

What is the Government of God in the Church? I

You Belong to God

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Where do we begin? We're not going to talk about the Old Testament. We're not going to talk about appointing leaders over a thousand, a hundred, fifty and ten—as you find in the book of Exodus; because when you're leading a nation of carnal people in the wilderness—they did not have their Nextel—their communication was with a trumpet and by messenger to the elders. So, you have to have great organization when you're leading carnal people in the wilderness. It's just like with an army. An army is designed to kill, destroy and to overcome the enemy. So, you need a hierarchy.

But we also have to understand something about a hierarchy, likewise in a corporation. You watch some of the things that they do. I find it very interesting, because—I don't watch any soap operas—but when I do watch television I like to watch History channel and National Geographic—and the last three I was watching were:

1. how they made these big locomotives
2. how they made fire engines
3. how they made axes

I thought: you have to have organization, you have to have everything down pat, you have to have job descriptions for everybody—because you're dealing with producing a product.

When it comes to the Church, we have something similar but applied in an entirely different way. And speaking of a hierarchy, we need to understand this: you've heard it said in time past: 'If there's any one thing the Catholic Church has right it is *church government*.' How many have heard that? You have to take that logic another step further. Therefore, the pope must have been an office inspired by God, and the College of Cardinals are those who uphold the authority of the pope; and all allegiance is given to the pope. Of course, *that's blatantly not true!* God works in an entirely different way. Let's see how God works.

Those who get all excited about, 'I have authority for this and for that and for the other thing.' Do you really? Where does all authority come from? Let's understand something that is true: The whole world—everyone in it and everything in it—*is under the authority of God the Father and Jesus Christ—everything!*

Here's what we need to remember: The whole world is under the authority of God. God created everything. Everything exists and is perpetuated by the things that God has set in motion

for all plants, all animals, all life—human life—the atmosphere, the solar system, the universe.

Hebrews 1:1: "God, Who spoke to the fathers at different times in the past and in many ways by the prophets, has spoken to us in these last days by *His Son*..." This is also talking about, at the time that this was written, because:

1. this was getting close to the last days of the apostolic era
2. as a prophecy for the last days, today

Verse 2: "Whom He has appointed heir of all things, by Whom also He made the ages; Who, being *the* brightness of *His* glory and *the* exact image of His person... [character, because that is what God is building in us] ...and upholding all things by the word of His own power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at *the* right hand of the Majesty on high; having been made so much greater than *any of the angels*" (vs 2-4).

Now we come into some of the authority of God. The angels govern this world *according to God's will* in all nations, whether they be righteous angels to bless or whether they be evil angels, or demons, to curse. It's all under God's authority.

Just to give you an example: What happened during the days of Job? *Satan came with the sons of God!* Satan said, 'Oh, look at your servant out there. You say he's blameless and everything like that.' And God said, 'Yeah, he is.' Satan says, 'Well, you give him into my hand and he'll curse you to Your face.' God said, 'Ok.' Then you know what happened to Job.

There are the angels that are involved. You can go back to the Old Testament, you can read how the angel—which is some cases refers to the One Who became Jesus Christ—to lead the children of Israel. How the angels of God intervened; killed all the army of the Assyrians during the days of Jehoshaphat. How during the days of Daniel, Daniel even fasted three weeks waiting for Gabriel to arrive, because Gabriel was busy helping Michael in fighting the clash between the Medes and the Persians, which then was involved in setting up of Cyrus the Great to absorb the Median Empire into the Persian Empire. He's the one that God chose to send to release the children of Judah from captivity in Babylon.

Then you have the angel Gabriel. And if you check it out, the angel Gabriel had authority to help fulfill all the prophecies leading up to the birth of

Jesus Christ. Gabriel is the one who spoke to Zechariah, he's the one who spoke to Mary. And then you find in Daniel 12, that in the end-time, who's going to stand up for the children of Israel? *Michael!* These are the things that God uses. He also uses, as we'll see a little bit later, the 'seven spirits,' which are the 'seven eyes of God.'

Every human being is subject to these verses right here, because you live, you breathe, you eat, you exist. God provides everything for us. God also says, 'all the beasts are Mine.' And in spite of what the commodity traders believe, God says, 'All the gold, all the silver is Mine.'

Let's look at it concerning the Church. What authority is in the Church? *I think you're going to be very surprised, because it's not what most people assume!* Let's see where that authority derives. After His resurrection, probably close to the last days that He talked to the apostles, after His resurrection.

Matthew 28:16: "Now the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them to meet Him." Very interesting. Doesn't that sound a little bit like Moses going up on Mt. Sinai?

Verse 17: "And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted." They hadn't received the Holy Spirit completely. But isn't it interesting, of the eleven some doubted. This also shows how difficult it is to change the carnal mind without the Spirit of God.

Verse 18: "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me!'" ALL authority! We'll see how He uses that authority. We've seen part of it in how He upholds the world, upholds the universe, everything like that.

Here is the mission or the duty of what we are to do—one of them, v 19: "Therefore, go and make disciples in all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even until the completion of the age.' Amen" (vs 19-20).

Christ is always with His Church. Sometimes He's not very happy with His Church, as we've seen back there depicted in Rev. 2 & 3; and as we know today by our personal experience. So, let's see how the Church comes to be the Church. Some of these Scriptures we're going to go to, we've gone to before, you've heard them given in other sermons. Let's look at the way that Jesus meant it to be.

Let's come to Matthew 16:13): "Now, after coming into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus

questioned His disciples, saying, 'Whom do men declare Me, the Son of man, to be?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist; and others Elijah; and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets'" (vs 13-14). What does this tell you? *Opinions don't count!* Today, unfortunately, they have enshrined opinions because people are able to espouse any opinion that they like and have enshrined them as *gospel truth*. They had the same thing back there.

Verse 15: "He said to them, 'But you, whom do you declare Me to be?' Then Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (vs 15-16).

Here's a very important thing we need to understand: How did the 12 apostles come to be with Jesus? *He called them! He chose them!* This also helps answer: How do we really know the true God? the true Messiah?

Verse 16: "Then Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood did not reveal it to you, but My Father, Who is in heaven'" (vs 16-17). No man can come to God unless God uses His authority, His power and His Spirit to do so. This also shows that men are not going to do things for God just because they desire to do so. Peter is the #1 example of that

Verse 18: "And I say also to you, that you are Peter... [meaning *little stone*] ...but upon this Rock... [speaking of Himself, because He's the Chief Corner Stone] ...I will build My Church..."

- What is the Church?
- How does the Church get where it is?
- What authority is within the Church for everyone who is here?

"...and *the* gates of the grave shall not prevail against it" (v 18). It's never going to die out.

As you probably heard me say to a couple of Mormon elders who were invited over to have a debate with me—which I didn't know it was a debate until I got there—it was interesting, the man who I was going to visit, his name was Job, pronounced job.

He said, 'I just wanted to see what you would say.' I said, 'Well, I'm stuck with a problem. Joseph Smith says the Church died out and God raised it up through him. Jesus said it would never die out, so, my problem is this:

- Do I believe Joseph Smith
- or

• Do I believe Christ?
I said I believe Christ'; got up and left! It's always going to be somewhere on the earth.

Verse 19: “And I will give to you... [beginning with Peter] ...the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven... [understanding the Truth of the Gospel] ...and whatever you may bind on the earth will have already been bound in heaven...” This tells us a very important key thing: No minister, elder, Apostle, prophet or evangelist is going to bind anything on anyone that is not already bound in heaven, because that’s where the Word of God originates from, and *it has to be in conformity with the Word of God!*

Do you think that God is going to bind His whims and carnal notions of ministers who rule by a rod of iron? We’ll rule with a rod of iron when we’re given the authority to do so when we’re spirit beings, and we’ll know how to do it properly. Is He going to bind all the pope’s decisions? *Nope! Not a single one of them*, whether he’s sitting in his chair or not sitting in his chair.

“...and whatever you may loose on the earth will have already been loosed in heaven” (v 19). This is telling us that there’re going to be decisions that are going to have to be made on *situations within the Church based upon the Word of God!*. It’s not going to be based on anything other than the Word of God.

Verse 20: “Then He charged His disciples not to tell anyone that He was Jesus the Christ. From that time Jesus began to explain to His disciples that it was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem, and to suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and to be killed, and to be raised the third day. But after taking *Him* aside...” (vs 20-22). Peter had quite a bit of vanity and leadership misdirected, that he was going to save the Savior.

“...Peter personally began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘*God will be* favorably to you, Lord. In no way shall this *happen* to You.’ Then He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, because your thoughts are not *in accord* with the things of God, but the things of men’” (v 23).

This tells us something else, too—doesn’t it? *The self-will of men is not going to serve the will of God*, because it’s after the things of men and not after the things of God. So, anything that we do has to *be in accord with the Word of God!*

Remember when Peter denied Him three times, that was another one. He said, ‘Lord, I’ll save You. I’ll even go to death with You.’ But it didn’t work out that way—did it?

What are the people of God? We’re not all here because we knew each other and we now belong to a social club. What are the people of God?

1-Peter 1:1: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to *the elect*...” What does *elect* mean? *It*

means selected! It doesn’t mean that God and Jesus Christ voted. It means you’re *selected*. That becomes very, very important because we’ll see how we are selected, because this has to do with the authority in the Church. To give the right balance of authority, but also to limit authority of men.

“...to *the elect* strangers scattered in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia; *who have been chosen* according to *the* predetermined knowledge of God *the* Father, by sanctification through *the* Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of *the* blood of Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you” (vs 1-2). We’re going to see this tells us that God the Father and Jesus Christ—and we’ll see how They do it in just a little bit—use Their *authority*, Their *Word*, Their *Spirit*, to call all those that belong to Christ. Then He gives us the purpose.

Notice the way that the Scriptures are written to really set it out so we have an understanding of what’s being said—always the goal.

Verse 3: “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... [Who selected us (v 1)] ...Who, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again... [with His Holy Spirit] ...**unto a living hope** through *the* resurrection of Jesus Christ from *the* dead; unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven for us, Who *are* being safeguarded by *the* power of God through faith, for salvation *that is* ready to be revealed in *the* last time” (vs 3-5).

That’s telling us an awful lot—isn’t it? Here’s a whole outline of God’s plan. Here’s telling us that we are going to be spirit beings—immortal, spirit beings—in the Family of God.

Now then, let’s see how God does this, and let’s see that God has chosen to use men as well as God’s Spirit. We’re going to go through some verses you’ve heard in the past, but let’s emphasize them from the point of view of Christ and God the Father doing the work.

This also limits authority of people claiming to be Christians but are not. The world today has it, if you have certain values—that is, you believe in some of the Ten Commandments out of the last six. But the real truth is, you’ve got to have the first four **first** in order to carry out the last six in the way that they’re intended to be. What’s wrong with the world today is they have the wrong god, so they’re breaking the first four commandments. How many who keep the Sabbath commandment are breaking the first three? *or* Are rejecting Jesus Christ and the New Testament? Let’s see how this is defined; let’s see whenever there is an artificial authority exerted

by men in the Church, they are—in degree—interfering with the Work of God if that authority is not used in accord with the Word of God. And we'll see what that authority is. And we will see it as very limited. Let's see what God does.

John 6:44: "No one can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day." What does this tell us? *All of those who are true Christians have been drawn by the Father*—the Sovereign of the universe. Every one who is an elder, teacher or minister needs to hear and fear that ***all the brethren of God belong to God the Father and Jesus Christ!*** Is that not true? ***Absolutely!*** They are not members of a corporate church.

A corporation is needed to conduct business in the world. But a corporation is not a structure that limits God as to how He works in His Church and where His Church is!

God the Father is doing it. How does God do it? Every one of us one day, something happened where we wanted to know about God. Why did that happen? Maybe it was a tragedy, loss of a loved one. Maybe you were saved from an accident and an angel of God saved you from an accident and you were so grateful you wanted to know about God—but you didn't know about God. How is God going to reach down into the lives of those that He wants to call? *There's always been the Church*, which means this: ***the ones that God calls, He will draw them to where His Church is!*** And the Church is not without its own problems and difficulties—because we're all human. And that does not mean that Christ is not the Head of it. That means that lo, God is going to do some correction.

Let's come to Revelation, the fifth chapter. Now, I have a sermon on this called *The Seven Spirits of God and the Holy Spirit of God*, which goes into it in a little more detail. But here is how God does it. You can go back in the Psalms and you can read that

- God *sees* everything that goes on in the earth
- God *knows* everything goes on in the earth.
- He knows all the hairs of our head.
- There's no thought that can be withheld from God.
- If the sparrow falls, the Father knows of it.
- He knows everything that's going on.

If God reaches down into someone's life, He does it in response to what the person is trying to find or seek and there are occasions when God intervenes in a person's life, like He did with the

Apostle Paul. Everyone who comes into the Church of God, with the exercising of God to call that person, is eventually brought to the true Church of God—that is the ***body of believers***. They narrow down, where is the Truth? ***Where is the Truth? Where is the Truth?***

Here's how God begins to do it. Looking down on the earth, how does the Father draw a person?

Revelation 5:6 "Then I saw, and behold, before the throne and the four living creatures, and before the elders, *was* standing a Lamb [Christ] as having been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes..."

What are the 'seven horns'? *The seven churches and Christ is the Head of the seven churches!* Is He not? ***Yes, He is!*** Did He not give a special message to each one of the seven churches? And as we go through and look at the seven churches, we know those were the seven churches at the time John wrote, plus a prophetic history of the seven churches. At the end-time as God looks down on the earth, He sees seven churches the way He views them. ***God is not restricted to a corporate structure that a man has devised to conduct business in the world.***

The Christian Biblical Church of God is a non-profit corporation to do business in the world. The corporation has absolutely nothing to do with anything other than conducting business in the world. That's it, because you cannot function in this world without having an official identity.

Here we're talking about the throne of God—where God the Father is; where Christ is—and this ties in with John 6:44, that the Father ***draws*** a person. And we'll see why He does that in just a little bit; we'll see how He does it, too.

"...seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God that are sent into all the earth" (v 6). The candelabra that was in the tabernacle and in the temple had seven lamps on the top of it that had little olive oil holders, and they put a little wick in it and those were lighted every day by the priest. Those are not the seven lampstands of Rev. 2 & 3—because Christ is in the midst of the seven lampstands, so they must be in a circle. The candelabra, which showed the seven lights being lit, symbolized these seven spirits.

In other words, this is telling us God is keeping communication on the earth through His angels and the demons and the seven spirits that are sent by God to personally carry out His own personal business. That's quite an amazing thing when we understand it. We will see how this is defined. These are the ***seven eyes of God***.

2-Chronicles 15:1: “And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded.” God uses His Spirit to communicate with His prophets. This is how God deals, *with His Spirit.*]

Verse 2: “And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him, ‘Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD *is* with you while you are with Him....” A very important thing to understand. We always have to do everything God’s way—and He’s with you all the way.

“...And if you seek Him, He will be found by you. But if you forsake Him, He will forsake you” (v 2). That’s living principle today. That’s what Jesus said, didn’t He? ‘*If you deny Me before men I will deny you before the angels of God*’—same principle today.

Verse 3: “And for a long time Israel *had been* without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law. And when they turned in their trouble to the LORD God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them. And in those times *there was* no peace to him who went out, nor to him who came in, but great tumult *was* upon all the inhabitants of the lands. And nation was destroyed by nation, and city-by-city, for God troubled them with every adversity. But you be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded” (vs 3-7).

This is how God deals with us. In other words, He’s saying, ‘Bring everyone to repentance and return to God.’ And that’s exactly what happened. Let’s see what happened when he got all uppity-up and that he decided to take things into his own hands.

2-Chronicles 16:7: “And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, “Because you have relied on the king of Syria...” What happened? He brought all Judah back. They promised that they would love God. They promised they would obey God. And God said, ‘I’ll fight for you.’ Then he turned his back on God and used the king of Assyria as an ally.

“...and have not relied on the LORD your God, therefore, the army of the king of Syria has escaped out of your hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Libyans a huge army with many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand, for the eyes of the LORD... [the seven spirits of God] ...run to and fro in all the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart *is* perfect toward Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore, from now on you shall have wars” (vs 7-9).

Stop and think about the incident with King David. He was doing fine until Bathsheba came along—she wasn’t innocent; and he wasn’t innocent—and killed Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah the Hittite. Because he did this, what did God say? ‘*Because you have done this thing (which he knew was wrong) you’re going to have trouble from this day forward—though I forgive your sin!*’ And did he have trouble from that day forward? *Yes, indeed!*

That’s why repentance—deep, real repentance—is important. That’s why, until you understand it, you’ll never understand Job. Which when the very first time I read it I thought God was wrong. I thought for sure God was wrong. Because I looked at my life and saw all the things I had to overcome. I looked at Job’s life and thought, man, he was really, really—as it says in the *King James*: ‘perfect’—but it means *blameless*. It took me time to understand that no human being, without the Spirit of God, can be righteous—which Job did not have. He was in the letter of the law, and even with that, it’s *only the righteousness of Christ that brings to the Father and puts us in the right spiritual standing*. Is that not true? *Yes!* All of those things are important to understand ***what is the government of God in the Church?***

Verse 9: “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro in all the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart *is* perfect toward Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore, from now on you shall have wars.’.... [Asa fell on his knees and repented. *NO!*]: ...And Asa was angry with the seer and put him in a prison house. for *he was* in a rage against him because of this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at that time” (vs 9-10). What did he do? *He misused his authority as king to vent his own anger and hostility and refusal of accepting the Truth!*

Now, keep that in mind, because that is what happens to those who really turn their backs on God and don’t like when they hear the Truth of God against what they think is their will.

(go to the next track)

Now let’s talk a little bit more about how God apparently uses *the seven eyes* which go into all the earth to seek out what’s going on, on the earth. We’re talking about a spiritual phenomena or the spiritual work of God Since Christ has all authority in heaven in earth, God controls everything that there is on the earth. God knows what’s going on, on the earth. No thought can be withheld from God. If a sparrow falls, God knows it. Here’s what the seven eyes of God do around the whole earth. Let’s also be willing to admit this: Do you suppose that there are other true brethren of God that we have never even

heard of in various countries and various places that God is dealing with? *Of course!*

Matthew 7:7: “Ask... [ask God] ...and it shall be given to you...” This can even happen to people whom God is not calling, but they have enough whatever it is in them, through circumstances or thoughts or whatever, this is not just for the converted. This is for the unconverted and converted. How are you going to find God in a world where God is not walking the face of the earth? He’s on His throne in heaven above, which I don’t think is too far from the earth. When we say ‘the third heaven’ we think way, way out way at the end of the universe. The third heaven is the place where God lives, but it doesn’t tell us where it is. If God knows all these things that are going on, perhaps it’s closer than we have figured.

Verse 7: “Ask, and it shall be given to you. **Seek**, and you shall find. **Knock**, and it shall be opened to you.” How’s a person going to find God? *Ask, seek*—look around, that’s the same as *knocking*. If anyone is truly seeking God, he’ll be able to find Him. There are people who come along who seek God for a little while and then drop off.

Here’s a promise, v 8: “For everyone who asks... [the Greek means *keep on asking*] ...receives, and the one who seeks... [*keep on seeking*] ...finds, and to the one who knocks... [keeps on *knocking*] ...it shall be opened.”

To show you how much more important it is for God to answer those prayers than it is for your own family, v 9: “Or what man is there of you who, if his son shall ask *for* bread, will give him a stone? And if he shall ask *for* a fish, will give him a serpent? Therefore, if you, being evil...” (vs 9-11)—because all men are evil, regardless of our exterior façade about how good we are.

“...know *how* to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father Who *is* in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?” (v 11).

How does God fulfill this promise? How many Bibles are there in the world? Especially today God is going to make sure that at this end-time that before the events that we know are going to unfold as related in the prophecies of the Old Testament and in the book of Revelation in the New Testament, before all these things start kaleidoscoping down like a dam bursting and the water just coming as gush, He’s going to make sure that there are going to be plenty of Bibles around to the majority of the people that are in the world so that they will have the Word and they will at least have been warned! Especially with the Internet; far better than radio; far better than television; because it’s up and running

24/7. We have so many things on our website, you can find whatever you want. We want that to be as good, or the best website that we can possibly do.

The majority of things they do is download the sermons. And we’re going to see the fruit of that. We already have. We’ve had many more baptisms now than we’ve had in the last couple years. And people writing in: Is there a place that we can fellowship? Is there a church in our area? Some people we have to say, ‘Well, no, somebody’s got to be first.’

Now, here’s how God responds with His Word:

- He uses the seven eyes to find out who is seeking Him.
- Begins to answer the seeking and the knocking by bringing people into contact with His Word.

Is that how it happened with you?

We’ll get into preaching because there’s also preaching and teaching that has to figure into this, because God is not speaking Himself. We have His Word, and that’s why in preaching and teaching we speak the Word of God. I’m talking about how does God deal with each of us as individuals first. Then we can understand the authority within the Church and what that authority really is, and separate out the true authority of God and serving the brethren and teaching the brethren as separated from the presumptive authority of men that they take to themselves the prerogatives of God to exercise lordship over the people.

We want to first find out how does God deal with us as individuals to then begin to form His Church. This is all a part of Jesus building His Church. Come to Matthew 13—we’ve read this before, but let’s go through it again so we understand what God is doing. Remember where we started. ***We are the elect of God***, meaning that ***we are chosen by God!*** God Himself makes a decision on us based upon our choices. Our choices are very definitely involved in this. And also based upon our response to God.

Matthew 13:10—after He spoke the parable, “And His disciples came to Him and asked, ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ And He answered *and* said to them, ‘Because **it has been given to you** to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given’” (vs 10-11).

The *asking*, the *seeking* and the *knocking* means God is going to respond and give something to you, and that something starts as a little bit. Then you choose what you’re going to do. If you respond to God the way that you should, then you’ll get some

more. If you respond to God more and keep responding to Him and His Word, you'll receive more. You don't get it all at once. Even the apostles, in preaching the Gospel, were not given everything all at once—were they? Likewise in our lives, we get some so God can see how we choose. Do we always choose God the Father and Jesus Christ above everything else? *and* The Word of God above everything else?

Yes, we had a nice rescue from the unclean food that was served for lunch by mistake. Steven was going down the line and he saw—Ut-oh, this is some shrimp, and ut-oh and this is some bacon. And he called the server over and said, 'Could you please take these out, we don't want any of that.' I came in way later, and I happened to sit down at the table where he was sitting and he said, 'Well, I told them to take it out.' I said, 'Good for you.'

Acting on the Truth. Not trying to usurp my authority. I didn't bang my fist on the table and say, 'What are you trying to do? You trying to be a minister? You trying to usurp my authority? No, he's just trying to keep all of you from eating shrimp and bacon—very simple! Was that right to do? He asked me. I said, 'Sure, it's okay.'

God deals with us this way. But understand this: ***We're all stewards of the Spirit of God! We are all stewards of the Word of God:*** to faithfully live by it and to faithfully stand for it; because God has given it to us.

Where do you find it? *You find it in the Word of God, plus God's Spirit!* And that's why Sabbath services and coming together to fellowship become so important that it is done correctly:

- in love
- in truth
- in teaching
- in fellowship
- all of those things that please God so His Spirit is here

When we pray and ask for the blessing upon our meetings, God puts His presence here with His Spirit. This is why the Sabbath Day should be like none other, because 'wherever two or three are gathered together, there I am in the midst.'

If you seek and ask and knock, then something has to happen. Spiritually, God does something. Then it is a matter of our choices once we understand it. And we can think of this in many, many different cases. You want to know the Truth, so one of the first things you hear is you shouldn't eat pork, shrimp, lobster, unclean foods. When confronted with it the first time, what do you

choose? To not eat it; reject it? *If you do, then God will give you some more understanding!*

Same way with the Sabbath. What happens when you first understand about the Sabbath? *If you reject it, you cut off God dealing with you with one of the seven spirits until you get the point and repent!* Then God sends the Holy Spirit to be with us, after the seven spirits—the seven eyes of God—find out what's going on and what we're choosing. This is quite a thing. Likewise with Sabbath services. Everything has to be done to use:

- God's Spirit
- God's love
- God's teaching
- God's understanding
- God's fellowshiping

—all of this together.

I'm sure that you will notice that within our fellowship here you don't have the tensions that were in other groups because of all of the politics going on—correct? *Yes!* God does not like to be where there's strife. He will withdraw His Spirit from your meeting. So, it's very, very important.

Here's what's important with God's Spirit. 'That to us it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.'

John 6:45 "It is written in the prophets, 'And **they shall all be taught by God.**' Therefore, everyone who has heard from the Father... [responding to seeking, asking and knocking] ...and has learned, comes to Me." That's the end result of it. *They are drawn by the Father!* And God first finds out about someone who's just starting by the seven spirits, which are the seven eyes which go to and fro through the whole earth. That's quite a thing!

That's why you can be in danger on a mountain top and ready to fall over a cliff and you can cry out to God: 'Oh God, spare me!' Maybe some angels come in and keep you from falling. Or maybe there's a wreck. We were talking during lunch and the Clines were telling me about a wreck they were in on their big rig. It was disastrous and all four of them should have been killed—two in the car and two in the cab. They all lived, but the car was totaled and crumpled beyond description. So, wherever someone is, if they ask—'God help me!'—and God helps them, it's God Who's doing it. *But that doesn't mean they're being called to conversion.* You must go beyond.

Matthew 13:12: "For whoever has *understanding*, to him more shall be given, and he shall have an abundance..." I tell you, if there's anything we need to know today is the Word of God—we've got all of it.

“...but whoever does not have *understanding*, even what he has shall be taken away from him” (v 12). We see that happening, too—don’t we? Not only in people who have been in the Church of God, but also we see it in the Protestant denominations. Whatever understanding they have is being removed more and more. It’s an automatic thing. It’s a spiritual thing that happens.

Verse 13: “For this *reason* I speak to them in parables, because seeing, they see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, ‘In hearing you shall hear, and in no way understand; and *in* seeing you shall see, and in no way perceive; for... [*because*] ...the heart of this people has grown fat, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and should hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them.’” (vs 13-15).

That’s one of the most inexplicable mysteries in the New Testament—isn’t it? And that can only be answered with the understanding of the Last Great Day. Why would God blind someone so they wouldn’t be converted? *Because they’re not willing to love God and obey Him!* So, rather than get them into a position where they would commit the unpardonable sin, He blinds them and let’s them go their way—in hopes that maybe some of the circumstances they go through will bring them to their senses and they’ll repent. If not, there’s the second resurrection.

This is also then becomes a responsibility, v16: “But blessed *are* your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you, many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see what you see, and have not seen; and to hear what you hear, and have not heard” (vs 16-17). That tells us an awful lot, and how much more today when we have the whole Word of God.

You know, it wasn’t until William Tyndale—at least for the English-speaking; and for the Germans, Martin Luther—that there was the whole Bible available to people to read. Think about the responsibility that God gives to every single one who has a Bible, and of all the billions of Bibles that there are in the world. They reckon that there’s an average of four in every home in America, but how many people read it?

Now He begins to explain how this process happens, v 19: “When anyone hears the Word of the kingdom and does not understand *it*, the wicked one comes and snatches away that which was sown in his heart. This is the one who was sown by the way.”

They’re also the enemies of Satan the devil and the demons. There are people who say, ‘Oh, that’s a wonderful thing!’ Then they go their way.

Verse 21: “But *because* he has no root in himself, *he* does not endure; for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, he is quickly offended.” It goes something like this: If a son or daughter or Catholic comes along and says, ‘I’m not going to be a Catholic anymore, I want to follow the Word of God—or Buddhist or Hindu or whatever—and a parent says, ‘We’ve been Catholics all our lives, our parents were Catholic all their lives, and if being a Catholic is good enough for me, it ought to be good enough for you. Besides, what is this Sabbath thing. Are you trying to be a Jew?’ And then they start getting a lot of pressure and they give up. Well then, they have ceased *seeking*. They have ceased *asking*. They have ceased *knocking*.

Verse 22: “And the one who was sown among the thorns is the one who hears the Word, but the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful.” That’s pretty self-explanatory—isn’t it? They care about the things in the world, the money in the world, all the things that are there. So, they say, ‘Oh, you mean I’ve got to quit this lucrative job to keep the Sabbath and Holy Days?’ Can’t have any of that. ‘I’ve got to give up these friends and business associates?’ Can’t have any of that.

Here are the ones who respond, v 23: “But the one who was sown on good ground, this is the one who hears the Word and understands, who indeed brings forth fruit and produces—one a hundredfold, another sixtyfold *and* another thirtyfold.” That’s how God deals with us. We hear the Word of God whether by preaching or today by radio, by television, by Internet. Back in some of those days it was by personal contact.

- How many have seen *Israel of the Alps*?
- What did they do then? *They sent the ministers out two by two as merchants!*
- What did they have packed in their things that they were selling? *Pages of the New Testament!*

The way that they taught the Word was, when they got done making their sales pitch for the clothes or whatever they said, ‘We have something far more valuable than what you just bought.’ And they gave them pages of the book of John. So, even in those circumstances they got it out. Well, how much more today when we have all of it?

Let’s see how this works. Now, for those who are fruitful, John 14. Let’s see what Jesus told them. Obviously, the apostles responded—didn’t they? Here is part of the thing that we will get into

right after we go through this in John 14 and certain parts in John 15. It is the covenant between you and God, finalized by baptism. That becomes very important.

John 14:14: “**If** you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*.” Of course, there are other Scriptures that say it has to be according to the will of God; and other Scriptures that tell us it will be in His time. But as you look at things down through a scope of time and experience in your life, do you not find that all of your prayers are answered? *Yes!* Sooner or later, and we have to be persistent like the widow was (Luke 18).

Verse 15: “**If** you love Me, keep the commandments—namely, My commandments.” In order to keep that relationship with God, you must keep the commandments of God.

Verse 16 becomes another important thing that takes place. We have, first of all, the seven spirits that God finds those who are trying to seek Him. Then, the dividing line comes whether they respond more to God or drop by the wayside because they don’t. There’s no conversion involved in it with those people. They just never progress to the point of real conversion. Now when you progress to the point of real conversion, here’s what you’re up against:

Verse 16: “And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that it may be with you throughout the age: *Even* the Spirit of the Truth...” (vs 16-17). This then becomes the strength and the separating point of our thoughts, that we have an added benefit of the Holy Spirit given to us, **which is the Spirit of the Truth**. The Spirit of the Truth is going

- to help us understand the Word of God
- perceive the errors and lies of the world and false prophets
- to see our own faults and mistakes that we can repent of them

We all do it.

“...which the world cannot receive because it perceives it not...” (v 17). Why? *Because the world does not repent!* Unless there’s true repentance, no one receives the gift of the Holy Spirit to be within them and united with the spirit of their mind.

“...nor knows it; but you know it because it dwells with you, and shall be within you” (v 17). That’s an important statement to understand. There comes a point when you have made the choices that God is going to deal with you more intimately with His Spirit with you. And you might look back and see in your life, this is the point that you really became—I wouldn’t say *obsessed*—not quite that much—**deeply driven to understand the Truth!**

Wanting to know what the Truth really is; wanting to really know where God is. That’s God’s Spirit being **with** you—‘and shall be in you.’

Let’s see how this works. All of this is the authority of God the Father and Jesus Christ in dealing with you as an individual. Much of this takes place before you ever talk to a minister. So, here is what happens next. God’s Spirit is with you and you still want it:

- You begin to hunger and thirst after the Word of God; hunger and thirst.
- You want to know what is right.
- You want to know the Truth about the Father.
- You want to know the Truth about Jesus Christ.
- You want to know the Truth about the Bible.
- You begin to see that everything out in the world has been deceived.
- Begin to realize that 99% of all the Sunday-keeping churches are not right.
- You know that all the pagan religions are not right.
- You really want to find God—and it becomes a burning thing within you.

God’s dealing with you!

Then what does He do. He begins to show you your sins and your faults and your mistakes. This begins to move you to repentance. God is doing all of this: **He’s working with you, with your mind, with His Spirit, to bring you to repentance**. This is all the authority of God. I know this may sound very basic, but it’s very, very important for understanding what authority there is in the Church, and what authority there is in the ministry concerning those whom God has dealt with and has called—**because they belong to Him!**

Roman 2:4: “Or do you despise the riches of His kindness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the graciousness of God leads you to repentance?” What I’ve just been describing to you in being led to repentance and coming to see your own sins—and when you see them you begin to realize, ‘Boy, I need forgiveness.’ Then in this repentance God gives you conviction that your sins had a part in killing Christ.

I remember when I was driving down to be baptized and I remember hearing a radio broadcast talking about repentance and talking about baptism—this was in 1960—I was baptized Oct. 19, 1960. And I was driving my little ‘ole Nash Rambler down Hwy.99, coming down to the Los Angeles area. All I could do, as it were, in my own mind’s eye see all my life, all my sins, all my problems and

everything—and I was hearing the program and I was crying and repenting right while I was driving. I don't know about you, but there has to come a point in your life where you experienced something like that. All of this is God dealing with you, dealing with me, to lead me to real repentance. Real repentance leads you to the point that you understand you're just beginning.

Now, the seven Spirits of God finding out where you are; asking and seeking; the Holy Spirit of God being with you because you want to know more; leads you to repentance, which then brings us to the authority, as we will see, of Christ and God the Father in your life.

We know that on the Day of Pentecost they were there *at the temple of God*. What had just occurred less than two month's back? *Crucifixion death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!* It was the talk of every Jew that there was, and here the Holy Spirit comes, fills the disciples with power and they speak with power in many languages, and they all hear; and Peter gives this fantastic sermon.

We won't go through the whole thing, but he concludes this way. This was not an altar call. He *didn't say*, 'Now all of those of you who would like to receive Jesus why don't you come forward and give your heart to the Lord.' *No!* God's Spirit moved them to repentance. We don't know how many there were at the temple, but there may have been upwards of 20-30, maybe even as many as 40 thousand there. But only 3,000 were baptized.

Acts 2:36: "Therefore, let all *the* house of Israel know... [not only is this a statement, but this is also a prophecy] ...with full assurance that God has made this *same* Jesus, Whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." If Christ died for their sins, He died for our sins. And if He died for our sins, because God is dealing with you individually, Christ's death is applied to you individually.

Verse 37: "Now after hearing *this*, they were cut to the heart; and they said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for *the* remission of sins, and you yourselves shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all those who are afar off, as many as *the* Lord our God may call'" (vs 37-39). So all of this, we're dealing with the calling of God, which God is doing and initiating Himself.

Verse 40: "And with many other words he earnestly testified and exhorted, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.' Then those who joyfully received his message were baptized; and

about three thousand souls were added that day'" (vs 40-41).

Now, let's talk about baptism; because this is the authority of God in each one of our lives, individually. We haven't gotten to the point of the Church or ministerial authority. There's no church without those that God has called. The true authority resides in God the Father and Jesus Christ in your life.

Jesus Christ died to fulfill His pledge that He would be the sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. He pledged that to Abraham; He pledged that to Adam and Eve. That is the covenant. Now you enter into the covenant with Christ and God the Father, Who has called you and led you to this point, *on an individual basis* that you—as Christ died pledging His life to save you from your sins, to save me from my sins, and eventually all mankind, in the plan of God, from their sins. But we enter into a covenant at baptism which then is an equivalent covenant death that Jesus died. So. the authority of God in our lives is based upon that covenant death of baptism—meaning *you belong to God the Father and Jesus Christ and to no man and to no corporate church*.

Romans 6:1: "What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin, so that grace may abound? MAY IT NEVER BE! We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?" (vs 1-2). *Baptism is a death!* It's a very merciful death because you're buried under the water, full water by immersion, and brought up out of it because that covenant pledge *must be at the beginning* of your relationship with God, not at the end. Just like the New Covenant could not begin until Christ died—then the New Covenant would be enforced, and the raising up of the Church of God.

Likewise, you cannot have a true relationship with God unless you have that *covenant death first*, by water baptism. Then you enter into an irrevocable covenant with God. There is no turning back. This becomes really important to understand.

Verse 3: "Or are you ignorant that we... [Paul is including himself] ...as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death?" We died to sin. His death was what? *A covenant death!* And if God the Father did not raise him from the dead it would have been irrevocable—correct? *Yes!* So likewise, our covenant death and watery baptism is also irrevocable, but it also puts us directly under the authority of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Verse 4: "Therefore, we were buried with Him though the baptism into the death..." That's very important to understand because 'the death' is referring to the death of Christ. God is taking the

death of Jesus Christ and saying, ‘I will not bring upon you the wages of sin, which is death. I will lift that from you because of the death of My Son Jesus Christ’—baptized “...into **the** death...”

It is not only the death of Christ, but it is the death of you, spiritually speaking. You no longer live to yourself, **you live to God**. You no longer want to live your life your way, **you live it God’s way**. That’s why Paul said later on, ‘the old man is crucified.’ And like Jesus said, once we come to Him—here’s the agreement, this is the covenant agreement:

“...so that just as Christ was raised from *the* dead by the glory of the Father, in the same way, we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been **conjoined**... [made an absolute integral part of] ...together in the likeness of His death... [through baptism] ...so also shall we be *in the likeness of His* resurrection” (vs 4-5).

There is the covenant promise right there! We all have this covenant that God has made with each one of us, individually. All of this is under the authority of God the Father and Jesus Christ, that **no man**—unless you give it to him—**can take it away from you**.

This does not make us rebellious, independent, uncooperative, unloving or anything like that. It just means God the Father and Jesus Christ dealt with us in the beginning, put us into covenant with Him and everything that is done in our lives and within the Church should be based around that, to accomplish the goal of attaining to the resurrection. The authority of God in your life becomes the most important thing.

Verse 6: “Knowing this, that our old man was co-crucified...” You’ve been conjoined to His death—the beating, lacerations and everything that took place, that applies to your life to blot out your sins.

“...with *Him* in order that the body of sin might be destroyed...” (v 6). This tells us that from the time of baptism on, it is a process of overcoming and changing and growing with the help and power of the Spirit of God.

“...so that we might no longer be enslaved to sin” (v 6)—very important.

(go to the next track)

I’m sure that there are some people saying, ‘You haven’t talked very much about the authority in the Church’—yet! We’ll get to that. And like any other topic that we need to discuss, once we start we’ll keep going till we finish. But it’s very, very important for all the brethren in the Church to know and understand, as well for every minister and elder

in the Church to understand, that **all the people belong to God!** The people, the brethren, compose the Church, all called of God, given the Holy Spirit by God—under the direct authority and covenant relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

That’s the key, important thing to understand before we get to *what is the authority of the ministry* within the Church? Because what we’re covering today **limits** that authority—very important!

Let’s finish here in Romans 6:6: “...the ‘body of sin might be destroyed so that we might no longer be enslaved to sin.” You come from a life where most of your thoughts are on self and sin—though they don’t seem like they’re sin to you. Until you have the knowledge of God and the Spirit of God beginning to deal with you, then you begin to understand. Then God leads you to repentance and then you are baptized. Now, in this covenant baptism, you have been co-joined into the death of Christ. And this covenant is from that time until you die a natural death or if you live until the return of Christ are changed from flesh to spirit.

We’re finding out the major place of safety is spelled: g-r-a-v-e! When Christ returns you’ll be resurrected. This is the covenant. God is going to give us eternal life. In addition to that, there are rewards. Because God gives us choices, we are to act and respond, we are to do and perform as led by God’s Spirit to do what we need to do.

Let’s talk about the covenant relationship between each one of us and God; because that’s the first authority within the Church.

Verse 7: “Because the one who has died *to sin* has been justified from sin.” Made right before God, through His grace and forgiveness through the sacrifice and shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Here is how we are to live after baptism, v 8: “Now if we died together with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, Knowing that Christ, having been raised from *the* dead, dies no more; death no longer has any dominion over Him. For when He died, He died unto sin once for all; but in that He lives, He lives unto God. **In the same way also**, you should indeed reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Christ Jesus our Lord” (vs 8-11).

With the Holy Spirit, here’s what we are to do, and this becomes very, very important to understand, v 12: “Therefore, **do not let sin rule** in your mortal body by obeying it in the lusts thereof.” This tells us that *after we are baptized, we just start on the road of overcoming sin!* But the key is, we are to let the righteousness of Christ—through His Spirit, through His Word—**rule** in our minds, instead of sin. That’s how we overcome sin.

The Days of Unleavened Bread tell us what God is doing with us, so we won't get deterred on growing and overcoming at this point, because that would lead us into another whole series of sermons and we don't want to do that at this point.

Verse 13: "Likewise, do not yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin..." This shows there's going to be temptation that's going to come along and try and pull you back. The sin within you need to overcome; and there's Satan without who wants to draw you away. Don't yield to it!

"...rather, yield yourselves to God as those who are alive from *the* dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God" (v 13). That's how we are to live our lives.

Let's see how the death of Jesus Christ, and our death likewise, in the watery grave of baptism, is final.

Luke 14:25: "And great multitudes were going with Him; and He turned *and* said to them, 'If anyone comes to Me and does not hate... [*to love God more than*] ...his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, and, in addition, his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (vs 25-26). And *cannot* in the Greek is 'adunati'—the strongest form you can get in Greek—meaning *the impossibility* of being a disciple of Christ if you are not in that covenant commitment to God through baptism.

So, just as Christ's death was irrevocable in taking away of sin; His resurrection from the dead by the power of God the Father to justify us to God is a singular purpose, it must also be the singular purpose in our lives and our dedication to God that way. In some ways this is going to offend people. In some ways they're going to think you don't like them. In some ways they're going to think: 'Man, who does he think he is?' or 'Who does she think she is?'

When it gets down to it, you've got to be absolutely dedicated, converted with the Spirit of God, being led of the Spirit of God—which is the Spirit of Truth—and everything you do goes back to God the Father and Jesus Christ.

- You belong to God!
- You're His property!
- You're bought and paid for by the blood of Christ!

That's a pretty tremendous thing to understand, but it is also, in a covenant sense, an absolute death pact—and from this point of view: Christ overcame and was raised from the dead; but *if*

we overthrow that covenant relationship with God and commit the unpardonable sin—which God will give us many, many warnings before we do... {note Sermon Series on *Hebrews*—specifically #29 on the *Unpardonable Sin*}

It's quite common for people, when they are first baptized to think that when they sin again, and they don't want to, 'Ooooo, have I committed the unpardonable sin'—because somehow they have in their minds that after they're baptized they're going to be perfect. No, you're not going to be perfect, because God's Spirit is going to reveal *the sin within*—reveal when you sin—which could not be revealed to you before because you had no consciousness of what was truly right and truly wrong and truly sin with God. You may have had some sense of right and wrong. This is our commitment to God.

Now, let's come back here to Matthew, the tenth chapter, and let's see it phrased just a little differently by Jesus, where He talks about the same thing and how we need to be totally committed to God. Now let's understand something: ***No man can take that away from you; because that comes from God to you.*** Your baptismal covenant is from you back to God. No man can take it from you.

Matthew 10:32: "Now then, whoever shall confess Me before men, that one will I also confess before My Father Who *is* in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, that one will I also deny before My Father, Who *is* in heaven. Do not think that I have come to bring peace on the earth... [so much for Christmas] ...I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man at variance against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's enemies *shall be those of his own household*" (vs 32-36). A little bit differently expressed in Luke 14; but that's what happens—*isn't it? Yes, indeed!*

Verse 37: "The one who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and the one who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And the one who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. The one who has found his life shall lose it; and the one who has lost his life for My sake... [through baptism and martyrdom, if necessary] ...shall find it. The one who receives you receives Me, and the one who receives Me receives Him Who sent Me" (vs 37-40).

There are the terms of the covenant that we make with God. And we grow in strength and belief and faith in this covenant as we grow and overcome. That's why we have the Word of God, the Spirit of God, the Sabbath services—and Sabbath services should be conducted in a way to foster that kind of

love and growth within each one of us to God the Father and Jesus Christ. It's what it needs to be.

1-John—in the *King James* this is one of the most poorly translated, if not just completely confusing, verses; so I won't go through a detailed explanation of that, but what I want to do is to show what the Spirit of God is to do for us. First of all, the seven spirits of God find those who are seeking Him. Then if they really mean business and keep seeking and asking and knocking, then the Spirit of God itself will come to be with you, to continue to lead you as long you're seeking God. Then through that, God's Spirit will lead you to repentance so that you can be baptized and have the remission of your sins. Then you receive the Holy Spirit within your mind by the laying on of hands.

What does that do? We'll see that in just a minute. But here is how it is expressed, 1-John 3:1, "Behold! What *glorious* love the Father has given to us..." That's another part of the covenant, God the Father loved us and sent Jesus Christ to be the perfect sacrifice for sin—correct? Jesus loved us and willingly volunteered to do it—correct? We are to respond in a covenant relationship with God, to *love God with all our heart, mind, soul and being*—correct? *Yes!* In turn we are to learn to love our neighbor as our self, to love the brethren as Christ has loved us, and even to love our enemies. So that's a whole change; that is conversion.

"...that we should be called the children of God!..." Here John uses the Greek word 'teknos' which means *your own begotten, conceived children*. Whereas, the other word that is translated *child* or *children* or son is 'huios'—which does not mean *your own, begotten*. The *King James* has it we are 'adopted.' *Nonsense! We are begotten! We are the children of God!* This is to give us hope despite of anything that comes along in life or in the world.

"...For this very reason, the world does not know us because it did not know Him... [and still doesn't] ...Beloved, now we are the children of God... [not yet born, but we are the children of God; we'll be born again at the resurrection] ...and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be... [that was given later (Rev. 1)] ...but we know that when He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is" (vs 1-2). There is the change.

We need to respond to God that way. What is the campaign slogan of Obama? *Change we can believe in. Hope!* Well, he doesn't have the corner on that—*God does!*

- What is our hope? *To be like Christ!*
- What is the change? *To have our bodies transformed!*

Verse 3—this is to what is to keep us going through all circumstances everywhere at every time, whether good or bad or indifferent: ...And **everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure.**" That's through continuous repentance and growing and overcoming and developing the mind of Christ.

Now, contrasted, v 4: "Everyone who practices sin is also practicing lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness" Not just the transgression of the law, but the greatest sin goes all the way back to Cain—that I'm going to come to God and *tell Him what I will do*, and give Him the offering that *I choose*, and He must accept it. That's what Protestantism is. Catholicism is. Every pagan religion on earth is.

Just like Delores gave me a very interesting article about a new Hindu temple that's going up in Fremont, California; and it says there the Hindu's must have their gods. That's the same thing that all religions do. And unfortunately, in the Churches of God, too much ministerial and church authority is based upon human reasoning that is twisting the Scriptures and is not a proper use of it. So that's why I'm going through thoroughly what we're doing here, because God's authority is in your life first, before we are all together as a congregation—correct? *Yes!*

Verse 5^[transcriber's correction]: "And you know that He appeared in order that He might take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. **Everyone who dwells in Him does not practice sin...**" (vs 5-6)—because we're talking about *practice* all the way through here. The Greek means that, because you can have it applying to all the rest of the structure of the sentence coming after v 4, because the emphasis is on the *practicing*.

"...anyone who *practices* sin has not seen Him, nor has known Him. Little children, do not allow anyone to deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. The one who practices sin is of the devil because the devil has been sinning from *the* beginning. For this purpose the Son of God appeared that He might destroy the works of the devil" (vs 5-8).

Here is the key—the Spirit of God and what He's doing in us: "**Everyone who has been begotten by [the Father] God does not practice sin...**" (v 9). Very important to understand. Doesn't say they don't sin—it says they don't *practice sin*. That ties in with Rom. 6, that the 'body of sin might be destroyed.' That we no longer 'live in sin,' that 'sin does not rule in us.'

"...because His seed of *begettal...*" (v 9). Very interesting—isn't it? What is that word in the Greek? *Sperma!* How do we all come into existence?

From our father's sperm! Now, in the exact same way we receive, with the Spirit of God, the begetting through that seed of God's Holy Spirit within our minds, and ***we are begotten of God.***

And now God is going to develop in us, as we're going to see, the mind of Christ, the hungering and thirsty after Truth, the wanting to know righteousness and understand the Word of God. All of this comes with us so that we can be developing the character of Jesus Christ to be prepared for eternal life at the resurrection. That's what it's all about.

This is what God is doing with each and every one. And the minister only, in most cases, sees those who attend church one day a week unless he visits them—correct? So, who's doing the work? The minister or the church? *No! God the Father and Jesus Christ in your life as you yield and grow and overcome!* When we come together in a congregation we are all here to learn of God—because ***God is the one Who's teaching us.*** That makes Sabbath services and everything so much better—doesn't it? *Yes!* That's what God wants.

"...[So the 'sperma'] is dwelling within him, and he is not able to *practice* sin because he has been begotten by God" (v 9)—which means this: When you sin you become aware of it almost immediately, and you repent of it. Are you able to practice that sin over and over and over again? Are you able to live in sin, as Paul said? *No, you're not!* You don't practice sin! But when you do sin, what do you do? Like it says in the model prayer: 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.' That way

- we are washed
- we are cleansed
- we overcome!

Verse 10: "By this *standard* are manifest the children of God and the children of the devil..." He has his own children—doesn't he? Those who follow him? *Yes!* They're not begotten in the sense that we are, but those who are demon possessed are totally possessed of Satan

"...Everyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, and neither is the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from *the beginning*—that we should love one another" (vs 10-11). And he talks about Cain (v 12).

Let's see what the Spirit of God is to do for us.

- leads us to repentance
- we repent
- we are baptized

- we receive the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands.

This is called conversion, and conversion is a process. There's an instant point when you are converted, receiving the Holy Spirit; but growing in grace and knowledge is the process of conversion to develop the Godly character once you receive the Holy Spirit. This all has to do with the authority that comes from God.

Romans 2:27: "And shall not the uncircumcised, who by nature is fulfilling the law, judge you, who, with *the* letter and circumcision, *are* a transgressor of *the* law? For he is not a Jew who is *one* outwardly, neither *is* that circumcision which *is* external in *the* flesh; rather, he *is* a Jew **who is one inwardly**, and circumcision *is* of *the* heart, in *the* spirit and not in *the* letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God" (vs 27-29). So, there's a change of mind and a change of heart.

We will see that it is called 'the circumcision of Christ.' Not done with human hands, but done by the Spirit of God; done through the operation of baptism.

Colossians 2:6 {note: Colossians series}: "Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, be walking in Him; being rooted and built up in Him, and being confirmed in the faith, exactly as you were taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Be on guard so that no one takes you captive through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the traditions of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and **you are complete in Him...**" (vs 6-10).

You don't need Christ and the Catholic Church. You don't need Christ and the Pope. You don't need Christ and the *Book of Mormon*. Christ is the Head of the Church, ***you're complete in Him.***

"...Who is the Head of all principality and power In Whom you have also been circumcised with *the* circumcision not made by hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ... [which is accomplished by] ...having been buried with Him in baptism... [which is a covenant pledge] ...by which you have also been raised with *Him* through the inner working of God, Who raised Him from the dead" (vs 10-12).

What does the circumcision of Christ do for you? {note sermon: *What is the Administration of Death?* Suffice to say, let me just explain very briefly: With the covenant that God made with Noah and his sons right after the Flood, He said that when a man kills a man he shall die by man's hand. In other words, He gave the *administration of death* to men, in judgment. This is for all the sovereign

nations on the earth. When God called Israel out of Egypt—they weren't converted, never were—but they were a sovereign nations under God to live in the letter of the law. They were also, as a sovereign nation on the earth, to have the *administration of death* for the penalty of crimes. That's why you read in the Old Testament, if you do this, you'll suffer the death penalty and so forth and so on.

In the carnal world around us, you just read some of those laws, and if they were enacted upon child kidnapers, molesters, and murderers—where they had the death penalty executed against them—we wouldn't have the crime problem that we do. Or as Megan's Law is, you go online and you find out where all the sex-offenders are in your whole city, and you might be surprised that there may be a dozen or two living very close at hand to you. If they would have been executed—those who committed crimes worthy of death—you wouldn't have the problem.

The Church is not a sovereign nation. The Church is not within the boundaries of a particular geographical area. Jesus said that we are to go into all the world, we're of all nations, everywhere. God has set the order that you cannot have two sovereigns within a nation. You see the conflict when you see what is happening with Islamic Sharia Law, when they want to enact it within Britain or America or whatever country. They are taking the death penalty, which rightly belongs to the sovereign nation, and not to individuals living in another sovereign nation, that is not according to the laws of that sovereign nation.

What happens? *Islamic men are arrested for killing their own daughters* because they happen to talk to a young man who is not of the Islamic race (if I could put it that way). Doesn't that cause a lot of problems? Over in their countries they get away with it. Over here they're arrested and tried. Now what they want to do is say, 'Well, since we're living here, we want you to recognize our Sharia Law.' That's completely against God's covenant that He gave to the sovereign nations beginning with Noah. You cannot have two sovereigns within the same geographical territory.

Since the Church goes into the whole world, there is no administration of death given as a power of the Church. In some of the churches we've been in, if they had, some of us wouldn't be here—right? So, that's a brief summary of *the administration of death*.

However, let's pick it up here in 2-Corinthians 3:8—comparison: "Shall not the ministry of the Spirit be far more glorious? For if *there was* glory in the ministry of condemnation... [or death ...to a much greater degree the ministry of

righteousness overflows with glory. And even *the ministry of condemnation*, which had glory... [that was the covenant that God made with Israel] ...was not glorious in this respect, because of the surpassing glory of *the ministry of life*. For if that which is being set aside *came into being* through glory, to a much greater degree that which remains *is glorious*" (vs 8-11). That is the New Covenant.

Verse 12: "Now then, because we have such hope, we use great plainness of *speech*... [here is the key as to what the circumcision of heart does]: ...For *we are* not like Moses, who put a veil over his face, so that the children of Israel could not gaze to the end upon *the glory* that is *now* being set aside. But their minds were blinded... [Mat. 13] ...for to the present hour the same veil *has not been* removed, *but* remains at the reading of the Old Covenant; **which veil is removed in Christ**" (vs 12-14).

So, the circumcision of the heart removes the hostility toward understanding the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms. It removes the blindness that is put there because they refuse to hear.

Verse 15: "For to this day, when Moses is read, *the veil* lies upon their hearts." So much so that some say you don't even have to read anything in Moses, it's all done away. Talk about a blindness! So with baptism this is taken away.

Verse 16: "But when *their hearts* turn to *the Lord*, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of *the Lord is*, there is freedom. But we all, with uncovered faces beholding the glory of *the Lord* as in a mirror, are being transformed *into* the same image from glory to glory, even as by *the Spirit of the Lord*" (vs 16-18). So, baptism takes away

- the hardness of heart
- the blindness of the eyes
- the carnal mind

the receiving of God's Spirit gives us a converted attitude to understand and know the Word of God and all of this is God's doing in our lives. ***This is the foundation of the Church!*** These are the experiences that we all go through when God calls us and deals with us.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Hebrews 1:1-4
- 2) Matthew 28:16-20
- 3) Matthew 16:13-23
- 4) 1 Peter 1:1-5
- 5) John 6:44
- 6) Revelation 5:6
- 7) 2 Chronicles 15:1-7

- 8) 2 Chronicles 16:7-10
- 9) Matthew 7:7-11
- 10) Matthew 13:10-11
- 11) John 6:45
- 12) Matthew 13:12-17, 19, 21-23
- 13) John 14:14-17
- 14) Romans 2:4
- 15) Acts 2:36-41
- 16) Romans 6:1-13
- 17) Luke 14:25-26
- 18) Matthew 10:32-40
- 19) 1 John 3:1-11
- 20) Romans 2:27-29
- 21) Colossians 2:6-12
- 22) 2 Corinthians 3:8-18

Scriptures Referenced, not quoted:

- Revelation 1-3
- Luke 18
- Revelation 1
- 1 John 3:12
- Matthew 13

Also referenced:

Sermon: *Seven Spirits of God & the Holy Spirit of God*

Sermon Series:

- *Hebrews Series #29, The Unpardonable Sin*
- *Colossians*
- *What is the Administration of Death*

DVD: *Israel of the Alps* (produced by the Seventh Day Adventist Church)

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