

**Do We Believe His Prayer? #2;
Thy Kingdom Come**

**2016 Feast of Tabernacles; 1st High Day, P.M. Service
October 17, 2016; Townsend, TN**

Jon W. Brisby
Edited Sermon Transcript

If you will recall, brethren, last night, with the opening message that I provided for you to start this Feast, I gave an introduction to my theme for this Feast. It is found in Matthew chapter 6 in what is commonly called, by the world at large, "the Lord's Prayer." That is the thing that I want to cover, going step-by-step through what we call "the sample prayer" which Jesus Christ showed to his disciples as a pattern for what to include in a good prayer when communing with our heavenly Father.

So, turn with me again to Matthew 6, and I want to read quickly again through verses 9 through 13 and what is called "the Lord's Prayer." Remember, I told you last night that if you really want to read the prayer of Jesus Christ—what I call "the Lord's Prayer"—you can find that in John chapter 17. That is where you find how Jesus actually prayed to His heavenly Father. This is not "the Lord's Prayer," but it is the Lord's sample prayer, and is intended to give a guideline, a template—I call it a prayer template—for the kind of things that make up a good prayer. So Matthew 6 verse 9:

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

So, if you will remember, last night I gave you the introduction—the statements that Jesus Christ recorded which precede and set the stage for this sample

prayer. I am not going to go through that material again, but Christ explains here to His disciples how to think about prayer, and what you are doing when you pray. You are communicating with your heavenly Father. That's what prayer is. It is not something you do in front of other people to bring attention to yourself. It is a personal and private communication with your Maker.

And we also, then, covered verse 9—the very first portion of this prayer: "Our Father which art in heaven," confirming that we do pray to the Father. That is what Jesus Christ told us we have the opportunity, the blessing, to be able to do. And this is the right way to do it.

What does it mean? We finish this phrase with, "Hallowed be thy name." But do we just say the words, "My dear Father, hallowed be Thy name"? Is that all there is to it? What does it mean to hallow the name of God, the Father? And so I went through and gave you just some very succinct verses that show what it means to make holy, or to treat as holy, the name of God, and how God, then, showed us a number of things which He includes in that—including keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days like you are doing right now.

Alright, so that catches us up to where we are, and I want to get right into the next portion. On this first High Day of Tabernacles it is very fitting that we cover the first portion of verse 10 of Matthew 6: "Thy Kingdom come." That is the next element that Christ said should be part of a good prayer. What does that mean? When you pray to the Father, "Thy Kingdom come," what are you asking for? What is involved in it? Have you ever taken the time to think about it—to meditate upon it? So, God commands us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come." Why? You know, because the first thing that comes to my mind is that with or without my prayer, guess what? The Kingdom of God *is* going to come. It is going to be a reality upon this earth. By taking part in this first High Day of Tabernacles, you are confirming your agreement with and your expectation of the arrival of Jesus Christ to become the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords, and to rule this earth.

Now, here we are, in the fall of 2016, and in the United States we are right in the middle of a presidential election, aren't we? And if you ever turn on the TV, or the news, or whatever, it is kind of hard to get away from the fact. Look at all the folderol that goes around human beings trying to appoint their leaders. And, of course, you and I believe that God is the one who sets up and takes down all of

those leaders, regardless of what human beings think they are doing. They are spending billions of dollars, aren't they, trying to influence the outcome and to get their guy, or their gal, into office? We know the Truth, because we believe exactly what God says in the Bible: God is the one who sets them up, and takes them down. And it is not always the most qualified, is it? Because in the end, God uses human government as a curse upon rebellious children. In essence, we get the government that we deserve. So, I hope you are not praying for a good leader. You will be disappointed. I don't care what the outcome of an election is, you will be disappointed.

If you love God's Truth, you will be disappointed. Now, if you love progressive politics, and you think there are wonderful things going on, you might be happy. I am going to be disappointed. But it is a reality that the day is coming when there is going to be a new King—there is going to be a regime change on this earth. There are going to be no more elections. There is going to be no more grasping for office, because Jesus Christ is going to come and He is going to *rule* with a rod of iron—not *beat* them with a rod of iron. He will never abuse His authority, but He is going to rule without equivocation.

So why should I pray "Thy Kingdom come"? Am I helping? I am not helping God, am I? Are we just a rooting section? No, but if it is not because we have a say in it, or an influence in the process in any way, there must be a reason that Christ said we should be praying, "Thy Kingdom come." We are certainly not voting. He *is* going to be here and He *is* going to rule, with or without us. So why pray?

Let me give you a few texts just to confirm that He is going to hold that office. Isaiah 9, verses 6 and 7. This is one you know very well. Isaiah 9, verse 6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder." That is a declarative statement.

[Without doubt] the government *shall* be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. [Verse 7:] Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end . . .

This confirms that this is going to be the last regime change that takes place. There will be no other to follow.

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.

And, ironically, is that not similar to what the whole world craves—government with justice and judgment? Isn't that what they want when they try to elect a new one? Isn't that what they are after? They have been so dissatisfied with the ones that came before, they are hoping that the next one will finally grant them justice. And in this world it is not going to happen, because the enemy of man has been allowed to sit on the throne of this earth. Satan, the Devil, is the god of this world by God's permission. And so, as long as he is in that position, I guarantee you that the governments of man are going to be a curse to their nations, as they are today. The only hope for this world is the reign of Jesus Christ.

So this is going to take place. "The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." Lest we have any doubt that there might be a rethinking on the part of God, the Father, that maybe this won't come to pass, by the authority of God and His power to fulfill His will, He is saying, "Take note. This is my will. I have declared it, and it will come to pass." "The zeal of the LORD of hosts *will* perform this."

Isaiah 2, verses 2 through 4—another one you know very well. It is the best single passage, probably, to describe for us the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ. We love this one, don't we? Isaiah 2 and beginning in verse 2:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains [this is talking about government], and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the [Eternal], to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. [Verse 4:] And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

And as I mentioned to you before, can you imagine a society where the number one category of government expense is no longer war? I think I have given statistics in the past about what the United States of America spends in its annual budget for defense—to make war. What if all those billions and billions of dollars were spent on something else? What if a lot of those billions actually were not spent, because they stayed in your pocket, and you didn't have to give it to the government in the first place? Wouldn't that be marvelous? Wouldn't it be marvelous if the only taxes you had were God's tithes and freewill offerings? Wouldn't that be marvelous? Wouldn't it be marvelous if you were not under the oppression of a Babylonian society that is trying to destroy you, which is exactly what Satan desires? He wants to incarcerate you, to take all of your liberty, to take your substance and make you serfs, and ultimately to destroy your hope for a better future. Wouldn't it be wonderful for that to end? It is going to end. The day is coming when this regime is going to change.

They will not be practicing war anymore. They, as individuals, carnal though they may be, will still have war in their hearts, because they are going to have to each choose to become converted, like you and I are right now choosing to become converted. God is not forcing you to be converted. He is offering you salvation, but you and I have to pick it up and choose it. He is not going to force anybody else in the Millennium, either. They are going to have to choose it.

So some, maybe even a lot, are still going to want to pursue their carnal inclinations, including war. Jesus Christ will not permit it, which is why He is going to be ruling with a rod of iron. So that is going to be a reality.

Isaiah 45, verse 23. Just one more text, quickly, to make this point. Isaiah 45 and beginning in verse 23: "I have sworn by myself," says this God—the one who became Jesus Christ. "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return," meaning "I am not going to take it back." He is saying, "I have sworn. I have bound myself by the substance of my own integrity, and I am not backing up." "That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."

Now, with those few texts, do you have any doubt that this is going to be real—that it is going to happen, that Jesus Christ is going to rule as King on this earth? I doubt that you have any qualms about it, but I am going to challenge that a little bit in the rest of the message this afternoon, because it is most easy for us to

read these promises—these prophecies—and it is very easy for us to get excited about it, because we want that paradise, don't we? Who doesn't want it, especially if you are called by God and He is giving you a desire for it? If you have come to hate, to a great extent, the things that are going on in this world, it is easy to say, "Yeah, I want that too." But, very often, when we run into problems, we may not want it in reality. And there is a reason, then, that Jesus Christ commanded us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come." That is what we are going to get to.

You and I are required to agree with Him and to desire His dominion. That, again, may seem automatic, but I want to challenge you to look within your own mind, and your own contemplation, and see whether or not you really, really want Him to come.

Psalm 145. Just a couple of texts to confirm the fact that this is what God wants from us. I have shown you that it is going to be a reality—He says so—if you believe the Bible. But the next step is that He wants you and me to agree, and to get on board, with the plan. Psalm 145. I will read verses 8 through 13, quickly. Psalm 145 and beginning in verse 8: "The [Eternal] is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The [Eternal] is good to all." I wonder how easy that is to believe, considering the circumstances that we deal with, personally and individually, in our lives? It doesn't always seem like God is being good, does it? One of the biggest challenges to our faith is accepting our circumstances and feeling blessed, and I know many of you have a variety of different challenges—trials, and persecutions, and difficulties in your lives—which are a burden to having joy. I understand that. What is the antidote to those feelings? It can be different in every circumstance, but I think the common denominator is coming to recognize that these things which I am reading are true, and asking God for the help we need in order to see it from His perspective.

"The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works. All thy works shall praise thee, O [Eternal]"—meaning, everything He is doing and accomplishing is bearing fruit. Now, we can't see all of them. Very often, we see something in process, but it doesn't make sense to us, yet. What He is saying is that the end result of God's work is going to be good fruit, in every case. God doesn't make mistakes. Human beings make mistakes. God is executing a perfect plan. It is a long-term plan, and He is orchestrating it step-by-step, right on cue, perfectly, even though we don't see a lot of the details—the minutiae of it. But in

the final analysis, we are going to look back, and the record book is going to show what a marvelous thing He was doing, from beginning to end, in the life of every single one, and collectively, in the world and in the Church. How awesome! What a genius this God is in the way that He brought it about!

"All thy works shall praise thee, O [Eternal]; and thy saints shall bless thee." This refers to the ones who have bought into the program, not because they were hit over the head and forced against their wills, but because they have come to value it and have chosen to throw their lot in with Jesus Christ.

Verse 11: "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power . . ." They are going to be excited about it; they are going to be enthused; they are going to be in real agreement.

To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom [the glorious majesty of His Kingdom]. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

Do you begin to get the gist of what it is He is trying to communicate to us? Do you get the point that He wants us to choose to buy in? He is making an offer and He wants us to decide that we appreciate what He is doing; that we value what He is doing; that we want to be a part of what He is doing.

Romans 8:21. Romans 8, verses 21 through 23. This is a description, now, from the Church's perspective, of those who have been called to be part of the Firstfruits, which includes all of you before me. What is it like living in this world when you know the Truth, and now you have a value for some of these prophecies I have just read to you, and you would really like for that to be the world we live in—you would like for everything you see on the face of this earth, right now, to go away, and you would like the government of Jesus Christ? Now you have that hope. Isn't it marvelous to have that hope? But do you know what the downside is? You still have to live in this world, right now. You have the hope—you have the image, you have the expectation—of a marvelous paradise, called the Millennium, under Jesus Christ, who is going to be a perfect King of justice, of judgment, of mercy, and of salvation, but for right now, you are still in the world that Satan, the Devil, is still influencing heavily, by God's allowance, by His permission. What is it like? Romans 8:21:

Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God [that is what our hope is for]. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

And so, the whole earth, physically, in every capacity, is in essence groaning under the travail of the curses that have been going on for nearly six thousand years under man's failed stewardship, inspired by the archenemy of God and man—Satan, the Devil, and those demons. So, the entire Creation that you and I know on this earth is groaning under the curse of that mismanagement.

Furthermore, verse 23: "And not only they [the world at large], but ourselves also [meaning those called out now with an understanding of the plan and purpose of God], which have the firstfruits of the Spirit [that is you], even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting"—having to be patient because the end is not yet, the reward is not imminent for you and me. We have to keep enduring. And while you endure in your own way, you are groaning—you are groaning under the weight, under the pain, of the curse of this flesh, and of this carnal world.

"[E]ven we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the [sonship—proper translation—waiting for the sonship], to wit, the redemption of our body"—that change to take place at the return of Christ and the resurrection (which we call the first resurrection) of those who are being tried now.

So these texts, in short, confirm to you that He is going to come, and He is going to rule. As Mr. Raymond Cole would say, it is a *fait accompli*. It is going to happen, and the test for you and me is to buy into the program and to decide that we value it enough to invest in it. And if you are one who has bought into the program, then living in this world causes you to groan under the strain of what it is to exist in the flesh, in this civil society. So, if you are one of those, then why wouldn't you eagerly and earnestly pray, "Thy Kingdom come"? It should be simple—it should be the easiest part of the prayer: "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. I am right there with you, God. I want your Son to come. Please, oh please, oh please, come sooner, not later." But I challenge you all again, as I do myself: Are you sure you want Him to come? Are you sure you really, really, really, really want that Kingdom to come? There are some built-in challenges to us as human beings that cause us,

very often—in spite of what we profess, in spite of what we even think about our motivations—to actually not really want His Kingdom to come. What are they?

The first one—the first one on the list—is a latent desire for the things of today's world. A latent desire for the things of today's world. And I list it first because I think it probably affects more of God's people than any other. There are others, but this is a big one. Luke 17 and verse 28.

And remember, by the way, what is the physical counterpart of that Kingdom from antiquity? Ancient Israel was given an opportunity, not to have a spiritual reward, but a physical reward in the physical Promised Land, and God proved them by all of His mighty miracles in Egypt. He brought them out with a high hand; He promised them everything that they needed, and He said, "If you will follow my program—if you will buy into this, and if you will do it—you are going to have a land flowing with milk and honey. I am going to protect you from every supposed enemy, and I will not allow them to touch you, and you will all have the riches of your own estates where you will reap the fruits of your own labors, and your families will be blessed, and you will have many children, and your lives, physically, will be marvelous." And they didn't get it. They had some of the blessings—a smattering of the goodness, the good results, along the way—but not nearly to the extent that God would have given it to them, because they didn't follow through.

Isn't it ironic that the majority of that first generation of those who came out of Egypt desired to go right back into Egypt? Isn't that interesting? And we think, "Oh, I would never have done that. I would have been like Joshua and Caleb—the only two who were allowed to go into the Promised Land out of that first generation. I wouldn't have been like the other millions whom God let die in the wilderness. I would have been like Joshua and Caleb. I would have loved the plan for the Promised Land. I would have been willing to follow through and do what God said so that I could have the kingdom of Israel." But *they* didn't. So why are we any different today? Oh, because we are now part of spiritual Israel—the New Testament Church—and we have the Holy Spirit. Good answer, if we follow through, but the challenge is still exactly the same.

Luke 17 and beginning in verse 28: "Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot . . ." Christ is here reciting what causes His people to fail, in spite of their good intentions. What were they doing in the days of Lot?

. . . they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. [Verse 30:] Even thus [just like that, He is saying] shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed [when Jesus Christ returns and establishes His government upon this earth, which is pictured by this Feast of Tabernacles].

It is going to be sudden—it is going to be unexpected. As hard as we have it to believe that it is true, God says it is going to be sudden and unexpected.

Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away [meaning, you are going about your business; you think there is more time, and all of a sudden, surprise, surprise, there is no more time]: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife.

Why? What was Lot's wife guilty of? God made an example of her. I won't turn back to Genesis to read the story, but you know it. Was it because she turned and looked at the city of Sodom that was being destroyed? And as I have explained to you in the past, she looked. So what? Was God just setting her up? He said, "Don't look," and she physically allowed her head to swivel on her neck, and because her eyeballs focused on the city, God said, "Aha! Caught you!"—ZAP. Is that what was going on? No. What does it mean that she looked back? She *longed* for Sodom. She was mourning the destruction of that city, because her heart was still there. And Jesus Christ used that as an example and a warning to the last-day Church. That is to say, this is the same threat that you and I face, which also might prevent us from being saved—from being a part of (from inheriting) that coming Kingdom of God: a longing for the things of this world, which God considers not worth saving—despicable.

The Israelites longed for Egypt. Lot's wife longed for the things of Sodom, and the destruction that took place in the days of Noah was the same thing. They were going about their business, doing all the things that they thought would make them happy. God says it was an evil society, filled with violence and all manner of abominations. But they were used to it, they relished it, and down deep inside they loved it—at least some elements of it that they did not want to give up.

Are we really praying, "Thy Kingdom come"? Sincerely, do we really want it to come? What I think is very common—and I identify with this—is that we are really praying, "Father, Thy Kingdom come, but please, not today. Thy Kingdom come, but not quite yet—please, not today." How badly do you really want it to come? How many loose ends do you have out there that you think you need to tie up beforehand? How many other things—how many other personal goals—do you have that are unfulfilled, that you would like to resolve, and you feel that, "If this doesn't happen—if I don't experience this, if I don't complete this project, or if I don't do this—then even if I were given a reward in God's Kingdom, I would feel unfulfilled, or there would be a hole of some kind. Therefore, Father, Thy Kingdom come, but please, not today." I challenge you to really test your thinking. You test you, and I will test me, to see how sincere—how deep—our desire is for the Kingdom of God, versus the fulfillment of something in this world.

I am reminded of the country song. I think it is about twenty years old, and one of the lines in it goes, "I want to go to heaven, but I don't want to go tonight." That is the one I think of. "Thy Kingdom come, but not right away."

1 John 2, verses 15 through 17. 1 John 2, beginning in verse 15: "Love not the world." *There* is the heart of the matter, and the challenge: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." God is the one drawing the bright line in the sand, and He is saying that you and I cannot have it both ways. We are either here, or we are there.

If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. [Verse 17:] And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof [John was inspired to write].

In other words, all of this stuff that we think is so important has a sell-by date—meaning, it is going to expire, it is going to run out, it is going to be destroyed. It is not going to be there anymore—none of it, physically. What do we care about? How important is all this stuff? What are we allowing to captivate our minds and our attention, day by day? Those are things God calls idols—idols of mind. There is the challenge.

"[T]he world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever"—meaning, he is going to be given an eternal reward at the return of Jesus Christ, and be a part of that governing Family. He will be one of the kings who will rule with Jesus Christ in reforming this corrupted earth and bringing it back to the paradise that God originally created, and making it a glorious habitation for the peoples of the world, who are then going to be called and have an opportunity, likewise, to join that Family.

Luke 9 and verse 61. Luke 9 and verse 61 says: "And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee . . ." So, here is a common response from certain ones. Here was Christ, during His ministry, and He was preaching these bold things, and there were certain ones who responded favorably. Many responded negatively, but some of these who responded favorably saw the value in what He was offering, and their initial response was, "I want that too. Let me in. Lord, I will follow thee. Here I am, I will stand at your shoulder. I will fight with you—for you—to accomplish your will. I am with you all the way. But, but, but, let me first go and bid them farewell which are at home at my house." Oh, you see, there was a condition. "I want to follow you. I promise I am going to follow you, but not quite yet, because I have some unfinished business back home."

[L]et me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.
And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough,
and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Well, that sounds pretty harsh. I mean, all he wanted to do was to go and say goodbye to his family. But Christ was reading the heart and the mind, and He knew. You know, God is the one who made us responsible for our family obligations, and guess what? If we do not fulfill those family obligations, we won't be there. So, we are not talking about him abandoning his parental, or marital, responsibilities, but we are talking about idolatry of the mind, because what Jesus knew was that this individual was putting all of those material things, including a physical family, before his love for the will of God. That is a very common one—and many of you are facing that challenge, I know. But Jesus is also the one who said, "If you love not less by comparison," paraphrasing, "father and mother, and all of these other things, you are not fit to be my disciples." So, He requires to be first, bar none. He requires to be first, not second. First, bar none.

Now, when you and I put God first, guess what? It makes us better at fulfilling our temporary physical responsibilities, like being a married mate, or a parent, because with the power of the Holy Spirit, if you put God first, everybody in your life actually becomes the beneficiary of it. Now, some of them might not feel that way when they are demanding that you put them first, and you are putting them second. They may not like that. In fact, some of them hate it, which is why Christ said that He came not to bring peace on earth, but a sword, because there is going to be division in families by virtue of the ones who are called to this Way of knowledge—this Way of Life—and those who are not. It automatically sets up a contention, and that becomes a very real crisis for God's people: how to weigh living with your family obligations—and whatever other things you have in your life in the world—and putting God first, and dealing with the contentions that naturally arise because of not putting something else first.

"Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." So I ask you the question again: How badly do you want the Kingdom of God? Are you sure it is first in priority? A latent desire for the things of this world is a major threat to each one of us. Evaluate in your own life where those things might be that would make you, in God's estimation, like Lot's wife. It is a real threat.

Alright, what's the second category of things that might cause us not to really, really, really want the Kingdom to come? I have labeled it: "A failure to appreciate how much better it really will be in His Family." I think we have a big problem with this. I read you a couple of descriptions, and God says it is going to be wonderful. I am going to read you a couple more, like 1 Corinthians 2, verses 7 through 9. 1 Corinthians 2 and beginning in verse 7:

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. [Verse 9:] But as it is written [And, by the way, where was it written? He is going to quote, now, from Isaiah chapter 64. I will read that to you in a moment.], Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

That is a beautiful text, isn't it? But it is very hard to believe. In essence, do you know what God is saying? "You do not have the mental capacity now to grasp how good it is going to be, but I am telling you that it is, and you are going to have to trust me." And you and I, by nature, say, "Show me more proof. Give me the evidence of it. Let me see more. Let me get excited about it. Give me a glimpse—just a little glimpse—so that I can become motivated to put you first, and not second." And what does God say? "The just shall live by faith." Oh, I didn't want to hear that, because I want more physical evidence. But this is part of the test. Can you—can I—get the feeling from what He *has* chosen to reveal to us, and what He has written? Is it enough to cause us to really value it and to love it, when we don't have a real grasp of the glory to come?

Isaiah 64. I will read verses 1 through 4. This is from where the Apostle Paul was quoting. Isaiah 64, beginning in verse 1: "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence . . ." Here Isaiah is praying, "Please, Father, intervene in this world soon. Please come now and begin to fix it." It didn't happen in Isaiah's lifetime, did it? But, again, Isaiah was writing the words of God, not the words of man, and this, too, was written for the last-day Church, especially.

Verse 2: "As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!" When, oh when, are the nations of this world going to tremble before the God who made them? When, oh when, are all of these atheists and sanctimonious hypocrites, who make fun of those who believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, finally going to be forced to bow before that God and to acknowledge His existence?

[Verse 3:] When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.

[Verse 4:] For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

They have never begun to hear it, let alone to understand it—let alone to grasp really what God has in mind for the family of man. And even though you are the most blessed of all because you have been tapped by God, now, to see it,

He still only allows us to see it, like the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, "through a glass darkly." You only see a mere shadow of what is to come, by the beautiful words that He has recorded in the Holy Scriptures. These are mere shadows to give you a tantalizing taste of how wonderful it is going to be to live in the Kingdom of God under the rule of Jesus Christ. But is it enough? Is it enough to get you and me excited about it so that we invest fully in it—to buy in and to desire it, let alone to make the sacrifices required in order to be allowed to partake in it? That is the question.

A couple more: Isaiah 55, verses 8 through 9. This one also requires us to act in faith. Isaiah 55 and beginning in verse 8:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

This is the one I think a whole lot more of us in the church ought to concentrate on, because what I run into, a lot, are individuals who are trying to interpret and to figure out difficult problems, and they are trying, in essence, to think as if they have knowledge that God has to be able to say how things ought to work. And they ask, "Why? Why did God do this? Why does God allow this?" And it is really very, very close—if not over the line—to passing judgment on God, and accusing God of not being fair, or just, or merciful, or kind, or good, when the answer to a lot of those imponderables is with God. I am not talking about the doctrine that He *did* reveal, because He revealed exactly what we need to know in order to be a part of that first resurrection. We have everything we need to know, but there are a lot of things we don't know the answers to. I say the magic words "I don't know" very often, because there are things I really don't know. But what I have always told you, as Mr. Raymond Cole told the brethren of this congregation, is that what we don't know is not salvational. What we do know is precisely what God has given to us, and that is going to be used to pass judgment. You know what you need to know, or you have access to that. A lot of other stuff, you don't.

"But why does God allow this? Why does He allow that? Why doesn't He do this? Why doesn't He intervene in this particular case?":

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

God is saying to you and me: "You must come to accept that I have put a lid on the capacity of your minds so that you cannot exceed it. For reason, I have put a lid on them, and I am requiring that you work within what I have given you, and that you accept it, rather than pushing against it by desiring, craving, lusting for more knowledge, and more understanding, and more capacity than I have chosen to give. Accept the limits that I have given you—work within them—and act in faith." That is what He wants—which means that you and I must accept the fact that there is a perfect explanation for everything God is either doing, or allowing, even if we do not understand it, or see it. And further, the things that are higher than our capacity to know, or to understand, or to fathom, really includes the glory of that Kingdom which is going to exist on this earth.

1 Corinthians 15:19. This text always makes me think of the individuals I have heard—not very often, but every once in a while over the years—who say, "Well, I don't really desire to be a King or a Priest in the Family of God. It is enough for me just to be a good Christian in this life today. I just want to please God. I love God, and I am just happy to show Him that I love Him, now in this life, without having to have a reward in the future." And then, after that conversation, I have to get the teeth marks out of my tongue to keep from saying, "You have no idea what your own personal motivations really are. You do not see yourself": "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"—meaning, if your only goal for your future is just to have a happy, prosperous, fulfilling life in the flesh, and then after a ripe old age, go to your grave and sleep forever, if that is your maximum goal, God calls you miserable above all miserable human beings. That is what He is saying.

What the Apostle Paul was inspired to communicate there is that your purpose for existence on this earth as a human being is to become a Son of God—to qualify to become a King and a Priest, and to have an immortal body, and to rule with Jesus Christ forever. That is why you were created. And if you and I do not receive that reward, our existence on this earth in the flesh will have been a waste—it will have been an absolute waste. I don't care how good a life you are able to create for yourself, or how lucky you are in experiences, if that is all there is, it is a miserable failure. The only reason—the only legitimate reason—for

choosing to be a Christian today is so that you have a chance to rule with Jesus Christ in the Kingdom to come. That's what it is about. This is a training ground, it is not an end result. It is not the brass ring. Do you see it that way? If you are really focused on the Kingdom to come, and not on things of this world, then you can pray honestly and sincerely on your knees before your heavenly Father: "Thy Kingdom come, please—Thy Kingdom come." Are you there yet? Do you feel it that strongly? Are you that in tune with it? Is it really number one in your life? What are the possibilities in your life that are making you say, "Thy Kingdom come, but not today"? That is the question.

Those who fail to come to that level of desire for His Kingdom truly will never inherit it. That is the downside of this very quandary that you and I are facing and have to overcome.

Luke 14. Luke 14 and verse 16. God is the one, again, who is a jealous God. He has a right to be jealous. He gets to make the rules. He has made the rules, and He has been very forthright with His people about what the rules are. He is not setting us up. He is not pulling the rug out from underneath us by having us focus on this, and then doing something else behind our backs. He has laid it all out. He said, "Here it is—this is what I am doing. This is what is going to happen. Here is your role in it. And here is what you have to do if you want to be a part of it." It is all out there for you, and you and I are each making our choices through the course of our lives. Before we stop breathing in the flesh, we will have written the book of our lives which shows the evidence of what we came to love the most, one way or the other. Luke 14 and verse 16:

Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many [Jesus Christ is the one who is planning the big dinner party and inviting many]: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come . . .

You are the ones, right now, who are bidden. You are among the few on the face of the earth who, by a calling and the opening of your minds, have been given an invitation to this great dinner party.

And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. [Verse 18:] And they all with one

consent began to make excuse. [They all began with one consent to make excuse.] The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

He is trying to be respectful: "You know what? I really, really appreciate that dinner invitation. I would love to be at your dinner party. I can't tell you how much I really value the time and the effort that you have put into planning the party, and I really want to be there, but I am so sorry because, you see, I am involved in this land transaction right now, and well, of course, it is important. I mean, this has to do with my family, and taking care of these physical responsibilities. Please have me excused."

Verse 19: "And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them"—"Ah! I just bought this team of oxen. I feel really bad about that because, you know, it is highly inconvenient. But you know, this is an investment, likewise, in order for me to be able to plow and to produce food for my family, and that is critical. And I've got to get this team ready for the season. Time is of the essence. I pray thee, have me excused."

Verse 20: "And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." "I mean, I am a newlywed. It is a brand new marriage. I have these responsibilities. It would be a huge act of disrespect to come to your party, right now, when I am right in the middle of my honeymoon."

What is wrong with any of the things that were just listed here, in and of themselves? We are not talking about people who are committing atrocious acts, or abominations in the world, are we? I mean, what is wrong with preparing an estate—the ground—or proving a set of oxen, or marrying? There is nothing wrong with any of those things, at all. What is the issue? Priority. What comes first? What do you love the most? What do you care about the most? Verse 21:

So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

The ones who were first invited to the dinner party couldn't come because they had more important things to do. This master is saying, "This dinner party is important. I *am* going to throw a party, and it *is* going to be full. But these first ones that I offered it to didn't value it enough to be there." That is like the ancient Israelites—the first generation in the wilderness, by the way, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness because they wanted to go back to Egypt.

So now, He is going to go out and He is going to recruit others to fill their seats. And He says, "Primarily bring in the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind." That is you and me. Do you understand that the majority of the first generation of the last-day church that came up under Herbert Armstrong are dead and in their graves? A lot of decades have passed already, and time is still going by, and God is still calling into His Church individuals who have the opportunity to come to love it, and to cherish it, and to fight for it, and to sacrifice for it, and thus to enter in.

. . . and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

That means that even among these, some did not return the RSVP. They were making excuses, too. So there was still room, even after the second set of invitations were sent out. There is more room for people to fill these seats.

And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. [Verse 24:] For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

But of the ones who said, "Please, please, please, I respect you; I love you; I really agree with everything you are doing, but please have me excused," He says, "*They won't be there*, because they didn't really desire the Kingdom of God." That is what it's all about. They didn't *really* desire the Kingdom of God. They liked the idea of it, but they didn't really desire it enough above all else in their lives to make it a priority.

In conclusion, Hebrews 12:22. Hebrews 12, verses 22 through 29. I will read as quickly as I can. This is what you are being offered. This is how serious it is: "But ye are come unto mount Sion"—and that is talking about the government of God. That is talking about the Master Plan and the orderly way that Jesus Christ is fulfilling His Father's will in the unfolding of this Plan. And you are a part of it.

"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels . . ." This is a big deal, my dear friends. What God is working out, and what you are a part of, is the most important thing in this universe. God, as Mr. Armstrong taught us, is recreating Himself through the human family, and you are a part of the firstfruits of that work. Do you understand how valuable that is? There is nothing that could be offered to you that will ever exceed that which you are a part of now—there is nothing more valuable, there is nothing more important for your consideration. All of that stuff that was going on back at home that was hard for you to turn away from in order just to be here at the Feast of Tabernacles—all of those tentacles that are probably still reaching out trying to grab you right now—are still probably trying to tempt you. "This might go wrong, and that might go wrong, and somebody is upset, and somebody else is not doing what they should be doing. Can I stay for the whole Feast? Can I get my mind focused upon the Feast?" There is nothing more important that you are involved in than the meaning of this Feast of Tabernacles, and the Kingdom of God.

"To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." Your names *are* written in the Book of Life. That is what this is talking about. Your names are in there, right now. Now, the problem is, they are written with erasable ink, and they can be struck out. Who can strike your name from the Book of Life? You can. By your choices, and me by my choices, will either keep our names in the Book, or we will strike our names from the Book of Life. That is what it means to choose life or death.

To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

The blood of Jesus Christ is what made it possible for us to hope for a glorious, eternal future in the Kingdom of God. That one sacrifice opened up this marvelous opportunity.

Verse 25—here is the challenge. It is a warning: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." Somewhere on this earth, Jesus Christ is speaking. Somewhere on this earth, that future Judge, who is going to rule upon this earth, is doing a work, and *there* is the big, big, big challenge for you and me. Where is He? Where is He working? Where is He speaking? Because we all claim, "Well, yeah, if Jesus were here, I would follow Him," and what Jesus is saying is, "I *am* here." Jesus *is* come in the flesh, as the Apostle John confirmed—not has come, *is* come. He is somewhere here, and the gates of hell have not prevailed against His work. Where is He speaking? Where is He teaching with authority? Where is His manifestation?

I know that it is hard to find. With all of the garbage we put up with in the history of our parent organization, and all of the offshoots that exist, and all of the stuff that has happened, it is very difficult to have confidence in anything. I understand that. I have been through the same thing that you have, in my own way. But He is somewhere, and what Jesus Christ has said is that, "I have provided the means for you to know, because you are called to weigh the spirits and to discern the difference. In spite of how clever the deceiver is, and all of the alternative arguments out there, I," God says, "have provided you with the means to tell the difference, and I have given you the responsibility of making your choice." You don't have to guess. You have a formula that you can follow in order to test the spirits—in order to determine what is true, and what is false.

And I guarantee you, that if you are listening to a minister who is telling you that God first allowed His chosen servants to get this, or that, doctrine wrong, and then, forty years later, He fixed it, so that we are "growing in grace and knowledge," that ain't it. Because that is not how God works. You show me any example in all of this Bible where that is how God works. You won't find it. I have laid down that gauntlet in writing, and there is not a single one of the ministers of these splinter groups who will take it up, that I am aware of. God doesn't work that way. He reveals knowledge through a chosen servant, to a chosen people, and then He tells them, "You hold on to what I have revealed, and don't you dare pervert it, or change it." You cannot improve upon it, in any way. All you can do is accept it—embrace it, hold on to it, defend it—and use it to put on the very mind of Jesus Christ. If change is required, there is a problem. And,

as Mr. Raymond Cole said, if change is required in order to get to the Truth, that means that either the servant through whom we learned it was never God's servant, or else Jesus Christ Himself failed. I don't think Jesus Christ failed, and I don't think Herbert Armstrong failed in his commission to deliver the Truth, any more than I think that Moses failed in his commission to bring the Commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments down from Mount Sinai and deliver them, intact, to Israel, God's chosen people. I think that job got done back then, and I think Jesus Christ also made sure that the church in the first century got the Truth, without it being perverted, either intentionally or accidentally, by human beings, even though He used fallible human beings, like Peter and all of the others, to deliver it. I think He made sure that, in spite of their physical failings and limitations of mind, the people got the Truth, and they were commanded to hold on to it, and not to change it.

I think you believe what happened, then. Why did the church go astray in the first century? Because they didn't hold on to the Truth. And now, fast forward almost 2000 years to the 20th century, when we believe God also raised up a chosen instrument that was humanly fallible—as we all are—but inspired by God to get the doctrine right so that the church would have the real Truth. And we, likewise, were commanded to hold on to it, and not to let anybody come along and tell us that we have to change it in order to be right. That is a clear signal that a deceiver is at work.

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh [there is a lot in that statement]. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth"—including the ancient Israelites whose carcasses fell in the wilderness because they wouldn't believe Him, or follow Him, or like the ones in the days of Lot, or Noah, or the ones in the first century, who died in apostasy because they went away from what they were first taught.

For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven [Where is He speaking from heaven?]: Whose voice then shook the earth [Oh, He spoke from Mount Sinai, didn't He? He scared those Israelites virtually to death by the power, physically, of that voice.]: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven [this is part of the last-day events, right near the end, that are going to take place]. And this

word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made . . .

These are created things that God made to be temporary in nature only. They have a sell-by date. They are not going to last, because they weren't created to last. They are here for a temporary period of time—they are a habitation for you and me, for our proving, and for that of all the human family. And when that Plan is completed and over, it is all going to burn.

"And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken"—the character that you have built; the mind (the mind of Jesus Christ) that you have cultivated by overcoming these obstacles, and using the power of the Spirit to transform yourself. That won't be taken away. That is something that lasts, and lasts, and lasts.

. . . that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore [because of all of that which we just read] we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace . . .

Unmerited pardon. You cannot earn salvation—I cannot earn salvation. Unmerited pardon—that means the free gift of God to forgive our sins. Whose sins is He going to forgive? Those who prove that they are on board with the Plan, and that they love Him first, not second.

"[L]et us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence . . ." Right back to Matthew 6. When you pray, "Hallowed be Thy name," do you pray with that kind of reverence, and respect, and appreciation for this God?

"[W]hereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: [Verse 29:] For our God is a consuming fire." Our God *is* a consuming fire—referring right back to the very end of the Plan. It is all going to burn up—all of this physical stuff, all of the stuff that we care about, all of this stuff that is pulling on our time and attention. It is going to burn. Will you be left? If you have been given a Spirit body, you are not going to burn. Anything that has not been converted to immortality will burn.

So, when you pray, "Thy Kingdom come," do you really mean it? Ponder that and meditate upon it. Get to the point that in earnestness you can say, "Holy Father, I want your Kingdom to come," or else, "Holy Father, I must acknowledge before you that I don't really want it enough, yet, and you know that. Help me to desire your Kingdom more than anything else—more than I do right now. Grant me the power of your Spirit to transform my mind and my thinking so that I *do* want it, so that I *do* desire it." If you do that, He will help you. He has promised to help you. He wants you to succeed, not to fail. "Thy Kingdom come."