

FEAST OF TABERNACLES – DAY 5 – 2005

Fred Coulter – October 22, 2005

And greetings brethren. This is Day 5 of the Feast of Tabernacles – 2005. Let's go back to Leviticus 23 and let's see something very unusual concerning the Feast of Tabernacles and then let's ask the question: Why would God command such a thing? Let's come back here to Leviticus 23 and let's focus a little bit more on what the commands concerning the Feast of Tabernacles is and we'll see something that God commanded that is really quite unusual.

Here, Leviticus 23:39: "Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days [that's the Feast of Tabernacles]: on the first day *shall be* a sabbath..." Now all the holy days are Sabbaths. We know that, but here again it's emphasized. "...And on the eighth day *shall be* a sabbath [which then is the Last Great Day]." Now notice verse 40: "And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days." Now why would God have them break off these boughs? What would the purpose of that be? Well, let's see if we can answer that question today.

But let's also notice something else. It says here: "And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. *It shall be* a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God" (Lev. 23:39-43, KJV). Now why would He have us remember dwelling in booths?

Now we know that living in a tent is not like living at home. And that's what it was, but why the two things? Well, a couple of years ago someone gave me some photographs that they had taken in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles. And it was quite unusual what they did, because you see in Jerusalem most of the roofs are flat and they use the upper roof kind of as a deck or something like that, and also they have them on the side of the first floor and then a deck on the top of the second floor, and so forth, but what they did, they made their temporary little booths for the Feast of Tabernacles. And they would take a bough and put it over the entrance of the booth. And I thought that was very interesting that they did that, and also it shows something else. There are some great lessons for us concerning the booths and concerning the branches, and so forth, but let's first of all consider the booth and what it pictures. It pictures that we are strangers and sojourners on the earth. And it pictures that we are looking for something greater.

Now let's come to Hebrews 11 and let's see where the apostle Paul writes of this concerning Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and let's understand Abraham, Isaac and Jacob never, never lived in the land of promise that God gave them. Let's put it this way: Abraham did live in the land in tabernacles, but he did not live in the land to permanently

be there. He was only to be a stranger and sojourner in the land because the land was going to be given to the children of Israel.

Now let's pick it up here in Hebrews 11:8: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing [where he was going] whither he went." Very similar to us: God calls us; we are to come out of this world – that means we are not to be part of the world, we are not to be as the world though we have to live in it. And that means what separates us from the world: the Spirit of God, the commandments of God, living by every Word of God. Those things separate us from the world. And in calling us out of the world, then as God says we are not to love the world nor the things in the world, or the pride of life, or all the things that are connected with the world. Because, as we will see, the whole world is going to perish. But the one who does the will of God is going to live forever. Now if you're going to live forever, then you have something to look forward to.

Now notice verse 9: "By faith..." So we have to believe God all the time. And that's the thing that's important. You cannot overcome human nature without faith. You cannot overcome the difficulties and problems that we face in the world without faith. You cannot overcome human nature without faith, and you're not going to make it into the Kingdom of God with out faith. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in a* strange country, dwelling in tabernacles [booths] with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for [because]..." In other words God not only gave him the promise of the land but He also gave him the promise of the Kingdom of God. And he knew that and he understood that. And that is one of the things that motivated Abraham. And it should be the thing that should also motivate us.

Verse 10: "...For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder [that is architect] and maker *is* God." Now that's what we are looking for. That's what the Feast of Tabernacles pictures. But it also shows that in spite, as we will see because of the branches that were cut off, that everything here is temporary. Whereas we are looking for a city that is made by God, an eternal city, heavenly Jerusalem where righteousness dwells, and all of that.

Now let's come here to verse 13: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises..." Now there are going to be many of us who are going to die in the faith not having yet received the promises. There are going to be those who will live on over into the time and when Christ returns, will be changed instantly from flesh and blood to spirit beings. And so they died in the faith. "...But having seen them afar off..." In other words through faith, through the minds-eye, through the understanding of God's Word: "...having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*..." Now when you do that that means that that becomes a part of you. And this is the way that all of us are to think because this is the goal. See, as one of the proverbs says, "Without vision the people perish." What we're dealing with today, especially in the Laodicean age, a lot of people (that is, who are in the church) are failing to keep the vision, failing to understand why they have been called. So what happens: they fall victim to their own devices. Now we'll see this a little later and how it can entrap everyone and so forth.

“...And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.” And since we are still living in the world there are some who take the opportunity to return back to the world, unfortunately. And we are sorry that that occurs. But you see, if you understand the plan of God, and the purpose of God, and the reason why we are here, and the whole purpose of why we do the things that we do; and you understand that it’s for the Kingdom of God, that we are looking for that, that what we do today and everything that we do are various steps of growth and changing and overcoming so we can attain the goal, so that we can enter into the Kingdom of God just like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob looked forward to.

“But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly [one]: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city” (Heb. 11:8-10, 13-16, KJV). That’s the whole goal. And that’s why on the Last Great Day we end up studying about new Jerusalem. God has prepared a city for them.

Now remember what Jesus said. And this goes right back and ties in with the Passover. And the Passover is what? The Passover is the renewing of the covenant every year, isn’t it, right? Yes. And what was one of the things that Jesus promised? Let’s go here to John 14. Now we need to understand that God is working, God is doing what He is doing, God is preparing for the setting up for the Kingdom of God on earth, God is preparing for the return of Jesus Christ. Jesus is preparing for His return. He’s preparing His saints. And are we preparing ourselves? And also in accordance with that, God is preparing a place for each one of us and Christ is in charge of doing that.

John 14:2: “In My Father’s house are many mansions [or that is abodes or dwelling places]...” Now these will be eternal spiritual dwelling places, won’t they? Everything will be made out of spirit, not made out of flesh, not made out of the dust of the earth. “...If *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” Now that’s what Jesus is actively doing. Not only a place made out of spirit but a place and an office in the government of God under Jesus Christ beginning during the Millennium. So that also has to do with that place. And He is also preparing for us the jewels. Now we’ll see that in just a minute. God is doing that. Now notice, here’s a promise: “And if I go [which He did] and prepare a place for you [which He is], I will come again [which He will], and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, *there ye may be also*” (John 14:2-3 , KJV). Now we need to keep that in mind.

Let’s see what else He is doing here. Let’s come to Malachi 3 because this is also very important, you see. And this is what we need to do to keep our minds on the goal, on the plan, on what God has for us, and the reason and purpose as to why we are here, and the reason and the purpose as to why we live the way that we live, and how we handle life, and what we do with life, and how those things are all together.

Here's something very, very important and this is what we need to be doing today. Many, many brethren do this, but there are some who don't. So you need to think: What is it that I am doing? How am I living my life? Because this is what we are going to cover today and we will see this is told in the story of the branches.

Now Malachi 3:16: "Then they that feared the LORD..." Now we can say today, fearing and loving God, fearing and obeying God, fearing and serving God. The right kind of fear, which is worshipful awe of our Creator and Maker. "...Spake often one to another..." So we need to have that fellowship with one another. Now notice: does God care about that? Notice: "...And the LORD hearkened, and heard it..." Now think about that. God is interested in our conversations, isn't He? He's interested in our fellowshipping with each other, isn't He? Why? Because Christ is in us, Christ is dwelling in us like I pointed out on the very first day. That's why He is interested. He listens. God is involved in our lives, isn't He? If His Spirit is in us, which it is, then He knows, doesn't He? Without a doubt.

Now notice: "...and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name." And of course "thinking on His name" is thinking on His plan, His purpose, His calling, and everything. So that's what it's all about. And this is why, brethren, we have the Sabbaths and we should use every Sabbath to get together, to serve one another, to love one another, to do the things that we need to do, and to do them according to the way that God wants us to do them. And to fellowship with one another – that's a very important thing. And you see, we are warned in the book of Hebrews that there are some who forsake the assembling together with each other be they few or be they many; or some, when they assemble, it's not for love and service and worshipping and serving God, it's for strife and it is for contention. Now those things are also noted too, aren't they? See, everything that we do, God notes, doesn't He? And so brethren, as we will see, let's understand do not (as the warning is twice) weary in well doing, and do not slack up, but rather serve God with all your heart.

Verse 17, God says those who do this then: "And they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels..." So God is making a crown for you; preparing a place, preparing an office, preparing a work, preparing responsibility, and making a crown for you with jewels on it. "...And I will spare them [that is, save them], as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return [that is the other people in the world], and discern between the righteous [that God is dealing with] and the wicked [and those that go against God], between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not" (Mal. 3:16-18, KJV). So you see this is very important for us to understand.

All right, now how does this fit in with breaking off of boughs? Ok, it fits in very, very clearly. Let's come to John 15:1. Here's a spiritual and a physical lesson, then we'll amplify this a little bit more. "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me..." All right, we're going to learn a lesson, because if the branch is broken off, which for the Feast of Tabernacles it is. And we did this one year. Someone said, "Why don't we just do it and bring some boughs in here to our meeting hall," and so

forth. And then every day we looked at them. And we learned a lesson. Let's see what that is.

"...Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Now that's what God wants us to do to bring forth fruit. And that means all the time. Just like every year there is a crop. Every year there is a harvest. This shows that every year we must continually be doing the things of God. Jesus said in verse 5: "I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in Me [dwells in Me], and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit [continually, constantly] for without Me ye can do nothing." Very important to understand, and we're going to see today this lesson.

Now verse 6: "If a man abide [dwell] not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered [and that's what happens to these branches]; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:1-2, 5-6, KJV). Now let's see about human beings, and let's see that breaking off the branches and using those during the Feast of Tabernacles is a very instructive lesson, which is what we learned right here. If it is not in the plant it is going to die. And it becomes very temporary, doesn't it? And every day when we looked at these they shriveled up a little more, and a little more, and a little more, and by the end of the feast they were dry and brittle and worthless.

Now the first day or two you couldn't tell much difference than when they were on the plant. But it became very apparent (there's the lesson right there) if you're not in Christ you're going to die. So this also tells us that physical life is temporary and will come to an end within an inevitable process from birth unto death.

Now let's go to Psalm 94 and let's look at what it talks about – how human life is vain, is empty, and without God there is no purpose and without God there is no understanding. Let's see what it says about us as human beings and let's realize that that is true. As fantastic and as magnificent and as great that God has made the creation of man – giving us minds, giving us abilities, making us in His image, giving us many of the same powers that God has in creating and making and doing and thinking, and so forth, all for the purpose that He can dwell in us.

But without God here's what we need to realize, Psalm 94:8: "Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise?" Now that's a good question, because all the ways of man is really foolish. And we also have here a comparison then (you can put in your margin there Matthew 25 about the ten virgins – the five wise and the five foolish). "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear [and we saw, yes, God already hears]? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" Yes, God sees, God knows. Nothing can be hidden from Him. "He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not He correct?" In other words, if God is going to correct sinners don't you think He's going to correct His own? And have we not learned the lesson of God's correction yet of what happened and we'll see exactly how that comes about, and why men get into being Laodicean in spite of the vanity of it. Not only just Laodicean, but the whole process of how every human society and every human being without God becomes. And yes, even

Christians who allow themselves to lose the vision, not understand the hope of God the way that they should, begin to partially wither on the vine.

Now: "...He that teacheth man knowledge, *shall not He know?*" Of course He will. Now here's what God says of the thoughts of man. Now this is just like the branch cut off – it is vain, it won't produce: "The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they *are vanity*." That's what it is. And we're going to study about the vanity. We're going to study about the futility of human life. We are going to understand why we go through the things that we go through and we're going to see the process by which people end up in either a good condition or a mixture of conditions. And we know from our study of the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 that those things are so, and only two out of seven, and mainly one out of seven remained faithful to God. Of course they repented and were come back to God, but let's understand how these things work, you see.

Verse 12: "Blessed *is* the man whom Thou chasenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of Thy law; that Thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked." And so this is something that we need to understand. "For the LORD will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake his inheritance. But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it" (Psa. 94:8-15, KJV). And so this shows the whole process here. Out of all of this that God has made and done in creating for us eternal purpose, that He has this that we are going to do and we're going to follow.

Now let's see here concerning how man is. Let's focus in on the theme of the vanity of man, because you see that's going to be one of the major themes, as we will see, that's going to be taught all during the Millennium. And there will be a great immediate comparison for the people to understand because they will be able to see the sons of God who are spirit beings because we'll be able to manifest ourselves to them.

Ok, Psalm 39:5. And this is what we need to learn today about our lives and what they're going to learn all during the Millennium about their lives, and so this will blend in with the rest of the feast here. Now let's pick it up here in verse 4: "LORD, make me to know mine end..." And that's a thing we need to understand. That's why we look to the Kingdom of God. That's why we have to have this hope always before us, because then this gives us the incentive. This gives us the vision. This gives us the goal, you see. "...Make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it *is*; *that I* may know how frail I *am*." And let's understand something – we're only just a breath away from death. Just think of that.

"Behold, Thou hast made my days *as* an handbreadth [there it is]; and mine age *is* as nothing before Thee: verily every man at his best state *is* altogether vanity." Then there's that little word – Selah. Now that means, "stop and think and meditate on this." Selah – verily man at his best state is altogether vanity. That's why the broken bough. See, you break off the bough and you see that life in that limb comes to an end. And you see that without being in the plant that it becomes nothing.

Verse 6: “Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather them.” And we’re going to see that also happened to Solomon. And we know what happened there – the world’s greatest Laodicean, huh? Who knows?

Let’s come down to verse 11: “When Thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man *is* vanity” (Psa. 39:4-6, 11, KJV). In other words we see the futility of human life. We see the beginning of it and we understand the end of it. And we realize that through all this vanity, as God said back in Romans 8, that the whole creation is given over to vanity, subject to vanity – it wasn’t made it willingly, but it was made subject to vanity for the hope that God has for it.

All right, now let’s come here to Psalm 62:9. Let’s just consider if we could for a minute, see all of the great civilizations come by before our eyes – and all of the great leaders, and all of the great men, and all the people as it were, great and small, and just see what their lives were. Here’s a summary of it: “Surely men of low degree *are* vanity...” Isn’t it true? A rich man looks down on the poor man and says, “Oh you poor guy.” And the poor man looks up at the rich man and says, “Oh you poor guy. I’d like to have all your wealth, but you know, I’ve got enough trouble in my poverty here.”

“...And men of high degree *are* a lie...” I mean think about that. Think about all of the great and the important people of the world – how many are really there in sincerity and in truth and in honesty. Men of high degree are a lie. You see, God lays them: “...in the balance, they *are* altogether *lighter* than vanity.” So considering that He says: “Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart *upon them*.” Key thing. We’ll talk about that a little more as we go on.

“God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power *belongeth* unto God.” That is, the power to understand these things and the power to receive wealth. That’s why He says if riches increase, set not your heart upon them, because they can all go. And as we’ll see a little later on whenever someone dies they leave it all. And we’ll see Solomon’s lament because he understood what his son was, as we will see. “Also unto Thee, O Lord, *belongeth* mercy: for Thou renderest to every man according to his work” (Psa. 62:9-12, KJV). So that’s quite a thing, isn’t it? That’s really something.

Now let’s come to Isaiah 40. Let’s see how God looks at the whole world. Now today, rather than just going out and ... Oh, by the way, I hope you were able to see some of those things when Mars was close this past August, when it came closer to the earth – the closest that it has been in thousands of years. And I’m sure that has something to do with the upset weather that we have this year, and I’m sure, as I mentioned before, that God has considered all of that in the Calculated Hebrew Calendar.

Now let’s come over here to Isaiah 40 and let’s see the power of God compared to man, and what man really is and how vain he really is, and how that is with the nations, and so forth, and yet within the mind of every man and woman there is some sort of quirk

of invincibility that somehow if they go their own way God isn't going to require it. It is part of the futility of human nature. Now we're going to have to deal with this with the people during the Millennium. It won't be quite as pronounced as it is today. But here is the mission of John the Baptist. And he was told what to say.

Isaiah 40:6: "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh *is* grass, and all the goodliness thereof *is* as the flower of the field..." And like James wrote, it's going to pass away. Now let's understand something: we're made of the dust of the earth, aren't we? All the grass is made of the dust of the earth, isn't it? What do we eat? We eat vegetables, which is just another variety of grass, right? And fruit, which is a physical thing, which is no different than grass because it withers away, too, doesn't it? So we eat meat. But what do those animals eat that we eat? They eat grass, they eat the things of the earth. So this is a true saying: all flesh is grass. "...The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people *is* grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." That's what we need to anchor our lives on and our spiritual understanding on – the Word and the Truth of God. That's why the gospel of John starts out, "In the beginning was the Word," because He was the one Who spoke it, and it endures forever. That's why this instruction is good for us.

All right, let's come over here to verse 12. So man getting lifted up in all of his vanity, and all of his greatness and you know, you just go down through history and think of all of the emperors and all of the kings and all of the priests and all of the important people and all of those who had money and wealth, and we'll see that in a little bit with Solomon.

Now here, verse 12: "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand..." Now you take and look at a globe and you look at how much is given to the oceans, and God says as far as He's concerned He can measure it in the hollow of His hand. No man can. We don't even know hardly anything about the oceans and what the ocean does. Yes, we've been able to go down many miles and even see volcanoes erupting under the surface of the water from the floor of the ocean, and we can even see the tectonic plates where they are pulling apart and even see the magma that comes up and is exposed to the sea water and immediately turns into rock and so forth. Yes, we can see that. But what do we really know? Nothing.

Let's see what else he says here: "...And meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth [all of the land of the earth] in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" So God is saying to mankind, and God is also saying to us so that we don't get lifted up in vanity, that we don't get lifted up and carried away and become lax and lukewarm and abominable and ready to be spewed out of the mouth of God, He says: "Who hath directed the spirit of the LORD, or *being* His counsellor hath taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and *who* instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and shewed to Him the way of understanding?" See, everything that we learn has to go back and come from the things that God originally gave, but now in the world has been

perverted by the knowledge of man and the influence of Satan the devil. And yet man and woman has this sort of invincibility within them that somehow they just don't comprehend this. So this is why God gives this in His Word so that we might understand 1) how great God is; and 2) how frail that we are; and 3) how much we need God.

Now notice what He says here: "Behold, the nations *are* as a drop of a bucket..." You do this sometime – you get a five gallon bucket and you take an eyedropper and you go *boop* – one drop. And you see if you can find it in the bottom of that five gallon bucket. Probably be very hard put to do so, right? That's how God looks at all the nations. And yet Satan, when he was tempting Jesus said what? "If you'll bow down and worship me I will give you all the kingdoms of the world. Because it's given to me," he said, "and I give it to whomsoever I desire." Amazing, isn't it? Look at the difference in the perspective of God and Satan and also man.

"...And are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon *is* not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him *are* as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity" (Isa. 40:6-8, 12-17, KJV). Now that's quite a lesson, isn't it? And we could also take those broken branches and we can see what? We can see the nations of the world cut off from God never prosper. Oh, they have some cycles as God uses them for His purpose, that is true. What is the end of it? You know, in all of these historical documents and shows that they have (and I've watched a lot of them on the History Channel) they go back and they show the Greeks, and they show the Babylonians, and they show they Egyptians, and the Assyrians, and the Romans and all of the empires down through time – but what has happened to all of them? Their great leaders have come to an end. And God also says that He raises up over them the basest of men. And there are still people today that admire Adolph Hitler. Did you know that he was a syphilitic? And did you know that he was constantly under the influence of drugs? Now what you need to do is watch a History Channel and when it comes on "Hail Hitler", you watch it. The German people did what? They thought he was God. They thought he was fantastic. And he in his vanity was going to establish the Reich for a thousand years. And he lasted twelve and died ignominiously because it's all vanity.

(Turn Tape)

Now let's continue on. Let's come to Psalm 144 and let's see even in spite of it, you see, God still will work and deal with us. But He has given us free choice, and that is the most powerful thing that you can exercise for good or for evil.

Now here, Psalm 144:3. Because God is so great, as we saw there back in Isaiah 40, here Psalm 144:3 says: "LORD, what *is* man, that Thou takest knowledge of him!" See, God made us a little lower than Himself for a great and marvelous purpose, but we are still, nevertheless subject to vanity in vain. "...Or the son of man, that Thou makest account of him! Man is like to vanity: his days *are* as a shadow that passeth away" (Psa. 144:3-4, KJV). So that's how a man is and that's what we need to understand. When we come to this understanding let's realize this: This is the greatest point of wisdom and

understanding we can come to if we draw to God, if we follow His Word, if we keep the vision of where we're headed and where we're going.

Now let's come here to the book of Ecclesiastes. Quite a tremendous book. A lot of fantastic things in here for us to learn. Now as we know Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes. And we also know that because when he started out – and this is a very, very good lesson: it's not how you start, but it's how you finish. It's not how great you are, but it is how you recognize how great God is.

Now Solomon started out fantastic. What did he first want to do? He asked God for wisdom to judge the people of Israel so he could do it rightly because he said, "I'm young and I don't know how to do anything. Please give me wisdom that I may judge Your people righteously." Now that pleased God so much that He said, "I'm not only going to give you wisdom, but I'm going to give you, because you didn't ask for wealth, and you didn't ask for riches, and you didn't ask for power, I'm going to give you wealth, and riches, and power." And so Solomon was probably the wisest man, the richest man, and one of the most powerful men that the history of the world has ever seen. Because when we understand about his kingdom and what it says there about how great it was, it was a world-wide kingdom. And he had so much gold, so much silver – silver was counted as gravel at that time that's how much gold that there was. And then you know what happened – he got vain, he got conceited. And in order to establish his world-wide power he began to do things that he ought not do. And in order to seal agreements between these different nations of the world that came to trade with him, which also brought him tribute every year, he ended up with 700 wives and 300 concubines – a thousand women. And then his heart turned after other gods. And there's no account that Solomon ever repented. So what we can say is this: Solomon was the most colossal Laodicean in the history of the world. So that's why some of the lessons he learned while he still had his senses and still hadn't turned against God, as recorded here in the book of Ecclesiastes, is very important for us to understand. And it's similar to what Samuel told Saul.

Samuel said to Saul (because after Saul sinned and had the confrontation with him and he got all exalted over himself and everything), "Saul when you were little in your own eyes you were just fine." So what this does, brethren, it helps us when we understand the vanity and futility of human life alone cut off from God. And when we compare ourselves with God instead of each other, because you see the Scriptures say when we compare ourselves among ourselves we're not wise, when we do that then we can more greatly appreciate God, we can more greatly appreciate what He's doing, and we can understand how absolutely dependent we are on God for everything that is involved in our lives.

So let's begin here, Ecclesiastes 1:1, and then we'll see how such a thing progresses here: "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem [this could be none other than Solomon]. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Now we need to understand that without God everything truly is

vain. And even with God, God has subjected the whole world and creation to vanity to save it. And so this is all a part of the story.

Now verse 3: “What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?” And that’s exactly what happened. You can just think of the lives of men who have grown up, women who have grown up and they marry and have children, and they work and they bring the family, and children grow up, and they grow old and they die, and all the labor that is done under the sun. And think of all the money and all of the foodstuffs and all of the physical things consumed by every human being on earth. And you know, if you could just line up the railroad cars, symbolizing all the goods that one person would use during his lifetime, including all the food, all the clothing, everything to build the houses that he lived in, the cars that he drove, the animals that he had, and could put it in freight cars like on a train, I wonder how long it would be. I imagine it would be something.

But what happens? Verse 4: “*One* generation passeth away, and *another* generation cometh...” Now we’re right in the middle of that right now in the world and in the church. One generation passes – there are a lot of us who are going to pass, and another generation is coming. And what is this new generation in the church going to be and what is it going to do, and how dedicated will they be? “...But the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.” Talking about the day, every day, day in and day out, day in and day out. “The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.” And that’s just the way it is with the weather. We understand that more today than Solomon did then because we have the satellites and we can look down and we can see the jet streams and the storms, and we can see where it’s raining and where it’s not and where it’s hot and where it’s cold and everything like that.

“All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea *is* not full [that’s an astonishing thing, isn’t it?]; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.” So he understood about evaporation and the formation of clouds and rain and snow and the rivers coming down and so forth. “All things *are* full of labour; man cannot utter *it*...” There is no end to all of these things, is there? It’s very interesting. Some day I would like to go into a place where they have catalogs, lots of catalogs for every industry in the world. And I think it would fill a building. And what do you see? You see all of the things that men have made and built and put together, invented and used.

Just think of all the tools for building a house. Just think of all the tools for electricians. Just think of all the tools for taking care of the electronics to bring electricity into the houses. Think of all the tools and parts and things for cars and planes and trains and buses and toys and all of this. All of the labor that goes into it. Yes, everything’s full of labor. And in spite of it notice, this is part of the invincibility of human beings: “...the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is* that which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun.” I thought about this the other day. Because in Babylon, when

Babylon started coming to power they had a little stylus and they wrote in a shorthand on tablets of clay. And they would record business transactions and everything. So they held this – whatever held the moist clay – and then they would put whatever the business transaction was on it, and then they would bake it and they would have a permanent record. Well you know, just the other day I saw a hand held computer that had almost the power of a personal computer at home and it was about the size of one of these little clay tablets that I just talked about going clear back to ancient Babylon. And what did the person use to operate this little hand-held computer, but a little stylus to click on the things that it needs to, to make the message carry out the transaction. So you see, nothing has changed in the world except the power and the means to use it. Just that one thing.

Now verse 10: “Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is* new?” Because even if it is new, it’s made out of something that has been here for a long time and made into another product and so forth. “...It hath been already of old time, which was before us.” And they also know that. How did they build the pyramids? They haven’t been able to figure it out. How did they build, not only in Egypt, but also in all of Central and South America. How did they move these great stones from one place to another? We don’t know.

Verse 11: “*There is* no remembrance of former *things...*” No, when the Flood came and that took care of it, it was over. When there were great wars and it destroyed civilizations, and especially the burning of two great libraries – the one in Alexandria, Egypt and the one in Laodicea. When they burned, most of the knowledge of the ancient world was consumed with it, and the history of it. There’s no more remembrance of it. “...Neither shall there be *any* remembrance of *things* that are to come with *those* that shall come after.” So here’s this continuous cycle of life. This is important for us to realize. We also are going through a cycle of life – physically and spiritually. And we’ll see what happens with that in just a bit.

Now verse 12: “I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem.” He was the only king over Israel and Jerusalem because it started with David and then it ended with Solomon. Only for 76 years were the twelve tribes of Israel ever all together under one king. Now you think on that. So here he is. He said: “And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all *things* that are done under heaven...” Now he’s going to have the great experiment of life. “I have riches, I have wealth, I have wisdom, everybody coming to me. Now I want to find out what life is all about.”

“...This sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.” It’s talking again about the cycle of life and everything that happens in life. And unfortunately to many things that happen in this life are not for joy but are for sorrow, are not for good but are for evil. So this is what he’s talking about here. “I have seen all the works that are done under the sun [that is what he could see]; and, behold, all *is* vanity and vexation [frustration] of spirit.” See, because when you have the latest, the greatest, the fastest, the mostest, guess what happens? Someone comes up with something better. And just when they thought they really had the carriage business in tow someone invented the car. And so you have the rest of that story. But what is it? Think about it.

Just take the thing of travel. Now I do a lot of travel by car and by plane. And it gets to be frustrating. Yes, we can do things with it, but it is an exercise and it is frustrating. Now he goes on saying: “*That which is crooked cannot be made straight...*” There’s always something to straighten out, isn’t there? “...That which is wanting cannot be numbered.” You can never keep up with it all, can you? I mean just take cleaning a house. You clean it but what happens? There’s dust, there’s dirt, there’s use – all of these things take place so you’ve got to do it again, and again, and again, and again. It can’t be numbered.

“I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all *they* that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly...” So he wanted to experience everything in life. And he had the money to do it, he had the means to do it. So then he summed that up: “...I perceived that this also is vexation [frustration] of spirit. For in much wisdom *is* much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow” (Ecc. 1:1-18, KJV).

“I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also *is* vanity” (Ecc. 2:1, KJV). Now let’s see what happens, not only in a physical life, but in a spiritual life. See, and we can liken this to what Solomon did and also in our lives, but let’s see it not only in the experiment of the physical life that Solomon was going to do, which we’ll examine here in somewhat close detail, but also in our lives.

Now, let’s look at it this way... Now I’m reading to you from the book called *An Understandable History of the Bible* by Samuel Gipp. And he does a pretty good job of it, only he’s a King James Version only, which is a good translation. But as you know from the New Testament [*A Faithful Version*] it’s lacking in an awful lot of things. But never the less he’s talking about religious persuasion, or religious movements, or the start, the growth, the development and the decline of churches or religious movement. And we can liken that to a life. Now when we start out and we’re young and we’re strong and we’re vigorous, wow, we want to do everything that we can. Just like Solomon here, he wanted to do everything that he could. He wanted to check out everything himself. All right so let’s take this and apply it in many, many different ways: 1) to our personal lives; 2) to our personal church lives; 3) to the life of a church; 4) to the life of a nation. So it could apply to all.

Now he says here on page 157: “Every major religious persuasion follows a natural pattern which is nearly impossible to avoid a process that leads from seeing the glory of God to experiencing His judgment.” That means because of sin and transgression. And we can see that with Solomon. Did he not do that? Did he not start out with having God give him visions twice and talk to him through those visions to where he suffered the judgment of God and the separation of the kingdom? Yes.

“A religious movement begins in the form of a revival.” Now he says, “not a week long revival meeting, but a spiritual awakening which leads its followers away from the world’s system into Bible literalism.” This is exactly what happens when God calls us, right? There is a change, a calling, a spiritual awakening. And then you get all involved in the Bible and studying the Bible and knowing and understanding the Bible and that’s what we need to do, and we’re continually doing. Yes of course, without a doubt.

Now he says, “The Reformation is a good example of this. During the Reformation people drew near to the Bible, believed it literally, and the end result was a revival which swept across Europe and drew people out of the Roman Catholic system and ended up with the establishment of Lutheranism.”

And in that I might say it’s a shame that William Tyndale was martyred when he was. Had he lived (because he believed in keeping the commandments of God whereas Luther did not) perhaps Protestantism would have started out differently than it did. And there are indications in the writings of Tyndale that he was beginning to recognize the Sabbath and the holy days, because you see for twelve years he translated the New Testament and the Old Testament and worked virtually alone with exception of one or two helpers, so he was beginning to understand the Bible just like this. And then he was cut off prematurely by his martyrdom. So there’s the revival.

Now then step number two, the step following the revival is education. And that’s what we do, isn’t it? We teach, we teach, we learn, we grow, overcome. That’s what Solomon said he was going to do. He’s going to educate himself by experiment. And so likewise in our individual lives from the time that we’re born it’s one continuous education, isn’t it, until the time we die. But there is a period of intense education, being children and adolescence and teens and young adults to prepare for adult life. Then we’re ready to go out and work. Then we’re ready to go out and do things.

Now he’s drawing again the parallel with the Reformation, “The infant Reformation had nowhere to send its converts to learn the Bible correctly. There was nowhere for its future clerics to learn the doctrines taught by the Protestants.”

And right well so with the churches of God. So we can look at the churches of God, and I want you to especially look at what happened to the Worldwide Church of God because it describes it to a “T” in what happened to it.

“It certainly could not allow them to return to the Roman school of philosophy for their education, so the second step requires the founding of institutions of higher learning through which to train its preachers and teachers.”

Nothing wrong with that. We even find in the Bible that there were the schools of the prophets, don’t we? Yes. And we even find where Paul said that there is the room of the unlearned, there is the room of the learned.

Now of course in this there is an inherent weakness, “Though the positions of teaching can be captured by those, then those whom they teach can easily be led astray.” Ho, ho, ho! Now he’s talking about here the infiltration of Satan. And he said this is exactly what the Jesuits did in England, and it’s what is being done across America in Bible colleges that criticize the King James Bible. Well, they do more than that. Now they’re even questioning the existence of Jesus.

So then there’s a teaching. Now this tells us if there is not the right teaching, and if it’s not based upon right knowledge (and of course the Bible is the foundation of all knowledge) then things are going to go astray, aren’t they? And just like with Solomon, as we will see, as he was educating himself in life through the experimentation of life, what happened? He got led astray too. And he also had a thousand women helpers to lead him astray, too, didn’t he? Yes.

All right, third step, “The third step that any movement takes in an unstoppable descent toward destruction is to seek to develop culture.” In other words an establishment. “Once a movement has established itself and formed it’s own culture [and we’ve seen this too, haven’t we?] this process takes from 50 to 100 years.”

Now it took a little shorter time in Worldwide Church of God, Ambassador College. And Ambassador College was the cultural center for the Worldwide Church of God. Just like what is the cultural center for your church? Just like with the Mormons, the cultural center is Salt Lake City. So they have their buildings, they have their institutions, they have their colleges, they have everything that is set. And everything is set and you go with the flow. And if you don’t go with the flow then you’re going to get yourself in trouble. We’ll see this in just a little bit here.

“After this period of time the movement has proved to the world that it is not a fly-by-night outfit, but a force to be reckoned with.” And that’s exactly what happened with Worldwide Church of God. And that’s exactly what happened with the colleges. They wanted to prove to the world that we were just as good as the world in our education, and that was a fatal mistake. They should have stayed with teaching the Bible and turned out men and women who understood the Bible rather than trying to please the world and be accepted by the world, you see.

“Emphasis is put on beautiful buildings and stately college grounds. [Hello!] And the value of fine art is promoted. Ministers are restrained from using any incorrect grammar, and the gap between clergy and laity begins to widen. This was true of Lutheranism as it is also true today of Fundamentalism and is true today of the Evangelicalism.”

Amazing, isn’t it? This is the process. We can see this in individual life, we can see this in congregational life, we can see this in churches. This is why there is always a cycle. And this is why you find that same cycle within the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3.

Now continuing, “Fifty years ago a Fundamental preacher was considered an uneducated backwoods hick with no education, who was able to preach nothing more than hellfire and damnation.”

And there are still a lot of uneducated preachers out there thinking that they know everything and are still leading people astray.

“Today the world has awakened to the fact that Fundamentalism is a powerful force...”, and it’s coup de grace through evangelicalism is coming because they’re uniting with the Catholics to form a united political power in the United States today, and that is going to take them down.

“Fundamental churches are found to be the largest, fastest growing in the country. Television and magazine are producing special stories concerning the Fundamentalist movement, the election of Ronald Reagan [and we can say George Bush today, so we can update this publication here] in the United States in 1980 showed the amount of influence that Fundamentalism could wield. Fundamentalism has proved that it is here to stay and it is a force to be reckoned with.”

Now not only in the religious world, but also in the political world. And you see, that’s exactly what happened to the Worldwide Church of God. It became a force to be reckoned with, and it was reckoned with and it became corrupt.

“This acceptance produces a kind of home grown arrogance.” You think about all the claims that different men who still cling to this system, how arrogant they are setting themselves up as apostles of God. One man just recently proclaimed, “I am the prophet that you find that John spoke of in the book of John.” And I gave a sermon on it. No, Jesus was that prophet. There are several men who say that they are the apostles for the 21st Century. So their cycle is going to be short. You wait and see. Home grown arrogance. This is not a derogatory comment but simply the truth. See, because whenever we forget that as human beings we are nothing more than grass and vanity, and that we’ve got to look to God, and that we’re not important to ourselves, and that anything we do, if it is not according to the Word of God – done in humility and truth, led by the Spirit of God – you are going to go through the same thing.

“When the preachers of the Reformation graduated from basements and dungeons to the pulpits of the largest, fastest growing churches in Europe [and you could say the United States as well] they realized that they had fought their way to a great victory. As they saw their colleges grow and multiply they prided themselves in the job they had done.” [Read any past *Plain Truth* magazine. Read any past letters sent out from Pasadena.] “But the new found ease of life began to make subtle changes in them. They found themselves beginning to appreciate the finer things of life. A pastor who had been satisfied in the early days of the Reformation with a basement and one candle for light to preach by twenty-five years later found himself in a fine, clean, functional building. And his congregation grew and space was needed. The church built bigger buildings.” Amazing.

Preacher Olsteen down in Houston just this past summer had his first meeting in his brand new 16,000 seat church. He has arrived. Did not the church of God in Pasadena “arrive” when they had their buildings, and had their Auditorium – the supposed Temple of God? Yes. Have not the Mormons arrived? Have not the Baptists arrived? And the Catholics have been there all along, haven’t they? Yes, indeed.

“But new buildings pass from mere functional simplicity to a touch of elegance. Simple lights became chandeliers, and in time chandeliers became more ornate. Church ceilings became higher. The pews grew more comfortable. The windows saw the use of stained glass. The pastor found social acceptance in the community.” Or as Joel Olsteen, have been invited on Larry King Live, and... Wonderful!

“Each succeeding building was bigger and better, with more elegant masonry, even gold overlay. Leading universities taught preachers and people to appreciate the arts and sciences. Christians soon had a culture which was separate from the parallel to that of the world. This left the door open for the next and final step – apostasy.” And we will see that happens in individual lives, in local church congregations, and in whole bodies of believers.

“These preachers now became the clergy.” Unquestionable. “They were God’s anointed and demanded authority that such a title alluded to.” Where even one man said, “When I speak, you look upon me as God, as the commandment of God. My mere suggestion is a commandment of God because I bear the authority of God.” And I’ll just let you guess who that was. And that was not the Pope.

“Their separated lives and Biblical education led to a proud spirit of Pharisee-ism. The colleges expanded by training ministers covering a wider spectrum of occupations. Basic Bible courses were supplemented by a study of the arts. Men became more addicted to education and culture, but worst of all these Bible believers thought that they were immune to the adverse affects of culture. Certainly others have fallen prey to apostasy but ‘they were never Bible believers like we are.’ ” That’s why they apostatized. And when those who stood up for truth (and many there have been down through history like William Tyndale, like Martin Luther, like Huss, like others down through history, stood up for truth) they were branded as heretics and condemned. And we’ll see that that happened.

So those who remained then, “felt a sense of assurance that their earlier establishment on the Bible and it’s doctrines would inoculate them from the affects of apostasy.” You know, unless you continue to grow in grace and knowledge it will set in.

Now he concludes, “Revival is from God. Education is necessary for training the ministers of God, but culture is a product that appeals to the flesh. Once the flesh is allowed to offer its preferences apostasy, or lethargy sets in. Standards become a little more lax. College professors are hired according to their academic abilities first, and their spiritual convictions second.” We’ve seen that happen too, haven’t we? We’ve even seen

it happen in ministers standing in the pulpit, who when the pressure is put upon them act this way. And the question is: Where is Solomon, and where are they? Very interesting, isn't it? Now let's finish up here.

"Statements like, 'We must have the best. I want to be first class', are used to comfort fears of anyone who feels that churches and schools seem too worldly. Of course a school administrator might comfort himself by thinking, 'The average Christian doesn't understand our minute changes. They aren't educated like we are.' Then suddenly there appears a Christian with an open Bible who points out Scriptures which may condemn the new-found culture of a church or school, or the church hierarchy, or the church authority, or the preaching of false doctrines. The school amazingly finds itself in the same position as the Roman Catholic Church was at the Reformation, refuted by an ignorant Christian who simply believes the Bible."

So here we come back again to revival, right? That's why we need to keep the vision so we don't have to go through this cycle, you see.

"Now the question to be answered is: Which is to be our final authority – the school or the Bible?" Well, we can say not only the Bible, but the Word of God and the Spirit of God and how we lead our lives. "Time after time education has found to come too far to turn back. Or as one professor at Oxford explained, 'We are!' 'We are' came the answer from Harvard, Princeton, and Yale in America. 'We are' came the answer from Mercer, Viola, Wake Forest, Carson Newman of the Southern Baptist. 'We are' came the answer from Bob Jones University, Tennessee Temple Baptist Bible College, and others of the Fundamentalist. Education has conceived culture and given birth to apostasy, or lethargy."

So as we continue tomorrow through the book of Ecclesiastes, what is the cycle in your life and how do you cut this short?

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Feast of Tabernacles – Day 5- 2005

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