

The Covenants, Grace and Law (Part 1)

Defining Some Issues

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Today, I am going to begin a series of sermons concerning the recent announcements regarding the covenants, the Sabbaths, tithing, clean and unclean meats, and, we might say, laws in general. I hope that you are not disappointed with the very first of this series, because it is human for us to want to directly confront an issue like this, and seemingly solve a disturbing problem very quickly. However, this issue, which reached a long-anticipated climax within the past month, is so big in its scope that it can involve every major doctrine pertaining to salvation.

This issue is much broader in scope than can be solved by isolating a few specific doctrines and speaking on them maybe one time, and that one time may surely be out of their proper context. That is something that "they" have never done. What they have never done, to any extent, is to show the ramifications of each change on the other doctrines that make up the package that pertains directly to salvation.

I could, conceivably, go through each and every one of them. However, I feel that it is far better, first of all, to get the big picture, and then the doctrines that we do go through will be seen clearly within their context, that is, within the framework of the whole picture—the whole package. You will see that they fit into a beautiful, logical, true mosaic of salvation.

We are going to begin in Romans 16, where Paul is talking about false ministers.

Romans 16:18-19 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf. But yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

The point of these two verses—which actually would include that which led up to these two verses—is that Paul did not want the Roman church to be drawn into a perversion of truth. He is saying to these people that we should beware in promoting and doing what is right, and not get mixed up with anything that to God is wrong and evil. He is saying to you and me that we should shoulder our responsibility. That responsibility is, within this context, to watch out, avoid what they are saying, obey, be wise, and, at the same time, be innocent.

I must say that psychologically, at least, what they have done has been very cleverly presented. Very much of what they have said up to this point, and especially in this final presentation, is true; but the transition from what is true to the conclusions reached is without scriptural basis. By the time this point was reached in the presentation, the people were practically "brain dead" from an exceedingly long, three-hour, rapid-fire presentation. They had been agreeing for so long with what is true that much was accepted without a great deal of critical examination. If the people were wise, they would have withheld judgment and thought

about things later. I hope that a great many people did do that.

It was also clever that, during the presentation, Mr. Tkach identified an "enemy"; in this case, it happened to be the Global Church of God. Mr. Tkach waved a *World Ahead* magazine and told people that if they wanted to leave and join that organization, then they should just leave. There is a psychological effect when one does that kind of a thing. That kind of an approach creates a "them" and "us" attitude, which in turn deflects the people's critical evaluation of the real issues. Psychologically, it makes people want to protect and hold on to their own.

Also the end of the presentation gave people something that carnally appealed to them. What I mean is this: Would not just about anybody desire to have more time to use as one was good and well pleased to do? Who would not want to have more of his income at his disposal? Who does not want to seem to get the government off his back? I think everybody wants that.

Finally, it came at the end of a long, many years' period of doctrinal changes that very seriously weakened many people's spiritual perception. The central doctrinal issues might generally be said to be grace and law, or, we might say, old covenant and new covenant. There might be other things involved in this—like justification, sanctification. However, I think that what we need to think about is that what they have done is big enough that it effects virtually every doctrine of Christianity.

This first sermon is going to be devoted to defining some of the issues by means of some illustrations—as well as some scriptures, of course. The illustrations will begin to show that the package—I want you to hang on to that word—will not work with the changes that have been made. "The package" is that body of doctrine that God has shown us—revealed to us—that has to do with salvation.

There are many doctrines in the Bible that have nothing to do, directly, with salvation, but there are some doctrines that are *absolutely essential* to salvation. If those doctrines are not perceived correctly, that misperception can have a very serious consequence on whether or not one is going to be saved. These recent changes are among those that would affect whether or not we are actually going to be changed. That is why it is so critical.

These changes will not work with the package of doctrine that God has given to us. In an overall sense, this series of sermons is going to show you why they will not work, and why the doctrines that we received earlier—through Mr. Armstrong—will work. They fit into a very logical and true program that will lead a person to conform, to fit with what God is doing, with His purpose.

I am also going to be defining quite a number of terms, not just in this sermon, but also in other sermons to come. These definitions are going to be very important for us to understand. In order to begin, I think that we have to go back in time, back toward some of the other changes that have already been made, in order to see some of the foundation of this thing. We are not going to get to the whole foundation, because there are internal, personal things that occurred to these people who are sitting in the seats of authority and who are changing all of these things. I am going to look at the changes themselves, and that is the foundation that I mean.

Go to the book of Proverbs, to a scripture with which we are all familiar.

Proverbs 29:18 Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keeps the law, happy is he.

We must begin here, because where a person is headed with his life determines how that person is going to conduct his life. The Living Bible gives an interesting slant to this verse.

Proverbs 29:18 (TLB) Where there is ignorance of God, the people run wild.

The primary sense of the verse here is that, if one does not know where he is going, he wanders all over the place. He will not go there in a straight line. Instead, he will go off in one direction for awhile; then, maybe, he will get back on track again. Then again, maybe he will not get back on track; maybe he will just keep on wandering. Thus, it is extremely important that we have *the right vision* before us.

Suppose that we have the wrong vision, coupled with an intense desire to reach whatever that vision happens to be. If we do not have the right vision—even though we have the discipline, even though we have the patience, even though we have the desire—we are going to be heading in the wrong direction, are we not? It is not the right goal.

Now suppose that we have the right vision, but it is not a clear vision. We do not have the discipline; we do not have the self-control; we do not have the desire—therefore, the vision is somewhat fuzzy to us, even though it is the right one. The chances are very great that we are going to wander all over the place. We are going to bang on one side, and then bang on the other. I hope we will get back on the track again from time to time—even though we wander all over the place. Maybe God in His mercy will guide us back to the central area, the path, the way that He wants us to go.

You can easily see that it is best to have the right vision, and it is best to have the *right qualities* that go with accomplishing that vision. The primary sense of Proverbs 29:18 is that if one does not know where he is going, he is going to wander all over the place. The implied spiritual sense is that, if one does not know God's purpose, he goes off the path of God's laws. "The people run wild." "He that keeps the law, happy is he."

In the King James Version, they actually put the word *law* in there, but in the Hebrew it is only implied. Within the verse, there is a fairly strong implication of the divine revelation given to the prophets. That is why, in the King James Version, they translated this word as "vision"—that is, the revelation given to the prophets—even though, again, the Hebrew does not directly say that. The translators understood that was what was implied in what was written.

This is important to you and me, because it is in the Prophets that God gives much of the vision for the future—what is coming. There might be a little bit in the Law, but a great bit is in the Prophets. Some, of course, is in the New Testament as well.

If this is indeed the vision that God has given and that He is working out, then we begin to understand the reason why we have been given free moral agency and told to choose. We have to choose which way that we are going to go. There is a way, but we have to choose to go that way.

To me, the single most revealing and doctrinally damaging change that was made was actually a series of changes—every one of them made in 1991. In January 1991, the "born again" doctrine was changed. I wonder if you recognize the critical importance of this doctrine? Basically, what it said was, "Once you reach this point, you are saved." The doctrine, as it is now, is a form of the "once saved, always saved" doctrine of Protestantism. The second one occurred in July of 1991. This is when they announced that "we are not going to be God, as God is God." The third one occurred in November of 1991, when they said that "the focus of the gospel is not the Kingdom of God and those future aspects, but rather it is Jesus Christ." The three of them, taken together, are a sledgehammer *against* the truth of God!

Whenever changes of this magnitude are made, it necessitates other changes, because supporting doctrines no longer "fit" the package we were given. They no longer "align" with what was given to us through Mr. Armstrong. Thus, additional changes had to be made, and they have continued unabated. They will continue, because each change necessitates other changes, in order to put together a coherent "package."

I even read the following in one of their publications: "We don't know what we will be. We only know that we won't be God." As I said a little bit earlier, they never ever fill in the details. Whenever they say, "Well, we're making this doctrinal change," they would then say, "This is why we are making it." What they would not say is, "This is where it is leading. This is the ramification that it's going to have on your daily life." They—in their case—wisely left that out.

It sounds to me as if they have taken a step toward the vague Protestant goal of going to heaven, or, we might even say, the Catholic concept of a "beatific vision." I do not know whether they will ever actually come up with that. (I am speaking here about the vagueness of the goal.)

We have been given a wonderful opportunity to participate in a small way in what God is accomplishing, but, brethren, if we don't know where we are going, how can we participate in any meaningful way? This is the ramification. Your choices, my choices begin to mean very little, if we are already saved. "Hey, I'll just try to be a good guy. That's all." Unfortunately, even that will not work, as we will see. With these three changes in 1991, they began laying a foundation which ultimately would—if allowed to continue—give everyone the right to do whatever is right in his own eyes.

We are going to review, right now, how clearly God says what we will be. It is not vague at all. It is not ambiguous. It is very sharply defined, very clear! We need to know for what we were created. Every scripture at which we will look is going to be a very clear scripture, a very familiar scripture.

Romans 8:29 For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate [This is where we are headed. God predestinated us...] to be conformed to the image of His Son [That's clear enough, as it is.], that He [Christ] might be the firstborn among many brethren.

That is a very powerful statement against the idea that one is "born again" when one is converted. Christ was *born first*; and He is going to be followed by many others, who are going

to be His brothers. Brethren, how can we be anything except what Jesus Christ is, if we are going to be conformed to His image—especially when one considers the emphasis in the New Testament for us to *change* to be as He is! Does it not say that we are to grow to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ?

By the way, this is just going to be an overview. Much could be filled in here; I just want to give those things that are so clear that I do not see how any of us could take them for anything except what they mean. There is nothing ambiguous about anything that I am going to give here. The only thing that remains, once we begin to see that we are going to be conformed to His image, is what our bodies will be like.

Philippians 3:21 Who shall change our vile [lowly] body, that it may be fashioned [or conformed] like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

There is nothing ambiguous about that. Our bodies are going to be conformed like unto His. It does *not* say they will be conformed like unto an angel's. It does *not* say they will be conformed like unto a better human being. They are going to be conformed like unto His. Paul is talking about the Lord. The Lord is God! Our bodies are going to be like God's. There is nothing ambiguous, nothing cloudy, and nothing vague about that at all.

Take the word *conform*, or, as it is in the King James, *fashioned*. Look up the word *conformed* in a dictionary, and it will tell you that it means "similar to" or "identical with." We have a question: Is our body going to be "similar to," or is it going to be "identical with"? Which one is intended? We shall see.

I John 3:1-3 Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. [We are sons of God.] Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him [which is very similar to what Philippians 3:21 says]; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure.

When he says, "it does not yet appear what we shall be," he means that we do not know some of the specifics about what our nature will be like, but we do know this in a generality: "We shall be like Him." Think just a little bit. What other creature that God has created has been given the Spirit of God and is being conformed to His image? Angels? Hebrews 1 says that the angels of heaven worship Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is greater than angels, and we are going to be conformed to Him! The conforming is *not* going to be to angels. The conforming is to be to God. That begins to become very clear.

One other thing that John adds here is that this hope—that is, to be *conformed to the image of God*, to the image of Jesus Christ—is what motivates a person to purify himself. It is the engine that drives a person along the Way, because he knows where he is headed. He is not going to be somebody who is slightly above angels; he is going to be somebody like the Son of God: one who is worshipped and who is worthy of the worship of angels. That is not ambiguous

in any way. We are going to be *like Him*: He can be worshipped.

Does it not say, in Revelation 3, that people are going to come and worship US? Do people worship angels? No, the angels tell them, "Get up off your knees, because I am a servant as you are." God says we are going to be worthy of worship. We are going to be God. There is nothing ambiguous about that. You always work from the clear scriptures, in order to shed light upon that which is vague and ambiguous.

I I Corinthians 3:18 But we all [meaning Christians], with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed [or, are being changed] into the same image [Brethren, could anything be clearer than that?] from glory to glory [from man to God], even as by [the means of] the Spirit of the Lord.

I do not know whether anything could be more clear. We are going to try one more scripture.

I I Corinthians 15:49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy...

That makes very clear what *image* means. Are we like Adam? Oh, yes.

I I Corinthians 15:49 ...we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Are we sons of Adam? Then, why do we have this image? Why are we like him? Because we are his offspring! We have been born into this earth, the offspring of Adam, as Acts 17 clearly proves; and we will be born again—this time as a born son of God—and we will bear the image of our Father. We will be just like Him, even as we are just like Adam is now. We will be God!

Incidentally, the word *image* used here in I Corinthians 15 means "that which corresponds to and reproduces the original." No image—whether it is a reproduction in a flat mirror, a three-dimensional hologram, or a living child of a parent—is an exact replica or image, because each person has his own peculiarities. That is so evident and so logical that everybody ought to be able to understand that nobody can be God exactly as God is God, because each person is an individual personality. There is nothing hard about that. We will be a reproduction of Him, but we will be unique—because we are who we are, and He is who He is. He has His life and His history, and we have ours. However, we will still be God. We will be just as much "God" as a baby in the human family is a human like its parents.

Add to this another simple illustration: Suppose you want to travel from San Francisco to New York. You look at a map, and you determine the route that you want to take. In some cases, it may be the route that you need to take. After you begin your trip, you decide that you want to change your destination and, instead, go to Miami. What is the effect? The effect is that you need a whole new set of directions—because now the goal is different. The old directions no longer "fit." That is exactly what has happened! Doctrine gives direction and support to the overall purpose on how the goal, the destination is going to be achieved.

Go to another familiar scripture in the book of Malachi. This is a very clearly stated principle:

Malachi 3:6 "For I am the LORD, I change not..."

This fits right into what we are saying, because he goes on to say,

Malachi 3:6 "...therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed."

If God had changed His purpose, the sons of Jacob would have been consumed. However, because God had a purpose that He has been working out from the very beginning, He was looking beyond the fact of what these people were doing to destroy themselves and to remove themselves from the purpose of God. God, in a sense, overlooked what they were doing—all the way to the future, to the conclusion of His purpose for these people.

God says, "I change not." He has never altered His purpose from the get-go.

Genesis 1:26 And God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.

There is an overall statement at the very beginning of the life of men, when God says something that, as we begin to see later, implies a great deal more. He said that He was going to make man "in Our image." In a nutshell, once you begin to understand it, there is *God's purpose for mankind*.

Go all the way back to the New Testament, to the book of Ephesians as we continue to build on this.

Ephesians 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ [Us, again, as sons of God—Christians.]. According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world...

"I am God. I change not." He has never deviated from that purpose from the foundation of the world, from the get-go. Once He had planned what He was going to do, He set out on that purpose; and He has never deviated from it. We saw very strong implication of that right in Genesis 1: "Let Us create man in Our image." What is He doing? It is beginning to become very clear. This is something that you heard so many times! *He is reproducing Himself*. If He is creating "in His image," then He is reproducing Himself!

Ephesians 1:4-5 He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that [Here comes a little more clarification:] we should be holy [We worship a holy God!] and without blame before Him in love. Having predestinated us [Romans 8:29] unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

Ephesians 1:9-11 Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure [In other words, it was completely by His initiative that we came to understand this.] which He has purposed in Himself. That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one [Hang on to that "gather together in one." "In one" what?] 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.

Those are really wonderful, grand words.

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God [Not the knowledge "in" Him, but the Son of God's knowledge—that which is possessed by the Son.], unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Now we can begin to see toward where we are being drawn. It is becoming more and more specific. The actual creation of Adam and Eve and the placing of them in the Garden of Eden was not an end in itself but only a necessary step at the beginning of a *process* that continues right down to today.

Is God creating a community? A *community* is defined by Webster as "a unified body of individuals; a state; a commonwealth." *The Reader's Digest Encyclopedic Dictionary* gives one that is even better: "A group of people living together in one locality and subject to the same laws, having common interests *and characteristics*." Beautiful!

Right from the very beginning God implies the expansion of *His own community*. He says, "Let Us..." Does that not indicate a community already exists? "Let Us make man in Our image." Man was made, physically, in God's image, and he begins with characteristics already in common with his Maker in terms of form and shape. The rest of the Bible fills in the details of how mankind is being brought from having not only form and shape in common with his Maker, but also character, so that he fits perfectly into the community which the Maker is expanding.

In Genesis 2, we see the first and smallest "community" created. It is the family.

Genesis 2:23-24 And Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called 'Woman,' because she was taken out of Man." Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife. And they shall be one flesh.

There is the first and the smallest community of human beings: a family. In chapter 4, we see that family begin to expand. Sons, in this case, are mentioned as being born into it. Notice the phrase *born into the family*. That is how they become part of the community: They are born into it.

We see, through chapter 5, a continued expansion of the human family—as more are born into that family. Until today—carrying up through the Flood, beyond the Flood through Noah and his sons and their wives, and then on to Genesis 10, where we have the table of nations—we see men and women scattered all over the earth in the forms of villages, towns, townships, cities, counties, states, providences, nations, and, today, unions of nations.

Go back to the New Testament again.

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

When the Son of God came, He came with a message from His Father. When Jesus gave the

title to the message that He brought from the Father, it was "*the good news of the Kingdom of God*." This is the Boss Himself, and this is the title that He Himself gave it. It was the good news of the Kingdom of God.

What does the word *kingdom* mean? Is it a community? It literally means "royal dominion." It can mean a number of things that are a bit more specific than that; and we will look at them, because they pertain to the overall message. In Matthew 6:13, right towards the end of what we know today as "The Lord's Prayer," Jesus instructs,

Matthew 6:13 "And lead us not into temptations, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen."

There, *kingdom* is used in the sense of the exercise of royal power and authority. We are praying to the Father; and what the word means there is, "Please exercise Your royal authority." However, sometimes *kingdom* refers to the people within a territory.

Matthew 4:8 Again, the devil took Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.

We are looking at masses of people who lived within these kingdoms. Thus, we have (1) royal dominion, and (2) people within a kingdom. We are just scratching the surface. If you look up the word *kingdom* or *the Kingdom of God* in a good reference book, you will find multitudes of applications that all point back to the same things.

Mark 11:10 Blessed by the kingdom of our father David.

Here, he is associating the ruler with the kingdom; that is, the ruler with people and the implication of territory. Are you beginning to see what is taking shape here? We will go to one more in this regard. Of course, we are speaking here of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:9 I, John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.

That shows ownership, much in the same position as Mark 11:10, where the ownership—or, in this case, the rule—was associated with David. Synonyms for *kingdom* are *realm* ("the realm of God"), *nation* ("the nation of God"—thus, "the good news of the realm of God," or "the good news of the nation of God"), *country* ("the good news of the country of God"), *dominion* ("the good news of the dominion or the rule of God"), *land* ("the good news of the land of God"), also *territory*, *state*, *principality*, *duchy*, *dukedom*, *empire*, and *monarchy*.

Is there any doubt in your mind that God is forming a community? Is there any doubt in your mind that ruling this community is going to be Jesus Christ, first, and after that, as in I Corinthians 15, where it says that Jesus Christ is going to turn everything over to the Father? That is pretty clear. There is nothing ambiguous here. Is God forming a community?

The important thing for us is what ramifications the good news of the Kingdom of God has on "the way we live our lives." In the course of the unfolding of Christ's ministry, and then the apostles', we find some very interesting things that have a direct impact upon "the way we live

our lives." Number one: Christ was the Son of God. This is so clear that I am not even going to turn to a scripture. Christ was the Son of God. Does not a son indicate a *family relationship*?

All by itself, rightly dividing the Bible, *son* is used in the Bible in at least two different ways. One means "a direct descendant of." The other is used in the sense of "characteristics of, but not necessarily direct descendant of." For example, the Bible uses the phrase *sons of Belial*. That literally means "sons of foolishness." A son of Belial is someone who has the characteristics of somebody who is foolish. We can eliminate that, because we know that the Bible says very plainly and clearly that Jesus was the Son of God. There was a direct relationship there. Since He was of the same Family, there is a family relationship. It was not merely a matter that He showed the characteristics of God, but on the other hand, He fits both categories. He not only was a Son literally (in that He was born of Mary of the Holy Spirit), but He also showed the characteristics of God. He was God.

That very clearly, then, indicates a family relationship between God the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ. Indeed, Jesus said that He came to reveal the Father and that if we have seen Him (i.e., Jesus Christ) we have seen the Father. Again, that is another indication of a family relationship.

Mark 3:34 And He [Christ] looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, "Behold My mother and My brethren!"

Are those family terms? Who are Christ's mother and brother? Who is Christ's family? He gives the answer.

Mark 3:35 "For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother."

Is He indicating a family relationship? Is God creating a community? We have already seen that the community that He is creating is a kingdom. It is a realm; it is a dominion; it is a territory; it is a state; it is a country; it is a nation. Now we are beginning to see that this nation, this state is also a Family. That is very interesting—like, man, everybody's related. Like, man, everybody is a son of the Boss—the Creator. Everybody has the same characteristics. Do not the descendants of parents look like their parents? Sure they do.

Everything fits together so beautifully, so logically. *God is reproducing Himself*. We will make it even clearer. Go to Romans 8 once again. We are not talking about metaphors, similes, or analogies; we are talking about reality!

Romans 8:14-15 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."

Is that a family? Thus, if we have the Spirit of God, we are part of a family. We are Jesus' brothers. We are Jesus' sisters. We are Jesus' mothers. We have the same Father as He did. That is not hard to figure out. Is God reproducing Himself? Is God creating a community? Is that community a nation? Is that community a family? Where is the destination of life, brethren?

John 18:37 Pilate therefore said unto Him, "Are you a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.

We know that *truth* there is meant in a general way, but a part of that truth was that He was born to be a King. Is He a King over nothing? He is a King over a kingdom. That is very clear. Now begin to draw you and me into this picture.

Matthew 19:28 And Jesus said unto them [the original twelve apostles], "Verily I say unto you, that you which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory [He confirms again that He was born to be a King], you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The apostles are going to be kings, too, in this Kingdom which is also a Family. Their jobs are very clearly specified. We will add something more to this:

Revelation 5:10 And have made us unto our God [The *us* is you and me. The *us* is the brothers of John, who wrote this.] kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Just like the apostles and just like Jesus Christ, we, too, are going to be kings and priests on earth, where the Kingdom will be located. That is very clear. Thus, we find that God is producing a *community*; and that community is a *nation*, and it is also a *Family*. The members of that Family are brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. We all have a common Father—the great Creator of everything that is. Like the apostles and like Jesus Christ, we are being drawn to a place where we are going to be ruling in that Kingdom.

We also find that Christ is, through His atoning death, the Savior of the world. He saves us from our transgressions of God's law of love. To become part of that Kingdom—that Family—we find that we have to repent of the breaking of God's law. We have to believe in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the atoning, or the atonement, for our sins. We have to be baptized, and we then will receive the Holy Spirit. Then, as we read in Romans 8, it is the receiving of that Spirit—through the meeting of those conditions—that we become a part of the Family of which Jesus Christ is already part. However, then we find something else:

I Peter 1:16 Because it is written, "Be you holy; for I am holy."

Just because we have met the conditions for entering into this *Family Kingdom* does not mean that is the end of our responsibility. Actually, we find that much of the responsibility is just beginning—a topic that I am going to have to cover in another sermon. We will conclude this section by going to Revelation 19:7. This puts us all the way up to the return of Christ.

Revelation 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him [Christ]. For the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Without going into a lot of supporting material to clarify that, I think we all believe that the person in question here, the wife, is the church. She is the Bride of Christ. However, I want you

to notice what it says there. "She has made herself ready." God does not ambiguously lead us in wrong directions. The woman—the Bride, the church—has had to do things. She had had to do things in order to get her into that position in which she is ready to marry Christ. It was not merely a matter of repenting, of getting baptized, of receiving God's Spirit. There was something she had to do in order to be prepared to be in that Kingdom and marry her "elder Brother" (as it were).

Why have I gone all through this rehearsing of a process with which we are familiar? Because hidden, unspoken, and unwritten in these latest changes is that they have bought the Protestant notion that all God is striving to do is to save people. I hope you understand what I mean. I will spell it out for you: What it is saying, without directly saying it, is that life is not going anywhere, except to some vague place that in Protestantism and in Catholicism they call "heaven." In other words, the Creator is not creating; He is merely saving. The Creator is not the Potter—molding, shaping, fashioning, forming, polishing, and finishing, with our participation in all of these things.

What is happening is that that church is subtly being moved to the place where free moral agency is of little consequence. I will tell you when it began. Believe it or not, it was probably the first thing that was attacked, and I am sure that you will remember when I begin to tell you. This happened all the way back either in late 1986 or very early 1987. They attacked the concept of being *qualified* for the Kingdom of God. Again, much of what they said was true. It was what they did not say that was important.

When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them a law for community relationships. When He did that, did He say, "All of My commandments you must keep, except for one"? I will just leave that up to your discretion. Did He say, "You do not really have to keep it. But, if you want to—because you love Me—you can, because it might be beneficial to you"?

We are not talking about a minor ceremonial regulation that affects man's relationship with God about once in a blue moon. We are talking about one of the major Ten—the law that spells out God's character, and tells us what love is, and tells us what sin is. Can you begin to understand why James said—I am paraphrasing—that *the law is a package*? You break one, and you break them all. You take the whole package together. Once the package is broken up, it begins to lose its effectiveness.

That fourth commandment is exceedingly important to the keeping of the other nine. In Ezekiel 20, why do you think that God specified two specific commandments that they broke—idolatry and Sabbath breaking? They are linked together, because if you do not keep the Sabbath, you are going to go into idolatry. If you do not keep the Sabbath, the others are going to be broken.

In one sense, it can be said that it is the commandment around which all the others revolve. I will explain why, in another sermon. Those are the two key commandments. If you break the first one, the rest are going to be broken, as sure as anything. If your god is not really God, then you are off the track already; and all the other laws are going to be affected. In the same way, if you break the Sabbath day, if you don't keep it, then the others are going to be broken. Do you know why? Because you are not going to be in contact with God.

He has called a meeting of His Kingdom, of His Family to be on that day. If you are not there, you are absent. You are AWOL. Sure, He can meet with people on other days, but that is the one He specified. How in the world can something that you do not really have to keep be beneficial? That is double-talk. It is like handing you a biscuit with one hand, and taking it out of the other. It does not work.

People do things, observe things in the practice of their religion because it matters to them. Yet, we have been told that one can be a Christian without the keeping of this beneficial day. What are they saying? "It does not matter." If, then, we can meet the requirements of being a Christian without the keeping of this day—which obviously does not fit the flow of this world's social, business, and religious activities—why go through the hassle of keeping it? That does not make sense.

What is happening here? Again, it is part and parcel of the fact that they have bought the Protestant notion that God is only trying to save people, that God's law serves no other purpose than to define sin. Oh, brethren, do not ever get into that mode! What has happened? What will happen? Here is a ramification: The law will be seen in a totally negative light, rather than God's intended purpose. I should say His very positive purpose of not only showing what sin is, but also providing a guide, which, if we live by the power of His Spirit, will work to produce the character that is identical to the Creator's.

Our small part in this whole wonderful purpose is not merely to say, "I believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior;" but to use our God-given free moral agency to conscientiously choose the right in order to do our small part in producing godly attitude and character.

You might think that eliminating the necessity of keeping one of God's Ten Commandments is bad enough. However, the natural, carnal progression toward total anarchy has already begun. I am going to give you evidence of what is already happening within that organization. I am going to give you a series of quotes extracted from a series of three sermons given in August by the pastor of two Atlanta congregations—sermons which were endorsed in person, in Atlanta by Mr. Tkach, Sr., by letter by Mr. Tkach, Jr.

I want you to see where this concept that they are teaching has already been taken by a leading minister. This first group is taken from the first sermon.

1. "Some fear that giving up the law and relying on grace will lead to immorality."
2. "God is freeing people from all rules—the Sabbath, the holy days, and the Ten Commandments—and it is a beautiful thing."
3. "Satan does not want grace preached, because he wants to keep people in bondage—under his control—by having them keep the Sabbath, the holy days, and the Ten Commandments."
4. "Those that don't observe the Ten Commandments are free."

Incidentally, I am just skimming the surface. I have a write-up with 198 quotes—all in this same general vein. From the second sermon:

1. "The law will even dehumanize you and make things impersonal."
2. "The law causes people to condemn others."

3. "The law made Paul an armed and dangerous man."
4. "Some use Matthew 19: 17 to say Christians need to keep the Ten Commandments. But Christ wasn't serious in what He said to the rich man. He was merely answering a fool according to his folly."

From the third sermon (These are really doozies. You can see that he got "better" as he went along.):

1. "All scripture was written to confirm Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ did not confirm scripture."
2. "Even the Ten Commandments were only given as a reminder of the exodus."
3. "The law causes division."

Now, listen to these last two very closely:

1. "The Bible has some good things in it, but you may as well read some other book because lots of other religious and philosophical books—even the Koran— talk about loving your neighbor."
2. "The Christian doesn't need any book, because Christ—the Word—is living in him, telling him what to do."

Brethren, that is not even the mind of a normal human being! That is the mind of Satan the devil, who hates God's law and purpose and will use any means to deceive or terrify men into thwarting God's purpose for them.

Finally for today, a quote from the January 5, 1995, "Pastor General's Report," page 4:

When the people of God, who are made holy through faith in Jesus Christ, devote time to the worship of God, that becomes holy time. It becomes holy time because it is devoted to God, who is holy—not because that particular time is itself holy.

The commandment says to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. You cannot keep something "holy" that has not been first been made holy by a holy God. Even Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of the Sabbath, said that there is none good but God. Yet, we here on this earth—who are not even worthy to tie His shoelaces—are told that we can make something holy merely by our observation of it.

When the vision is changed, then the law—which is intended to be guidance toward that vision—is thrown out. It is the same as saying, "I do not know where I am going, but I will end up at the right place regardless of the way I go." It is the all-roads-lead-to-heaven principle.

That is it for today. God willing, we will continue next week.