

**Entering Into His Rest #3;
Blessings/Curses for Obedience/Disobedience**

**2008 Feast of Tabernacles, Second Day
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Jon W. Brisby
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Brethren, this morning I am going to pick up where we left off yesterday in this series on my Feast theme of "Entering Into His Rest." The rest promised by God to ancient Israel was a physical promised land. The rest promised to the New Testament Church is a spiritual rest—the Millennium and beyond, eternal life in the God Family. That's what we are here to celebrate during this seven-day Feast.

And so, notice that previously, I gave you a list of the promises God gave—both physical and spiritual. And remember, I skipped over some things when I was reviewing those promises to ancient Israel, and I said we would come back to them. Well, today we are coming back to them. The work that God did with ancient Israel, mirrors the work that He is doing with the Church—spiritual Israel—today. God called them and then gave them incredible help—promises to defend them, to take care of them in every way, and to bless them. But, there were conditions before they could receive all of those things. What was the primary condition? Remember, I have been labeling it the "big if"? The "big if"—whether or not they would really reap the benefits of that kingdom, that promised land. What was the "big if"—the condition? It's very simple, brethren: the condition is obedience to the commandments. Obedience to the commandments that God gave. Notice Deuteronomy 8 and verse 11. Deuteronomy 8 and beginning in verse 11:

Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full [meaning that God promised initially to bless them, which He did. But He understood the tendency of carnal minds and what they would do], and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks

multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; *Then* thine heart be lifted up, and thou *forget* the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage . . . [emphasis added]

He says the tendency of human beings, when they are in a state of plenty—all of their basic needs are being met; if you want to say it, they are fat and sassy, they are at ease, they are comfortable—then they let down, and they don't do the things that they should do in honoring God. He warned them ahead of time that this was going to be their proclivity, and yet, they still did exactly that. He said that when He gave them all of these blessings, that they would forget.

Verse 15: "Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness . . ." Remember, we talked about God leading them in this pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. He led them. Everywhere they went, they could see the physical manifestation of His presence, and where He wanted them to go.

Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end . . .

He was a loving Father. Israel—the nation—He called His son, and He treated Israel as a son, a beloved son, and gave that nation everything. But did they appreciate it? Did they value it?

Verse 17—after all of those blessings, all of those good things: "And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." Oh, that's typically what human beings do. Oh, and it's not that you and I will actually verbalize that, but if we analyze the deepest thoughts of our hearts and our minds, we can usually go back and find that this is really what is at the root. You see, God just calls it black and white, but we have a hard time identifying with that. We read this and say, "Oh, those bad ole Israelites. How could they take credit to themselves for all of those miracles that God created in saving them from the Egyptians; and bringing them through the Red Sea; and

giving them water out of a rock; and manna from heaven? How could they take credit for it and say they did it on their own? That was stupid, because we all know that it wasn't true." But it is not that easy for human beings to see it, brethren. And you and I would have faced the same challenges if we had been the ones back there in the desert at that time. We think it would be easy, and that we wouldn't have done it. Just like the way I told you I thought about it when I was young. But the truth is, we do think that way.

"My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." In other words, "I deserve it. I was a slave in Egypt for so long, I'm just finally getting my just desserts for everything that I have suffered. And I am wise enough, and clever enough, that even without God's help, I still would have ended up free, and independent, with power and control." That's the way human beings think.

"My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. [Verse 18:] But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God." He's saying, "Don't do it. Don't let your mind go there. It's a mistake."

But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the [Eternal] thy God, and walk after other gods . . .

He's saying, "If you blow this—if you get it wrong and you fall into this trap, and you take for granted all that I have done for you in calling you out, and making you a holy nation, and blessing you, and promoting you, and giving you all of this wealth and power—if you forget, and if you get tired in mind, and you start to think you deserved it, or that you earned it, or you got it on your own," this is what is going to happen:

. . . if thou do at all forget the [Eternal] thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.

"You shall surely perish." That's the end result, brethren, of failed conversion—death. For ancient Israel it was a physical death. The majority of

that first generation, their carcasses fell in the wilderness over a forty-year trek—all except Joshua and Caleb—the only two from that first generation who actually entered into the promised land.

Moses didn't enter in, although he was called faithful. But Moses represented the carnal man. Joshua, in type, represented Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, represented by Joshua, went into the promised land, leading Israel. Moses didn't, because he represented the carnal man. Yet, God said that Moses was "faithful in all his house." But because he was the type of carnal man, God did not allow him to go in, and he died. He got to see it, but then he died and was buried outside the border of the promised land. It wasn't that God wasn't merciful. Yes, Moses made a mistake—he struck the rock and should have spoken only what God told him to say. God was not mean to Moses—He didn't take away this privilege of going into the promised land just because Moses made one mistake. Because Moses wasn't a rebel in mind. He had shown that he was faithful—his heart was in the right place—but God didn't let him go in. He made an example out of Moses. Why? Remember what I told you on opening night? None of those things that happened back there, that were recorded, occurred for them. They happened for you and me. And so God used his dealings with Moses to record an example, so that you could read the story and see the interpretation, and heed the warning, so that you don't make the same kind of mistake.

"I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish." That's what is going to happen to those who won't do it God's way. He is ever-willing to bless, to heal, to pour out protection, love and mercy upon His dear chosen ones, but if they refuse to do things His way, He says, "I'm just simply not going to let you have that Promised Land. You will not enjoy the rest of that Millennium." They are God's rules. He created it all—He made the master plan, so He can do what He wants, and those are His rules. He is like the eight-hundred-pound gorilla that can do anything that he wants. There is nobody who can challenge God for supremacy and power. Satan wanted to—he tried—but he didn't even come close. There is no other power—physical or spiritual—that can compare to this God. He makes the rules, and the rule says, "I will give you abundance beyond your wildest dreams *IF* you agree to do things my way." And He is very adamant about that—it is not just a suggestion. He's not like one of those parents who gives a command to a child, but then kind of relents and lets them do what they want to do. No, when He says, "I'm serious when I give you an instruction and a command, and I mean what I say," He means what He says.

Now, we all make mistakes. We are weak—we fall down and we violate the Law every day—and we have to ask for the shed blood of Jesus Christ for forgiveness every day. That's different from a state of rebellion in mind in which we decide that we don't like God's way—we think He is wrong; we think this other way is equally as good, or better—and we are going to justify doing something else. That's what it means to seek other gods—that's idolatry; that's a violation of the Second Commandment. God won't tolerate idolatry—no other foreign gods. He is a jealous God. He says, "My way or the highway." He is allowed to do that. He makes the rules.

You know, rather than fighting that, brethren, how much better off would we be if we could just come to simply acknowledge that by learning from the failed history of ancient Israel? Because that's why they fell. I have a whole sermon for you toward the end of the Feast on what happened to that first generation, and why and how it applies to you and me today. But I don't want to step over my own material for later. But if we learn from their mistakes, as God wants us to do, we have the guarantee that we will enter into that rest—we will not be of those who fail; we will reap life everlasting.

Basically, this is the way God's formula works: He created the physical and the spiritual realm within which we exist, so that there are blessings for obedience to His Law, and there are curses for disobedience to His Law. That's how simple it is. It really is the simplicity of Christ. So many human beings want to make it more complicated than that, with all of these machinations of their own. No, no, no. It is simple: Obey the clear instructions that God gave—His Laws—and you are in. Disobey—disagree with it, fight against it, seek to pervert others to do the same—and you are out. That's how it works. It is matched with a whole lot of mercy, longsuffering, patience, redemption and forgiveness for those who really, really want to do it His way, but are struggling, and just need time for overcoming. But the rebels need not apply because they just simply won't be there. And that's what ancient Israel was. Ancient Israel was a nation of rebels. They would not bend their knees to God, no matter how much He made these things very plain and told them up front about them—He didn't set them up; He didn't pull the rug out from underneath them; He didn't keep them in the dark and then hold them accountable for a set of rules and instructions of which they weren't aware; He didn't say, "Ha, ha, you broke that rule," so that they could legitimately say, "But I didn't know about that rule." "It doesn't matter. You broke it, so you are out." That is not the way God dealt with them. He told them up front what was

required. He even—as I just read to you—gave them the warning: "Now be careful. I'm giving you these instructions and I'm really, really, really serious about them, and if you violate them, and if you turn away to other gods—concepts of your own minds—and you decide you don't like my commandments, and you are going to do it your way, then this is what's going to happen: you are going to lose. Game over. But if you hold fast, then you will inherit." That was the condition. Exodus 19 and verse 3. Exodus 19 and beginning in verse 3:

And Moses went up unto God, and the [Eternal] called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians . . .

Again, He is saying, "Don't forget what you have already experienced. You've seen this and have witnessed it with your own eyes." But human beings all too often forget. Oh, they are euphoric at the time. I read to you a passage from the Psalms in which they sang to honor and glorify God when they came through the Red Sea, and how jubilant they were that they had been spared by God. And at that moment, they were appreciative. But it didn't last, because human beings forget. They only seem to remember until the time of their next great trial, and as soon as they are in the middle of another threat, all of a sudden, everything in the past is out the window and all they can think of is what they're facing right now. There is no memory of the way God intervened in the past, and no confidence that He will do it again.

And Moses went up unto God, and the [Eternal] called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

This is an interesting text. I had a man a few years ago—he was only with us for probably a couple of years, at the most, and then he left—who tried to tell me that it is an absolute certainty that Revelation says that the church is going to flee to a place of safety on jumbo jets—747s, or whatever. It has to be an airplane. The whole church is going to get together and get on airplanes and fly to the Middle East and go to Petra, and the reason is that Revelation says that He is going to take them on the wings of an eagle. Well, that's flying, so that has to

mean it's airplanes. You know what I said to him? "Then how do you explain Exodus 19 and verse 4? I suppose the Israelites were taken from Egypt to Mount Sinai on a 747?" Because God used the same term there. "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself."

Again, this is an example of how God looks at things, compared to how human beings look at things. In God's eyes, He gave them every benefit—He brought them out of Egypt across the Red Sea; He brought them across the wilderness to His holy mountain (Mount Sinai)—and from God's perspective it was like a first class voyage on eagles' wings. But that's not how the Israelites saw it at all—with all the harrowing experiences that they went through. *They* thought they were dead on numerous occasions—either by Pharaoh and his army; or by starvation in the wilderness; or by thirst; or by the Amorites; or by the Amalekites. These people were harrowed—they were tortured in mind. They thought it was the most appalling, the most terrifying, experience they had ever had in their lives getting to Mount Sinai. But God said, "I gave you a first class ride on eagles' wings and brought you into my presence." It's a very stark contrast, isn't it?

Verse 5: God is telling Moses, "You go and remind the people of this":

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.

Again, He asserts: "This earth belongs to me; I made it, and I can do with it what I want. And I have determined—for my purposes, for my reasons—to call you as a nation, and to bless you particularly, out of all the other nations on the earth. I want you to have it, but there are conditions, and you must obey and respect, and worship, me alone. That's the condition."

. . . for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

Israel wanted to receive all of the blessings that God was offering. At Mount Sinai, when He offered them the covenant relationship, they said, "Yes, we want it." And, in fact, they entered into that covenant, and it was a marriage

covenant. I can't wait to get to the Fundamental of Belief, item number 25, on this issue of divorce and remarriage, because I am going to cover the concept of marriage in detail. And we are going to talk a lot about what marriage is, as confirmed on Mount Sinai between God and ancient Israel. It was a marriage covenant, as Mr. Armstrong taught us. God made vows to Israel; Israel made vows to God in return, and it was certified by the sprinkling of blood upon the congregation. It was a blood pact. It was a marriage covenant.

"And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." *If* they would keep the covenant; *if* they would be faithful to their marriage vows, God said, "Then I will give you all of these blessings." They could have had it. They wanted it. And I suspect the majority of them were sincere when they said, "I do." They were sincere. Many of them thought they could keep God's commandments and please Him. They couldn't.

We won't turn to it, but Mr. Cole used to quote this one all of the time, when God said, "Oh, that there were such an heart in them," so that, in essence, they could obey. He knew from the beginning that they weren't up to it. Why? He didn't give them the power—which is the Holy Spirit—to succeed. They didn't have an opportunity to have true conversion and begettal into the Church of God—the Body of Christ—because Christ had to come and die first in order to qualify before the Holy Spirit could be given. So with ancient Israel, there is no way they could have done it. But that's the point of recording the story, because, otherwise, somebody down the line might say, "You know what? Where is the evidence that if a human being just had enough favor from God—the promise of protection, the knowledge of the Truth, the right way to live—that they couldn't make it on their own? Where is the evidence of that?" God answered that by recording the failure of Israel. So, in the future, when the Millennium comes and Christ is ruling, there is going to be no way for anybody to say, "You know what? There was another way it might have worked. Yeah, this is the way God did it, and brought about this salvation plan, but there might have been another way. Because any human being, given enough breaks and favor from God, might have been able to be successful, even without the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit." Well, God anticipating that very argument, said, "Well, I'll just make sure they know that that doesn't work." Ancient Israel is the proof of it, because that is exactly what He did: He dealt with a physical people, without the Holy Spirit, but with everything else—protection, blessings for all of their physical needs, all the

good stuff, God's direction (He was their King), He was their defender, their protector. They had everything else except the Holy Spirit, and they failed. They failed. Which proves that the Holy Spirit is the integral ingredient—the necessary ingredient—for success. That's why those accounts are written: so that you and I can learn these things and take them seriously.

Israel wanted those blessings desperately, and they thought they could do it, but to them it was like a New Year's resolution. "Oh, yes, I'm going to get into shape. I'm going to lose weight, and I'm going to correct my diet; I am going to do this and I'm going to do that; I'm going to learn a second language."

I'm dealing with that right now. I would really like to learn more French. I don't know, we'll see—I'm going to try. So you can make a New Year's resolution, but how many times do we actually make it happen? Very often we fall off the wagon somewhere along the way. Other things come in and distract us. We are sincere at the time—we want to do it—but we just don't follow through. That's the way ancient Israel was. They made the covenant, and they intended to be a faithful wife, but they didn't have it within them. They considered God's requirements for obedience to be too much of a burden to be able to actually do them. That's really what it was. In the final analysis, what God required of them was more than they could offer. They wanted to—it was a nice goal—but they didn't have it in them.

Spiritual Israel also must obey God in order to receive the salvation of that rest which He has promised for His Kingdom to come. The same guidelines are there for you and me as they were for ancient Israel—type/antitype. Notice Mark 10 and verse 17. Mark 10 and beginning in verse 17:

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

It was a simple, straightforward question: "Cut to the chase. Just tell me what I've got to do. What are the basic requirements in order for me to have eternal life? Summarize it." "And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." It's not my subject, but why did He say that—because Christ *was* good? He was saying, in essence, "You shouldn't be calling me good, because there is only one good, and that is God."

Christ was the Son of God—He was God in the flesh. He *was* good, He was perfect and never made a mistake. It was right for the man to call Him good. So why did Christ seem to contend with him? Obviously because this man who called Him good didn't really believe it. Christ was pointing out his hypocrisy. He called Him good, but he didn't believe Christ—this Jesus whom he was addressing—was the Son of God. He didn't believe this Jesus Christ in the flesh, standing before him, was perfect—that He had been begotten of God, that God was His Father. He didn't believe that. So when he called Jesus good, Christ responded by pointing out his hypocrisy. If the man had been sincere in accepting that Jesus Christ was God, He would have let it go. But the man called Him good. Have you ever had anybody shine you on? "Oh, you're so wonderful, and da, da, da, da, da." And you know—mm-hmm, they don't really believe it. That's what was happening here. "Oh, good master, tell me what I have to do to have eternal life."

Here's what He said—this is what it takes for eternal life. Verse 19: "Thou knowest the commandments . . ." Oh, back to the same old familiar Ten Commandments that He gave originally to Moses on Mount Sinai. How do we know they are the same? Because He lists enough of them to confirm which Commandments He is talking about, lest there be any misunderstanding:

Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

He listed six Commandments—actually the last six of the Ten which define our responsibilities toward our fellow man. And some want to say, "Well, He didn't list the Sabbath in here. So that means the Sabbath isn't required, only these." No. We understand that the whole Law either stands or falls together. He was giving us samples so that we could understand which Commandments He meant. So here they are, in the time leading up to the New Testament era, during the time of Christ's own ministry, and they are asking Him the same question: "What do I have to do to have eternal life?" And He says, "The same things you have always been told: keep the Commandments"—the very same Ten that were written with the finger of God upon two tables of stone at the beginning—the ones that were expanded into statutes and judgments so that you could understand how to actually apply them. Those Commandments. It has always been what God has required of His people.

Matthew 5 and verse 17. Matthew 5 and beginning in verse 17: "Think not [Christ said] that I am come to destroy the law . . ." So there must have been a lot of ideas like that floating around, and the wise men of the different sects of the Jews were certainly justifying it. And I'm sure they sounded very convincing, and I'm sure they convinced a lot of people. But it was false, nonetheless.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil"—to fill full. Not as the Protestants interpret it: "I came to live it perfectly myself so that you don't have to." That's the way they treat that—that Christ fulfilled it, by living it, but that you and I can disregard it. Not at all. As Mr. Armstrong taught us, that word "fulfill," from the Greek, really means to "fill full." He was really saying, "I came to show you, by example, what is required in order to please God. I'm not just going to tell it to you—I'm not just going to talk the talk, I'm going to walk the walk—I'm going to do it so that you can see what is required, so that you have no confusion, no reason for doubt or misunderstanding. This is what is required in order to enter into His rest."

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall *in no wise* pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. [emphasis added]

Have heaven and earth passed away yet? Ummm, when I woke up this morning, I was still on the earth. The sun rose. Those astrobodies are still there. As long as they are, all of this Law is still incumbent upon human beings. Now, the day is coming—and we are going to see this on the Last Great Day—when, the Bible says very plainly, all of this physical Creation, the earth, is going to be folded up. It's going to be destroyed—it's going to be burned up, it's going to be consumed—because the only ones who are left alive in the end are going to be Spirit Beings who don't need a physical habitation to sustain them. That's at the very end. But for right now, all of this Law is applicable, and has not been done away. That's what Christ was saying.

John 14 and verse 15. John 14 and beginning in verse 15, where Christ was reiterating to the chosen twelve—eleven, at this point, because Judas had already betrayed him (was in the process of betraying him)—the final instructions that God was giving on that night before the Passover when He was arrested and tortured and killed. And this is what He said to them. John 14 and verse 15: "If

ye love me, keep my commandments." The same Commandments—the same standard, the same responsibility of behavior, there always has been. It hasn't changed a bit. Remember, this is the same God—the same yesterday, today and forever. He doesn't change. It's really, really nice when we come to recognize that—that we really can depend upon Him—and what it means to serve a God who is always consistent.

If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth.

That's the missing ingredient that ancient Israel did not have. But to the New Testament Church, He said, "You are going to get that missing ingredient that you lacked." The initial apostles, and all of the laymembers who would come into the Body as a result of His death and qualification as Savior—the first-century church—would be given the missing ingredient of the Holy Spirit so that they *could* be successful. Ancient Israel didn't have it. God never promised them eternal life. He didn't hold out a carrot to them just to taunt them. He didn't say, "I'll give you eternal life." No, as I showed you, He promised them a physical land—physical blessings for human beings. But they couldn't even do that. But to spiritual Israel, He said, "No, this is life and death. This isn't just a matter of having physical blessings or not having them, this is your eternal lives at stake. But I'm giving you the missing ingredient, so that you have no reason to fail. You have no reason to fail. I'm going to provide everything that you need."

. . . and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever [verse 17]; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Christ was with them in person still at that time, and He said, "I'm still going to be with you, even after I'm gone." And the disciples couldn't understand that at that time. They were confused, and which ones of us wouldn't have been? But we understand now. Not just in physically being with them, but through the Spirit, Christ was going to help those men, and all of those who would be inducted into the very Body of Jesus Christ through baptism, later. And they would have the power to walk with God.

Verse 18: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also." Isn't that what Mr. Armstrong always taught us? You know, Protestant Christianity focuses on the death of Jesus Christ. Mr. Armstrong said His death would have meant nothing if He hadn't been resurrected. What gives us—you and me—the hope of being in that Kingdom is not that Christ died, but that seventy-two hours later He was resurrected from the dead and ascended up to His Father's throne. That is where your hope lies, because He was the forerunner—the very first one to be resurrected to immortality through that process of living a physical life as a human being and qualifying for it. And because He succeeded in that, without sin, His death can cover all of your sins and my sins so that, in spite of our weaknesses and our failings, day by day, we can have that guilty past blotted out and still have hope of entering into that Kingdom. His resurrection provided that.

"Because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments . . ." There it is again. Lest we think, "Oh, well, maybe He said that at the first, but then He went on to more important things, and now we can kind of push the Commandments aside." No, He goes back to it and says, "Don't forget this. I'm really serious about this."

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." How many are out there espousing a false sense of love? "Oh, love your neighbor. Show love. Show love. I love God. I love God." Christ said, "Talk is cheap. The ones living by these commandments are the ones demonstrating real love for me. And the ones disregarding them, for whatever reason, are showing hate and despite for me." That's how simple it is.

I try and keep that in mind, personally, day by day, and I try not to let myself off the hook when I'm guilty. You know, I could say, "Oh, well, yes, I know, I made a mistake. Well, okay, not a big deal." I try to remember that it *is* a big deal so that I can continue to be motivated not to continue to make the same mistake, but to really fight to make a change. And the only way that I can be motivated to make a change is if I really take the Law seriously. So that when I make a mistake—and I know that I made a mistake—I say, "God, that was like slapping you in the face. Violation of your Commandments was showing, not love, but the antithesis of love: hate—despite for you. That's what my violation

of your Law did." It's either one or the other. If love *is* the fulfilling of the Law, disobedience—the breaking of the Law—is showing incredible disrespect for Jesus Christ and His Father. Again, it's the simplicity of Christ. In our human minds, we like to make all kinds of shades of gray. We like to let ourselves off the hook, and downplay it, but, I'm telling you, brethren, the only way for you and me to make real progress in overcoming is to recognize the seriousness of sin.

Now, I always have to caution some that there is another ditch on the other side of that road, and that is getting so down on yourself that you want to give up. Satan, as I've said before, will get to us in any way he can. Satan will try to get you to think that you are not worthy—that you are too weak, and that you are committing too many sins that you just can't overcome—and to think that, "Well, I don't belong with the people of God. So I'm just going to fade away." And there are some who have done that. There are some who are not here today—not because they don't believe the Truth, or do not agree that they think this is the faithful remnant where the Truth is being preserved by Jesus Christ—but because they have let the cares of the world overwhelm them like a wave of the ocean, and they feel guilt, and they get to the point of just feeling despair, and they begin to just float downstream and let it take them.

We are trying to do everything we can to help and support those, and any one of us might wind up in that situation at some time in our lives, but that's very different than the rebels who think they have a better way, and that they have the world by the tail in interpreting God's commandments and laws. But, either way, either of those paths you may take, if you don't get out of it—if you don't find a way to overcome it and do what you are supposed to do (which is to keep the Commandments)—it means the loss of life. Satan doesn't care how he gets to us either, whether by getting us discouraged so that we just fade away, or whether he gets us through our human vanity and arrogance of mind to go off on a different path. He doesn't care how he gets us, as long as he gets us.

As you heard Mr. Whitaker talk about yesterday, the deceptiveness of that enemy is powerful, and it is lethal. And, brethren, if any of us think we are not subject to it, we have not analyzed our own minds enough. We all have weaknesses—weak points in our fortifications of mind—that Satan will attack. Do you know where yours are? Do you recognize them? Anybody who thinks, "No, my fortifications are strong. Don't worry about me. I pray; I fast; I study; I'm an example in the church. My fortifications are strong": Oh yeah? Think again.

You had better be posting a guard on your weak points, or somebody is going to be slipping in behind your defenses when you are not looking. Do you recognize where those weak points are, or are you going to be taken off guard?

But it is simple—it is black and white—as far as the expectation goes. Now, I'm not saying it is simple to do, but God is very clear: "Keep the Commandments." That's what is required. "If you love me, keep my commandments."

God gave His laws to be a blessing to us, not to be a curse or a burden. And so many in the church have viewed it that way. They are called, they come into the Truth, and they believe it is right—they believe it is true—just like the ancient Israelites did. Oh, but in the day-to-day requirement—day to day, week to week, month to month, year to year—they begin to think, "Oh, it's so hard to keep doing this. Keeping the Sabbath properly every single week; keeping all of the annual Holy Days like I'm supposed to be doing; tithing; eating right; trusting God for healing; doing all of these things we are supposed to be doing as a part of the faith once delivered: it's hard."

And it may be true that those who grow up in the church have a special challenge. The second generation is a good percentage of the church today, if you take a look at it: those who had at least one parent in the church. The demographics of this Body have changed over the last thirty-five years from what it was when we began. A lot of our ministry—our service today—is trying to help recover some of those who grew up in the church. Many of the ones responding and coming back to the Faith—even after decades of being out in the world—are ones who still remember that Way which was taught to them when they were young. And now they are looking for a way to get back to their roots. But there is a special challenge for second-generation children. If you grew up in the church, and your parents were dutiful and taught you these things, and you practiced them, it's easy not to value them and appreciate them, and to see them as a burden. "Oh, I've got to keep the Law; I've got to do this. Mom and Dad make me do it." And then you get out on your own in the world, and all of a sudden, it's like, "Oh, there is so much stuff that has been denied me—so many things that can make me happy. I want do this, and I want to do this, and I want to do that." And how many young people run out there and grab it? Many—most—do it. Because we don't appreciate and value God's Law. We look at God's Law as if it's some mean, hard code of conduct that God gave to us just to make us jump through hoops, because He can. Do you ever think that way? Have you ever thought that way?

God did not give those Commandments to make us jump—dance to His tune. That is not why He gave them. He created a universe—He created this earth—according to laws: known physical laws which our scientific community can certainly document, as well as a spiritual Law which is invisible, that they do not acknowledge. But it's all a part of the same body of Law that affects the lives of human beings on this earth, and God said, "I made it this way. All of these laws really do exist, and a law is a law only if there is a penalty for the violation of that law." If God said not to do something, His created universe has a penalty built in if you go ahead and do it.

You probably get tired of the example I've given you—but I don't know of a better one—when I've talked about touching the hot stove. A parent tells a child, "Johnny, don't touch the hot stove." And little Johnny thinks, "Well, I *want* to touch the hot stove, especially because Dad said not to." But the parent is not trying to get the child to jump to his tune. He's trying to protect that child from harm. But Johnny touches the hot stove. "Owww, that hurt!" "I told you." That's the way God is. Every single law—every element of the Commandments is given so that you and I can avoid pain and suffering—heartache, sorrow, misery, anguish and ultimate death. That's why the Commandments are there.

But human beings look at them like, "Oh, you keep the Sabbath? Ohhh! You pay what percentage of your income in tithes?! Unbelievable! You have to take off from work and school and go to these commanded retreats, or whatever they are?! You can't go to doctors?! You can't eat pork?! Oh, what a religion! I could never live with a religion like that!" It's a curse, they think. They think the Commandments of God are a curse. So did ancient Israel. Ancient Israel viewed the commands of God as a curse that they *had* to do just to make this God happy, so that He wouldn't strike them with a lightning bolt. "Ohh, let me do it just as much as I have to so that I can get through this." That was their view. They never appreciated the value of those laws, nor realized that those laws were for their good.

You and I, brethren, have got to have a different orientation. If you see the Law—or some of the laws—of God as a burden, at least acknowledge it to yourself and acknowledge it before God. I do that. I say, "God, I know it's your Law—I know that it is the faith once delivered—but I don't like it." And I ask Him, "Please, help me to learn to like it. Because I know that it's your Law—which means that it's good. But my carnal mind doesn't think that it's good.

I'm the one that needs to change. Help me to come to love your Law. Help me come to love your Law." Even when I got baptized at age nineteen, in 1981, there were a lot of God's laws that I didn't love. I guarantee you that I didn't love them. I knew that I believed they were right, but it took me a lot of time to really begin to incorporate them into my life, and to learn to value them—to really love them. I look back now and say, "Wow, there has been a big change." And for others of you—second, third, fourth-generation ones who grew up in the church—you can do it too, if you have the commitment that you believe it's true. Even if you don't love it yet, don't let that stop you. Ask God for the power—be serious about it; get to work on it—and He will teach you to love His Law. That's the secret.

He gave it to be a blessing, not a curse. Matthew 11 and verse 28. Matthew 11 and beginning in verse 28: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—the promise of the same rest that we have been talking about, that I have given to you as a theme for my messages this Feast: the coming Kingdom of God, the beginning of which is the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ, that we are celebrating at this Feast of Tabernacles. That's the rest that He wants you to have—meaning release from the burdens of sin: the penalty, the guilt, and the curses that come with the violation of the Law. He says, "Stop touching the hot stove. I want you to have rest from that pain. So don't do it anymore. Don't do it. Do this instead and you will be happier." That's the key.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden"—laden by the sins of Egypt, like Israel in slavery. That was the type: bondage in this world. God wants us to come out, through the miracle of a calling—and an open mind to receive the Truth—and be baptized like Israel who went through the sea, the baptism He offers to the New Testament Church in order to receive the Holy Spirit, which is your power to walk across the wilderness and have everything that you need at your hands. God's going to do everything for you, and He's going to feed you, and He is going to protect you, and He is going to bless you, *if* . . . you obey His Law, and you say, "Yes, Lord. I'll do it your way, not my way." That's what it takes.

". . . and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you . . ." So God acknowledges that it's a yoke. Now, how many of us like to have something around our necks? Have you ever seen one of those big yokes for oxen, for harnessing them to a wagon? How would you like to carry that around on your neck? Uncomfortable—it would make your neck and your back ache, and tire you

out right away. God acknowledges that His Commandments are a yoke to human beings—because of our carnal minds. We naturally hate and resist, and don't want to do it His Way. It is a yoke. But He is saying, "My yoke is light compared to the yoke that you bear automatically in the world of sin."

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. [Verse 30:] For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

You compare the requirements for keeping God's Law to what it's like to ignore God's Law and just do your own thing in the world, and you tell me who has a better life? I'm telling you, brethren, that if you live according to the flesh—according to the whim of the carnal mind—you will suffer. Many of you *have* suffered. Many of you are eyewitnesses and can speak from your own experiences about the fact that it is a mirage, and it looks so enticing, and you think that you are going to make yourselves happy, and then you violate those laws and it comes crashing down, and you instead buy for yourselves misery and anguish, and every evil. That's the temptation that Satan puts out there, with all of the promises for success and fulfillment in this world—which Mr. Whitaker talked about yesterday—to entice us to act upon the carnal inclination to do what we want to do. And then the rug is yanked out from underneath us at some point along the way, and we find ourselves miserable and unfulfilled. That's the yoke of the natural orientation of lawbreaking.

Christ says, "Yes, I do have a yoke—because it is a requirement." And keeping God's Law is going to be difficult for all of us, because we are carnal. But, He says, "By comparison, that requirement to subjugate the self and to do what God commands is light, because when you do it—when you use the power of the Holy Spirit—and really make those changes in your life, your life will get better. You will stop getting your fingers burned because you will stop touching the hot stove, and you are going to be so much happier." But do you know what? You and I actually have to do it in order to prove it, which is what He wants us to do: "Prove me now herewith." He says, "Just do it. Live it and see if this doesn't come to pass."

Brethren, to all of those out there who have repudiated the faith once delivered based upon their technical reinterpretation of the Law, and all this kind of stuff, and saying, for example, that "tithing is done away" and that there are

texts in the Bible that show God doesn't require tithing of the New Testament church, do you know what I say? I have proved the validity of the tithing law by personally keeping it. I did just what the book of Malachi requires me to do [paraphrasing]: "Prove me now herewith, whether I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that you won't have room to receive." I've received that, brethren—not as a minister who is paid by the church. I'm talking about before twelve years ago when I wasn't a minister. I was a laymember in the church, tithing, as my parents taught me to do from the time I was very young. Tithing works. Ignoring the tithing law brings a curse. Now, if I have proved that in my life, who is going to convince me otherwise by some technical argumentation over Greek or Hebrew words? No one. If you prove the validity of God's Law by keeping it, and seeing the difference in the blessings versus the curses, who can take that away from you, or convince you otherwise? You don't need to be a scholar—you don't need to be able to go toe to toe with these men who have grandiose ideas about their own intellect. All you need to do is keep the simplicity of the Law and say, "Yes, Lord," and practice what God said, and you will find that the blessings come.

It requires great discipline to learn to obey, and I know, brethren, it seems like a terrible struggle. Oh, I have had my own, and I still do. I'm right there with you. It's a struggle, because the carnal mind is there, every second of every day, trying to pull in the opposite direction, and we have to be willing to fight it, and to keep fighting it. But God has promised to give the Holy Spirit. If we use it—if we cultivate it—then we can overcome it, and we can be blessed.

Ezekiel 18 and verse 29. Ezekiel 18 and beginning in verse 29: "Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the LORD is not equal." This was their synopsis of God's commandments and expectations, after the fact. "God's way is too hard—it's not equal, it's not fair," is really what they are saying. "He expects too much of us. We shouldn't have to do all of this stuff. The way of the Lord is not equal."

But God says in rebuttal: "O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?" He says, "You think my ways are unequal? *Yours* are the ones that are unequal, not mine. *Yours* lead to curses, misery, anguish and death. My way leads to blessing, protection, help, and ultimately, salvation in the Kingdom of God."

[Verse 30:] Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways [meaning what we choose to do], saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions.

Transgressions. That means the breaking of the Law—the violation of the same commandments of which Christ said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." They are the same Ten Commandments that God—this same Jesus Christ who spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai—gave and said to Israel, "Keep these Commandments, and then you will receive the Promised Land that I want to give to you."

Repent, and turn yourselves from all of your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin [so that your iniquity—your lawbreaking, your commandment breaking—will not keep you out of the Kingdom of God]. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit [That's not within you or me, brethren. That has to be God's Spirit. That's the new Spirit that you and I lack, by nature, and have to have in order to do these things]: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

God is beseeching His people and saying, "Why? Why will you die? You don't have to die. I'm offering you everything. All you have to do is accept it; be serious about it; be aggressive, and I will give you everything you need along the way. You just have to commit to it, and put aside your own rebellious orientation of mind and do this."

. . . why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye. [Turn yourselves, and live ye.]

We must come, brethren, to love God's Law. As I said, by nature, we don't love it. I'm never fooled by people who like to make an outward show of how much they love God's Law—by what they say. I take it a lot more seriously when I actually see the fruits in the decisions that they make.

The choice that you have made to be in this place to keep the Feast of Tabernacles says a lot about your love for the Law. You've made the necessary

sacrifices to pull out of all of the obligations in your personal lives—of which you have many—and you have said, "This is more important." It's inconvenient—it's difficult—but some of you have made incredible, and I mean incredible, sacrifices, and I know that. You are an inspiration. You didn't have to say a word, you see, but you are here. You are fulfilling one of those commands of God to come into His presence in an appointed place to worship before Him. You don't have to say anything. You don't have to have a bumper sticker on your car that says, "I Love the Lord." No, you are proving it by the fact you are here. Good for you.

Psalm 119 and beginning in verse 97, in closing. We don't love it by nature. Better, at least, to do it, even grudgingly, because you know it's right—while you are asking God to help you to learn to love it—than not to do it at all. But you can't continue forever in a state of grudging obedience. Sooner or later, you see, that's not going to fly, because if you don't subjugate your carnal mind—if you really don't use the power of God's Holy Spirit to learn to live it—sooner or later you will become fatigued, and this *will* to keep obeying, even though you have never come to love it, will fade. It will fade and you will quit. Many have done that, too. So, we need to learn to love it. If you don't love it, view that as a warning sign. Don't let that discourage you and make you turn away from it, but view it as a motivating goal: "This is what I need to do. I have to *learn* to love the Law," so that, like the Psalmist here in Psalm 119:97, I can say, "O how love I thy law!"

O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments [*there* is the same obligation] hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.

The enemies are around all of the time, just like Mr. Whitaker was talking about yesterday: self, the world, and Satan. Those enemies are at us all of the time—24/7. What is your antidote? God's Law—His Way of life, and a love for that Way which is stronger, through the use of the Spirit, than those enemies.

I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

Mr. Armstrong used to say, even if you don't fully understand, for example, the Holy Days, you will learn more by keeping them. That's the way he did it. He

didn't understand at first the significance of the Holy Days and what they picture for the future in the master plan of God. God revealed to him, first, the knowledge that the Holy Days were not done away, and that they needed to be kept, along with the weekly Sabbath. He had no idea what they meant, but he started keeping them. He said, "Yes, Lord." And because of his obedience, then God began to work with him and open his mind and to reveal to him, piece after piece, the significance of those Days. But he had to start first by being obedient, so that God could teach him, and that's what he did.

I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

And the ones who keep them, brethren, will gain a deeper understanding in time—more than you have ever had. And the more you understand, the more value you place upon them, and the more rich they become to you.

I guarantee you, brethren, that I am an example of that. There has been a huge difference in my thinking since the time I was a teenager in the church, and what it meant, then, to keep the Feast of Tabernacles from a physical standpoint, and the obligation to follow certain rules. I'm doing those same things now, but now it's much more rich because I have a deeper understanding of those things. But that has come because I have continued to keep them, and God, through the teaching of His ministry—especially through Mr. Raymond Cole—has helped me to really understand the value of them. They are things now that are so valuable I can't imagine living without them. I am no longer doing them just because my parents said I have to.

I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

I'm not there yet. I can't tell you that every one of God's commands is sweet to me, as honey in my mouth, but I'm still working at it. That's what you and I—all of us together—have to do in our own lives. Keep fighting for it, because we know it's right—we know it's true. We are not going to repeat the mistakes of ancient Israel and disregard His Commandments—to see them as a burden; to seek

to get out from underneath them by some tortured concept of mind in order to justify a departure. No, we value the precepts of God. We want His Way, and not our own, even if we don't like it all of the time, and we are going to ask God, "Help me to love it, so that it will become sweet to my taste."

Brethren, our eternal lives in God's Kingdom of rest hinge upon our coming to love and to obey His commandments. Those who show, by their fruits, that they will obey, will receive that reward of rest to come.