

**Coming to Know and Trust God #8;  
The World Will Know Him**

**2010 Last Great Day, P.M. Service  
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Jon W. Brisby  
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Well, for this final service on the Last Great Day, brethren, this eight-day Feast, we want to complete the last message—my eighth message to you. I've had the privilege and the honor of speaking to you and sharing with you those principles that I hope have been of some value in helping you to assess where you stand in your knowledge, your understanding, your belief in, and your appreciation of God. So you've had seven more specific, technical messages so far, but this afternoon I'm going to give what we call the "meat in due season" message to remind us of the purpose in God's plan for this day. But I still want to do it under the banner of the theme of coming to know and love God—to know and to trust Him.

The Last Great Day pictures the time when all of those who ever lived before on this earth without saving knowledge will have their first chance to come to know and to love God. You and I—as the called (called to be part of the firstfruits of God's work)—have that opportunity now. The majority of the world, not so. And, in fact, all of those who have lived and died in the last six thousand years never had a chance to know God. But God didn't forget them and He didn't leave them out of His glorious master Plan because He loves them as much as He loves any of you. And, so, what is pictured in the Last Great Day is for them. If you will remember, I went through that and I covered it, in part, on the Day of Atonement in speaking about that "at-one-ment" that will be offered to the whole world. So, in keeping with that, we want to begin with that theme and go forward and look at the specifics of how God is going to complete His work with those who will be offered salvation at a later time.

So let's start in 1 John 2 and verse 2. 1 John 2 and verse 2, lest we believe that God is partial or prejudicial, or loves only a small group of people at the expense of

the rest of humanity. 1 John 2 and verse 2: "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Jesus Christ did not die just so that a few human beings could be offered salvation. He died so that the whole world could receive that opportunity. So we are not just talking about just a few hundred, or a few thousand, or even a few million, we are talking about a master Plan that encompasses *billions* of human beings, and it is His plan to share His glory, power and immortality with billions of Family members for eternity. That means that it is a whole lot more than just a small firstfruits harvest. We are talking about a great fall harvest of the entire world.

Notice Isaiah 19, beginning in verse 19. I guess this is my favorite text, and I feel badly sometimes about wearing it out, but I don't know of a better one that I like in the whole Bible for emphasizing what He is doing to take gentiles—physically, mentally and spiritually—of the world and to actually change them into spiritual Israelites. Isaiah 19, beginning in verse 19: "In that day shall there be an altar to the [Eternal] in the midst of the land of Egypt . . ." Not a pagan altar—as I told you earlier in the Feast—not one of their obelisks to a false god, whether it is Ra, or some snake god, or some jackal god, or whatever it is. No, we are talking about an altar to the true God, which is going to be in Egypt. ". . . and a pillar at the border thereof to the [Eternal]"—not to a false god, but to the true God. This day is going to come.

And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the [Eternal] because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour [the Egyptians are going to receive a Savior just like you have received that same Savior already], and a great one, and he shall deliver them. And the [Eternal] shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the [Eternal] in that day.

What a monumental future is coming. Now, it's not just Egypt. Don't think about it in terms of just a little piece of land on the Mediterranean Sea or on the Nile River. Egypt is the symbol for the gentile world in its entirety. In some cases, God uses Babylon, the Chaldeans, as that symbol, but in many other places it is Egypt—pharaoh and the Egyptians—which represent Satan's false system. It is representative of the manifestation of all rebelliousness against the Way of God. So, Egypt is synonymous with that, as God has revealed to us, but the day is

coming when those who *en masse* are opposed to God and His ways and laws, under Satan's world today, are going to become converted. I can't even imagine what that is going to be like.

You know, you and I are used to living in a world where everything is against us—where we are misfits, where we are the odd men and women out. We are weird, we are strange, we are odd to the rest of the world. Why are we dressed up in suits and dresses, nice clothes, on a weekday—a workday to the rest of the world? You know, we look odd. Didn't they just look at us oddly when we were out in town? Yeah. "What are those people all about?" But we are used to that. I don't say we are comfortable with that, but we are used to being odd and strange in the eyes of the world because the majority of people in this world have a totally different orientation than we do. So it's hard to even think about a time when that is not going to be so anymore—when the whole world is going to understand the Truth and be called, as you have already been called. They finally are going to have an open mind to begin to walk in and learn a different way—the whole world, every nation, every people. What an amazing thing that is going to be.

Isaiah 25 and verse 7—another text which speaks prophetically of that very time. Isaiah 25 and beginning in verse 7: "And he will destroy in this mountain . . ." And a mountain, of course, symbolizes a government and its authority, and we are talking about the time of the rule of Jesus Christ upon this earth when there is going to be a new King—a new Sheriff in town, if you will. And His government will be ruling with a rod of iron upon this earth.

"And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations." What veil is this that has been spread over all peoples and nations? It has been the miracle to shield the Truth from their understanding—to hide it from them intentionally and to make it impossible for them to understand, let alone to value, the true ways of God. And I'm afraid that is a principle that all too many in God's church still don't fully get, because there are all too many in our parent organization, and all of the various splinter groups that have come out of it over the last forty years, that still think they can seize the Truth on their own—through their own study, through their own intellects, through their own activities. No, it has to be a miracle; it has to be an opening of the mind; it has to be a calling—the lifting of a veil—that allows the eyes to see, the ears to hear, and the minds to understand. Otherwise, human beings cannot do it. The day is coming when that is going to be lifted from the entire world.

And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory.

That's the end of the Plan that we are getting ready to talk about—when there will be no more death.

. . . and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the [Eternal] hath spoken it.

This isn't a prophecy just for Israel—a small nation out of many nations. God's people are going to be people of all nations around the world. Verse 9: "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him . . ." Oh, boy, have they waited. They don't know they are waiting. Many of them hate God, and that's because they have never been given a chance, like you have, to know Him, let alone to appreciate Him. They don't know it, but they have been waiting for Him all of their lives. The majority of human beings who have lived and died in the last six thousand years have lived for decades waiting for a savior that never came in their lifetimes. But they are going to receive one.

And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the [Eternal]; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

What a wonderful time that is going to be. And that is the very image of the Last Great Day in the master Plan of God.

How is it going to transpire? What do we understand about the mechanics of how God is going to bring this salvation to that expansive world? Well, let's go through that as a reminder—meat in due season—as we do every year. Let's start in Revelation 20. You knew we were going to go there. Revelation 20 and we will begin in verse 1. Here we see a description of what we call "the resurrection order"—the order in which God is laying out the salvation process for all of humanity. It starts with the firstfruits, and then it continues on with the great fall harvest. Revelation 20 verse 1:

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

That thousand-year period is the Millennium which we have just celebrated in the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles—a time which is a Sabbath rest for the earth. A Sabbath rest for the earth. There will be no antagonists in the spirit realm agitating and amplifying weakness of human minds—causing strife, and turmoil, and pain, and suffering. Oh, the people in the Millennium are going to have to fight against their natural, carnal natures, because they will still have them—don't ever underestimate. There will be the need for every human being who is offered salvation—either earlier or later—to overcome. But during that thousand-year reign, they will not be contending with the additional weight of a Devil. It is going to be a Sabbath rest for the peoples of the earth. Verse 3:

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

After the end of that specific one-thousand-year period of Sabbath rest it won't be the Sabbath anymore. What makes it either the Sabbath or not the Sabbath? The allowance of a Devil to antagonize mankind. So when the Sabbath rest is over, God's master Plan is not yet fully completed, but there is still a small part to be finished:

[Then, Satan] must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus [meaning those of the Firstfruits who were martyred], and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. [That's the Firstfruits harvest. Then the first part of verse 5:] But the rest of the dead [not the Firstfruits, but *all* of the rest not included in the Firstfruits] lived not again until the thousand years were finished.

They stayed in their graves from whenever they died—at whatever time, going back through antiquity over the last six thousand years. And then the second part of verse 5: "This is the first resurrection." That's not referring to the sentence in the first part of verse 5. If you don't have it marked, take the first sentence in verse 5 and put parentheses around it. "[T]he rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." That is a parenthetical statement. It's like a temporary detour to give you a little piece of information which is outside of the main thread of the thought being expressed here. The statement, "This is the first resurrection," refers back to verse 4. What is the First Resurrection? Those who did not bow their knees to Baal and who were willing to be martyred and hold on to the Truth which they valued with their very lives. And it is they who will be a part of a First Resurrection at the time that Jesus Christ returns—pictured by the Feast of Trumpets—and will be added to the very God Family, and they will rule with Him for a thousand years.

So the first sentence in verse 5 is where you have to be very, very careful because sometimes God does this intentionally to mask the meaning and make it confusing to the world. The Bible wasn't written for the world, it was written for the Church. And so it requires a teacher to interpret it and to explain it to us—a teacher inspired by Jesus Christ. In our age, that was Mr. Herbert Armstrong.

So the rest of the dead—apart from those who were part of the First Resurrection—were not resurrected. They did not live again until the thousand-year Millennium was finished. Verse 6: "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power." No, because they are changed into Spirit Beings—God Family members who are omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, just like the Father and Jesus Christ, but in a glorious, harmonious Family order that will accomplish a collective goal according to the will of the Father. It is going to be a glorious time.

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

These are offices of incredible responsibility and authority. Alright, now skip down to verses 7 through 10. This explains what happens when the thousand years are expired. Satan shall be loosed, and it talks about the nations of Gog and

Magog that go out. Now, the big question is—and it is not my purpose to get into it because I've covered it in years past—how long is the little season? And I've told you, we do not draw that conclusion. The old *Bible Correspondence Course* of the late 1960s will tell you that it's just a few weeks, or a few months, right at the end of the Millennium during which Satan is used to test only those who are alive in the Millennium—that Satan, now, and the false prophet, and the demons, and all of those who fail in the Millennium are burned up, Satan only symbolically, and *then* the second resurrection happens. But Mr. Raymond Cole didn't believe that necessarily was true. Remember what I told you earlier, God has allowed us to see through a glass darkly? He did not choose to give us all of the details. This happens to be one of the details that is not necessary for your salvation or mine, which means we are not going to hang our hats on one particular interpretation or another, because we don't have to do it. It's nice to know more details about the future, but it is not necessary for your salvation or mine.

In an earlier sermon, a few years ago, I pointed out some inconsistencies in this interpretation because I can point to old material from *Good News* magazine articles where it was said that Satan's final judgement doesn't happen until the final conflagration, when the whole earth is burned up. Well, when does that take place? Not right at the end of the Millennium, but at the end of the White Throne Judgement period. So which is it? Is it what the *Correspondence Course* said—a few weeks or months right after the Millennium is over—or, is it the final conflagration at the end of the White Throne Judgement period? I find no consistency. And my personal opinion about it is no more valuable than anybody else's. God hasn't given *me* a special, prophetic revelation on the subject, so I am not going to be dogmatic about it. If I had to guess, I would guess that Satan is going to be loose throughout the whole White Throne Judgement period. Maybe not. Why do I like that interpretation? Because it makes the White Throne Judgement period different than the Millennium. The only thing different about the Millennium as opposed to the Great White Throne Judgement period, besides the great second resurrection of billions, is that one is the Sabbath and one is not. And the key thing I see that makes the Millennium the Sabbath is the absence of Satan. If Satan is only released for a few weeks and then banished again in the White Throne Judgement period, that would make the latter just like another Sabbath. Maybe so, but I don't think it's necessary for it to be that way. It could be that God wants all of those billions to face, not only their carnal natures, but

also Satan, the Devil, through that whole period—just like you and I have had to face Satan, the Devil throughout our whole lives.

That's not what the *Correspondence Course* suggests. But, again, it was the inspiration of Mr. Raymond Cole, who was a witness of the teaching of Mr. Herbert Armstrong from the beginning, that helped guide us to know the difference between the suppositions of men—in which ministers other than Mr. Armstrong reached for things that they should not have reached for with interpretations that God did not necessarily inspire—versus the things that were really the faith once delivered. Thankfully, these issues about Satan's little season are not important for us to know because you are not going to be judged on whether Satan's little season is a few weeks or a few years. God's not going to hold you or me accountable for that, which is why we are just simply not going to be dogmatic about it. And I don't want any of the ministers of this group to be dogmatic about it.

Drop down to Revelation 20 and verse 11. What we know is that there is the Millennium—a Sabbath rest for the earth—and then when the Millennium is over a new phase begins which is pictured by this day, the Last Great Day. Verse 11: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." For whom? "Found no place" for whom? The earth and the heavens. It's a direct reference to 2 Peter 3:10 and 11, where God, through the Apostle Peter, said that this earth is going to be burned up.

That's another debate, by the way, because I do find old statements of certain ministers writing in the *Good News* magazine that say, paraphrasing, "Well, the whole earth isn't going to be burned up, but just the surface of the earth." That's not what I was taught, and that certainly is not what Raymond Cole taught us, and he was taught by Mr. Armstrong. When God said that there was going to be a new heavens and a new earth, we take that literally. Peter said that even the elements were going to melt with fervent heat. That means the minerals and all of the content that makes up the dirt. I like to say that even the dirt is going to burn. That's how hot it is going to be. So anything that is physical, and anything that has not been changed into Spirit that is still left alive on this earth when that final conflagration takes place, is going to be destroyed, because the entire earth, physically, is going to be destroyed. That includes all of the

astro-bodies. It says the "heavens and the earth" because there is going to be a new heaven and a new earth. The current astro-bodies in this solar system were created temporarily for the master Plan involving the maturation of human beings in a physical environment that supports their lives until they are either judged and changed into Spirit Beings, or until they are mercifully burned up. And once there are no more human beings, there is no longer a need for the physical Creation that we take for granted. He did not create the solar system, nor any of these astro-bodies—including the earth—to be a permanent habitation. There are going to be new heavens and a new earth and they are going to be a habitation for Spirit Beings. This earth was not created to be a habitation for spirit beings, it was designed for human sustenance. Human beings are not going to exist in that day. The habitation of the God Family is going to be a Spirit realm—a new Jerusalem—which you find in the very final chapters of the book of Revelation. It's not the physical one at all, and that's what's being referred to here. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away." What does it mean, "the earth and the heaven fled away"? It means they were taken out of the way by God. They get burned up. They are no more. ". . . and there was found no place for them." Why? Because their purpose and their role was completed. The need for them—the reason for which God created them—has come to an end, and now, basically, He can, as the Bible also says, fold them up and put them away.

Verse 12—we are talking about this Great White Throne and that period of time: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened." What books? The books of the Bible—the Holy Scriptures, the teaching of the Law; right versus wrong; what is required in order to please and to honor God; the books by which He is going to be judging all for salvation. Those books will be opened to them. That means they are going to be called and converted, even as you have had that opportunity now.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." I'm not going to read Ezekiel 37, but you know, that is the chapter that we read that gives the prophecy of the dry bones, when all of these dead are miraculously going to be brought back to life. But we are not talking about a resurrection from flesh into Spirit, like the First Resurrection, we are talking about a resurrection to another physical life with a flesh body. That's what Ezekiel 37 shows us. Because there will be bones, and there will be sinews and flesh put back on those bones, and God is going to breathe into those new bodies the breath of life like He did with Adam.

And they are going to stand up on their feet, and it is going to be an incredible army of billions. They are called Israel, but remember what we have already read: Israel is not just the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the true Israel of God is the whole world, because Christ died for the whole world. He wants them *all* to be a part of that Family. And so the Israel of God spoken of in Ezekiel 37 is really the very same population we are talking about here, and they are going to be given their chance to be converted and to prove by their personal choices thereafter if they are worthy of salvation.

Now, as to whether that White Throne Judgement period is one hundred years, again, that was just simply a speculation by Dr. Herman Hoeh. That didn't come by divine revelation from God to Mr. Armstrong. It's an interpretation from the reading of Isaiah 65—maybe it's true, maybe it's not. I'm happy with a hundred years, if that is what it is. That's what the *Correspondence Course* says, but again, what was the source? Maybe so, maybe not, and again, thankfully it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter whether it's twenty years, fifty years, seventy-five years, a hundred years, or two hundred years, God knows what He is doing. But it is going to be a period of time in which God is going to allow these masses of billions, who are converted now and have new bodies, to establish new livelihoods upon the face of the reconstructed earth, which will be a paradise that will be completed throughout the thousand-year Millennium. And now they are going to prove by their own choices whether or not they love what God is offering to them. God does not choose to give us as many details as we would like to know about that time. I just happened to have learned from Mr. Raymond Cole that it is foolish to try and assume that which God hasn't chosen to reveal. It's just not necessary to do it. What He has confirmed through Mr. Armstrong—that last-day servant—is enough to give us incredible zeal, appreciation and hope for that future. We don't have to know the specific details.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened." That means the books of the Bible were opened to their understanding. The veil is lifted, as we read in Isaiah 25, so that they can understand finally those words of life. "[A]nd another book was opened, which is the book of life"—the book which pictures, symbolically, either salvation or lack of salvation. Because having your name written in that book equates to success and salvation, and having your name not found in that book is equivalent to failure. It is one or the other. "[A]nd another book was opened, which is the book of life"—which means

the opportunity for eternal salvation in the God Family. Synonymous with a call—the opening of the books of the Bible—is having your name written in the Book of Life, and I won't take the time to go through it, but God is counting on our success. From the beginning He is counting on it because when He calls you, He never calls you to fail. He always calls one with the hope of his success, and so He writes those names in the Book of Life.

Now, the Firstfruits have had their names written in that Book of Life since before the foundation of the world, and that is another point of contention among many of these "scholars" from our parent organization who hate that idea. Nevertheless, that is exactly what Mr. Armstrong taught and we do count that as the faith once delivered. *You were known by name—who you would be*, physically, all of your DNA—millions of years before you were born, regardless of what these scholars want to tell you. And that means God knew every decision that every human being, from the beginning to the end, was going to make, including who they were going to marry, or fornicate with, in order to produce children who would themselves grow up and either marry, or fornicate with others, throughout six thousand years of time in order to produce every one of us to be the persons that we are. The fact that He knew you from the beginning does not mean that He is responsible for every sin that human beings have committed. It was the choice of each according to free moral agency, but He knows the end from the beginning, and we are not going to put limits on God. He is omniscient, and that means He knows everything. And He uses that knowledge to complete His purpose. That's part of getting to know God—the awesome master Plan of a Creator.

And so the Firstfruits had their names written in that book from the beginning. That's a positive approach by God to say, "I want you to be there, so I am writing your name in now." And your name stays in there—my name stays in there—unless and until we do something to have it stricken. And that is up to you and that is up to me. God wants you to be there, so your name is there. Now, if we disqualify ourselves because we prove that we *will not* come to value this Way of Life and we run away from it, besmirch it, hide from it, or fail to bear fruit, He *will* strike our names from it.

Well, for all of these great numbers, these billions, who come up with a new flesh body in the White Throne Judgement period and are called for the first time,

their names are all going to be added to that Book of Life, prospectively, and they are going to be given their opportunity, and God's hope is for them to be successful. And their names are going to stay in that book unless and until *they* strike it out by virtue of their choices during that White Throne Judgement period—how ever long it is. But He starts with your name there.

. . . and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead [those former dead who now have new bodies and open minds with the opportunity to be begotten of the Holy Spirit] were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

How long is the White Throne Judgement period? The answer is, long enough for God to evaluate their fruits and to know without a doubt—basically to give them a chance to know without a doubt—what they love and what they don't love.

Let me ask this question of you: Knowing and believing, according to that teaching, that these billions—including every evil human being in six thousand years of human history—are going to have a chance for conversion, are you okay with that? Because I have run into people in past years that have come to a knowledge of the Truth—who have read material from Herbert Armstrong and have become fascinated with it to a certain extent—who are not okay with that. And I remember talking to one man a few years ago, and it seemed that he was really encouraged about the Truth until he got to the point concerning the White Throne Judgement when all of these billions—including ones like Adolf Hitler—are going to have new bodies, and open minds, and a chance for salvation. And he choked on that. He said, "I can't accept that." His belief was that there are certain human beings who have been so evil—so abominable and so heinous—in their day that they don't deserve another chance. And some will not entertain the possibility, according to *their* ideas about fairness, that in God's Plan such individuals will get an opportunity. They want to believe that those individuals will never have salvation. Do you feel that way? What about all of the most abominable people in the history of man?

What if, instead, I put it to you more personally? Some of you have had individuals in your lives who have harmed you incredibly. You have been the victims of crime, brutality, and every evil—either before or after your calling.

Many of you before then. Are you happy with the idea of those villains receiving an opportunity for salvation? That's a way to test whether or not we agree with God, don't you think? It's another way to test whether or not we really know and trust God and what He is doing. He loves them—He loves every single one of them, no matter how evil, no matter how grossly vile, they have been. But they were deceived. They are deceived. They have not had an opportunity to be converted and to know God's Truth. Will you deny them an opportunity for forgiveness? God is perfect in love, and mercy, and compassion, and He *will* forgive them, and He *will* redeem them in the White Throne Judgement and give them an opportunity for salvation. They are going to get the same chance you have gotten.

It works the other way, as well, as an encouragement to you, because there are some of you who have been plagued in times past by feelings that you are unworthy of a calling—let alone having a chance of being born into the Family of God. And some of you still struggle with that, I know, because you have shared it with me. And you think, "I still don't feel like I have a right to be a part of this group. I don't think I'm good enough. I don't think I'm worthy." Well, Adolf Hitler is worthy of his chance—his opportunity for conversion—and so are you. I don't care what you have done in your past; I don't care what laws of God you have violated; I don't care who and to what degree you may have harmed other human beings with your misbehavior; if you are truly repentant and you acknowledge those things before God—and you don't have to do it before other human beings, except, perhaps, to the ones you have harmed—and you are determined to walk toward the example of Jesus Christ, and you are serious about it, and you will bear fruit toward that goal, your sins are blotted out as if they never happened. Oh, you may still have to live with some of the physical penalties that come from those past lives, but spiritually speaking, they will never be brought up. They are totally gone in the thinking of God.

All of those in that White Throne Judgement are going to have that same gift of forgiveness. No matter what they have done, they will have mercy, and love, and restitution—the Atonement—to a relationship with Jesus Christ and the Father, and in fact, with all of you, given that you are part of the God Family in that day. You are going to be a part of that Family to which they are going to be reconciled. Are you prepared to forgive all of the evil perpetrated by those who have been so wicked? Will you welcome them to the offering of God's grace?

Hosea 2 and verse 18. Hosea 2 and beginning in verse 18: "And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field." Who are these beasts of the field? The gentiles, symbolically. They are the ones that have been vile and evil—separated from God.

[I will] make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground [unclean animals, symbolic of the world]: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the [Eternal].

These people are going to come to know God—I mean really know Him.

And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the [Eternal], I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy.

That means the whole world that has been cut off from God for six thousand years, and yet, a day is coming when they will obtain mercy. For the first time they will have mercy through a calling and the White Throne Judgement.

[A]nd I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.

Can you imagine the scope of what that is going to be like? That's beyond our capacity, once again, to imagine. But He allows us to see through that glass darkly, just enough to have a hint of the glory that is involved in that process of what He is doing—the whys and the wherefores—so that we can appreciate it; so that we can appreciate it just enough, although we yearn to know more and more. And, boy, we want to have all the details. Don't we want to know how long it's going to be, and when, and every other specific? He said, "I didn't choose to reveal that." But He gave us just enough to entice us into the enthusiasm, and the excitement, and the awe of His character and what He is offering—not to just a few, but to many.

These who are resurrected in the White Throne Judgement period will be given an opportunity to use the Holy Spirit for the first time to bear fruit in their own lives, and thereby to prove whether or not they will qualify to be added to God's eternal Family. The Firstfruits will always have preeminence in the Family, but all of those billions who are added later, by virtue of their having passed their tests in the White Throne Judgement period, are also going to become beloved, full members of the God Family. They are not going to be mini-gods or sub-gods, they *too* will be fully God as God is—omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient—fulfilling their roles in that hierarchy of Family government. Every one of them will be beloved and the least among them will still be capable of fulfilling any job, any responsibility, and will be *worthy* to be *worshiped* in the final completion of God's Plan. Because God is always worthy to be worshiped—He is perfect, immutable, without equal. These are going to have the same gift and the same opportunity that you have now. Does that give you a better sense of the awesome nature of the God who created this whole Plan? Think about what He did. He didn't have to do that. He could keep all of that power to Himself and Jesus Christ—the two of them could just kind of hoard it to themselves. But they want to share that power and glory with many Sons, and so, ultimately there will be millions and billions who will fulfill that ultimate Plan to expand the Family of God.

What do those of the Firstfruits and that late greater harvest have in common? The main thing they have in common is that the salvation test for both is coming to know and to love God—the same thing we have been talking about during this festival. It's the same yardstick by which God will evaluate them for their success or failure, just like what you and I are facing right now. You have it memorized by now, I'll bet: Hebrews 11:6. You may not even need to turn to it. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God . . ."—and that means coming into a close, personal relationship with that God. For anybody to have that relationship—whether of the Firstfruits, or those in the White Throne Judgement period, or during the Millennium—he must "believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," that God is honest; that He is faithful; that He is true; that He is dependable; that He is trustworthy, and you can bank on Him to keep His word. You can put your confidence in Him; you can lean on Him because He will never let you down; He will never yank the rug out from underneath you; He will never abandon you. If you do what He says—what He requires—you have a sure Friend, and there is no friend like God for a friend.

One proof of our conviction in His character is always the level of our appreciation for the gift. That's why so many of the Psalms basically are psalms of praise. Let's notice one: Psalm 103. Psalm 103 and beginning in verse 1, a psalm of David: "Bless the [Eternal], O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name." He's saying, with everything that is within you, come to value and to appreciate this God. Don't let it just be a superficial profession.

Verse 2: "Bless the [Eternal], O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." That's what we have a tendency to do. That's what ancient Israel always did—they never could remember the good things God did for them, the miraculous ways in which He saved them. They always forgot. As soon as the next trial came along, they pushed out of their minds all the ways in which God had proved His love for them. "Bless the [Eternal], O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Don't you dare forget the ways in which He blessed you and helped you. Don't take those things for granted. It is a dishonor to God and His reputation when you and I take His blessings for granted and refuse to give Him credit and thanks for them, and then doubt Him in the future when we face new trials, as if maybe He won't help us.

Verse 3: This God, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities"—all of them, if you are repentant. If you are truly repentant, He forgives you. "[W]ho healeth all thy diseases." That's another part of the same promise, as Mr. Armstrong used to teach—according to the original teaching on health and healing before they changed in the mid-1970s to say it is okay to go to doctors, and have surgeries, and take all of this man-manufactured medication. That wasn't the original teaching during the years in which the church was being incredibly blessed. The teaching was that this system is a part of Satan's world, and it isn't going to exist in the Millennium or the White Throne Judgement period. There will be no counterfeit. The people of the world have no choice but to try and save themselves and to try and make their lives more comfortable in any way they can because they don't have God. Mr. Armstrong said that they have to do the best that they can, on their own, separated from God. So they create their medications and they learn how to do internal surgeries, and do this and do that. That's because they are under a curse—they don't have a special relationship with God. But for the called of God, you don't go to those counterfeits, you don't put your trust in Satan's medical system—which is what Mr. Armstrong called it, and he used this very text in Psalm 103 and verse 3 to prove it.

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." That means spiritually, under the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the death penalty—that Mr. Byrd has been talking about in his sermons on "Grace and Law"—is paid. What was against us? It wasn't God's spiritual Law, it was the death penalty—the Law that said "the wages of sin is death." That's what was against us—not the rules that tell us how to discern between good and evil. That Law is good and it is Eternal, but it was the penal code which said that those who violate that perfect Law automatically earn death. And we have all sinned, which means we have all earned the death penalty, and if there is no redemption, why do we even try? We are just the walking dead, waiting to go to our graves and be obliterated, except that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ provided a way out—to be redeemed and to be recovered—because He paid the price so that we could have a hope of life beyond this flesh.

But Mr. Armstrong said that there are two parts to the promise here in verse 3: "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities—that's the blood of Jesus Christ. But the second part says: "[W]ho healeth all thy diseases." Now that's the physical promise—God as physician, as Healer, *Yahweh Ropheka*, God-Healer. And what did Mr. Armstrong say further? "If you don't have the faith to be healed, you don't have the faith to be saved." That was the original teaching of the Church. If you don't have the faith to trust God to heal you, physically—or, at least, to put yourself in the hands of God—neither do you have the faith to trust Him for your spiritual salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. They go hand in hand and the source of faith for both is one and the same. You see, it is a tall order, isn't it?

Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. [Verse 6:]  
The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.

Why? Because He is a good God, that's why. He is a good God every single time—He never makes a mistake; He never lets you down; He never leaves you to hang. If you follow His rules and you have been up front, then you can count on the fact that He is going to follow through on His part. Psalm 18 and verse 2. Psalm 18 and beginning in verse 2:

The [Eternal] is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised.

You bet He is worthy to be praised, and in fact, we are negligent if we forget to praise Him regularly. We need to remember to thank Him, to praise Him and to honor Him, and learn to do it so that it is not just a superficial thing. This is a part of coming to know and to trust Him—really to be thankful. And if you are not thankful, ask Him to help you to become thankful. Be honest with where you stand and He will help you to grow and to draw near to Him. I don't care how far away from God you feel right now—and some of you feel that way: "I feel so far from God, I feel like I get on my knees and my prayers just bounce off the ceiling and hit me on the head. They don't even get out of the room, let alone, out of the house, or up to heaven where He is." I know some of you have felt that way. Alright, well, do something about it. Because it doesn't have to be that way. It shouldn't be that way. And if you believe He is a good God, then you believe He is not holding you down; and He is not separating Himself from you because He doesn't like you. If you are not satisfied with your closeness with Him, do something about it. Because He is a good God. He will respond and He will embrace you; and love you; and care for you; and bless you; and defend you; and protect you; and fight your battles for you. All you have to do is to decide that you want His Way; you want what He is offering; you want to be a part of this future that we are celebrating at this eight-day Feast, because that Way of Life has become more important to you than trying to seek your own temporary fulfillment in the flesh, in this world. That's all He wants.

So it doesn't matter how long you have been running away from Him. And, you see, again, we treat God like He is a human being. Some of you are estranged from family and friends, and the longer you are estranged, the harder it is to make your way back. Isn't that true? You have been estranged for so long, you think, "Even if I reach out now, they would probably just slap it back in my face. After so many years of running away and not cultivating the relationship, they would never accept me." And with human beings, that might be true, but with God it is not true, at all. Do not treat Him like a human being, He is not one. God is not a man. I don't care how long you may have been running from Him; and I don't care if that literally means you have been violating the Sabbath and the Holy Days, and

not keeping the Laws; or whether you have been physically a part of the Body but in mind you have been detached and running from Him; I don't care how long it has been, you can change it. All you have to do is decide to do so. And if you do it sincerely, He will welcome you with open arms. He will not hold your past against you one iota. It's in your hands. It is absolutely in your hands to cultivate that relationship with Him because He wants you to have it.

He is worthy to be praised, and to be honored, and to be thanked. Hebrews 13 and verse 15. Hebrews 13 and verse 15: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice . . ." Not, as Mr. Byrd was confirming, animal sacrifices, according to a temporary law that was only picturing something to come. No, the sacrifices of the New Testament church, the members of which have been begotten of the Spirit, are different. What kind of sacrifices are we talking about? This kind: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually. . . "

You know, you can read Leviticus 23, which lists the Sabbaths of God—the weekly Sabbath, and all of the annual Holy Days—and they all talk about the requirement of an offering made by fire to the Eternal. Well, what is the offering made by fire? We are not doing burnt offerings anymore. But for the New Testament church, what's the equivalent of the Leviticus 23 command for an "offering made by fire" in order to show respect for God? It's your participation in services just like this, where you come into holy convocation, and you offer up your praise in hymn-singing, opening and closing prayers, and special music. That's the offering made by fire. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." That's what you do when you come to those convocations.

But we are not talking about a superficial profession like many in the world. It doesn't mean going around saying, "*PRAISE* the Lord." Everything out of their mouths—every other word—is "praise the Lord, praise the Lord, praise the Lord." That's a vain repetition—it's superficial and it is a disrespect to God. The true people of God do not engage in that. When they speak a praise, they do it reverentially—with thought and purpose, with the intent in heart and mind to show respect and honor to the Creator. That is going to be shared by both the Firstfruits and those of the White Throne Judgement period. The Commandments and the requirements for salvation are singular for both groups.

Another proof is our willingness to trust Him in times of great peril. Psalm 23. You know it. Psalm 23 and beginning in verse 1, a psalm of David—probably the best-known and most-beloved psalm: "The [Eternal] is my shepherd; I shall not want." Can you say that? Can you recite that? Do you believe it? Do you feel it? "The [Eternal—this good God] is my shepherd; [because this God, who is perfect, and powerful has chosen to be my God, I am most blessed, and therefore] I shall not want." The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. There is a whole lot more to this than what we simply read superficially, isn't there? "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." That means, "He blesses me incredibly"—He blesses me incredibly because of my calling.

"[H]e leadeth me beside the still waters." The still waters represent peace and blessing. He leads by showing us the Way to peace and blessing in every way. Now, does that mean He gives us an easy life—He calls us into the Church, and if we say, "Yes," and get baptized, it's a gravy train? No. Keep reading: "He restoreth my soul." That's what a relationship with God in the Spirit actually accomplishes. As Mr. Armstrong said, we have a missing piece in our minds. The mind of man—though rebellious and carnal—desires a relationship with its Maker, by nature, and is incomplete without it. By virtue of a call and conversion—by a begetting of the Holy Spirit—you are made whole, the missing piece is added to you. And, then, for the first time, you and I have an opportunity to experience peace, inner contentment, satisfaction and fulfillment. "He restoreth my soul." He makes it whole.

"[H]e leadeth me in the paths of righteousness . . ." That means that by a calling He teaches us the right Way—He opens the books that we read about in Revelation 20 to our understanding. They show us the difference between right and wrong—the way of blessing versus the way of curses. What a blessing it is to know what brings blessings and what brings curses. "[H]e leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake"—because He loves us and He wants us to be happy, not cursed.

Verse 4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death . . ." And, guess what? He is going to allow His chosen, beloved children to do just that. It's not all a bed of roses. Oh, yes, He leads us on the path by the still waters. That's really good, but that doesn't mean that you are going to be without trial, and temptation, and difficulty. No way. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the

shadow of death . . ." That means you will be confronted with challenges to your faith; you will experience, naturally, fear, worry, trepidation, and anxiety by virtue of living in this world of Babylon. God is going to let you go through it, for reason. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." I will not give in to fear; I will not live my life in a reactionary manner, trying to save myself by violating God's Law.

Why? " . . . for thou art with me"—because I really do believe, by the power of the Holy Spirit in my life, that God is a good God. And when He said that He would bless and take care of us, and provide for all of our needs, we are going to take Him at His word. So, no matter how scary it gets; and no matter how much it appears that there is no possibility of a happy ending in these personal circumstances—whatever they are; and no matter how impossible it is for us to save ourselves from our circumstances, we will put ourselves in the hands of this God and say, as Job did, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Because we trust Him. " . . . for thou art with me." He is not a fair-weather friend. You can count on Him.

"[T]hy rod and thy staff"—the power of this God; the Truth of this God; both His power and His character—"they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." I'll bet a lot of you can identify with that. In your lives, He has, in essence, set you in the midst of people who hate you—or circumstances that hate you. Most especially, Satan, the Devil, in this world. And He allows you to live in it, and to face all kinds of temptations, and trials, and enemies. He sat us at a table with our enemies. Who likes to go to a dinner party with people that hate you? It's not fun, is it? You sit at a table, and every eye looking at you despises you and wants you to be dead— and made miserable before you die. Symbolically, God says, that is exactly what I have done to my beloved people. I have set them at a table. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." Oh, He is going to allow you and me to face serious trial.

"[T]hou anointest my head with oil." This individual is not going to accuse God of being unfair, or doubt His sincerity, His character, or His faithfulness."Thou anointest my head with oil"—the gift of the Holy Spirit. "You have given me, by your call and my conversion, the power of the Spirit to deal with any of these circumstances that may befall me. You have given me everything I need for success, despite my trials."

"[M]y cup runneth over." This individual says, "God, I am so thankful to you. Despite the fact that I have enemies on all sides, and I have this thorn in my side—whatever it may be: agitations, and trials, and difficulties that buffet me—I am so thankful to you because you have still blessed me in so many ways that I do not deserve. And I pour out my thanksgiving to you most of all. My cup runneth over."

Verse 6: "Surely [most certainly, without doubt] goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." The person who can say that has real confidence that this is not only a living God, but a good God. "Surely [most certainly] goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the [Eternal] for ever"—I will make that goal of His Kingdom foremost in my mind. And Jesus Christ said, "the violent take it by force." The aggressive ones who love what He is offering will not let anything stand in the way of their securing it. He has promised it. It is yours for the taking. All you have to do is grab it—don't be denied. He loves you. He is not offering you a fake opportunity that He is going to snatch right back from you. He was serious when He extended that calling, and conversion—that chance for an office of power and glory in His Family government. He was serious—He was deadly serious. And if you love it enough to fight for it, and to sacrifice everything else in order to achieve it—if you have the vision of that future, and you don't let anybody take it from you—you can have it. And so can all of these who are going to be offered the very same gift in the White Throne Judgement.

In the White Throne Judgement, the whole world will finally have the privilege of knowing what you know now. Many of them are going to respond with zeal, and value it as a pearl of great price, and they are going to put God first, and they are going to make the necessary sacrifices so that they can be there. What about you?

In that day, brethren, what will they think about your example and your legacy, personally? Your stories—those of the Firstfruits, the ones who were offered that gift early—are being written right now. What will history show to those of the White Throne Judgement about what you did with your calling now, today? You see, their history book is not going to be just the Old Testament of ancient Israel. They are going to have those books, plus probably those that tell your story. And they are going to learn from *all* of them. What lessons are you

writing? Will they be lessons of success—of love and conviction—or will they be ones of failure, like our ancient ancestors? Revelation 20 and verse 13. Back to Revelation chapter 20, and here is the final piece that we cover by tradition on the Last Great Day, and it is the negative part—the sad part—because God has to tie up all of the loose ends. A Judgement is going to take place, and there are those who are going to be separated—that He is going to treat as Sheep—and also those that He characterizes as goats. There are those who are going to be redeemed to eternal life, and also those that are going to be cast into a lake of fire. Revelation 20 and beginning in verse 13: "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it." Here is another resurrection—a resurrection, not to eternal life, spiritually, but to a temporary, physical body.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [meaning the grave] delivered up the dead [these people came up out of the ground] which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. [Separate and apart, now, from those who were successful in the White Throne Judgement. Verse 14:] And death and hell [the grave] were cast into the lake of fire.

After this final piece of messy clean-up, if you will, there is no more death, because there are no more human beings alive in the flesh to die. The master Plan is completed—it's finished. "And death and hell [the grave] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." According to God's will and purpose, there is a second death for those who fail. There are those who want to argue about that now. They don't agree with what Mr. Armstrong gave us, and so they think the ones who were called to be part of the Firstfruits, but who failed and are already dead and in the grave, are just going to stay in the grave. Because they say, "Well, a loving God would never resurrect somebody to a new physical body just to turn around and throw them into a lake of fire and kill them again." They don't know God. They don't know His character and they don't know how to evaluate good versus evil because they are thinking humanly, carnally; they are not thinking on the God plane. God said there would be a second death. We take Him at His word. Every single human being will face a judgement and hear the verdict of Christ—either success or failure—and they will be sentenced. He is not going to allow those rebels, who were called and given the opportunity, but who did not love it, and have since gone to their graves smugly confident that they were successful, to remain in that state. He is going to resurrect them and He is going

to tell them: "I love you, but you won't be in my Family, because to give you eternal life would be an incredible curse to you, seeing that you don't agree with the Father. You liked your own ways better than ours. And to give you eternal life and all that power would not only make the rest of the Family miserable, but you would also make yourselves miserable. But you need to know that your ideas that you defended so vehemently, and promoted to other members of the Body, to make yourselves feel better about your own concepts, were wrong. You were wrong and I never knew you. Therefore, lovingly, you are going to go to sleep." And those flesh bodies are going to be burned up in a fire so hot that there will be no pain, there will be no suffering. There will be only instant obliteration. That's love, that's mercy, that's compassion.

[D]eath and [the grave] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

That's not an evil, harsh God. That's a loving, merciful God. If you recognize that, you are already a long way toward recognizing how to know God—how to think, through the Spirit, on His plane, and not according to the flesh. It is a perfect, glorious Plan. There is no evil, there is no unfairness, in it. Everybody that God offers a chance, gets a chance, and it is up to them what they do with it. He puts none of them at a disadvantage. He loves every single one of them, but the ultimate perfected Body of the Family of God is going to be truly perfect and glorious, far beyond our wildest imaginations.

Brethren, don't set your sights on this world. Don't get yourselves caught up in your hopes in just trying to create your own utopia in this world. This world is going to come to an end. All of our efforts, physically, are only temporary and they are going to end. Real hope is in the future—the future which is signified by the master Plan pictured in the weekly Sabbath and annual Holy Days which we keep every year, those Days which are the sign between God and His people. If you are growing, through the use of the Holy Spirit, if you know these things, you can come not only to know God, but to trust Him. You can be among those mentioned in Hebrews 11 and verse 6, that have real faith—the necessary ingredient for salvation—and are the ones that really, honestly believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those that serve Him.

May you go forward as lights in this evil world. Rather than being dominated by this world so that your lights are dimmed and potentially snuffed out, may the power of that great God in you give you not only peace and joy—no matter with what trial you are confronted—but the power to allow that very quiet example to shine forth to others who, one day, will remember their interactions with the Firstfruits of God, and that it might help them in the coming day of their calling and conversion. May God grant you that peace and that success in your calling.