

Old Covenant *vs* New Covenant (Go To Meeting)

Russell Kemp—August 12, 2022

I've selected this sermon for a particular purpose! We have gone through the spring Holy Days: Unleavened Bread and Pentecost. I know that we have been selected to be the firstfruits of God's Kingdom, and that's such a wonderful thing!

But, I want to remind everybody, *we're not there!* We're not in God's Kingdom, yet! We have a long way to go. We still need to be resurrected, and after the resurrection we still need to deal with Trumpets, Atonement and then finally we get into the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. **All of these things**—all of them—*hinge on the covenants that we agreed to with God!*

The Old Covenant:

I want to go back to the O.C. and go over a few things, because God originally made a covenant with ancient Israel after their escape from Egypt, and they left with miraculous signs and wonders! He continued with these miracles as they continued their journey through the desert on the way to the 'promised land.' These people saw miracle after miracle after miracle and were blessed by God.

Yet, not far from the journey from Egypt they began to groan! They began to complain! These are the people who just witnessed water turned to blood, fish dying and the river that stank. The nation had been overrun with frogs, the lice, the flies. The Egyptians' loss of their livestock, everyone afflicted with boils and sores. These are miraculous things! I don't think any of us have ever seen any of this stuff!

They witnessed hail, and fire mingled with the hail. Finally, the locust invaded their homes and unbelievable darkness covered the land. And they finally witnessed the death of all the firstborn of the Egyptians!

This horrendous, absolutely horrendous! Yet, after all this, we see in Exo. 16 where they began to complain about Moses and about Aaron being in the wilderness.

Exodus 16:3: "And the children of Israel said to them, 'O that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, when we ate bread to the full, for you have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger!'"

This is shortly after these miracles! What gratitude! What thanks! What appreciation for what God has done!

Nevertheless, God continued to perform miracles by providing the bread, water and protection as they continued to travel on their journey! Then finally, we're told in Exo. 19—just before the Ten Commandments:

Exodus 19:1: "In the third month when the children of Israel had gone forth out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the wilderness of Sinai." *Then God told Moses to tell them:*

Verse 4: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you unto Myself... [then He goes on to explain His objectives for doing this]: ...Therefore, if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then **you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people**... [what a calling] ...for all the earth *is* Mine... [notice this out of Revelation]: ...And **you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a Holy nation.**'...." (vs 4-6).

God was about to set them aside as a special people to show the world what a blessing it is for a nation that lives by the Word of God! What a wonderful opportunity!

Bear in mind that it is clear that these people were not special because *they* did something great! But because they were the seed of Abraham! God was using them to make them special!

This applies to us today, and we'll get into that in the New Covenant.

Verse 11—*God tells Moses to tell the people:* "And be ready for the third day; for on the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people... [something we've never seen] ...upon Mount Sinai."

Verse 16: "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning that there *were* thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mountain. And the sound of the trumpet was exceedingly loud so that all the people in the camp trembled."

Pretty frightening! What a magnificent, spectacular performance by God to display to the entire people. They knew that He was present! Then on the very day of the Feast of the Firstfruits, God gave them His commandments (Exo. 20).

Of course, the people saw all of this thunder and lightning, and the sound of the trumpet—which had to be pretty frightening—and they were obviously in fear of the Lord, as I'm sure that you

and I would be.

Skipping over the Ten Commandments, Moses explained to the people and gave them a purpose, why was God doing this?

Exodus 20:20 “And Moses said to the people, ‘Do not fear, **for God has come to prove you and so that His fear may be before your faces...** [here’s the point that God is making] **...so that you may not sin.**”

Pretty explosive! Pretty clear! What an awesome experience and the beginning of God’s Covenant with the children of Israel.

The next several chapters lays out all the expectations of God. This is under the Old Covenant:

Exodus 24:3: “And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments....”—*everything that God expected them to do to become this special people in the sight of the world!*

Here was the reason for the people for this covenant: “...And all the people answered with one voice and said, ‘All the words which the LORD has said, we will do.’” (v 3). They were agreeing to the covenant with the Lord!

After the sacrifices, after the peace offerings and all these things:

Verse 7: “And he [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant, and read in the ears of the people. And they said, ‘**All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.**”

Is this what the people actually did? *We know the rest of the story there!*

Deuteronomy 8:1—*God reminded them: “All the commandments which I command you this day shall you be diligent to observe and to do that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land, which the LORD swore to your fathers”—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob!*

Then they’re reminded of why God did this when He says:

Verse 3: “And He humbled you and allowed you to hunger, and then He fed you with manna, which you did not know, neither did your fathers know *it*... [here it is very clearly and succinctly stated why God chose them as a people]: ...so that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone; but by every *word* that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live.”

He then goes on to remind them, v 4: “Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot

swell these forty years.”

Have any of you still wearing the same clothes that you did 40 years ago? *I laugh about that! I may still have a ‘leisure suit’ somewhere in my closet!*

God provided their every need! Remember that there were no stores anywhere in the desert; they couldn’t buy any groceries or clothing. They had to totally rely on God.

We know the history of ancient Israel and how they went from generation to generation breaking the Laws of God to eventually go into captivity and then repent and be returned to prosperity, and this cycle was renewed over and over again until God finally sent Israel into captivity and scattered them among the nations of the world. They were all over never to be known again as the nation of Israel, God’s chosen people. ***They simply did not keep their covenant with God!***

That’s a lesson for us today. How about the people of American. I want to make this clear, it’s not America only; it’s Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand. I don’t care where you are, we are the blessed people!

Verse 7: “For the LORD your God brings you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey, a land in which you shall eat bread without scarceness.... [think about who has that] ...You shall not lack any *thing* in it. *It is* a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you may dig copper” (vs 7-9).

Does this not seem like an accurate description of those nations that I just mentioned? We in America, along with the others, are covenant people of God. We’re modern Israel, and we have indeed been blessed above all the nations on earth.

I can tell you from traveling the world extensively, that this nation has been blessed above all I’ve ever seen in my lifetime. I’ve literally traveled the world! I was in the Navy and traveled almost to the North Pole and almost to the South Pole. I’ve traveled across the Atlantic, the Mediterranean up into the Black Sea. I’ve been in the South Atlantic and through the Pacific and into the Indian Ocean. I mean, I’ve traveled through, I believe, over 70-some countries.

We’re truly blessed! Once again, I ask: Are we grateful? Are we appreciative and thankful to God for the blessings that have been bestowed on us? That’s a blanket statement! We haven’t change

much, I don't think, from ancient Israel. As a nation, are we keeping our end of the covenant?

Let's keep in mind that God often does things with conditions. Fred talks about that, the **IF** factor that accompanies a lot of God's promises!

We're familiar with Deut. 28. Let's read what was to accompany God's covenant with Israel:

Deuteronomy 28:1: "And it shall come to pass, **if you shall hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD your God** to observe *and* to do all His commandments, which I command you today, the LORD **your God will set you on high above all nations of the earth.**" *That's quiet a promise!*

But God then explains to them all the blessings that they could receive by keeping their end of this covenant. Wonderful blessings! We've certainly seen many. Notice, though, that all of these blessings are accompanied with the words: **IF you shall do all His commandments!**

Verse 15: "And it shall come to pass, **if you will not hearken to the voice of the LORD your God** to observe and to do all His commandments and His statutes, which I command you today, **all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.**"

Very clear: **IF** you keep the commandments, **IF** you do not keep the commandments! **IF** you do it's a blessing; **IF** you don't it's going to be curses!

God then goes on to explain all the things that will happen to a nation that refuses to keep the commandments. I don't have time to go into all of Deut. 28, we've certainly been blessed, I tell you that! I know my life has. I'm afraid we're losing it, and I don't think we're going to enjoy it much longer. We are headed down a slippery slope right now!

But to cut to the chase, ancient Israel never received all the promised blessings of God because they refused to keep His commandments. Nevertheless, God made a promise to Abraham that cannot be broken. The promise was made to Abraham after he showed that he would follow all of God's commandments regardless of the consequences. He proved that when he was willing to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice, as God had commanded.

Think about that! We find that promise to Abraham in:

Genesis 22:16: "And said, 'By Myself have I sworn,' says the LORD, 'because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son.'"

We know that he had other children, but we're talking about his only son from his wife Sarah. Here comes the promise:

Verse 17: "That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens, and as the sand, which is upon the seashore. And your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed... [that's Jesus Christ] ...**because you have obeyed My voice**" (vs 17-18).

You did what I told you to do. I wanted to find out if you're going to follow me.

It is not purpose to go into all these blessing at this time. You can find them all in Gen. 27 when Isaac blessed Jacob and again in Gen. 49 when Jacob passed the blessings onto his children.

The point I want to make here is that God always keeps His promises. As a result, modern Israel—Great Britain, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand—all received the bulk of these promised blessings!

Nevertheless, Britain and the United States and others ***have not kept their covenant with God!*** That **IF** factor of Deut. 28:15 applies to modern Israel as well as those Israelites that fled Egypt. As a result, we have already witnessed a major decline what was once Great Britain, and now America is facing a rapid decline! Brethren, I've never seen anything like I'm looking at right now in this country! I'm sorry, I don't want to get into all of that; that's not the purpose of this message. But I have to tell you, if something doesn't change we're in serious trouble in this country.

All of this is taking place ***because they refuse to keep God's commandments—period!***

It's interesting to consider that ancient Israel would have received all the blessings that have been bestowed on Britain, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the United States ***had they kept their covenant with God, and continue to keep His commandments!***

Instead they were scattered, lost their identity, they were no longer known as Israel. ***Now we, modern Israel***—the recipients of those blessings promised to Abraham—***are unwilling to acknowledge where those blessings come from!***

That's really sad! Israelites are indeed a stiff-necked people, as God told Moses when He said to him:

Exodus 32:9: "...I have seen this people, and behold, **it is a stiff-necked people.**"

With the exception of the promise of Christ's coming through the seed of Judah, all these promises are physical in nature! All the rest are physical in nature. They deal with property, territory, food, shelter, protection, peace, prosperity.

We today—those whom I'm talking to—enjoy those blessings, even though they may be short-lived. Nevertheless, God knew that they could not keep His laws and commandments in the *spirit of the Law!*

God tells us, Jeremiah 24:7: “And I will give them a heart to know Me, that I *am* the LORD; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. For they shall return to Me with their whole heart.”

In other words, God had a plan! That through His Spirit He would give His people the ability to keep His commandments *in the Spirit of the Law!* However, prior to the coming of Christ, it was clear that they would not be able to discern or truly understand God's Laws!

Deuteronomy 29:3—*speaking to ancient Israel:* “Your eyes have seen the great trials, the signs, and those great miracles. Yet, **the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.**” *This would not take place until Christ!*

It's interesting to know that God still keeps the majority of the world blind to His plan until Christ, along with the firstfruits, establish God's Kingdom here on earth. Let me just quote a portion of what Christ said in Matt. 13, when the disciples actually asked Christ why He spoke to them in parables.

Notice what we just read in Deut. 29, how He did not give them “...a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear...”

Matthew 13:13: “For this *reason* I speak to them in parables, **because seeing, they see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand.**”

Then in v 15 Jesus makes it clear why they're not being called at this time:

Verse 15: “For the heart of this people has grown fat, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed...” *Sound familiar?*

The New Covenant:

Hebrews 8:8—*God says,* “Behold, *the days are coming,*” says *the Lord,* “when I will establish a New Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.”

Then He makes it clear that this covenant

will not be under the same conditions as the ones that He made with Israel at Mt. Sinai:

Verse 9: “Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in *the day* that I took hold of their hand to lead them out of *the* land of Egypt... [once again God gives us a reason that He does this]: ...**because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them,**” says *the Lord.*”

Then He goes on to describe the type of covenant—this New Covenant—that this will be:

Verse 10: “For this *is* the covenant that I will establish with the house of Israel... [Are we the house of Israel?] ...after those days,” says *the Lord:* ‘I will give My laws into their minds, and I will inscribe them upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.’”

That's what we live in today! This New Covenant now makes that Old Covenant null and void, and you hear that from a lot of Protestant all the time:

It's the O.C., it's all done away, all the laws, all that stuff is done away with.

NO! We know that's not true! But it did make the original covenant null and void.

Verse 13: “In speaking of a new *covenant,* He has made the first *covenant* obsolete. Now that which has become old and obsolete *is* about to disappear.”

Ancient Israel certainly could of done a better job of keeping the covenant with God. They would have received the many promised physical blessings. But God has a future plan, through Christ, and He actually revealed this plan to Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 11:19: “And **I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you.**...”

Without the Spirit of God it is impossible to keep the spirit of God's Laws. It's impossible! You can't do it! I can't do it!

“...And I will remove the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh” (v 19).

Once again God tells ancient Israel His purpose in selecting them. He gives His purpose of the New Covenant:

Verse 20: “So that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them. And **they shall be My people, and I will be their God.**”

Once again, we see God selecting people to carry out His plans. ***People chosen to set an example to the rest of the world and people to***

represent Him and His way of life! He has a purpose for all these things He does. Ancient Israel failed to do that! They would be a special people! They were to set an example to the rest of the world. Had they done that, they would have been blessed tremendously physically.

Christ is the Author of the New Covenant. Heb. 10 offers us a clear explanation of the N.C.

Hebrews 10:4: “Because *it is* impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”

Only Christ—the One Who has created all things, including human life—can offer up the sacrifice of taking away the sins of the world. Christ tells us:

John 1:2: “He was in *the* beginning with God. All things came into being through Him... [everything that we see, feel and look at] ...and not even one *thing* that was created came into being without Him. In Him was life, and the Life was the Light of men” (vs 2-4).

That’s quite a statement, the God the Creator, that created everything, came into the world, became a human being and then had to sacrifice.

Hebrews 10:9: “Then He said, ‘Lo, I come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first covenant in order that He may establish the second covenant... [*the New Covenant*] ...by Whose will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (vs 9-10).

Verse 12: “But He [Christ], **after offering one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.**”

Verse 14: “For by one offering He has obtained eternal perfection *for* those who are sanctified.”

What a tremendous blessing that that is! Here is the promise of God’s Spirit:

Verse 15: “And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after He had previously said, ‘This *is* the covenant that I will establish with them after those days,’ says *the* Lord, ‘I will give My Laws into their hearts, and I will inscribe them in their minds... [and here is the wonderful promise of the New Covenant]: ...and their sins and lawlessness I will not remember ever again’” (vs 15-17).

We’re all sinful people; we’ve all been through that. The Bible makes it clear that we’ve all sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The effectiveness of the New Covenant requires God’s Holy Spirit dwelling within man.

Christ makes a promise of the Holy Spirit to

the disciples when He told them:

John 14:15: “**If** you love Me, **keep the commandments—namely, My commandments.**”

- Are we as a nation keeping God’s commandments?
- Are people keeping His commandments?

Then He tells them how this is going to take place:

Verse 16: “And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that it may be with you throughout the age: *Even* the Spirit of the Truth, which the world cannot receive because it perceives it not, nor knows it, but you know it because it dwells with you, and shall be within you” (vs 16-17).

Brethren, this is the New Covenant. It’s not as somebody preaches in the Protestant churches that the Law has ben down away. But it’s the Spirit of God helping us to keep those commandments. That’s what it’s about.

We know that on the Day of Pentecost the disciples received the promise of God’s Holy Spirit:

Acts 2:1: “And when the Day of Pentecost, the fiftieth day... [the same day that God appeared to ancient Israel at Mt. Sinai] ...was being fulfilled, they were all with one accord in the same place.”

If you remember, ancient Israel was also with one accord: *we will do all that God tells us to do!*

Verse 2: “And suddenly... [talk about miracles, stuff we’ve never seen] ...*there* came from heaven a sound like *the* rushing of a powerful wind, and filled the whole house where they were sitting.”

Verse 4: “And there appeared to them divided tongues as of fire, and sat upon each one of them. **And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...**”—*tremendous miracle!*

God sent Moses to Egypt to rescue a people from slavery! These were the generations that came from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and they were given the opportunity ***to be a special people to represent God and His way of life to the rest of the world!*** That was the purpose! They were given this opportunity to enter into a ‘promised land’ of milk and honey!

They were all physical promises, and they were all based on man’s ability to perform God’s will and that ***IF*** factor. ***IF*** you perform what you promised, you will receive these blessings!

They did not live up to their promise and they failed to receive the blessings of the Old Covenant. So, in comparing the O.C. to the New

Covenant, we like ancient Israel, were living in slavery. We were slaves to the world and it's way of life, it's sins!

Ephesians 2:1: "Now, you were dead in trespasses and sins."

In other words, we were no different than ancient Israel that walked and lived as the Egyptians.

Verse 2: "In which you walked in times past... [speaking to you and me] ...according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working within the children of disobedience; among whom also we all... [including us] ...once had our conduct in the lusts of our flesh, doing the things willed by the flesh and by the mind..." (vs 2-3).

Remember what we read in Heb. 10:16 where God said that He will *inscribe His Laws in our mind!*

"...and were by nature *the* children of wrath, even as the rest *of the world*" (v 3).

We were no different than the rest of the world! Hopefully, we are different now. As God sent Moses to rescue the children of Israel from Egypt, from sin, He sent Christ to rescue us from this sinful world that we live in.

As the ancient Israelites departed Egypt—sin—it required them to repent. He gave them a complete set of laws. Sabbaths, Holy Days, all those things to live by. They were all with one accord and agreed to this covenant with God. Like Israel, we're called to come out of sin to repent and to change our attitude and change our attitude and behavior.

Ancient Israel spent the next 40 years in the wilderness awaiting the 'promised land, because of the rebellion. They were not allowed to enter that land. We, in stellar fashion, are in a wilderness.

Look at the world we live in today! We still live in a sinful world awaiting the return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. We have a New Covenant, but the culmination of that covenant will not be complete until the return of Christ, until we have been resurrected!

We're still on our trip, on our way to God's Kingdom! Ancient Israel was baptized into the Red Sea. Their whole life was buried along with the death of the Egyptians. They were now to live a new life on their way to the 'promised land.' That's it!

They came out of sin/Egypt when through baptism in the Red Sea. We, in a similar fashion were baptized by the immersion in water, the burial of our old self. As part of the New Covenant we have had our mind changed, as God promised, by

His Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands.

What is my point, since much of this is covered at services on Pentecost? My question to day is: What happens now? Pentecost is past and now and God's Holy Spirit has been given, and we simply wait for the resurrection and the return of Christ.

What happens if Christ doesn't return during our lifetime? I remember back in the 1970s I was convinced that Christ was going to return in five to seven years. I'll bet there are some of you out there remember that.

- What prophecy isn't being fulfilled to our expectations?
- Are we going to be like ancient Israel when Moses went to get the instructions from God and was delayed in returning?

Exodus 32:1 "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, then the people gathered themselves to Aaron, and they said to him, 'Up! Make us gods, which shall go before us, for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'"

Remember that this is the people that witnessed all the miracles of God. If Christ is delayed in returning, Are we going to lose faith?

Let me find a new church, follow a new man!

Or even drop out and return to the things of the world. I was many people do that who were in the Worldwide Church of God. Many of have seen that happen in other associations.

Pentecost is not the end; it's the beginning! We have become the firstfruits to do the work and the will of our Father. We have a responsibility to grow in the grace and knowledge of God. We have a need to build up and teach our individual families. We need to renew our responsibilities and service to God as well as to each other.

As we proceed forward as firstfruits, we need to be aware that it actually costs to follow Christ. There's a cost involved. Let us remember what Christ taught us:

Luke 14:26: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, and, in addition, his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not carry his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (vs 26-27).

Christ makes it pretty clear here that there is a price to pay for submitting to a Christian way of life. Being firstfruits does not come without a price.

Then He tells us:

Verse 28: “For which one of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has *sufficient* for *its* completion.”

All of us at this point should have counted the cost! Let’s look at some of the costs:

1. a Christ-centered way of life will cost you your ‘favorite’ sins

Let’s face it, we all know we have sins!

1-John 1:8: “If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the Truth is not in us.”

However, are we to continue in these sins? ***Please understand, we are to be a special people set aside by God as an example to the rest of the world!***

Hebrews 12:1—we’re told by Paul: “Therefore, *since* we are surrounded by such a great throng of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily entraps us; *and* let us run the race set before us with endurance.”

Paul was using the analogy that we’re in a race to the Kingdom of God, let’s ask ourselves concerning sin:

- What sin keeps you in bondage?
- Do you have any?
- What would you be ashamed of if Christ returned today?
- What do you keep secret from others?
- What makes others wonder if you’re genuine?

Remember, we need to keep examining ourselves because a full surrender demands that we deal with our favorite sins.

2. a Christ-centered life will cost you the favor of the world

Sound strange? Most of the world lives in darkness and many hate the Christian way of life. We’re seeing that more every day. We’re not allowed to love the world.

1-John 2:15: “Do not love the world, nor the things *that are* in the world. **If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**”

It’s main focus is still on worldly things. ***Is our focus more on*** our homes? our jobs? our promotions? the things of this world? ***than it is on our covenant with God?***

Verse 16: “Because everything that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes,

and the pretentious pride of physical life—is not from the Father, but is from the world.”

Christ came as a Light into the world, but the world loved darkness.

John 3:19: “And this is the judgment: that the Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness... [they don’t like to see their sins] ...rather than the Light because their works were evil.”

People prefer darkness to hide their way of life! This was our previous way of life. We’re not to live that way anymore! That’s to be gone! Over!

Matthew 5:16: “In the same way also, you are to let your light shine before men... [Are we doing that?] ...so that they may see your good works, and may glorify your Father Who *is* in heaven.”

Remember that under the Old Covenant ancient Israel was to be a special people, and example to the rest of the world, as a light to the rest of the world! Overall that didn’t happen. We have the same responsibility under the New Covenant.

However, when we live this way, it’s going to bring rejection from the world. We need to be prepared to deal with that rejection. How many of you have ever lost close relationships with co-workers, families and friends because of what we believe and what we practice. I can attest to that. I personally sometimes have a closer relationship with people in the Church than do with members of my own family.

They just don’t understand why I don’t keep Christmas and Easter holidays and why I don’t attend services on Sunday. We were warned ahead of time that this would be the price we would pay for being ‘lights’ to the world.

John 15:19: “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have personally chosen you out of the world, the world hates you for this.”

The world doesn’t understand and they hate it when we bring lights to the sins of the world. They don’t want to hear it. In fact, I don’t know how much longer certain things will be allowed to be preached at all.

We are also supposed to save a second tithe to go to the Feast of Tabernacles, and encouraged to give offerings. But there is a cost both physically and financially to be a Christian and follow God.

- How about us personally?
- How many people in the Church have lost their job by refusing to work on the Sabbath and God’s Holy Days?

- How about the days we all take off to observe the Holy Days and the Feast of Tabernacles?

All of these things are physical in nature and all wealth belongs to God. All wealth in this world is temporary!

Matt. 19 tells us about the young man who came to Christ and said, 'What do I have to do to keep the commandments.' He just gave up because he was very wealthy and he didn't want to give it up. There is a cost to being a disciple of Christ. We have already been there.

Luke 14:27^[transcriber's correction]: "And whoever does not carry his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

The Apostle Paul probably gives us the best example of the cost of following Christ in Philip. 3. Paul had a lot going for him. He was a Pharisee and in high standing with respect to His position and the law. He was successful. He was well on his way up the ladder to success. Like many of us, he was working diligently toward the success of the world until Christ intervened!

Philippians 3:6: "With respect to zeal... [Paul was]: ...persecuting the Church... [he believed in what he was doing and felt he was blameless] ...with respect to righteousness that *is* in law, blameless.

Verse 8: "But then truly, I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord..."

Paul recognized that there was nothing worth the Truth of God and the knowledge that he was given by Christ. He lost everything that he had been working for as the cause for following Christ continued.

"...for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things... [He gave up everything to be a Christian. What did he say all those things were worth?] ...and count *them* as dung; that I may gain Christ" (v 8).

Paul obviously recognized the value of giving up all that he had for Christ:

Verse 11: "If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection... [focused on the future] ...of the dead."

Paul fully realized that all the temporary pleasures of this life was not worth the gift of eternal life.

We all may have to give up things that seem so important in this world:

- loss of family relationships

- loss of friends
- loss of jobs
- loss of income
- loss of many of the comforts of this world

I truly believe as we grow closer and closer to this end, the suffering is going to get much greater. We know that if you follow prophecy at all.

I had a minister one time come to my house many years ago in WCG when it was going through its problems, and he told me that he could have had all that I had and more. I wondered where did he go? I live pretty modestly. I have no idea whatever brought that up. He said he could have been a pilot, he had a pilot's license. He could have been a professional golfer had it not been for the Church.

It sounded to me as though he was bitter for giving up the physical things of the world for following Christ. He certainly didn't have Paul's attitude toward loss. From what I've heard he's no longer in any of the Churches of God.

Paul realized that he was just in the beginning of the New Covenant. Remember what I said earlier, Pentecost is just the beginning; it is not the end! You're not resurrected, yet! Paul recognized that his rewards were to be attained in the future, and what his attitude need to be now in the present.

Verse 13: "Brethren, I do not count myself as having attained... [he wasn't there, yet] ...but *this* one thing *I do*—**forgetting the things that are behind**, and reaching forth to the things that are ahead."

His whole focus was on the future, on God's Kingdom! Then Paul tells us what our direction should be after having received God's Holy Spirit; what we should be doing following Pentecost:

Verse 14: "**I press toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**"

After ancient Israel passed through the Red Sea and became firstfruits on the Day of Pentecost, they were still in the wilderness and had not attained the promises of God. They gave up a lot, but they had to be patient as God tried them to see if they would be a 'special people and nation.'

They were promised a wonderful future, but it was based on that ***IF*** factor. ***IF*** they followed God and kept His commandments. But they grumbled, complained, refused to keep God's Laws and as a result they never reached the 'promised land.'

Pentecost is past and we're still in the wilderness of this sinful world of Satan! Like Paul, we have not yet attained. We have a promise of a much better world ahead. Speaking of the cost of being a Christian, there nothing in this world that

can replace the value of eternal life in God's Kingdom—**nothing!**

But we 'ain't there, yet, folks'! This day is yet in the future! If we believe in prophecy, we can expect some rocky, rough times ahead! Christ speaking through the Apostle John to the Church of Philadelphia had this to say to us today:

Revelation 3:7: "And to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia, write: 'These things says the Holy One, the One Who *is* true; the One Who has the key of David, Who opens and no one shuts, and Who shuts and no one opens. I know your works....'" (vs 7-8).

- Does God know your works?
- Does He see them?

"...Behold, I have set before you an open door..." (v 8).

An invitation, a destiny if we faithfully continue to move forward! ***We can't look back!***

"...and no one has the power to shut it because you have a little strength, and have kept My Word, and have not denied My name" (v 8).

Now, ask yourself, is He speaking to me here?

Verse 10: "Because you have kept the Word of My patience, I also will keep you from the time of temptation, which *is* about to come upon the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth."

As we approach the end of this age, we know times will become very difficult for human life. But Christ offers us protection from the temptations to come.

Verse 11: "Behold, I am coming quickly... [we don't know the day the hour, the time, but we better be prepared] ...hold fast that which you have..."

- don't give up
- don't quit
- don't walk away

"...**so that no one may take away your crown**" (v 11).

We have a position, office and a crown waiting for us ***IF*** stay the course. We're still wandering around in the wilderness. Here comes the promise; here comes what you can look forward to if you stay the course:

Verse 12: "**The one who overcomes will I make a pillar in the Temple of My God...** [then it no longer is temporary like our life currently is] ...and he shall not go out anymore; and I will write

upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven from My God; and ***I will write upon him My new name.***"

What a marvelous, wonderful promise we have been given concerning the future! Is there anything in this temporary world worth giving up for that promise? Anything?

We're told in Psa. 90 that we are given three score and ten and I'm sure that many of you out there are like me and have passed that four score mark. There's nothing we can do to change that. Our time in our physical body passes like a breath of the wind. We're told that it is full of sorrow and trouble.

Psalm 90:12—*we're given a lesson*: "So, teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom."

Pentecost is only the beginning! We must move forward! There's a cause for continuing the Christian way of life, **but the future that we're promised is far greater than the cost of anything that we face in our physical life!**

Once again, take the advice of Jesus Christ when He tells us, **'Hold fast that which you have so that no one may take away your crown!'**

We have a wonderful, bright future if we stick with it!

Scriptural References:

- 1) Exodus 16:3
- 2) Exodus 19:1, 4-6, 11, 16
- 3) Exodus 20:20
- 4) Exodus 24:3, 7
- 5) Deuteronomy 8:1, 3-4, 7-9
- 6) Deuteronomy 28:1, 15
- 7) Genesis 22:16-18
- 8) Exodus 32:9
- 9) Jeremiah 24:7
- 10) Deuteronomy 29:3
- 11) Matthew 13:13, 15
- 12) Hebrews 8:8-10, 13
- 13) Ezekiel 11:19-20
- 14) Hebrews 10:4
- 15) John 1:2-4
- 16) Hebrews 10:9-10, 12, 14-17
- 17) John 14:15-17
- 18) Acts 2:1-2, 4
- 19) Ephesians 2:1-3
- 20) Exodus 32:1
- 21) Luke 14:26-28
- 22) 1 John 1:8
- 23) Hebrews 12:1
- 24) 1 John 2:15-16

- 25) John 3:19
- 26) Matthew 5:16
- 27) John 15:19
- 28) Luke 15:19
- 29) Luke 14:27
- 30) Philippians 3:6, 8, 11, 13
- 31) Revelation 3:7-8, 10-12
- 32) Psalm 90:12

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Genesis 27; 49
- Matthew 19

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