

Our Awesome Destiny

Becoming Children of God Through Faith

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Each year when I send out the speaking and song leading schedule to those who are assigned to this responsibility at the Feast of Tabernacles, I include with that schedule a memo suggesting possible subjects on which they might speak. Every subject, every sermon and sermonette does not have to focus on the Millennium. I suggest to them that they might want to speak on a topic that applies to this particular feast in this particular location.

I also suggest that they might want to touch on our pilgrimage since conversion, because the Feast of Tabernacles also pictures a pilgrimage. Maybe they might want to touch on God's bountiful providence. In the Old Testament setting that is mainly what the Feast was kept for. It was an acknowledgement that God is providing all the time. Another aspect is the fear of God because of what it says in Deuteronomy regarding this subject.

One of the things I invariably suggest is that though the Feast of Tabernacles focuses on the Millennium, they should not forget that *our* destiny is not the Millennium, but the Kingdom of God. In one sense, in terms of our destiny, the Millennium is a mere blip—an ever brief moment in time compared to the almost unfathomable everlasting future, and thus subject material important to our destiny is also appropriate for this time.

Though the word may not have been spoken in my opening address last night, one of the things I had in mind with that message contains the desire that we be deeply committed to every aspect of God's purpose, because that purpose is of such overriding purpose that we cannot afford to let any opportunity slip by in failing to apply ourselves for the Kingdom. The Kingdom, and the family, and the swirl of its business may seem routine and commonplace, or mundane, but its importance to God's purpose cannot be overestimated.

In our calling we have been given knowledge of such awesome value that its worth is impossible to over-estimate. It is not only valuable, but the knowledge of it among the billions of humanity is like a precious jewel that is extremely rare.

I was recently reminded of this through an email exchange I had with a husband and wife couple. I could tell from their emails that they were unusually educated in common

religious Christian belief. Even though I felt that I clearly explained myself on many scriptures pertaining to the destiny God is preparing us for, they were as blind as a bat.

In my explanations there was nothing of a technical nature to any of the scriptures I referred to. No understanding of the Greek grammar or of word definitions was required. All I did was point to what the English translation clearly said, but what I received back in reply missed the point entirely, falling back on common popular and successful, but biblically illogical, myth. It was very much like the popular saying, "It was just like speaking to the wall."

Ecclesiastes 8:16-17 When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also there is that neither day nor night sees sleep with his eyes) Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labor to seek it out, [which is exactly what Solomon was doing], yet he shall not find it: yea, farther: though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.

Ecclesiastes 9:1-4 For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God: no man knows either love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all. There is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked, to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean, to him that sacrifices, and to him that sacrifices not: As is the good, so is the sinner; and he that swears, as he that fears an oath. This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yes, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead. For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

One of the things that confused Solomon and really troubled him deeply was that the same things happen to the righteous and to the unrighteous. But Solomon, like the people I exchanged emails with, was looking in the wrong direction for answers, and so he turned away as blind as he was before he asked the question.

With all of his smarts, with all of his wisdom—that great gift that God gave him—he could not cut through the mass of knowledge he had in order to determine "**Why?**"—the question that seems to be on the lips of so many people. "Why am I here?" "Why was I born?"

He would have had a much clearer understanding if he had paid more attention to how differently the two groups reacted to the problems rather than observing that they both had the same events occur in their lives. The reactions of the righteous would have revealed an entirely different perspective, direction, and purpose to their lives.

Solomon does confirm here what is later made very clear in the New Testament in John 6:44 by Jesus when He stated, "No one can come to the Son except the Father draw him." In other words, the purpose God is working out is such a mystery that it cannot be penetrated even by the closest scrutiny in the minds of even the most discerning of carnal men.

Most people go through life with a wistful yearning about what is going on. I do not mean that it is something that is always with them, but rather it is a subconscious frustration, because life seems to have little direction other than the pursuit of material and secular goals.

Think for a moment how many religions there are in this world. There are well over one thousand different Christian organizations in the United States alone. How many do you know that revolve around and are founded upon the concepts that **God**, like every other living thing, is reproducing Himself? Very, very few, brethren. This is a reason why Solomon added what he did in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes 1:3-9 What profit has a man of all his labor which he takes under the sun? One generation passes away, and another generation comes: but the earth abides forever. The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goes toward the south and turns about unto the north; it whirls about continually, and the wind returns again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea: yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. All things are full of labor; man cannot utter it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that has been, it is that which shall be: and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

Solomon still continues the same general thought as he lays a foundation for the reasoning and conclusions that he later makes.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-4 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heavens: A time to be born, and a time to die, a time to

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plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted: A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh: a time to mourn, and a time to dance.

And on and on it goes. You get the point.

Ecclesiastes 3:9 What profit has he that works in that wherein he labors?

What is life for? He is searching for answers to this most important of all questions. "Why am I here?"

Ecclesiastes 3:10 I have seen the travail which God has given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.

Notice the conclusion he comes up with in verse 11.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made every thing beautiful in his time: also he has set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end.

In the phrase "he has set the world in their heart," Solomon is saying that God has put in human beings a yearning for eternity. Man wants to live forever. Solomon has laid quite a foundation in this book by showing that mankind observes the endless and repetitious cycle of events occurring throughout history. Wars come and go. Prosperity comes and goes. Governments come and go. Disasters come and go. Economic systems come and go **endlessly**, and yet there is an unfilled yearning to know how events in their lives are going to work out and where life itself is headed.

The answers are not given them from the sources available to them. But we are here at the Feast of Tabernacles because we believe that God has commanded it. He has commanded this Feast of Tabernacles to be an annual reflection, not only on a major step in His overall plan, but where each person's life is headed. A major portion of this Feast's purpose is to annually reorient us on the major question in all of life: Where have I been? Where am I now? Where am I going with my life?

God commands us to live in booths to remind us that we are on a pilgrimage and that

we are to consider ourselves strangers and foreigners. Though life is temporary and somewhat confusing, we are not to be wandering. Our lives are purposeful and headed in a certain direction.

We are to follow the course God has laid out before us with all zeal and with all the commitment we can muster. This is ultimately because we have been shown the two great alternatives in life, and we are commanded to choose. God, speaking in the first person, decrees the fate of nations and empires. He prophesies specific events that are going to happen in our day, and some of them show strong evidence that they are underway.

Let us go to Revelation 10:7 to an interesting comment made there. We will begin in verse 5 so you will get the feel of verse 7.

Revelation 10:5-7 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that lives for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer [better translated "that there should be no longer a delay"]: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he has declared to his servants the prophets.

Let us go to Mark 4:10-12 to something Jesus said regarding the world we now live in.

Mark 4:10-12 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. [They asked Him to explain what He had just said.] And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive: and hearing they may hear, and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

Those last couple of phrases makes it very clear that God is controlling things from above, choosing some to understand, and others, at this time, *not* to understand.

The Christian world around us assumes that they know what this mystery is, and they are baffled when one of us tells them what it *truly* is. They will argue, like this couple did,

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that such a thing cannot possibly be. The only reason we know is because He has revealed it to us.

We know what the ultimate destiny of mankind is as a whole. This purpose is titled in the Bible "the mystery of God" in a number of places. This mystery goes far beyond what most have imagined, even in their wildest dreams about the purpose of life. Yet once it is revealed, it is so obvious, so simple, and yet so powerful in its logic that one may wonder why one did not understand it all along.

Romans 9:9-12 For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calls;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

Even though these twins, conceived in the same woman by the same man, and would be born within minutes of one another, God told Rebecca that the first one that was born (the elder) would be serving the younger. God had already made the choice. That is the point.

Romans 9:13-14 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated [or rather, loved less]. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

Is God unrighteous because He chose Jacob rather Esau? Paul says, "God forbid!" or "Certainly not!"

Romans 9:15-16 For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.

God is running the show! Though I feel responsible to respond to people like this couple who are undoubtedly very fine people, and I have no doubt at all about that, but for whatever the reason, John Ritenbaugh understands, and they do not! That is not because of me that I know this. It is simply because of an act that God has chosen to

make. He did the choosing. I did not. The same thing is true with you. That is why Paul says in I Corinthians 1 that God has chosen the weak and the poor and the foolish of the earth to confound those with the great brains and the understanding and discerning minds.

Apparently, despite Solomon's great gifts, it looks as though God never opened that man's eyes—even though his father was David. That is incredible! But God did not give that blessing to David, that his son (the one He chose to sit on the throne) was not going to have his mind opened spiritually to understand what is going on. God had other plans for Solomon; for instance, for him to write the book of Ecclesiastes which is written from the standpoint of human wisdom, of great power, of intelligence that is very high, very discerning carnally; but spiritually he just was not with it.

We are going to look in Deuteronomy 7 where God says essentially the same thing.

Deuteronomy 7:6-9 For you are a holy people unto the LOORD your God: the LOORD your God has chosen you to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LOORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people: But because the LOORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, has the LOORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LOORD your God, he is God, the faithful God, which keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.

It is essential to our spiritual well-being and to our relationship with God, and to our relationship with fellow man that we understand that this great gift came to us, not as the result of anything we are, or have done. It came simply and purely as an act of God's will—a decision on His part to give us a gift to show mercy to us.

At the convention held in Philadelphia in 1776, the fifty-six men who drew up and signed the Declaration of Independence from England, pledged and committed their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to fulfill the goals of that awesome document. Most of them paid dearly; many of them with their lives. Almost every one of them lost everything they had in life, including their families, because England deemed them as the greatest of the traitors that were on the earth at the time. Now can we give any less to God for this gift of liberty?

This sermon is designed to make sure that we all know where we are headed so we will understand the basis of our choices, the seriousness, and some small portion of the value of what is on the line. We need to know and believe why such commitment is needed, and why our lives must be devoted to preparing for the next stage of God's great purpose. This knowledge begins perhaps with the most fundamental and yet important of all spiritual elements: that we know, and know that we know that we are not the product of blind chance.

Some of the most intelligent and highly educated people believe in the theory of evolution. It is an impossible fable which operates according to blind chance. It postulates that totally fortuitous coming together of just the right elements at just the right time not only set off a chain of events that resulted in life beginning, but also set off all of the processes that resulted in all of the forms of life in a continuous string of trillions of fortuitous comings together in order to produce what we see in the world around us.

This theory says that life is accidental rather than purposeful. It proposes in theory that life, which is far more complicated than a watch or a computer, just happened by blind chance. It reminds me of the joke that is told about scientists challenging God, telling Him that they can create life just as He has. God accepts the challenge. He says, "Okay. Let's each create a man." And so the scientist begins scraping away the dirt from which he is going to form Adam, and God says to him, "Hey! Get your own dirt!"

Even these people who believe in this theory must admit that in order for what happened there must be an already existing material universe, already existing natural laws that enable their view of creation to occur. But God's Word establishes a far different foundation—a foundation that is purposeful and guided from the very beginning.

We are going to go to the New Testament to the book of John. Here in John 1:1-5 is the actual earliest point of time in the Bible.

John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

Here the Bible reveals that a purposeful creation began with the cooperation of two God

beings. It shows that all life within their creation was imparted from their already-existing life. But then this very brief description concludes in verse 5 by showing that mankind does not understand this, and rejects it.

These five brief verses do not explain the purpose of life, but John is laying the foundation for teaching that the Life which became flesh, and was, and continues to be the Light imparted to mankind by word and deed, was the One who revealed most openly and thoroughly the purpose of Their creation. For that instruction we must look elsewhere, so let us go back to the beginning of the Book to Genesis 1:26.

Genesis 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Here we have the earliest indication from God's revelation of the purpose of their creation. It is not hidden from mankind. Mankind is created, and being *further* created into the very image of the One doing the creating. When most of Christianity looks at that, they assume, correctly in one sense, that God is the Creator, but their appreciation of what is said here, put together with things that are in other parts of the Bible, is limited in that they think that right then the creation ended. No, brethren! It was only beginning.

Creation is being done by God in two stages. There is the mortal, physical creation, and then there is the creation to immortality and life everlasting that will be in those who are formed into the image of God's Son. So mankind is created and being further created into the image of the Ones doing the creating.

The context implies very strongly that we are not created in the model of the animal kind, but of the God-kind. We are not animals. When God speaks, He says, "Let us make man in **our** image." He does not say, "Let us make man in an ape's image." In addition, the next two verses show that mankind was created to have dominion over the rest of the physical creation, but we are going to leap ahead in time to a conclusion of the main purpose by going to Hebrews 2. Here in capsulated form is a very good indication of things we need to know.

Hebrews 2:1-3 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if

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we neglect so great salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.

That is what I am appealing to you in this sermon. Do not neglect the gifts we have been given. It was Jesus who introduced the Gospel of the Kingdom to the world. The world believes the good news is that Jesus died for our sins. Yes, that is part of it, and it is a big part of it, but the biggest part of it is **why** did He die for our sins? He died so we could be in the Kingdom of God as sons of God. That is our destiny, and Jesus came to reveal that.

Hebrews 2:4-8 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with different miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will? For unto the angels has he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. [Where is that "world to come"? It is the Kingdom of God, and this earth under the rule of the Kingdom of God.] But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man that you are mindful of him? Or the son of man, that you visit him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of your hands: You have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.

Do you catch the importance and the significance of that? It is an extension of the charge God gave us when He gave us dominion over the earth and dominion over the animals. There is more, greater dominion coming in the future. There are things we do not yet have dominion over, but in the future we **will** have dominion over them. So we have, at least to that point, just a hint of the awesome destiny that lies before us.

Let us go to Genesis 2:15 as we continue this pattern of revelation that God gives us.

Genesis 2:15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

Again we have here a simple but far-reaching statement of what man is to do with his life. The environment God gave to mankind is equipped to serve God's purpose for mankind as well as to support his life. Adam and Eve had to begin exercising dominion and creativity in embellishing and preserving that environment from deterioration.

Embellishing and preserving is what "dressing and keeping" means.

The principles contained within this is that this labor of embellishing and preserving serves the purposes of helping prepare mankind for his ultimate destiny because the applications of these principles extend far beyond taking care of a garden. Adam and Eve received them in behalf of all of mankind, but the principles of "dressing and keeping" are to be used in every aspect of life. Man is intended by God to be a builder, not a destroyer, like Satan.

Genesis 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

The next model that God gives after the Garden of Eden and the command to "dress and keep" is the establishment of the family. The family will be the basic building block of society and the institution God invented, provided, and promoted as the means through which mankind would experience the majority of his foundational character and personality development and social-relationship experiences.

God purposely arranged that these models would be at the very beginning of His revelation to mankind so that the reading of these things would hopefully start mankind on the right path to greater, more specific and detailed revelations of His purpose. But here is the catch: It must be *believed*. This is such a simple statement. If we do not believe it, we will not use it, or if we believe it and do not value it as worth anything, we still will not use it. There will be no commitment to accomplishing it. God did this in order that the readers of Scripture, at the very onset of their study, begin forming and understanding what is going on, and how it is to be accomplished.

God created man. God gave man dominion. God said, "Look, I want you to work. Work is essential to the creation that continues from that point on. Here is the family. This is the area that you are going to experience relationships by which all of these principles I am going to tell you will be able to be used. You will be ready by the time you go into the grave because I am going to add My creative efforts to it as well. I am going to make sure you face experiences that are going to give you the opportunity to make the right choice, and do it."

Are we committed to doing it? Do we really believe what God says?

The apostle Paul made an interesting statement in the book of Acts in regard to this purpose God is working out. It is kind of interesting because in it he quotes a Greek

poet.

Acts 17:28-29 For in him [meaning God] we live and move, and have our being: as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone graven by art and man's device.

The apostle Paul clearly placed God in the position of a Father by using the word "offspring." Do you know that the term "Father" appears 985 times in Scripture, and it is the first word that you run across in the Hebrew dictionary? Look it up for yourself in Strong's. The first word is "Abba." To the best of my knowledge, the way we use Father is never used in the Old Testament in the manner Paul and others in the New Testament use it, and how God ultimately intends that we understand and use it.

In the Old Testament God is referred to as the Father of Israel. But that is at best only a type of the New Covenant application.

Let us go back to the Psalms. A man by the name of Asaph wrote this, and I get the idea that Asaph knew a thing or two. He quotes God here as saying:

Psalms 82:6 I have said, You are gods, and all of you are children of the most High.

This is a very interesting verse. Again the term Father is not used, but children is. Even more interesting is that the term "gods" is Elohim—the same word that is translated "God" in Genesis 1. Here mere men are called gods, and children of the Most High. These gods spoken of in this psalm were judges, and they were considered gods because they were acting in the name of God by revealing His judgments before the people. When people came to court they were supposed to look in the law book of God to see what God's judgment was, and then tell the people, "Here is the judgment." They were speaking for God, and so they were referred to as gods. Mere men were referred to here as gods. Conversion is not even an issue here. Mere unconverted men were called gods.

This psalm comes up in Jesus' ministry.

John 10:34-36 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, You

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are gods? [Guess who the author of Psalm 82 was!] If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken: Say you of him, whom the Father has sanctified [meaning Himself], and sent into the world, You blaspheme; because I said, I am the Son of God?

The background here is that Jesus was accused of blasphemy for calling Himself the Son of God. Then Jesus, in His defense, references Psalm 82, calling Himself the Son of God. He also states that the Word of God came to those called Elohim in Psalm 82. The Word of God that came to them in Elohim was the **written** Word from which those judges were to extract the basis of their judgments.

In John 10, Jesus—the Living Word of God—was standing right before these people. How much more does He deserve to claim the title "Son of God"? They could not answer Him. They could not respond with an honest answer. What Jesus did was put Psalm 82 in a much more narrow interpretation of Elohim than it appears Psalm 82 is talking about. In other words, there is more to Psalm 82 than meets the eye.

The meaning of what Jesus said is that Psalm 82 calls mere judges gods only in a general sense, and the people accepted that as true. On the other hand, Jesus is **literally** the Son of God, begotten by Him, consecrated by Him, and sent to be their Savior, and so therefore they have no right to charge Him with blasphemy. What this does is that it opens the door to further understanding for us because these people were not ignorant of Jesus' background. In order for Him to be truly the Son of God He would have had to been begotten by God, and indeed He was, as John 1:14-18 clearly shows.

Let us begin to move out from this a bit. In John 3:3-5 Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus.

John 3:5-6 Jesus answered [Nicodemus], Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.

You begin to see where this is headed, and that is that human beings, like Jesus, can be begotten by the Father, not quite in the same manner as Jesus was, but nonetheless regenerated by God's Spirit. God begins to be spiritually reproduced in those who have the Spirit of the Father.

In John 6:61-63, Jesus had just gone through some things that were very deep, and not

only deep, but offensive to some of the people who were listening to Him.

John 6:61-63 When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Does this offend you? What and if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickens [that gives life]: the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

This book is spirit. The meaning of the words is what imparts life *if* we believe them, and *if* we are committed to their truth. They begin to affect the generation and creation of an entirely different nature—the holy nature of God Himself. Thus Jesus, in using Psalm 82 in His defense, when linked with His instruction to Nicodemus in John 3, has tied the term "Son of God" to those who are literally (as He was), or spiritually (as we are) born of God.

Luke 10:21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in your sight.

This is undoubtedly one of the things the apostle Paul picked up on to say what he did in I Corinthians 1, that God has called the weak and the foolish of the world.

Luke 10:22 All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knows who the Son is but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

This is a second reason why those out there do not get it. They are not being called, and the Son is not revealing the Father, or the Son Himself, to them.

Luke 10:23-24 And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that you see: For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them: and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.

What a gift! What a gift to what is probably the weakest generation that has ever lived on the face of the earth, unless the ones just before the Flood were just like us. I do not know. So pay close attention to the teaching Jesus is giving there and rejoice, because you know this knowledge is the heart and core of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the individual Christian. The good news is that God is reproducing Himself in those called, who trust Him, and will yield to His governing of their lives.

God is no different in that sense from all the rest of His creation. He reproduces Himself, and when He says, "Let Us create man in Our image," we somehow distrust Him and do not take Him seriously what He so plainly states.

Jesus was purposely sent to reveal an aspect of God as Father that had never been openly expounded before mankind until the time came in God's purpose and plan. He planned to send His Son Jesus Christ into the world to reveal that God is reproducing Himself and is in the process of creating a family with character just like His. Whispers of this have existed from the very beginning of the Book, but now make much better sense to those to whom His purpose is revealed. I will not go into some of them because of the lack of time.

Ephesians 3:8-15 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unreachable riches of Christ: And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that you faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named.

I do not see how it can be made any clearer. It has already been stated in Ephesians 2:19 that we are members of the household of God, but here the term "family" is directly used in association with what God is the Head of. He is the Head of the family, and what is the family name? The family name is the Church of God. It is not named here, but it is named elsewhere. It is the assembly—that group which belongs to God and is one with Him.

Unity is the overall subject of Ephesians, and Paul's central purpose in this epistle has been to show the essential unity of the Israelites and Gentiles because of the Spirit of God. This is how Jesus' prayer in John 17:20-22 that we read last night is being answered. God is drawing both Gentile and Israelite together to be **one** in a family—a family that shows all of the same characteristics of the Father and the Son.

Romans 8:12-17 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you through the spirit do mortify [put to death] the deeds of the body, you shall live. For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

It is the Spirit of God by which we are regenerated that also enables us, if we believe, and will, to think, and act like God. If we will, we can have the same basic ending as Jesus Christ had. He is our pattern.

Romans 8:28-30 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

It is so interesting that Paul wrote this in the past tense, like it is a done deal. But let us not relax. We want to grow.

Let us go to some more beautiful words in Ephesians 1. I heard Mr. Armstrong say several times that this was his favorite chapter in all the Bible. I can understand why. It is beautiful. Let these words sink in. They are awesome!

Ephesians 1:3-14 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having

predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved [The "beloved" is His church, His family.] In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of his grace: Wherein he has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence: Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he has purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ, in whom you also trusted after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with the holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

These verses succinctly tell us the beginning and the end. It is in God's mind that these things were plotted out, executed, and will be completed. All He wants us to do is to trust Him. Granted, that is not always easy. Sometimes the positions, the circumstances He puts us in really put us at the Red Sea—Pharaoh at our back, and the sea before us. Are we going to trust Him to divide the water and allow us to pass through? That is the choice that lies before us. We can sin. We can break faith, or we can believe Him and allow Him to work out what He is working out. Sometimes He has to do this because He is a Creator. He has certain things in mind as He is forming and shaping us that He wants to bring to pass in our lives so that there is wisdom and understanding, and the ridding of foolishness that so frequently is there.

Romans 8:17 And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Romans 8 notes that we are heirs of God, and that inheritance, too, is part of our destiny because God has willed it so. The Father has already given this inheritance to Christ. It has been confirmed to Him, and because of what Christ did it is now confirmed to Abraham.

Because of what Christ did in confirming it to Abraham, it is also confirmed to all of those who are Abraham's children. But never lose sight of the fact that He is creating us all together into one body to glorify Him and to receive an inheritance along with Jesus Christ. Do you know what that inheritance is?

In order to make use of this inheritance it is necessary that we be given everlasting life. That inheritance is really of no value unless we also have everlasting life to go with it so that it can be properly used and complete the things that God has in mind and has already, I am sure (maybe stretching out things), planned for a billion years.

It is so interesting that the promise to Abraham began with the promise of what we now call Palestine, or Israel, or the Holy Land, or whatever. Then it was expanded from the river of Egypt to the river of Babylon—the Euphrates. The first thing you know, in Romans 4 you find out that Abraham is going to inherit the whole earth, and then we find out that Jesus Christ is going to inherit everything that God made. That is awesome!

Let us just look in Hebrews 2, and we will close on this. I do not think there is a more fitting place to close to see where things are headed.

Hebrews 2:8-11 You have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.

I want to read portions of verse 8 from the Weymouth translation because that first phrase in that verse says: "For in this subjecting of the universe to man." The universe is what they say "all things" mean.

The Living Bible translates it like this: "And you have put him [man] in complete charge of everything there is. Nothing is left out. But not yet."

God put Abraham to the test as to whether he would sacrifice his son. Did he trust God enough to sacrifice his son? It is interesting that in Hebrews 11 when that issue is

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brought up by the apostle Paul that the apostle Paul actually used an accounting term in relation to Abraham and his decision. It gives us good insight into Abraham.

Do you know what Abraham did? It says that he added things up. He took what he knew about God, about God's power, about God's promises, about God's character and he added them up. He knew one of those promises was that through Isaac would come all of the descendants of Abraham. He added everything up, and he said, "God will resurrect him [Isaac]. If I have to kill him, He will resurrect Him. If I don't have to kill him, He will provide a substitute." You see, Abraham used truth about the character, about the mind, about the purpose of God, and he said, "I trust Him." That is why he is the father of the faithful.

The faithful are those who trust God, and so what lies before us is inheriting with Abraham all that he is going to receive as a result of the promise being confirmed by Jesus Christ. Let us trust God.