."

. . . though thou hast not know me: [Verse 6:] That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me.

Something seems to be pretty compelling to this God: that His true people come to acknowledge Him as the one and only. And what I am telling you is that, you know, we can say, "Well, that seems kind of selfish, or personalized on God's part." But, you know what? As you are going to find out in the message that I give you tomorrow morning about the power of God, He is the Creator, He is the one that brought it all into being, which means that He can make the rules any way He wants them to be. I won't get ahead of myself. But, He, by His volition, has determined that *this* is important to Him: that the ones He calls must come to acknowledge that He is *it*. No others, period.

[T]here is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. [Verse 7:] *I* form the light, and create darkness: *I* make peace, and create evil [emphasis added throughout].

Oooh, *there* is one that will throw some for a loop. You mean, God creates evil? How can He be a good God if He creates evil? We will get to that. "I the [Eternal] do all these things." He's saying, "I am responsible for everything that occurs and everything that exists. It was done by my volition."

Now, how did He create evil? We understand that He is not the author of evil, but by virtue of the fact that He created beings who He knew were going to go apostate—including Satan and one third of the angels, who became the

demons—He is responsible. He knew that was going to happen because He knows the end from the beginning. So, the evil that is in the world is God's doing. He could have prevented it, but He didn't. You and I have to come to reconcile ourselves to that, and it's part of coming to know God. We are going to go down that path and we are going to get there.

Psalm 14 and verse 1. Psalm 14 and beginning in verse 1: "To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Now, this is reflective of the world at large—cut off from God. They have not been introduced to this Creator God. He has not given the invitation to the majority of them yet. Now, they create gods of all kinds for themselves, but they don't know the real one. And, so the most learned minds, with the greatest natural abilities—the geniuses, the scholars of the word, the erudite, the educated, the ones with multiple degrees behind their names—they are the ones most likely to tell you that there is no God.

A case in point was recently in the news in the last few weeks: Stephen Hawking—who is kind of considered to be the "Albert Einstein" of our day. He knows all of this great, fantastic, scientific stuff—quantum physics and everything that is far beyond my understanding—but he came out recently and said that we are moving beyond the need for a God—that the belief in a Spirit Creator God is basically what ignorant human beings create and manufacture and hold on to when they don't know enough to know about the real universe we live in. But the smarter and more accomplished you are, the more mature you become in order to leave all of these old myths behind and move into the next dimension. That's basically what God is talking about here.

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." That includes Stephen Hawking—no more criticism to him than any other human being in the world, because millions and billions are in the very same category until God chooses to call them. They are *all* fools. *We* are all fools except for a call and an opportunity to come out of that blindness. We would all absolutely be in that category. There are none of us that are any greater, and, in fact, we are the basest and we are the weakest of all.

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." I don't care how many degrees he has behind his name; I don't care how many human beings elevate them because of their books, and their writings, and all of these things that they

produce. God says they are fools. "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." That's all of humanity rolled up into one big wad, and He labels them all fools.

Verse 2: "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men." That's all of us—*every* single human being that has ever drawn breath upon this earth, except for Jesus Christ. All of us. "The [Eternal] looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God." Is there even one who legitimately, honestly, seeks on his own, and has the capacity, to come to know and to appreciate the true God? Even one? Anywhere? What is God's conclusion of the matter? Verse 3: "They are *all* gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: there is *none* that doeth good, no, not one." Not a single one. Now how do you like them apples? Not my words. That's God's inspiration through King David. Not a single one has the capacity to come to know God.

So, who is going to do it, and how is it even possible for anybody to do it? Only by a miracle—only by a miracle. Jeremiah 9 and verse 3. Jeremiah 9 and beginning in verse 3. What does He say about all of us as weak human beings according to the flesh? "And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth." Oh, we like to claim that we care about the Truth. You have all kinds of human beings out there saying that they just want the truth. But God says, "No, they don't. I don't care what they say, and I don't care how much they convince one another how great their intentions are." God, who reads hearts and minds, says not a single one.

"[F]or they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD"—they don't know me. All of these people out there saying they know God, they love God, they will do anything—they want to do this ministry, and they want to do that ministry. "Just let me serve the Lord." God says, "Nope, they don't know me." They may be very sincere, and there are a lot of them that are—they want to, they desire it, and they don't even know in themselves that they don't know. That's because they have been deceived by the god of this world—and he does deceive the whole world, as the Bible says.

[T]hey know not me, saith the [Eternal. Verse 4:] Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders.

Now, this seems to be advising us to be paranoid about everybody around us. That's not the intent. God doesn't want us to move off by ourselves into the woods and be hermits. What He is saying to the people of God, who have had the opportunity to have this knowledge, is to come to acknowledge the truth, which is that all human beings are liars, by nature, period—without doubt. All of us. And not a single one of us, by nature, has the capacity within us to know God. Verse 5:

And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity.

What is iniquity? The transgression of the Law—commandment breaking. All of us, by nature, break the Commandments. We hate the Commandments. God says, "This is good, and this is evil. Do the good, and don't do the evil." And we desire with all that is within us to do the evil. Anybody that tells you that, by nature, he loves God and loves God's Commandments, he may be sincere in thinking so, but I am telling you he hasn't even gotten off of home plate, let alone first base—not if you are going to believe the very words of God here.

Verse 6: "Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they *refuse* to know me, saith the LORD." There is our natural state. Through deceit, human beings *refuse* to come to know God—to understand who and what He is and what makes Him tick. Who is this Being we call God? We can't even get half-way to that base of knowing who this Being is. "[T]hrough deceit they refuse to know me, saith [not Jon Brisby] the [Eternal]." That's what God said. That's the Truth. That's our starting point. That is our starting point.

Only a very chosen few have been called out of that deception and that blindness and have the opportunity to come to know Him now. Only a very few, and I believe that many of you—not only in front of me here in this audience, but also under the hearing of my voice—make up a significant part of that Body in the last days.

Notice Exodus 6 and verse 7. Exodus 6 and beginning in verse 7. God said to Israel: "And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God."

To whom did He say that? All nations on the earth? Nope. One little, extended family that came from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob through twelve

sons—who had children and multiplied within the slavery of Egypt. And to that extended family of Israel, to them and no one else at that time, He said, "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the [Eternal]." Who gets to know God? Who gets the priceless opportunity to even potentially get to that point of knowing God? Only Israel. Only Israel. Not Israel of the flesh, of course, but the New Testament Church—spiritual Israel, as a Body—which is not a hereditary compilation of those who came from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob of the flesh. We are talking about all of those who have been called—regardless of what nation, or race, or creed they come from. Because the gentiles have been added into that fold, but it's still only by a call. And by baptism into that Body, they became spiritual Israelites. Only those called—that small group out of the billions on this earth—even have the remotest opportunity of coming to know God. And what percentage of those called actually do? I don't know. But Christ, Himself, said, "Many are called and few are chosen." That must go hand in hand with coming to know and to love Him because it's really another way of talking about what is required for salvation—coming to know and to trust Him, to love Him.

"[Y]e shall know that I am the [Eternal] your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians." What is the equivalent of the "burdens of the Egyptians" for the true Church? Being mesmerized and enslaved by the world—by Babylon. And to you and me He says, "You need to come out of Babylon." Now, you cannot physically come out of it. You live in the world, inspired by Satan, the Devil, which is modern-day Babylon, and there is no way for you to get out of that physically. You have to live within it, but what He is saying is that in mind and in heart, we all have to come to get out of the orientation of that system—to come to value and to set our hearts and minds on something else.

By virtue of your participation in the keeping of this eight-day festival, you see, you are demonstrating a desire to do that, because you had to make many sacrifices in order to be here. You had to put so many things on hold back home. And in some cases, some of you made incredible sacrifices in order to do that. Why are you doing that? You must have some hope of a better tomorrow—beyond what is involved in this physical realm. Otherwise, why would you do it? Why? It's because you have been called, and through the gift of God, you are being enticed by something He has opened your mind to receive, that the world cannot love. You are Israel—you are Israel of the Spirit, regardless of

what nation, creed, race or culture you came from physically. By virtue of your call and that baptism, you have become Israel.

Deuteronomy 4:32. Deuteronomy 4 and beginning in verse 32:

For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?

He's saying, "You look back at all of history—nearly six thousand years of man on this earth, from the beginning with Adam and Eve in the garden, up until the present day, and you tell me," He says, "if there is anything in history that ever . . ." what He is getting ready to say. It had never happened before.

Verse 33: "Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?" Here, ancient Israel was gathered together by a miracle at the base of Mt. Sinai. They had come out of Egyptian slavery and had gone through the Red Sea by an incredible miracle, and were sustained by water out of a rock, and had eaten manna which had rained on them from heaven, and He had brought them to this mountain and this place, and He descended upon that mountain in their presence and He spoke to them out of the fire and the smoke. And He is asking from the historical perspective, "Has that ever happened before in human history? Has that kind of thing occurred at any other time?" Nope.

What about since then? What about for you and me—spiritual Israel? Have you ever stopped to think that your calling and conversion is exactly comparable to that exodus of those people out of Egypt? What miracles were involved in your call and your conversion? And what He is asking is, "Has that ever happened? Does that happen in the world?" The only time it happens is when God chooses to create the miracle of touching the mind of a human being and opening that revelation to your understanding and to mine. Otherwise, it does not happen, and it has never happened, period.

"Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?" You heard that voice speaking out of the fire, if you will, by virtue of your calling, how ever it happened, by whatever means—whether it was the voice of Herbert Armstrong on the radio years ago,

whether it was picking up a piece of literature that came either from our parent organization, or even from one of those other splinter groups, that still contained enough nuggets of that revealed truth that it touched you. By whatever means, that was you hearing the voice of God out of the fire by a miracle. And He is asking, "Is that normal in this world?" Verse 34:

Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

Think about your own life and how you came to a knowledge of that Way. Do you think it was just commonplace? Was it just an accident? Or, do you think maybe you did it on your own? Through your own intellect you came to a knowledge of the Truth? There are all too many who have been part of the physical assembly of God's churches over the years that have come to believe in their minds that they have kind of figured it out through their own Bible education—and reading from enough different sources to kind of put it together through their ability to discern and to make calls about what is true and what is not. But God says it was a miracle that it happened. It was God's volition to make it possible—not the action of any human being.

Verse 35: "Unto thee it was shewed . . ." The volition of God to open your mind. That's how you got it. "Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest *know* that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him." Who can know that? No one but the called. NO ONE but those uniquely called out and touched in their lives by a miracle. If you are one of those, brethren, you have so much for which to be thankful. Regardless of what are your personal trials and problems, day by day—the pain, and the suffering, and the anguish, and the turmoil that you may bear—if you know that Truth, and if you understand this Way of Life, you have a capacity never given to the majority of human beings in the last six thousand years. Do you appreciate and value that? Do you get on your knees every single day and thank God with a full heart for that knowledge and that gift of your calling? It's a miracle and you are among the few on the face of this earth who have a chance to know—and I mean really know—this God. Drop down to verse 39:

Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart [God says, "I want you to stop and I want you to think very seriously about it. Don't take it for granted; don't flippantly gloss over it."], that the [Eternal] *he is God* in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

Why does He emphasize that? Because you and I, by nature, say, "Well, of course I accept that He is God. Pffffft, let's move on." Are you ready to move on? You might think you are ready to move on because you might think, "I've got the 'knowing God' part. What comes next?" But we're not there yet. We're not there: Knowing that God is more than a superficial proclamation.

Even among the called, God defines what it means to know Him. I'm going to introduce you to God during this Feast and I'm not being flippant by saying that. Because what I am going to give you is a lot of repetitive knowledge, concerning who and what God is, that the church heard from *way back* in the 1930s and going forward. So you are really not going to get a lot of new information, but what I intend to do is reformat the presentation of the faith once delivered in a way that might allow you to see it from a different perspective, which might just add something to your appreciation for this God.

The day is coming when all humanity will come to know this God. And we talked about that a little bit in my message to you on the Feast of Atonement—during this past weekly Sabbath—a few days ago. Oh, the whole world is going to have their minds opened, and that calling given, so that they too may come to know. That's the answer to those who want to accuse us of being prejudicial, racist, bigoted and everything else. We're not saying that we are the only ones who will ever know. We are saying we believe that we are part of the few God has called, and it's no credit to us that we know now. But the day is coming when the whole world is going to have this opportunity. Let's look at some of those texts. Hebrews chapter 8. Hebrews 8 and beginning in verse 10:

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord [and this is a long-range prophecy for the time after Jesus Christ returns]; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: [Verse 11:] And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord . . .

What is He saying? That there is going to come a day when the ministry and teaching is going to go away—nobody is going to be teaching? No, that's not what He is saying. What He is addressing is the concept that is prolific in the world today, among every religious denomination, of ones who claim to represent Jesus Christ, who are out there on their soap boxes or their pulpits saying, "Come to me and I will teach you about God. Step right up and let me bring you to the Lord." And what He is saying is that all of these hawkers out here on the street saying, "No, come over here, I've got the Truth—No, over here, I've got the Truth," the day is coming when all of *that* is going to go away. The Truth is not going to be some hidden thing that people are searching for in the darkness and just can't find it. Because this is a Day when the *whole world* is going to know the Truth. It's going to be open because Jesus Christ Himself—as the King of the earth—is going to teach it to them all. It's going to be no more hidden, no more secret, no more veiled, because the minds of all humanity—all nations—are going to be opened to it. That's what He is speaking of.

". . . for *all* shall know me, from the least to the greatest." That was pictured by the Feast of Atonement. Atonement pictures the reconciliation of the whole world to God. That's going to happen. That is literally going to come to pass. This passage in Hebrews is a quote from Jeremiah 31 if you want to go back and read it—the apostle quoted this to the Hebrews.

But let's turn to Jeremiah 16. Jeremiah chapter 16 and beginning in verse 19: "O [Eternal], my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth . . ." Here, he is prophesying of a time involving those who today are called gentiles—and that simply means "cut off from God," separated from God—which we all are as human beings, until our minds are opened to the Truth. As the Apostle Paul said, it doesn't matter whether you are a Jew or a gentile by birth. That is nothing. That is nothing. Because even physical-born Israelites are spiritual gentiles until their minds are opened.

O [Eternal], my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.

I read this to you on Atonement. The day is coming when their minds will be opened like yours are now, and they are going to say, "I can't believe I lived my whole life before thinking this was God and that was Truth, and it was a bunch of lies. I had no idea I was so deceived." This is going to happen.

Verse 20: "Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?" Does a human being get to create his own gods? And those gods begin as ideas in the mind—that's where the real idols are. Forget whatever gods he builds out of stone, or wood, or whatever else, no, the idols, the gods of man's making, are up here in the mind. And now, these people, who finally will have their minds opened—the veil lifted from their thinking—are going to come to an awareness that they never had, and they are going to say, "How stupid it is that we ever thought that we were the ones who got to decide who and what God is for ourselves. Look at all of the stupidity that we are involved in—worshiping this and worshiping that, and thinking God is this or the other. How deceived we were." That moment—that *eureka* moment—is going to happen *en masse* in the day that Jesus Christ returns.

Verse 21: "Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know . . ." In one fell swoop, God is going to create the miracle to open the minds of all of these deceived peoples of the world and they will become enlightened as never before in the six-thousand-year history of man on this earth. This is going to happen. "[B]ehold, I will this once cause them to *know*, I will cause them to *know* mine hand and my might; and they shall *know* that my name is The [Eternal]." Again, brethren, read it for the intensity that God puts into it. Don't think it is superfluous; don't gloss over it and say, "Okay, this is no big deal. Let's move on." It seems to be a big deal to God—this concept of coming to know Him—don't assume that it's so easy or so automatic. Human beings cannot do it without a miracle. Jeremiah 24 and verse 5. Jeremiah 24 and beginning in verse 5:

Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.

This is speaking of ancient Israel, but more so, prophetically of those Israelites who were gentiles spiritually—cut off from God, living in Babylon, which is the land of the Chaldeans. They were saturated by that

Babylonianism—deceived by their concepts and their principles. And He is saying, "A day is coming when I am going to bring them out."

For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. [Verse 7:] And I will give them an heart to know me . . .

Are they going to take it? Are they going to come to this knowledge on their own? Are they going to decide, of their own volition, that, "We're going to come to know God," and then figure out how to do it? Then they are going to show up on God's doorstep and say, "Knock, knock, knock, here I am"? No, He will *give* them—by a miracle—a heart to know Him.

And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the [Eternal]: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.

We are not talking about a superficial knowledge: "God? Yeah, I know Him." We're not talking about a profession, we are talking about something deep; we are talking about something real. God considers it important, and what He means to come to know Him is very different from the way human beings talk about it.

That's a day to come for the world—when they are going to have that glorious calling. For you and me, we're on the hot seat right now because with knowledge comes responsibility. It's nothing to gloat over; it's not to think, "Ha, ha, ha, I'm called and they are not." What it means is that if you are called, you are accountable now, because God does not reveal it, or open it, or create that miracle in the life of any human being without requiring something in return. So, if you *know*—if this Way makes sense to you—you are accountable.

Now, you may not like it—and I understand that. Growing up in the church, I didn't like it either. I liked a lot of things about it—including going to the Feast of Tabernacles when I was a child—for the physical things I got. It was a blessing to my family, but I didn't appreciate anything about the spiritual Law of God. I am still in the process—at age forty-eight—of struggling to come to love His Law. Does that appall you? "Well, you're supposed to be the minister; you are supposed

to like the Law." No, I'm a human being like you and I have a natural, carnal mind that I still have to fight on a daily basis, and I am not satisfied *at all* with where I stand in the knowledge—let alone the love—of God. I have a long way to go. The more I learn, and the more God shows to me, the deeper in the hole I feel, and I hope to get you to join me in the hole, and I don't mean that in a bad way. The awareness of the reality of where we stand and what God requires is the beginning of us being able to get better—to acquire the motivation and the ability to actually overcome and to *grow*, and I am talking about real growth. I am not talking about superficial growth, and I am not going to blow smoke at you. I am not interested in doing that. I am going to tell you the Truth. But we have to back up and we have to get down to the bedrock first, and then we have to move forward in this progression of understanding what God requires of us. Let's get the superficial stuff out of our minds and get down to the basic requirements.

Deuteronomy 7 and verse 9. For salvation, we must not only acknowledge that He is the one true God—oh, that's the first step—but then we have to come to appreciate and to love Him. And, boy, that's even tougher—a tall order indeed to come to really appreciate, to value, and to love this God. Deuteronomy 7 and beginning in verse 9: "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God . . ." Just a powerful God? Just an all-consuming God? We are going to talk about that tomorrow morning—the power of God, that's the first step. Then, after that, it's not just enough to come to believe that God is real and that He is all-powerful; furthermore he says, "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God . . ." Do you believe He is a faithful God? That's a character issue, that's not a power issue. That's a character issue. Do you believe that He is a faithful God always, without doubt? ". . . [a] faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." Do you believe He is that good—that perfect, that consistent, that dependable? Do you really believe that? Verse 10:

And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face.

"That doesn't sound like a loving God. Hmmmm. That sounds like that old mean God of the Old Testament," say most so-called Christians today. "Oh, I'm glad we have Jesus Christ, the good God and not that mean old bad God." If you think the God of the Old Testament is a mean old bad God, you don't know Him.

You don't know Him. We are going to see if we can not only come to know Him, but to appreciate and to value Him, because that is going to be the basis of our coming to love Him, and that is our goal.

Verse 11: "Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them." Why? Because, He says, "I've made it an integral part of your relationship with me. Those are the ones I'm going to bless. And then, once you are called and I show you my Law, but you don't come to love it and you don't commit yourself to a life of overcoming, and instead, you resist and run away from it," He says, "I'm telling you up front, you are going to pay with curses in your life. I will bring them upon you." Now, you can say that it is because He is a mean, and a cruel, and a nasty, and an unfeeling God, if you want—and we often do that when we are in trials and affliction and difficulty. And we want to say, "Oh, God, why me?" That's what Job did, but there was an answer to that question, and Job came to see it.

Now, I don't want to get too far ahead of myself, but with understanding—which you and I have by a call—comes accountability. Accountability. Now, you may not want to be called—and I didn't want to be called. I grew up in the church and I had to make a decision as a young man—or as the teenager I still was (I thought I was a man then, but I look back now and think, "Ohhh no"). But I had to come to make that decision: Is this just my parent's religion, or is it something that compels me, of its own accord, in my life, that it is true and right? And, oh, how I sought to find a way to convince myself that "ahh, this is just mom and dad's religion and I was just brainwashed. But I'm going to move on and make my own life in this world and make myself happy by my own means." I wanted to do that so badly, and if I had worked harder at it, I might have been able to deceive myself and to have done that, but for some reason I believed that I would be lying to myself, and I just couldn't do it." I'm not saying it was easy for me to do what was right—uh-uh, no way. But I came to the conviction that I believed this was true, and I believed that Law applied to my life, and that obeying would bring me blessings, and violation of those principles would bring me curses. I came to believe that was true, and I hated it that I believed that was true, because it set me on a course to have to do a lot of things and to avoid a lot of things that I didn't want to have to do. I'm glad I made that decision, and I am glad I took that course because I look back now and say, "If I had not done it, I would have destroyed my life." I couldn't see it then as a young person. I would have absolutely, flat out, destroyed my life if I had pursued the way that I wanted to at the time. I don't have any doubt.

With understanding comes accountability. You can say, "I don't want to be called," and you can run away and say, "I'm not called," but God knows if you are because He is the one that either taps you on the shoulder or not, and if He taps you on the shoulder, guess what? YOU'RE CALLED. And it doesn't matter whether or not you choose to get baptized. Baptism is not the deciding factor. Being called—having your mind opened and becoming aware, having the opportunity—that's what puts you on the hook. And once you are called, YOU are accountable. So if you are struggling under that because you don't want to be called, but you are afraid you are, because you do understand—even though you don't want to understand, but you do [laughs]—join the club. Join the club.

Deuteronomy 11 and verse 1. To those He does call, He says, Deuteronomy 11 and beginning in verse 1: "Therefore thou shalt *love* the [Eternal] thy God . . ." He didn't say, "Just acknowledge that I am, and grudgingly obey." He will not be satisfied with that; He will not settle for that. He says, "[T]hou shalt love"—thou shalt love—"the [Eternal] thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, *always*." Tall order, but He gets to make the rules and that's what He decided to present as a requirement to you and to me.

"And know ye this day: for I speak not with your children which have not known . . ." He says, "I'm not talking to the uncalled people of the world. You can't claim you didn't know. You can't put your hands over your ears and go, 'nah, nah, nah, nah, nah'" [laughs]. He says, "I am speaking to the ones who *do know* and who *were taught*."

. . . and which have not seen the chastisement of the LORD your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched out arm [He says, "I'm not talking to them."], And his miracles, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land; And what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots; how he made the water of the Red sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and how the LORD hath destroyed them unto this day; And what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came into this place; And what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that was in their

possession, in the midst of all Israel: [Verse 7:] But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the LORD which he did.

He says, "I'm not speaking to the people who didn't go through that. You are different." You did get touched by God, and He did create a miracle in your life. Therefore, welcome to the club. Welcome to the club, whether you wanted it or not—whether or not you wanted to be an Israelite—this is your opportunity, this is your calling. Take it or leave it.

Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it.

That's the Kingdom pictured by this seven-day Feast of Tabernacles, which we just began to celebrate this evening. It is a picture of the Kingdom that He wants you to inherit with Jesus Christ.

And that ye may prolong your days in the land, which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give unto them and to their seed, a land that floweth with milk and honey. For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt . . .

He says, "What I am offering you for the future is not even comparable to what you live in right now, and if you think what you have right now is of great value, and, oh, you pine to make your life better today, and you put all of your energies into and struggle to try and create your own utopia, right now, you are trying to make a good life in Egypt." That's what He is saying. "And you are not going to be able to do it. What I am offering you is so much more valuable than the greatest thing you could ever achieve on your own in Egypt [or Babylon] today." Verse 11:

But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: A land which the [Eternal] thy God careth for: the eyes of the [Eternal] thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.

Do you want to be part of a blessed land? Do you want to be part of a realm that is truly governed, and protected, and enriched by the very Spirit of God? Or, are you all caught up in just wanting to try and make your best life right now in the flesh? Those are the choices He sets before you and before me.

God is adamant. He is adamant about His Law. He created the Law which says, "This way brings blessings, and that way brings curses." He set it in motion; it works on autopilot—He can go on vacation if He wants and the blessings come and the curses come according to whether we obey or disobey. That's the way God made it. He is adamant to curse those who are called, but who still refuse to know and to love Him. If you resist—like I was tempted to resist—and you try to run away from Him, you are going to end up with a life like Jonah. God had a way of getting the attention of the one He called to do a job but who ran the other way. You won't get away with it, and I won't get away with it. He is adamant about enforcing His decree that those He touches with a call but who then run in the opposite direction, are going to pay, and they are going to suffer, and they are going to make their lives miserable. Call Him a bad, and an uncaring, and an unfeeling God if you will, but I'm going to show you in the coming messages at this Feast that it is part of His perfect love.

Ezekiel 6. Ezekiel 6 and beginning in verse 6: "In all your dwellingplaces the cities shall be laid waste . . ." This is what is going to happen to those Israelites—the called people of God—who will not bend their knee to Him, and instead run in the opposite direction. Here's the fact of what you and I have in store if we do this: "In all your dwellingplaces the cities shall be laid waste . . ." It means, for example, that you are going to run after a certain job because you want this job so bad—it is your dream job, even though you have to work on the Sabbath—and you think, "But I know this is going to make me happy, and I am going to make more money, and my family is going to be more happy," or, you are going to marry outside the church, or you are going to do this, or you are going to do that, and you are going to try and make your life happy. But God says, "I am going to destroy everything that you try to do to make yourself happy. You can be smart, you can be intelligent, you can be lucky, and you can start to feel like you are getting it together, and I am going to sweep it all away. It's going to crash and burn." That's what you have in store if you run once you are called. Now, if you are not called—if you are really deceived and God has not yet touched you with that opportunity, then do your best in the world to try and make your life happy.

Do your very best. But if you *are* called, fair warning, this is what God says He is going to do if you run away:

In all your dwellingplaces the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste [meaning all of those altars to pagan gods, idols, things your are setting up and worshiping, by whatever means, instead of God] and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished. And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

He says, "You can do it the easy way, or you can do it the hard way. But if you run from me and you think you are going to create your own good life—without me and without my laws—best of luck, but I am going to destroy it, and sooner or later, like it or not, easy way or hard way, you *will* come to *know* that *I*"—God says of Himself—"am the Eternal." Easy way, hard way—you choose, I choose. That's what He set before us.

It is very interesting that in the book of Ezekiel He repeats this phrase: "You shall know that I am the Lord." You shall know that I am the Lord. Do you know how many times this is repeated in the book of Ezekiel? Sixty-three times. It is repeated a total of seventy-seven times in the Old Testament. The first nine are in the book of Exodus where God is proving Himself to Israel and making an example of Egypt. He is saying, "Here I am; I've made you my special people; I've given you these blessings; I've cursed Egypt—you've seen that happen; I've promised to give you all of these good things; I've protected you; I've opened up this way. Now, I want you to *know that I am the Eternal.*" That's what He requires. Nine times in Exodus, sixty-three times alone in the book of Ezekiel. From Ezekiel 11 verse 10, through Ezekiel 16 and verse 62, within that short range of chapters, He says it thirteen times. Do you think it might be important to God as it relates to His chosen people? Whatever is involved in coming "to know that I am the Eternal," don't gloss over it. Don't treat it as a flippant thing and think you are ready for the next advanced lesson. Focus on that. It is critical because it is very often the undoing of human beings—most especially the called of God, the Israelites—that fail to take it seriously. They think they know it, and they don't, and they get tripped up because they don't really know Him.

Is it just a matter of believing that there is a Creator power who brought all into existence by design and providence—all that exists in heaven and earth? *That* won't get you anything. Do you know why? You are not any better than Stephen Hawking or any of the other scientists, great minds, or philosophers that do not believe in a Creator God, just because you say, "I believe in God who created all that exists." Guess what? James 2:19 says, "The demons also believe and tremble." Do you think it sets you apart, just because you believe, mentally, in the existence and preeminence of God? Satan and the demons all know that too! They don't have a love for God, though. They don't have a relationship with Him at all just because they *believe* in Him. So that won't get you anything except a starting place. Then we have to go on from there.

In conclusion this evening, brethren, the very essence of our salvation is found in this very simple command. Now, turn to Hebrews 11 verse 6. Hebrews 11 and verse 6, and this is my base text—my theme text—for you, for the messages I will be giving you at this Festival. Which means we are going to read it, repetitively, quite a number of times—Hebrews 11 verse 6. Here is the essence of salvation. It's one of those key little statements that God made that summarizes everything about what it takes to be saved, if you will. Hebrews 11:6:

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God [two things:] must believe that he is, *and* [number two] that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

If you pass the test in your life, by the choices that you make, voluntarily, that demonstrate to God that you believe that He is, *and* that He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him, you will be successful. You will be successful if you do those two things. And I think you should recognize that it is not just a simple, superficial thing. No, the essence of salvation is coming to believe that He is, *AND* that He is a rewarder. What we are talking about is not only believing in the existence and power of God, but also the character of God. You have to have both.

Through this Feast of Tabernacles we are going to examine what it really means to know God *and*, furthermore, what it means to *trust* that He will do everything He says. Tomorrow morning we will get started.