

**Abundant Life—Today and Tomorrow #1;  
Abundant Life—What Is It?**

**2006 Feast of Tabernacles, Opening Night  
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Well, welcome, brethren, to this opening service of the 2006 Feast of Tabernacles. We are here to receive meat in due season—that knowledge, that reminder of the purpose of the command that we are fulfilling now by assembling in this particular place, at this particular time. We *are* here because we fear God. We *are* here because we know that He has commanded High Holy Days and festivals throughout the year to teach us about a master plan that He is carrying out now for the salvation of mankind. And, so, all of you are here because you honor that revelation; you value that revelation; you fear the God who created heaven and earth, and you have set aside the cares of this world and all the pressing things back home. You have made provision and you have planned all year long. And here you are, now, at this particular appointed place. Why do we do it? Well, it is because we value what God is doing on this earth. We believe the promises He has made. And so in the course of this seven-day Feast of Tabernacles and the eighth High Day, that we call the Last Great Day, we're going to hear a lot of meat in due season to remind us about that master plan because that's the way God wanted it: We have a reminder every year so we don't forget, and obviously, then, to receive that meat that, hopefully, will inspire us, to uplift us to get back on that horse and to fight for those things that are most important, that we can fulfill His very plan and purpose for the lives that He has given us.

We're here to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, which is a picture of the glorious abundance which God has in store for mankind when His Son returns to this earth. God wants man to be happy and to be successful. Notice John chapter ten and verse ten. John chapter ten and verse 10. Here Jesus Christ is talking about the contrast between *His* orientation of mind as that true Shepherd, and the orientation of human beings who are selfish and greedy, and who use religion to merchandise other human

beings for their own purpose and their own gain. And, yet, God—the true God, His Son Jesus Christ—has a totally different orientation. Because He's not in it for Himself, He's in it to help you. He wants *you* to be happy and he wants you to be successful. He wants *you* to have the riches of the reward both physically and spiritually.

Notice His *modus operandi*, His mission, His orientation of mind. John 10:10: "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." Those are the imposters. Those are the counterfeits, now. But, by contrast, Christ says, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." What's His mission? "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." It's really a synopsis of His purpose—the very thing that Christ is doing on this earth at the behest of the Father. It's really a condensed mission statement of Christ and what He is doing: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

What good is it just to be alive, however? Meaning, just to live? Alright, you physically exist, you are not dead, you're alive. Which means you are breathing; you have a mind with which to process. You can think. You have an orientation. But what good is it just to exist—to have life—if it's an empty life, if we exist in misery, anguish, emptiness, and hopelessness? Is it enough just to be alive? I doubt that for any one of you—and I know for me—that's certainly not the kind of existence or life that we want, is it? Which is why the promise of Christ—the mission of Christ—is dual. It's not just that we have life. That's just the first part of it because He said He came that we might have life. But not life which is empty; not a life which is hopeless; not a life which is one of misery and sorrow. No, He came that we might have life, but that that life might be enriching, that it might be absolutely rewarding, fabulously fulfilling, abundant. That you might have *abundant* life.

And so, brethren, I have selected that very text and that very mission statement of Jesus Christ as my theme for the eight messages that you are going to hear from me during this eight-day Feast. And, so, my overall theme—if you want to give it a title—we'll just call it, "Abundant Life, Today and Tomorrow." Abundant Life, Today and Tomorrow.

What does it really mean to live abundantly? You see, because human beings will always interpret that and every other term according to their own definition. So if you say, "I want to have abundant life," I might say, "Well, so do I." But we can each have totally different definitions of what we consider abundance. But Jesus Christ is the one who said this is His mission from the Father. And He said He came not just to give you life but to give it to you more abundantly.

Well, what did Christ mean by "abundant life"? What is that kind of life—the characteristics of the existence that He wants you to enjoy? We're going to talk about the different aspects of abundant life, synoptically, in eight messages. I could give one hundred and eight messages and still not cover the full extent of it. So it really is going to be an overview in eight messages of certain key principles that have everything to do with abundant living. But, as I already gave you in the theme, it involves abundant life, today and tomorrow. Because we're here, now, keeping the Feast of Tabernacles which we all know represents the abundant life of the future, when Christ returns—that thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ—when we know the world is going to be ruled by God, not by Satan. When all of the evil is going to be taken away. When there's going to be peace, and joy, and happiness, and contentment. So we all understand that principle. And we understand the joy and the riches of being members of the God Family—for those of us who are going to be part of that first resurrection. So we can almost speak automatically about the riches to come—abundant life in the future, in the Millennium. But God also wants us to have abundant life today.

What does it really mean, therefore, to live abundantly? Are you living abundantly right now? You can. And you should. Now, don't draw any conclusions yet because we're going to go through and I'm going to give you the beginning of that overview this evening.

Let's begin in Luke 18 and verse 29. I think you are going to be amazed at the things that Christ literally revealed and recorded in the Gospels to help us understand these principles. Luke 18 and verse 29:

And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more *in this present time, and* in the world to come life everlasting.

What did Christ say? Another one of those compelling, straight-forward, bullet-point sentences. He just encompassed the whole thing. And what did He say?

There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more *in this present time, and* in the world to come life everlasting.

He said both now and tomorrow—today AND tomorrow—there are great riches to be had. Not just in the future—which is the most important thing, everlasting life in the Kingdom of God. What price can we put on that? There is none. It is an invaluable promise—a gift—that God has offered. That you, as part of the firstfruits, have been given your chance NOW to have that relationship with Him. To receive the Holy Spirit—that personal relationship with the Father—through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and to enjoy incredible things, right now today. Even in this evil world. Even in this world which is not ruled directly by Jesus Christ, but by the god of this world. Even in the midst of the chaos, and the confusion, and the evil, and the sorrow and the misery that man has perpetrated upon himself under the sway of Satan. Yet, Christ said we can live abundantly right now as the faithful children of God. As well as, then, ultimately—and most importantly—having life eternal in the God Family.

You can have both. You can have it all. He wants you to enjoy it. How are we going to get it? Hopefully, by the end of this Feast, my goal is to expound to you those straight-forward principles which God has recorded for us, which tell us exactly how to work that plan, and how to achieve all of those things that He desires to give. He is a loving, and a merciful and a patient God. And, as we heard in the opening prayer, He is a God of mercy, even in our darkest hour. He is a God of justice, of patience, of love. He is never wrong. He is never deficient. He is never uncaring. He is never inconsiderate. He is never lacking. He literally IS perfect—a concept which is so hard for us and our human minds to wrap ourselves around because we know we're not; the people around us certainly are not. And so it becomes hard to even envision the idea of a Being who is never wrong—who, literally, is perfect. Well, that's the God we serve. He is perfect. And in spite of our problems, our trials and our difficulties, yet, this is a God who wants us to enjoy richness, not only tomorrow, but today as well. How are we going to do it?

Well, take note, first of all: God promises abundance both in this life as well as in the future—in the Kingdom. But does that mean that He promised smooth sailing in this life? By "abundant life", is Jesus Christ talking about an easy lifestyle? If we just find the magic combination of how to worship Him correctly, God opens *every* door in our lives—we just get to be in a cakewalk. Is that what we are looking for? Is that what we are expecting? Are we looking for the magic bullet, the special key, that just makes ALL our problems go away and we have SMOOTH sailing? Now, I guarantee you that if that is yours or my definition of abundant life today, we are going to be miserably disappointed. Because let's just re-analyze what we just quoted from Jesus Christ here in Luke 18. What's the very first qualification? Those who do what for the Kingdom of God's sake? What did they first do in order to gain God's favor, which opened up all of these marvelous opportunities for abundant life at this present time, as well as that everlasting life of the future? What was the first part of what we quoted in verse 29?

"And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house . . ." Now, wait a minute, that doesn't sound like a good thing. ". . . left house, or parents . . ." Leaving parents. ". . . or brethren, or wife, or *children* . . ." It means there's an individual in the plan of God who, by a call, has actually been severed from many of those close relationships that are so dear and important to us in the flesh. By virtue of responding to a call and beginning to obey God's commands and putting Him first, it actually causes difficulties and problems in relationships with parents, with brethren, with wives and children.

And so the very hallmark of the response of the children of God is the fact that they have made sacrifices. Which means they have suffered loss; they have had to choose in order to truly put God first and be obedient to His commands. Even as Jesus Christ said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." He didn't say, "Keep my commandments as long as it doesn't harm this situation or that situation, or this relationship, in your physical, personal life." No, He said, absolutely, without compromise, "You put me first and you obey. And if you are put in a difficult situation and have to choose obedience to my Law that makes it difficult for you in a relationship in this world, you don't worry about that. You do what's right and you let the chips fall where they may, and I promise to take care of you." That's what God has given us.

Who is it that's going to have this abundant life today and tomorrow? Number one, it's the ones who have made sacrifices. So they have suffered. They've suffered loss. And many of you before me have suffered loss because of the choices you have made to begin to keep the Sabbath. And that changed your image in the minds of your friends and your family, and they began to look at you like you had two heads. And you can try and be nice and you can try and maintain those relationships, but for some individuals, you just joined a cult, and you just launched on a path—an orientation of mind—which just makes you stand out like a sore thumb.

What about relationships with unconverted husbands, wives, children, parents? How many of you, how many of God's children in this age, have experienced incredible difficulties related to family and friends who do not understand why you belong to that very weird religion that you are pursuing and how it's hurt your relationship with them that used to be so close? So you understand it.

Does that mean, therefore, that you are beyond having an abundant life? Because you've had to sacrifice the kind of closeness you might have with those in the world. So now your opportunity for abundant life is *zero* until the return of Christ, right? No. Not if we believe the words of Jesus Christ who said right here, "There is no man that hath left house, or parents [suffered the breach of these kind of personal relationships over God's Law] . . . house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake . . ." You put Him first, at great expense. And if you do that, He didn't say you have no opportunity for abundant life today. Those are the ones, verse 30, "who shall . . . receive manifold more *in this present time*, and in the world to come life everlasting." You have both. You have it all. Today and tomorrow. So said Jesus Christ.

Notice the parallel passage in Mark chapter 10. Mark 10 and verse 29. No, Christ isn't saying that you are going to have an easy life. Everything's going to be smooth. There's going to be no sacrifice. There's going to be no problems. If you just find the magic key to how to do everything just right, it's going to be SMOOTH SAILING in this world. That's not what He ever promised. Here's the parallel passage in Mark 10, verse 29, and it's amplified, now, so that we get a little bit more of the picture:

Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake . . .

That means God's Law said, do or don't do, and in order to obey that law you had to give up one of these other things.

There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an *hundredfold NOW in this time* . . .

Isn't that amazing? Did you ever notice that before?

" . . . But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands . . ." Uh-oh. There it is: "With persecutions". There's the caveat. You see, God's definition of abundant life means that it includes the existence of hardship and persecution. Persecutions are going to be there as long as you live in this world. And if you put God first while you are living in Satan's world, you can expect persecutions and trials and difficulties. And God's going to let it happen. And, in fact, He's going to bring some of them about just to test and to try you and me, to help us grow and to develop more character like His Son. It's a part of the plan. It's a part of the purpose—the training ground that we are experiencing. So the persecutions—the bad stuff, the hard stuff—are a part of the overall good, for your better end.

So do not fall into the trap of defining the abundant life that God promised in the present as being all ease—putting your feet up and taking an easy stroll down through time to the return of Christ. That's not the abundance God is talking about. ". . . he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

Yes, you are going to be abundantly blessed. You are going to *feel* rich and rewarded and fulfilled, but you're going to do so, as the people of God, in the midst of trial and persecution and tribulation. That's the abundance we're talking about. What, then, is the real definition of this abundance? It cannot be, as we have just used the words of Christ to define it, the physical mammon of this world. If you think the promise of God for abundant life today has to do with how much

money, how much riches, how much acclaim, how much power, celebrity or anything else you can receive now, and that's going to be your definition of living abundantly, I can already tell you that you are mistaken, you are going to be disenchanted with the result. Because overall, remember, God has a much greater purpose for you in the future: that eternal life in the God Family—holding an office of responsibility as a king and a priest, forever and ever. That's the ultimate reason we are here. The time that we have in the flesh, on this earth, is a moment. It's a fleeting, fleeting, time—just a blink of an eye. That's all it is in the overall fabric, and it's not even that when compared to the eternity that is coming. But even in that blink of an eye, even in that very small, fleeting time that we draw breath in these flesh bodies, He wants you to live abundantly. But it's going to be with persecutions; it's going to be with training opportunities to develop character. It's not the mammon of this world. It's not seeing how many toys you can accumulate to yourself. What's the world's philosophy? "He who dies with the most toys wins." No, he who dies with the most toys leaves them to someone else to enjoy. And that's not what God is here to give us.

Remember the old choice? And we love to talk about these things: If you had to choose, would you rather have peace of mind, or millions of dollars? If you literally had that choice before you, and you had the opportunity to either have someone give you a stack of a thousand hundred-dollar bills—millions of dollars— or you were offered harmonious peace of mind. Which would you choose? "Oh, well, I would choose peace of mind." Yeah.

How many of us really think that having a lot more money wouldn't solve a lot of our problems today? I've talked about this before: I used to work in the corporate world for eighteen years. And I worked around people—my colleagues, my co-workers—the ones that are all going in and pooling together to buy lottery tickets. And they DREAM of hitting the big jackpot. "Oh, if our ship would just come in I KNOW that my life would be so much better." And I would smirk. And I would bite my tongue a little bit, and then I couldn't help it, and I would say: "You know, money doesn't buy happiness." "OH, yeah, yeah, yeah, I know money doesn't buy happiness for all of these other people, but I just KNOW that if I had the money, it would allow me to have a rich and rewarding and happy life." See, that's the trap that we fall into as carnal human beings. We believe absolutely, in theory and in principle, that money doesn't buy happiness, but, really, what we believe is that it doesn't buy happiness for you, but it would buy happiness for me. Because I'd know what to do with it. I could really make that work for myself; it



would take so many pressures off; I could do so many things. Ahhhh, wouldn't it be wonderful!

And so, when I ask the question, "If you could choose, would you rather have peace of mind, or millions of dollars," most human beings, do you know what they really think, even though they won't admit it? "I would choose the millions of dollars because then I could generate my own peace of mind. I could have both." Did that cross your mind? Did any of you put that potential scenario together? Yeah, some of you did. You could have both. If you had the money, you could create your own peace of mind. No, you couldn't. Human beings have been trying. For six thousand years they have been trying to do that and they haven't been successful yet—not a single one. It doesn't work.

But, you see, you and I are both programmed inherently with that little flaw—in our carnal minds that God gave us from the beginning—which makes us think we can. So we believe the lie. And human beings for nearly six thousand years have been trying to generate their own happiness; they've been trying to generate their own Millennial Kingdom of God through their own efforts. And most of them believe that "if I can just acquire more stuff—surround myself with wealth, and acceptance and popularity, and all these wonderful things—I can make a happy existence for myself. I can have peace, and joy, and contentment, and fulfillment." That's what they think. That's what we all think. It's a lie. It doesn't work. It never has. Proverbs 14 and verse 12. One of those quotes we have been hearing for years in God's Church in this era:

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof  
are the ways of death.

The problem is, this passage has been quoted so many times by ministers to try and put church members in their place, you see. They pull this one out whenever there's somebody who disagrees, or wants to ask for an explanation of a doctrine, and the minister gets uptight about it. They don't want to give an answer, they just want us to accept what they say. And, so, when they don't want to answer a question—they can't answer a question—or somebody challenges them, then they just say, "there is a way which seems right to a man," but you are challenging. Your way is wrong and you need to listen to me.

So, unfortunately, we heard Proverbs 14:12 used and abused over many decades in the church for the wrong reason. But it's still the inspired Word of God; it still has an appropriate application. And, most importantly, it's a confirmation of the fact that you and I are ill-equipped to make ourselves happy outside of the intervention and the guidance of God. You can't do it and neither can I. "There is a way which seems right to a man." You and I think we have the key. If we just had all the things we needed, we could put those puzzle pieces together and we could create this fulfillment. We could *MAKE OURSELVES* richly rewarded and fulfilled and happy. We could have that abundant life. All we need are a few breaks. But God confirms, no, we all think that. There is a way which seems right to us. You and I think down deep in our minds—in the carnal mind—that we have what it takes to generate a fulfilling and a rewarding life. But God says, "but the end thereof *ARE* the ways of death." It seems so enticing; it seems so possible. But the reality is, it's a mirage. It's a counterfeit. It's a lie. It's a trap. And neither you or I can do it on our own.

God created human beings to need God. He made us to need Him. He made you and me with a missing piece in our minds which can only be filled by His indwelling Holy Spirit. And if you don't have that piece in your life—if you don't have that piece of the puzzle connected into your physical mind—you cannot have real happiness, contentment, joy and abundance. It's impossible. You can't generate it in this world—this physical world—outside of a relationship with God. You can chase it. Oh, and don't we? The people in the world are chasing it every day. All too often, even the people in God's church are chasing it as well. We still haven't let go of the lie that we can pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps—we can find a way to make our lives happy and fulfilled and rewarded. And so we chase the lie. And it never works. Matthew 6 and verses 19–21:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." What's the key to avoiding the trap—the lie—that all human beings have bought into that says we can make ourselves happy through our own efforts in the flesh? Come to accept, believe, and to embrace the concept that that is not true, that you and I do need

God. We need to put Him first and we need to be investing our time, our energies and our efforts while we're in this flesh, in building treasure in heaven. That means you put God first; you work on the spiritual priorities that God requires of us: like coming to keep this Feast of Tabernacles.

Here you are—you are really weird people, did you know that? You are peculiar, indeed. Here you are, gathered together on a Friday night, in this particular place. And some of you have made incredible sacrifices to be here—not only flying, or driving, long distances across the United States, but some of you from across the Atlantic Ocean—from far-flung places. And we've got sites all over the world where people have made incredible sacrifices to travel distances to be in one of those places. Why are you doing that? If all you wanted to do is have a vacation, you probably could have done a lot of other things and caused yourself less grief. But you chose to be here, at this particular time, whether or not it was convenient for work, family, or personal reasons. Yet, here you are. The rest of the world is going about its business, doing what it does, day in and day out, week in and week out. And here *you* are. Why? Your very presence means you have put God first. You are showing a fear and trembling before Him. You have come into His presence. And so, you are already fulfilling some of those commands: When He says, "You build your treasure in heaven". It matters to you.

The Sabbaths are signs between God and His people. He respects it when you obey; when He calls and says, "You have a command performance before the King—the King of heaven and earth. I'm going to be in this particular place at this particular time, and I want you to come and appear before me, and I want you to worship me because I'm worthy of it." Your hymn-singing, your presence, your service one to another, listening to those inspired messages that you receive through the ministry: all of those things are a part of the command that you are fulfilling right now. And He appreciates it when you say, "yes" and you do it. And I know He's pleased. The Sabbaths are a sign between God and His people: those who fear Him enough to come when He calls and says, "Meet me here. I'm going to appear and I want to see you." And some say, "Well, that's going to be tough because I have an awful lot of pressures that say I need to be somewhere else during that time." But, you see, all of you have overcome those things and here you are. And God is appreciative of that. And you are now under the sign that God said would bind Him to His people in these last days. Good for you.

But that's an example of building treasure in heaven and not on the earth. Because you could be working. I mean, look at what you are foregoing: the opportunity to make money in this coming week, and you're not making money—most of you—by being here. You are either spending your vacation or—depending upon whether you're self-employed or whether you are a wage earner—you are making a sacrifice to be here. Which means you are not getting mammon. You are not earning anything of the mammon of this world by being here, but you are putting treasure in heaven by being here. Good for you. That's exactly what Jesus Christ commanded us to do.

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Whatever we care about the most is the thing we're going to sacrifice to generate. And if you really fear God and you love His Law the most, then you're going to do whatever you have to do, and I'm going to do whatever I have to do, to put Him first and to obey—no matter what the physical sacrifice is. If that's where our hearts are, we will do it—we will accomplish it. Human beings are good at saying, "I can't." We only say "I can't" for the things we don't care enough about. I can't do a lot of things. And really, what that means is, I'm not willing to make the sacrifice to do them. It's not important enough to me. But, boy, let something come along that I really care about and I'll overcome any obstacle to make it happen. Is anything like that in your mind? Have you ever run into that?

My boys and I love to ski during the winter. Somehow we make it a priority; we always get to ski. We have to plan; they have to take time out from school; I have to arrange my schedule, but you know what? We always find time to ski, because it matters. That's one of those physical mammon things. But, you see, when you're motivated you find ways to make it happen. If we love God's Law the most, we make it a priority, we find a way to overcome the obstacles, and we're there—we obey. We build treasure in heaven instead of trying to treasure the things of this world and to acquire them.

How do we receive the abundance that God has promised? Well, let's stay here in Matthew 6 and drop down to verse 24: Christ said, "No man can serve two masters." You can't have it both ways.

. . . for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

But, again, human beings think they can. They think they are absolutely committed to their religion, whatever their chosen religion might be, as well as their personal goals to enrich themselves in the here and now—money, personal relationships, whatever those things are. And they want to have both. They want to have their cake and eat it too. So they want to pursue all of the mammon of the world but at the same time to believe that they are fulfilling the commands of God—that they are pleasing God at the same time they are trying to get everything they can. Isn't that, really, what most human beings are doing? Sure. But they create God in whatever image they want: I decide I want to achieve this thing. Well, then I also conceive in mind that God is pleased with me for pursuing that goal. So I get both. I'm worshiping God and I'm enriching myself with the mammon of this world. That's really the religion that's practiced in this world. Their religion conforms with whatever they want to achieve for themselves—the lust of the flesh.

God says, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." Aren't those some of the key things we think about, worry about, try to generate and preserve for ourselves? Eating, drinking, having clothes to wear, having a roof over our heads, being comfortable: aren't those some of the important things on our list, physically? And what happens if we lose a job or some crisis occurs and we don't have the income, and all of a sudden we don't know how we're going to eat, or keep a roof over our heads, tomorrow, or next week, or next month? All of a sudden we really worry, don't we? Because those things are kind of important to us. Sure they are. And, yet, God said:

Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Is Christ saying, "Ohhhh, don't even plan. Don't worry about that. We'll just kind of let things happen and wing it"? No. He IS a God who plans. He is orderly. And He also works really hard, which means He wants us to do those things too. In fact, there's a whole message you are going to get later in this Feast on this principle of working hard. So I won't delve into that and go astray. But, no, He wants you to plan. He wants you to be industrious. He wants you to look down the road and to make every provision within your power. But He doesn't

want you to get anxious and overwrought when circumstances don't allow you to see as far down the road as you would like to see.

Have you ever tried to drive at night in the fog? That's a little scary isn't it? And you say, "I can't see far enough down the road. This makes me uncomfortable. I need more vision—I need to see what's a little bit farther down the road." And what do you do? You turn your high beams on. Does that help? No. That just made it worse. You see, we get really anxious when we can't see well enough to know what's ahead. We want that knowledge—we want the advanced information. We need it to feel at ease, to feel comfortable, don't we? And what happens when your vision goes down and you have to walk forward and you can't see any farther than the hand in front of your face? Not good. We get anxious; we get worried. And what God is saying is, as His children, He's going to put us in circumstances in which we can't see very far. We can't see how it's going to work out. We can't see around that corner. And He says, "I don't want you to be anxious. I want you to trust in faith that I am going to provide what you need." You are going to have all your real necessities, but it doesn't say you are going to have all of your wants—all your desires. But He is going to take care of you. He's going to give you, and He's going to give me, what we really need. You are going to be okay; don't fret; don't worry about the future; trust Him—that you are His children, and that means something to God. Verse 30:

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

That's always the problem, brethren. It's always a lack of faith with you and with me—the root of all of our problems.

"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat?" That doesn't mean don't plan to feed your family. You need to hustle—you need to get out there and work—and you need to do everything within your power. But when you've done everything within your power, stop fretting—stop AGONIZING and WORRYING yourselves in a fit over "how's the future going to work out? Because I can't see how it ends."

. . . take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.)

God says, "This is the orientation of the ones who don't have me"—the ones that are cut off and don't have a personal relationship with their Maker, yet, according to God's plan. Their day is coming later. We're going to talk about *them* when we get to the Last Great Day—many of them. You are the ones that have been called out of the world and given the priceless gift of a relationship with God *now*. And He says, "If you do what you are supposed to do with that gift, then you don't need to fret, and you don't need to fume, and you don't need to worry about the future. You just focus on first things first"—which is putting God first—building treasure in heaven, and all of this other stuff is going to work out. And He says, "Trust me." And that means have faith—develop the faith to believe Him, that He is going to follow through and He's going to do what He has promised. Because not to do it makes you and me just like the people in the world—the gentiles. And a gentile is one without God. They are the ones who are fretting about where their next meal is coming from, or next month's house payment, or getting the car fixed, or whatever it is.

(For after all these things to the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

He knows that you need to eat, and that you need to feed your family, and that you need to clothe them and give them shoes. And He knows that you need a roof over your head—that you need protection from the cold in winter and the heat in the summer. He knows you need all those things and He wants you to have those necessities. But He doesn't want you to spend your time fretting and looking at those needs as an idol—so that it takes you away and distracts you from your real responsibilities. That defeats the very purpose of faith and building treasure in heaven. What does He want us to do? Verse 33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Seek you first—foremost, primarily, without fail, without compromise, without counterfeiting—"the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," and *all these other things*—the things that we've been talking about—"shall be added unto you."

God says, "You do what I want first and foremost"—even if it puts you in a threatening situation and you don't know how it's all going to work out. And He says, "You do what I require of you in faith and then you leave the rest to me. I'm going to make sure you have all these other needs taken care of." Now, if you say instead, "I can't, I've got to save myself; I've got to work on the Sabbath; I can't take off for the Feast of Tabernacles because I'll get fired; I have to have my job or

my family is going to lose their home." If we do that, maybe we save ourselves. But you will be sawing a limb off behind you, and so will I.

The best decision for you and me, as the called children of God is that, in spite of how bad it looks like it's going to be, we do what God says—we step out and we do what our neighbors and our friends think is absolutely stupid and foolish. But it fulfills what God says to do and we say, "Yes, Lord." And then He says, "You trust me in faith and I'm going to make this other stuff work out." Yes, it is a leap of faith—there's a reason they call it that. Because it's like leaping off a cliff, and it seems like a stupid thing to do. But here you all are. In the face of many, many trials and difficulties, problems, obstacles, that could have—even physically should have—prevented you from being here, yet, here you are. So, many of you understand the principle involved.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these [other] things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow." That doesn't mean don't ever plan. No, no, no, no. That's not what He is saying. You need to be doing that. I gave a whole series of sermons a couple of years ago on good stewardship. God does give us the responsibility to take care of our own—our physical obligations, family, self—to do these things. And anyone who does not is breaching, then, the example of Jesus Christ. That's not what He means here. "Take therefore no thought for the morrow"—meaning stop fretting and worrying about things you cannot fix. It does you no good. "For the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." That is saying, you know what, you and I each probably have enough immediate issues we need to deal with—that we *can* do something about—without worrying about the problems we can't solve at the present time. So stop WORRYING your lives about the future—the unknowns. Just because it's foggy doesn't mean there is an obstacle you are going to hit. When you can't see, you think there might be; there might be a deer that comes out at any time, and you have no way to avoid it because you don't have the vision to see down the road. Maybe there's a boulder or another car. What if you are going through the fog and, all of a sudden, taillights come up in front of you and you don't have time to stop? So we worry, "what if . . ." What if there's a threat right ahead of me and I'm charging forward? It might be a disaster. What if, what if, what if—fret, fret, worry, fume, distress. It leads to stress and anguish, and we hurt our bodies as well as our minds—you are going to get a message on that, too, in this series on abundant life: state of mind and how it affects the body.



"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Worry about and focus upon the issues you do know about—that you are aware of—and have an opportunity to fix and correct, and stop adding on top of it all the things that might happen, maybe, if everything goes desperately wrong. God says, don't spend your time thinking about that. Leave it to Him; He's going to help you; He's going to be your eyes; He can see everything; He can see through the fog, even if you can't.

I don't have time to get into it, but, you know, there is a principle involved: When David asked God to be a lamp. He said, "Be a lamp unto my feet." But when do you see the most? You don't see the most when the lamp is down at your feet, because you can only see just the next step or two. If you want to see way down the line, hold the lamp up high and cast that light out ahead of you. Now I can see ten yards—thirty feet—down the road. David didn't ask for God to be a big spotlight to be able to see a mile down the road. He just asked, "Be a lamp unto my feet"—show me the next step you want me to take so that I can be sure of *that* one—and then I will let all of the unknowns, for good or for bad, take care of themselves, because I'm going to trust You. You are the one guiding me. I'm going to follow You.

The irony is, brethren, among God's chosen, of whom you are, those who lust for the mammon of this world usually don't get it, and those who prove they don't really care about that mammon of the world are more likely to get it. It's really an interesting phenomenon. It's not that God wants to withhold physical niceties and pleasantries from you and me—and some in the church do have them. But, by and large, it's the ones who don't lust after them—who have not made idols out of those physical things—who have them. And we can all fool ourselves—we lie to ourselves—and say, "Oh yes, God is most important to me. I'm building my treasure in heaven, not on this earth." But, then, what are we spending most of our time thinking about? Jobs, income, get this, acquire this, position myself here, achieve this—physical, physical, physical. And, oh yes, I'll pray and study a little bit, or at least do enough to make it look good. So we like to think of ourselves as being religious—as being devoted to spiritual things—but, boy, we spend an awful lot of our time chasing the mammon of this world.

I also like the one where we talk ourselves into the idea that, well, we haven't been obeying, say, the tithing laws—and this is hard, especially for people who first come into the church who for the first time have to consider the idea of obeying God's tithing laws: "Wait a minute, I'm having a hard enough time

making ends meet, let alone paying these tithes that are required of God. Whew! How am I going to do that?" And so we think, okay, we've heard the sermons—we know what Mr. Armstrong taught us from the beginning; Malachi three, you know: tithe, God says, and see if I don't open a window in heaven and pour you out more abundance than you can handle. So we begrudgingly tithe and say, "Well, okay, God says he's going to bless us if we tithe, so I'm going to pass Him money with one hand while I hold the other one out waiting for the rebate because I need it to pay the mortgage." Have you ever thought that?

Are we really building treasure in heaven, or are we obeying God's command to tithe—or whatever, I don't just want to pick on a money issue. But whether it's Sabbath-keeping, Holy Days, or any of the others—all of the others. Are we really doing them because we inherently believe they are required of God and we're showing love for Him by saying, "Yes, Lord," and obeying whatever it is, or are we really bargaining with God? "Okay, God, you promised to bless me and give me all of these nice things, so I'm going to do what you say, but, now, I want you to kind of give me tit for tat and take care of some of these problems I'm experiencing." Uh, it usually doesn't work. That usually doesn't work.

If you are going to receive more of the mammon of the world, and that's not what I'm here to advocate, but the ones who have enjoyed it in the church—now, I'm not saying in the world because time and chance are happening to all of them, and there are some really wealthy people with a lot, a lot of money. And I guarantee you it's not making them happy but they think it is, and the ones that don't have it are trying to get what they have. But in the church, of the ones whom God has set apart and is working with, those who typically have more of the mammon are the ones who have proven to God that they don't worship the mammon—they don't compromise God's Truth for the mammon—they're not consumed by those physical things. That's not what drives them, that's not what they think about to the exclusion of spiritual things. They have really learned to put God first out of a real devotional love for His commands. And then, by the way, He has given them some of these other things on the side. But the worst thing God could do, would be to give me, or to give you, money, wealth—whatever these things are of the world—if it would cause us to turn our heads and to turn away from God. If so, He's not going to give it to us—not if He doesn't want to destroy us. So it is interesting, ironic, that those who lust for the mammon of the world—whether they admit it or not—God is going to say to them, "No, I know what's in your heart and it's not good for you, so I'm not going

to let you have it." And the ones who prove they don't really care about those things and they could be just as happy if it was ALL taken away from them are more likely to be the ones God may allow to have more of the mammon—sometimes yes, sometimes no—if it would not become a stumbling block to destroy them.

And so, now, we're going to go out after this message and say, "Okay, God, I promise I'm not going to care about mammon anymore." Why? So that we can convince God to give it to us. But, you see, He will see right through that. We've got to get to the point where we really, really, REALLY don't care about those things. And we don't think, "Now push the lust to the back, but keep it shielded—don't let God see it," and then say, "Oh, God, I'm going to build my treasure in heaven; I'm going to obey you first; I'm going to do all these things." And what we are really thinking is, "Oh, God, please, now, give me the blessing; give me the money; give me a better job; give me the good stuff." But, you see, He's going to recognize that. Yours and my deepest thoughts He knows. It's not going to work.

Those called into the Truth of God have been given a very special promise of abundance. Notice Luke 11:9:

And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil [which is what we all are by nature], know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give [Oh, what does He promise to give?] the Holy Spirit . . .

He didn't promise to give you and me money, physical wealth, acclaim, celebrity, or power in this world. No. What's the abundance He promised for the ones who are faithful to Him? "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Why the Holy Spirit? "Uhhh, yeah, I want a little bit of your Holy Spirit, but what I really want is a lot of these other things, God. Can I, can I get some of this other stuff? Because I know this stuff will

really make my life easier. I could be happier." No, that's the lie we were talking about earlier, where we think we could make our own happiness if we just had the stuff—if we have enough of it we can make ourselves happy. And God knows that's a lie. He wants you to come to accept that it's a lie and to realize that what you and I really need is that missing piece of the puzzle in your mind—the mind you've had from the time you were in the womb—the missing piece that can only be filled by God's Holy Spirit. That's what's going to make you complete. That's what's going to make you satisfied. That's what's going to give you abundance—you have that missing ingredient, that relationship with your Father. He is the one who made you and me, so He knows what you need and I need. And that's what He's promised to give us abundantly: the Holy Spirit.

Romans 11, verse 33 says, "O the depth of the riches both *of* the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Where is the true wealth, brethren? Where is the true abundance? Give up on the lie—the deception—that the world sells to us daily, under the influence of Satan, the Devil. It is not in the mammon of this world.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!  
How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

When we come to the point that we really agree with that statement—I mean from the depth of your heart and mine—and we can say, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Oh, how valuable are those things—I love them, I cherish them more than anything else. If I had to sell everything else to have God's knowledge and Truth—the revelation that He gave—that is what I desire more than anything else. You must get to the point you can say that, and mean it, before God. You don't have to convince another human being—convince God that it's true, on your knees, in your prayers—and don't try to sell a fib to God; He'll see right through it. But when you get to the point where you come to value it *that much*—you ache for the knowledge of God; that's REALLY what you value; that's really what satisfies you and fills you full—then, you see, you are on the right track. Then you are going to start tasting the abundance that God promised. That is the foundation of the whole thing. All of these other things are distractions—they are counterfeits, they are mirages that will disappear. The more you chase them the farther away they will get and you will never achieve them—no human being has yet done it.

Matthew 13, verse 22. What are we asking for? Are we asking God for the mammon of this world, or most importantly, on our knees, are we asking Him for the true riches? Matthew 13, verse 22: "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches . . ." You see, it's a lie. It's a mirage. It's not real, but it seems so real. It seems so real that we just can't avoid chasing it. God calls it "the deceitfulness of riches." Why? The promise is there, it's so enticing, but you chase it and it's empty—unsatisfying. "The care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word." It distracts us from our primary obligation of putting God first—of obeying His laws. And we're going to try and make ourselves happy our way.

So we compromise and we forsake God, and we do what we think is going to give us the riches. And, guess what? We end up at a dead end and we miss the boat. "The deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." Unfruitful, why? Because it takes the Holy Spirit working in you and me in order to generate positive fruit, and if we quench that Spirit while we are chasing after the mammon, we lose.

"But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit"—using the gift that God has given and saying, "Yes, Lord, I am going to work to build treasure in heaven. I am going to make a priority out of you, even though my carnal mind is screaming at me: no, no, no, no, no." You are going to overcome that and you are going to say, "Yes, yes. Because I believe that God is true when He says this is the way to happiness and fulfillment. I am going to overcome all of these other things going on in my head and I'm going to say, 'This is the way that I am going to walk'."

"Which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." It's a great return on the investment God.

Hebrews 11 and verse 24: an example of an individual, historically, who did this very thing. And we're talking about Moses. Hebrews 11: 24, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years [meaning he became an adult], refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." He was raised in the home of Pharaoh as a prince. He had the opportunity—had he just stayed with the program and played the game—to experience all of the greatest wealth, physically, that was possible in that very age—in the time of the glory of Egyptian society. There he was, in the

royal family. A position that all other human beings on the earth desired. Moses had it. He was right there.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

And you have to believe that there were a lot of people he knew—when he did what he did; when he went against Pharaoh and he killed that Egyptian and he had to flee for his life—they had to be saying, "What an idiot—what an idiot who got caught up in feeling sorry for these poor slave Israelites and gave up all of the wealth of Egypt because his conscience bothered him. Because he had some affinity for these poor Israelites. Why would anybody do that?" But Moses did.

Verse 26, "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." What riches? The reproach of Christ? Did you know that's what Moses was doing in the wilderness? I thought Jesus Christ didn't come until thousands of years later. But, remember, it was Christ who was manifested as the God of the Old Testament—who dealt with Moses in the burning bush, in the pillar of the cloud and the fire. It was the same being who became Jesus Christ.

So when Moses was called and God began to work in his life, he was responding to the one who became Christ. And look at the sacrifices he made—including the fact he renounced all of that wealth, and that prestige, and that power, and that acclaim that the world offered in the realm of Egyptian society. He traded it all in for a hard life in bondage to Jesus Christ in the wilderness. And from the time he did that, he had a hard life, didn't he? Didn't Moses have it pretty rough? We have a lot of documentation that God chose to record in the Old Testament about the trials and tribulations of Moses. And yet, here in verse 26 it says, "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." This tells you something that you don't find out by reading the first five books of the Old Testament. Here God gives us insight into the mind and thinking of Moses. He loved the promise God gave to him concerning the Promised Land, about the future that was to come, and he loved it so much more than the wealth he had ALL around him—that he was enjoying—he was willing to give it all up now in order to chase the dream of the promise that God was offering in the future. And do you know what's really funny? He didn't even get to enjoy that promise in his physical lifetime, did he? All that he went through with all of

those rebellious Israelites in crossing the wilderness. And then coming to the brink of it, they couldn't even go into the Promised Land, and God made them wander for forty years—Moses at the head. And he wandered and he suffered with them. And in the final analysis, at 120 years old, Moses saw the Promised Land from afar, but he died—he didn't even get to go in. And, humanly speaking, you would look at that and say, "Moses made a huge mistake. He traded the wealth of Egypt—the power of the royal family—to suffer the rest of his life wandering in the wilderness with all of those rebels. And he died and never even got to the land flowing with milk and honey. What a bad mistake that was." That's the human rationalization for it.

But here God says he esteemed the promise, the reproach of Christ, and all that is required in that way of life, "greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." He valued what God was offering in the future so much, he was willing to make the necessary sacrifices today in the flesh to achieve it. And even though he didn't see it—just as Abraham never saw the promise come to fruition in his own physical lifetime, by the sacrifices he made, given what he knew, according to what God had given him at the time—he was building his treasure in heaven. And so he was promised that he would be there in the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ—Moses is going to be one of the ones who is going to see it.

Verse 27, "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." God is invisible. You can't put your hands on Him. You can't touch Him. I can't prove His existence to you or to any other human being. But when you come to know and believe that He really does exist and that there is a master plan He is working out, and when you come to have the confidence that it is true and that it is not a lie, and if we do obey Him, if we show that He is first in our lives, then we know He is going to give us those offices of power and great riches, not just for a short season of 50, 60, 70, or 80 years, but He's going to give it to us for all eternity as beloved children in His Family—never ending, forever and ever and ever. And when you come to believe that's true—I mean you believe it with all that is within you—then you begin to make decisions in your lives today and start making sacrifices, just like Moses did, to trade away the lie of happiness and treasure in the mammon of this world, for the true reward which you cannot put your hands on now, but which you have come to believe is very real and worth any sacrifice needed today. And, in the meantime, while you pursue it, you experience persecution and tribulation, and

you are required, even as Christ said, to sacrifice houses, husbands, wives, children, parents, and brethren. You love that promise so much you are willing to do it. It hurts, but you do it and you are richly rewarded with peace of mind and contentment. You feel good about it because you know you are building your treasure in heaven and it's going to be worth any sacrifice today. The individual who is doing that—even in the midst of trial and persecution—is living abundantly; they are feeling rewarded; they are feeling fulfilled. They're enduring difficulties in this life but they are satisfied—they're enriched. They are abundantly living. If we will get our priorities straight, brethren, if we will give up the lie that Satan has foisted upon human beings—and it comes to us so naturally to think we can make success for ourselves—and come to put God and His commandments first, we can have that real abundance that God desires for us to enjoy.

Notice Isaiah 55 and verse 1: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat." He is saying, "Okay, you don't have the physical mammon; there is none needed. You still have purchasing power even if you don't have the wealth of this world. You don't need it to get the true riches."

He that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?

Oh, we are enticed. We see something—a new car, something in the store window—and we go, "Oh, look at that. Ooh, if I had that, boy, would I be happy. I would be so content; I would be so satisfied. I've got to have it." And we go out and we buy it. Now we have it and we might have the feeling and illusion of happiness for a while, but how long does it last? Is there any physical thing you have ever possessed that gives eternal satisfaction? So you understand by your own experiences, don't you, that it is a lie—it's a mirage. It satisfies you today, and tomorrow, or next month, or next year, all of a sudden, it's: "Boy, why did I want that? I can't believe I was so caught up in having to have that because right now it's not doing anything for me." That's how it always turns out when we chase the lie. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?" That means it's something you think is going to satisfy your hunger, but when you buy it and eat it, it's empty. You are still hungry. And God says that's what the pursuits of



the flesh that human beings are out there chasing are doing. They are chasing what they think is going to fill their bellies and they eat it and they are still hungry.

Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

That means real satisfaction and contentment. And we are talking, most importantly, about peace of mind—contentment which starts in the mind and affects every aspect of our lives. It is saying, "You buy—you spend your time, your energy, your purchasing power on those things that will truly satisfy—then you will be on to something." Verse 3:

Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

He says, you spend your purchasing power—your time, your energy, your thoughts—on putting me first. You find a way to obey my Law above anything else, even though it's the hardest thing—as human beings—we could ever spend our time doing, because, by nature, we don't want to obey God. We just simply don't. It's the first thing we need to admit. When I hear somebody say, "Oh, I just love God so much just for the sake of pleasing Him." And I used to think: "Well, I wonder what's wrong with me because I sure don't. It's hard for me to do what is right because I don't want to do what God has said—I've got my own agenda." And it used to bother me when I would hear people talk about, "Well, oh, I just naturally love God and want to obey Him." And then I figured out that most of those people are phonies, because they have the same carnal mind that I have. God says we all have it. And it is one of rebellion against God.

There are some of you out there who feel like you are the only ones—you think you are surrounded by all of these good Christian people with halos over their heads. And you think you are the only one who is really struggling. No, you are not. You are just like the rest of us. When we are honest, we know that we are rebels to the core and we hate the things that God said are good. Which means you and I have to fight and we have to persevere against the natural tendency, and we have to rule over it and do the things that don't come naturally and learn habits that are really, really hard to create. And it takes the power of God's Holy Spirit to

be successful with that. But if you invest your time in that way—if that's what you buy with your energies and your blood, your sweat and your tears—then you are going to reap the real reward: that abundant life.

That everlasting covenant that God promises, brethren, includes the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles when the riches of the God Family will be given to the firstfruits of that first resurrection, and we will reign with Jesus Christ in His Kingdom on this earth and on into eternity thereafter in the Family of God. It is worth the sacrifice to build your treasure in heaven. And I'm telling you, brethren, if you spend your time doing that—no matter what persecutions and tribulations you must yet endure in this life—you can do so being absolutely fulfilled: peace of mind and great abundance while you are doing it. Abundant life—not only the everlasting life that God has promised tomorrow, but even today.

In the next seven messages, now, I'm going to give you very specific, broad principles that are going to be a part of you and I achieving more of that abundance today and tomorrow. Next time.