

THE SABBATH DAY TEST

by Clint Zimmerman

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I WOULD LIKE YOU TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE TAKING A TEST. I KNOW THAT WILL MAKE EVERYBODY HAPPY! AM NOT GOING TO GIVE THE TEST TO YOU, GOD STARTED THIS TEST AT SUNSET. I'M JUST GOING TO TELL YOU ABOUT IT.

YOU SEE, THIS DAY, THE SABBATH, IS A SPIRITUAL TEST DESIGNED BY THE ALMIGHTY GOD FOR OUR BENEFIT SO HE CAN SEE WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE ARE DOING. WEEK AFTER WEEK, FOR AS LONG AS YOU LIVE, GOD IS GOING TO GIVE YOU A TEST EVERY SABBATH DAY — HE WILL GIVE YOU OTHER TESTS ALSO, BUT YOU WILL ALWAYS BE TESTED ON THE SABBATH DAY.

WE ARE HEADED FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND WE KNOW THAT THE SABBATH PICTURES THAT KINGDOM INTO WHICH WE HOPE TO EMERGE ONE DAY — THAT KINGDOM WHERE THE LAW OF GOD AND ALL OF ITS GRANDEUR AND PERFECTION IS GOING TO BE DISPLAYED BY ALL OF THE MEMBERS OF THE KINGDOM. GOD IS LOOKING AT YOU AND ME NOW, TO SEE HOW WE ARE MEASURING UP, WHAT WE ARE LEARNING, HOW WE ARE APPLYING WHAT WE LEARN, WHAT IS GOING ON IN OUR MINDS, WHAT OUR ACTIONS ARE, AND IF WE ARE GOING TO BE FIT CANDIDATES TO FINALLY ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM.

GOD HAS A PERFECT GOVERNMENT. HE HAS GOT HIS KINGDOM PLANNED, AND HE IS LOOKING FOR YOU AND ME TO LIVE IN THAT KINGDOM IN PERFECT PEACE. BUT HE HAS GOT TO KNOW THAT WHEN WE GET THERE THAT WE WILL BE PEACEFUL, OBEDIENT AND SUBMISSIVE TO HIS LAW. HE HAS TO KNOW THAT WE WILL CAPTURE THE WHOLE CONCEPT THAT HE AND CHRIST HAVE IN MIND; HOW PEOPLE ARE TO LIVE, AND HOW WE ALL WILL BE IN PERFECT ACCORD — IN ABSOLUTE AGREEMENT, WITH TOTAL UNITY — WITH ALL OF THEIR THINKING, WE HAVE TO LEARN THAT TODAY!

YOU AND I PRAY FOR THE KINGDOM TO COME. IF YOU ARE LIKE ME — MAYBE YOU ARE NOT QUITE AS OLD AS I AM — WE ACHE AND YEARN FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD, DON'T WE? WE TALK TO OUR GOD AND WE SAY THAT WE WANT HIS KINGDOM TO COME. GOD IS GOING TO SEE IF WE REALLY MEAN THAT. WE HAVE TO PROVE THAT TO HIM BY THE WAY WE LIVE TODAY.

MR. ARMSTRONG HAS MENTIONED THAT YOU AND I ARE LIVING IN AN 'EMBRYONIC KINGDOM OF

GOD.' WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE LIVING IN THIS KINGDOM TODAY OF WHICH GOD HAS MADE US MEMBERS IN ITS EMBRYONIC STATE. WE MUST SHOW GOD WHAT WE ARE GOING TO BE LIKE WHEN FINALLY HE CHANGES US AND MAKES US LIKE HIMSELF, SO WE WILL BE QUALIFIED TO LEAD ALL OF THE PEOPLE WHO ARE THEN GOING TO LIVE IN THE MILLENNIUM. IT WILL BE TRULY FULFILLING; A GRAND AND GLORIOUS CLIMAX TO THE PLAN THAT GOD HAS BEEN WORKING OUT.

WE FIND OURSELVES PARTICIPATING, ON THIS DAY, AT THIS VERY MOMENT, IN THAT EMBRYONIC KINGDOM THAT GOD HAS ESTABLISHED. HE HAS CALLED US INTO HIS CHURCH, HE HAS GIVEN US INFORMATION, AND HE HAS INSPIRED US WITH HIS SPIRIT TO SEE WHETHER WE WILL RESPOND TO THE LAW THAT HE HAS WRITTEN FOR US.

CONVERSION IS A PROCESS OF EDUCATION. RIGHT NOW WE ARE LEARNING AND GATHERING TOGETHER KNOWLEDGE, BUT WE TEND TO SPIRITUALIZE AWAY THE INFORMATION THAT WE GET. IT IS TOO EASY, I THINK, TO LOOK AT THE LAW OF GOD AND SPIRITUALIZE AWAY WHAT HE IS TRYING TO GET ACROSS TO US. WHEN WE LOOK AT THE LETTER OF THE LAW, WE FIND THAT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS ARE REALLY A RATHER MINIMAL EXPLANATION OF WHAT GOD WANTS FROM YOU AND ME. THE BARE RUDIMENTS ARE PRESENTED TO US IN THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, AND WE MUST UNDERSTAND SPIRITUALLY WHAT THE LAW IS SAYING AND WHAT GOD IS COMMANDING.

IF WE LOOK, THEN, AT THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, WE SEE THAT CHRIST IS TELLING PEOPLE — YOU AND ME AMONG THEM — WHAT THE VERY FEW WORDS THAT ARE WRITTEN IN THE TEN COMMANDMENTS ARE MEANT TO GET ACROSS TO US. AS AN ILLUSTRATION, YOU CAN COMPARE MATTHEW 5:21 AND EXODUS 20:13 TO SEE THAT WE SHALL NOT MURDER, THEN CHRIST EXPLAINS THAT COMMANDMENT MORE FULLY. IT GETS DOWN TO THE FACT, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT IF WE CALL A BROTHER A FOOL IN THE SPIRIT OF HATRED, WE FIND OURSELVES IN DANGER OF HELL FIRE, WHICH MAKES IT EXCRUCIATINGLY CLEAR THAT THERE IS FAR MORE TO THOSE WORDS: "THOU SHALT NOT KILL," THAN WE MIGHT SUPPOSE AT FIRST GLANCE.

WE THEN FIND OURSELVES HAVING TO STOP DOING THOSE THINGS THAT BEFORE CONVERSION WERE ACCEPTED AS "NATURAL." BUT NOW WE

UNDERSTAND THAT THERE ARE MANY MORE THINGS THAT WE OUGHT NOT DO UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THAT LAW CONCERNING MURDER, BECAUSE WE ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE MAKING JUDGMENTS OF OTHER PEOPLE, CONDEMNING THEM, OR GOSSIP ABOUT THEM. WE ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE TRYING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ANYBODY IN THE SPIRIT OF HATRED OR MURDER.

WE CAN KNOW WHAT GOD EXPECTS OF US, AND IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT WE DO! THE SABBATH PICTURES THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD, INTO WHICH WE ARE TO FINALLY EMERGE. THE SABBATH IS TO REMIND US OF THAT. SO, WHAT YOU AND I THINK ABOUT TODAY, WHAT WE DO AND WHAT WE DON'T DO, SHOULD BE MOTIVATED BY OUR EVER-EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GOD'S LAW CONCERNING THE SABBATH.

GOD INSTITUTED THE SABBATH IN GENESIS 2 AT THE CONCLUSION OF SEVEN DAYS OF WORK. THIS WAS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO US FROM THE VERY BEGINNING. GOD STOPPED HIS WORK ON THAT DAY, HE GAVE US THE EXAMPLE OF REST AND HE EXPECTS YOU AND ME TO FOLLOW THAT EXAMPLE.

WE SHOULD BE IN THE PROCESS OF GROWING IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SABBATH, GOD SAYS THAT THE SABBATH IS HOLY. THAT WORD, BY ITSELF, IS RATHER LIMITING BECAUSE OF OUR PHYSICAL NATURE AND OUR ALL TOO CARNAL NATURE!

MY SABBATH KEEPING HAS CHANGED THROUGH THE YEARS, AND I FIND IT STILL CHANGES. I FIND THERE ARE THINGS THAT I SHOULD EMPHASIZE THAT I HAD NOT BEFORE. I FIND THERE ARE THINGS THAT SHOULD STOP DOING AS MY UNDERSTANDING OF GOD INCREASES. I DO NOT KEEP THE SABBATH THE SAME WAY THAT I DID SEVEN YEARS AGO, OR EVEN A YEAR OR TWO AGO. REALLY, I WOULD EXPECT THAT MY UNDERSTANDING AND, THEREFORE, MY KEEPING OF THE SABBATH HOLY, WILL BE AN EVER-IMPROVING THING. I WOULD LIKE TO KEEP THE SABBATH PERFECTLY TODAY, BUT I AM NOT ABLE TO, I DISCOVERED THAT EVEN TODAY!

WE ARE EXPECTED TO GROW AND BECOME MORE MATURE AND REACH THE FULL STATURE OF JESUS CHRIST! WE HAD BETTER BE TRYING TO DO THAT, BECAUSE THIS IS WHAT GOD EXPECTS. YOU AND I ARE EXPECTED TO BE MOVING IN THE DIRECTION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD, THE SABBATH IS A FORETASTE OF GOD'S KINGDOM; THE SABBATH PICTURES THE WORLD TOMORROW.

WHAT YOU AND I DO ON THE SABBATH DAY IS A DEMONSTRATION OF OUR SPIRITUAL CAPACITY, OUR DEGREE OF UNDERSTANDING AND OBEDIENCE

TO GOD ALMIGHTY WHO HAS GIVEN US A LAW ABOUT KEEPING THE SABBATH. IT SHOWS HIM HOW READY WE ARE TO BE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

THE SABBATH THEN, IS A LITERAL, ACTUAL, REAL AND COMPREHENSIVE TEST GIVEN BY GOD WEEK AFTER WEEK TO EVERY CHRISTIAN THAT HE HAS CALLED INTO AWARENESS OF HIS TRUTH. IT IS A TEST IN APPLIED CHRISTIANITY. GOD GIVES THE TEST, AND IT IS NOT SOME PERFUNCTORY RITUAL IN WHICH HE ENGAGES US. I THINK THAT MANY OF US HAVE NOT SEEN, WITH CLARITY, JUST HOW SERIOUS THE SABBATH IS IN GOD'S SIGHT AND HOW SERIOUS IT OUGHT TO BE IN OUR OWN SIGHT.

IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT THAT WE UNDERSTAND THIS AND RESPOND ACCORDINGLY, BECAUSE, AS IT SAYS IN I PETER 4:17, JUDGMENT IS ON THE CHURCH NOW. YOU ARE A PART OF THE CHURCH AND WHAT YOU ARE DOING TODAY, WHAT YOU ARE DOING RIGHT NOW, WHAT YOU PLAN TO DO AFTER SERVICES, WHAT YOU ARE GOING TO DO UNTIL THE SUN GOES DOWN, FINDS YOU UNDER THE SCRUTINY OF GOD. HE HAS CALLED YOU OUT OF THE WORLD, HE HAS TAKEN ALL THE PRESSURE OFF YOU AND HE SAYS, "TAKE IT EASY TODAY. HAVE A REST. DO MY PLEASURES AND DO NOT BE CONCERNED ABOUT ANY OF YOUR EARTHLY OCCUPATIONS OR NEEDS, JUST PAY ATTENTION TO ME."

SO, BY DIVINE FIAT, IF YOU WILL, GOD HAS SAID, "YOU ARE FREE OF THE WORLD, FREE OF ANY OBSTRUCTION, ABSOLUTELY FREE TO DO MY WILL." WE HAVE ALL THE PRESSURES OF THE WORLD TAKEN OFF US IN THAT WAY, AND WE SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN WHAT GOD WISHES US TO DO. WE ARE BEING JUDGED AND TESTED IN WHAT WE DO, GOD IS WARNING EACH ONE OF US TODAY; THIS IS YOUR DAY OF SALVATION! GOD IS AWARE OF WHAT YOU DO TODAY.

YOU SEE, MUCH MORE IS EXPECTED OF US THAN JUST ACCEPTING THE SCRIPTURES AND THEIR ARGUMENTS FOR THE SEVENTH-DAY SABBATH. IT IS MORE THAN REFRAINING FROM WORK. IT IS MORE THAN JUST GOING TO CHURCH ON THE SABBATH DAY, IT IS AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING THING THAT DISPLAYS BEFORE GOD OUR TOTAL SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT. ALL THAT WE DO — EVERY ACTION, EVERY THOUGHT — CRIES OUT TO GOD THAT WE HAVE CHOSEN A WAY OF LIFE, WE DEMONSTRATE TO GOD WHAT KIND OF LIFE WE HAVE CHOSEN.

THEREFORE, WE SHOULD BE IN THE PROCESS OF REFINING OUR OBEDIENCE, OUR RESPECT, OUR REVERENCE, AND OUR LOVE FOR GOD. TODAY WE ARE PROVING WHETHER OR NOT WE ARE AN APT CANDIDATE FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD. WE ARE PRE-LIVING, IN THIS EMBRYONIC KINGDOM, WHAT GOD HAS IN STORE FOR ALL MANKIND.

THIS DAY PICTURES MOST GRAPHICALLY FOR GOD ALMIGHTY HOW WE ACCEPT THAT. IT WOULD SEEM TO ME THAT THE SABBATH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO PICTURE THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THEN IT SHOWS HOW EACH OF GOD'S PEOPLE FIT INTO THAT KINGDOM.

WE SHOULD ASK OURSELVES, "WHAT HAVE I DONE, WHAT AM DOING, AND WHAT WILL I DO TODAY THAT GOD WILL NOT ALLOW IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD?" THEN WE SHOULD CHANGE IF WE ARE IN VARIANCE IN ANY WAY.

IN MATTHEW 22:37 IT SAYS, "... THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND." GOD HAS SET UP THE TEST — THE SABBATH — TO SEE IF WE LOVE HIM WITH ALL OF OUR HEART, WITH ALL OF OUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL OF OUR MIND. THIS IS NOT JUST TO SEE IF WE WILL STAY AWAY FROM WORK AND GO TO CHURCH INSTEAD. THE SABBATH IS DESIGNED TO SEE IF WE WILL RESPOND TO THE FULL INTENT OF GOD'S SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTION. EVERY WEEK OF YOUR CONVERTED LIFE YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN TIME OFF FROM THE WORLD IN ORDER TO SEE WHAT KIND OF PROGRESS YOU ARE MAKING IN THAT WAY.

IN PSALMS 1:1-2 WE FIND THAT DAVID SAID, "BLESSED IS THE MAN THAT WALKETH NOT IN THE COUNSEL OF THE UNGODLY, NOR STANDETH IN THE WAY OF SINNERS, NOR SITTETH IN THE SEAT OF THE SCORNFUL. BUT HIS DELIGHT IS IN THE LAW OF THE LORD; AND IN HIS LAW DOETH HE MEDITATE DAY AND NIGHT." NOW, THE RELIGION INTO WHICH YOU AND I HAVE BEEN CALLED IS A THINKING RELIGION, WE HAVE TO HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST, GOD HAS BUILT BRAINS AND A SPIRIT IN MAN, AND HE PUT HIS HOLY SPIRIT INTO OUR MINDS SO WE CAN THINK PROPERLY. DAVID WAS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THAT; HE WAS THINKING MIGHTILY ABOUT HOW HE WAS GOING TO LIVE HIS LIFE. HOW YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE IS YOUR RELIGION, YOUR RELIGION SHOULD BE GOD'S WAY; ACCORDING TO HIS COMMAND AND INSTRUCTION.

HE SAYS THAT YOU AND I SHOULD MEDITATE ON THE LAW OF GOD. WE SHOULD OPEN UP THE PAGES OF THE BIBLE, STUDY IT AND PONDER WHAT GOD IS TRYING TO GET ACROSS TO US. WE SHOULD COME TO A MORE PERFECT UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT GOD IS DOING, AS DAVID DID. THAT SHOULD BE A PART OF OUR CHRISTIAN LIVING. WE ARE SUPPOSED TO TAKE THE MIND THAT GOD HAS GIVEN US AND THINK ABOUT WHAT GOD WANTS US TO DO, AND THEN GOVERN OUR ACTIONS ACCORDINGLY.

WE ARE SUPPOSED TO FIND OUT WHAT GOD'S LAW HAS BEEN SAYING THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES. WE SHOULD LEAVE THE WORLD (PARTICULARLY ON THE SABBATH) TOTALLY BEHIND. THE

WORLD SHOULD HAVE NO LURE FOR US ON THE SABBATH. IN THE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS OF THE SABBATH, GOD HAS GIVEN US A GIFT OF TIME TO PROVE US AND TO TEST US, TO SEE WHAT WE ARE MADE OF. WE HAVE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS TO PROVE TO OUR GOD THAT WE LOVE HIM AND THAT WE WILL PASS THE TEST THAT HE GIVES TO US.

WE HAVE BEEN CALLED OUT SO THAT WE CAN BE COMPLETELY SEPARATE AND HOLY. IT SAYS IN I PETER 1:15, "BUT AS HE WHICH HATH CALLED YOU IS HOLY, SO BE [BECOME] YE HOLY IN ALL MANNER OF CONVERSATION [CONDUCT]." IT WAS WRITTEN A LONG TIME AGO THAT GOD'S PEOPLE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE HOLY, BECAUSE HE IS HOLY, YOU AND I HAVE TO PROVE THAT TO GOD.

WHEN ISRAEL WAS OUT IN THE WILDERNESS THEY THOUGHT THEY DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT, SO GOD SENT THEM MANNA. IN EXODUS 16:4 GOD SAID TO MOSES, "I WILL RAIN BREAD FROM HEAVEN FOR YOU; AND THE PEOPLE SHALL GO OUT AND GATHER A CERTAIN RATE [PORTION] EVERY DAY, THAT I MAY PROVE THEM. WHETHER THEY WILL WALK IN MY LAW, OR NO." TO ME THOSE WORDS SAY THAT GOD WANTED TO SEE FAR MORE THAN JUST WHETHER OR NOT THOSE PEOPLE WOULD PICK UP THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF MANNA AT THE RIGHT TIME AND DO WITH IT WHAT THEY OUGHT TO. YOU SEE, FROM THAT GOD WAS PROVIDING A TEST AND HE WANTED TO KNOW IF THEY WOULD WALK IN HIS LAW OR NOT. SO, EVEN IN THIS BEGINNING OF THE SABBATH, AS FAR AS ANCIENT ISRAEL WAS CONCERNED, GOD WAS TESTING THEM. DAVID, AMONG OTHERS, MEDITATED ON THIS EVENT TO SEE HOW HE SHOULD LIVE HIS LIFE.

WE READ IN VERSE 6, "AND MOSES AND AARON SAID UNTO ALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, AT EVEN, THEN YE SHALL KNOW THAT THE LORD HATH BROUGHT YOU OUT FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT." GOD WAS GOING TO DEMONSTRATE THIS BY THE DELIVERY OF MANNA, THEY WERE GOING TO PERCEIVE WITH ALL CLARITY THAT HE WAS THE GOD OF CREATION, THE GOD OF DELIVERANCE, THE GOD WHO BROUGHT THEM OUT OF SLAVERY, THE GOD THAT TOOK THE PAIN OUT OF THEIR LIVES AND SET THEM FREE.

SO, WE SEE THAT GOD HAS SET YOU AND ME FREE HE HAS SEPARATED US AS HE DID THEM; SANCTIFIED US AS HE SANTIFIED THEM; CALLED US OUT OF THE WORLD AS HE CALLED THEM OUT OF EGYPT; GIVEN US REST FROM THE WORLD AND FROM ITS SIN, IF WE WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT. THE ISRAELITES HAD A DIFFICULT TIME, THEREFORE, IT WILL NOT BE TOO SURPRISING IF WE HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME IN ACCOMPLISHING WHAT GOD WANTS ALSO.

IN HEBREWS 3:11, WE FIND THAT GOD SWORE THAT HE WOULD NOT LET THOSE PEOPLE ENTER INTO HIS REST BECAUSE THEY DID NOT BELIEVE HIM. THE SAME THING APPLIES TO YOU AND ME IF WE DO NOT BELIEVE GOD. THEY DECIDED THAT THEY COULD DO IT THEIR OWN WAY, WHICH GETS BACK TO THE SAME OLD STORY THAT EVE BEGAN BY EATING OF THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL. EVE THOUGHT SHE COULD MAKE HER OWN DECISION ABOUT WHAT SHE OUGHT TO DO TO MAKE HERSELF HAPPY. SO DID THESE PEOPLE, AND IT HAS BEEN A CONTINUAL PROBLEM DOWN THROUGH THE AGES, EVEN TODAY.

IN HEBREWS 4:1 WE FIND, "LET US THEREFORE FEAR, LEST, A PROMISE BEING LEFT US [THIS IS TALKING TO YOU AND ME] OF ENTERING INTO HIS REST, ANY OF YOU SHOULD SEEM TO COME SHORT OF IT." WE CAN MESS UP AND MISS OUT! WE NEED TO BE AWARE OF THAT, WE HAVE THE ILLUSTRATION OF WHAT HAPPENED TO THOSE OLD TESTAMENT PEOPLE TO GIVE ADEQUATE DEMONSTRATION OF THAT.

HE GOES ON TALKING ABOUT FAITH, AND IN THE EIGHTH VERSE IT SAYS, "FOR IF JESUS [JOSHUA] HAD GIVEN THEM REST [IF JOSHUA HAD TAKEN THEM INTO THE PROMISED LAND AND THAT WAS ALL THE REST THAT THEY WERE TO EXPECT], THEN WOULD HE NOT AFTERWARD HAVE SPOKEN OF ANOTHER DAY." TODAY IS YOUR DAY IN WHICH YOU MUST GIVE AN ANSWER.

VERSE 9-11, "THERE REMAINETH THEREFORE A REST [A KEEPING OF THE SABBATH] TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD [SO IT IS TREMENDOUSLY IMPORTANT THAT WE CAPTURE WHAT IT IS THAT GOD IS EXPECTING OF YOU AND ME]. FOR HE THAT IS ENTERED INTO HIS REST, HE HATH ALSO CEASED FROM HIS OWN WORKS, AS GOD DID FROM HIS [GOD GAVE US THE EXAMPLE; HE SHOWED US WHAT TO DO]. LET US LABOR [LET US BE DILIGENT] THEREFORE TO ENTER INTO THAT REST, LEST ANY MAN [THAT MAY BE YOU OR ME] FALL AFTER THE SAME EXAMPLE OF UNBELIEF." WE HAVE TO DO IT BETTER THAN THOSE PEOPLE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

VERSE 12, "FOR THE WORD OF GOD [UPON WHICH YOU AND ARE SUPPOSED TO BE MEDITATING AND PONDERING, THINKING ABOUT AND FINDING THE VERY ESSENCE OF THE CONCEPT THAT IS DISPLAYED IN IT] IS QUICK, AND POWERFUL, AND SHARPER THAN ANY TWO-EDGED SWORD, PIERCING EVEN TO THE DIVIDING ASUNDER OF SOUL AND SPIRIT, AND OF THE JOINTS AND MARROW, AND IS A DISCERNER OF THE THOUGHTS AND THE INTENTS OF THE HEART," THE WORD OF GOD DISPLAYS — AS WE PUT OURSELVES UP AGAINST IT — JUST WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE ARE, WHAT WE THINK, WHAT KIND OF CHARACTER WE HAVE, AND WHAT KIND OF MINDS WE HAVE.

VERSE 13, "NEITHER IS THERE ANY CREATURE THAT IS NOT MANIFEST IN HIS SIGHT: BUT ALL THINGS ARE NAKED AND OPENED UNTO THE EYES OF HIM WITH WHOM WE HAVE TO DO," EVERYTHING THAT WE DO — ESPECIALLY ON THE SABBATH — IN THAT TWENTY-FOUR HOUR PERIOD OF TESTING IS EXPOSED TO GOD. HE IS MAKING THE JUDGMENT ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE. YOU HAVE TO BE AWARE OF THAT, YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS GOING ON.

HE TAKES HIS PEOPLE INTO THE LIBERTY OF HIS KINGDOM WITH ITS LAWS AND DIRECTIONS. HE ALSO TAKES HIS PEOPLE INTO HIS GOVERNMENT AND FAMILY BECAUSE HIS PEOPLE HAVE CONTRACTED TO DO HIS WILL, TO LIVE HIS WAY, AND TO BE HIS PEOPLE, THIS DAY — THE SABBATH — IS A TIME WHEN THE TEST IS GIVEN TO EVERY CHRISTIAN ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

TODAY ALL OF OUR THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS ARE REVIEWED AND EVALUATED BY GOD. WE ARE FREE FROM ALL THE ENCUMBERMENTS OF THE WORLD FOR THIS PERIOD OF TIME. GOD IS GOING TO SEE HOW WE ARE GOING TO DEAL WITH THE TIME THAT HE HAS GIVEN US, THE LAW THAT HE HAS GIVEN US, AND THE FUTURE THAT HE IS GIVING US. WE ARE FREE FROM THE WORLD TO SERVE GOD IN EVERY LAST NUANCE IN OUR LIVES TODAY.

IN HEBREWS 3:11 GOD SAID, "SO I SWARE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER IN MY REST [TALKING ABOUT ANCIENT ISRAEL, ESTABLISHING A PRINCIPLE THAT IS JUST AS APPLICABLE TO YOU AND ME AS IT WAS TO THEM], TAKE HEED, BRETHREN, LEST THERE BE IN ANY OF YOU [NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANS] AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF, IN DEPARTING FROM THE LIVING GOD." WILL YOU DO ANYTHING THAT WILL CUT YOU OFF FROM GOD? IF YOU SIN YOU ARE IN THE PROCESS OF CUTTING YOURSELF OFF FROM HIM.

VERSE 13, "BUT EXHORT ONE ANOTHER DAILY, WHILE IT IS CALLED TODAY; LEST ANY OF YOU BE HARDENED THROUGH THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN. FOR WE ARE MADE PARTAKERS OF CHRIST, IF WE HOLD THE BEGINNING OF OUR CONFIDENCE STEADFAST UNTO THE END." WE HAVE TO GO ALL THE WAY.

NOW, WE COULD SHOW GOD THE SAME KIND OF DISOBEDIENCE THAT ANCIENT ISRAEL DID, BUT HE IS EXPECTING OBEDIENCE FROM US. THE SABBATH TEST IS SUPPOSED TO BRING TO OUR ATTENTION WHAT WE ARE DOING WRONG AND WHAT WE ARE DOING RIGHT, WE NEED TO SEARCH FOR THE BEST POSSIBLE WAY TO APPLY, USE AND PRACTICE THE WHOLE LAW OF GOD IN ALL OF ITS SPIRITUAL FULLNESS.

IN PSALM 111:10 IT SAYS, "THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM: A GOOD UNDERSTANDING HAVE ALL THEY THAT DO HIS COMMANDMENTS: HIS PRAISE ENDURETH FOR EVER."

SO, WE LEARN BY DOING WHAT GOD SAYS. WE SHOULD BE CONTINUALLY IMPROVING AS WE THINK ABOUT HOW TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE SPIRITUAL LAW OF GOD. OUR FAILURES AND SHORTCOMINGS SHOULD, IF NOT STOP US, SERVE AS AN INSPIRATION TO CHANGE, REPENT, BE DIFFERENT, JUST BE WHAT GOD EXPECTS US TO BE.

EZEKIEL 18:31 SAYS, "CAST AWAY FROM YOU ALL YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS, WHEREBY YE HAVE TRANSGRESSED; AND MAKE YOU A NEW HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT: FOR WHY WILL YE DIE, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL? FOR I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THE DEATH OF HIM THAT DIETH, SAITH THE LORD GOD, WHEREFORE TURN [REPENT] YOURSELVES, AND LIVE YE.

IN EZEKIEL 20:2 IT SAYS, "THEN CAME THE WORD OF THE LORD UNTO ME, SAYING, SON OF MAN, SPEAK UNTO THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL, AND SAY UNTO THEM, THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD; ARE YE COME TO INQUIRE OF ME? AS I LIVE, SAITH THE LORD GOD, I WILL NOT BE INQUIRED OF BY YOU [BECAUSE THESE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN BREAKING HIS LAWS, THEY DID NOT REALLY HAVE AN ASSOCIATION WITH HIM, BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT DOING WHAT HE SAID]. WILT THOU JUDGE THEM, SON OF MAN, WILT THOU JUDGE THEM? CAUSE THEM TO KNOW THE ABOMINATIONS OF THEIR FATHERS: AND SAY UNTO THEM, THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD; IN THE DAY WHEN I CHOSE ISRAEL, AND LIFTED UP MINE HAND UNTO THE SEED OF THE HOUSE OF JACOB, AND MADE MYSELF KNOWN UNTO THEM IN THE LAND OF EGYPT, WHEN I LIFTED UP MINE HAND UNTO THEM, SAYING, I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD LAND YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO DO AS I SAY] THESE PEOPLE SAID THAT THEY WOULD DO IT.

WHEN WE WERE BAPTIZED, YOU AND I HAVE SAID, "I WILL APPRECIATE WHAT GOD IS DOING FOR ME. I AM IN RECEIPT OF GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT SO I CAN UNDERSTAND, AND I MUST GROW AND DEVELOP." WE SAID WE WOULD AND GOD HAS GIVEN US THE WHEREWITHAL WITH WHICH TO ACCOMPLISH IT.

VERSES 6-9, "IN THE DAY THAT I LIFTED UP MINE HAND UNTO THEM, TO BRING THEM FORTH OF THE LAND OF EGYPT INTO A LAND THAT I HAD ESPIED [PREPARED] FOR THEM, FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY [SYMBOLIC OF WHERE YOU AND I ARE GOING — THE KINGDOM OF GOD], WHICH IS THE GLORY OF ALL LANDS: THEN SAID I UNTO THEM, CAST YE AWAY EVERY MAN THE ABOMINATIONS OF HIS EYES, AND DEFILE NOT YOURSELVES WITH THE IDOLS OF EGYPT: I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD. BUT THEY REBELLED AGAINST ME, AND WOULD NOT

HEARKEN UNTO ME: THEY DID NOT EVERY MAN CAST AWAY THE ABOMINATIONS OF THEIR EYES, NEITHER DID THEY FORSAKE THE IDOLS OF EGYPT: THEN I SAID, I WILL POUR OUT MY FURY UPON THEM, TO ACCOMPLISH MY ANGER AGAINST THEM IN THE MIDST OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, BUT I WROUGHT FOR MY NAME'S SAKE, THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE POLLUTED BEFORE THE HEATHEN, AMONG WHOM THEY WERE, IN WHOSE SIGHT I MADE MYSELF KNOWN UNTO THEM, IN BRINGING THEM FORTH OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT."

WE HAVE BEEN CUT FREE FROM THE WORLD BY ALMIGHTY GOD, WHO GRANTED HIS SPIRIT, HIS MIND, AND HIS POWER TO ENABLE US TO KEEP HIS LAWS AND HIS SABBATH. WHEN WE OBEY, WE SHOW THAT WE REALLY WANT TO BE IN HIS FAMILY.

VERSE 10, "WHEREFORE I CAUSED THEM TO GO FORTH OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, AND BROUGHT THEM INTO THE WILDERNESS. AND I GAVE THEM MY STATUTES, AND SHOWED THEM MY JUDGMENTS, WHICH IF A MAN DO, HE SHALL EVEN LIVE IN THEM. MOREOVER ALSO I GAVE THEM MY SABBATHS, TO BE A SIGN BETWEEN ME AND THEM...." THE SABBATH IS NOT ONLY A TEST, BUT HERE WE HAVE THE BANNER UNFURLED, WHICH WE CAN CARRY, TO SHOW ALL THOSE ABOUT US THAT WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD; WE ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD. WE ARE THAT PEOPLE INTENT UPON BECOMING RULERS IN THE WORLD TOMORROW FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL HUMANITY. WE ARE SUPPOSED TO SHOW THAT, AS WE MOVE THROUGH OUR LIVES, AND MORE PARTICULARLY THROUGH OUR LIFE IN THESE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS OF THE SABBATH.

VERSE 13, "BUT THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL REBELLED AGAINST ME IN THE WILDERNESS [THEY WOULD NOT DO WHAT GOD SAID; THEY WANTED TO GO THEIR OWN WAY]; THEY WALKED NOT IN MY STATUTES, AND THEY DESPISED MY JUDGMENTS ... [THE LATTER PART OF VERSE 16] BUT POLLUTED MY SABBATHS: FOR THEIR HEART WENT AFTER THEIR IDOLS." GOD WAS OUT THERE IN THE WILDERNESS WITH THOSE PEOPLE, TALKING WITH THEM AND LEADING THEM WITH THE PILLAR OF SMOKE AND FIRE, GIVING THEM INSTRUCTION VERY DIRECTLY THROUGH MOSES SO THAT THEY WOULD KNOW WHAT TO DO. BUT THESE PEOPLE WERE POLLUTING THE SABBATHS. AS THEY TREKED ACROSS THE WILDERNESS, THEY DIED AND THEIR BONES WERE DRIED IN THE SINAI PENINSULA. BECAUSE THEY WOULD NOT DO WHAT GOD WANTED THEM TO DO, THEY DID NOT GET INTO THE PROMISED LAND.

BACK IN VERSE 13 WE READ, "...THEY WALKED NOT IN MY STATUTES, AND THEY DESPISED MY JUDGMENTS, WHICH IF A MAN DO, HE SHALL EVEN LIVE IN THEM; AND MY SABBATHS THEY GREATLY POLLUTED: THEN I SAID, I WOULD POUR

OUT MY FURY UPON THEM IN THE WILDERNESS, TO CONSUME THEM," EVERY SEVENTH DAY GOD PERFORMED MIRACLES TO SHOW THEM WHEN TO CAMP, TO REST, TO CEASE FROM THEIR ORDINARY OCCUPATIONS AND PLEASURES, AND TURN THEIR MINDS TOTALLY TO HIM. WE ARE SUPPOSED TO KEEP THE SABBATH HOLY, WITH EVERY FIBER OF OUR BEING AND WITH EVERY PIECE OF OUR SPIRITUAL MINDS, GOD EXPECTS THAT OF US. WE HAVE GREATER OPPORTUNITY THAN ANCIENT ISRAEL IN THAT WE HAVE THE SPIRIT OF GOD WITH WHICH TO THINK LIKE HIM.

VERSE 18, "BUT I SAID UNTO THEIR CHILDREN IN THE WILDERNESS, WALK YE NOT IN THE STATUTES OF YOUR FATHERS, NEITHER OBSERVE THEIR JUDGMENTS, NOR DEFILE YOURSELVES WITH THEIR IDOLS: I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD; WALK IN MY STATUTES, AND KEEP MY JUDGMENTS, AND DO THEM; AND HALLOW MY SABBATHS; AND THEY SHALL BE A SIGN BETWEEN ME AND YOU, THAT YE MAY KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD GOD. NOTWITHSTANDING, THE CHILDREN OF ISRAELI REBELLED AGAINST ME: THEY WALKED NOT IN MY STATUTES, NEITHER KEPT MY JUDGMENTS TO DO THEM, WHICH IF A MAN DO, HE SHALL EVEN LIVE IN THEM; THEY POLLUTED MY SABBATHS: THEN I SAID, I WOULD POUR OUT MY FURY UPON THEM, TO ACCOMPLISH MY ANGER AGAINST THEM IN THE WILDERNESS."

WE LIVE IN AN EMBRYONIC KINGDOM, BUT WE ARE NOT IN THE KINGDOM YET. THE FURY OF GOD IS GOING TO BE Poured OUT UPON A PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN TOLD ABOUT THE TRUTH, WHO KNOW ABOUT THE SABBATH, AND YET WILL NOT OBSERVE IT AS GOD WISHES THEM TO.

VERSE 24, "BECAUSE THEY HAD NOT EXECUTED MY JUDGMENTS, BUT HAD DESPISED MY STATUTES, AND HAD POLLUTED MY SABBATHS, AND THEIR EYES WERE AFTER THEIR FATHERS' IDOLS." THEY DID NOT PUT THE INSTRUCTION OF GOD TO USE IN THAT DAY, EVEN WHEN THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE TO DISTRACT THEM.

GOD SAYS IN I CORINTHIANS 10 THAT THOSE PEOPLE LEFT YOU AND ME AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO DO. NO TWO PEOPLE WILL KEEP THE SABBATH IN EXACTLY THE SAME WAY. WE EACH RESPOND OUT OF THE LEVEL OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT THAT WE HAVE; OUT OF THE INFORMATION THAT HAS COME INTO OUR MIND AND OUT OF THE DEGREE OF STUDY AND THE CLARITY THAT HAS BEEN MADE, WE RESPOND TO THE SABBATH AND THE INSTRUCTION OF GOD ACCORDING TO OUR FAITH AND THE CONVICTION IN OUR MIND. WE RESPOND ALSO ACCORDING TO OUR IGNORANCE AND OUR CARNALITY IF WE INDEED HAVE NOT LEARNED WHAT WE OUGHT TO UP TO THIS MOMENT IN TIME. WE RESPOND IN OUR REBELLIOUSNESS,

AND WE TURN OUR BACK TO WHAT GOD WANTS DONE.

IT IS TOO EASY TO TURN BACK INTO THE WORLD AND DO IT THEIR WAY. IT IS TOO EASY TO REASON IN OUR VANITY, TOO EASY, TO GO BACK AND TO HAVE ANOTHER CHUNK OF FRUIT OFF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL AND TO MAKE OUR OWN DECISIONS ABOUT WHAT WE WANT TO DO. IT JUST DOESN'T MATTER TO US!

WE ARE BEING TESTED TODAY, AND GOD IS FINDING OUT ABOUT US RIGHT NOW. HE BEGAN TO LOOK AT US VERY CLOSELY AS THE SUN WENT OVER THE HORIZON, AND HE WILL CONTINUE TO LOOK AT US AS WE GO ON THROUGH THE DAY TO SEE JUST HOW WHOLEHEARTED WE ARE; WHETHER WE HAVE GIVEN OURSELVES TO HIM IN COMPLETENESS OR WHETHER WE HAVE DECIDED FOR OURSELVES HOW WE ARE GOING TO DO THINGS.

IN EXODUS 20 WE FIND THE SABBATH COMMAND STARTING IN VERSE 8. "REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY [THIS INDICATES THAT THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT PEOPLE ARE GOING TO FORGET TO KEEP THIS DAY HOLY]. SIX DAYS SHALT THOU LABOR, AND DO ALL THY WORK: BUT THE SEVENTH DAY IS THE SABBATH..." THAT IS NOT JUST A THEOLOGICAL TERM, BUT RATHER THE WORD "SABBATH" MEANS "REST." WE ARE TO REST ON THIS DAY, BECAUSE IT IS THE REST OF THE ETERNAL GOD!

CONTINUING IN VERSE 10, "...IN IT THOU SHALT NOT DO ANY WORK, THOU, NOR THY SON, NOR THY DAUGHTER, THY MANSERVANT, NOR THY MAIDSERVANT, NOR THY CATTLE, NOR THY STRANGER THAT IS WITHIN THY GATE." NOW IF IT GETS DOWN TO RESTING YOUR CATTLE, THEN IT SEEMS THAT IT MUST BE TERRIBLY IMPORTANT SO FAR AS THE MIND OF GOD IS CONCERNED.

VERSE 11, "FOR IN SIX DAYS THE LORD MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH, THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IN THEM IS, AND RESTED THE SEVENTH DAY [GOD WANTS US TO REST ALSO. HE WANTS US TO TURN FROM WHAT WE THINK WE NEED TO BE OCCUPIED WITH DURING THE OTHER SIX DAYS]: WHEREFORE THE LORD BLESSED THE SABBATH DAY, AND HALLOWED IT."

LET'S TURN TO ISAIAH 58:13. "IF THOU TURN AWAY THY FOOT FROM THE SABBATH, FROM DOING THY PLEASURE ON MY HOLY DAY IT SEEMS THAT ISAIAH IS BEING USED TO EXPLAIN TO US THAT GOD MEANT BY THE WORD "WORK" AS IT WAS TRANSLATED IN EXODUS 20. WE ARE SUPPOSED TO KEEP OUR MUDDY FEET OFF OF THE PERFECT BEAUTY THAT GOD PUT IN THE SABBATH DAY, AS HE MADE IT HOLY!

KEEPING THE SABBATH IS SUPPOSED TO BE DELIGHTFUL! YOU AND I ARE EXPECTED TO GROW IN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRUE SPIRITUAL VALUES SO THAT THE KEEPING HOLY OF THE SABBATH BECOMES A DELIGHT IN OUR MIND BECAUSE WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST. SO IT SHOULD BE A DELIGHTFUL THING TO SEE THE SUN GO DOWN ON FRIDAY EVENING. IT SHOULD BE A DELIGHTFUL THING IN WHICH WE ENGAGE OURSELVES, IT SHOULD BE DELIGHTFUL TO KEEP THE SABBATH HOLY — NOT THAT WE WILL FIND DELIGHTFUL THINGS TO DO THAT WILL SATISFY OURSELVES.

CONTINUING IN VERSE 13, "...CALL THE SABBATH A DELIGHT, THE HOLY OF THE LORD, HONORABLE; AND SHALT HONOR HIM...." WE SHOULD NOT BE GOING OUR OWN WAYS. WE HAVE BEEN CALLED OUT OF THE WORLD, AND WE HAVE HAD TO GOVERN OURSELVES SO THE WAYS OF THE WORLD DO NOT ENCROACH UPON US DURING THE SABBATH.

I REITERATE THAT GOD HAS GIVEN US COMPLETE FREEDOM FROM THE WORLD ON THE SABBATH. HE HAS TOLD YOU ON HIS AUTHORITY AND OUT OF HIS POWER, "YOU DO NOT HAVE TO PAY A BIT OF ATTENTION TO THE WORLD TODAY, YOU HAVE GOT THE WHOLE DAY TO TURN YOUR TOTAL APPROACH TO THE CREATOR GOD." WE SHOULD NOT GO OUR OWN WAYS, OR DO OUR OWN PLEASURES, OR SPEAK OUR OWN WORDS. THIS SHOWS THAT GOD IS LOOKING FOR HOLY CHARACTER IN YOU AND ME TODAY. OUR WHOLE APPROACH, OUR ENTIRE ATTENTION IS SUPPOSED TO BE DIRECTED TOWARD GOD AND HIS HOLINESS, TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT IS IN GOD, WHICH SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED IN US, THAT WE TOO MAY BE ACCOUNTED BY GOD ONE DAY AS HAVING BECOME HOLY, WE ARE PRACTICING ON THIS DAY TO BE HOLY. SO, KEEP THE DAY OF GOD HOLY!

IT WOULD SEEM FROM THOSE INSTRUCTIONS IN ISAIAH THAT WHAT WE TALK ABOUT ON THE SABBATH IS IMPORTANT. IF WHAT WE SAY IS IMPORTANT, THEN WHAT WE DO IS APT TO BE EVEN MORE IMPORTANT. IF WE ARE ABLE TO COME TO UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT THAT GOD IS GETTING ACROSS, OF REST AND TURNING FROM OUR WAYS ON THIS DAY, THEN WE BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND AND PARTICIPATE IN THE DELIGHTS OF THIS DAY.

VERSE 14, "THEN SHALT THOU DELIGHT THYSELF IN THE LORD...." YOU ARE TO DELIGHT YOURSELF ON GOD IN THIS DAY. THIS IS WHERE WE GET OUR DELIGHT, BECAUSE OUR MIND HAS CHANGED THROUGH THE HELP AND POWER OF GOD. WE THINK DIFFERENTLY, AND SO OUR DELIGHT BECOMES INTIMATELY ASSOCIATED WITH OUR CONCEPT AND UNDERSTANDING OF GOD HIMSELF.

WHEN YOU GET YOUR DELIGHT IN THAT WAY,

THEN, "...[CONTINUING IN VERSE 14] I [GOD] WILL CAUSE THEE TO RIDE UPON THE HIGH PLACES OF THE EARTH, AND FEED THEE WITH THE HERITAGE OF JACOB THY FATHER: FOR THE MOUTH OF THE LORD HATH SPOKEN IT."

THIS IS TREMENDOUSLY IMPORTANT! IT IS ETERNALLY IMPORTANT! YOU AND I, LIKE DAVID, SHOULD MEDITATE ON THIS. WE SHOULD REVIEW WHAT CHRIST SAID IN MATTHEW 5 AND 6 TO SEE WHAT DIRECTION OUR MEDITATION SHOULD TAKE. WE HAVE BEEN WARNED ABOUT SEEKING OUR OWN PLEASURE AND WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL ABOUT THAT, FOR OUR DELIGHT SHOULD BE IN GOD. WE ARE SUPPOSED TO HAVE PLEASURE, BUT GOD TELLS US THE DIRECTION THE PLEASURE IS SUPPOSED TO TAKE.

LUKE 8:14 TALKS ABOUT THE SEEDS THAT HAVE FALLEN AMONG THE THORNS, "...WHICH, WHEN THEY HAVE HEARD, GO FORTH, AND ARE CHOKED WITH CARES AND RICHES AND PLEASURES OF THIS LIFE, AND BRING NO FRUIT TO PERFECTION." WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE UTTERLY CAREFUL THAT THE PLEASURES IN WHICH WE INVOLVE OURSELVES DO NOT JUST TAKE US RIGHT BACK INTO THE WORLD AND FIND US PARTICIPATING IN WHATEVER THE WORLD DOES.

IN II TIMOTHY 3:1 WE READ, "THIS KNOW ALSO, THAT IN THE LAST DAYS PERILOUS TIMES SHALL COME. FOR MEN SHALL BE LOVERS OF THEIR OWN SELVES [THAT IS A PROBLEM WITH MOST OF US. WE HAVE TO FIGHT THAT], COVETOUS, BOASTERS, PROUD, BLASPHEMERS, DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS, UNTHANKFUL, UNHOLY, WITHOUT NATURAL AFFECTION, TRUCEBREAKERS, FALSE ACCUSERS, INCONTINENT, FIERCE, DESPISERS OF THOSE THAT ARE GOOD, TRAITORS, HEADY, HIGH-MINDED, LOVERS OF PLEASURES MORE THAN LOVERS OF GOD."

WHAT HAVE YOU PLANNED FOR TODAY? IS IT TO SERVE GOD; TO REALLY GET CLOSER TO HIM; TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HIM AND WHAT HE EXPECTS OF YOU? IS THIS YOUR PLAN FOR TODAY? ARE YOU ENJOYING THE SERMON, OR ARE YOU JUST ENDURING IT? I ALREADY TOLD YOU THAT GOD IS GOING TO TEST YOU TODAY AND I AM PART OF THE TEST!

NOW, THESE PEOPLE PAUL HAS BEEN TALKING ABOUT HAVE A FORM OF GODLINESS; THEY ARE RELIGIOUS, IT WOULD SEEM. BUT THEY DENY THE POWER OF GODLINESS. WE CANNOT AFFORD TO BE NUMBERED AMONG THAT GROUP. WE SHOULD TURN AWAY FROM THEM. THESE PEOPLE SEEM TO STUDY SOME AND KNOW THE SCRIPTURES, AT LEAST HOW THEY WOULD INTERPRET THEM, THEY HAVE THEIR SPIRITUAL KIND OF REASONING, BUT THEY FAILED THE TEST.

YOU AND I, AS SABBATH KEEPERS, SHOULD NOT JUST POINT OUR FINGERS AT SUNDAY KEEPERS. PAUL IS ADDRESSING THIS INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTION TO A MINISTER OF GOD FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CHURCH MEMBERS; HE WAS WANTING THEM TO THINK ABOUT IT.

TURN TO PSALM 119:97, "O HOW LOVE I THY LAW! IT IS MY MEDITATION ALL THE DAY [I PONDER ABOUT THIS]." THAT MEANS THAT YOU TALK TO YOURSELF ABOUT IT, CAREFULLY WEIGH THE ENTIRE MATTER SO THAT NO IMPORTANT FACT ESCAPES YOUR ATTENTION, YOU SHOULD COME TO A MORE COMPLETE SPIRITUAL AWARENESS, FOCUS ON THE QUESTION AND COME TO A DEEP UNDERSTANDING ABOUT WHAT IT IS THAT GOD IS SAYING. YOUR SPIRITUAL COMPREHENSION IMPROVES, AND YOU RECEIVE THIS FROM GOD. YOU CAN BE TOLD ABOUT IT, BUT ONLY GOD CAN GIVE IT TO ANY ONE OF US, ACCORDING TO OUR APPLICATION, OUR RESPONSE, OUR ACTION.

VERSE 98, "THOU THROUGH THY COMMANDMENTS HAST MADE ME WISER THAN MINE ENEMIES! FOR THEY ARE EVER WITH ME, I HAVE MORE UNDERSTANDING THAN ALL MY TEACHERS: FOR THY TESTIMONIES ARE MY MEDITATION. I UNDERSTAND MORE THAN THE ANCIENTS, BECAUSE I KEEP THY PRECEPTS, HAVE REFRAINED MY FEET FROM EVERY EVIL WAY, THAT I MIGHT KEEP THY WORD. I HAVE NOT DEPARTED FROM THY JUDGMENTS: FOR THOU HAST TAUGHT ME. HOW SWEET ARE THY WORDS UNTO MY TASTE! YEA, SWEETER THAN HONEY TO MY MOUTH." THE WORDS OF GOD ARE SUPPOSED TO COME ROLLING SWEETLY INTO OUR MINDS AND GIVE US GREAT DELIGHT AND PLEASURE, THROUGH GOD'S PRECEPTS WE GET UNDERSTANDING.

WE KNOW WHY WE ARE ALIVE AND WE KNOW WHERE WE ARE GOING, BECAUSE GOD HAS EXPOSED TO US HOW WE ARE TO GET THERE. SO, WE HATE EVERY FALSE WAY, BECAUSE NOW WE SEE WHAT IS GOOD AND WE RECOGNIZE THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD. WE SEE HOW GOD IS INTENT ON TEACHING US PERSONALLY ABOUT HOW TO LIVE, SO THAT WHEN WE ARE ALL ALONE, WITHOUT ANYBODY WATCHING US, GOD CAN KNOW THAT WE WILL DO HIS WILL. HE WANTS US TO RIGHTLY DIVIDE THE WORD OF TRUTH, SO WE CAN GET TO THE VERY HEART OF THE QUESTION AND APPLY THE INSTRUCTION OF GOD CORRECTLY.

IN PSALM 119:2 WE READ, "BLESSED ARE THEY THAT KEEP HIS TESTIMONIES, AND THAT SEEK HIM WITH THE WHOLE HEART, THEY ALSO DO NO INIQUITY: THEY WALK IN HIS WAYS. THOU HAST COMMANDED US TO KEEP THY PRECEPTS DILIGENTLY. O THAT MY WAYS WERE DIRECTED TO KEEP THY STATUTES! THEN SHALL I NOT BE ASHAMED, WHEN I HAVE RESPECT UNTO ALL THY COMMANDMENTS. I

WILL PRAISE THEE WITH UPRIGHTNESS OF HEART, WHEN I SHALL HAVE LEARNED THY RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS. IT WE LEARN TO KEEP, AND TRY TO BE DILIGENT IN KEEPING, THE WHOLE LAW OF GOD WITH OUR WHOLE HEART, FROM THE VERY DEPTHS OF OUR BEING, FROM THE VERY ROOTS OF OUR TOES. WE STRIVE TO KEEP THAT LAW AND ITS SPIRITUAL INTENTIONS, WE CAPTURE IN EVER-INCREASING BRILLIANCE THE CONCEPTS OF A MARVELOUS GOD, WE SEE THE PRINCIPLES THAT HE HAS EXPOSED TO US, AND WE RESDOND.

WE SHOULDN'T NEED A WHOLE LIST OF DO'S AND DON'TS ABOUT KEEPING THE SABBATH, BUT THAT IS WHAT WE OFTEN WANT. THERE ARE DO'S AND DON'TS, BUT WE HAVE BEEN CALLED BY GOD, AND WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN HIS WORD, HIS SPIRIT, AND WE HAVE A MIND THAT CAN THINK LIKE CHRIST. WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE ABLE TO KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT AND REJECT EVIL.

WE SHOULD BE INSPIRED BY THE FACT THAT GOD IS WILLING TO PUT IT ALL AT OUR DISPOSAL SO WE CAN FIND OUR WAY. WE WILL NEED HELP, BUT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO HAVE THE PURE AND THE POWERFUL MIND OF CHRIST WITH WHICH TO LIVE OUR LIVES. WE ARE TO LIVE OUR LIVES BY EVERY WORD OF GOD. WE ARE TO COME TO UNDERSTAND THAT WE CANNOT LIVE LASCIVIOUSLY, FOR WE MUST ADHERE TO EVERY WORD OF GOD. WE ARE LEARNING SPIRITUAL COMPREHENSION AND UNDERSTANDING. WE ARE NOT TO INSIST ON HAVING OUR PERSONAL LIBERTIES, THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH BOOKS THAT COULD BE WRITTEN THAT COULD COVER EVERY POSSIBILITY THAT EXISTS IN THE SPIRITUAL MAGNIFICATION OF THE LAW, SO, WE MUST COME TO THE POINT THAT WE USE THE MIND AND SPIRIT OF GOD ALMIGHTY.

EZEKIEL 20:11 SAYS, "AND I GAVE THEM MY STATUTES, AND SHOWED THEM MY JUDGMENTS, WHICH IF A MAN DO, HE SHALL EVEN LIVE IN THEM, MOREOVER ALSO I GAVE THEM MY SABBATHS, TO BE A SIGN BETWEEN ME AND THEM, THAT THEY MIGHT KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD..." GOD HAS, IN HIS HANDS, YOUR TOTAL FUTURE AND ETERNITY. YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO KNOW HIM, AND PROVE WHETHER YOU DO OR NOT BY THE WAY YOU LIVE DURING THESE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS. YOU ARE LIVING, RIGHT NOW, IN THE "EMBRYONIC KINGDOM OF GOD" BEFORE THE ETERNAL GOD AND HE IS WAITING FOR US TO PASS THE TEST.

END