

## Faith, Hope, And The Worship Of God (Part Three)

### A Calendar Application

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There is perhaps nothing more important in life than the worship of God. Despite its importance, our culture forces us to most frequently think of worship in terms of what one does in a religious service. But worship is far broader than that, because worship is the giving of homage to God. Worship is the action of paying respect, of giving respect, of giving tribute to Him. It is the paying of reverential deference, obeisance, and thus it reaches out to encompass our every act in reference to our relationship with Him, and not merely what one does in services on Sabbath and holy days, or even in prayer and Bible study each day.

The emphasis here is on *action, giving, serving, obeying, paying*. These are all aspects of worshipping God. Worship thus can describe how we respond to Him on the job, at home, in our marriage, how we drive our cars, because the deference, the respect that we give Him in each and every area of life reflects how seriously we take Him. By worship we show how important being like Him and pleasing Him really is to us. Worship reveals the value that we place on our relationship with Him.

This sermon is going to be on faith, hope, and the worship of God, and it is going to touch on the calendar for a period of time as well. We are going to begin with three of the most basic scriptures regarding faith.

**Ephesians 2:8** For by grace are you saved through faith.

**Hebrews 11:1** Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

**Romans 10:17** So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

I am going to give you one verse on hope. We do not look at it very often.

**Romans 8:24** For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for?

It says in Ephesians 2:8 that we are saved by grace, and that states faith's overall importance to salvation.

Hebrews 11:1—"Faith is the foundation of things hoped for"—confirms *why* it is so important. Everything built or developed in our relationship with God depends upon faith in Him.

And Romans 10:17: "the faith that saves" is generated through hearing and receiving the words of God about God and His purpose.

Now faith can be generated from many things. A false message will even generate things, and we will believe it, but only the faith generated from God's Word matters in this relationship.

The first phrase in Romans 8:24 is poorly translated—"For we are saved by hope." There is one word in there that could be better used. It should read, "We are being saved *in* hope." Now Paul is not contradicting Ephesians 2:8. Rather here in Romans 8:24 he is indicating that salvation is a continuous, ongoing process. The whole package does not happen all at once, but rather that through the whole process we continue in hope. We are being saved *in* hope. It is a necessary part of the process that is going on, and we need hope all the way through it—all the way to the end.

When we are young our hopes usually center around toys of some sort. Dolls or bicycles or video games are the kind of things that children naturally hope for. As we get older we still hope, but what we hope for gradually changes to things like maybe an automobile, or clothing, or even a friendship with someone, or acceptance in some group that we admire. We hope that a team that we favor wins. We hope to graduate first from high school, and then from college, and then we hope for a good job. We hope that we will meet the right person to marry and have a family with.

As we continue to age, and our experiences broaden, hopefully we mature in our thinking, and we become concerned about the way things are in the

world, and we wonder why there is so much conflict, and we hope for peace. We wonder why there are so many horrible diseases, and we hope we do not get them. We hope for cures. We wonder why there are so many disasters ravaging life and property all over the world, and we hope that they do not touch us.

As we continue to age, our own mortality affects us far more seriously than when we were young, and we begin to seriously wonder about God, hoping that we have a good relationship with Him, and that relationship becomes much more important. We hope that this life is not all there is, because it can really be a bummer. We hope to go to the Place of Safety. We hope for eternal life, or as we say, "to be in God's Kingdom."

Now hoping comes easily because all of our faculties, all of our senses—our sense of sight, our sense taste, our sense of smell, our sense of hearing, and our sense of touch—are geared to set a perceived value on multitudes of things, and hope for the things that we consider best to us.

And so we see something beautiful, and we hope that we will see something beautiful again. We smell a fragrance that maybe sets off a chain of references and raises nostalgic memories within us. Or we hear a piece of music and it does the same thing, and we hope that we will experience that kind of pleasure and thrill once again. We taste food, and we hope that we get to taste something that tastes so good again. And we touch something, or somebody touches us, and it gives us a sense that we hope that that kind of thing happens again.

But there is a very important issue in all of this hope, and that is that the bottom line—the single most important factor on whether what we hope for is accomplished and becomes a reality in our life—is the substance (we are touching on Hebrews 11:1 here), the ground, the assurance, the evidence, the proof that we will have what it is that we hope for. Without solid evidence, one has little or no reality for his hopes, and they are merely wishes, ephemeral daydreams.

Many hopes pass through our mind, and as quickly as they form they are just as quickly put out, because we know that they are impossible. You might hope that tomorrow you would have a million dollars in your hands, and if

you did your mind starts generating things like, "I could do this. . ." "I could buy such and such a house." "I could have such and such a car." "I could pay off all my debts." "I could get beautiful clothing." And on and on it goes. But you know it is just a pipe dream. It is not going to happen because there is absolutely no evidence whatever, no possibility that such a thing will occur.

Do you know what the result of such hoping is? We will take no steps to make it happen. In order for a hope to be accomplished, to become something that we actually possess, it must be accompanied by a conviction, something of substance, a proof produced from a reality to even continue to hope and to motivate us to work toward accomplishing what it is that we hope for.

When I was a boy, every year one of the fraternal organizations in the town that I lived near raffled off a shiny new automobile, usually a Buick for the adults, and a glitzy Schwinn bicycle for the kids—one boy's and one girl's. The bicycle was usually metallic maroon, or metallic blue. Sometimes it was metallic green. It was usually two-tone. It was usually equipped with a battery-operated light right on the front fender, and a battery-operated horn right in the framework in the middle. Some of those bicycles even had radios on them, mounted on the handlebars.

Every year I would look at that bike and it would almost make me cry because I would look at mine which my dad bought from a kid who lived about a half a mile away from us, and he had put it together from about three or four other bikes. It was multi-colored. It was more than two-tone, but boy, it did not look good. It did not even have any fenders on it. The chain was always coming off the sprocket. This was when I was younger, before I could fix them myself, and I felt in my mind very good, justifiable reasons for desiring to have a better one.

But there was a catch! I could not afford the cost of a ticket, which cost ten cents. I could not even afford to buy one ticket. Therefore, I had no evidence whatever, no assurance, no conviction that I could ever win that bike. There was absolutely no reason for hope, and so the hope of possessing one of those beautiful Schwinn bicycles was usually put out of mind, only to be replaced by a bad attitude because I was so poor.

There has to be proof for our hopes, or they are nothing but a wish, they are nothing but a dream, they are nothing but our own imagination. We are dealing here with a process that is very important to spiritual health and well-being and eternal life, because God's Word tells us that faith is the substance, the ground, it is the assurance of things hoped for. It is even the title-deed of things hoped for. It is the evidence of things not seen. It also tells us that the only faith that God will accept comes—proceeds—from His own Word. So faith—the conviction, the assurance that enables hopes that pertain to our relationship with God—must come from God's Word.

And just as surely as only a raffle ticket bought from that particular fraternal organization on that particular bicycle on that particular year was valid, the only reason that we can have hope rests upon whether God has *said* anything about the things that we hope for. Only a true conviction that comes from God's Word is valid, that our hopes pertaining to God and His promises have reason to be fulfilled.

And as to any hope of eternal life, every shred of hope we have absolutely rests on the faithfulness of God in keeping His promises. His Word is always true, and that is where conviction should rise from. His Word is *always* true. Now if there is no God, or if He lies, or if He is careless in any way, then we have no foundation whatever for our hope, and that kind of faith is absolutely baseless. It is nothing more than wishful thinking. Everything, therefore, depends on the fact that He has spoken, and whatever He says is true.

Now if we have heard nothing on a particular subject from Him, we have nothing to believe. There is no law for or against. His Word is law. There is therefore no legitimate reason for anything except human faith or human emotion. We can place no hope in what does not exist, and all we are doing is exercising our imagination.

I want you to apply this truth to the calendar issue which plays a part in our hopes for a good relationship with God.

Where did you ever read in God's Word about postponements? Well, you did not. In other words, there is no biblical revelation from God that says either you must have them, or you shall not have them.

Now that is not the only rule that is missing. A calendar is a precise instrument requiring many precise and strictly followed rules in order for it to operate consistently. And God nowhere says that it has to be simple either. The calendar is *not* simple. It cannot be simple, because the heavens are not operating simply. There is a fairly high level of complexity in trying to reconcile the movements of earth, sun, and moon, and especially so if you are trying to do this for a work operating on a worldwide basis.

I have some quotes that I am going to give to you. The first one is from *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Volume I, Page 814, under the article "Calendars," and the sub-heading: Ancient Israelite and Early Jewish:

One may assume that the ancestors of Israel and the early Israelites themselves followed some sort of calendar (or calendars), but the extant sources do not permit one to determine what its (their) nature may have been. [Catch this:] No part of the Bible, or even the Bible as a whole, presents a full calendar. Information about these matters must be gleaned from occasional—often incidental—references to dates, days, months, seasons, and years.

The next quote is from the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Volume I, Page 483, article: "Calendar":

The Hebrews and early Christians did not possess a published and widely authoritative calendar similar to those in general use today. The present Jewish calendar is a crystallization of a long process of calculation and controversy carried on not only in the century since the first published Jewish calendar (4<sup>th</sup> century AD), but during the ages preceding it as well. Thus, modern students of the Bible should realize that it is not possible to speak of a biblical calendar. A widely accepted pattern of time-reckoning there certainly was, but in the biblical periods, this was in the process of continual change and experimentation.

There is no calendar in the Bible. God has not spoken to give us a complete set of rules in His word.

From *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, article: "Calendars":

When regard is had to the sun's motion alone, the regulation of the years and distribution of the days into months may be effected without much trouble, i.e., the Gregorian Calendar. [It is simple. It is easy.] But the difficulty is greatly increased when it is sought to reconcile solar and lunar periods [That is the kind of calendar that is used to place the holy days on. It is generally called a luni-solar or lunar-solar calendar.], or to make the sub-divisions of the year depend on the moon and at the same time to preserve the correspondence between the whole year and the seasons.

Now how difficult is it? Listen to this quote.

*Religious Holidays and Calendars* by Kelly, Dresser, and Ross. They state:

The fact is that the movements of the sun and moon do not neatly coincide with the calendar systems of any human civilization.

From Goudsmit and Clairborne in their book *Time*:

Ingenious calendars have been devised, but a fully accurate solution cannot be found because the problem of reconciling the days, months and years is really insoluble. It is impossible to produce a perfect lunar-solar calendar.

Now many of these people who are writing books like *Religious Holidays and Calendars* and Goudsmit and Clairborne and their book, *Time*, are astronomers who spend their lifetimes dealing with things of this nature, and they say that a calendar of this nature is an impossible situation. And yet we have people in the church of God who have little background in this precise discipline, producing their versions of the calendar that they want everybody in the church to follow. It is my judgment that this is misdirected zeal.

Let me give you just a simple example of an insoluble calendar problem. Much is made by some that the feasts must be kept in their season. Brethren, that is an actual, literal impossibility in a worldwide work, because those in the southern hemisphere are always going to be out of sync with those who

are in the northern hemisphere. When it is spring in Jerusalem in the northern hemisphere, it is fall in South Africa, New Zealand, and Australia. They celebrate Passover in the fall. Now are those in the southern hemisphere sinning every year when they keep the feast out of season?

Now tell me: Where does God designate in His Word that calendrical time on earth must be measured from Jerusalem? He does not. That rule is not in the Bible. That is an assumption that the calendar makers are making. Now it might be what we would call a good assumption, but it is still an assumption. God has not spoken directly on that. And those men who are producing these calendars—some of them anyway—know this. They know that God does not speak on it, because they take the liberty of moving the designation from Jerusalem to Greenwich, England's International Dateline, moving it several hours away from Jerusalem on the clock.

Then there are others who have floating datelines, the difference that differs each and every month. This may be sincere and well-intentioned, but they are doing this on their own authority. They are making personal and private judgments in areas God has not given a specific command, and then trying to persuade the church to follow their lead.

The authority for them to do that is not given in the Scriptures. God does not tell us precisely whether to use the actual conjunction during which the moon is not visible, and thus is dark. He does not tell us the first faint crescent. The Bible does not tell us it has to be either one or the other. He does not tell us when or where to intercalate, i.e., the 13<sup>th</sup> month, and *when* it must be intercalated—the cycle. He does not tell us whether to use the barley harvest in Jericho, or Dan.

Now I'm just saying these things because there are many more rules needed, especially for the mathematical aspects of the calendar. You may think that these examples that I have given you are simplistic, but I have purposely kept it that way because I want us to see that even the most commonly accepted aspects of the calendar are based upon assumptions in many cases. A calendar is a precise instrument, and you cannot create a calendar based upon assumptions.



I have been shown eight different calendars, and I understand that a ninth one is in the works, all of these emanating from within the church of God, except for one, and that is the calculated Hebrew Calendar that we have been using all of these years. Each one of these calendars is different in some way because the private judgments being made by the creator of the calendar put more or less weight on different biblical assumptions.

Now what God *does* reveal in His Word is, "What advantage has the Jew? Much every way. Chiefly unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:1-2).

Just to add to this a little bit, in Genesis 49:10 we have these prophecies regarding the children of Jacob and what they would be doing in the end time.

**Genesis 49:1** And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.

Are we in the last days? I certainly hope we are. Verse 10 tells us what Judah is going to be doing in *the last days*.

**Genesis 49:10** The sceptre [the symbol of rulership] shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

That perfectly coordinates with Romans 3:2. The oracles of God have been committed to the Jews. It is their responsibility to preserve them and to pass them on. So the preservation of the oracles (the sayings of God) has not been given even to the church.

Now there is a serious thing occurring here:

**Judges 17:6** In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

We might say the king is dead. I am referring to Herbert Armstrong. The apostle is dead. Certain people immediately took off and began changing things, and this is nothing more than a continuation of what was begun through them. Now are we to copy what these people in the book of Judges did? Is every man free to do what is right in his own eyes in regard to the calendar?

I want you to understand that I am not talking merely about setting a date on a calendar. If you use a calendar to make an appointment, that does not change the calendar. What I am talking about are the misunderstanding and the changing of the rules that determine the underlying calendar itself.

From what I have given you so far in this sermon, what does this indicate that those who assume to make their own calendars have their faith in? Since God has not given the rules in His Word, their faith cannot be very firmly planted there. So it indicates to me then in regard to this issue, it is not in God, because it is a deviation from what we received from Him through an apostle, and over 1600 years of church history, and more importantly, what is clearly stated in Romans 3:2.

I want you to back there to Romans 3:

**Romans 3:3** For what if some did not believe?

Whom is he talking about here? He is talking about the Jews.

**Romans 3:3-4** Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yes, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That you might be justified in your sayings, and might overcome when you are judged.

Do you understand what this is saying? Let me change a couple of words here. I am not twisting the scripture in any way here in this change. If you want to look this scripture up in modern translations, you will find that I am going to translate it the way that *they* have translated it now, because the

word "unbelief" here, or "did not believe," is somewhat misleading to us. It is not wrong; it just does not convey what Paul is trying to get across here as clearly as it could.

"For what if some were not faithful?" What if some Jews were not faithful? "Shall their faithlessness or unfaithfulness make the faithfulness of God without effect? God forbid."

There are two things that I want you to get out of this. First of all Paul does not say that all Jews were unfaithful. He said *some*. There is a tendency in almost everyone of these papers that I read on the calendar to jump on the Jews as though every single one of them just lived to try to deceive Christians, and to twist and pervert the way of God. Now maybe many of them did, but not *all* of them did. In fact, some are so strong in this, I think that if that got out into the public, they would be accused of anti-Semitism in their writings. Not all Jews were unfaithful. Some were.

The second thing that I want you to get out of this is, it says that the issue regarding the sayings of God and His way of life does not depend on the faithfulness of the Jews, but rather on the faithfulness of God. "Let God be true, but every man a liar." Regardless of what the Jews do, GOD WILL BE FAITHFUL! It is impossible for Him *not* to be faithful. God is not a liar.

That brings us then to a fundamentally important question: How are we to worship God so that He is pleased?

I am going to give you an answer out of the Scriptures, and then we are going to look a little bit further. Go back to Hebrews 11 again. First I will give you the answer, and then we are going to look at an example. It will take us a little while to get to the example.

**Hebrews 11:6** But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Without faith it is impossible to please God. We are to worship God by, in, and through faith in what He reveals—by, in, and through faith anchored in what He reveals. We are to worship Him by faith in His sovereignty. We are

to worship Him by faith in His providence. We are to worship Him by faith in His faithfulness, and He gives us more than enough evidence to enable us to grasp how and where these things are shown to us so that we can worship Him in faith, if we will receive it.

That last part is very important. Even though He makes the evidence available so that our hopes can really be solid, if we do not receive what He says, it does us no good. The Israelites did *not* receive what He said all the time, and that is why He said that they were stiff-necked.

Now let us go back to Jeremiah 7.

**Jeremiah 7:21-24** Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice ["obey My sayings"], and I will be your God, and you shall be my people: and walk you in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear [they did not receive it], but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.

They came up with their own ideas. They invented—created—ways of worshipping God out of their own minds rather than turning back to God the very things that He said to them.

**Jeremiah 7:25** Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them.

God was on the job through His prophets continuously, and yet people have told me, "Well, it's no little thing if God keeps His people in the dark regarding a calendar for fifty or seventy-five years." That is not what God says. That is not His pattern. That is not His way. He does not hide His way at all. He makes it readily available to His children.

**Jeremiah 7:26-27** Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers. Therefore you shall speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to you: you shall also call unto them; but they will not answer you.

This series of verses encapsulates why Israel's relationship with God was so stormy and divisive. They did not give back to Him what He said to do. Will we repeat their example? We are not condemned to do so. We are free though to choose the same way that they decided to go.

Let us look back in the New Testament at a very vivid contrast to this. Go to Romans 4, as Paul advances the case that he is making here in the book of Romans. We will lead up to it by reading verse 1.

**Romans 4:1-3** What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he has whereof to glory; but not before God. For what says the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Now unlike the progeny that developed out of Abraham, Abraham believed God—put the emphasis on the word *God*—and that is what set him apart. This is what motivated him to obey God. He believed God, not other men, nor even himself. There is even a case there, where Paul in I Corinthians 4 (as a modern translation has translated it) says, "I don't even trust myself!" Our thinking is not always right. God's thinking and God's Word IS always right. The reason I say this about Abraham is that his belief in God, his knowing God, his knowledge of God, brought all of his own imagination into question as to whether it was really in harmony with God.

I want you to flip your minds back to Genesis 22. That is the chapter in which God proved—tested—Abraham by saying to Abraham, commanding Abraham, "I want you to take your son, your only son, and you're to go to Mount Moriah, and there you are to slay him." "Kill him." "Sacrifice him."

I used those terms because God's own Word, the sixth commandment, says "You shall not kill." Now here was God telling Abraham to kill his son. You

talk about an anomaly being created and his faith being put on the line. This God he thought he knew well had earlier instructed him that he was not to offer his son in sacrifice to any idol, to any false god whatsoever, because that was not in line with the nature of God. Abraham understood this. His faith was really put on the line when this God told him to slay his own son.

Do not think that Abraham's own mind did not go through a bunch of mental gymnastics trying to reconcile this anomaly between a God who says, "Don't kill," and a God who tells you to go and kill your son. I am going through this because I want you to see in regard to the calendar that what God provides for us is not always clear to us, but He has His reasons for doing what He does. Was Abraham really free to change the circumstance that God had provided him with if he was going to be faithful to that God? I dare say not.

I do not know whether you ever saw the movie "The Bible," and I do not know whether these people depicted this as accurately as they could have, but I think that they caught the essence of the kind of mental gymnastics, the stress that this surely would have put Abraham under. They portrayed him in that movie as him starting out to go to Mount Moriah, but he was arguing with God a great deal of the way there. "God, how could you require this of me?" You know how in movies they kind of have to put action into things in order to get across a point.

I know that this is somewhat at least fairly close to the truth, because Hebrews tells me,

**Hebrews 11:17-19** By faith Abraham, when he was tried [referring to Genesis 22], offered up Isaac: and he that received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall your seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from when also he received him in a figure.

In verse 19, that word *accounting* is a bookkeeping term. It means "to add up." Abraham had to reason this thing through, gathering what he understood from his experiences with God about God, and what God had said previously. He eventually came to the conclusion that in order for God to continue to be God, and in order for the promises to be kept, Isaac therefore

had to be resurrected. And so you know that he went all the way to the place where Isaac was on the pile, ready to be slain, when God finally stepped in and provided a sacrifice, and Abraham called Him "Yahweh-yireh"—the God who provides.

God read Abraham's mind, and He knew that in Abraham's mind Isaac was as good as dead. That is how far it went before God finally intervened. Abraham believed God even to the point where, even though he did not, I am sure, fully understand why, he was still willing to kill, to sacrifice, the one who was to receive the promises that had been given to him and to Sarah by means of a miracle. The emphasis here is that he acted on the Word of God. He acted on what God said, and he was able to add it up because he understood the faithfulness of God.

Now apply this truth to Romans 10:17. God spoke. Abraham received it. Abraham believed it, and therefore he had basis for his hopes. God's Word was the foundation of his hopes, and therefore he looked for city whose Builder and Maker is God. When it says, "He looked for a city," it means that he prepared himself to live there, because nobody who believes in God hopes in vain. Therefore he pleased God because he gave back to God in worship, in deference, exactly what God told him to do.

We can reach a conclusion here. The question in life therefore is, "WHOM do we believe?" combined with "WHAT do we believe?" It is not a question of sincerity, but the reality, the truth of what we believe, combined with its source.

What God says is always true. That is why the statement that I have been making that there is no calendar in the Bible is so important. God has not spoken on those rules—all of the rules that are necessary for putting together the kind of calendar that He wants. So in regard to the calendar, we are not dealing with Scripture *per se*. But what *is* in the Bible is that God has assigned the responsibility to the Jews. That is what He has spoken on, and *that* is what we must hear and believe. Otherwise we have no basis for our hopes. He provides us with no legal right before Him to change the rules of the calendar that He Himself is preserving.

He has added to Romans 3 and Genesis 49 the witness of centuries of usage of that calendar, both by the Jews and the church. He has added the witness of the fruit of the division that is has been used to heal, of the unity it has produced, and by contrast, the fruit of disunity and lack of effectiveness it has produced in those who have attempted to change.

I personally do not care whether the calculated Hebrew calendar is technically perfect. My conscience is clear, because this is what I have been given to worship God through. What I do know from doing this for forty years of keeping the feasts is that when Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread roll around, the moon is full. When the Feast of Tabernacles comes in the fall, the moon is full. Something is working.

But the issue here is where God has placed authority over the underlying calendar, and therefore faith in Him that He will faithfully watch over it, even as He faithfully preserved the Old Testament through them, and accept my worship using it.

Go now to Hebrews 11. Again we are talking about faith.

**Hebrews 11:2** For by it the elders obtained a good report.

**Hebrews 11:4** By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts and by it he being dead yet speaks.

He is speaking through Hebrews 11.

Remember, the issue in this sermon is, "How can we worship God in a way that is pleasing to Him?" I want us to reflect back on the early chapters of Genesis. Adam and Eve are created and they are married in chapter 2. In chapter 3 they sinned and they are kicked out of the Garden, and the worship of God ends.

In chapter 4 the basic groundwork is laid, showing us how to access God, and the resulting worship of God be established. Or should I say re-



established, because God had already established it in Adam and Eve who represented all of mankind, and then proceeded to destroy it when they sinned.

Let us go back to Genesis 3.

**Genesis 3:15** And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

**Genesis 4:1-5** And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

It is good to note that worship's re-establishment is the very first thing that is revealed after the destruction following the sin, and then the pronouncing of the curses. Re-establishing contact with His creation is something that God greatly desires.

The first thing I want you to notice after this is God's reaction to what they did. It is simple. He accepted one. The other He rebuked. Hebrews 11:4 told us that Abel acted in faith, offering a better sacrifice. Therefore, because faith comes by hearing God's Word, God's Word holds us accountable for what we hear. Because of this, we know then that God spoke to **both** of these men as to what He expected. If He had not spoken to Cain, He had no reason to call him into account for what he did.

When God speaks, it becomes law, and Paul said, "Where there is no law there is no sin." So therefore God's anger against Cain's offering was justified, because Cain had had it explained to him. Both men offered. Abel heard, believed, and obeyed. Cain heard, disbelieved, and disobeyed.

Now it is necessary to note that the very fact that Cain offered gives us strong evidence that Cain was not irreligious. In fact, he might have been very religious, and his offering given may have been more costly than Abel's. Products that are labor-intensive are usually more expensive than those that are not. Cain had to plow. Cain had to sow. Maybe he even had to fertilize. He had to cultivate. He had to reap, and he had to thresh—highly labor-intensive compared to Abel's bringing of nothing more than a slain lamb. But the heart of the matter is that he did it his own way regardless of his sincerity or his inventiveness.

What Abel did was receive and follow God's instructions. It was that simple. Abel took what God revealed at face value and he simply did it. Cain invented what he must have supposed was a better, more excellent way, and he took it with him to worship God.

It is interesting to note that in Genesis 3:17 God cursed the ground, and Cain turned right around and he made an offering out of that which came right out of the ground, to add insult to injury. In Hebrews 9:22 it says, "And almost all things are purged by blood." No matter how hard Cain worked to produce his offering, no matter how costly it may have been, his sin simply lay in the fact that he did not believe God enough to offer what He said. His worship therefore was deficient.

Abel's way—the way of faith—rests upon what God said. Cain's way rests upon what man thinks. Abel's way rests on Christ's blood. Cain's way rests upon what man can do.

Is it possible that you can see where Paul's teaching in Romans 4 about faith and works and acceptance before God, and justification by God, came from? It came right out of Genesis 4, combined with some other places as well.

One of the lessons here is that, because of Satan's proddings, man always thinks that he can improve upon what God's simple instructions say. We can extrapolate from this too, because from this we can see where James' teaching regarding faith and works arises from as well. Only those works that arise from faith in God's Word are acceptable. The others produce death. They are "dead" works regardless of how much labor is in them, regardless of how costly they are.

There is an interesting statement in Ecclesiastes 7.

**Ecclesiastes 7:29** Lo, this only have I found, that God has made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

Now man's inventiveness is revealed in the multitude of ways of worshipping God that he has devised. You have everything from huge cathedrals and real fancy robes and bells and whistles and incense and golden altars and stained glass windows and pews—the whole thing. It does not impress God. That is why He said there in Isaiah 66, "What is this building that you have built Me? Do you think that I'm impressed? What I'm looking for is somebody with a humble heart who trembles at My word."

Do you know why He wants people to be like that? Because it is response to God's Word in giving back to Him exactly what He said that prepares us for His Kingdom. That is what makes us in His image. There is nothing complicated about this.

Brethren, God has hardly spoken on the calendar. The word does not even appear in the Bible. There are precious few rules that even appear in the Bible. He has told us very simply what He wants. He has given the preservation of the Old Testament, and with it the calendar, to the Jews. The calendar belongs there because it is essential to the keeping of Leviticus 23. He has put that into their hands. It is their job to preserve it, and through it we can faithfully respond to God through what He has provided.

It is not the sinfulness of the Jews, the faithlessness of the Jews, that we are to take account of. It is the faithfulness of God that counts. He always provides for His children.