

951016 Water Ritual on LGD HLH Pentn CAN

The special music you heard reminds me of the first time I attended in Pasadena in the auditorium, the Messiah, in which a choral group sang the words, but the words were preceded by reading.

It was a remarkable period of time.

I presume it was 1948, let's say.

I don't remember exactly which year, but I think it was.

I was just reflecting, in part, on some of the things that were read there, in addition to what Mr. Richard Burkey mentioned, and what I should like to address.

Talk to a number of people in and out of the region of Southern California on the importance of a topic that probably many of us are sure we understood until we came to an event that tested whether we did.

It's called patience.

But before I do, I want to tell you how the world has changed since 1948, which, in a sense, is one of the reasons why we do need to think about patience and how we conduct ourselves.

I was in a suit that afternoon, it was a Sunday afternoon, when I went to the Civic Auditorium in Pasadena as a student at Ambassador College, and I looked around and saw that no man wore a business suit as I am wearing today.

They all wore tuxedos, for no responsible man went to a public affair in Pasadena without a tuxedo.

Today, I see men and they not only don't wear a business suit, they certainly aren't in tuxedos and they go to the Civic Auditorium today.

This is a changed world, and I think it is important that we recognize how we need to conduct ourselves as individuals in a world that does change, however slowly, some decades much more rapidly than others, in particular the decade of the 1960s.

But I am saying this by way of introduction, because there wasn't that much difference in the spirit and attitude generated in that marvelous group.

So many years ago, the same attitude can be generated in us by listening to a reading of the book of Isaiah in particular.

I should like to draw attention to the fact that Isaiah answered the question, here am I, Lord, send me. He failed to ask, however, another question, what would happen if I did go and you did send me? That isn't what God heard from him, nor was it revealed.

But Isaiah died, they sawed him in two, in the Jewish tradition after the death of Hezekiah in the days of his son, King Manasseh.

So sometimes we have to ask some serious questions before we hastily make a decision.

I came to Ambassador in 1947 in the autumn of October.

It was a period of time in which a number of people whose names I need not mention, I'll just mention one because his name had been written up as a contributor to the book that Mr. Armstrong wrote, on the new morality, Dr. Merrill.

He was baptized, a gentleman from Sweden who lived here, worked for Chrysler Motors, was baptized, yes, was baptized.

Other men and women were, and I was not.

See, there was a question I had.

I just didn't ask, send me, Lord, I was concerned for what would happen if He did.

Because we had lived through World War II.

We had lived through the knowledge that if one had another religion, you could be put to death by the millions.

If you had another political affiliation, you could be put to death by the millions.

A few million, but a few are millions when you're not that many millions yourself.

You could be put to death if you were of another people.

You could be put to death if you were of another sexual orientation.

You could be put to death if you were a religious leader.

For you see, it was a world in which to be Jewish, merited death.

To be a Marxist, merited death.

To be a homosexual, merited death.

To be a Catholic priest, merited death.

If you took a view contrary to the party doctrines.

If you were a Gypsy, it merited death.

If you were a Lutheran who waited until others came first, not that all did.

And you took a stand finally against the Nazi party, it merited death.

So we've grown to be quite different today in 1995.

In 1947, 1948, our morals, the standards were different.

The challenges were remarkable if you lived in Europe at that day or parts of Asia.

How to cope with the changes of life where today we tolerate what was not publicly permitted in some countries and was privately extirpated in others.

And now we live in a world so far removed in codes and standards.

I can think of occasions of young people who came from poor homes in the 1930s in school, even into the 1940s in World War II.

Whose haircuts, boys, were not up to standards in the public, not private schools.

And the principal was willing to give his money to the child but told the child, you get a haircut and don't come back until you are neatly groomed for this school.

And today, I needn't even describe what it's like to be where we are, it is astonishing.

I think it's important to recognize that we live for decades, hopefully.

Some of you are relatively new in the church but may or may not have decades behind you in maturity.

And in these changes that take place around us and are bound to take place again, it is important to know how to conduct ourselves, how to be patient.

It's one thing to be tolerant, to be forgiving.

It's another thing to be permissive.

It's another thing to be gracious and in contrast hostile when you see things that are not part of your experience.

So we need to look at life as a whole.

We need to look at ourselves as individuals, at our families.

In terms of our employment, the people whom we meet socially and the people whom we meet spiritually, there are a number of important words we can use.

The topic today is not the topic of love that I wish to address.

The patience is an aspect both of faith and love and hope.

Paul lists certain fundamental areas.

Jesus focused on the word patience more often than we might realize.

And in the Bible, whether in the Hebrew Scriptures or in the Greek, we have some very important places that we ought to read.

How we handle ourselves, how we are willing to, let's say, move and not seem peculiar, because if I were to go to a public event and dress as we did to standard 40 to 50 years ago, I would seem to be the peculiar one for whom others must be patient.

Ecclesiastes 7-8 speaks of the importance.

Some of these you don't have to turn to.

You may only want to mark.

In some cases, I think that you should turn to it while I read it.

Patience in spirit is a very important attitude, and it's contrasted there to the sense of pride, because many who are proud are impatient people.

Patience in spirit is an attitude.

The word in spirit, of course, is in reference to the mind, to the inner, invisible person.

It's interesting that you will meet in life people who can be proud and hasty, and you will meet other people who are patient and concerned.

1 Thessalonians 5-14, in a letter of Paul to a church congregation, asks the brethren to be patient toward all, and the word men is used, which is a term now that is treated as sexist, so we would have to substitute something else today.

Patience toward all people that we meet.

It's important to learn how to be patient because we each have differences.

Habits that are good, habits that are bad, and habits in between that don't make that much difference, but may be different from your habits.

James 5-7 tells us how long we have to be patient.

Interestingly, however James may have perceived it, we have to be patient till death, he says, be patient to the coming of the Lord.

James in writing may have perceived his generation as hardly possible to get beyond that, in which there were publicly butchering people in the arena for entertainment, because so many people, for example, in Italy and the cities had no jobs and had to be fed, and they had to be entertained, or who knows what crimes they would have been into, and what kind of a world could ever get beyond that.

Well, the world has changed in many ways since then, but to be patient to the coming of the Lord is in a sense to learn to be patient to the time of death, or it is appointed unto men once to die, appointed unto humans to die once and then the judgment.

Patience is consequently lifelong.

It is not something that you decide to have just so many years, and after that you don't need to be patient any longer.

So patience is an inward attitude that expresses, of course, itself outwardly toward everyone, and whose duration must last through life.

Ministers are asked to be patient, all who have some responsibility.

For example, in 2 Timothy 2.34, someone ordained in the church should be apt to teach, should be a servant of the Lord and patient.

Now, here we are dealing with a number of responsibilities, but we discover the importance of patience in the area of communicating to other people.

I can't tell you when or where I learned patience because it's a lifelong experience, but the first time I specifically remembered patience had to do, my wife has heard this story, with little Alvin who couldn't subtract, and I was the next to the last person in class to learn to subtract.

Now, there were others who learned immediately how to subtract.

I don't know if Mr. Burkey is now asking what was his problem, meaning me, that I learned next to the last, but I was the kind of person who wanted to understand what subtraction meant before I could do it.

And all the others who understood, the teacher never asked them.

The teacher asked me because she thought, I must have learned something.

And I was told to go to the cloakroom, which had a little table and a couple of chairs and a window, and to teach Alvin to subtract while the class went on.

And I dutifully did that, like Isaiah didn't ask the final question, well, what happens if I can't? And I couldn't, and I walked out to the teacher and said, Alvin doesn't understand, and she says, go back and do not come out until he does.

If I had the wisdom I have today, I would have suggested that she try it.

But I didn't know that, but you could talk to a teacher and perhaps encourage her to use the same method.

Poor Alvin just didn't get it.

And I had many things going through my mind.

What will my father say in the evening if I don't show up? You know, all those things.

And finally, a very important question, not related to this topic, but maybe more so than you realize.

It's a question that really underlies why it's difficult sometimes to work with others or to understand others and to be patient with others.

I said, Alvin, what is it that you don't understand? And I gave a few examples here and he began to explain to me what he didn't understand.

And when I knew what his problem was, I explained it to him.

And Alvin understood.

What was the Jews problem? What was the Marxist problem in the period of World War II? What was the homosexual problem? What was the problem of being born a gypsy, being a Catholic priest, a Lutheran pastor? People find it difficult to understand why other people are either what they are in their thinking or their action, their being.

We have stereotypes, racial stereotypes, sexual stereotypes.

And you notice I'm not trying to define only the group that's right and not the group that's wrong.

I'm giving you a whole perspective.

I had to understand what Alvin's problem was.

If I'm going to be patient with people who do not understand Christ, who have some other sexual orientation, who have been ordained into a religion that I would find sufficiently different that I could not be a member of, it is important to understand those individuals.

What is it like to be a gypsy? What is it like to have been a Jew who, when he arrives at a new place, his first plan is where to go next? As a Jew told me, when we were seated side by side, I know a Jew in Southern California who was interested in Buddhism, found us somewhat interesting.

We were together in the philosophical library looking up some things.

And he said that's one of the things being a Jew one never forgets.

How and where to go next, because the people among whom we are are never patient permanently.

We can go through Hebrew 612, a verse you should be familiar with.

Through faith and patience we inherit the promises.

Belief is important, but belief leads to the recognition that you don't stop believing the first day, or the second, or the third, or the first year, or the first decade.

Belief should extend a lifetime, and in a lifetime we learn that it is important to have faith and confidence.

Hebrews 11 is a chapter devoted to faith, and there are scattered examples in the Bible devoted to patience, sometimes particular individuals.

Sarah and Abraham, Isaac and Job are all individuals designated as having great need of patience while their belief and faith may have been tested.

It's significant, therefore, that we take a look internally and externally at ourselves.

We as children, when we grow a little older, discover siblings, brother or sister or brothers or sisters, coming along if we're the oldest, and when we're young we grow up to realize little by little that we have older, more powerful brothers and sisters.

Our oldest daughter was never shy.

She was quite capable of leading, which made it a little difficult for number three, who was a boy.

The youngest child we had was short.

She's mature now at 30.

31, as it turns, yes, 31 this year, time goes by.

Some people learn to work with others.

They are, by nature, more patient than others, and part of this is inherited.

We have people who are inherently impatient, and other people and sometimes even races who are inherently more patient.

And within the groups there are some who are more patient than others.

Americans have never been known worldwide for their patience.

We want to get a job done.

We want to go and lie the Communist leader of China.

Since it was based on a revolution said in response to the question, what do you think of the outcome of the French Revolution for France? And he said in good Chinese wisdom, with patience, it is too early to tell.

Americans would have predicted the outcome before it happened.

So whether we are mature individuals or little children, we first have to learn patience by dealing with our younger siblings or our older ones.

And then there's the problem of dealing with your father and mother.

And then father and mother has the problem of dealing with the children that come along.

There are some parents who find it much more difficult to be patient with their children than others.

Some have a knack of creating the solution so that patience is easy.

A mother who is able by nature without having to read a work by Dr. Spock or someone else to know how to make decisions instantly for the children as distinct from the mother who worries and then gets frustrated.

It is interesting to see that in our own makeup we all differ in terms of our ability to be patient.

It isn't that everybody is born equal.

Before God and the bar of justice is one thing, but some of us are born physically unequal, handicapped people.

And some of us, by nature and emotion, are born with greater problems to wrestle with than others do.

I do not have to explain that. All you have to do is look at other people whom you know.

And you say, well, that person just seems so naturally patient. It may be true.

And some people seem impatient. So we have different degrees with which we must wrestle with this particular problem.

So sometimes, and when I reflect on our children, I find that there are some children that predictably can handle patiently more children in the next generation than another might.

We see this and it's important that we profit by our own experiences. It's important we profit as parents or grandparents as we help others and wrestle with ourselves.

And it is important as children that we also be patient.

Not everything comes to the first born as soon as it might come to the next one.

And sometimes the third or fourth think it's owed to them at three, which the oldest child at nine may have never had before.

And now we have the question of the importance of patience within the church as an institution, not merely the family or the workplace.

We have to learn how to be helpful, how to be firm, how to explain to others and when not to explain to others, how to listen and when to speak.

Now, some people emphasize more one of these areas than others, other areas.

But if we're going to be patient and the kind of examples that we are, we ought to think of some of the thoughts that were expressed by Mr. Burkey.

His experience is rather different in mine in terms of the friendships that he has.

Now, I can say that, but not because I know all of his friends, because I know that he doesn't know some of ours.

Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Jews, and sometimes Christians, Catholics, Protestants, sects, there are people for whom the curtain will never go up in this life to see what we may see.

But if I have a Jew who does not understand, cannot understand the Messiah, who must, like Thomas, wait to see what he looks like to be convinced.

But there are others who may know nothing of the Messiah, who may be remarkably patient and thoughtful.

I know of Jews who are patient and those who are not.

Our dear Buddhist friend, now some years deceased, could be a very patient man and not let certain things ruffle him who died in an accident in Thailand, a sub-Ahmadiyan.

In some ways, he was far more likely to be patient than I would.

I'm giving this sermon not because I'm the most patient man in the world, but I should listen to myself and be an example as well.

We had three pieces of luggage.

I was to get on a plane in which only two were allowed.

No one had told me before.

What do you do? Well, he was a patient man and he made the simple suggestion.

We tie two of them together and we have now one and two.

I thought that was both clever.

It was a nonsensical thing to have to do it because the same amount went on the plane, except that you had to toss two together.

I think if I were loading it, I would have preferred just one each, but those are the rules.

And that's how we made the decision.

My mind immediately went to the illogic of something.

The illogic rules, and you can lecture society for making illogical rules, but he was a patient man and simply worked with them.

But there are things he didn't understand.

Mr. Berkey points out today that it is possible for some people to be growing in areas, as Paul addressed the question, who show the works through faith of the law of God in their lives.

For others who may know more of the law show none of that evidence.

Even if these people had never really understood what was written in this case, a Greek might not have understood what was written in the code that the Jews had, but nevertheless they had learned certain things from life and were instructed by those things.

So in closing, let me suggest that you give some serious thought to looking at the daily problems that come to you in life, with others, with things.

And you look at the example, and then you begin to ask yourself how you solve some of these things.

Can we change everybody else to meet our standards? The answer would be no.

No woman in her right mind, and there are people like that, not in their right mind, who marry men in order to change them, has made a wise decision.

I don't know whether men seek to change their wives as much as wives seek to change their husbands, but that's at least the way the story is given.

It is important that we learn how to coordinate our relationship with people, some of whom we can be very close to, and others we simply prefer to be a little further away.

Sometimes I meet a man, and the more I know of him the more I would describe what my relationship would have to be.

I would be willing to dig a ditch with that person, eight hours a day, anywhere in the world, so long as he dug in one direction and I in the other.

I guess some of you know people like that, and then there are people in work we keep interrupting because we have something new to think about.

In our little excavation, I don't even remember the size, I think they were about 10 or 12 feet in a direction, not more than that, near a 10 square.

A Jewish lady and I were excavating in Syria, Mrs. Harris, she had her children early and then came to be interested in other things instead of having the professional opportunities earlier and then having children.

My wife has met her on a number of occasions. She's the kind of person that makes it possible to work with without ever having your patients tested.

She never talked too much or too little. She knew what to say, and I think that she at least felt it was mutual because she's always asked if I were going there again, I think she'd like to go at the same time.

A remarkable person. Patients can be helped by knowing what others need. When to say the right words, when not to say anything.

We can examine the experience of others around us who seem to have the art of patience and listen to what they're saying or thinking or doing.

But above all, it's most important in calling on God for his spiritual help through the spirit of God, that is to let Christ, who was himself patient, as expressed in the final trial, where he certainly had a reason to lose his temper and argument.

He exemplified toward death patients. We can see in how others conduct themselves what we might have done. Paul was a little bit more temperamental and gave a lecture to the high priest whom he didn't know was one when the high priest behaved inappropriately.

Jesus said nothing. Both examples are there to show emotionally the difference. Paul explained that it was an error on his part.

So I'd like to encourage you for the rest of this summer to work on this category and to be of help to some who are no longer with us, to be of help to those who are, to recognize the differences that cannot be changed and to help change the differences that can be improved upon.

I think it is important now we begin to look at ourselves as individuals to see that we don't trigger problems in others, because none of us know human being other than Jesus Christ and even he offended some.

Don't forget that. There were many who were upset by him. It is important to know that none of us can make somebody else so comfortable that they can be perfectly patient with you.

The people who have hard of hearing problems or who are blind or who may otherwise have some handicaps, there's some people who know how to work with them and others don't as well.

The elderly, the less skilled, we need to think about what needs to be done for the other person, for Alvin.

I don't know of any of you who are Alvins here. You all should be people who should be able to teach such at whatever your age.

But as we get older, we sometimes present difficulties to others. We have been very able and independent, and then with age we cease to be as able or independent.

We have to learn how to be patient with those who must be patient with us. So we're dealing with problems, doctrinal differences, personality differences, age differences, simply different ways of being reared.

We find this, of course, in the marriage of our children, and you will find it also that differences in culture will make a significant difference in terms of how patient we can be with someone else.

We have each different sets of habits. Some grew up, as my wife and I did in the late 20s, 30s, and the 40s, and our habits will be permanently different.

Not all of them, we modify some, but we don't modify them all. Our children grew up in the 50s, 60s, and 70s, and early 80s.

And they will have a set of habits that will demand patients from their mates, and they must learn how to be patient with others by being tolerant, but not permissive.

Being gracious, but not a doormat, to know how to handle each situation. This, of course, means how to become perfect.

The last verse of Matthew, chapter 5, which you might like to reflect on.

You grow many wonderful things based on what I see there. I don't know if you remember the victory gardens in World War II, a man who lived in the city thought he would contribute to the supply of food and he planted potatoes.

The time of harvest came. He told his neighbor he had many, many potatoes. Some were as big as marbles, some as big as peas, and there were quite a few little ones, too.

He was an American. You do very well in Canada. Beautiful. This is the last, the eight days that we are assembling here. This is the last sermon.

I used to live at a time when we had two sermons the last day, but you have opportunities to become acquainted with others yet whom you may have not had the chance to speak with.

Let me say again, because there are individuals who are traveling from one site to another depending on where you have family members, and this is one way to do so. Quite often we're assigned to two places, but happily not this year.

We are given an outline. We are asked to address the questions. In this case, the subject is for the last great day, and it is the greatest promise ever made.

There was only one outline for today. I had to choose that outline, and this is it, since I was asked to speak here at the close. It is based, of course, on John 7, 37 to 39, though the story of all the events preceding and following run through chapter 7 and 8 and 9.

So I'd like to at least have you be aware that we'll start with material in chapter 7. The particular verses are these.

On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

These are the two particular verses. It is important that we have some background and acknowledge that there were areas in which the church did not have a clear descriptive background as we should have.

During the Jews Festival of Tabernacles, there were seven days formally of the festival, and there is an eighth day. In fact, to the Jewish community, the last or eighth day, which would correspond to today, was simply called the eighth day.

No Jew, no Jew who has any understanding of the tradition of his nation and of his religion would ever have misunderstood the day of the events described in John 7, 37 to 39.

It could only have been the seventh day, the last day of the seven days of the Festival of Tabernacles.

Mr. Armstrong, late in his life, beginning in 79 and 80, began to realize that, indeed, though Christians used the term, the last great day, to refer to the eighth day in their communication through historic times, and the Worldwide Church of God adopted it, Also, for that day, it was not proved thereby that the greatest day of the feast, the last one, where Jesus said what he did, was the eighth day.

It was, in fact, the seventh, the last day when the water-pouring ceremony reached essentially a climax, much as the story of Jericho, when there were seven days, and the last was a very great time they marched around Jericho.

This is the story of the last of the days of the Festival of Tabernacles, and if you look at John 7, 37 to 39, what is very interesting is that there was only a short comment which Jesus made.

On the last day, the great day of the feast, in verse 37, after the events and the celebrations of that day, he said these statements that I have read over the three verses, 37, 38, 39.

Therefore, many of the Jews who were in the crowd when they heard this said, truly, this is the prophet of which Moses spoke, was meant.

Others said this is the Christ, but some said will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seat of David and from the town of Bethlehem where David was?

So there was a division among the people because of him, and some of them among the Pharisees wanted to take him, and certainly it would not have excluded the Sadducees.

Officers came to the chief priests who usually were Sadducees, and reported that they had never heard anyone speak like this, and they were, let's say, up braided by the officials for not having taken him.

And so there was a discussion in which Nicodemus spoke in verse 50, and then everyone went to his own house, verse 53.

And Jesus went to the Mount of Olives, and early in the morning he came again to the temple.

And what we have here, in fact, are simply three verses and a brief discussion.

This is not one of the great messages that Jesus said and discussed and elaborated with respect to time.

This was, in fact, his comment on the ceremony in which the pouring out of water, and you can read this in any Bible commentary you wish, symbolized the Spirit of God.

In this case, he is identifying himself as the source of the water figuratively, and as, in fact, the source of the Spirit, for he was to ascend to heaven, and to ask God to send to the church his Spirit.

The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, there is only one Spirit. They're not two separate Spirits.

Though there may have been some problems in the history of the church in this century and the last with respect to defining the nature of God.

Mr. Armstrong always recognized, Mr. Tkach has recognized, now deceased, and the church today recognizes that there is one Spirit, one faith, one baptism.

And that Spirit can also be in us, that ultimately might be fulfilled, that scripture which says God shall be all in all, which is left for you to learn the meaning of.

However, what is important is that this is not something that Jesus said in the morning. This is something he said after the occasion, after all the events that occurred that day, and it was late in the day.

His message was short and to the point, and would lead to a discussion. Everyone went to his own house, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives, chapter 8, and early in the morning he came again to the temple, and all the people came to him and he sat down and taught them.

Now at this point, unrelated to the text, but clearly something that needs to be commented on, there is a section on the woman taken in adultery.

Great controversy has raged as to whether or not this belongs in scripture. I would answer the question this way, it would be the same answer for any other controversial portion of the Bible, whether it belongs in there or does not, whether this is the right original wording or it is not.

You and I are not responsible for the preservation of scripture. We are responsible for reading and studying and making it a part of us.

In the judgment, I do not have to give an account, nor does the Worldwide Church of God have to give an account because it has not preserved, copied, and reproduced and been held responsible for the preservation of scripture.

The Greek world, the Greek church, the Greek Orthodox church, the leaders of the Greek Orthodox church through the centuries have been and are the custodians.

They have chosen to maintain this section as a part of scripture, even though many Protestants and Westerners, Roman Catholics, argue over this or would delete it to the footnotes.

In simple terms, those to whom the responsibility to preserve that part of the Bible was given will have to give an account.

Those of us who read it are not in a position to decide that they were wrong.

And so we are introduced then to the rest of the story and you know what happened.

There was a controversy that Jesus entered into regarding the views of those who objected to Jesus' teaching or how he had embarrassed those who tried to have him condemn the woman.

And a controversy arose and Jesus had to leave, hurriedly, because they wanted to get rid of him.

And then the remarkable occasion occurs in verse 59 of 8, chapter 8, and verse 1 of chapter 9.

And they took up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple going through the midst of them and so passed by.

And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man who was blind from birth.

There is not a single break from the story of Jesus coming back that morning.

After he had been on the Mount of Olives, the end of chapter 7, beginning of chapter 8, but what this also occurs on the same day.

Early that morning the question over the woman taken in adultery, then the discussion of the meaning of what the meaning of Christ's message is with respect to the Spirit of God, who he is, his role, is he Messiah.

And finally they took up stones and as he passed by, he found a man who was blind and he made clay and he healed that person.

And this was a Sabbath day, verse 14, chapter 9.

This was, in fact, not merely the eighth day, it was also the seventh day of the week.

Just want you to get to background.

The study paper simply defines it as the early part of the AD 30s.

I do not need to define the year this was the feast of tabernacles before the crucifixion of Jesus.

It was the last feast of tabernacles in his life.

The church today does not regard the year of the crucifixion or the day of the crucifixion of consequence and does not circulate now material on that topic.

This, however, is a message concerning the significance of our receiving the Spirit of God.

What is significant today is that we look back on the seven days of the feast of tabernacles as it was described here.

That is the seven preceding days here of the Festival of Faith or the Feast of Tabernacles.

And we look now to this day.

And we ask ourselves what distinguishes this day from what precedes.

No fundamental distinction with respect to the Spirit of God, but a major one with respect to whom God may speak.

Historically, the Worldwide Church of God has regarded the Festival of Tabernacles as a reference to the state of the world under the government or kingdom of God upon the return of Jesus Christ.

And therefore defined in Revelation by the English word taken from the Latin, which goes back to the Greek words that may be translated directly in English, the thousand years, after which there is a resurrection.

That resurrection differs from the first in that we are told that no one other than those in the first resurrection rise until the thousand years are finished.

And so traditionally the Church has seen a resurrection as clearly a reference to our past, our human past.

Those who have lived and died millennia ago till recent times and yet in the future before the coming of Jesus Christ.

That is the emphasis that the Church placed was to analyze when and under what circumstances people would be called yet in the future upon the first resurrection and our royal entry into the kingdom of God as immortal sons and daughters, if you please.

Today the Church chooses to focus on the receiving of the Holy Spirit, but not to address the relationship of the millennium or the second resurrection, neither of which are at any point discussed in this paper.

And I want you to know that. I want you to know that. One of my functions as a minister is to teach and to teach clearly what the Church is saying. The Church is saying we do not today know whether the thousand years is to be understood figuratively or literally.

We do not in fact know the relationship of the second coming of Christ, the millennium, the second resurrection, the events described as the great white throne judgment with respect to the time sequence.

This will be described from time to time in material to come yet to the ministers in the pastor general report and to appear in the plain truth at a later time as is appropriate deemed so by the general editorial staff.

And more for you at an earlier time in the Worldwide News.

So you should carefully examine the material to come, but I can tell you that the Church does not wish us to focus chronologically on the events that we traditionally have associated with the Festival of Trumpets, the Festival of Atonement, or the Festival of Tabernacles.

We are free as Christians to believe what we believe then or what some of us may believe now. We are free to believe that you cannot understand it if you think you cannot.

You are free to consider and to study the question of whether the concept of the kingdom of God reigning over the nations is simply figurative.

It is after Christ returns, before he returns, or if we should simply consider it figurative or a millennial, that is simply not pre-millennial, not post-millennial, but a millennial.

The decision of the Church as far as I know is that any of us are free to evaluate any of these points so long as we do not cause division and disruption.

Whether you think that is the way matters should be explained or administered is a matter for you to think.

I would not be free to tell you that it isn't being thought.

I want you to know that many ministers left us fellowship because they were unwilling but not incapable of making clear to you that there are changes and that these changes leave many of the decisions to you as to how all those who lived and died in the past will receive the Spirit of God and as to when they will receive the Spirit of God.

You should be able to do what Paul said, to be able to give an answer to anyone who asks the basis of the faith you have.

The Church today wants us to emphasize that we are celebrating our salvation, that our is left undefined as to whether it is simply ours today without addressing the other question, or ours in the greater human sense of those yet to enter the Church, fellowship those yet to be called before or after the coming of Christ.

That might seem strange, but it should not seem strange because if you have been reading carefully the material and the plain truth in the Worldwide News and listening to the sermons, your ears should already have perceived that indeed not everybody in every generation in the Church understands everything alike.

For we know there was a time before the last three centuries or four where the knowledge of the Sabbath was very, very limited, where the knowledge of the Holy Days did not even come to general attention until this century.

So that if there are aspects of tithing or other things that we may differ in the 1990s on from the previous half century, you have to remember that both now and the last half century would differ from the experience of people whom God called in His Church last century, two centuries ago, three, when they were essentially seventh day Baptists in terms of their doctrinal belief.

The early brethren that we recognize as brethren were essentially called out of the Baptist Church in Britain and the United States.

Many of you have been called out of a much larger group because when William Miller spoke and he didn't understand the Sabbath when he began preaching in 1831, he called many out of all kinds of denominations in the American northeast and there were people even in the northwestern part of Europe as ministers went over there and commented on the nearness of the coming of Christ, which led of course to a misunderstanding and the arising of two kinds of people, seventh day Adventists in the Church of God, seventh day of which we are heirs.

So when I came to the Church of God, seventh day, I found people who clearly spoke from the heart and exhibited the love of God as I had never seen it, shall I say, in the church that on occasion our family attended.

The German Methodist Church and ultimately simply became the Methodist Episcopal because another language was no longer needed after World War II.

I saw something very, very obvious.

I was in the presence of people who had the Spirit of God and among them were people who clearly did not indicate they did.

But I saw what I have seen since, that in those who have been called of God through this work, we have people who have exhibited the Spirit of God and those who have proved they don't.

That's not for me to judge.

That's for me simply to observe.

He who hates his brother is a murderer, said John, and no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

And sometimes we find people whose antagonisms are such that it could not be called less than a kind of spirit of hate, not to mention other sins.

Living in that person thinks differently, seeks to do the will of God, acknowledges his sin, her sin, and asks God, asks God to clean us from within our minds and our actions.

So today, in this hour and a half sermon, sorry, service, sermon is not an hour and a half, service.

As we draw to a close, let me tell you that what the church is most concerned about today is whether or not you are in contact with God, whether or not you have his spirit, and if you do, whether your example will have meaning in your family, in the presence of your neighbors, in school, on the job, within our fellowship with those whom you may meet who have walked away from our fellowship, because they may not have been able emotionally to handle different concepts.

When I first came to the General Fellowship of the Church of God's Seventh Day, where we worked in one or two summers in Oregon, where many of our brethren who met with us at this festival occasion assembled with the Church of God's Seventh Day because they were scattered all over Oregon, we had a congregation in Portland, one in Vancouver, one in Eugene, and where we attended not uncommonly at Jefferson, Oregon, and a little building on top of a place called Scrabble Hill, there were people of the Church of God's Seventh Day, people of the Worldwide Church of God, and of the people of the Church of God's Seventh Day, some looked to Salem, West Virginia as headquarters, some looked to Standbury, Missouri, and it was possible for us all to have fellowship. That is not today because strangely the different groups making up the broad movement of the Churches of God, whether we think of Denver, Colorado, Meridian, Idaho, Tyler, Texas, Pasadena, California, Arcadia, California, near San Diego, and some place, I forget, in Oklahoma, where we have various headquarters, the real differences, if you please, brethren, exist between the leaders of the Churches who have gone from us in some way been associated with us.

You and I might find that many of them we can talk with as members, but it is at the top where the differences are, and you need to know that.

If all were converted, we could actually have fellowship together.

That's why the Church, the Worldwide Church of God wants us now not to address some fundamental things that I have mentioned here as not being addressed, but once you to give an account, that means that Christ has chosen to let your own understanding of different portions of the Bible be your responsibility, but to focus on the fact that today we must be sure that through the Spirit of God we let Jesus Christ live in us and fulfill his will, his teaching, his instruction through the Holy Spirit.

And by learning what it means to seek the unity of the Spirit.

It is that unity of the Spirit which means we do not just walk away when we're emotionally upset or traumatized, but we know how to mature as parents must learn to mature as their children mature.

I hope all of you, brethren, as we close this service, will not forget that more important than distinguishing characteristics of doctrine small or great, more important is whether you have surrendered your will to God and received his Holy Spirit and learned to work together because the more the Church divides, the weaker is the actual effort that is accomplished because we have divided our spiritual resources and our financial resources.

We are today essentially half of what we were nine, eight years ago.

That need not have been.

We all, in one way or another, have in a minor or major way contributed to it.

I have contributed to it by not always knowing what strange ideas have arisen in the Church with respect to extreme views and legalism because my wife and I were regularly called by people who came and went, middle of the road, sometimes soft-headed.

Had we known the state of mind of all we have discovered since, we might have helped more.

But we didn't dream there were so many exotic ideas that should give rise to people.

The bulk of whom have the same ideas yet can't get together after they leave us.

You'd have to say that something is wrong when the doctrinal differences of those who are no longer with us would be essentially the same.

And still, they do not know how to work together.

We have to learn whatever our differences to work together.