

God And Reality

The Feast of Trumpets and Reality

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We are going to begin this sermon by turning to John 3:32-33. John the Baptist is the speaker. By Jesus' own testimony, John the Baptist was one of the greatest human beings who has ever lived, and so I think it pays for us to give attention to what John said here in these verses.

John 3:32-33 And what he [Jesus] has seen and heard, that he testifies; and no man receives his testimony. He that has received his testimony has set to his seal that God is true.

What John is saying here in a very short form is that the person who accepts, the person who believes what Jesus says about Himself—what He is and what He is going to do—that person thus asserts that what **God** has said about Jesus is true. What did God say about Jesus that John the Baptist is referring to? God said, "This is my beloved Son. Believe you Him."

Please go back to I John 5:10. We have the same man who wrote the book of John, but we have the negative side of this same thing.

I John 5:10 He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself: he that believes not God has made him a liar.

That is dangerous ground! Remember what God said: "This is my beloved Son. Believe you Him." What John the Baptist was talking about is what Jesus said about Himself, as well as what He would be doing. "He that believes not God has made Him a liar." Why? Because God is true. Everything God says is true.

This sermon deals with a number of themes that fit this day, as well as the current series that I have been going through. A reminder about that series and how it began is that I gave a sermon or two regarding what the Barna Report stated about modern "born again" Christians—people calling themselves Christian. That survey revealed these people feel very free to reject things Jesus said because they do not believe they are true—things that to you and me mean everything, at least as it pertains to this day.

These people do not believe Jesus was resurrected. Many of them do not believe He is going to come again, and so they feel free to throw doctrine out of the Bible. It is not a part of their life because they personally do not believe it. They do not even realize that this record is in the Book: that if we reject what Jesus said about Himself, or what He is going to do, or what is going to happen to Him, we make God the Father out a liar. They would be aghast to know that God is calling them "Liar, liar, pants on fire!" Only it is far more serious. They feel free to call themselves "born again" and "Christian."

Do you know that one of the major purposes of doctrine is to tell us how to love? It tells us how to love God, and it tells us how to love fellowman. Without the base of doctrine, there cannot be the kind of love of God that God wants us to have, and this love they say is all-important to their salvation. It is weird! You throw out the things that tell you how to love, and say, "Oh, I love God." There is no foundation for what they are saying.

One of the themes that we are going to be dealing with I think is especially prevalent in this age because of the easy availability of radio, television, and books, and especially movies and advertising. The subject is "Dealing with reality." Those sources that I already mentioned do not by any means exhaust the sources of "un-reality."

From the time that we were born, we have been taught—overtly or covertly—about Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, the tooth fairy and the boogey man. We see cartoons in which animals talk and appear to live in social circles similar to humanity. There are 101 Dalmatians, Donald Duck and his three nephews. There is Daffy Duck, Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Goofy, and Ninja Turtles who have Renaissance-period names.

Then there are the X-Men. Besides that there is a Volkswagen—Herbie by name—that has a mind of its own. In addition, there are fairy tales in which animals turn into people, and people turn into animals, depending upon the circumstance. There is Cinderella, the Little Mermaid, Sleeping Beauty, Hansel and Gretel, and all of the Mother Goose rhymes.

Movies, they say, depict life, and so do advertisers say that, but portrayed in them are unrealistically handsome or beautiful, intelligent, fearless, wise, and successful heroes and heroines. The visual impact added to that media is awesome, especially when it comes at a person who permits it with its relentless forceful persuasion.

It is unrealistic to believe that moviemakers can depict life with all of its nuances, whether for good or evil, in two hours, four hours, eight hours, or sixteen hours for that matter. This is because life is a continuous process, and they depict solutions or resolutions to problems as though they were somehow complete. But brethren, the

reality is that because of human nature being as it is, there is no such thing as a perfect solution. Rather, what we find in reality is that each solution creates its own problems. I feel pretty sure that even when Jesus Christ is ruling on earth it is going to be that way, except that the evil will be removed.

Having un-reality displayed before us occurs continuously. It shows up in our language in that we use euphemisms like "passing away" rather than "dead" or "dying." It is the stork that brings babies rather than the reality, because we do not want to deal with the reality.

The most serious part of all of this is that it washes over in the way that man perceives God, and God's way of life, and so things like the return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead, "the wages of sin is death," or the Lake of Fire are not looked upon with the seriousness that they need to be looked upon. Despite much of humanity being religious, the Creator God is not real to most people. They do not relate to Him on a day-to-day basis, and He is not consulted unless desperation—the last resort—is reached.

Depending upon the context in which reality is an issue, its synonyms might be *actual, genuine, certain, truth, factual, authentic, unquestionable, reliable, irrefutable, and verity*, and there are many more.

I want you to turn to Ezekiel 8:11-12. Ezekiel is reporting here on a vision that was given to him. Remember that Ezekiel was in Babylon and he was in what we would call today a concentration camp. He was not free to move all over the place, so God came to him in visions, in dreams, and sometimes a voice, or whatever. Here he is given a vision of the Temple and what was going on within it.

Ezekiel 8:11-12 And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. [We are seeing a picture of supposedly the great religious leaders of the nation of Judah.] Then said he unto me, Son of man, have you seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? For they say, The Lord sees us not: the Lord has forsaken the earth.

These people could not possibly know God as a reality and be saying something like this. Now did they believe in "a" God? I am sure they did. Were they religious? They

certainly were, but God was not a reality to them or they would not be doing this.

It is likely that at the time this was written people had a special part of their home devoted to their idol, and it was there in that special private part of their home that they communed with their god.

There are two realistic possibilities for helping us understand this a little bit better. The key here is the term "chambers of his imagery." One is that the "chambers of his imagery" is actually taking place in one's *mind*, in one's thinking processes. There, you see, it can really be private. Nobody knows but **you** what is going on there. It is really an intimate chamber that no one's eyes can peer into. The second is directly tied to that possibility, and that is that all false gods are as ephemeral and unrealistic as a thought.

What I want to emphasize though is that the God we believe in and serve is so powerful in His awareness of what is going on in His creation that He **knows** what is going on in a person's mind. In other words, it cannot be hidden from Him. We need to pay attention to that because if there are any idols in our life, they cannot be hidden from God.

This is the same God who says He has every hair on our head numbered. When you couple that with the descriptions that are contained in Psalm 139 (which we will not go into), it shows how minutely involved God is in our lives. When you add that to our understanding, I do not see how anybody can fail to almost be dizzy with wonder at how aware God is of each one of us. Brethren, this can be downright scary. This is a reality. No idolatry, no sin, can be withheld from God, no matter where we are, whether we are in our private chamber or out in the public. This is the God with which we have to do, as Hebrews 4:12 says.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

We must be careful because we can conjure up false images of what God is like. We can think of God in unrealistic terms by over-emphasizing one attribute of His nature, such as His mercy or His anger. Most of the Protestant world tends to give people the impression that God is an absent-minded old fuddy-duddy, sitting on His throne, and so they come up with this idea that doctrine really does not matter all that much. They think that you can sort of form your own religion, and God will accept it because He is so loving, so merciful, and we are so sincere, that this is all that matters.

But that approach will not fly, and the reason it will not fly is because it is not in alignment with what God is creating. He Himself is not like that, and He is re-creating Himself in us. We can only be a faithful representative when we are reflecting what God Himself is in our very limited human ways, that He is happy, satisfied with that.

All these things that I have mentioned so far are unrealistic assignments that people make of God, His character, His personality, His way, or whatever. Psalm 14 gives us a little insight into an overview here.

Psalm 14:1 The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.

This is taking the unrealism to the nth degree: "There is no God." The very next sentence shows the fruit of that. The fruit of that is "they are corrupt."

Psalm 14:1 They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that does good.

Psalm 14:4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? Who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord.

Later on the apostle Paul wrote in the book of Romans that his heart was really sorrowful over Israel. He called them "my brethren," "my countrymen." He said they had zeal for God, that there was religion there, but that it was not according to knowledge, and so what they produced in terms of the way they related to that God was unrealistic.

In regard to Psalm 14:1, 4, one might expect such thinking from some elements of the unconverted. However, both the Bible and our own experience shows that what it says here in Psalm 14 is a true report. God, His purpose and plan for carrying out His purpose is simply not a reality to them, and God's reality and powers are not part of their everyday thinking.

There are a great many people in the world who think about God daily, and they pray to Him daily, but I would say, brethren, that what they are thinking about and praying to is actually a distortion of what God is to some degree.

Much of the process that God is putting us through is designed to bring us into grips with reality, and God's Word is **reality**. That is why I opened up with those two verses. John the Baptist saw it right away, and so he reported on it. It is a key to understanding

our responsibility that we are to **believe** what God has said about His Son, and what the Son has said about Himself, and what He is going to do, and so forth. These are the people who have the witness in themselves that they really are Christians, because they are relating to God in this manner.

God's Word says that we are being judged as we live our one chance for God's kingdom. He also says that Jesus Christ **is** going to return. There **is** going to be a resurrection of the dead. There **is** a Lake of Fire, and God **is** going to establish His world-ruling government on earth. That is **reality!** Regardless of what it looks like **now**, what God has said is true. It will occur. We may not live to see it, but it will happen.

II Peter 3:1-4 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

II Peter 3:8 But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

One source that I looked at in regard to this section of verses translated verse 1 in a very interesting way. They translated it as follows: "Peter said, 'I am writing you in order to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.'" I thought that was really good.

The world scoffs, and scoffing is not wholesome. It is not the product of a pure mind. It is the product of an impure mind. There were an awful lot of people in Peter's day, in the first century church's day, who were already scoffing about the return of Jesus Christ. What had happened is that they had formed things in their own mind by their own thinking about **when** Christ should return. The issue was not *whether* He would return. They probably still believed that in many cases, but it was **when**. As time went by, they were losing their hope, and scoffing began. Peter wanted to stimulate them to something that was **wholesome**.

Today the world scoffs, if not literally by word, most certainly by its lifestyle, saying that anybody who believes in the return of Jesus Christ and so forth has his head in the sand. Even much of the religious world, calling itself Christian, no longer believes in the

literal return of Jesus Christ.

Scoffing is pretty serious. It is **willful** contempt. It is a form, a way, of showing one's arrogance, because they are calling God a liar. This begins to take on pretty serious consequences here. Scoffing is no little thing. It is one's pride in the form of arrogance coming out in the calling of God into account. In effect they are saying that God's Word is irrelevant, unrealistic, invalid, because He has not come **yet**, according to **their** time schedule.

The non-religious say that to believe in this is an escape from reality, that it is a coping out so that one may sit back and do nothing about the world's problems. They do not seem to grasp a simple truth. Truth is reality, and the reality is that each one of us individually **is** the problem, and that changing ourselves in order to be conformed to God's standard **is** the solution to the problems. When we break this down to its smallest element, that is the only way things are going to change.

I will break it down even smaller. People have marital problems. If they would just understand the principle of love (Ephesians 5), they would begin to realize that things will probably not change in the marriage until **they** change themselves. That is the way God solves problems. Each individual has to change himself, not the other person. He has to change himself and leave the other person in God's hands, because God is able to bring about a change in that other person. I grant you that there are other times when one partner in the marriage will be doing things about as well as he or she can, according to God's Word, and the marriage breaks up because the other person will not change himself. That occurs. But know this, that when you change according to God's Word, you are free and clear with God. The other person is not. That is worth a great deal.

Looking at people's skepticism carnally, there are some good reasons for them to be sarcastic, at least from their point of view. They have either witnessed first hand, or heard or read all of their lives, of countless groups preaching the imminent return of Jesus Christ, and nothing, they think, has happened, and so they can become quite cynical. But brethren, the reality is that they are the ones with their heads in the sand because things **are** happening. It is just not happening either where they are looking, or as fast as they would like; but things are happening.

We too must be careful, because if we are not, we can adopt the same deceptive attitude toward the fulfillment of this day and what it portends. Neither will **you** really anticipate the awesome fulfillment of this day unless you heed Christ's admonishment in the Olivet Prophecy, and be alert and pray always. We must be on guard. The attitude

of this world is always right on our doorstep, and in many cases right inside our homes.

Colossians 2:16-17 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come: but the body is of Christ.

This day *is* a shadow. It is not the real thing. But if one follows a shadow to its source, it will lead one to the reality. That is God's intention. We are actually observing something that has not yet occurred, and therefore it is just a shadow of what the reality is going to be in fulfillment. We have our reality strengthened, shaped up, and made less vague by the keeping of what He commands us to do, so here we are, keeping the Feast of Trumpets.

I want you to go back now to Leviticus 23:24. Richard was giving somewhat of an explanation, and mine will concur with what he said regarding verse 24.

Leviticus 23:24 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month shall you have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation.

Did you know that the Feast of Trumpets is the only holy day that is designated by God as a memorial? None of the others have that designation. Memorials are usually established *after* a significant event in order to establish that event as being important to peoples' heritage. A small aspect of that is here too; however, so significant is the event that Trumpets memorializes, the event is memorialized *before* it occurs.

A memorial is established to memorialize either something that is said, or it can be a thing, like a day, or a monument of some kind. The Feast of Trumpets is a monument, though, of something that yet lies ahead.

One time in the past I gave a sermon showing that there are parallels with Joseph's life to the Feast of Trumpets, and this morning Richard talked about the fall of Jericho also having parallels with the Feast of Trumpets. What I am talking about now is the *reality*, and that includes the events that surround the fulfillment of this day.

This day signifies the beginning of the receiving of our inheritance, of the promises that the Father made to Abraham and to his descendants and confirmed by Jesus Christ. This event then opens the way for the completion of God's purpose as being taught by

the remaining festivals. I will now mention the return of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the dead. This day even memorializes to some extent the events that occur in terms of the tribulation and the Day of the Lord, because an awful lot of things that are mentioned in the book of Revelation and the blowing of those trumpets lead up to the fulfillment of that day.

This is a very significant day leading out to great things. I mean **great** things that involve the firstfruits—the 144,000—the redeemed of the earth. ***It is the day that really opens the door to eternity.*** It had better be a reality to us, because right now it is what we are aiming for. I want you to understand that we are not aiming for the Millennium. You are aiming, brethren, for something that makes the Millennium look like nothing. I am trying to put together a sermon for the Last Great Day on that.

II Peter 1:16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: but were eyewitness of his majesty.

II Peter 1:19-21 We have also a more sure word of prophecy: whereunto you do well that you take heed [could this be part of what he was referring to just a little bit later when he said "I want to stir your mind up to wholesome thinking"?], as unto a light that shines in a dark place until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

I want to focus just for a little bit on the word "fables" in verse 16, where Peter says "cunningly devised fables." The word that is translated "fables" there is the word that "myth" comes from. Now what is a myth? A myth is a story formulated to express man's desires without reference to reality. The Greeks had all those stories about their gods and goddesses and their shenanigans. A myth is a story formulated to express man's desires. They saw their own desires and translated them into the activities of the gods and goddesses without reference to reality. There was no reality behind these stories. This is what Peter is referring to.

These myths were leading people in the first century church **away** from the prophecies of Jesus Christ, and about Jesus Christ, about His return, about the establishment of the kingdom, and about Christians being **born** into the family of God.

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It is interesting, because this series of verses, especially verses 19-21, state an incredible reality, and this is that God's Word—even His prophecies—is more reliable than human eyewitness accounts. Did you get that? God's words—even the prophecies made thousands of years ago—are more reliable than human eyewitness accounts.

Did you ever see the movie "The Eye of the Beholder"? Those three people witness what they perceive was a murder, but each of the three saw something so different from others. Judging what happened is very confusing. This is normal for humanity.

If a house burns, then the owner says it is a total loss because, you see, he is looking at it from his point of view, as the owner. "Oh, this house is ruined. We will never be able to live in it again." Hundreds of thoughts like that go through his mind. The insurance adjuster comes along and says, "Aw, that is not too bad. A little bit of paint here, put up new wallboard, and you will be all fixed up." But the owner says, "Yes, but we are going to smell that smell." The adjuster says, "Well, just spray it a little bit and the odor will go away."

Then the fireman comes along. He adds his perception to the view as well, and his view is different from the other two because he is looking at it from **his** perspective. All human beings view things from their perspective. We are beginning to see why the Word of God is better than any eyewitness account. That is what Peter is saying here. We have something that is **better** than an eyewitness account—even an eyewitness account of an apostle, or apostles, who witnessed Jesus in His full glory for a brief period of time.

God's Word is **sure** because He is not affected by humanity's experience. God **is** truth. His Word is truth, and what He reports in His Word depends upon the character and perspective of the one who reported it, and so we can draw on the **sure** word of prophecy.

A human eyewitness cannot take in the whole picture and judge accurately. God takes this into account. That is one reason I am sure that the Bible gives four views of Christ: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and yet John said at the very end of his writing that even what was written cannot even begin to come close to all that Jesus said and did. Each person's perception of events is limited somewhat by his own storehouse of experiences.

We are going to look at just a couple of examples of Bible evidence that shows man gives the reality of God little consideration. Let us go to Psalm 10. Remember, this is a true report.

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Psalm 10:4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.

That is a true report. It is very interesting that God inspired the word "all" to be a part of that testimony. Does the thought mean the ungodly person does not consider God from time to time? But God is not a day-to-day relationship for that person.

Psalm 10:11 He has said in his heart, God has forgotten: he hides his face; he will never see it.

This is just a very brief overview, a little bit of an insight into the way the world looks at God. This overview clearly shows that God is not a reality to them, and this is a major factor as to why the world (and if we will think of ourselves, too, and be realistic) continues to sin.

Turn with me to another familiar scripture and we will see this confirmed.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

This does not mean that we are evil, but the proclivity to do evil is always present. It is very easy for us to put God out of our mind for a period of time, long enough for us to sin. And then God does not come down on us. Lightning does not come out of heaven, the walls do not fall down, and it seems as though we have gotten away with it. Human nature is very good at convincing itself of that, and so we pass it off and say, "That was not so bad." And then the human heart will go on in its sin.

You see, we have to develop beyond that reality. The true reality is that nothing can be hidden from God. God does not intend for this be scary beyond measure, but He wants us to know that this is a reality. It is something we have to deal with. We are not getting away with it.

Did you ever see a little child who knows he is not supposed to do something like, say, touch the television set or a piece of crystal, or something that is in the room? He walks over to it, tempts himself, and looks around to see if anybody is watching him. If he cannot pick up an adult's eye, he will reach out and grab the article. "Ah! I got away with it!" But you see, mom or dad was watching him do it, and he did not get away with it, but

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the child deluded himself into thinking he *did* get away with it. That is what we are compared to God. We are little children, and we do have to grow to the place where He is a reality, and we cannot get away with it. But even better, we grow to the place where we want Him in the right way to be aware of us all the time, because the fear of God proves to be a motivation to not sin, and when we do not sin, God loves it.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 clearly states that if one is not painfully punished immediately after a sin, the carnal mind concludes that God either did not see, or that He does not care, and the person thinks that it was not so bad and continues on in his unrealistic way. But it is absolutely foolish though. Adam and Eve did not immediately die after they sinned; but die they did.

God has His reasons for everything that He does, or permits, and His reasons are always in perfect agreement with His purpose, and are always absolutely correct and in love at the time. The foundation of our thinking in this regard is what Moses stated way back in the book of Numbers when he said, "You can be sure your sins will find you out." There is no escaping the God that we have to deal with. This is absolute reality. We have to grow to the place, brethren, where we do not **want** to sin. So strong is the drive not to sin that we will make any sacrifice to stop ourselves. That is love for God.

Now let us think of this. Is God in all our thoughts, or is He just a Sabbath service experience? The problem, brethren, is a weakness of faith. It comes right down to the foundation, because God's reality is not in focus, and the effect of this lack of focus is that God is not sought out, just like Psalm 10:4 said. Yes, brethren, we must pray. We must seek through God's Word for instruction as to what we must do.

This next scripture, now, is a reality.

Matthew 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

It is hard for us I think to grasp that mankind has been on earth somewhere around six thousand years. We read an awful lot of history in our time. We have read books about wars and the inhumanity of man to other parts of humanity. It is kind of hard for us to grasp that the time we are coming up on is going to be the worst period of time that humankind will ever experience on earth, and that the only time that even begins to compare with it is that time just before the flood: "As it was in the days of Noah." But this is going to **exceed** that.

"Then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world." That exceeds the time before the flood. This is what we are headed for. Jesus' Word is reality. It is going to be so bad that all life would be wiped off the face of the earth painfully by *mankind* if God did not step in and stop it short of that point.

Much of the world knows about this. Do they seek God's Word for instruction as to what steps must be taken to solve and avoid the awesome problems, this awesome calamity that is hanging over humanity's head? No, they do not, even though we can look here in the United States at high governmental officials who claim that they are Christian. Each person sees the calamities from his own perspective, drawn from his own experiences, not God's. So, what is the solution that the leaders in Washington, D.C., or in Berlin, or London, or Rome, or Madrid, or Paris come up with? What kind of solutions do they come up with? They are always ***carnal*** solutions, which is proof that they are not seeking after God.

God's Word clearly shows that the source of the problems that is producing these calamities is ***spiritual***, and that each person must be a committee of one to confront his own spiritual deformities and deficiencies and correct them, or nothing will ever change. So you can be sure that Matthew 24:21 is going to come to pass because they ***will not*** seek after God because He is not a reality to them. If they had a relationship with Him, He would *be* a reality. They would know His character. They would know His nature. They would know that He is true. They would know that everything He says is true, and they would turn to ***Him*** for the answers and He would tell them that the problem is spiritual. And so the reality is that the world is destined to go through exactly what Jesus says, because, as simple as it may seem, God is not real to them. He is just a term that they throw around without realizing what they are doing.

Is God real enough to you that you are willing not only to pray for the solutions to your problems, but also actually sacrifice yourself to do what God says in order to solve your problems? Most in the world seem to be hoping that somehow political negotiations and science together will pull a rabbit out of its hat and save the day in the last half of the ninth. Sometimes, brethren, we have the propensity to do something similar, and so we kind of stand around, wringing our hands, praying, feeling sorry for ourselves, but waiting for God to do something. Why do not we do something other than just pray?

Well, it is time to get moving, because even back in Paul's day, time was drawing short. I really think that he wrote this for us. Certainly he wrote it for the Romans because he sincerely believed that what he saw in the way of a calamity shaping up (that eventually became the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple) did occur, and it would have been very easy for them to misunderstand and think that this ***was*** setting the stage for

Christ's return. God withheld that information from them that this was not the end. But let us apply this to us.

Romans 13:11-14 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put you on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.

How did the coming of the Feast of Trumpets affect you? Was there a bit of excited anticipation, or have we reached the stage where we are almost sleepwalking in our dutiful obedience?

The word "sleep" is understood symbolically. Sleep stands for insensitivity to Christian responsibility. Whenever we are asleep, we are insensitive. We are unaware of what is going on around us. We are alive, but our eyes are shut, as it were, and the bodily functions have reached the place where we cannot pay attention to anything. It is really an apt symbol for people who are sleepwalking through their Christian life and not really aware of what is going on.

Perhaps they have almost reached the place like I described earlier of those in the world who are unaware, even though things are happening, and because they are unaware, they scoff. Maybe we do not scoff with words, but like I said in connection to those verses, those people scoff with their lives and with their attitudes. The way that the life is lived is actually demonstrating that God is a liar. It is a frightful position to be in really. Paul said it is time to wake up!

Paul also uses the term "night." Night symbolizes that period of time in which Christ is not ruling over the earth. The apostle John stated at the very beginning of the book of John—the Gospel of John—"that Christ came into the world, and the darkness comprehended it not." He said, "The whole world lies in darkness" and we are living in it, because Christ is not here. But we do have light.

When one has light in a dark area, does one look at the light, or does one look at what the light is shining on and revealing? We want the second one because, you see, we can be aware of the light. When we look on what the light is revealing and shining on, then we see the intent and purpose for the light.

Light is also a symbol not just for Jesus Christ, but for truth, and truth is reality. We have come full circle. God's Word is truth. Jesus Christ is truth. Truth is reality. The reality is that we are drawing close to a period of time that we have to be really aware of what is going on. It is not just a matter of being aware of what is happening out in the world in terms of those things that are leading to the return of Jesus Christ, it is also being aware of where we stand in relation to these realities that are going on. Are we viewing them as realities? If we are viewing them as realities, I can guarantee you, brethren, you will take steps to change your life to make your relationship with God to really be personal and intimate. That is what we want it to be.

Light is a symbol of truth that leads us on the right path, illuminating which way we should go in order that we do not stumble. Not only does John 17:17 say God's Word is truth, but John 10:35 adds to this.

John 10:35 [Jesus said] If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken.

In other words, Jesus said the scripture cannot be proved wrong.

Jesus Christ is coming. He said that. He said, "If I go, I will come again." That is the truth. That is a reality. In another place Paul wrote that "we all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." We are being judged. That is a reality. In another place it says that there is going to be a resurrection of the dead. That is a reality as well. Many, many before us have been in the same sort of circumstance regarding anticipating, and yet waiting for Christ's return, have they not? We just read in Romans those people were waiting for Christ's return the same as we are now.

Luke 19:11 And as they heard these things, he [Christ] added and spoke a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

Now why has He not returned yet? What benefit is there that He has not returned? Is there anything we can do other than just exhibit a passive patience, waiting it out? I think that I came up with four general reasons for Christ's seeming delay.

1. God's plan and purpose are on God's time, on His schedule, not ours. Being able to see a small portion of His awesome mind and power enables us to know it is exactly on schedule. Nothing holds God up in the

accomplishment of His work.

2. If we would go through the parable that He gave following this statement, the parable shows that the delay allows more to be called and be prepared for God's kingdom.

3. The seeming delay gives us more time to overcome, and that in turn means we are not ready yet. That is another reality.

4. The "iniquity of the Amorite" principle is in operation. In other words, lawlessness in the world has not reached its peak yet. We just saw that confirmed in Matthew 24:21.

Let us go back to Matthew 24. It is going to get so bad that it says in verse 22:

Matthew 24.22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

That last phrase is comforting because it is absolutely real. God is going to stop it short; otherwise we get killed too. He is going to cut it short. But it has to get so bad that mankind's sins will even be apparent to the majority of carnal people so that they will be primed to repent when God reveals Himself to them. Believe it or not, brethren, the delay is actually an act of mercy on God's part, because it is going to make it possible for *more* to come into His kingdom.

Matthew 24:3-8 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. [Another reality.] For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in different places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

I just read through them. You are very familiar with them, but I wanted to reiterate to you

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that these are the events that God is sending forth to warn, and ***the events themselves are the trumpets***. The events are sounding the alarms. They are going off all over the world. Things are happening. They may not be happening in the way we have perceived them, but they are happening.

God also shows that there will be no mass conversions until the very late stages of the Tribulation and during the Day of the Lord. The conversions will not take place until God truly becomes a reality to the people and they begin to take action toward having a relationship with Him.

Let us go all the way back to Isaiah 2. This is a tremendous chapter. At the beginning of this paragraph my Bible says "Judgment on the proud." That has a connection to this sermon because we read in Psalm 10 that the reason the ungodly will not seek after God is because of their pride. Pride is holding them from the reality of God. They think they can do it without Him.

Isaiah 2:5-7 O house of Jacob, come you, and let us walk in the light of the Lord [in His truth which is reality]. Therefore you have forsaken your people the house of Jacob because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers. [Talking about the religions of the Israelitish people.] Their land also is full of silver and gold [Has there ever been nations as rich as Britain and the United States?], neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots.

All you have to do is drive in any major city, and you know there is no end of our chariots, which is certainly an indication of our wealth.

Isaiah 2:8 Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made.

Do you know that in many cases the word that God used for idols is "vanity"? They are vanities. Do you know what vanities are? They are anything that is unrealistic, and our land is full of idols.

Isaiah 2:9-11 And the mean man [the little man] bows down, and the great man humbles himself: therefore forgive them not. Enter into the rock and hide you in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. The

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lofty looks of man [the pride] shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

The reality, brethren, is that not until we are humbled, not until man is humbled can he begin to have a relationship with God, and in that relationship God will become real. Humility is the key to reality, because God then reveals reality and makes it possible for us to believe it.

Isaiah 2:12-17 For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low; and upon all the cedars of Lebanon [a symbol of majesty, honor and strength] that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan [symbols of that which are sturdy, strong, and true], and upon all the high mountains and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

This is where we are headed. This is a reality. This is why ultimately no one would survive unless God stopped it. It is a combination of what men are doing to themselves, to other men, and what God Himself is going to do to really make these people aware of Himself.

Isaiah 2:18-22 And the idols he shall utterly abolish. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty when he arises to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he arises to shake terribly the earth. Cease you from man whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?

At the end of this chapter God is saying that man is ***nothing!*** The setting of this chapter is interesting in that it begins with a brief preview of what will happen when God's government takes an active role in the rule of man through the return of Jesus Christ.

Then it quickly proceeds to the justification for God's judgment of man not considering God and His Word as a reality to be submitted to. God is going to have to give mankind a lesson in fear like it has never had before so that the world will be totally without excuse for not giving God the time of day every day. This is the only way that God will become a reality to the vast majority.

You will recall that when Jesus was asked why He spoke only in parables, that part of His reply was His quoting of this very same Isaiah when he said of the Israelites: "Their eyes they have closed," thus indicating a willful rejection of God and His Word, and therefore God is saying it is useless to speak to them more plainly at this time. It is by the time that Isaiah the second chapter is over that they will be **forced** to deal with Him. By comparison, God has been merciful in His dealings with us. Is it going to take something of the nature laid out before us here in Isaiah 2, and of course in many other prophecies as well, to make **us** deal fervently in our life with His reality? I hope not, brethren. We can turn ourselves around.

We can make sure that God is an active part of our life every day, and that we are seeking Him out in prayer and in study, and that we are giving Him the time that is needed for Him to work on our minds, to change our nature. We can make sure that we are making every effort to sacrifice our lives and our time as a living sacrifice, following through on the truths of His Word. If we will do that there will be no doubt at all that God will become ever more real to us, and we will love the relationship that we have with Him. It will be warm and wonderful, and He will fill your life with a sense of well-being that it needs to have in order to be at peace, and yet at the same time fervent, accomplishing what His will is for us.