

A Sermon Transcribed

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES

by: Mr. Keith Brittain
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Good morning, brethren. Very beautiful piece of music. I think most of you have heard Sonia King's compositions. She's a member of the Church in England and she's put out a couple of tapes with some very beautiful music on them. And I thought that was very beautifully performed by Leander and John this morning.

In the beginning of this sermon, brethren, I want to deal with the subject of endings – four endings to be precise – two in the Old Testament and two in the New. It will not be immediately apparent where I'm going with this sermon but I am laying a foundation for the material to follow and providing pegs on which to hang the sermon. If I'm going to hang anything I'll hang the sermon, not myself today.

Let's turn to the first of these four endings. 2 Chronicles chapter 36 and beginning, brethren, in verse 22. This, in the inspired order of the Old Testament, is where the Old Testament ends. And a few weeks back I gave to you a sermon on the inspired order so you are aware of this scripture in its true placement in the order of the Bible. It is the conclusion of the Old Testament of God.

2 Chronicles 36:22-23 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, [God] stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

So the Old Testament, brethren, ends with a proclamation, a proclamation of a great emperor throughout his empire. Verse 23, the proclamation:

23 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and he has charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in [Judea]. (And now a question followed by an admonition.) Who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.

And this, as we saw brethren, is where the Old Testament ends. A calling, "Who is there among you of all His people?" And primarily, of course, the gospel is going to the nations of Israel, though more and more it is reaching Gentile countries. And the people of the Gentiles are God's children, also. So a question is sent out by the true gospel around the world. Who is there among you, of the children of God on this earth? The Lord his God be with him. Let him go up to be a part of this great end-time work.

Now let's turn, brethren, to the end of the New Testament, Revelation 22. This ending of the Old Testament is as we saw a call to do God's work. And in a sense, that ending is also a beginning, a beginning for each one of us personally because you are those who responded in the affirmation to the question. You were those among the people of God who were willing to come up out of the physical nation of Israel, Manasseh and give your lives to God. It was the start of your doing of God's work. You began to look to Jerusalem, to God's spiritual headquarters, Mount Zion, the Church, Pasadena. And you began a work of building God's house and His Church, as those people back then were called upon to build the temple of God in 2 Chronicles 36.

Now in the inspired order of the New Testament we come to the last words of this section of the Bible, Revelation 22 and verse 20, because you've been called to do a work of God, brethren but to what end? To what ultimate end are you doing God's work?

Revelation 22:20-21 He which testifies these things says, Surely I come quickly. Amen.

Another proclamation, brethren, only this time a proclamation of Jesus Christ Himself, because Jesus was the One who gave the revelation to John the Apostle.

...He (then, Jesus Christ) which testifies these things says, Surely I come quickly. Amen. (A proclamation followed by a prayer, a prayer on the part of the Apostle John.) **Even so, come, Lord Jesus.**

As you and I pray, Thy Kingdom come so John here prayed for the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom and the fulfillment of Jesus Christ's prophecy, His own proclamation in verse 20. And he followed the prayer by a final wish.

21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. (And a second) **Amen.**

For the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to be with us all, brethren, each one of us must be striving to become Jesus Christ now. So that when Jesus Christ returns we can be as He will be. We can be spirit beings and we can be married to Jesus Christ as His bride. The ultimate end of your doing this work now is so that you can do another work of God in the World Tomorrow. You are doing a work of God now as physical human beings. Then you will do a work of God as spirit, divine beings.

So, both these endings, brethren, represent two beginnings, the beginning of your calling, as it was, say, from the Old Testament by extension as we derived it to the beginning of your life as a spirit being in the World Tomorrow when Jesus Christ returns. So both these endings, brethren, in the inspired order of God's word are endings but they are also beginnings. The first, your personal beginning in the service of God and the second, your beginning as a divine being in the World Tomorrow.

But between these two beginnings, brethren, there will come an ending that is truly an ending. Both these endings are beginnings as well as endings. But between the two of them, between your calling into God's Church to do His work, between that and the time that you're a

part of the first resurrection and changed into spirit and to rule with Jesus Christ there is to come an ending that will truly be an ending. And to find that ending, brethren, we must look at two others in the Bible.

So far we started the two inspired endings of God's word, the endings in the inspired order of the Old Testament and the New Testament. But these two endings in the inspired order are not the two historical endings of the Old Testament and the New. The historical ending of the Old Testament, brethren, is found in the book of Nehemiah, chapter 13.

You see, after Cyrus made that proclamation Ezra and Nehemiah go on to tell us the story of the Jews that did come back to build the temple of God. So, though the Old Testament in the way God inspired it to be set up ends with the proclamation of Cyrus, a calling to ourselves, in type prophetically to do a work of God also, historically it ends with Ezra and Nehemiah. These were the final historical events of the Old Testament.

Now, some theologians will say that Ezra should follow Nehemiah. The traditionalists hold to the way it is put in the inspired order. And, in fact, when the Jews wrote the twenty-two scrolls of the Old Testament they put Ezra and Nehemiah on one scroll together, Nehemiah following Ezra. And we can prove for our own conviction in the Church that Nehemiah does belong after Ezra because without it coming in that order, without Ezra actually having gone to Jerusalem before Nehemiah the seventy weeks prophecy of Daniel for the first coming of Jesus Christ cannot be fulfilled. Now, that's a whole other subject by itself but it's enough to tell you that in the Church we accept the traditional view that Nehemiah does follow Ezra, historically.

Let's look at the last verse, then of the book of Nehemiah, brethren, Nehemiah chapter 13 of verse 31 and the last seven words, again a prayer.

Nehemiah 13:31...Remember me, O my God, for good.

Now, certainly, we could echo that personal prayer. We want to be remembered for good. That prayer is very important for the last chapter, the historical ending of the Bible. In fact, it's repeated three times in this chapter, brethren. Verse 14:

Nehemiah 13:14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof. (Latter part of verse 22)

22...Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.

Three times, as Nehemiah brings us to a historical conclusion of the Old Testament he prays this prayer, a personal prayer asking God to remember him for good. Now, in this conclusion of the Old Testament we see Nehemiah doing a work of cleansing, of cleansing the temple of God, of cleansing the ministry of God, of cleansing the people of God, physical Israel at that time. And as he did that work in different stages of it he prayed three times that God would remember him for good, undoubtedly because Nehemiah was getting towards the end of his life.

Now there are some that would believe and there's a possibility we've speculated in the Church that Nehemiah chapter 8 belongs in the circumstances of Nehemiah 13. That when Nehemiah did the work of cleansing then Ezra was able to read the law. And so, the Old Testament historically may also end with a second reading of God's law. As it starts with the Pentateuch and the giving of the law, the books of the law, so it may well end with a reading of the law by the prophet Ezra.

We're going to come back to Nehemiah in a moment, brethren, and take a closer look at the work that he was doing. Before we do let's turn to what would be, in all probability, the historical end of the New Testament, 3 John. Now, as we saw in the inspired order of the New Testament, the general epistles of James, Peter and John come a lot earlier in the New Testament. They come right after the Pentateuch, if we could call it that, of the Gospels and the Acts. They come before the Pauline epistles.

Commentaries are not fully decided on when these epistles of John were written. But there are those that believed that it was composed (or at least the last two of them, 2 and 3 John) were composed toward the end of the first century. To us, of course, we think of the book of Revelation and true, you could say from the standpoint of the history of the last two thousand years that you have it in the book of Revelation as going all the way through. But we're talking about the historical ending of the apostolic era, brethren. And John was the last of the apostles, of the New Testament era back then. True, it is extending through the last two thousand years but where the history of their actions are concerned we see it does not conclude in the book of Acts because it ends only with Paul and what he was doing in Rome. And John outlived Paul.

Tradition has it that after John received the Revelation from Jesus Christ while he was a prisoner on the Isle of Patmos that he was afterwards released and spent his final years in the city of Ephesus. And it is speculated that during those final years he wrote these last two epistles. So, that would make 3 John verses 13 and 14 the historical ending of the New Testament.

***3 John 13-14* I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write to [you]:
14 But I trust I shall shortly see [you], and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to [you].
Our friends salute [you]. Greet the friends by name.**

The historical ending emphasizes fellowship. It's good to write to the brethren but even more importantly, as he goes on to show from verse 13 through 14 he actually wanted to come and visit with them to speak face to face. "Our friends salute you." And "Greet the friends by name."

And, of course, in order to maintain our spiritual growth, brethren, fellowship is an essential aspect if we want to be a part of qualifying for the return of Jesus Christ to be changed into spirit.

But that's not the major point that I want to bring out of these two historical endings of the Bible, brethren, Nehemiah 13 and 3 John. Because, as Nehemiah in his final years did a work of cleansing so here in 3 John, brethren, we also find a work of cleansing. As Nehemiah was

responsible for the cleansing of the temple of God in the final chapter of his work, so the Apostle John was responsible for the cleansing of a Church of God in his final epistle.

Is it coincidence that these two historical endings should involve two cleansings, one of the temple, one of the Church? I don't believe so, brethren. I believe God ended on this note as a prophetic warning to future generations of Christians. And particularly to this era of God's Church as we'll see later on from a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

God gives us, by prophecy that as the Old Testament story ends with a cleansing of His temple and as the New Testament ends with the cleansing of the Church of God, so this end time Church of Philadelphia will also end with a cleansing, with a purging of the Church that Mr. Tkach may have to be responsible for as one of the burdens he will bear as God's apostle.

But, a cleansing from what, brethren? A cleansing from the work of Satan. Now, that may seem very strange. We understand that this is the work of God. And outside of the Church is a work of Satan. That we understand. We understand that out there in the world, because Satan is the god of this world that is where the work of Satan is. And this Church and what goes on within it, this is the work of God. Correct, brethren. We understand that. But what is not generally understood is that God also permits Satan to do a work within the Church and that is what this sermon is all about.

What we are going to be dealing with as we've seen from the two historical endings which lead to this, we're dealing with this sermon where the end of the work of Satan within the work of God. Now, to understand the ending of the work of Satan within the house of God we have to understand, first of all, what that work is.

These two last historical chapters, (and I realize that it can be debated whether they are or not) but these two chapters that we've dealt with contain the names of two men, one Tobiah, the other Diotrefes. Two men used of Satan to infiltrate God's house, in the Old Testament the temple, in the New Testament the Church of God. And this is why both chapters, Nehemiah 13 and 3 John, speak of a cleansing. It was a cleansing necessitated by the work these two men did against God's people.

Let's turn back to Nehemiah, brethren. And to get the background we'll start with Nehemiah chapter 2. Nehemiah begins his work, verse 9:

***Nehemiah 2:9-10* Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.**

10 When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, (remember that I mentioned Tobiah to you, brethren) heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

So, here we're introduced, brethren, to this man Tobiah. Now, right away we're told by God that he is an enemy of the work of God. Let's go to chapter 4. Chapter 3 records the individuals responsible for the building of the wall under Nehemiah and he mentions, first of all, Eliashib the

high priest. So, throughout the history of Nehemiah the high priest, at that time, was a man named Eliashib. Remember that name, brethren, because we're coming back to this high priest. We're going to find out that he was another Eli, as Mr. Spears was showing you from the sermonette just as Nehemiah was another Samuel.

But Eliashib is mentioned positively in chapter 3 as one being zealous for the rebuilding of the wall, particularly that which was the priest's portion to build. Chapter 4 verse 7:

Nehemiah 4:7-8 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,

8 And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. (Another mention of Tobiah, another totally negative mention concerning him. Chapter 6 and verse 1):

Nehemiah 6:1-2 Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had built the wall, and that there was no breach left therein;

2 That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.

Again a mention of Tobiah in a negative standpoint, continually conspiring against this work of God. Verse 10:

10 Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay you (Nehemiah, he tried to put Nehemiah in fear); **yes, in the night will they come to slay [you].**

11 And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.

12 And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

13 Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me.

14 My God, think you upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works,

Because they constantly opposed the work of God from the outside, brethren. While Nehemiah was doing the work of God Satan had a work on the outside in opposition to the work of God. And it was also in opposition on the inside, too. Verse 17:

17 Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. (Because the nobles were opposed to Nehemiah because he looked out for the poorer people.)

18 For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah;

19 Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

That gives you enough of the background, brethren. This Tobiah is constantly mentioned throughout the book of Nehemiah as a great adversary of the work of God and the work that Nehemiah was doing.

Well, in the year 432 BC Nehemiah had to return back to the Persian capital to Artaxerxes. A few years later he returned. When he returned, brethren, I want you to notice the situation with the temple of God. Nehemiah 13 and verse 4:

***Nehemiah 13:4* And before this, Eliashib the priest, (the high priest himself, brethren) having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, (while Nehemiah was gone back to Persia, Elishib) was allied unto Tobiah:**

The great enemy of Jerusalem and of this work of God, Tobiah, now had the high priest of the temple for his ally. And an enemy who had been on the outside was now right dead center, inside, inside the very temple of God at Jerusalem. Verse 5:

5 And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests.

Tobiah was given a guest chamber right in the very temple of God and he was able to appropriate, during that time, some of the tithe money and some of the riches that came in, to the point that the Levites were no longer supportive. The Levites went back out into the city to work in the fields, no longer perform their ministry. And because the Levites were no longer performing their ministry the people went back to their old sins of the breaking of the Sabbath and the religious intermarriage, which is the story of Nehemiah chapter 13.

The three times he prayed to God to remember him for good as he did three works of cleansing. First the temple, secondly the ministry and thirdly the people of Judah from their religious intermarriages. As he says in verse 6:

6 But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem (he had had to back to Artaxerxes): ...

7 And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the (very) courts of the house of God.

There was an enemy of God in the temple of God and Nehemiah, in the historical ending of the Old Testament had to cleanse the house of God. Now, let's turn to 3 John, brethren, what we speculate as the historical ending of the New Testament. I mentioned that the historical ending finalizes with a note relating to fellowship. That, to a certain extent is one of the themes of 3

John because fellowship is so important to the building of the Church of God. In fact, verses 5 through 8 also deal with this subject of fellowship but verse 9, brethren, is what I want to concentrate on and verse 10.

3 John 9-10 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, receives us not.

Diotrephes was a minister, an ordained minister of the Church of God. But clearly he was not a converted individual at this point. If he had been converted he no longer was. He was an ambitious individual who loved to have the preeminence among them. And so, within the house of God in the New Testament, there was an enemy of God and an enemy of the people of God because he “receives us not.” He would neither receive the Apostle John nor the messengers of John.

10 Wherefore, if I come, (notice he was free now, he was no longer in prison on the Island of Patmos) I will remember his deeds which he [has done], prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and forbids them that would, and casts them out of the church.

This man had power within the Church of God wherever this Church of God was in Asia. But he had so established himself as a minister over a true Church that he would cast out, now, true brethren who wanted to remain under the authority of the Apostle John and the true government of the Church from headquarters.

And so, Diotrephes was an enemy of God within the work of God criticizing God’s apostle. Verse 10

...prating against us with malicious words:

Just as there are dissidents within the Church of God who have malicious words for Mr. Tkach in Pasadena. But of course, we’re not too much aware of it now. It’s not a big public thing as it was with Diotrephes, as it was with Tobiah, not yet, brethren. But Jesus Christ made a prophecy for this work where what happened in these two historical endings is going to happen again. They are prophetic, prophetic warnings for us today, Matthew chapter 13.

You see, brethren, Satan has a fifth column movement in the work of God. There is a work of Satan within God’s work. It’s an invisible work but it’s there and it has always been there. But one day soon, it will finally end it and that will be a true ending because he will never be allowed again throughout the thousand years to come to do such a work because he will be chained throughout the thousand years. Afterwards he’ll be released and he’ll do another work. But it’s an ending and certainly an ending in the history of the Philadelphian era.

Now, a fifth column movement, if you’re not aware of that phrase, it’s a twentieth century term. It was a name applied to the rebel sympathizers in Madrid in 1936 before the Second World War when there was a Spanish civil war. Four rebel columns were advancing on the capital city of Madrid. But they used the term ‘the fifth column’ because they are rebel

sympathizers within the city. So, as you had the four rebel columns advancing on the city of Madrid you had a fifth column within the city. So we have Satan's work outside, brethren, ranged, opposed against us. But there's also a work of Satan, a fifth column movement, within the Church. Now, we saw the culmination of it in the 1970s but it will happen again before this work is finished. And that's what these prophecies of Jesus Christ are about. Matthew 13 and beginning in verse 24:

Matthew 13:24-30 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

Okay, the man which sowed good seed represents God, or rather Jesus Christ, both in that sense. But I think it's specified in verse 37 which we'll come to later, that the one sowing the good seed is Jesus Christ. Sowing the good seed represents, brethren, the spreading the gospel and our calling, our beginning in God's work.

25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat,

Okay, right within the Church, Satan also does a work. There are those that God calls into His Church and there are those whom Satan calls into the Church of God. Not all of our numerical growth is given to us by God, brethren. Satan also gives growth to this Church – not spiritually, obviously but numerically. A part of it is Satan's. He sowed tares among the wheat, right in the Church.

...and went his way.

26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? (How come it's got these tares, these weeds?)

28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this (the enemy being Satan). The servants said unto him, Will [you] then that we go and gather them up?

Shall we get rid of these tares out of the Church of God? You'd think that would be the logical thing for God to do.

29 But he said, No; lest while [you] gather up the tares, [you] root up also the wheat with them.

Now a tare, brethren, in the English terminology, the modern day term is darnel. It's a poisonous weed that until the time of the harvest looks very much like wheat. Only at the time of the harvest when the wheat and the tares, the darnel is full grown are they distinguishable one from the other. So you can't tell until the time of harvest for the most part, who are tares and who are wheat. Now, some tares reveal themselves by dissident attitudes and they have to be disfellowshipped. That's an ongoing thing. But there is coming a time that will cause many tares to surface. So he said, "Don't do it."

30 Let both grow together (they are side by side in the Church of God, the tares and the wheat) **until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them** (because the tares will go into the tribulation and fire is a type of trial): **but gather the wheat into my barn.**

Symbolically the place of safety because only the Philadelphians will go there, not the Laodiceans nor the tares. Of course, the tares are different from the Laodiceans. In fact you have three baptized groups in the Church of God today. You have baptized Philadelphians, you have baptized Laodiceans and you have the baptized unconverted, those who have been baptized but their baptism didn't take. They were not truly, truly repentant at the time and they did not receive the Holy Spirit.

But, notice the order of things. Before the Church is gathered in the place of safety the tares will be taken out of the Church and they will be cast into the tribulation. Now, remember that I mentioned, brethren, the tares are poisonous! As they grow to maturity, if you were to eat them they become poisonous. And some of the tares are going to poison some of the converted at the end by their malicious prating (a quote from 3 John), by their criticisms and they will be moved to those criticism and to those dissident attitudes by events that will take place around us in the world. The one particular event that we will deal with shortly. Verse 37, when the disciples asked Jesus Christ about this parable:

37 He answered and said unto them, He that sows the good seed is the Son of man;

38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom;

Notice, we are children of the Kingdom, brethren. As Mr. Armstrong used to say, the Church of God is the Kingdom of God in embryo form.

...but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world;

Properly translated in the Greek, the end of the age – this age, brethren – the end time. We've got three basic ages of man: the six thousand years of Satan ruling the world, the thousand years of the millennium and then the hundred year period at the follow of the second resurrection. Verse 40:

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this [age] (Greek *aion*, age).

They are burned in a fire at the end of this age, brethren. The fire at the end of this age is the tribulation.

41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom (Church of God, Kingdom in embryo form) all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire (not *the* lake of fire – a furnace of fire, the tribulation): **there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.** (And to prove that this event is before the millennium, brethren, verse 43.)

43 Then (afterwards) **shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.**

The first resurrection takes place afterwards, after the wheat are taken to the place of safety, after the tares are separated out of the Church of God and go into the tribulation. Verse 47:

47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: (good and bad, wheat and tares, only this case the analogy is fish.)

48 Which, when it was full,

In the fullness of God's time when He has sufficient Philadelphians for that section of His government in the world tomorrow, when it's time for God's work to end and the work of the two witnesses to begin and Philadelphia to go to the place of safety:

...when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

49 So shall it be at the end (not of the world but of this age): **the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,**

Now, when the just, brethren, go to the place of safety they are severed from among the wicked. God will take His Church out from among the wicked to a place of safety. But here the wicked are severed out from among the just. These are the wicked within the Church, the tares.

50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire (that will be in the end time – the third world war): **there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.** (bitter regret)

The message for us, brethren, of those last two historical chapters is to beware of Satan's fifth column movement in the Church. Nehemiah did a work of cleansing, John did a work of cleansing, a cleansing of this Church took place in the 1970s. God's apostle Mr. Tkach will have to do a work of cleansing when this work comes to a close, be it in the 1990s, be it in the year 2000 we don't know. A purging out of the work within the work, the invisible work of Satan within the work of God.

Let's turn now to Daniel chapter 11. In effect, there have been many harvests throughout time – times of cleansing out of God's Church. We mentioned Nehemiah, we mentioned John, Mr. Armstrong in the 70s. But one yet to come that God's apostle today will have to also effect. Of course, it will be the angels doing it in a sense but these people will have to be disfellowshipped, put out of the Church at the end. Though, for the most part they will take themselves out because of circumstances in this world. As I mentioned one particular circumstance that we're going to deal with shortly. Daniel 11 verse 32, the story of God's

Church through the last two thousand years coming from the time of Antiochus Epiphanes who desecrated the temple between the testaments:

***Daniel 11:32-35* And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.**

Considered to be a prophecy of the Maccabees but also, in type, of the Church of God through the last two thousand years because notice verse 33.

33 And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. (Those people were burned at the stake, they fell by flame during the Middle Ages.)

34 Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but (throughout the two thousand years) **many shall cleave to them with flatteries.**

These are the tares that cleave to the Church. And God says let them grow together with the wheat. Now, the literal tares are not actually growing spiritually. God is talking there about wheat and physical tares that do actually grow. But when we're talking about Church members (and there are tares, obviously as we see that are members of the Church.) They don't grow spiritually though they appear to be converted.

When it says many shall cleave to them with flatteries, brethren, these people who were tares, who were cleaved to us with flatteries don't appear servile. They don't appear obsequious. They're not sycophants. They're friendly, warm and in their own minds sincere individuals. They do not know that they are being used by Satan. They don't know, at this stage, that they are a part of his fifth column movement.

There are many people in the Church of God, baptized, who believe that their baptism is valid. And a large proportion, yes, the baptisms are valid. They are valid baptisms. When it says cleave to us with flatteries, brethren, you know, you could see somebody who is acting in a servile, sycophantic manner. Somebody who is unctuous or whatever, you would recognize it right away. These are just warm, friendly, sincere people in their own minds. They like Church of God members. They like being around the people in God's Church. They enjoy the fellowship. They enjoy the warm, friendly hospitality that's here.

Many of them do get baptized and believe that they are converted. But Satan has deceived them. As the Bible says the heart is deceitful above all things. They have deceived themselves into a false conversion. Verse 35:

35 And some of them of understanding shall fall,

Those that are truly converted. Not just those of verse 34 who are cleaving with flatteries, the tares. But some of understanding shall fall – a falling away to come from God's Church.

...to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end:

Now, it's happened throughout history but at the time of the end, the Laodiceans, people of understanding, will fall and will be tried and purged and made white in the tribulation. And perhaps some of the tares will repent in the tribulation. Many of the tares will die in the tribulation and their day of salvation is yet future.

God could stop this, brethren. God could stop Satan sowing tares in God's Church. But God has a purpose. He is using the tares and we're going to see how in a minute. But some of the Laodiceans may be temporarily poisoned by the tares of verse 34. By their critical attitude some Laodiceans, out of contact with God, lacking in the right effort in prayer and Bible study, might listen to some of these criticisms and these dissidents, get themselves further weakened and end up in the tribulation and then come to their senses and realize how foolish they'd been.

But instead of being submissive to the government of God in headquarters they allowed themselves like people in the 1970s to get critical. Now, sometimes brethren wonder why Mr. Orchard and I, when we have to counsel a person for baptism are so cautious in our baptisms of perspective members; why we thoroughly try to counsel them. And sometimes people get a bit upset with us. "Can't they see I'm repentant? Can't they see I'm one of the good guys?" You can't tell the wheat from the tares. That's why He said to the angels don't pull them up in case you pull up wheat by mistake because the tares look like the wheat until the time of harvest.

You can tell tares if they're poisonous now because they're dissidents, and because of the way they talk. And people say, well, you know they baptized three thousand in one day in the book of Acts and five thousand in another. They did it in one day. How come I have to spend weeks, maybe months? How many of the three thousand survived? How many of the five thousand were still members of God's Church by the time the apostles were writing about the falling away; by the time John in 1 John was complaining about those that went out from us because they were not of us. Yet while they were here within the Church they seemed like converted members and they'd been through the rite of baptism.

If the apostles were right and doing everybody in one day without too much counseling...now true. They were Jews. They were already keeping the Holy Days, they were already keeping the Sabbath. They were already tithing. They were already keeping the laws of clean and unclean meat. The only thing they needed was to understand who their Messiah was, Jesus Christ because the other laws of the Old Testament they were keeping. So true, if they got hold of Jesus Christ and true repentance they could be baptized more quickly than we coming out of the world and out of these other religions.

But, nevertheless, brethren, many of the three thousand and many of the five thousand fell away later on because they weren't truly converted. Quite a staggering thing that God should record in Acts chapter 8 that the first pope was a baptized member of the Church of God, Simon Magus. Now, he wasn't called the first pope but he is the Simon Peter to whom the Catholic Church looks as the founder of their church. It just so happens they've got the wrong Simon. But he was baptized into the Church of God. Do you think that was a valid baptism? Look at the results. Look at what he founded.

This is why we are careful, brethren. For your sakes! That you are not given an invalid baptism! Not that we want to put you through the third degree and make life miserable for you. It's because we want to help you to make it into God's Kingdom and not be deceived into a false baptism as many tares are.

Now, Jesus spoke of a time of harvest to come. What will prefigure or predispose that harvest to take place, brethren? Revelation 12 gives us the answer. I won't turn there. You can just write it down if you wish. Revelation 12 verses 12 through 13.

There is coming another great rebellion on the part of Satan and the demons and Revelation 12 describes it where a short period of time before the tribulation Satan and the demons are going to go and fight God in third heaven again or not the third heaven. They fought as far as the second. Fight God in outer space. God would not let them get as far as the third heaven to pollute it. And Satan will lose again as Revelation 12 records for us. He'll be cast back down to this earth.

Then it says he know that he has but a short time – a few months, a few years, probably just a few months before the tribulation starts. He has great wrath! Far greater than he's ever had before because time's running out on him. And so "he persecuted the woman that brought forth the man child" referring to the Church.

For the tares today, brethren, many of them are comfortable in God's Church. It's a warm, friendly atmosphere. But at that time, when Satan promotes a vicious persecution of this Church, a violent persecution of this Church the tares who have been sitting comfortably every Sabbath, are going to be shaken out of their seats. And Satan, who has planted them here, leaving them here for his end-time purpose, is then going to go to work on their minds, make them critical. And persecution from the outside will do that to people, particularly when your life might be threatened or your body, physical harm.

And in consequence they're going to start talking to others saying, "I don't like this and I don't like that." And some of the truly converted will allow themselves to listen to that garbage and allow themselves to fall. Though they are of understanding they will end up in the tribulation to be purged, to be made white because they are not solidly founded upon God and prayer and Bible Study. Luke chapter 21.

Mr. Orchard was pointing out something this past week when we were visiting. It really is quite staggering. We give sermons on prayer and then, as he said, you can ask some people are they praying and they'll say yes. Fine, you assume that because you've given sermons on prayer on how long to pray and what to pray that's the yes answer to what you want. But if you ask further questions you might find that their prayer is in the car on the way to work or maybe when they're lying in bed. They're getting on their knees and having formal prayer besides the informal prayer from your mind through the day wherever you are, that's a different story.

Their concept of prayer is just giving God casual time. They are talking to God but when it comes to formal prayer on their knees...we would take that as basic, elementary. But there are

people in God's Church who don't spend much time on their knees and yet they think they're praying as much as God needs because they're praying in the car on their way to work. Can't be bothered to get up half an hour early. "Oh, I've got all this time driving. Let's put it to good use. Stay in bed a little longer and just get my prayer in while I'm driving to work. Or maybe pray while I'm brushing my teeth or shaving in the morning." But there are people, evidently, with that kind of mentality in God's Church.

Luke 21 Jesus Christ describes the end-time tribulation He says, verse 12:

Luke 21:12 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you,

Okay, a persecution to come upon God's Church just before the tribulation described in the preceding verses. When that tribulation comes, when God shakes the tree of this Church, when things get rough instead of comfortable and easy then, verse 16:

16 And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, (who are not necessarily in the Church but hate this Church, would rather you be a part of their religion) and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends;

So your relatives may betray you but notice that He distinguishes here, brethren, between the word brethren and kinsfolk. If the 'brethren' refers merely to your relatives why follow it with the word 'kinsfolk'? The kinsfolk are your relatives, the brethren are fellow members of God's Church. And friends – where are your major friends? Right here, brethren. You have some friends, some acquaintances in the world but your closest friendships are right here because the tares are friends of the wheat and you, the wheat, are friends of the tares.

The day will come when the tares become your enemies. But right now they don't know. They're not aware, most of them. They don't understand that they're being used of Satan.

Why does God permit these tares in the Church, brethren? Two major reasons: to teach the wheat two lessons. Very simply, first of all that only God can convert a person. Just because you're attending Church and even baptized does not make you converted. Remember Mr. Orchard's sermon last week on change.

Attendance is not sufficient. The change must be from within. Only God can convert an individual and the tares, by this, are used to humble the wheat because, if you are wheat you could, just as easily be a tare. How do you tell the tares in the Church, brethren? Well, it's very easy. You just look for those who are wearing a pink shirt.

But how do you know that I'm converted, brethren? How do you know that I'm wheat and not a tare? You don't! You say, well, I'm preaching to you the word of God. You're right! But does that mean I'm converted? We had a person, used of God for many years on television to bring people into His Church, yet at the end his father felt that his son had never been converted in all that time. God used him. God used his mouth.

How many of you who were baptized in the 60s would have believed at that time that we would have lost 50% of our evangelists in the 70s? It was unthinkable! The thought never

crossed our minds. Now, some of those evangelists were converted but some of them were tares. They got all the way to being evangelists. God allowed it, brethren, to test the wheat, to see if we would hold firm.

And we learned this lesson, that only God can truly convert a person because, you see, the tares, on occasion can act just as converted as the wheat. In fact, sometimes the tares act more converted because the wheat, who are the low and the base of the world are very lacking in character. Some of the tares have more natural character. Sometimes we have to spend more of our time working with the wheat than we do with the tares even if we don't know the difference between the two as ministers. Because the wheat, because of the lack of character are constantly getting into trouble.

When David came to the throne of Israel, one of the greatest of the men of God in the Old Testament, would you have believed at that time that he, a converted man of God, would one day take another man's wife, commit adultery with her and then murder her husband? Is that the act of a converted man? No and yes because David was converted. He was sure in a very unconverted frame when he did what he did. But he's not lost out on God's salvation because he deeply repented.

You see, sometimes the unconverted can act more converted than the converted. That's why God says don't try pulling them up at this time. Events will show you at the time of the harvest, for absolutely clear, who are the wheat and who are the tares. Romans 9, one day many of those tares will be brought to repentance. How great a persecution was wrought on the Church of God in the book of Acts by Saul? He was not a tare. He was one of the persecutors from the outside. But who would have believed, if you had lived back at that time, before Saul's conversion, that one day he would become one of the greatest men of God in the New Testament. How many people were tortured or hauled into prison by Paul and gave up on the truth of God? And some of them lost out on their salvation. And here, their great persecutor, will be in the first resurrection and with a very high position in the Kingdom of God.

That's why we're not to go looking around, brethren, with a suspicious attitude – who's a tare? Because Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4 and verse 5:

1 Corinthians 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the time,

The time of harvest and of persecution will reveal. We're not to go around in attitude of, "huh, I wonder about so and so". Point the finger at ourselves, brethren. That's where it belongs. You see, only God can convert. There, but for the grace of God go I. You could just as easily be a tare as wheat. If God hadn't called you into His Church Satan could have done it. Romans 9 verse 17:

Romans 9:17-18 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, (Because God has allowed Satan to bring tares into the Church. Satan couldn't do it if God didn't allow.)

...that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

18 Therefore he has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens.

God allows Satan to harden the individual by circumstances. Yet God takes the responsibility because Satan can do nothing except God permits it.

19 So, you will say to me then, Why (in the world then) does he still find fault?

These people don't know they're being used of Satan. Did Pharaoh know it, brethren? No! He was one of the great egomaniacs of all time but has he lost out on his salvation? He wasn't called. That wasn't a day of salvation for him. Pharaoh, one day, is going to be one of your best friends, time to come, if he makes it in his day of salvation.

...For who hath resisted his will?

20 Nay but, O man, who art you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? (Why am I a tare instead of a wheat?)

21 Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?

22 What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

See, part of His purpose is so that the wheat doesn't become vain and egotistical. Because we could just as easily be tares if we are wheat, brethren. We could be a vessel to dishonor as opposed to honor if God had allowed it to be.

Now, some of the tares may well commit the unpardonable sin. But many of them will have a day of salvation ahead of them. So, the first lesson is: only God can convert, brethren, as we see here in Romans 9. And the tares are used of God to humble the elect in this, that we recognize that that conversion, one of the most privileged of things that can be given to a person today. Whereas, in the World Tomorrow it will be given to all of humanity. And, of course, in the hundred year period to those who were once tares.

And the second great lesson is: only God can save. There is a difference. Just because you're converted you're not saved. Tares are going to be used to test the elect. 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and the only way the wheat is going to survive the test is if you are close to God. Because only God can bring you through the test of the tares that is to come against the wheat at the time of persecution.

We need to understand, though brethren, God allows these things. Satan cannot checkmate God. If you're wheat you can make it despite how many tares there might be in the Church. And we don't know. Because, if you're close to God, God will get you through the tests and the

trials that have to come upon us. But we have our trials from the outside, we will have them from the inside. Verse 18 of 1 Corinthians 11:

***1 Corinthians 11:18-19* For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.**

19 For there must be also heresies among you,

Those who are making snide, critical remarks, headquarters, etc. The Greek word is actually schisms among you. To what end does God allow this?

...that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

That the wheat will finally be distinguished from the tares, from the darnel. God allows the schisms to see where the wheat stands, whether we've built our house upon rock or upon sand. The book of Jude verse 4:

***Jude 4* For there are certain men crept in unawares,**

They were baptized into the Church of God and people thought they were converted. They were unawares. They didn't know they weren't converted. The converted didn't know they weren't converted.

***Jude 4* For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, (yet appearing godly, however, over a period of time they) turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Verse 8, notice how they do it. They come in sincere but it's called with flatteries. It's not the real thing though it appears as the real thing. And after a while:

8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion,

Church government, no matter what the heresies, brethren, in the end the final crux of the matter is Church government.

...despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. (They spoke evil of Mr. Herbert Armstrong and will speak evil of Mr. Tkach. Verse 12)

12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, (They keep the Holy Days with us) when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: (They're not recognized as being tares yet)

So, only God can convert, brethren and only God can save. How are we to regard the tares? As I said, you will become suspicious and judgmental of others? No, not at all.

I talked at the beginning of this sermon, brethren, on the subject of endings. There's one other ending I want to deal with, the end of Jesus Christ's physical life on this earth, last events, the last chapter historically for Christ when He was physical. There was a tare in Jesus Christ's ministry. A tare put there by Satan. His name was Judas. But why is it that God prophesied centuries before Judas was ever born that there would be a traitor in the camp. That that one

would be used, to be instrumental in bringing Jesus Christ to death. And that he himself would kill himself. It is implied though it's not specifically stated that he would die early.

Why is it that God allowed that? God could have stopped that happening, brethren. God could have had twelve apostles at the beginning who were all solidly behind Jesus Christ. Why did He allow a Judas? Again, as a warning to succeeding generations of Christians that there would be tares in the work. And yet, how are we to regard such individuals. Psalm 41 and verse 9, which prophesies of Judas says:

***Psalms 41:9* Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted...Has lifted up his heel against me.** (Now, David was speaking specifically of a close personal friend, Ahithophel. But it's also prophetic of Judas.)

***Psalms 41:9* Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted...Has lifted up his heel against me.**

"We walked together" David said. "We had a close personal relationship." But the event occurred whereby the person turned against him just as Judas turned against Jesus Christ. What were the final words of Jesus Christ to Judas, brethren? In Matthew 26 in verse 50 Jesus said to Judas:

***Matthew 26:50* But Jesus said to him, "Friend, why are you come hither?"**

Those are the last words Christ ever spoke to him. He didn't say 'enemy' why have you come hither? Judas was an enemy but Jesus Christ addressed him as friend. Even if you knew someone were a tare (and you don't know) because Paul says judge nothing before the time, in this case the time of harvest. You treat everybody with the same respect and the same love. And some of the tares in their day of salvation will be in the Kingdom of God and will make it to become spirit beings. And some of the converted now will fail in time to come and be a part, sadly, of the third resurrection. So why should we judge anything before the time? But we do have to be aware of these prophecies so that if you are truly converted, when the time of testing comes you can survive the coming test of the tares.

Jesus did not address Judas as enemy because Judas wasn't the enemy. It says in Ephesians 6 and verse 12, For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, (against Judases, against tares, brethren). We wrestle against the principalities of the powers of darkness. Satan is the enemy! And you have one other that's an even greater enemy than Satan, yourself. Satan cannot stop you making it into the Kingdom of God. Only one individual can. Satan works against you but he cannot stop you. You alone can stop yourself. Like the Pogo comic strip, "We have met the enemy and he is us." You are your own greatest enemy, brethren.

We won't be able to blame the tares if we fall away. A certain blame (yes) does belong to Satan but Satan cannot twist our arm behind our back when he tempts us and force us to do evil. We do it by our own personal choice. The greatest enemy is the self and that's why it says the

heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. We have to conquer the self and rule it so that Satan cannot use it against us.

So, God prophesied of Judas and brought him into Christ's ministry to illustrate the tares in the Church who will betray the righteous. As I said, brethren, some of the righteous because of their lack of contact at the time will fail in the test of the tares. The tares are poisonous. And when their time comes to do their thing, when Satan works with their minds and they become dissidents they will poison the minds of some of the converted.

Yet God knows the tares are unwitting tools in the hands of Satan and they don't know they're being used. But for most of them God's mercy and calling will one day be given to them. Some of them will commit the unpardonable sin but many won't because they don't know that they're pawns in Satan's hands.

But, in the meantime, brethren, in conclusion, how do you, if you are wheat survive the test of the tares? At the beginning of this sermon I started off with two scriptures that conclude the inspired order of God's word. They are pegs upon which I want to hang this sermon. There's far more to surviving the tares than this, yes, but these two sum it up.

Remember that in 2 Chronicles chapter 36 we were called to do a work of God. If you are to survive the coming test you must, first of all, fulfill that final scripture of the Old Testament. You must have your heart in God's work. That was the subject of Mr. Orchard's sermon two weeks ago, about doing the work and the need of our constant daily prayers for it, for the work of God and for the Church of God.

And secondly, as we see by extension with the final verses of the New Testament, that now we are to seek to become Jesus Christ so that we can be as Jesus Christ is when He returns. We also can be spirit beings.

Now, Mr. Orchard in his second sermon, the one he gave last week, talked about the importance of internal change. You support a public work of God. You must have your heart in it. But at the same time, brethren, we have to do a work of character. We have to change within. We have to become Jesus Christ.

Upon those two scriptures hang the two major keys to surviving the test of the tares. Without your heart in God's work, without seeking to become Jesus Christ you will not survive the test to come. You will not remain faithful to your calling. But if you do, you can make it through and you can have your reward in the Kingdom of God.

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