

# Love of God & Christ for Church & Each Other I

(Feast of Tabernacles—Day 1)

Michael Heiss—October 9, 2014

Good morning, everyone! It's a pleasure to be here. In thinking of something to mention here and for the next four days, I was struck by three different events that formulated this message in my mind.

First, one of my wife's good friends was talking to her about the old days and former associations, Worldwide Church of God and so forth. This person said, 'You know, we just didn't hear too much about the love of Jesus.'

I had to think about that and say, 'Yes, in part that's true.' Of course, there's a reason for that. For one thing, the Protestant world, when they came out of Catholicism, went so overboard in promoting and projecting the Son—which was accurate, true, Jesus is

- our all in all
- the Savior
- the soon coming King of kings

—but the Protestant world did so at the neglect of the Father. It's as though they bypassed Him! That is one reason why the love of Jesus wasn't mentioned so much.

The second thing that moved me was the latest issue of *The Journal*, and one of the headlines is *Preacher Unhappy with God for Letting Friends Suffer and Die*. I understand that. If God is a loving God, if He is truly love then why does He allow so many people to die: violently, debilitating diseases, cancer, Alzheimer's, dementia, multiple sclerosis, spinal meningitis, you name it!

There's a reason for it, and that reason I hope to bring out during the next four messages. Usually, as you know me, I enjoy the Hebrew; I enjoy technical things; I enjoy bringing out different aspects of the meaning. But not today; not this Feast. We're going to be concentrating on *the love of God*. We're going to see some things that will blow your mind when you actually stop to think about them.

The third incident that moved me was a few weeks ago a particular friend came up and in the same light as this, looked at me and said, 'We ask God to heal, and He didn't do it, and this person died of cancer. If God loved her, why did God let her die.' We're going to answer that, but first we've got to start out with love. What is love anyway?

President Abraham Lincoln in one of his speeches was fond of saying, 'We all declare for

liberty, but by using the same word we don't all mean the same thing.' The same thing is true of *love*. Everyone wants love.

I remember a song<sup>[transcriber's correction]</sup>, which is a travesty, *What the World Needs Now is Love Sweet Love, it's the only thing that there's just a little of* (used in several movies) Or the person who says, 'I love you, O baby, I love you, I can't live without you I love you so much.'

That's not the love that God is talking about. God's love is different. God's love is one of outgoing concern for others; that which builds up, edifies, encourages. We're going to take a look and see the expression of that love. The first place we're going to go is:

Luke 12:27: "Consider the lilies, how they grow; they do not labor, nor do they spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory was adorned like one of these. But if God so adorns the grass that today is in the field, and tomorrow is cast into an oven, how much more *shall He clothe* you, O you of little faith? Then do not be seeking what you shall eat or what you shall drink, and do not be anxious" (vs 27-29).

Verse 31: "But seek the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father delights in giving you the kingdom" (vs 31-32). That kingdom has been prepared for us, going back for almost an eternity.

Matthew 25:31: "Now, when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the Holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon *the throne of His glory*; and He shall gather before Him all the nations; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at *His left*. Then shall the King say to those at His right hand, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom **prepared for you from the foundation of the world**'" (vs 31-34). This kingdom has been prepared for us *prior to the foundation of the world!*

How far back does that go? *I can't even fathom how far back that is!* But it was prepared for you and me. But something happened and got in the way between us and God. We really know what that was. Isaiah was man filled with the Spirit of God and was used mightily of God:

Isaiah 59:1: "Behold, the LORD'S hand is

not shortened that it cannot save, nor is His ear heavy that it cannot hear. But **your iniquities have come between you and your God**, and your sins have hid *His* face from you, that He will not hear” (vs 1-2).

We can read the rest of that chapter, but the point is that sin came between God and us, between us and the kingdom. God’s got to do something about that, but what is He going to do? What is the result of sin?

What we’re doing is laying the foundation for the next three messages. I’m trying to set it up for us so that we’ll have the background to truly discuss the *love of God*.

Romans 5:12: “Therefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and by means of sin *came* death; and in this way death passed into all mankind; *and it is* for this reason that all have sinned.”

Verse 14: “Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam until Moses, even upon those who had not sinned in the likeness of the transgression of Adam...” So, death reigned from Adam to Moses. Why?

Romans 6:23: “For **the wages of sin is death**, but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.” Meaning: somebody has to die! What is God going to do?

In a way it’s somewhat analogous to an incident that took place in the life of a man known as ‘the little flower’—Fiorello LaGuardia—famous mayor of New York City. He was a delight. I never got a chance to see him, but he was an Italian, short, outgoing, the type of guy that in the Depression would read the funnies over the radio to kids. One of his famous sayings was: *dirty money doesn’t pay!*

One night he was walking through New York City and he went to Night Court. He was the mayor, so he walked in. There was the judge, the litigants were there—the plaintiffs and defendants—and he walked up and asked the Night Court judge, ‘Could I take over for you.’ *Of course, Mr. Mayor, we’d be honored to have you do that!* So, he came up and sat down and a case came before him: a grandmother guilty of stealing food. Remember now, this was the depression. She had no food for her grandchildren, so she stole.

The grocer said, ‘Mr. Mayor, I understand that she’s poor, I know that, but she stole, your honor; we can’t allow people to steal.’ The mayor was nodding his head saying, ‘Yes, you’re right.’ He read the statute and the gavel came down: guilty! The fine. \$10.

If you want to go back to 1935-38 that was a lot of money back then. This woman didn’t have \$10, how was she ever going to pay that fine? So, Mayor LaGuardia put his hand in his pocket, took out his wallet and took out a \$10 bill and said, ‘The fine is paid.’ That was Mr. LaGuardia.

God has a problem a lot bigger than that. God’s problem is not a matter of a \$10 fine. The point was that somebody had to pay that fine. Here now is the ‘wages of sin is death,’ so, who is going to die? God could let man die. Why not? Man sinned—didn’t he? *Of course!* But then if all men died God wouldn’t have His expanded kingdom.

Remember the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world. He wouldn’t have that. He would not have his glorified sons. Just how badly...which do you want. Haven’t you heard that life is full of choices? Well, God—our God, the Great God—had a choice to make. What was it going to be?

To give us a hint of what His choice was—and we all know what His choice was—remember, He had to consciously make it. Nobody forced Him to make it, just like nobody forced Mayor LaGuardia to take out \$10 and pay that shoplifter’s fine.

Let’s turn to the Psalms to get a feel for this; we will get a little feeling for God’s thinking. Notice what the Psalmist—King David—says.

Psalms 8:4: “What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You care for him? For You have made him a little lower than God and have crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the birds of heaven, the fish of the sea, and all that pass through the paths of the seas” (vs 4-8).

This was said way back when, 1,000<sub>B.C.</sub> or so. This refers to the One Who became Jesus Christ, but it refers to us because we are man. How are we to ever have dominion if we’re going to die. The Apostle Paul expanded upon this. Let’s see how he referred to this Scripture and expanded upon it. The book of Hebrews is a fascinating book in the New Testament. It is an incredible and pivotal book.

Hebrews 2:6: “But in a certain place one fully testified, saying, ‘What is man, that You are mindful of him, or *the* son of man, that You visit him?’” That’s what we just read in Psa. 8. Paul knew that. Paul was a great scholar and knew the Old Testament backward and forward. He was a rabbi in his own right, and he sat at the foot of Gamaliel and learned. Paul was very knowledgeable, he really was. He knew his stuff backward and forward.

Verse 7: “You did make him a little lower than *the* angels; You did crown him with glory and honor, and You did set him over the works of Your hands; You did put all things in subjection under his feet.’ For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing *that was* not subjected to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we see Jesus, Who *was* made a little lower than *the* angels, crowned with glory and honor on account of suffering the death, in order that by *the* grace of God He Himself might taste death for everyone” (vs 7-9).

There we have the decision that God made. God decided that He would die. There were two beings: one became the Father and the other became the Son. One was going to come down and pay that penalty and the other one had to mind the store, had to keep the universe running, had to govern everything. He had to watch the whole sorted mess!

When you see what God did, it makes you realize why a certain verse in the New Testament, in the Gospel of John, is perhaps one of the most beloved verses and he one known far and wide—we all know it by heart, we don’t even have to turn there, John 3:16. **‘What is man that you’re mindful of him?’**

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life.” ***That’s how much God loved all of us!***

I like the Gospel of Matthew for any number of reasons, but Matt. 13 is filled with parables, and there are two that I would like us to read. Remember we’re told to seek first the kingdom. Well, we’re going to look at a couple of parables and get the obvious meaning and then I want to elevate it; I want to put a different twist on it.

Matthew 13:44: “Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to treasure hidden in a field; which when a man finds, he conceals, and for the joy of *finding* it, goes and sells everything that he has, and buys that field. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a merchant seeking beautiful pearls; Who, after finding one very precious pearl, went and sold everything that he had, and bought it” (vs 44-46). This is admonition to us to seek the kingdom, to be willing to give up everything!

I want to elevate this. This One Who gave up everything that He had: God the Father! No, He wasn’t the merchant who went around buying and selling pearls. He wasn’t that, but He looked at you and me and said, ‘*Behold, these are all My pearls, pearls of great price—every one!*’ so, if you ever get to thinking that:

- I’m not really worth very much
- I don’t know much Hebrew
- I don’t know Greek
- I’ve never read the whole Bible cover to cover
- I don’t understand chronology
- I don’t get this
- I don’t get that
- I don’t have an academic mind

It doesn’t matter! God looked at us and said, ‘I want you, and I’m going to have you.’ So, ***He gave up the most precious thing He had, which was His only begotten Son!***

Let that sink in! So great was His love He was asked to do that. He asked Himself. In reality He asked of us nothing that He has not already done Himself! Let us not forget that. That is why it is said that love is the greatest of the commandments. Let’s see where Jesus explained that. Jesus is talking to the Pharisees:

Matthew 22:35: “And one of them, a doctor of the law, questioned *Him*, tempting Him, and saying, ‘Master, which commandment *is the* great commandment in the Law?’ And Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is *the* first and greatest commandment; and *the* second *one is* like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself”” (vs 35-39). Here are the two of the truly great commandments.

But Jesus doesn’t just pick them out of His head, although He could have—after all, He was *God* in the flesh. But He was directly quoting. So, for us to get it straight and have it all in one place, let’s see where He was quoting: two places in the Book of the Law, the Torah.

Deuteronomy 6:5: “And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” There it is, that is the first truly great commandment of loving God.

But you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Go to Lev., the book of sacrifices and rituals, but there’s a lot more to the book of Lev. than rituals and sacrifices.

Leviticus 19:17: “You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall always admonish your neighbor, that you may not bear sin because of him. You shall not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people...” (vs 17-18). You know, sometimes that’s hard to do.

“...but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I *am* the LORD” (v 18).

I want to kind of tease you a little bit. God says here, “...you shall love your neighbor as

yourself..." But He didn't say, 'You shall *like* your neighbor as yourself.' There is a difference. We will bring that out in another message. There's a difference in *liking* your neighbor as yourself and *loving* your neighbor as yourself.

Loving means that you uplift him, to help him, you're willing to sacrifice for him. It doesn't mean that you just love his personality and you like being around him all day. No, it doesn't mean that! God never told us to do that. In fact, we're going to see a couple of apostles who were so headstrong, so bullheaded that they couldn't agree with each other, got into a shouting match and had to separate because they couldn't get along.

That had nothing to do with love for one another. It simply had to do with that personalities are different. We are all different. I might get along with some of you more than with others. You may not get along with me that well. It doesn't mean that you don't care for me anymore than it does not mean that I don't care for you or that I wouldn't got out of my way to help you. God says that you must be willing to go out of the way to help others.

Now we're going to take a look at truly one of the great chapters in the Bible. You talk about love, the love chapter, 1-Cor. 13, because we need to drink in of this. All of this is setting the stage for demonstrating and talking more about the love of God and the love of Jesus. This is the background for it. This is a great rabbi talking, an intellectual, probably the most brilliant of all the apostles. He said:

1-Corinthians 13:1: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." It doesn't matter a hoot how brilliant I might be.

Verse 2: "If I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries..." I can read Daniel, Isaiah, I can tell you what's going to happen when and where; even if I could do all of that:

"...and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains..." (v 2). We're not in the mountain-moving business so I don't think we have to worry about that.

"...but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give away all my goods, and if I deliver up my body that I may be burned, but do not have love, I have gained nothing" (vs 2-3). How is that possible? *He's talking about the attitude!* Why are you doing it? Do you want to be a glorious martyr and just die for the sake of dying? We do have individuals in various religions today who do that.

*No!* Paul says, 'If I give my body to be burned, if I emulate myself, set myself on fire, commit suicide for the glory of whatever, *I've gained nothing as far as God is concerned!*'

Verse 4: "Love is patient *and* is kind; love envies not, does not brag about itself, is not puffed up. *Love* does not behave disgracefully, does not seek its own things, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil" (vs 4-5).

When Jesus Christ came down, preached His Gospel, was crucified on the stake, was He thinking about Himself? Was He doing all of this for His own glorification? *Oh no! He did it for us!*

Verse 6: "Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the Truth. *Love* bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether *there be* prophecies, they shall cease..." (vs 6-8). Yes, at the end of days they'll come to an end. All will be fulfilled!

"...whether *there be* languages, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away" (v 8). When God resurrects us, when He takes our spirit and puts it in a spiritual body, you will be greater than the greatest Einstein, greater than Sir Isaac Newton. There will be no person who has ever lived who will have as much knowledge and understanding as any of us will have at that time. All human knowledge won't be worth...

One time the vice-presidency was described by Franklin's vice-president as being nothing more than a 'spittle of warm spit.' That's how he described the vice-presidency; kind of odd, but that's what he said. The point is, we'll know everything there is to know, as god; but unless there is love it won't mean anything.

Verse 9: "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is Perfect has come, then that which is in part shall be set aside. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I reasoned as a child; but when I became a man, I set aside the things of a child. For now we see through a glass darkly..." (vs 9-12). There are things we just don't understand. We really don't!

"...but then *we shall see* face-to-face; now I know in part, but then I shall know exactly as I have been known. And now, these three remain: faith, hope *and* love; but the greatest of these *is* love" (vs 12-13).

When I learned it, I learned it from the *King James Version*: faith, hope and charity. If you remember there was a song *Faith, Hope and Charity* written by a woman: Dale Evans, queen of the west, wife of Roy Rogers, king of the cowboys. You don't

hear songs like that anymore. This world has gone down since then.

“...faith, hope *and* love; but **the greatest of these is love.**” Love determines what we do, what we have, how we react to life itself. Love is the most important of all.

The Apostle John wrote about love, 1-John 4:7: “Beloved, we should love one another because love is from God; and everyone who loves has been begotten by God, and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God because God is love. In this *way* the love of God was manifested toward us: that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this *act* is the love—**not that we loved God...** [never forget that] **...rather, that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins**” (vs 7-10).

He chose *us* and said, “I want you and I will pay the ultimate price, and He sent His Son to be the propitiation. Then He also gives a command:

Verse 11: “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also are duty-bound to love one another.” We’ll see in part two more of what that means.

1-John 3:16: By this *very act* we have known the love of God because He laid down His life for us: and we ourselves are to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his feelings of compassion from him, how can the love of God be dwelling in him?” (vs 16-17). That is going to be part of how we love the brethren, how we love each other.

Verse 18: “My little children, we should not love in word, nor with *our* tongues; rather, *we should love* in deed and in Truth.” This is by comparison. It doesn’t mean that you really don’t love in tongue, you do, but rather ‘put your money where your mouth is’—actions speaks louder than words. Just don’t think lovely thoughts, *do lovely things!* That is what John is getting at.

Let’s see two things that Jesus did while dying on the cross. He wasn’t thinking of Himself, which is the most incredible thing. Mind you, here is the Son of God, He was God, He emptied Himself, became a human being subject to death, and then:

John 19:25: “And Jesus’ mother stood by the cross, and His mother’s sister, Mary the *wife* of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw *His* mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold your son.’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother.’ And from that time, the disciple took her into his own *home*” (vs 25-27).

Here He is dying for us on the cross and He has enough presence of mind to take care of His human fleshly mother. That’s love, outgoing concern. He respected and loved His mother. Then He also loved us: He was thinking of us.

Luke 23:33: “And when they came to the place called *Place of a Skull...*” And what does Jesus say while on the stake?

Verse 34: “...‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’...” They have no idea! ‘Remember Our plan, Jesus in effect is saying. Remember what we agreed upon. Do not destroy them.’ He was thinking of us while dying. That, all I can say, is very, very difficult to do. If you could do it by snapping your fingers, you’re a lot better than I am.

He did and He sacrificed Himself for us! That gives us a flavor of the love of God, the love of Jesus and in part two we’ll show how God said He loved Jesus; how Jesus said He loved the Father; how all is one, we are one altogether, and examples of how to do it.

#### Scriptural References:

- 1) Luke 12:27-29, 31-32
- 2) Matthew 25:31-34
- 3) Isaiah 59:1-2
- 4) Romans 5:12, 14
- 5) Romans 6:23
- 6) Psalm 8:4-8
- 7) Hebrews 2:6-9
- 8) John 3:16
- 9) Matthew 13:44-46
- 10) Matthew 22:35-39
- 11) Deuteronomy 6:5
- 12) Leviticus 19:17-18
- 13) 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
- 14) 1 John 4:7-11
- 15) 1 John 3:16-18
- 16) John 19:25-27
- 17) Luke 23:33-34

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