

The Commandments of Men

Mark Mickelson

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My college Bible, a wide-margin, King James version, has what we used to call “inspired margins”, and we would write notes on the sides. We called those inspired margins because they were the comments from a sermon or Bible study or even from notes taken in class. One of the sets of notes I have in that college Bible came from two Bible studies back in Pasadena at the time, on the book of Ezekiel, chapter 38. The subject was Gog and Magog, and the first speaker got up at that first study—he was an evangelist because we had ranks in the ministry back then, so he was one of our leading ministry, and actually a wonderful man and a dear friend—he got up and he said the events portrayed in Ezekiel 28 were dual. We’re talking about the battle of Gog and Magog and the war coming down into the land of Israel. He said they would take place both at the beginning of the Millennium and also at the end.

A week later we had another Bible study on Ezekiel 38 by another evangelist, except it was a little more forcefully given, because he was correcting what it was the other evangelist had told us the week before. I had the notes from both in my Bible so at some point they’re indelible, they’re going to stay. Obviously, one or both of the men was simply stating his own private opinion. They could not both be right, and disagree, and be explaining from the scripture.

Look at 2 Peter 1; I want to start here in terms of just a general reference. Starting in verse 16, Peter is writing of their manner, how they taught, and what their focus was:

2 Peter 1:16 *For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.*

17) *For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory [the excellent glory would not be a reference an angel, it is a reference to God]: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*

18) *And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.*

19) *And so we have the prophetic word confirmed [from God Himself: this is My Son], which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;*

20) *knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,*

21) *for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (NKJV)*

Peter said this isn't a matter of man's opinion or one opinion versus another opinion, this is a matter of the inspiration that comes from God. The title of my sermon today:

The Commandments of Men

I want to address some of the issues into which, quite frankly, the Church of God has wandered when speaking their own words, doing their own things, making their own explanations, and we do need to get back to what is it that the Bible actually says.

Critical explanation or interpretation of a text is called exegesis. I've always disliked that term because we don't use that; you don't write two more exegesis on your shopping list when you go to the store—it's a word that we don't commonly use. Let's just say for the sake of argument, a critical explanation or interpretation of a text is exegesis, so a critical explanation or interpretation of a scripture is biblical exegesis. There's a book, Exegetical Fallacies, by D.A. Carson, that was recommended to me by a friend in the ministry a few years ago, and I was looking at the introduction and how carefully worded this was, and how meaningful the comment is here. He writes:

Careful handling of the Bible will enable us to "hear" it a little better. It is all too easy to read the traditional interpretations we have received from others into the text of scripture. Then we may unwittingly transfer the authority of scripture to our traditional interpretations and invest them with a false, even an idolatrous, degree of certainty. Because traditions are reshaped as they are passed on, after a while we may drift far from God's word while still insisting all our theological opinions are "biblical" and therefore true.

It's like telling the story around the table and the story changes; well, traditions change. At some point in time, your biblical opinion is so far from the biblical record and you have no knowledge. The quotes continues—

If when we are in such a state we study the Bible uncritically, more than likely it will simply reinforce our errors. If the Bible is to accomplish its work of continual reformation [as compared to being "written in stone" by our understanding] —reformation of our lives and our doctrine—then we must do all we can to listen to it afresh and to utilize the best resources at our disposal.

I thought that was very well written; I certainly have to appreciate and agree with what was stated there.

I want to go back to how scripture is portrayed to us, in this case, 2 Timothy, chapter 2. We have a responsibility to look at scripture in the way God gives it, and not take off and make it our own words and our own interpretation. 2 Timothy 2:15 starts out, and it's a very short passage that I want to address:

2 Timothy 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God [Paul writing to Timothy], a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

16) *But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.* (NKJV)

We are to rightly divide the word of truth. I tried to think of a way to explain that. Rightly dividing is only one word in the Greek and it simply means “to cut straight”. In the last year we’ve been in the process of remodeling a bathroom in our house, and we put down linoleum on the floor. I was nervous because I am not skilled at this kind of thing, so I have to go watch the Internet and then check somebody else’s video to see if they agree with the first video, and then try to go do it and not make a mistake. So my wife offers to make a template, and she takes this cardboard and makes a template of the bathroom floor where the linoleum is going to go—there you go, tape it all together, pull it up, lay the linoleum out, lay the template down—and then she taped around the edge of the template so that I would know where to cut. I said, I can’t cut on that side, I have to cut on the other side, so then she had to tape next to the tape so I could cut this straight, and I just literally cut right down the edge and laid it in there, and it was perfect. You know what, that’s kind of how it is. You are to cut straight in scripture, which means not to go off and do your own thing, and do freelance, and then add something to it—no, there is an actual answer.

I think one of the biggest mistakes we have made historically is if the Bible says something like *prepare the way of the LORD*, we interpret that without looking to see where it came from. In this case it came from the Old Testament. The word *LORD* is Yahweh—God the Father—and *the way* is a highway and it’s right there, in your Bible. Here’s where the reference comes from, go see what it says. It would be so simple to just go back and confirm what the Old Testament says, and brethren, we need to be willing to do that. We need to rightly divide the word of truth. To use the Bible as “here a little, there a little,” honestly is the polar opposite of seeking understanding. It is how deception is maintained. There is a difference between being uninformed and being unwilling to change. I think when we are uninformed, God shows mercy, but intransigence is different; it involves self-will and our accountability is different in that respect.

Go to John 11. I want to bring out a reference to the Pharisees and what their approach was, what their concerns were. John 11 is the death and resurrection of Lazarus. So literally, if you have someone you know, and he dies and he’s dead for a while, and he is resurrected back to life, wouldn’t that be something you would want to at least consider? Maybe something important here just took place? John 11, that’s the background, go down to verse 45. Lazarus is resurrected, Christ said, let him loose, take the bandages off, let him go.

John 11:45 *Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.* (NKJV)

What a dangerous thing that is for the leadership of the Jewish community.

46) *But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did.*

47) *Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs.*

48) *If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."*

49) *And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all [you don't get it],*

50) *nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish."* (NKJV)

The concern was to maintain power and control, to maintain their place, to maintain unity. We can continue to have our potlucks and our socials and our sports activities and go on vacation together for the Feast; we don't have to mess up the structure of the country club because those are the benefits that we have accrued and we deserve that now; we want our life to be good today. They didn't want anybody messing up their wonderful things.

There's another article that was forwarded to me, sometime back—I shared it with a few friends—it's on the Internet, [Honoring the Truth-Teller](#), by Dr. Roger W. Sapp. I looked and there's a later version of this that's been expanded and it's been used in various ways, but I just want to read a couple of the paragraphs out of an earlier version of the letter, in terms of what happens when you begin to tell the truth. The answer is, you will be punished—you will be punished; it's not going to go very well. So Dr. Sapp begins:

Prior to 1993, I was an active duty army chaplain. During that season in my life, I taught leadership skills to officers and non-commissioned officers in leadership retreats as a part of my ministry. I often used management games to teach these leaders about leadership. In one management game called "Power Play", a scenario is created where these leaders were arbitrarily divided into groups by virtue of winning in a trading scenario. The winning group is then given authority over the other groups. The winning group is given a right to make the rules for future trading and to dictate these rules to the other groups. Without exception, the group that has the authority begins to make the rules to keep its authority and to benefit it as a group in trading. Given enough time the winning group will begin to clearly abuse the other groups. This group will justify its behavior on the basis of winning the earlier portion of the game and by virtue of having the authority.

Brethren, he could be writing about the history of the Church of God in our day. It is almost universal. A little further down in his article, he says,

In nearly all cases, the group in authority would become increasingly authoritarian and created more rules strictly for their own benefit and to keep “the rebels” in line. The abusive group would often say that the other officer groups were not playing fair when they rebelled, withdrew or failed to cooperate. In other words, the group with the authority became blind to their abuse and blamed the abused groups for withdrawing and not wanting to play the game anymore.

You are being disruptive if you don't play the game according to their rules. Again, a remarkable article, and there's much more to it. I don't want to read the rest for sake of time and also just for the fact that you're not supposed to read the whole article when you share it. I'll refer it to you and you can look it up; it's on the Internet.

The Church of God has at times made doctrine on a very, very faulty basis. The claim that Jesus Christ is the God of the Old Testament is probably the poster child of faulty interpretation. Jesus referred to the Temple as His Father's house, and the presence in the Father's house was the Father, and it wasn't a time share. It wasn't something where a different person moved in every couple of weeks and took up residency and then moved back out. Faulty interpretations lead to faulty doctrines; faulty doctrines in scripture are called the commandments of men. That's in Matthew 15. I think back to college, Matthew 15 was literally one of the earliest verses I committed to memory. I think I started out in Jeremiah 10, don't worship as the heathen do, and then moved on to Deuteronomy 12, and then Matthew 15, and it just kind of ran through my mind as one of the early things I tried to understand and keep in mind. Matthew 15:1.

Matthew 15:1 *Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying,*

2) *“Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.”* (NKJV)

That was a big issue, that was a tradition—a long-held, long-standing belief.

3) *He answered and said to them, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?”*

4) *For God commanded, saying, “Honor your father and your mother”; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’*

5) *But you say, “Whoever says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God’—*

6) *then he need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.*

7) *Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:*

8) *These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.*

9) *And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”* (NKJV)

Basically their philosophy was, give us your money now, but if you don't give it to us now then just give it to us when you're dead. Not just give it to us—because we're in charge—we'll run it and we'll use it, and don't worry about the family. We're your family, and, frankly, we own you and all that you have. Christ stood up and condemned that attitude because it had a doctrinal component that violated putting God first in scripture.

I think one of the most destructive and deceitful commandments of men has been that of the trinity. I think every Church of God member will look at the trinity and consider it to be one of the greatest violations of scripture that has taken place. It is a direct violation of the first and the greatest commandment, to love God, to put God first, and it's considered a mystery because it's not in the Bible and cannot be explained. It teaches that God is the one God, is composed of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. One step down from the trinity—just remove the Holy Spirit from the argument—is the binity. The binity is also a bit of a mystery because it is also not in the Bible, and it portrays the one God as including just the Father and the Son. Unfortunately, the Church of God variation of rejecting the trinity was to then adopt, in some ways, the binity itself as its teaching.

Holding onto contradictory beliefs in your mind produces cognitive dissonance—a nice, formal phrase; we'll put it next to exegesis. George Orwell, in his novel 1984, coined a number of terms; one was “double think”. Double think is accepting two mutually contradictory beliefs as correct at the same time. So when you believe—if I can give an example of double think from our own history—the one God is the Father (and that is written on page 4 of the fundamental beliefs booklet) and then you believe that the one God is the Father and the Son (and that's on page 5 of the same booklet), and you believe them both and they're mutually exclusive, then what you need is double think to make the cognitive dissonance go away. Let me just say, if that has been pointed out to you repeatedly, and you still believe it, then it's going to take extra, heavy-duty double think to keep everything in order. Those two concepts do not agree.

The question that comes up—Terry Swagerty addressed this at the Feast—is what difference does it make? I believe it makes all the difference in the world, and the question that then follows is, again, is this a matter of salvation? Is putting God first a matter of salvation? Is not putting God first a matter of salvation? I think it is. Again, all the potlucks and activities and sports contests and vacations aren't going to take the place of doing what God actually says.

The Church of God, as we know it, in my perception and history, is in spiritual decline, and to not be willing to stand up and say so is, quite frankly, negligence. It is in spiritual decline. I sat one time on the council where I served, and forgive me for being a little direct, but it is exactly what took place. I turned to the man next to me and said, do you smell that? He replied, what? I said, I'm serious, can you smell that? He said, Mark, what are you talking about? I said, that is the smell of death, and he was shocked. I said that's spiritual death and you just witnessed it. It was a particularly onerous session and I just couldn't hardly believe it myself. The Church of God, spiritually, is dying. Its members need to understand, they need to come to repentance, they need to

go back and restore again those things as they were, hopefully, the way they should have been at the beginning, and put God first.

One of the commandments of men that we were taught over the years—and I would have to say that those we were taught are things that I taught; I did, it was the best I knew and understood, and I know better now—one of the commandments of men is that God can't be in the presence of sin. This impacts a lot of the way we looked at the plan of God, and the timing of the prophetic events and various things that took place. Let's go back to Job. Satan wanted to be like the Most High, not just next to the Most High. He didn't want to replace Jesus Christ in the Old Testament; no, he wanted to replace God, because he wanted everything. If you go back to Job 1:6, it says:

Job 1:6 *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.*

7) *And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD [LORD there being Yahweh, God the Father, specifically] and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."*

8) *Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"*

9) *So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"*

10) *Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.*

11) *But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"*

12) *And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. (NKJV)*

Can God be in the presence of sin? Well, Satan himself came up right before God's throne. How can we teach one thing and believe it, and then read another thing and believe that? It takes double think, it does. You have to have one compartment that you pull out and read, and then you put it back in the shelf, and then you have another compartment, you pull that out and read it, and then you put it back on the shelf, but you can't do it at the same time. You stop and begin to ask, what does the Bible actually say?

Brethren, I believe it becomes clear. Gnosticism was a serious problem in the time of Jesus Christ and the apostles, and the premise of it, in its most basic form, is that matter is evil and God is good—matter is actually perfectly evil and God is perfectly good, so God can't actually be in context with matter. So then you have emanations that had to come out from God—each emanation was a little bit further from God and a little closer to being able to be around evil, and if you get far away enough from God then that was the demiurge, which became the creator—that's gnosticism.

The idea that God cannot be in the presence of evil is gnosticism in its current form, just like the binity is the trinity in its Church of God form. I think that should be a warning; I think that should go out to the Church of God. I think the Church of God should consider. It's worse, actually, the implications of gnosticism, in terms of the teachings of the Church. Look at John 14:19. Christ is speaking here.

John 14:19 *"A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.*

20) *At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.*

21) *He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."*

22) *Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?"*

23) *Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. (NKJV)*

If God cannot be in the presence of sin, then you are not converted and you don't have His Holy Spirit, and God does not dwell in you, because we sin. Teaching as doctrine the commandments of men is important. It does make a difference. You know what, it is a matter of salvation—whether or not we are willing to put God first.

Another element of this is whether God turned His back on Jesus when He died—another teaching of the Church of God, that Jesus actually "became sin". I'll just give a little hint: He did not become sin, He became a sin offering. The offering had to be perfect, without blemish, which would be without sin, so no—that did not take place. What did take place and the prophetic implications ... give me another day and maybe I'll be able to address that, hopefully before the Passover, in a sermon. The scriptures always agree. There are problems in transmission, there are problems in translation, and there are problems in understanding. Those are problems that are not inherent in what God has laid out for us.

The solution is to look to God and seek His ways, look to His Spirit, working in our mind, and you know what? Every time you put a piece on there that is the way God set it, then another piece is going to line up with it, and soon the pieces will match. You do not have to interpret one piece with another piece; they just have to go together and they will fit in the end. I believe, brethren, there is gain for all of us, in these ways.

One of the problems prophetically is, you have the plan of God in your mind, so you already have the story that frankly didn't come from the Church of God originally, it came from people before our time. You have the story, now the scriptures have to fit the story because if you don't fit the scriptures in, then the story doesn't work. Well, you can't change the story; it's the answer. So now you take the scriptures, in what is called proof texting, where you start stuffing the scriptures in to fit. You can do that with all good intentions and all sincerity—it's still not right. So let's say that God, seeing our

good intentions, is going to show mercy, but God, knowing our self will, is going to hold us accountable. Let's look at 2 Peter, chapter 3. This scripture has come up—I've had this discussion a number of times—and it's interesting because it has significant implications.

2 Peter 3:10 *But the day of the Lord [LORD, in the Old Testament, is Yahweh, so it's actually the day of God the Father, is the reference historically] will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. (NKJV)*

When does the Day of the Lord come as a thief in the night? All of the parables, all of the references, waiting for our Master to come, the slumbering and sleeping of the Church—the thief in the night is a reference to the return of Jesus Christ. It wasn't a thief in the night in the time of the apostles, it's not going to be a thief in the night at the end of the Millennium. It's when you're not really ready, it's when you're asleep; kind of like the Church of God would appear to me to be—asleep. So the Day of the Lord—the last portion of time as we've looked at it, maybe a year's time, the Tribulation being Satan's wrath, the Day of the Lord being God's wrath, and we've known that and taught it for many years—it comes as a thief in the night; this is talking about the end of that time period and the return of Jesus Christ to the earth, and it says in that time, the heavens pass away with a great noise, elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth and the works are burned up. There will be a huge, fiery conflagration and destruction on the earth, and maybe ten percent of the people on the earth will still remain. That's what prophecy foretells.

- 11) *Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,*
- 12) *looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?*
- 13) *Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

Those heavens and that earth are going to be destroyed and the replacement is going to be a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells—that will be the replacement. Isaiah 65 portrays that as the Millennium. Here's the problem: You're going from the end of the time of the tribulation period, in our own understanding, even historically, to a thief in the night when Christ returns, and then all of a sudden you're going to jump a thousand or more years ahead, and there's a big hole missing in the context. That is simply not the way that is to be understood.

The Day of the Lord precedes the Millennium. Some people in reference of scripture certainly do live on into the Millennium, and *burned up* here—this word in the Greek—is just used one time, but the root word means “to find”. We need to stop arguing a word in the English as the basis of what we teach, because it isn't that simple. The scriptures

match and you don't take this one and say, well, that's then what this one means. No, if you have the right meaning they fit, they will work together. The New Living Translation says, *the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment*. That's actually an accurate translation. The word means "to find"—burned up. To be found wanting. To be found needing judgment.

That judgment will take place. It is the wrath of God and it's going to be replaced with the restoration of the earth, and frankly, the restoration of God's people as well. If you make a doctrine out of "burned up" in the English and you define it as "burned up completely", then what you end up with is an understanding that doesn't fit with the rest of scripture. The scriptures do not need to be explained away, they need to be believed and understood—they fit—they fit once you put them in the right place.

If our Bible study consists mainly of listening to a sermon or reading some literature then we're not really studying the Bible after all. Sermons are good, my wife and I sat last night in front of the fire, pulled a sermon up, enjoyed and appreciated the instruction—we did. But listening to a sermon is not Bible study, it is listening to a sermon. Bible study is reading the scriptures for yourself. If all you do is to listen to someone teach you, then all you're going to be able to do is repeat what they have said. If they teach you the commandments of men, then you will not know any better for yourself. That's where this has to be something we do, we look to, we are familiar with. We need to be conversant in scripture.

I think personally that there have been various prophetic interpretations over the years, repeated again and again, that became truth; they became the faith once delivered (delivered to whom?—delivered to us). Well, that's not the definition of what the faith once delivered was. I believe some of those prophetic interpretations—quite a number of those prophetic interpretations—were extra biblical, frankly, not actually in accord with what the Bible says. Let me give you one that I want to show you that has a deep background in scripture and a very small background in interpretation in the English, and the historical English in the Church in our day: Revelation 21:1.

Revelation 21:1 *Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. (NKJV)*

I don't know how many times I've heard it said that oceans are going to go away—all the wasted space of the oceans, there's going to be no more seas, it's just going to constantly shrink down. God is going to reform the surface of the earth as He chooses, but so much of what we have interpreted as some literal event is actually a portrayal of nations and kingdoms rising and falling, and certainly there is physical disturbance taking place. But *no more sea* is not about how much water will or will not be on the earth one day, it is about Satan no longer having dominion.

I've got probably five or six verses here, and I want to show you how the Bible extensively connects with itself; you can't take, there'll be no more sea, there'll be no more death, the earth will be destroyed, and you take the Day of the Lord and you take

the way of the Lord, and all of a sudden it has its own English meaning in this little, tiny place because then it fits into the story. That's not how the Bible has been written and that's not what we should try to understand. No more sea is about Satan no longer having dominion. It is Satan who is going to be destroyed, his kingdom taken and shuttered, Babylon destroyed, beast and false prophet thrown into the lake of fire. It is his dominion that is going to be taken away. Look at Job 41—I'll go back to the book of Job. Again, I think when you go through a stack of these, all of a sudden it's like, oh, okay, well that's interesting, it was there all along—of course it is. In most things, if you see it in the New Testament, go see if it's also in the Old Testament, and if it is, it might be there a number of times. Quite frankly it would be edifying to know what the foundation of that passage would be. Job 41:1.

Job 41:1 *"Can you draw [God now contending with Job in trying to get him to understand in a much deeper way] out Leviathan with a hook, Or snare his tongue with a line which you lower? (NKJV)*

Can you go fishing and haul Leviathan in on your line?—not a chance. I made a real mistake one time—more than one time ((laughs))—but I remember I'm out in the yard, this is in my younger days, I'm strong, I'm climbing mountains and traveling around the world, and I kind of felt like I could do whatever I had to do. I was getting upset as I'm mowing the yard and thinking about what this person said, and what that person said, leaders of different groups and the way they had postured themselves as God's replacement in terms of an administrative office on this earth. I actually asked God, let me in on this, let me fight this battle. Can you imagine? Asking God to let you in so that you can fight this battle. I got devastated. I just got shuttered for about a month. Then it dawned on me, whose battle was I fighting against? Satan.

You're not fighting against this leader or that leader, this person who said this or this person who said that—no, you're fighting against Satan's program and his effort to destroy and to deceive. So you go to God and say, God, Satan's out there causing trouble, let me at him. You need to just get out of the way, you cannot, I cannot do that—I had no idea. It dawned on me, finally, I was asking God for something that was not my place and was frankly foolishness. Get out of the way, let God be in charge, give Him the glory, and if he wants to use you, fine, let Him do so. I try not to go that way these days—it wasn't much fun. Basically God is saying, Job, are you going to go fishing, are you going to haul him in? Leviathan—used as a portrayal, I believe, here, of Satan. Fishing—where is he? He's in the sea; he's in his dominion. You're going to go into his castle and raid his table? I don't think you can do that, that's not going to happen.

Job 41:7 *Can you fill his skin with harpoons, Or his head with fishing spears?*

The answer is no.

31) *He makes the deep boil like a pot; He makes the sea like a pot of ointment.*

32) *He leaves a shining wake behind him [it's like a Loch Ness monster in your imagination, and behind him is a wake of shimmering water that's been disturbed, like a shining wake]; One would think the deep had white hair.*

33) *On earth there is nothing like him, Which is made without fear.*

34) *He beholds every high thing; He is king over all the children of pride.”*

You know what?—that's pretty clear: *king over the children of pride* is not a sea monster, it's a portrayal. It portrays Leviathan as being a great reptile in the sea. There are various portrayals of that. Look at Isaiah 27; again you're going to see where the sea is part of the prophetic portrayal, and actually, I believe, it's pretty clear:

Isaiah 27:1 *In that day the LORD with His severe sword, great and strong, will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan that twisted serpent; And He will slay the reptile that is in the sea. (NKJV)*

Oops, I'm sorry—I just read a scripture that says Leviathan is going to be slain. Do you believe it? Not if you believe the commandments of men (but another day for that as well). He is the reptile that is in the sea, it is Satan being portrayed, and God is going to judge his course and he will answer. His dominion is portrayed as the sea. Isaiah 57, go forward just a little bit. Again, this one is just an analogy; by itself it probably wouldn't have a lot of weight, but in Isaiah 57:19, it still adds to the understanding of how these terms are used prophetically.

Isaiah 57:19 *“I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near,” Says the LORD, “And I will heal him.”*

20) *But the wicked are like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*

21) *“There is no peace,” Says my God, “for the wicked.” (NKJV)*

It says the wicked are kind of like the sea—all churning and boiling and disturbed. But then it portrays Satan as Leviathan in the sea, causing the disturbance, causing the boiling and causing the wake. So it actually isn't unrelated, it actually connects very clearly. Let's go then to Daniel 7. I'm trying in some cases where I have a series of scriptures, I at least put them in order so we can just turn in one direction as we go. In Daniel 7 we have four, gentile, beast kingdoms—world dominions of Satan's system. How are they portrayed? Daniel 7:1.

Daniel 7:1 *In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts.*

2) *Daniel spoke, saying, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea.*

3) *And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. (NKJV)*

First was a lion; it had eagle's wings and he watched until the wings were plucked off, and it goes on and begins to describe each one individually.

It says these four, gentile, beast kingdoms rise up out of the sea. Isn't it amazing, even by creation, the continents where the kingdoms have existed are in the sea. God created the earth that even portrays what his prophecy would include and show. It's the borders of those continents that stop those kingdoms from moving to the next one oftentimes. Regardless, they are under God's dominion in terms of His limits. But the four great beasts come up out of Satan's dominion—that's the point, that's the connection. Then let's go back to the book of Revelation—Revelation 12, in this case, and I want to start over on verse 10. I'll read through here to the end of this chapter.

Revelation 12:10 *Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.*

11) *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*

12) *Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."*

13) *Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.*

14) *But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. [So what is the serpent now portrayed as doing? He comes after the woman with his dominion and his power and authority that he still retains.]*

17) *And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Again, you could say, all by itself, it just means people, but Satan's kingdom is people. It's also dominion over people, dominion over their understanding, dominion over their actions, dominion over their physical lives. So you start to add these up, and the sea that is properly portrayed in Revelation 21 as being no more, is not a reference to all the waters going away, it's a reference to Satan's dominion that is going to be taken away—his power taken away, and Satan himself being put away. Revelation 13.

Revelation 13:1 *Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. (NKJV)*

It just goes again, and it says:

2) *Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. (NKJV)*

So he comes up out of the sea with great authority and when there will be no more sea, that authority will be taken away. So it is—it's a prophetic portrayal and you might not catch it, we might miss it if it were there by itself, but if it's there in the book of Job—Satan being there in that respect—and it's in Isaiah, and it's in Daniel, and then it's in Revelation, then the fact is, you don't need to interpret it, you just need to wait until the pieces are in line and then they will fit. Once they fit then it's obvious.

My entire experience in the Church of God has been in a corporate structure and environment. I really didn't recognize that. I have had twenty-two years in the Worldwide Church of God, I have had twenty-three years in the United Church of God, and I am by no means the one who got around here first. All of my life now I look back, and I have come to believe that the ministry in the Church of God is just too busy with corporate things. Jesus Christ didn't return in 1975—what are we going to do? Well, I guess what we'll do is just build a corporation. We'll have activities and administrators and we'll travel, and we'll have sporting events, and we'll have people and hire them to run the budgets to ask for more money, and then we'll spend more money and we'll do more things. We'll build big media and buildings and big events, and buy planes and have activities and travel around the world, and we're going to say that's what God wants us to do.

I look back now, and again, my entire experience in the Church of God has been in a corporate structure and environment as compared to being part of what I believe should have simply been the *ecclesia*. I'm not arguing that we shouldn't have any structure or order in what we do, but the corporation is not the answer to spiritual things. Family weekends, sports tournaments, youth camps, activities at the Feast—they're all pleasant, we all want them, and I suggest that they might continue. But I will say it this way, in all the years that I served through the ministry, I never directed a youth camp, I attended more challenger programs I think than any other ministry at the time, and I never directed a challenger program, and you know what?—even in Africa we ran camps, we ran a challenger program, we had the Feast, and I've never been a Feast coordinator or director, either, in any of my years. One of the members who ran the challenger program years ago came to me at one point in time because we worked together and I served under him. He said, Mark, I want you take over some of the administrative things here with the program. I said, you have my resignation effective today; he said, ok, we'll just forget that we had that little conversation. Yes, somebody has to run these things, but when you have the ministry as the administrators of the Church, who are so busy with the corporation that they don't have time, I believe, to truly look into God's word deeply, and to teach these things, that simply is not helpful. The more corporate a ministry becomes, the less ecclesiastical a church is going to be.

Acts chapter 6. Deacons were chosen to assist with many of the duties organizationally. Quite frankly, I think the deacons were the administrators, but we've

somehow mixed that up in terms of our focus and priority. I believe administration is a lesser gift, not a greater gift. We've even exalted it to the point that the highest office is an office of administration. The reference then goes on, in verse 3.

Acts 6:3 *Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;*

4) but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”
(NKJV)

I believe the ministry is to give themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. That doesn't mean they'll never organize anything, but it does mean their focus needs to be (those that are full time, because those that have their own jobs are already struggling to balance the two) to give themselves to the ministry of the word. Not to the activities of the corporation. I think those begin to compete with each other. Having corporate policies is one thing, having corporate doctrines is another. We are to worship God in spirit and in truth, not according to the commandments of men.