

In Search Of A Clear World View (Part Six)

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In one major area of life everybody seems to begin life equally. Everybody is born into an already existing world, we have absolutely nothing to do with creating, but after this beginning into what already exists, and we begin to interact with that, we begin to become very much different from all of those others who were born into the same world. Those already existing elements closest to us impact on us most profoundly, shaping us in what we are today, and of course two of those elements shaping us is our parents.

As we age we exert an ever-increasing amount of influence toward determining the use that we make of what the world around us makes available to us through the choices that we make. One of the most significant elements that we have confronting us is that we have been invited into contact with the Christian church, and it is unique, even among all the institutions created by God or allowed by Him to be created, it is a one of a kind.

When I say it is unique I mean it is **unique**. There are tens of thousands of churches but there is only *one* true church and it stands alone in this world. There is nothing else like it on earth in terms of purpose and destiny, because it is literally His Family being developed to inherit the earth.

The choices that we individually make are going to determine to a great extent what we eventually become. We cannot dodge the responsibility of making those choices, it is part of our life now and those choices that we make are going to impact upon our future, even as they may impact on us right away. If they are wrong choices they may dog us, if they are right choices they are good for us even though they may be difficult to continue to carry on with.

I am beginning a review of the major points of my Feast of Tabernacles series. That series did not cover any major technical spiritual issues like repentance, forgiveness of sin through the blood of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, heaven, hell, or any other major point of the gospel. Rather what I gave you was an overview of what I will call practical day to day concepts important to guiding and motivating our use of the technical spiritual teachings.

None of these four issues is complex and each of them is clearly contained within what Jesus verbally taught and showed by His example. You are free to put the concepts into

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whatever order of importance that you feel is good for you. I put them in the order that I gave them as they came into my mind as I was preparing to speak on them. Do not forget that the concepts are overviews that encompass other elements besides the main issue. They most certainly are not intended to be the whole picture.

The first was given near the beginning of Jesus' ministry. I want you to turn to Matthew 6. This point here came close to the beginning of the formation of what became the church of God. I emphasized that because I think that God inspired Jesus to put this point right at the beginning of His ministry. There is a great deal hanging on the choice that we make here.

Matthew 6:19-21 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is there your heart will be also."

The key words in this point are treasures and heart. This sets the theme of the subject material. The issue is spiritual in nature, it is not something having to do with anything that is physical at all except those physical things may impact on the spiritual.

Treasures indicate something that we value highly as important to us. Those two pronouns we and us, are the important parts there. That which we value highly, we strive to protect or add to so that we can have more. What we treasure we freely give our time and attention to. That is the major purpose of Jesus' use of the term in this context.

This should be important to us because what we treasure affects our heart. I want you to see what Jesus said about this in Matthew 15.

Matthew 15:18-19 "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication's, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."

We are beginning to see the development of an equation important to us. What we treasure is that which is closest to our hearts, and what is in our heart then affects the decisions that we make. So in biblical parlance, the heart gives birth to, and motivates,

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the attitudes and activities we engage in with our life. Some people treasure time and so they seek more time, others seek wealth so their activity is used to build more wealth.

The equation is easily understood. Placing high value on the right things and the use of our life is motivated to do activities needed to either accumulate or guard what we treasure. Treasuring our calling and the teachings of Jesus Christ is a responsibility each is charged with. This is accomplished by means of study, thoughtful meditation, comparing the understanding we have been freely given by God with what we have learned, experience, and foreseen from life in this world.

Where is life in this world headed, compared to where is life headed with what God has revealed to us? There is the question and that is what we have to decide between. If you make the right decision, you then are going to have to put a value on that. This is the basic question each person must answer for himself. The value of our calling must be thoroughly thought through and estimated by each one of us *individually*. Our calling is in some way of inestimable value, because we have never experienced it yet, but we have to think ahead and think about how much we already know—what is it worth?

Nobody can set that value for you, it is up to you, you cannot dodge this responsibility. You can put it off but eventually the answer to that is going to come around back to you. Every single one of us bear the full weight of determining how much our treasure is worth.

How much are you willing to give yourself to God in order to fulfill the responsibility that He puts before us? How much we are willing to give ourselves as a living sacrifice is going to be determined by how much we treasure what God has given to us.

That our calling is a significant treasure is without doubt. We can and we must teach each other, we can and we must encourage each other, we can and we must forgive each other, but when it comes to push and shove regarding the treasure, only you can make that decision. Nobody can remove it from your shoulders, and all the way to the end whether we make it in God's Kingdom or not, is going to be pretty much determined by how much we value what we have been given.

The equation is as follows: the value set on the treasure in turn motivates the heart to produce one's activities of attitude, words, and conduct. It is interesting that in that exact same context in which that appears, Jesus added that no one can serve two masters. He set an impossibility before us in order to force the valuation that we place on the treasure. It is going to be one or the other.

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As I said earlier, I think that Jesus or the Father planned this out, that right at the beginning of His ministry to those who are beginning to gather around Him and begin the formation of the church, this is what He put before them. *You* place the value on what you are hearing from Me in the way of teaching. You cannot dodge the responsibility, everybody has to make that valuation themselves.

As we grow in understanding and knowledge of God's way, we can actually increase the valuation as we go along, (this is the way it should be) but do not ever let it slip to become *less* valuable to you.

The second part of that series is that as our world view is directly tied to the value one places on the treasure we have been given, we must possess a clear understanding of the churches and the individuals overall responsibility to God.

Mark 1:14-15 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

Jesus, our Lord and Master and example, came teaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. He began the announcement of God's overall purpose to the world beginning in Galilee. His labors did not stop at that point because God began adding the number of disciples that were following Him.

In addition to that, His teaching to them expanded by means of His magnifying of the original teachings of the gospel which first attracted those who were forming around Him. He magnified them, that is, magnified the teachings, with more detail and specific teachings impacting on virtually every aspect of life.

Magnify means to make larger. In application to teaching it means to expand, to make deeper, and at the same time, clearer. Jesus magnification of the gospel begins in the Sermon on the Mount. I want you to go with me to the book of Isaiah where we will see a prophesy that was made by Isaiah in chapter 42.

Isaiah 42:21 The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness sake; He will magnify the law and make it honorable.

Isaiah 42:21 [New International Version] It pleased the Lord for the sake of His righteousness, [right doing] to make His law great and glorious.

This is what Jesus did in the Sermon on the Mount. He took the basic teachings and He began expanding it and made it far greater and far more glorious than it had been before in its basic element.

I want to teach you something about the word law there in Isaiah 42:21. The Hebrew word for law is Torah. The word law is not the first definition of the word Torah, the primary definition of the word Torah is teaching, law is actually secondary. God's law is a revelation, God's teaching is a revelation, it is an enlightenment, it is a guide, and what does God's law reveal to us? It reveals to us what is right and what is wrong. We call it law, and it kind of gets a bad name from it. When we hear the word law, we want to shrink away from it and we think of pain. No, it is a revelation of what is right and what is wrong.

Put this definition back into the book of Matthew once again because in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is making clear, He is revealing to us, He is showing us what is right and what is wrong in a far more detailed fashion than just the Ten Commandments hanging all by themselves.

This leads to something else. It is a step in the responsibility of the church (because we are looking at the responsibility of the church), we become a part of the church, we have a responsibility. If we are going to succeed in what we are doing, that is moving toward salvation, we have to know what the church's responsibility is before God, because if you are in the church it is your responsibility.

Jesus was clearly referred to in other places in the Bible as Rabbi. Rabbi means teacher, that is what they called Him, He was a teacher. We will make a connection here in Ephesians 1. Paul refers to Jesus as being the head, and the church as being the body of Jesus Christ. The church Paul says, fills Him out, that is completes, Jesus Christ.

The strong inference from that metaphor is this: that the church continues on with the same basic work and pattern as Jesus began. We are zeroing in on the churches responsibility before God.

The apostle Paul clearly identifies the church as being a teaching institution. It is a teaching institution and it too, like Christ, has a responsibility of preaching the gospel to the world, but in addition it also teaches itself, thus helping each other prepare for the arrival of the Kingdom of God on earth. In other words, the church magnifies the basics of the gospel. As Jesus magnified in the Sermon on the Mount, the church gives to its

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own members a tremendously varied magnification of the very basics of God's way of life.

I Corinthians 12:18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

This gives us a pretty good indication that everybody is purposely called, it is not a hit or miss thing. God is directing things in an organized manner and He picks and chooses to place people in the body of Jesus Christ, just as surely as He picks and chooses where every part of your body is located within you.

You were not created by God in a haphazard way, with the pieces all just suddenly flying together. The liver is where it is suppose to be, the kidneys are where they are suppose to be, the stomach is right where God appointed it to be, and you as a part of the spiritual body of Jesus Christ are placed exactly where God wants you to be.

Ephesians 4:10-13 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. And He Himself [Jesus Christ] gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, [not the ministry, rather the work of service] for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Every part of the spiritual body is equipped by God to serve the church. That is what this metaphor is telling us. Our calling was not an accident, it did not just happen out of the blue. Your being placed in the body is done by a masterful Creator. He not only puts us in the body, He equips us to perform a service for that body. That is the responsibility that everybody has to think about, and use his time and effort in serving the body in some way so that the whole can perform the responsibility as a body in behalf of God.

In order for us to be as successful as we possibly can in this that He has done for us, we not only have to treasure what we have been called to do, we also have to understand that our responsibility is to work in behalf of the body that He has put us within. As we work within that body, just like our stomach does and our lungs do, we are performing a function that is preparing us for the Kingdom of God.

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These things are not hard to figure out but they are good to keep in mind, because these are things that help us make sure that our path toward the Kingdom of God is in the right direction and that we are doing the right things.

The second part of our world view is that the church is clearly a teaching institution preaching to the world, and expanding on that teaching for the spiritual growth of itself. Each member must support that teaching and use it toward overcoming his spiritual deficiency.

There was some overlap in my messages from one sermon to another, sometimes some of the things got blurred, but the third message began by involving the reality that the world contains many organizations calling themselves Christian churches. This point becomes exceedingly important in terms of keeping our mind unconfused and pointed in the right direction, because there is a lot of competition out there.

According to the Catholic Church, thirty-three thousand different denominations have formed since Martin Luther broke away from the Catholic Church. They are not all in existence any longer, most of them have passed from the scene and are no longer with us actively within the world. However, I understand that there are several hundred that have broken away from the Worldwide Church of God. That is something to pray about.

Jesus stated that His church is a little flock. He also stated that it would continue right on existing, the gates of the grave would not prevail against it, that it would never die out. True to His word, that church that He began continues to this day, but the world seemingly counts that there are somewhere close to one billion people calling themselves Christians in the world today.

Here in the book of Luke it gives you evidence to what Jesus called it. He said,

Luke 12:32 "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

One billion people does not seem to me like a little flock, that is a lot of people. That is over three times the population of the United States of America. Here is the question: how can one identify that one, seemingly very-limited-number group, in the midst of this mass of one billion people? No one can convince me that there are really a billion Christians, so that true church must be pretty small compared to one billion.

If you were looking at a crowd of one billion people and out of that one billion there

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would be one small group of people that really was the true church, how can you identify it? By watching them in action! In a way this is again our responsibility. Your eternal life depends upon you identifying as much as you possibly can, as close as you can, and hopefully you can hit it right on the nail head as to which one is actually the true church. I am not talking about there is only one congregation. I am just talking about church that might have many, many congregations within it.

What Jesus said clearly infers that there is only one body of true believers. Jesus never said, I will create My churches, He said, I will create My *church*. He is clearly telling us there is only one group. It is likely that the one group is scattered all over the world, so where is it? We want to make the effort to make sure that we are a part of that group.

We know from Revelation 2 and 3 that the end time church is far from perfect, but there still remains a way to identify the true church if one believes that God means what He says, and we of course do believe that.

Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

So far there are two markers and they are important. One is that the church will be keeping the commandments of God, and the second marker is that that church will have the testimony of Jesus Christ. I think that you know from your own experience that having those two markers we ought to be able to fairly clearly identify who it is that we are looking toward.

We just heard Martin talking about this world attempting to make Sunday the day of worship, a day that everybody is off, because everybody it seems, agrees that Sunday is the day of worship, If that true church is keeping the fourth commandment, which they will be doing because they are identified as commandment keepers, you know that they will not be keeping Sunday as a day of worship. That is going to eliminate the overwhelming majority, perhaps a percentage of 98 or 99 percent of all of the groups that exist out there.

You know that the fourth commandment also includes the holy days as well, so when you put the weekly Sabbath together with the holy days, you have cleaned house considerably as to pointing out, making clear, where the true church is.

Notice how clearly this identifies. The dragon was enraged with the woman and he went

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to make war with the rest of her offspring. All of the offspring were not in one place. That needs to be taken into consideration, that one church is scattered, even in this narrow context they were at least in two different places—one that Satan was chasing after, the other apparently in a place where they were safe and secure, and made so by God.

I think that we can understand that to this day the church has not been taken to a place of safety, the church is scattered, perhaps in a world wide way. So that makes identification in a way a bit more difficult, but one of them is that they keep the commandments. That is one that you can rely upon.

Please turn to Isaiah 43. It supplies support to how important this particular point of identifying the true church is.

Isaiah 43:10 “You are My witnesses, says the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me.”

This is important to you and me because that church is the witness that God has placed on earth of Him. We witness to the world of God. Where that church is, is going to be witnessing for God.

The book of Acts gives one narrow example of how the church does this.

Acts 18:26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

I just picked this verse out because of the word ‘way.’ It is important in regard to what John said earlier, in Revelation 12:17 that the true church is not only keeping the commandments but it also has the testimony of Jesus Christ.

What is testimony? Testimony is verbal evidence that is given to identify, or it could be considered as verbal evidence given in a trial, a person who is being drilled in a trial is giving his testimony. Life is a trial for you and me. Life was a trial for Jesus Christ. But as we are under trial, as it were, the church will give the same testimony that Jesus Christ did, that is of God's truth. It will give major evidence regarding God's truth.

The reason I turned to Acts 18:26 is because that testimony became the teaching of the

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way of God. This is how it is approach in the book of Acts, the church preached the way of God. Now let us get the apostle Paul's approach on this.

Acts 20:25-27 “And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.”

I do not know whether you get it but I will tell you. The true church will have the whole counsel of God. It does not mean that we know everything, but we will give a complete picture that no other church on earth will even begin to come close to what the true church knows, understands, preaches, and does. So on the one hand it will be preaching the way of God, giving the whole counsel of God that it has available to the world, and at the same time it will be living it by keeping the commandments of God.

We have a double barreled proof to make us understand which church it is out there among the thousands that is preaching the truth, that is the true church. That puts a burden on us. It means that we have to be sure of what that truth is.

Paul could say that he preached the whole counsel of God. John Ritenbaugh cannot say that he preaches the whole counsel of God. I am no Paul, no apostle, I am a teacher and I can give you what I have, but I cannot go beyond that until I learn more. What I have learned I will give to you.

This ought to be a value that is constantly increasing as we go along, but there they are. It is not just the keeping of the commandments, the keeping of the commandments is the fruit of having the whole counsel of God, the testimony of Jesus Christ, the spin off is the way we live it.

You can see that many of the churches out there might be a nice social organization, filled with nice people, but they do not have anywhere near the whole testimony of Jesus Christ, and to back that up they are not keeping the commandments of God either. The one affects the other. The true church will have both, and it is doing both.

First point was that we have to treasure things pertaining to God. Second point was we have to know our responsibility. Third point was we have to know where the true church is and be absolutely confident that we are a part of it, and that we can identify churches that might be very nice people, but they are not the truth.

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Number four is a rather large one. The members of the true church do not conduct life believing that major portions of God's Word is done away. The members truly give of themselves to God for whatever use He might make of them. This becomes more important as we move on to the fourth point, which I feel is necessary for our world view. It is drawn from an admonition that Jesus gave to His apostles the last night that He was alive in garden of Gethsemane when He woke Peter out of a thought that he was having, that he was going to do battle for Christ.

Satan and his demons are enemies, I do not think there is any doubt about that. They are an almost constant harassment and a problem in themselves. An even more difficult challenge to our conversion is coming through the world, the anti God organized system that Satan and his demons have created, and its influence is through a very strong negative spirit. That is why I went into such detail about that word course in Ephesians 2:2.

We were born in this world, we were educated by it, our carnal character is largely formed by it, and we work within it. Romans 8:7 says that because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. The carnal mind is that mind that was educated from the time that we were born until God began to call us. It was educated in the world, it is a worldly mind, and that worldly mind is an ever-present reality influencing us to return to the world as its slave.

Its spiritual influence is accomplished by means of the fact that our carnal mind, which is enmity against God, feels very comfortable within the world, and it yearns to return to it, therefore there has to be in us a very sharp awareness of this influence. We must be respectful of its pull as we move on.

Toward the end of my previous sermon on this subject, I asked this question, "How did this culture, this particularly American culture that we live in, come to be?" I asked this because, among the end time remnants of the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I judge that the American people are burdened with living within what I believe is a more deceptively intense culture than the other nations of Israelitish people.

Why do I feel this way? I think what I have said is true. It is because none of the other Israelitish nations was proclaimed right from its beginning, just two hundred and thirty years ago, as a Christian nation. Have you every heard of France being called by themselves as a Christian nation? How about Germany? I do not think even Britain does it, but we have grown up in this and we brag about it, that we are a Christian nation from this nation's birth.

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If you think that has not had an impact on you, I think you better begin to think this through more thoroughly. Right from the very beginning, many biblical principles were built right into the Constitution, to such an extent that one of its main founders, John Adams, even stated in writing that the Constitution was framed *only* for a Christian people. One of the founders, he called this a Christian nation—he inferred it so strongly it cannot be avoided.

The United States, according to this founder, has been a Christian nation from the very beginning, and those men formed the Constitution in such a way that it has huge chunks of Biblical principles in it. He penned that because he feared that holding fast to the liberties that the Constitution permitted required self-discipline that non-Christians would take advantage of to their own ends and destroy the culture that was being established for the American people.

The thought of being a Christian nation, though untrue, exists to this day. You can see this almost every day if you are surfing the Internet. It exists to this day. The problem is that the so-called Christianity has left numerous false impressions on our mind and character, and therefore our belief system, conduct, and attitude, and those things must be swept aside and overcome following conversion.

I do not know if you believe this or not but, I am going to prove it to you. This happened during the ministry of Jesus Christ as well. It is right in the Book that this can happen to a nation. Being born in this situation puts us into a peculiar situation in that we witness what we sincerely thought was Christianity being ripped to shreds. This truth demands of us that we must be ever more thoughtful to seek out the truth.

Matthew 18:21-22 Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”

Where in the world did Peter ever get that concept? I will tell you where it came from. It was commonly accepted by those people who had been taught by the Sadducees, and especially by the Pharisees, that there was just a limited amount of times that you are to forgive somebody. Jesus *blasted* that idea to smithereens. He basically said, you never quit forgiving.

Peter got that idea from whom? He got it from those who were preaching to him before Jesus ever showed up and taught him the truth. Where in the world did we get our ideas

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of what Christianity is except in almost exactly the same way as Peter got the spiritual ideas that he had in his head? We got them from this so-called Christian teaching that we grew up with.

This is why I began this sermon the way that I did. We are all born, in a sense, equal, but we are born into a already-formed culture that is going on, and as we begin to age, this culture is teaching us left and right all of the factors that this culture is being operated on, and one of those factors is religion.

We are facing the same kind of thing that Jesus faced when He began preaching His magnification of the law of God. Peter was wrong. God says to keep on forgiving—always being in that attitude, ready to forgive somebody that had done something against you. Who was right? Jesus or the Pharisees? You get the point. You grow up in a “Christian” nation and every single one of us have gotten a very large number of ideas from the spiritual element in this culture and they are wrong.

Look at the Sabbath. Look how wrong they are about that. How about the holy days? How about Christmas, Easter, Halloween, demons, you name it, and this Christianity has very much wrong. Are you ready to evaluate yourself according to the truth of God, or according to what you and I picked up in this culture that we have lived in from the time we were born?

This is why I am telling you that I have concluded that Americans face a problem that the other Israelitish people do not face to the same intensity. Ever since we were born we were taught that we are a Christian nation when we are not. We have the name but we do not have the spirit.

This is why anybody heading toward the Kingdom of God within the culture of the United States of America is hit with a special problem, a specially intense problem, because there is the possibility that we sincerely think that what we are thinking and the way we are acting is right, when it does not fit within the testimony of Jesus Christ. It is something that requires a great deal of thoughtfulness and meditation, and it is going to be slow in terms of us learning, because theses things are deeply bound within us.

Matthew 16:5-12 And when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.” And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “It is because we have taken no bread.” But when Jesus perceived it, he said to them, “O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?”

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Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but you should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

We face the same challenge, only it is not the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, it is the leaven of all of those organizations out there calling themselves Christians, and they are not. We grew up in it, and we have absorbed it as we were growing up, so like Peter had to overcome what he thought was truth right out of the Bible, others have had to go through this same process. Jesus was such an irritation to those two religious party leaderships, because He was constantly correcting their teaching, they eventually decided to put Him to death rather than to change.

How much do we yet carry of today's Christian leadership and their doctrinal leaven? Are we following God's commandments? Or the commandments of men? Because that is what the Pharisees were doing and that is exactly what Jesus labeled it, the commandments of men—claiming they are Christians and they lead or have led people falsely, claiming to be what they are not.

What is happening, you can read it right in the scripture. That spiritual history is repeating itself in all of the Israelitish nations, but none so strongly as it is here because of the long American history of proclaiming itself as a Christian nation from its very founding.