

Spiritual Blindness—Traditions of Men

Fred R. Coulter—August 6, 2011

Greetings, brethren! Welcome to Sabbath services. I'm happy to be back again! Happy to be here!

It occurred to me in reading some reports, and I'll read those reports on Church at Home, but one of the best books that we have today and let me remind everyone this: you can have any number of *Lord, What Should I Do?* that you want and pass out to new people, because Protestantism is crashing even faster than they had figured.

The whole substance of Protestantism has changed. I've been thinking about what to do about Protestant pastors. We've had a good example working with a gentleman who attended here for about 9-10 months, maybe almost a year. He came because he discovered the Sabbath, and then he discovered Church at Home, and then he asked if there was a place to meet nearby. So Fairfield was a place to meet nearby.

He learned a great deal of it, but then he would go Sunday to his Sunday-keeping church and he would relay a lot of these things to his pastor. His pastor even admitted in a sermon that Saturday was the Sabbath. And you think, 'Hooray! That's great news.' But they also admit a lot of other things, too. They admit that Christmas is pagan, yet they go along with it. Same way with Halloween and Easter and all of those things, yet they go along with it.

I've been thinking, and this has been on my mind for quite a while. How do we reach those people, not only those who attend the Protestant churches, but what about the pastors and elders and ministers? What about them?

I thought that perhaps we need to get a program going for ministers who are leaving Protestantism. After our experience with the man who was here, it came down to this. He agreed with everything, everything, everything, *until we got to Passover*. Then he decided that since I told him it was for *only* baptized members, that he figured his baptism was good enough. So henceforth, I guess he's still trying to work with his Sunday-keeping church to get it to be a Sabbath-keeping church.

But nevertheless, it's been on my mind, because this Sabbath that we have today, there is a day of fasting and prayer in Houston, Texas, led by Rick Perry. I'm sure that there a good number of people in the Churches of God who are likewise fasting. I hope that they're fasting for sincerity and they're fasting for Truth.

Let's come here to Isaiah 58, and I hope that it's not this kind of fast. However, if it's going to

end up in political things, then it depends upon the sincerity of the people involved. In order for God to listen, in order for God to hear... and, of course, we find that the children of Israel whenever they're in trouble, they always seem to run toward God. However, they never quite seem to make it there.

So here Isaiah 58:1: "Cry aloud, do not spare, lift up your voice like a ram's horn, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." Have you ever heard a ram's horn? *One of the most irritating, piercing, obnoxious things you could ever hear!* Well, sometimes the message of Truth is exactly like that; they don't want to hear it. Why?

Verse 2: "Yet, they seek Me daily, and seem eager to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness... [but weren't doing righteousness] ...and one that did not forget the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they seem eager to draw near to God. *They say*, 'Why have we fasted, and You do not see? Why have we afflicted our soul and You take no knowledge?'...." (vs 2-3). Only God knows the hearts and minds of people.

If God acknowledges what they are doing, and if what Rick Perry is doing is from the sincerity of his heart, plus wanting to help the nation, God may very well hear and answer for the sake of the people. That would be because we don't know how much more time we have left. And God always acknowledges repentance.

The people of Nineveh, when they fasted and prayed after the warning of Jonah, were they converted? *No!* Did they have the Law of God? *No!* Did they heed the word of Jonah and repent? *Yes—* from the emperor right on down to the animals.

So he says here, Jeremiah 5:1: "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in her open places, if you can find a man, if there is one who does justice, who seeks the Truth..." This has to be the Truth about God, not truth as people view truth. Because there are many things that are viewed as truth, because they have partial truth, so they think they have whole truth, but they do not.

"...and I will pardon her [Jerusalem] and though they say, 'As the LORD lives;' surely they swear falsely" (vs 1-2). We don't know what the situation will be. Many people do not realize that Rick Perry was invited to speak before the Bilderbergers this past winter. The last American they invited to speak before the Bilderbergers was

Barack Obama. Nearly everyone that the Bilderbergers invite to speak to them become President.

How all of this fits together, I don't know. I couldn't tell you. But I know one thing for sure, the super-elite are alive and well and wealthy, and perhaps they can see the only way they can deal with America is get someone who is identified as a Christian to lead the country. The one who is currently leading it has absolutely no clue even about the basic political facts of life. He cannot tell the truth. He does not understand economics, and he certainly has no Christian background even in the sense of the worldly Christianity.

You've got all of these factors involved. You also have the facts involved concerning that they can't yet take down America, because with this latest fiasco they have had with the stock market this past week, they have found that even though the dollar is weaker than it has been, it's still stronger than any other currency in the world. So they're stuck.

This means that perhaps the plan of a world currency and the plan of a world government are further down the road because they don't have the strength in the other nations yet to do it. Can you depend on Europe? *It's in worse shape than America!* Can you depend on a combination of Russia, Brazil, China and India? *No, they can't do it!* When our stock market went down, every other stock market in the world went down. If one of them had gone up, say all the Chinese stock markets had gone up, that would have signaled strength with China. But China's currency is geared to the U.S. dollar. So, they don't have the financial ability to do it.

I think it's a combination of many things that they have to delay implementing their plans and perhaps—so I don't have my cowbell here, so just consider I'm ringing my cow bell—that they understand the only way to bring some stability to America and still make money in America and still use it as the leading currency, is to get someone like Rick Perry, who can probably do a much better job than Barack Obama.

All of that is just looking at the current situation and asking: Will this be something that God will acknowledge? If they're truly seeking God, God will hear them. But how many people in the nation are really going to repent?

All right, let's read it here, v 3: "O LORD, are not Your eyes on the Truth?...." And what is the Truth?

- God's Word
- God's commandments

- God's laws
- God's statutes
- God's ordinances
- His precepts

"...You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; You have destroyed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to return" (v 3).

How many people are going to return? It does say if you find *one man* who is really seeking the Truth. God's mercy and acknowledgement of repentance is always received by God **IF** it is true repentance. He will even receive repentance that's not quite so true.

Let's see what Israel always does. ***Israel always returns to God when they are in trouble!*** Even though God does great things for people, they become so stuck in their own ways. They will come to God far enough so that they can get a blessing from God and then they continue on their own way.

Psalm 78:27: "And He also rained flesh upon them like dust, and winged birds like the sand of the sea; and He let them fall in the midst of their camp, all around their tents. So, they ate and were filled to the full, for He gave them that which they craved. They were not turned away from their lust, but while their food was still in their mouths. The wrath of God came upon them and killed the strongest of them, and struck down the chosen men of Israel. For all this they still sinned and did not believe in His wonderful works. Therefore, He ended their days in vanity and their years in terror. When He slew them, then they sought Him; and they turned back and sought after God earnestly. And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the Most High God was their Redeemer" (vs 27-35).

Notice v 36, and this is where Israel always gets in trouble This also carries over into some of the Churches of God as well. "Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouths, and they lied to Him with their tongues. For their heart was not steadfast with Him; neither were they faithful in His covenant... [even in spite of this what God did]: ...But He, *being* full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and did not destroy them; yea, many times He turned His anger away and did not stir up all His wrath, for He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes away and does not come again" (vs 36-39). Then it talks about how they provoked Him and so forth.

When we come back here to Isaiah 58, we have a measurement on what God expects them to do. We don't know how this is going to turn out. I do suspect that in the big football arena they have there, that's where the Houston Texans, and the

stadium they're meeting in is the Reliant Stadium, which holds 80,000 in the stands. If you put a lot of chairs on the playing field, set that up for chairs, they can get over 100,000 in there. It will be interesting to see the turnout that will be there.

Will they embrace the Truth? Will they repent of their Sunday-keeping? The Protestants are people who want to better themselves. A lot of them join a church so they can have friends and have a close society, as we'll see a little later, where that they can better themselves. Without repentance and without baptism, the whole thing becomes a flattery toward God.

Isaiah 58:3: "*They say*, 'Why have we fasted, and You do not see? Why have we afflicted our soul and You take no knowledge?' Behold, in the day of your fast you pursue your business and exploit all your workers. Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to strike with the fist of wickedness; you cannot fast as *you do* this day, and expect to make your voice to be heard on high" (vs 3-4). Then God shows what the fast is to be (v 5). Then He says 'loose the bands of wickedness and heavy burdens' (v 6).

Then He says after you do that, v 9: "Then you shall call, and the LORD shall answer; you shall cry, and He shall say, 'Here I *am*.'...." But let's notice where this leads to, and remember, Paul said that 'blindness has happened in part to Israel.' They have 'a zeal toward God but not according to knowledge.'

You've got all those complications involved there. Here the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the time of their trouble are seeking God with prayer and fasting and they're seeking it so that the nation can become a better place. And they're seeking it so that we won't be sold into the hands of our enemies, and so forth. But are they really seeking God? That's the whole thing. You must seek God, not your way, not flattery. We don't know, even with flattery, maybe God will give them a space so they can further repent. *Who knows!*

Verse 9: "...If you take the yoke away from among you, the pointing of the finger, and speaking malice; and *if* you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in darkness, and your gloom *shall be* as the noonday" (vs 9-10). That's exactly where we are politically—darkness and gloom.

I know just driving up here today, I could look back more than a mile and there wasn't a car in my rearview mirror. I could look ahead more than a mile and there wasn't a car ahead of me. Economic times, people are just hunkering down and staying at home.

If they do what is right, then v 11 will happen. "And the LORD shall always guide you and satisfy your soul in dry places, and make your bones fat; and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not. And *those who* come of you shall build the old ruins... [and so forth] ...you shall raise up the foundations of many generations..." (vs 11-12). So now it goes into the things that are going to happen in the millennium.

Notice where this leads, this becomes a key, this becomes a real key, v 13: "If you turn your foot away from the Sabbath, *from* doing your own desires on My Holy day... [They're fasting today, which is interesting that it's on the Sabbath. I wonder if they will hear the word *Sabbath*.] ...and call the Sabbath a delight, the Holy of the LORD, honorable; and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor pursuing your own desires, nor speaking *your own* words."

Are they fasting and praying so they won't lose their possessions? Are they fasting and praying so that they can have a government is more righteous? Maybe that's what they're doing. Almost anything can be more righteous than what we have today.

He says, v 14: "Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you with the inheritance of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it."

We'll see how this turns out; we will see what will happen. Along the lines that I mentioned to you about: What about the Protestants, what about the Protestant leaders and teachers, and so forth? I asked Todd Olson who came out of a whole long line of Protestantism, Church of Christ, in Edmund, Oklahoma. And he's been very zealous for the Truth and he's tested all the Churches of God.

He found that Christian Biblical Church of God is the one closest to the Bible and he's been very helpful. I asked for his insight on what to do to reach some of the Protestant ministers. He brought up a very good question. Will they be willing to leave everything behind and walk away from it? So, maybe we need to change the focus a little bit, maybe not try and help those who are leaving solely because they want to get away from Protestantism, but those who are wondering what they need to do in their lives and in their churches and with their parishioners in order to return to the Truth God. Maybe we need to look at it that way.

He sent me a very good write up and he's had some very good experiences in talking with different ones that he knows in the different churches that they go to, and so forth. So he said here:

If a program is to be designed to assist the exit of Protestant ministers out of Protestantism, one must assume that God has to take away the blinding and that one is being drawn into a knowledge of the Truth.

Yes, that would have to happen and only God can do that.

It seems that in this recent Oklahoma example the flashpoint is homosexuality and interfaith experience.

And remember the sermons I've been giving, the *Coming One-World Religion*. That is true. So here's what he's identified in the Midwest and some on the east coast that he is familiar with:

One who believes in the idea of Truth, believes that the church activity is the pursuit of Truth.

That is any church activity.

However, this person does not realize the church activity, although under the banner of Truth, is primarily about community-building.

And I'm going to bring that out in other sermons that I'm going to bring for Church at Home.

- everything is community
- everything is a group
- everything is cooperation
- everything is be nice and get along

The priority is better community through service, fellowship, and unity.

And unity is described as—I'll describe it, he doesn't do it here, but this is what it is—*don't rock the boat*. Don't bring up any controversy.

The one who does not believe in Biblical truth, but sees the societal benefit of church activity and family community and society.

Then he has Leo Strauss, I guess that's one of the leading ministers of it.

You have a situation here that their partial blindness has to do with: they are satisfied with Sunday, they're satisfied with the holidays of this world and even bringing it up to some of his friends, right at an egg-rolling contest on the church lawn, he said, 'Well, don't you think that this is pagan?' *Well, we know that!* 'Don't you think that this is contrary to what's in the Bible?' *Well, it may be, but it brings everyone together!*

Together and social affinity, and the fellowship of social affinity, has replaced any relationship with God. There are some other things here. He said:

If a pastor is convinced that the Bible is the inherent perfect reliable Word of God, then the focus is the clear words of Scripture in contrast to the socially-minded focus of the church.

This puts the minister kind of stuck in between, because people attending church want the activities. And when you bring up Sunday, oh-oh, now you're bringing up a bad word. You bring up Sabbath vs Sunday?

If the pastor cannot clearly explain why he is a Christian, instead of a Muslim, Jew, pantheist, atheist, etc., if he cannot clearly explain why the Bible is reliable, the inherent inspired Word of God, then this must also be addressed. Interestingly, this is where I find most church-goers and pastors.

What are they focused on?

Are they willing to give up career, income, social status, friends and family? Then he has been very unsettled by this idea of Truth. I firmly believe then in most cases this requires the realization and ability to admit to one's self that church experience is primarily about a better life through community-building and secondarily about Truth.

Any thoughts that any of you have, how can we reach these people? I'm going to see what I can do with Church at Home and present in a way that will be helpful. I need to direct some of the Church at Home programs directly to church leaders and pastors and teachers.

The comment was made that in talking to a friend of his who is also a Sunday-keeping pastor of a very large church, he talked to him about the Sabbath and the Holy Days incrementally over a period of time. And he would agree, yes, this is true. He would agree, yes, this is right. Then you come up to a roadblock. That's the thing that Todd also saw—the roadblock.

And what is the roadblock? Is it life? Is it status? Is it, whatever? How can we put things in such a way—now God has got to create the circumstances out there in the world for them to begin thinking along these lines. Maybe, as he says, homosexuality and inter-faith experience will help bring some of them out of the woodwork.

But it's very interesting, in explaining this, that when he hit the roadblock, even though he's in

contact with groups overseas that keep the Sabbath and Holy Days, he still—and accepting them working with him, he is still a Sunday-keeper and Christmas and Easter and all of those things. It's like Todd explained to me one time before, that as long as it's under the banner of the cross, and since they have done away with so much of the Bible, that if you have Christ, you have everything, and you don't need anything else. How do we penetrate or prepare to penetrate that kind of barrier and that kind of thinking? This is the challenge.

I firmly believe that in most cases this requires the realization and ability to admit to one's self that church experience is primarily about a better life through community building and secondarily about Truth. I can give example after example that demonstrates what happens when a question of Truth threatens community unity and fellowship. The question of Truth is quickly and decisively scuttled.

Where do we have a vision of a starting point? Because we know as Israelites, God is going to shake them up. Just how that's going to come about, we don't know.

The idea about going to heaven, having Christ...

—and one big mistake that they have is, once you have your sins forgiven, you're saved forever. *No!* Once you have your sins forgiven, you have a starting point.

One of the things that are going to have to be, and they claim to be Christians, so let's see what Jesus said; let's see one of the criteria that has take place in order for the blinding to begin to be removed. They have to have the scales removed. What will it take?

God is the One Who's going to have to create the circumstances for that to take place! But what are we going to have ready? How can we help them? I think the truth is that you have to look at helping the pastor to help all of the parishioners, and so that the whole group of them or a substantial group of them really come to the point of the Sabbath and repentance. And that they also have to understand their baptism is in invalid, because they are not in covenant with God. They're going to have to come to that.

But here is the crux of that point, Luke 14:25: "And great multitudes were going with Him; and He turned *and* said to them." Where people have safety in numbers, where people have safety in a church community, where people have safety in doing community activities and community cooperation. With all that I'm learning about the coming one-world religion, they are building a

foundation to enter the one-world religion, because that's what the one-world religion is going to based upon—*unity through diversity*. 'We accept all of your differences, but let's be unified in our community.' That's how they're going to do it.

Here is what Jesus said to the multitude, v 26: "If anyone... [it has to happen on an individual basis] ...comes to Me..." How do you come to Jesus? *None can come to Him unless the Father draw him! And none can come to the Father unless they go through Christ, for He is 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life.'*

I think we can use a lot of Scriptures that they will have to say come from the New Testament, and they had better agree with them, because if they don't agree with them, then we can just tell them, 'You're in trouble with Christ.' You take the name of Christ; you do what Christ says. You say you believe in Him; you do as He requires. You also have to believe Who He is, because they another Jesus, though they claim in some cases, that they believe that He was God manifested in flesh, or God incarnated in the flesh.

How deep that belief goes is another question, because here's what Christ requires, v 26: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, and, in addition, his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." That means that you have to love God more. But how will the community of

1. your family
2. your church-going community

—and this also is a problem within the Churches of God, because too many of them are into social community and unity—same thing. And I'll give you one sign where you can know that false doctrine is coming. How far down the road, don't know it.

Most of the Protestants follow the *NIV*. Worldwide, before it started changing the doctrines recommended the *NIV*. The first step that takes place within the Church of God, this is the first step that took place:

They read Mark 7, where the *NIV* says, instead of 'all food is purged by going out into the draught' or the sewer, so the dirt on your hands is not going to affect you, they blatantly mistranslated saying, 'Thus Jesus declared all meats clean.'

When that sermon was given down at the auditorium, and you all know about the auditorium, so all of those of you who have been in the Church a long time, you better get your head screwed on right, and you better check and see: Is your fellowship a social event or a spiritual event? If it is a social

event, you better ask yourself: What are you doing? *and* What is your relationship with God?

Sooner or later false doctrines are coming down. I know that the current leader of the council in United has one of the *Faithful Version* Bibles. Someone asked him, ‘Why doesn’t United recommend this Bible since it teaches the Truth and corrects the problems of the errors of the *King James* and upholds the Holy Days? And he said, ‘Well, the *Faithful Version* clings to the old way.’ **Be warned**, remember the changes that came down in Worldwide? You better be ready, they’re coming again. You need to understand that.

Some people aren’t going to like me saying that. But how did we start out? God said what? ‘Cry aloud and spare not, raise your voice like a ram’s horn.’ If this pierces you like hearing a ram’s horn, and you’re upset over it, then you better start getting right with God.

When ministers and teachers start fooling with the Word of God, to misinterpret, to accept wrong translations, to reject the Truth, you know that you’re going right down the tubes with all the Protestants. Did that not happen in WCG? If you think I’m wrong, then I beg of you, listen to my *Resignation Sermon* in 1979 that I gave on the Day of Atonement.

Listen carefully to it and ask: Was that inspired and did everything I say happen? And if it did, it’s not because of me, I was just a vehicle to convey the message. Like today, I’m just a vehicle to convey the message, because no one else is going to do it.

Now, if that makes me an enemy of you, so be it! ***You just better make sure you’re not an enemy of God!***

(go to the next track)

Let’s see what Jesus said. So anyone who is a Christian, or claims to be a Christian, what you need to do is *measure your life by the words of Christ*. And you will see that the words of Christ and the words of the apostles all agree. You also have to ask yourself: What is most important in my life? Is it God and Truth? Is that first? *or* Is it community and fellowship and the church group I attend first?

Jesus said, v 26: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, and, in addition, his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.”

So you call yourself a Christian, but this tells us in the Greek the strongest negation possible—‘ouk’—meaning *the impossibility* of being a disciple of Jesus. We have to make the choice. Now this choice, we have to make at baptism, but let’s also understand something else. This is a choice that we

have to make ongoing the rest of our life, too—isn’t it? *Yes!*

Too many people, after they have made the decision to be baptized, and repented, then they forget the thing concerning even the daily prayer. Even the Protestants, they recite the prayer. And don’t the Catholics recite it by rote? ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’

Jesus also said to those teachers who were professing to teach in His name, He said that the only one that God is going to listen to is the one who is practicing the will of the Father Who is heaven.

Don’t come to me and say, ‘Lord, Lord. Didn’t we prophesy in Your name? Oh, I was a magnificent preacher.’ *Yes, Joel, you really were, but you weren’t preaching My Word.* ‘Didn’t we do many wonderful works, all the works of community—feed the poor?’ *But do you teach them how not to remain poor?* Feeding them, that’s good, that’s so they can stay alive long enough so then you can teach them how not to be poor.

- quit sinning
- quit drinking
- quit taking drugs
- quit committing adultery and fornication and homosexuality.
- get rid of your idols
- quit keeping Sunday

—all of those things. And we’re going to see, the Sabbath is a key thing, just we read there in Isa. 58. It gets down to the Sabbath as the starting point after God has drawn you, so you can repent and be baptized.

It’s not easy; v 27: “And whoever does not carry his cross...” The cross here is the cross beam for the crucifixion.

What did Paul say? What did Paul say about baptism? *We have to overcome human nature* as the way of life as a true Christian. That’s the whole rest of the story of the New Testament, baptism in the covenant way. It all flows along, because this is the same mistake that’s going to happen. When they start preaching grace, grace, grace, and they don’t even understand what grace is, look out—changes of doctrine are coming. When they start saying Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Look out—another Jesus is going to be introduced. You need to realize that.

Too many of them, when the Church of God split up, they said, ‘Well, let’s get the people first and we’ll talk about doctrine after that.’ When it is doctrine—the Word of God, the sword of the Lord—which divides. God expects it to be divided. What did Jesus say? ‘Don’t think I’ve come to bring peace, I’ve come to bring a sword, to set a man

against his father, and the father against his son, and the mother against her daughter, and the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law. They'll be five in one house, three against two. And anyone who does not love Me more than these, is not worthy of Me.'

When you talk about carrying the cross, that means putting to death the human nature that you have through the Spirit of God.

Romans 6:1: "What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin... [Going against the commandments of God. When change is introduced, they never say, 'Here's a nice little sin that we would like you to embrace, because it's really fun.' No, they say, 'This is *new Truth* from God.' *A lie!*] ...Shall we continue in sin, so that grace may abound? MAY IT NEVER BE!..." (vs 1-2). You'll notice it's in capital letter, because the Greek means, *may this never come to be*—'me genoito.'

"...We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?... [That's why you carry your cross. And if you don't carry your cross, you cannot be a disciple of Jesus Christ.] ...Or are you ignorant that we, as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through the baptism into **the death**..." (vs 2-4). Oh, everyone likes to say, 'Oh, Jesus died for my sins.'

- What does that mean?
- What are you supposed to do?
- How would you be if someone died for you?
- What would you do?
- How would you react?

If they're in armed services, they give the survivors medals. Christ wants to give you eternal life, but it's on His terms, not our terms.

"...**the death**; so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, in the same way, we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been conjoined together in the likeness of His death, so also shall we be *in the likeness* of His resurrection.... [we need to understand that and realize that] ...Knowing this, that our old man was co-crucified with *Him*..." (4-6).

That's why Jesus said carry your cross, because living in this world God's way is going to present difficulties; you're not of the world. So if you want to have your church experience conform to the world and Protestantism, then you're in trouble.

"...was co-crucified with *Him* in order that the body of sin might be destroyed... [Showing the process of growing and overcoming.] ...so that we might no longer be enslaved to sin; because the one who has died *to sin* has been justified from sin. Now, if we died together with Christ, we believe that

we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from *the* dead, dies no more; death no longer has any dominion over Him. For when He died, He died unto sin once for all; but in that He lives, He lives unto God. In the same way also, you should indeed reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore, do not let sin rule in the lusts thereof" (vs 6-12). So, we've been crucified!

That's why we take up our cross. Then He gives the example. This is something we need to do all the time, because there are going to be opportunities coming along where we can water down what God has to say. Then He says, what if you're like someone who builds a tower and you have to sit down first and count the cost—right?—whether you have sufficient to finish it.

Well, with Christ you do. With trying it your way without Christ, which is what Protestantism really has done, and Catholicism long ago really has done. And the way Satan wants to get everyone all together is to have them all give up on the Bible to where you can have goodness in religion and cooperation together, and that's going to solve our problems when it only creates another set of more severe problems, because in that, you're rejecting God.

Then He also talks about one who is going to go make war. Luke 14:33: "In the same way also, each one of you who does not forsake all that he possesses cannot be My disciple." Think of that! How do you do that? Does that mean you go out and sell everything? *No!* That means that you count all the possessions that you have compared to eternal life *as nothing*. Whatever physical possessions we have, we use correctly according to the way that God wants us to use it. We don't put our lust upon it and we don't put our greed upon it and we don't try and make that the center of our lives.

Everyone who's going to be a minister and teacher, and you've heard me say this how many times, so I'm going to say it again because some people just never really, really get the point, even though they agree and shake their head. *You must have a relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ first.*

- that is based upon Truth
- that is based upon the Spirit of God
- that is based upon the Word of God

Here is how it should be; let's come to Mark 12; here it is how it needs to be. This is why every day is a new day. This is why you need prayer and study every day, because I'll guarantee you something that is absolutely true. If you don't pray and you don't study, things will go along kind of good for a while

and then all of a sudden something's going to happen. BANG! And then you're going to say, 'What happened?' And you're not going to have the spiritual means. And you're not going to have the spiritual strength if you've got too far to really recover. You need to count that. As I pointed out, counting the cost is everyday. But here is how our relationship with God is.

Mark 12:28: "And one of the scribes who had come up to *Him*, after hearing them reasoning together *and* perceiving that He answered them well, asked Him... [trick question]: ...'Which is *the* first commandment of all?' Then Jesus answered him, '*The* first of all the commandments... [plural] ...*is*, "Hear, O Israel. Our one God is *the* Lord, *the* Lord'" (vs 28-29). Elohim "...is the Lord, the Lord." And that is the correct translation. You can read it in Appendix X [Exegetical Analysis of Mark 12:29] in the *Faithful Version*.

Verse 30: "And you shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This *is the* first commandment." That has to be paramount in our lives. That's why Jesus said that 'none can come to Me unless he hate his father and mother and brother and sister and wife and children, and yes, his own live also.'

Why would He say that? *Because none of them and not even yourself can give you eternal life!* You want eternal life? Isn't that why you were baptized? Isn't that why you agreed to the covenant? *Yes!* Eternal life is not going to come from what you are. It's going to come from what God is. So you have to be loving God this way. And Jesus said, 'If you love Me, keep the commandments; namely, My commandments.' And He said, 'Keep My words.' That's the only way you're going to receive and retain the Holy Spirit of God.

Now then, He says, v 31: "And the second is like this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Come back here to Revelation 2 and let's see what happens when people put the second commandment first and think that puts them in spiritual standing with God. It's good to do those things. Like I said, it's good to feed the poor, it's good to take care of those who have need, but if that is the primary, and other events similar to that of your church activity, then you have had your reward. Don't expect eternal life.

You may start out well. Right here, Church at Ephesus, Revelation 2:2: "I know your works, and your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot bear those who are evil; and *that* you did test those who proclaim *themselves* to be apostles, but are not, and did find them liars." Good, that's what most everyone did right at first, because they heard the

Scripture, 'Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good.' They heard the Scripture which says, 'Search the Scripture, see whether these things are so.'

The problem is, they weren't vigilant the way that they should have been, v 3: "And *that* you have borne *much* and have endured, and for My name's sake have labored and have not grown weary; nevertheless, I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.... [You left loving God. You got so busy in activities.]Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works; for if *you do* not, I will come to you quickly; and I will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent" (vs 3-5). Apply that to yourself individually, because it happens one person at a time.

When they get all wrapped up—and this is the heart and core of Protestantism, they're all wrapped up in doing these things. This becomes the center of the Church. The Church becomes a social club accepting certain doctrines—whether many or few—and that the church has many activities for people to do to keep them busy.

You want to know about activities, ask a Mormon. They have a lot of activities and if you want to know about tithes and offerings, ask a Mormon, because they have to go reconcile their income tax every year with the local bishop. And if they haven't paid enough, they better pony up. Here's what Todd wrote concerning his observation of most Protestant leaders:

It is my observation that most Protestant leaders have developed by implicit means the belief that the greatest good is development of a Christian community through service, fellowship, and unity.

Whereas the Bible teaches, the greatest good is your relationship with God and developing the mind of Jesus Christ, and preparing for eternal life. So, the Protestants are not Christian in the sense that they're in right standing with God the Father and Jesus Christ. They may have Christian values and they don't even understand how they throw away the Sabbath, throw away the Holy Days, throw away a lot of things. And they don't want any disputes to disturb the community. So he says:

This is done with the idea that heaven is the future promise to the one who is faithfully engaged in this community-building activity.

Doesn't that sound like what Satan gave to Adam and Eve? *Yes!*

Two problems arise: First, community-building takes priority over all other human activities, including the pursuit of Biblical

Truth, where the pursuit of Biblical Truth must be primary.

Second, everyone has his own poorly defined idea of heaven. The promise of heaven feels very real. The details of heaven are poorly developed.

Well, Jesus said, 'No one has seen the Father.' John wrote in John 3 that 'no one has ascended to heaven, except the Son of man who is in the bosom of the Father.' So, this seems a conundrum. How do you approach people who believe lies as Truth, to convince them that their Truth is a lie?

The starting point is the ability to admit to one's self that Truth is real and it is possible that I have believed a lie.

That's a starting point I'm going to have to use at Church at Home in a very detailed way. How do you know?

It seems the initial focus should be the topic of Truth in that pastor's life.

Do you really believe the Truth? Now you say you believe in Jesus, what did He say of Himself? 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.'

- Do you believe that?
- Do you know what Truth is?
- What is your definition of Truth?
- What is it that you believe is Truth?

A lot of pastors will admit that Sabbath is the day to keep, but they keep Sunday. That means you have no conviction of Truth. And if you're not convicted of Truth, then you believe a lie. You can know things to be true. You can sit down and eat a meal and say, 'Oh, I know there's arsenic in here, but it won't affect me.'

Or like a drug addict saying, 'Well, I can handle this.' And they become drug addicts: meth, cocaine, heroin. And when they burn heroin, I didn't know this until reading a book about an addict who had overcome being an addict, but when they burn heroin and the smoke comes up, they call that the dragon's tail and they sniff it. A lot of people have done that with their lives with religion, with the lies of religion.

So the initial focus should be on the topic of Truth. But whatever the flash point it is ultimately necessary to realize the true focus of Catholic and Protestant faith is community and the promise of heaven.

I'm going to have to speak on that at Church at Home. We've got a lot of Church at Home programs we're going to have to do. We're almost up to 200 now, but by the time we get done with this, we'll be close to 300, I guess.

This helps us understand something. If you understand the true focus of Catholic and Protestant faith is community and the promise of heaven...

What is the sign out here in the church that we meet in? And we meet in one of their auxiliary rooms. It is called the Community of Christ. The seeds of worldwide ecumenism is being worked everywhere, in every religion. Satan is busy. His ministers are busy, and the Church of God is not exempt.

This explains why so much false doctrine can be tolerated especially when the false doctrine serves the purpose of building a more loving, unified, inclusive fellowship.

Think of that.

As the focus on community grows, so does the threat of absolute Truth.

'I have my little empire built up here. We have all of these good people.' So, Mr. Joel Osteen, would you like to stand up and command all of your hand-clapping do-gooders there to repent and be baptized, to keep the Sabbath, keep the Holy Days, love God with all their heart and mind and soul and being—or are you still going to preach humanism in the name of Jesus?' Whatever you choose and whoever the minister may be, guess what your reward will be?

As a denominational movement, it is easy to imagine that the ordination of gay and lesbian clergy in the Methodist and Presbyterians churches will be a flashpoint for many. Maybe this could be the first flashpoint topic to be developed.

He knows people who have done that and are participating in it. I appreciate what he wrote me and his input on this and I would appreciate anything that anyone else could also send me.

I mentioned this, but let's focus on this, because you can have it partially correct and you think that you have it wholly correct. But it is like having a combination to a safe and you're missing a number. You can't open it. And the numbers you have are good numbers, but the one that you're missing is the key.

Likewise, you have to have all of Christ, all of the Father, all of the commandments of God, and you yourself must have the Spirit of God, that's the missing number in the combination. That's why we're told to repent and be baptized.

Romans 9:31: "But Israel, although they followed after a law of righteousness..." They had the commandments of God. Same way with Protestants, they have that, but they have their traditions. Sunday is a tradition of men—correct? Even the Catholics admit it. That's why in the

Faithful Version Bible here we have *Rome's Challenge to the Protestants* (Appendix N) Go back and read that again and read how Cardinal Gibbons nailed it to the wall.

"...although they followed after a law of righteousness, did not attain to a law of righteousness.... [Why?] ...Because they did not seek it by faith, but by works of law..." (vs 31-32). Today Protestantism has that all turned around. And *works of law* here means *the traditions of men* that became law. Protestants have traditions, Catholics have traditions, Jews have traditions, Buddhists, Hindus—all the religions of men are based on tradition. They may have some Scriptures sprinkled into it, but that does not equate to the righteousness of God.

"...for they stumbled at the Stone of Stumbling" (v 32). That's exactly, though they use the name of Christ, pronounce the name of Christ, claim the name of Christ, they immediately turn their backs on Him through their traditions. And they claim a grace that God never gave. They claim a salvation that God never gave, because the true Christ is a 'stumbling block and a rock of offense.'

So, every Sunday-keeping pastor, if you stumble on the Sabbath and you stumble on the truth, you're stumbling on Christ, because He's the one Who gave the commandment, 'Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it Holy.' He is the One Who created it and He's not going to oblige any human being by doing away with His law, because He said He didn't come to do away with the Law or the Prophets.

And He said, 'Until heaven and earth pass away,' are we still here on the earth? *Yes, we are!* Is the heavens still there? *Last time I looked!* He said, 'One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law. All of those who believe that are in error, though they claim the name of Christ. All of those who teach that are teaching lies and you're causing people to be led into sin. Your community activity and all of your 'do-goodism' is leading people into sin against God, because you have left off loving God with all your heart and mind and soul and being.

Verse 33: "...but everyone who believes in Him shall not be ashamed." And that belief must be accompanied by obedience in the Spirit of the meaning of all the commandments of God as amplified and magnified by Jesus Christ.

Now Romans 10:1: "Brethren, the earnest desire of my heart and my supplication to God for Israel is for salvation. For I testify of them that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (vs 1-2). That's exactly what the

Christians today have. They don't have the knowledge of God.

Verse 3: "For they, being ignorant of the righteousness *that* comes from God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God." And establishing their own righteousness are the traditions that they have invented and created and followed, regardless of what they are. 'Works of law' in relationship to Judaism is all the traditions that the Jews had, and those were the laws that they demanded everyone to follow. And furthermore, if you don't have the book, *Judaism: A Revelation of Moses or Religion of Men*, you better get it and you better read it, by Phil Neal, our editor.

Every rabbi was to be obeyed *above* obeying God! And even the traditions of the rabbis God had to accept. *That's what Judaism claims!* Someone's going to say, 'Oh, well, that's Judaism.' All right, what do Catholics and Protestants say? 'You must obey the *pope* or you must obey the church, you must obey what is taught from the pulpit.' Is not Sunday tradition? *Yes!* Halloween, Easter, Christmas—are they not tradition? *Yes!* Those are 'works of law' by men. And you need to understand that Jesus said in Mark 7, 'Full well you reject the commandments of God that you may keep your own traditions.'

You can understand v 4: "For Christ *is the end of works* of law... [The traditions of men that are made laws to replace the laws of God. Christ ends those! They are all null and void. Yet, Satan has his crafty lie by coming back and saying, 'Well, all of those who try and keep the commandments of God are trying to receive salvation by works,' and that is an utter absolute lie! You end all the religious traditions of men for righteousness.] ...For Christ *is the end of works* of law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

Let's talk a little bit more about blindness. Catholics, the Protestants and the Jews are all in the same category, as far as God is concerned. Perhaps the Jews a little more trouble, because they've rejected Christ and rejected the New Testament. But the Protestants have rejected the Old Testament and the laws of God, so they're pretty much in the same boat. And the Catholics brag that they can preach the Gospel without the Bible. All of their hypocritical pretense of using the Word of God to teach is just that. It's a hypocritical pretense. Why? Even though they have the Bible.

Romans 11:25: "For I do not wish you to be ignorant of this mystery, brethren, in order that you may not be wise in your own conceits: that a partial hardening of the heart has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all

Israel shall be saved, according as it is written..." (vs 25-26).

They have a hardness of heart. In the same way the Jews stumble at Christ, the Protestants have another Jesus and the Catholics are wholly pagan, attaching the name of Christ to it. They are exactly in the same situation. *They are blind!* And it also happens in the Churches of God.

Now let's see the end result of that. Let's come to Luke 6. Let's see what Jesus said. This helps us to understand, we're to preach the Word, that's what Paul said. And the reason that there are so many problems is because people like to tell God what to do. That comes in the form of misinterpretations and going along with human nature and lust.

So, here's the end result of it. I want you to put on your thinking cap.

- Think about what has happened in the Churches of God.
- Think about what is happening in Protestantism.
- Think about what's happening in Catholicism.

And Satan is getting them all ready for the grand magnificent entrance of *the beast* and the *false prophet*. They are all varying degrees of blindness.

Luke 6:39: "Then He spoke a parable to them, saying, 'Is a blind *man* able to lead a blind *man*? Will not both fall into the ditch?'" Isn't that what's going to happen? *Yes, indeed!* Look back and see. If you know anything about Pasadena, Big Sandy and Bricket Wood, ask: Where is it now? Why did God take it away? Did He just take it away because He was selfish and didn't want them to have it? Is that it? *or* Was there a reason?

Verse 40: "A disciple is not above his teacher..." Tremendous thing to understand! Who is the teacher? *Jesus is the teacher*—right? He said, 'I am your Lord and Teacher'—correct? *Yes*. He said that when He washed the apostles' feet on the last night of His Passover—right? *Yes, He did*. He said the same thing. "A disciple is not above his teacher..." and 'a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him'—same thing here. Whenever anyone brings in a misinterpretation or false doctrine, they are setting themselves and claiming Christ for it, or claiming God for it. This includes Jews, Protestants, and Catholics. You are making yourself greater than Christ. You need to think about that.

"...but everyone who is perfected... [That means the full growth of Christianity the way God wants it with His Spirit.] ...shall be like his teacher" (v 40). That's quite a thing that *if the blind lead the*

blind, they're both going to fall in the ditch! Let's see the conclusion of this, because blindness is quite a thing. Maybe we can open the eyes.

Now here's an account that there was a man born blind for the very purpose of Jesus healing him. He healed him. His parents said, 'This is our son.' They asked him, 'Who did this, how did He do it?' And he told them twice, and then they said, 'Well, we know this man is a sinner, because he breaks the Sabbath.' Well, He didn't break the Sabbath. Jesus never sinned. They said, 'We are of Moses.' And the blind man who could see looked at them and he said, 'How can this be that a man has healed someone who was blind from birth and that's never been heard of from the beginning of the world? This man has to be of God.' And they got all mad and said, 'You're His disciple.' Kicked him and his mother and father out of the synagogue, disfellowshipped from the community. 'You can no longer belong with us, because you believe the Truth and we don't want to believe the Truth.' All right, so I just paraphrased the whole chapter.

John 9:40: "And those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things; and they said to Him, 'Are we also blind?'" Jesus said... ['If the blind lead the blind, they'll both fall in the ditch?'] Isn't that correct? Where is Judaism and Protestantism and Catholicism? Aren't they in the ditch?] ...Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now you say, "We see." Therefore, your sin remains'" (vs 40-41).

Anyone who claims they have a greater vision of what is taught in the Bible—that they don't need the Bible, they don't need the laws of God—they are blind and their sin remains. And their whole religious operation has no forgiveness of sin whatsoever. It is a 'feel-good' system of community and doing good works, and rejecting God and rejecting Christ. *They are so blind they don't even know it!*

Scriptural References:

- 1) Isaiah 58:1-3
- 2) Jeremiah 5:1-3
- 3) Psalm 78:27-39
- 4) Isaiah 58:3-4, 9-14
- 5) Luke 14:25-27
- 6) Romans 6:1-12
- 7) Luke 14:33
- 8) Mark 12:28-31
- 9) Revelation 2:2-5
- 10) Romans 9:31-33
- 11) Romans 10:1-4
- 12) Romans 11:25-26
- 13) Luke 6:39-40
- 14) John 9:40-41

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- Isaiah 58:5-6
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The Holy Bible in its Original Order, A Faithful Version:

- Appendix X—*Exegetical Analysis of Mark 12:29* (
- Appendix N—*Rome's Challenge to the Protestants*

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