

# Continue On Course

Allen Hirst

Recorded on October 9, 2024

Most of us probably remember the rhetorical question we used to hear—40 years ago for some of us. The speaker would come up to the podium and ask, “Why are we here?” Or, “Why are you here?” With the loss of our pastor, Rick Ralston last month, many of us have asked ourselves the same question again. “Why am I here? What shall I do now?” I think we all know the answer. We must stay on course; we must continue forward. We must not falter in our pursuit of righteous character and doing our best to be pleasing to God. We all miss the level of service and care that Rick had for the brethren. Many of us miss the phone calls that were made to check up on us. We miss the regular consistent prayer updates and hopefully, as an organization we will be able to fill in for some of that loss.

Whenever there is loss, there will be change. If you turn to Philippians 3, Rick was known by me, and I know by others, for his concern for the brethren and his attention and compassion for the sick and the widows and those who were suffering. Also, we all knew him as a teacher, an administrator and directing the affairs of the church. He served as an example to each of us. The Apostle Paul wrote of how we should imitate the good examples and righteous actions of our teachers and leaders. The Apostle Paul speaking about himself or for himself in Philippians 3:14.

*Philippians 3:14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

*15) Therefore, let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.*

*16) Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.*

*17) Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. (NKJV)*

We do have a pattern from Rick to observe and imitate. There is always opportunity to step up and serve. Yesterday the ladies had a luncheon and they discussed how they can build communication bonds and encourage one another. God designed this life so that in loss comes opportunity. All of us as we become more mature should willingly serve. Where there is a need, there is opportunity. Every generation is required to suffer loss. This physical tent, our human body, is temporary. Suffering loss is a reality of this physical life and we are tested through loss. We suffer loss in order to be strengthened through hardship. Painful ordeals teach us that our only hope is in Almighty God. We must continue to learn and our character will be exercised. We must stay strong in our faithfulness and worship before God. Turn over to Ephesians 5. We must put our full trust in God Almighty. God Almighty is a Creator God and also the God of Jesus Christ. God is permanent and we are not. He demands that we have faith in him. He has called

us and is guiding us to develop the character and faith that will bring us to the point where he can rely on each one of us to be holy, righteous, and faithful.

**Ephesians 5:1** *Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.*

*2) And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. (NKJV)*

For most of us, the answer for, “Why am I here?” starts with this: *This is a commanded assembly ordered by Almighty God.* Our intent is to worship and obey God in all that He commands. We will look forward to God’s promises of salvation and eternal life. We look forward to serving God and being a part of His work. Turn over to John 10. Jesus was questioned by the Jews. They wanted Him to plainly state that He was the Christ. His answer was that He was doing God’s work and that those who followed Him would also be doing God’s work. We can trust God and Jesus Christ to be faithful in guiding us toward our reward of eternal life.

**John 10:25** *Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me.*

*26) But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.*

*27) My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*

*28) And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.*

*29) My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.*

*30) I and My Father are one.” (NKJV)*

We are here because God has a plan. He has chosen to reveal that plan in part through His commanded Sabbaths and His annual assemblies. They are designed to teach and guide us in understanding God and His plan. We are here because we are obeying God. We must continue on this course. God will hold each of us individually responsible for continuing the work. We are called to do a work. We must move forward in doing that work. I believe that in these end times, God revealed through Rick and others, with greater clarity, who Yehovah our Almighty God is and the unique identity of Jesus Christ. Also, through our own prayerful study individually we have been blessed with greater clarity and understanding. We have better understanding concerning the differentiation between Yehovah, the God of the Old Testament, and His servant who became Jesus, the promised Christ.

As a church we understand and teach that God is not a trinity. We also know He is not a binity or two in one. For me, understanding that God is not a family has also given me more clarity. God and Christ are separate and distinct individuals. We do not worship a family unit. The focus of our worship must be toward Yehovah, God Almighty. God has put in place, through the structure of His creation, our potential for receiving eternal life and being part of His family. Jesus Christ, an eternal being, like God the Father has always existed. He allowed Himself to become part of this physical creation and is the first person to be born into that family.

For us here, as part of the Pacific Church of God, and for a growing number of others understanding that God Almighty is known as the name Yehovah in the Old Testament, has added clarity. He is the one who spoke to Adam and Eve in the garden. He is the one who spoke to Satan in the garden and pronounced upon him a curse and foretold the ultimate results of Satan's sin and the sins of Adam and Eve. He is the one who spoke to Cain, telling him he needed to do better when offering sacrifices. He is the one who spoke to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He spoke to Moses and the children of Israel. He is the one who communicated with the prophets. He is the one who Jesus prayed to. As far as I know, Pacific Church of God is the first modern corporate church of God to officially embrace that truth. Most corporate churches of God currently embrace the doctrine that Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament.

There is an argument that is often used to support the claim that Almighty God would not speak to humans because we have sinned and He cannot be in the presence of sinners. Therefore, He had to have someone like Christ do the speaking for Him as His representative. I do not believe that the most powerful Being that has ever or that will ever exist, is so fragile, delicate, and dainty, that He cannot be in the presence of any and every possible thought or action that might ever exist. We are obligated to put our diligent efforts to discern what is true. Turn to Acts 17. I think most of us are familiar with the example of the Bereans. Acts 17 begins by describing the trouble Paul and Silas stirred up by teaching the truth in Thessalonica. Fearing for their own safety and the safety of Paul and Silas, the faithful brethren of Thessalonica, sent Paul and Silas to Berea. What happened in Berea is famous as a positive testament to the Bereans and as an example of what our approach should be to the scriptures.

**Acts 17:10** *Then the brethren [the brethren from Thessalonica] immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.*

*11) These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.*

*12) Therefore, many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. (NKJV)*

The point here is that the Bereans did not just take Paul's word or the word of Silas and Timothy, who were also with them in Berea. They listened to the teachings and then reread the scriptures themselves in order to understand what was being taught. They apparently understood it was their responsibility to discern if what was being taught was true. The Bereans were being taught from the scriptures. Paul's custom was to teach and reason from the scriptures. Notice verse 2 and 3. Notice what was Paul's custom.

*2) Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,*

*3) explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." (NKJV)*

He declared that Christ—that Jesus was the Christ. What is not recorded here or anywhere else in the scriptures, is that Jesus was the one who spoke as though He were God in the Old Testament. It is not recorded here or anywhere in the scriptures that he acted as though He was or ever will be the Almighty God. There are several scriptures in our archives given by Rick Railston and Mark Sappington and others that document the difference between the unique entities and the different roles of the one and only God Almighty and His servant, Jesus Christ.

A couple of concepts strike me from the example of the Bereans. First, they were willing to listen. They were willingly listening to new concepts of understanding that the leaders of the Jewish communities and synagogues were publicly rejecting. They were willing to listen and were open to learn true information. Second, they also knew to be leery of being deceived. God warns us about putting our trust and faith in other humans. If you turn over to Jeremiah 16. As humans, we have a natural proclivity to delude ourselves with our own thoughts and delusions. Thoughts of our own imaginations. Jeremiah 16:19 speaks of the Gentile nations coming before God in repentance, stating they didn't understand the nature of God or His identity because they trusted their ancestor's understanding concerning God.

**Jeremiah 16:19** *O LORD [Yehovah], my strength and my fortress, My refuge in the day of affliction, The Gentiles shall come to You From the ends of the earth and say, "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, Worthlessness and unprofitable things."* (NKJV)

Then God responds in verse 20.

*20) Will a man make gods for himself, Which are not gods?  
21) Therefore behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know My hand and My might; And they shall know that My name is the LORD. [Strong's #3068].* (NKJV)

Then in chapter 17, Yehovah declares how the sins of Judah are automatically committed by each generation because that is what they have been taught. Continuing in verse 1. I want to read this from the New Living Translation. Jeremiah 17:1.

**Jeremiah 17:1** *"The sin of Judah is inscribed with an iron chisel—engraved with a diamond point on their stony hearts and on the corners of their altars.  
2) Even their children go to worship at their pagan altars and Asherah poles, beneath every green tree and on every high hill.  
3) So I will hand over my holy mountain—along with all your wealth and treasures and your pagan shrines—as plunder to your enemies, for sin runs rampant in your land.  
4) The wonderful possession I have reserved for you will slip from your hands. I will tell your enemies to take you as captives to a foreign land. For my anger blazes like a fire that will burn forever."* (NLT)

Back to the New King James Version.

*5) Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD. (NKJV)*

Just like the Bereans, we cannot put our trust in what we learn from our teachers or our ancestors without first confirming that what we are taught can be confirmed and verified from the scriptures. Continuing in verse 7.

*7) Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD. (NKJV)*

We cannot trust our own emotions. For example, when I was young and learning the truth about the lies concerning Christmas, Easter, Halloween, and other traditional celebrations that I enjoyed as a youth. I loved the warmth and closeness of our family gatherings for Christmas and New Year's. I had to learn to ignore my emotions, my emotional pulls and set my mind to trust God. Continuing in verse 9.

*9) The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? (NKJV)*

The emotions of my heart had to change because continuing in verse 10, where God is speaking.

*10) I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings. (NKJV)*

Turn over to Psalms 118. It is imperative that we are here because we trust God.

**Psalm 118:1** *Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. (NKJV)*

We need to be thankful for the fact that we can trust Him. In verse 6 the author of the Psalm continues.

*6) The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?  
7) The LORD is for me among those who help me; (NKJV)*

God helps and hopefully we have others who are helpful. There should be others among us from whom we can receive help. We must be among those who are helpful to each other. We must take care not to be snares that lead others to destruction. Continuing in verse 7.

*7 continued) ... Therefore I shall see my desire on those who hate me. (NKJV)*

Even though we are among brethren, we have a duty and should be highly motivated to be helpful to each other in serving and trusting God. We must remember, continuing in verse 8.

*8) It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in man.*

*9) It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in princes. (NKJV)*

Turn to Psalm 146. We cannot look to the powerful, or to those who we think are righteous, intelligent, or well informed. We are all temporary and subject to the pulls of the flesh.

**Psalm 146:3** *Do not put your trust in princes, Nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help.*

*4) His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; In that very day his plans perish. (NKJV)*

Turn to Proverbs 28. We must clearly understand that our only hope in pleasing God is our trust in Yehovah, the God Almighty.

**Proverbs 28:26** *He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered. (NKJV)*

Let's turn over to Genesis 1. God is sorting and dividing us based upon what we do and upon the intents of our hearts. God revealed from the beginning the fact that dividing us is an important aspect of His work. God set the tone of separating and dividing from the first chapter of the Bible. The entire first chapter of the Bible describes divisions created and established by God. He planned for us humans to live out our physical existence in a realm of existence that portrays divisions for our observation and analysis.

**Genesis 1:1** *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

*2) The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

*3) Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.*

*4) And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. (NKJV)*

In the first 4 verses of Genesis, we see there are 2 distinct and opposite conditions—light or darkness. He created the 24-hour day with a light portion and a dark portion. Each normal day is divided between dark and light. God divided the light from the darkness. On the second day he differentiated between waters on the earth and waters in the atmosphere. The third day he divided the dry land from the water and established various vegetations according to specific kinds. He differentiated the light from the sun, the moon, and the stars. Each set of lights are different. He created unique birds and animals and then He created humans. In the fundamental nature of humans, he also created division. He created the human beings male and female. This is a division we

should be able to discern. We must be able to discern the reality of differences. Is something this, or is something that?

For example, is a particular light from the sun or the moon? Do we observe and properly discern an animal from its different kinds or the plants? The difference between water and land? Male or female? God gave us the ability to make observations and comprehend the differences. Proper understanding is understanding truth. Arriving at understanding truth requires discernment and judgment. The discernment and judgment expected of us goes beyond observation of the divisions in the physical elements. God expects us to understand the differences between right and wrong. He expects us to understand that circumventing truth is wrong. For example, borrowing from the famous idiom, comparing apples to oranges. Apples are not oranges. Calling an apple an orange does not make the apple an orange. What is wrong is not right.

For our observations of the divisions that God created in nature, we can also expect to gain the ability to make proper and valid moral judgments. A proper moral judgment is the ability to understand truth and choose proper behavior based on what is true. Turn to Romans 1. We will be flipping back to Genesis so you might want to put a marker in there. God expects all humans to understand fundamental truth as a normal process of observing creation. From the divisions designed into creation, we are expected to discern the fundamentals of morality. This is what the Apostle Paul meant from the first chapter of Romans when he said—verse 18.

**Romans 1:18** *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,*

*19) because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.*

*20) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,*

*21) because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

*22) Professing to be wise, they became fools ... (NKJV)*

The admonition here in Romans goes on to elaborate that humans should understand just by observation, some of the purposes for the God-created divisions in nature. For example, here in Romans it goes on to say that we should respect the normal functions and purposes of the relationship between a husband and wife. As has been mentioned in previous sermons, God created marriage for the purpose of creating Godly offspring. The fundamentals of nature are intended to reveal God and the nature of His plans. From the beginning, the examples of sorting and dividing are intended to impact our mental thought processes and give us an idea of the spiritual realm. In addition to what we can observe, God also reveals through His scriptures.

In the third chapter of Genesis, He reveals there are serious consequences to rebelling against God's purpose and attempting to disrupt His plans. The consequences are serious and they are eternal. Genesis 3 from the description of the serpent deceiving Eve and enticing both Eve and her husband Adam to sin. That's what chapter 3 of Genesis is about. The serpent is Satan the devil. I just want to go through a basic, but let's turn to Revelation 12 before we get to Genesis. I want to establish the identity of the serpent that deceived Eve. Revelation 12 clearly describes the serpent as Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.

**Revelation 12:9** *So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (NKJV)*

Being cast out is a consequence of rebelling against God and attempting to frustrate His plans. Actively attacking God without repentance will result in being cast out. Now let's turn to Genesis 3. Genesis 3 describes how Satan the serpent deceived Eve and caused Adam and Eve to sin. As a result, God pronounced the division or separation between Satan and Jesus Christ. I want to begin here in verse 14.

*Genesis 3:14 So the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. 15) And I will put enmity [enmity is hostility and almost always causes division] Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; [Seed are descendants] He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel." (NKJV)*

Here He is referring to a single individual, the Christ. The meaning here is that Christ will destroy Satan and his seed. The two seeds are references to God's children of righteousness and Satan's children of wickedness. The ethics and moral character we develop in this life reveals whether we are children of God or children of Satan the devil. Turn over to John 8. Jesus said that those who do wickedness are the children of the devil and those to whom impute righteousness are the children of God. Jesus explains that those who reject Him as a Christ should know better and are not of God. Rather, they are the children of the devil as revealed in Genesis 3.

**John 8:42** *Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. 43) Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 44) You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. (NKJV)*

Turn over to 1 John 3. This concept of God differentiating His children from those of Satan is reiterated and confirmed in 1 John 3. I want to start in verse 8.



**1 John 3:8** *He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. (NKJV)*

The work of the devil was the condemnation of mankind under the penalty of sin. Satan enticed Eve to sin therefore all of humanity was condemned under the penalty of sin, which is death. Satan continues to this day to entice humans to sin and rebel against God. Continuing in 1 John 3:9.

9) *Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.*  
10) *In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. (NKJV)*

God is dividing us through the fruits of our actions.

11) *For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another ... (NKJV)*

We can find an early example of a lack of love in Genesis 4. The example—don't turn back there yet—of Cain's response when confronted by God for killing Abel showed a lack of love for his brother. Before we go back to Genesis, I want to continue in verse 12 of 1 John 3.

12) *not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. (NKJV)*

Now let's turn back to Genesis 4. The fourth chapter of Genesis describes the events of the next example of sorting and dividing and on ethical and moral character.

**Genesis 4:1** *Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." (NKJV)*

This phrase, *I have gotten a man from the LORD* can be understood as Eve's reference to God's promise that her seed or offspring would destroy Satan and his seed. Continuing in verse 2.

2) *Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. (NKJV)*

These two sons of Adam and Eve may have been the first two males born to Adam and Eve. The Bible is not clear on that. One thing seems to be certain; Adam and Eve had many children. In the next chapter 5, the third child specifically mentioned to be from

Adam and Eve was Seth. Adam was 130 years old when he begot Seth and it says Adam begot sons and daughters. Logic dictates that he would have begot many sons and daughters in the 130 years since he was created. This is important to understand partly because of the Scopes trial that occurred in Tennessee from July 10 to July 21, 1925. The trial is known in history as the Scopes Monkey Trial. That trial was a test trial that allowed evolution to be legally taught in public schools. One of the famous lines of questioning in the trial was, "Where did Cain get his wife?" If the only children were Cain and Abel. The man being questioned could not answer the question in a suitable manner that supported the creation account. I have heard that question myself. What is important to understand that the Bible accounts are given in very brief descriptions of events that usually occurred over longer periods of time than we often might imagine. Most surrounding details are left out. They're left out of the narrative. By the time of year 130, from the creation of Adam and Eve, there were likely several thousand people living. Eve was still conceiving children at the age of 130 years. Because God's plan was for them to be fruitful and have children—be fruitful and multiply—we might reasonably assume she might have had one child a year. If you wanted to be conservative, probably not less than 3. One child every 3 years. I think that's not unreasonable. It's not like they were saving up for a career or had some big trade I want to learn.

At 130 years into civilization, I would be surprised if they were concerned with family planning and limiting the size of their families. I would think they would be having as many children as possible. That would mean at least 1000 women able to conceive in the year 130. Eve was either 130 or 131 years old when Seth was born. In the description of the Cain and Abel event we see the two characters in the story are adult men that had chosen their own method of providing for their families. One was a rancher and one was a farmer. In Genesis 4:3.

**Genesis 4:3** *And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. (NKJV)*

The account is not clear as to whether this is the first time offerings were presented to God.

- 4) *Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,*
- 5) *but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.*
- 6) *So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"*
- 7) *If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." (NKJV)*

The point that is being made to Cain is that he must learn to control himself and obey God regardless of his opinions concerning God's instructions. As we read on, we are going to see that Cain does not seem to be interested in obeying God.

*8) Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. (NKJV)*

Then God questions Cain in verse 9.

*9) Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" (NKJV)*

We saw in 1 John that Cain did not love his brother. The event of Cain killing his brother would have likely happened shortly before Seth was conceived by Eve. That might be estimated to be around 127-129 after the creation. Continue in verse 11.

*11) So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. (NKJV)*

Verse 14. This is Cain's response.

*14) Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face ... (NKJV)*

He knew he would be hidden from God's face. Skipping down to verse 16.

*16) Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden. (NKJV)*

Cain was divided out and away from the presence of God. He was rejected because of his evil works. He was cast out in the same condemnation that are the children of the devil. As a side note, the next verse states that Cain built a city. A city requires a sizable population. I suspect women in those times wanted to have as many children as possible. Obviously, they had many children. There are many examples in the Bible of differentiating and making decisions that are intended to divide. Turn over to Matthew 13. The concept of sorting and dividing is important. Dividing the righteous from the wicked is a main point of God's plan. Jesus described in a parable, an analogy of God's plan for dividing the children of God from the children of the devil. Another example of God dividing can be found here in Matthew 13:24.

**Matthew 13:24** *Another parable He put forth to them, saying [Christ speaking]: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25) but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. (NKJV)*

This analogy could also be analogizing the story of Satan enticing Adam and Eve to sin. The good seed was Adam and Eve and then because of sin, a corrupt seed—a seed of Satan—was planted into the line of Adam and Eve.

26) *But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. (NKJV)*

Following the analogy of Adam and Eve, some were evil and some pursued righteousness.

27) *So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'*

28) *He said to them, 'An enemy has done this. The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'*

29) *But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.*

30) *Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.' ' ' (NKJV)*

Jesus, I believe, is confirming the analogy concerning humans in verse 38. He is confirming that. His disciples question Jesus concerning the parable continuing in verse 37.

37) *He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.*

38) *The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.*

39) *The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.*

40) *Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.*

41) *The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,*

42) *and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

43) *Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! (NKJV)*

I want to turn back a few pages to Matthew 3. John the Baptist also prophesied at this time when there will be a harvest separation. We are being sorted and divided according to whether we are chaff or grain. Speaking of Christ in Matthew 3:12.

**Matthew 3:12** *His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (NKJV)*

The chaff is the part of the plant picked up in the harvest process that is not the desired grain. The purpose of the harvest is to get the grain and separate it from the rest of the plant. The separating process is called threshing. The winnowing fan is used for blowing

the chaff away from the grain which leaves only the good fruit. The chaff analogy represents the destruction of the wicked. The good grain, the good fruit, are those who are righteous. Let's jump back up a verse to verse 11.

*11) I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (NKJV)*

Here is a division or separation. Being baptized with the Holy Spirit is receiving the Holy Spirit and eventually being born again to eternal life. Being baptized with fire is the final judgment against those who choose wickedness and rebellion against God and are cast into the eternal inferno to be burned up and totally destroyed. This is a main point of the concept of division; separating the righteous from the wicked. So why are we here? We are here for training and guidance in preparation to rule with Christ. Turn to Revelation 20. In the first 8 verses of this chapter, describe in some summary form, Satan being bound for 1000 years and those who are part of the first resurrection are assigned responsibility to rule with Christ. Those who are part of the first resurrection are the Firstfruits. Up until the first resurrection, the Firstfruits are being divided by the rest of society. We are the Firstfruits.

*Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (NKJV)*

The 1000 years in part represents the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles. As we celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, we are here to be encouraged. We are here to feel in a small sense, the joy and delight we will experience serving in God's Kingdom. We must not allow ourselves to falter because Rick our pastor is gone, or for any other reason. We must steal our minds to continue on in service to God. We must continue in teaching God's truth, serving the brethren and supporting each other. Remember, the purpose of sorting and dividing is to separate and perfect us. We are the Firstfruits to be in the first resurrection. Throughout the year we will have plenty opportunity and events that will try us and test us. For now, while we are here at the Feast, let us rejoice in this time that God has set aside for each of us to observe this year.