

It was directly after the Feast, on the Sabbath, the weekly Sabbath afterward, that I was wondering about what sermons God would be giving in the weeks and the months to come, and as I was thinking about some of that, looking ahead, and right away different subjects started flooding my mind. I couldn't believe it. It was wham, wham, wham, wham, wham. And whenever that happens I feel very good because I know exactly the kinds of things that are to be covered and why and that was very obvious to me. So again, what was unique about all this too was a focal point of all those series of sermons (there are a series of sermons) that are going to be given over a period of time and how they're tied together in the primary purpose of why they're to be given. And the way they're tied together and the primary purpose God is having them to be addressed is going to be given in context right after I give you the title of this sermon today, this sermon series.

This sermon series is entitled, *God's Original True Church, Part 1*, and "original," meaning "present or existing from the beginning; first, or earliest."

At the end of the seventh and final era of God's one and only true Church, the Church experienced what is referred to in prophetic writings given to the apostle Paul, which is known as the Great Falling Away, or more perfectly, the Apostasy, in God's own Church. And what emerged from that Apostasy after a prophetic period of time, times, and a half a time, which is a literal prophetic period of 1260 days, was a remnant, a very small remainder of a much larger Church that existed before the Apostasy. However, that remnant consisted of people who were awakened from a spiritual sleep that led to the Apostasy in the first place and these people were awakened and offered repentance. That's awesome. They were awakened and offered repentance.

But what of all the rest? What about all the others that had fallen asleep spiritually? Well, the vast majority are still God's people in a very unique way, but just simply spiritually asleep. I think some of this hit me probably more at this feast, or at least during some of the sermons at the feast, than ever before, and that is to understand how God calls us and works with us, how He calls us out of this world and He begins to give us of His holy spirit, leads us to repentance, and we have to make choices along the way, and then those who are baptized, who choose that and want that, they go through a process of time; and some are chosen as time goes along and some are not. God chooses whom He will. And I think of because of what we've experienced in time and God giving a better understanding of how He has worked with people through time it makes it very clear that many have been called through time but few have been chosen.

Now that's rather unique when you think about people who have been baptized because you're only baptized once. If it's true, you've received the impregnation of God's spirit, it only happens once in life. So if that did happen, which it has happened to many, many people through time in

the past 2,000 years, especially in God's Church we're talking about, then what of some of those who just went through various things in life, lived and died, but weren't chosen for whatever reasons? And even some who themselves fell asleep spiritually and drifted away for whatever reasons, they're still very unique to God because God can awaken them at any time out of a spiritual sleep, if they will receive what He has to give to them, if they will receive the guidance, the direction, the correction in their lives that they need to receive. Now, the vast majority of those, obviously, are going to be resurrected in the Great White Throne, but they have such an advantage because they lived at a time when they experienced God's way of life. They experienced God's spirit dwelling in them. They experienced fellowship with others in a Church, in a body, in the Body of Christ, and they're going to start off with a big bang compared to others who never knew of God, if they'll receive that awakening. It's going to be much easier for them to receive it then because they're not going to have the pulls of the world as it is or was in their time. They're not going to have the pulls of a demonic world, of Satan himself, and all of those kinds of things that people succumb to in life when they drift away.

All who have drifted away in the past decade, in the last two decades, or whenever in God's Church by various pulls, by various things that happen in life, that doesn't mean that their job is finished and over with unless they have fully rejected God, which as a whole doesn't happen except for those who led up to a time in the Apostasy. There are individuals there who made choices and decisions. They have rejected God. Their minds are set. That is a unique state, but it is a state. But others just simply fell asleep, those who became weak, because when you let down in life like what happened through Laodicea, when you let down in life you begin to become weak in your life spiritually, and you're going to fall asleep spiritually. You're going to drift away from the Church. You're going to drift away from certain truths and certain things that help you to keep focused, certain things, whatever it is.

So choices are made. God makes choices of who listens to Him, who can be worked with, who will receive what He has being giving to them as they are growing spiritually. We make many choices and most of the choices we make have a great deal obviously to do with determining, with God determining, are we chosen for the first resurrection or for another time? There can even be individuals in that mix who were just not chosen for the first resurrection, for God's government at that time who can be resurrected at the end of a thousand years to be in God's family. There will be some who have the ability to fit into that category. That's quite unique for our understanding of how God works with us, because God is the one who builds and molds and fashions a building, and that doesn't mean that every individual then has to fall asleep, in that respect. But again, very unique what God is revealing to us. The closer we get to His Kingdom being established on earth the more He is sharing with us, because at that time He's going to share a whole lot more with us of what has happened through time and what has happened in people's lives and everything else that goes with that.

So, getting back to this, thinking about some of those things that led up to the Apostasy, thinking about those who are out there, some who have fully rejected God's way of life, some who went back to a different world, that they're not going to be given an opportunity because it is the Great White Throne for them to be resurrected in and then to be worked with and awakened once again, but there's that essence that's still a part. It's just that they haven't used it, haven't been able to utilize it because of choices that were made in falling asleep on a spiritual plane.

And so, very much like a calling out of the world, people have to be drawn by God's spirit to begin seeing God's truth and God's way of life, and then they have to make choices that can lead them to baptism. The same thing is true once baptized. There's a unique connection then with God, availability to God's throne, availability to grow and conquer and fight and overcome, but we make the choices as to what kind of fight we put into it. We really do. We choose as to what kind of a fight we are going to put into this, how much we really want God's way of life. That's why we heard some of the kinds of sermons we did at the feast this year, because of what is fast approaching and a reality that if we desire with all of our being to be a part of a new age, a part of a new world that's coming, it's not owed. We've got to fight for it. God offers everything available to us to be able to attain to those things, but we have to want it. We have to fight for it.

So again, all those who have gone by the wayside, they're very unique because they're still alive. Everyone else in times past, not, obviously. So there are a lot of people who can be awakened and live on into a new age. That is quite unique. So in this sermon series and some to follow God is going to pave the way for many of those who became scattered to have opportunity to be awakened. We're getting closer to that period of time. What God will be giving is to help facilitate that process they will experience in their life as God begins to awaken them.

So we need to be fully prepared to know how to answer those from the scattering. They're going to need help and there aren't that many of us and exactly when that takes place, how it takes place, we don't fully know yet because God hasn't revealed those things, whether there's a process that will begin at some point here especially once the sealing is complete, that we talked about at the feast - which means that the events of the first four Trumpets will be taking place on this earth and we'll know the sealing is complete, because that can't begin until that is complete. Awesome to understand that. Also, I thought I would throw out here, there is absolutely no advantage, no good purpose in anyone discussing this, period, and wondering out loud, "I wonder if it can be this group or some of these or who they might be," and so forth. Okay? Nothing good will come out of that. As a matter of fact, as a whole, only what is not good. So it's good not to dwell upon those things. That's God's choice and God's decision to make in every situation. The reality is the main thing you need to understand is that you need a lot of time to conquer and to grow and to overcome and it's not going to happen in five to ten years of being in God's Church. Scratch it off. Don't have expectations of something that is not a reality in your life. There's a purpose why you've been drawn and called, and most haven't been called until the latter part

here. So there will be others who have been worked with for a long time who just have not been chosen yet to be a part of that government. So again, those are things God will reveal and they'll be quite plain once they happen. Then we'll know and we won't have to wonder about it. So there are some things that aren't spiritually healthy for us to speculate about, to think about, or even talk about.

So where does one begin if they want to know the real history of God's one true Church? Obviously if we were in a process before the Apostasy this is very much a part of our life. We know these things inside and out, and maybe we don't. Because I lived through a period of time that led up to the Apostasy where, candidly, the fact that there were eras and that recollection and that thought process in people's lives was practically gone, didn't even exist in God's Church anymore. It didn't exist. It wasn't being taught. On the contrary. I don't know if you remember that. I do because I preached about it as time went along, and as time went along, I began to realize how much that had infected the minds of people that that had been lost. I think of what happened during Sardis, all that was lost, and the last part of Thyatira and going on into Sardis. It's easy to see how things are lost if they're not taught, if they're not held on to with all of our being. We can lose them.

So we saw a lot of things that were lost in the Church that led up to the Apostasy, a lot of things that people began to doubt if they even existed, if they were even real, if they had any meaning anymore, a lot of things. There are a lot of good lessons in all of that.

So again, where do we begin? Well, there are several places we could do this, but let's begin with Christ's own words that he gave to the last apostle in the first era of God's Church. Revelation 1. Awesome what was written here, what God gave to John, what Jesus Christ actually gave to John, because God gave it to Jesus Christ (it makes it very clear), and Jesus Christ gave it to John. That's how it works. That's how revelation is given in the Church. That's how it works. All things that are revealed and given to God's people the Church receives it from the head of the Church, Jesus Christ.

**Revelation 1:1.** So it is important for us again to note here just before we begin that we grasp and see these things to the depth of our being. Because you see, a church that was scattered out there, there are some who call themselves Philadelphian, who feel like they're Philadelphian, but they don't understand about the eras. They feel that still identifies them in many ways, but that doesn't mean they have a belief of all the eras and what has been given about the eras of God's Church, but they hold on to that, Philadelphia. Philadelphia. Amazing! How can you hold on to Philadelphia and not believe everything about the eras? It's kind of a "head scratcher." **The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him to show unto His servants things which must,** in other words, a word meaning, "necessary; it's necessary," **shortly,** or "soon herein," is what the word means.

So, if you understand what God is giving to Jesus Christ and what Jesus Christ is giving to John, then it's easier to understand all this because he's going to tell him what's going to happen to the Church all the way to his coming, all the way to his return. That's the book of Revelation. It starts out talking to His servants, to those, to John, specifically, and those who follow in time to understand things or to be able to be led to understand some of the things that would happen to God's own Church through time, through the next 2,000 years. They didn't know that. John still didn't know that. They didn't understand time; time was going to go on a long, long, long time. They lived as everybody else before them. They looked for a city whose builder and maker is God. Incredible. That's how you live your life. You live what is true to what God has revealed to you to that point in time, and if He reveals more than you hold onto that, whatever that is.

So again here, there were going to be different eras, different periods of time for God's Church and that's what Jesus Christ is giving to John and John is recording here, and so it's putting everything into perspective. There are things that are going to happen to you throughout the ages. It's incredible to me that because of how God was going to reveal things and do things on this earth that people's reactions and how they would respond and how people would act through time, God knew. God knows. God knows us. God knows the thinking process of the human mind and what will happen to those whom He calls and the kinds of trials and difficulties they're going to go through because of what God is going to allow to take place on the earth. It's no mystery that a great church was to emerge. There's no mystery, the power, the mind, the being of God to lead, guide, direct, mold, and fashion His people through time.

So again, **to reveal to His servants**, to the ministry, primarily, first and foremost, and all others that would be taught by them then through time, **things which must**, or that are necessary, that will soon happen, that will **soon come to pass. And he sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John who bare record of the word of God**, so testimony, record. That's what it's talking about. He witnessed certain things that were given to him. He bare that record then of what was told to him about the word of God, about the truth, about the things that we read about in the book of Revelation. These things are absolute because they're from the word of God, and the testimony, the witness of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. **Blessed is he who reads...** Now, what does that mean, "Blessed is he who reads?" You have to read the rest of the sentence. You have to read the rest of what it says because not everybody that reads it is blessed. **...and hears the words of this prophecy.**

Again here, as it is with this book from beginning to end, mankind, people can't just pick it up and understand what is being said. They can read the stories. They can read certain things that are taught, certain things of moral value that they may latch on to and say this good, but to see it, to really see it, and grasp what is being said, to see things Jesus Christ said on a spiritual plane even as he spoke clearly about what things meant, to be able to see it, to really grasp and understand what he's saying is another matter because it takes help. Because we don't have spirit, the holy spirit in us unless God gives us that and shares it with us to give us the ability to see. That's why

the world can't grasp and comprehend what is true and right unless God calls them, begins to work with them, begins to give His holy spirit.

Another thing that went by the wayside: God does the calling. You know, if every minister who lived through the period of Philadelphia and into Laodicea just had that one thing in their mind all the way, that God Almighty has to call, then what they did and how they did it would have greater meaning and purpose and direction and not go off in tangents as it did.

**Blessed is he who reads and hears the words of this prophecy.** It has to be spiritual. That's what is being said here. ...**and keep**, so there's even a stipulation here even with that because what you hear has so much to do with how you live your life, with how you think, with what God offers you and gives to you. ...**and keep those things which are written therein.** So even in the book of Revelation there's much about life and how to live life and the importance of obedience to God, and on and on it goes, keeping His commandments. ...**for the time is near.** Sometimes people read this and say, "What do you mean? That was 2,000 years ago. How can he say the time is near?" For everyone who is called that was their time. It was upon them. Every era, when they lived, whoever was in a particular era, that's what they were living. That's what was important to them at that moment in time. It had come to them because they were going to live their lives and die, and how they lived their lives became exceedingly important then. Just like it does for all whom God calls. "For the time is near," because God is working through a Church, and a body, the Body of Christ now in a way that He didn't in the previous 4,000 years. He worked with individuals along the way, but now it's a body.

**Verse 4—John, to the seven Churches which are in Asia...** And so there is this route we know, kind of like a postal route as it was, and the cities that were connected together and spoken of in this fashion. They're recorded here, the names of those, and yet it is not about a physical city in each case. It's about what God chose to reveal something to His Church about seven periods of time that would come to pass in His Church over a period of over 2,000 years. Awesome! **John, to the seven Churches which are in Asia, grace be unto you and peace from Him who is, who was, and who is to come.** This is God Almighty. This comes from God Almighty given to Jesus Christ. There are places that refer to Christ later, but this is about God Almighty. He has always existed. That's what it's about. ...**and from the seven spirits which are before His throne.** So something unique about each period of time, and even to those who would be sent, those who would work with them through time, but again here, seven spirits which are before His throne. These are things that reflect what they will go through. They are going to deal with various things because of the way the world is at a particular moment in time. We'll talk about that as we go through this. ... **and from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness and the first begotten of the dead.** Incredible.

You know, for us these things, they're clear, and yet for a Church that is scattered out there right now, they haven't addressed this. He was dead. He wasn't alive. When he was dead, he was dead all over. He didn't have a spirit that went somewhere, did something for three days and three

nights. He was dead and God had to resurrect him from death. **...and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him, Jesus Christ who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood,** so that focus and that motivation he had that led him up to that point in time of suffering and going through what he did; he was so focused, so filled with life with that purpose that was given to him. **... and has made, or as it is, has been making us kings and priests unto God and his Father.** That's what the seven Church eras are all about, making unto God kings and priests. It's about His Kingdom and what God's work will be and what Christ's work will be for the period of time following what was given to John here.

**...and had made, or has been making us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.** Beautiful, what is stated here, the purpose of this book and why God inspired it to be written from a time after Jesus Christ was now with his Father for the next nearly 2,000 years and everything that would lead up to a time when he actually returned and what would follow even after that because of God's purpose going on through time there toward the end of Revelation.

**Verse 7—Behold he comes with clouds and every eye shall see him.** Even here there are things stated that people cannot grasp and comprehend because of what the meaning is here of what is going to come to pass in time. "He comes with clouds and every eye shall see him." That doesn't mean they're going to see his actual return. That's not what it's about. It's about he is going to return, he's going to come to this earth, he's going to come with tremendous power in ways that man can't grasp and comprehend. It says, "every eye shall see him," so it means what it says, **and they also who pierced him.** They're dead. They're going to be dead for a long time. They're going to be dead until the Great White Throne, but they'll "see" him. It's intended that everyone "see" the King of kings, the Lord of lords and make choices in life.

**...and all kindred's of the earth shall mourn because of him,** in time. Can you imagine being resurrected during that period of time? They're going to mourn as he's returning to this earth because of what they're going to suffer through because of what it takes for mankind to be brought to a spirit of humility and to begin that process anyway and to go through to have the experience of what man is doing to himself all because God has allowed it to come to a point in time where now the earth has to be changed and God has to intervene and stop man from destroying himself, and to destroy those who are destroying the earth.

So, **all kindred of the earth shall mourn because of him,** those who are resurrected during the Great White Throne who have never known. How they've lived their lives, there's going to have to be some soul searching, some mourning that takes place, to loathe, to learn to loathe what they did and what they lived if they want God's way of life. And if they don't want it, there's going to be some more mourning before it's over with. **Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega...** You know God making it very clear here what's being said now, **the beginning and the ending.** So God Almighty, it all comes from God Almighty. This is given to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ gives the

message to John, but it comes from God Almighty. **I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, says the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.**

It goes on to say then, **I, John, who also am your brother...** So who is this speaking to? Anyone who is called, anyone who is able to hear the words of this book because it's not to the world. It's not to the world of traditional Christianity. It's to those who have that spirit, that ability to hear and to see what is written in the book of Revelation. **I, John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation and in the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the Isle that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.** Awesome! Awesome what was taking place at this moment in time because this is where this book came about; it is because of what happened here when John was imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos.

So John was exiled there around 95 A.D. It could be a little less than that, but somewhere around 95 A.D. is what historians pretty much agree upon because of who was ruling at that time and some of the things that took place in that region of the world. Interesting to note when you read through various things that historians say, it was said of John by historians going back through time, he was the only apostle who escaped a violent death. Awesome. The only apostle who escaped a violent death, or as stated by one source, "He was likely the only one of the original twelve disciples to die a peaceful death and escape a violent martyrdom," because all the rest went through a great deal in the way they died and the way they had to give up their life and what was taken from them. So, anyway, John was there at that period of time, for a short period of time, but nevertheless on the Isle of Patmos, and this is where God gave to him understanding and things to be written in this particular book. Awesome.

**Verse 9—I, John...** You have to understand his age, to understand that at this point in time he had to be close to 89, 90. Incredible. He was an old man. **I, John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation,** on the Isle of Patmos, as it talks about here reading the verse again, **for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, what you see, write in a book and send it to the seven Churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.** Now, to us we have special understanding of what this is talking about because toward the end of the age here now God gave to Mr. Armstrong, an apostle of God, the ability to understand things about seven entire eras of time for God's Church. Awesome. Not perfectly, but to understand that there were seven periods of time for God's Church.

**Verse 12—And I turned to see the voice that spoke to me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks...** Now we can't comprehend what this was or even what took place because it talks about certain things that he was able to see things as it, like in a spirit realm, and he's able to see things that are hard to describe and yet there are things he can see somewhat physically, if you will. How do you describe some of those things? But he's striving to describe them. **And in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks one**

like unto the son of man, dressed in a garment down to the feet, and clothed about the chest with a golden belt. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow and his eyes were as a flame of fire. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace. Now, how do you describe something that you are able to somehow see, as it were, in a spiritual realm, but you can't, but you're seeing something physical that reflects the magnificence, the awesomeness of something that is very, very hard to describe for anyone in physical life? So this is how it's done. **His feet like fine brass as if they'd burned in a furnace. And his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was as the sun shining in his strength.** I can't comprehend that. It's trying to explain something in physical terms that you can't do. You're limited. How can you describe something like this, something of such awe, something of such power, something that doesn't exist in a physical world? Well you can't, but he tried.

**Verse 17—And when I saw him I fell at his feet as lifeless.** Can you imagine if you were given the ability to see something like this and it seemed totally real to you? This is real time you are speaking of. I would say it would probably take the speech out of you, probably take the strength out of your legs. It might even do more because it's happened to people at different times when things on a spiritual plane have happened in their presence to where they lost control of their bodily functions, because it's kind of scary when you haven't experienced something like that.

**And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Do not fear. I am the first and the last.** Now, this is in a different kind of context, not speaking of Alpha and Omega, not speaking of the great God as He described some of those things that pertain to himself. "First," literally, as in the firstfruits, things that he fulfilled the first of, the first in that respect of the firstfruits, the first resurrected from the dead. And that's in that context. And it says here, "and the last," as in it talks about the last Adam, the one who completes God's plan at the end—to its fulfillment. That's what it's about. So again, different terminology here but not speaking of God Almighty, not speaking in those terms of the beginning and the end. It's just a matter of a process here of how God fulfills and accomplishes His purpose.

**I am he who lives, and was dead; so it makes it very clear that it's about Jesus Christ. I am he who lives, and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore, Amen. And have the keys of hell and of death, the grave. Incredible, of grave and the death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.**

**Verse 20—The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand and the seven golden candlesticks; the seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches. Messengers; angels can refer here to as messengers whom God has sent or specifically of angels that have a specific function and a specific task. The seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches. And the seven candlesticks, which you saw, are the seven Churches.** So again here, if you read it in the world it's just a bunch of gobbledygook. "Seven candlesticks... seven churches... seven... What in

the world is this all about?" You know, going from Ephesus all the way to Laodicea and it really has no meaning for people.

Well, next John begins to write about these seven Church eras, and they are eras, which began with the first era on Pentecost of 31 A.D. and ended at the end of the seventh era, which was on Pentecost of 1998. Awesome to understand these things, brethren. Who can understand this? Only to those whom it's been given.

So let's begin by looking at some of what was said to this first era, which consisted of the leadership of twelve apostles under Peter who were sent to the Jews and to Israel, and to Paul who was sent to the gentiles. Now they were primarily sent to the Jews, don't misunderstand, but there was some bleed-over here of some things that took place of that which God gave to some to fulfill, to accomplish, to John, to Peter; there are things in history about Peter, of having traveled to Great Britain. The Roman era of that time and the expanse of their world that extended all the way to there, and it wasn't that hard to be able to do something like that. So, maybe he did and maybe he didn't. I believe that he did.

So before we continue looking at what is stated about this first era, it's important to note that in the beginning God provided the Church with those twelve apostles who would serve in the first era of the Church, and as stated, God provided the gentiles with an apostle who was Paul. There were twelve who were sent primarily to the Jews and one who was sent to the gentiles, all during the first era of the Church, Ephesus.

Now I'm going to read something that's about me in the Church website:

"Ronald Weinland is the last apostle in a long lineage of apostles, beginning with the original 12 who were established in 31 AD. He is the last apostle to God's Church before Christ returns to establish God's Kingdom, which will reign over every nation on earth. He was preceded by Herbert W. Armstrong who was the apostle to God's Church in the Worldwide Church of God until his death in January of 1986."

I only do this for one purpose ever; to write such things is because I am directed to. I do not like doing this. It is not me. So, I do what I have to do and this is one of those things. Anyone who knows me knows the depth of that. So I wanted to read this because of how it's stated here: "...is the last apostle in a long lineage of apostles." It's written this way for a purpose and we're going to learn some things today that you have not known. It states that there is a "long lineage of apostles," but you need to understand what's fully being said here. There is a lineage of apostles that started with the original, if you will, thirteen. I'm speaking of the twelve who were chosen, the one who replaced Judas Iscariot, and then Paul. So there were thirteen in Ephesus, and ONLY thirteen. There were no more, period. John was the last. By the time we come up to the period of time of 95 A.D. all the rest had been killed. By 95 A.D. John was the last. He was sent to the Isle of Patmos. This is where he was given the book of Revelation to write.

After he died, what happened to the Church? You should know. You should know what the Church would go through after an apostle like this dies. It wasn't good. It wasn't easy. It was incredibly difficult for those who followed; it truly was, to live through the times that they were thrust into because of a vast changing world and because of the kind of things that were being changed in what was true about Christ into something that was totally false. And the power and control they began to exert over people through this false religion was powerful and it wreaked havoc upon God's true Church, upon those whom God called. Times became more difficult the further you go into this, all the way up to 325 A.D., and then it really got bad, because they really had power then to kill and to destroy anything that didn't agree with them. There was tremendous power there that was given to that "church." If you read some of the things in history about what people have done in the name of "God," in the name of "Jesus Christ," in the name of "religion," it makes you sick to think that that could be "God's church," to cause people to try to recant. I don't know how anyone can read through things of history and believe for one minute that those people represented God. The cardinals, the popes, and all the crap of what they did to people in their lives, killing and destroying and torturing to get them to recant, to acknowledge that "you're wrong" and that "we're right." They had power, and they exercised it over people and they tried to exercise it over God's people.

You can be so thankful you didn't have to live through that. I can't comprehend what it would be like to live in that kind of a world. That's why when I think of people who choose to believe some of that kind of garbage and read through their own history, I think, what kind of a God, what kind of a God would have His teachers, those who are supposed to be teaching about Him and upholding His truth do such a thing? That's grounds enough to say, "Get me out of here! Where's the door! This is nuts. This is really nuts." How anyone who's listening to this right now, or who's going to be listening to it in the near future, how you could choose to follow something like that? Even what's happened in recent history and some of the sick, disgusting things that had been done by your leaders... and to uphold that? And people are moved from one jurisdiction to another? They should have been thrown in jail, not moved from one jurisdiction to another to hurt more children. It's a sick world we live in! And how anyone can call that "of God" or "Christian" blows my mind. But they'll kill you before they'll give it up. They'll kill you before they give it up. That's sad. That's sick, about human beings. If it comes down to it, and there are going to be some things that happen in the future... Sick, sick, sick, sick! But it doesn't stop the truth. It doesn't stop my words. I don't give a flip what they think or do. I really don't. They can do whatever they want to do. That's why we have to have God that protects us, and He's the one who does. And when it's done, the job is done; it's done. You don't have to worry. You'll be resurrected. Who cares what man thinks and what he does because human nature, mankind, can be so evil.

Look at what is starting to emerge in this world. I'm surprised somebody hasn't been killed yet and it's probably coming. There is such hatred. I mean, it is so deep. You can watch the different TV programs and what people are saying and the insanity of what's going on out here and what people are doing and saying. They're losing it. And the hatred, it's being fueled, it's being fueled,

and they don't know by what, but it's being fueled. You're seeing some things that are quite profound right now.

So again, it states that "there is a long lineage of apostles," but you need to understand what is fully being said here. There is a lineage of apostles that started with the original thirteen, these original thirteen. That lineage is picked up again much, much later, toward the end of this age. It is indeed long. It doesn't mean that it's a consistent and consecutive lineage as people might think of a lineage at all. It just means it is long from the time it began to the end of this age. We should understand that and we should understand why. We should understand things that Mr. Armstrong wrote when he talked about, "The gospel hasn't gone out in the world in nearly 1900 years." Incredible. And not into Europe; another hundred 19-year time cycles. Incredible. Coincidence? Nothing coincidental about it at all. So, I'll come back to this later, but let's forge forward here.

**Revelation 2:1—Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write; These things says he, and I want to interject here, there isn't one person out there who was scattered who will ever listen to a word you have to say unless they had been brought to a point of being humbled so greatly, of being shaken so deeply, because they're going to be shaken when certain things happen, because they've heard, they know, it's in their mind. It doesn't take much for God to turn it on. "You know this." It's there. "Now it's happening. Now what are you going to do?" There are going to be some scared people out here, because they know a lot. It's in their mind. They may have forgotten certain things, but it's up here, and there is a spirit there that when God gives His holy spirit to bring it alive again... powerful, powerful. Only those will listen. Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write; These things says he who holds the seven stars in his right hand, and who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.** Nearly 2,000 years of walking, as it is here, amongst seven Church eras through time as the head of the Church. So it's important for any who are new, who come along in time, that you understand that this is about seven eras of time for God's Church. It's distinct things that would happen in each period of time, about His one true Church. This is not about seven different Churches that exist at the same time because it's important to understand that there's only one true Church of God, one true Church of God that has existed over the nearly past period of time of 2,000 years now. Isn't that incredible?

I marvel when I write about that in some context, whatever that might be, or speak of it in a sermon, to think how the world doesn't understand. You belong to a church that started when? When was your beginning? When did your church begin? 1495? 15... 15 what? 1550, whatever it is? 1920? Your church began then? The roots of your church, the history of your church, that's when it began? What about the one we read about in the Bible? What about the one that started on Pentecost 31 A.D.? Whatever happened to that one? Did it just quit somewhere along the way? Did it not exist through time as God said/spoke of His Church, His people, of what Christ had to say? Did it not exist? Do you not grasp? So your church started in 325 A.D., huh? That's the oldest one,

that most in the world even recognize and call "Christian," for those who use that title, like the Catholic Church does.

It blows my mind too that all others can't come to a point in time where they acknowledge this. I mean these are just physical things; this isn't even spiritual. This is not big stuff. This is not deep stuff. 325... and you started later on? Hmm? Lutheran. Incredible. Seventh Day Adventist? Where did you get your start? Baptist? Baptist, do you even have any knowledge that you came out of a Seventh Day Baptist Church? Whew, wow, what a biggie there! And that you gave up the seventh day Sabbath in your history? You don't even know that do you, about your own history? If you read it you wouldn't want to believe it anyway. Those of you who are Episcopalian, whatever it might be, where did you get your start? Where did you get your beliefs? I mean that seriously, that blows my mind. Why can't people acknowledge these basic, simple things in history? So the trinity, do you believe in that? Where did that come from? Ah, the Catholic Church again, amazing. Easter. Where'd that come from? You keep Easter right? Where did that come from? So the pope's really were your authority? "Nope. The pope's not our authority." Then why do you keep those beliefs because they're not in the Bible? Amazing! No, seriously. Just talking to you, talking to those who are listening today, those aren't big spiritual things. There are things that people choose to be ignorant of. They are without excuse in God's eyes. Do you know that, on a physical plane, of dealing with life, and the things that have been done in the name of that body? Incredible.

So going all the way back there has been a flow in God's Church; one era of time, it stopped, and another one began. That's what we're going through. So there's only one true Church—that's why I'm going to read Acts —one true Church of God that's existed for nearly 2,000 years.

**Acts 20:28** says, **Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, an admonition here, taking care of the Church, over the which the holy spirit has made you overseers, so to the ministry this is what's being given, what's being stated, to feed...** To feed what, the Catholic Church? That didn't exist yet, hmmm. ...**to feed the Church of God...** Isn't that incredible? One of the great truths that existed all the way up through Sardis was the identity, was the name because it's "God's Church." It doesn't belong to Luther. It doesn't belong to some system, Catholic, whatever. It doesn't belong to different people like this, different systems, whatever it might be that they choose a name and they decide they're going to start being called by this like Baptist, because they understood something about how to baptize people. Do you know why they have the name? Because they understand what the word means; it means to immerse. They understood that it's not to sprinkle water upon a baby's head. "Put the water on the baby's head." It's not about putting water on the baby's head and having this sanctimonious type of thing that somehow that this child is now baptized and they don't even comprehend what the Bible says about baptism. But the Baptist, they understand. Let's just name our whole name after this because we've got something we grasp. You have to immerse them under water. That's what John the Baptist did. Baptist, baptize! I'm sorry, today I'm not having much patience with thinking about different church groups and people and what they choose to do, what they choose to

believe, the hogwash, the stupidity that they want to embrace. So you name your whole church after something like that and don't even know you came from the seventh day observance.

Anyway, it's God's Church. Isn't that simple? God's Church has His name. What a novel idea that it should be known by God. ...**which the holy spirit, God's spirit, has made you overseers, to feed the Church of God**, that's what it was known by, so simple, so basic. ...**which he has purchased with his own blood**. Awesome. The world doesn't like the truth. The world that calls itself "Christian" doesn't like the truth. That's why they turn against you. That's why they hate you. That's why they loathe what you believe.

**Ephesians 4:4-6**. I love this one. How can anyone that calls themselves a preacher out here read these words and not know that they're just simply lying through their teeth something fierce. **There is one body, and one spirit...** One, one, one, one, one; amazing, what it says here. ...**even as you are called in one hope of your calling**. So what's their hope? What's that one hope of their calling? Calling? What's that mean? **One Lord, one faith...** That's a good one to chew on. That one there, you could just stop right there – one faith. Do they know what faith is? Do they know it's based on what you believe? And other places speak of that, one truth, one belief, if you will, but one thing to believe in, not a lot of different things to believe in when it comes to God. One faith. So why aren't they all in the same church if they believe the same thing? If it all came from the Catholic Church, if it all came by the decisions of the popes, why don't they acknowledge that really the pope is really over them? If they believe in the trinity, and Christmas, the mass of Christ, and of Easter, and of sprinkling on the head, and all the other little things that are done, and saints, and all the stuff there... No, they don't agree. **One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all**. It's so basic, so simple.

Another scripture, that isn't rocket science. It's simple even on a physical plane. A person should be able to address something in their life about what they believe and acknowledge something that is very basic here. Just like the name of a church, that's not rocket science. That doesn't require God's holy spirit, to acknowledge and say, "Oh, yes, through time, through what's written in here, and as they wrote they always referred to it as 'God's Church,' 'the Church of God.'" Amazing. So where did it change? They don't bother asking. They don't care.

**Revelation 2:2**. I'm so thankful that all of this isn't going to last for a long time, because if this went on for a long time, the desire to persecute, the desire to shut the mouths of anyone who would speak certain things or to stop something would be pretty powerful. It truly would be. **Verse 2—I know your works...** So it's incredible what's being said here. **I know your works, and your labor, and your patience, and how you cannot bear those who are evil: and you have tried those who say they are apostles, and are not, but have found they are liars**. So the reason this is being said is because of what was taking place already. Through the period of the first Church era it began to happen, and it didn't take too long, as you read in the book of Acts here, and some of the things that started happening, and one who was Simon, one who claimed basically Peter's title, Peter's name, and stories he took to himself. Incredible, what took place

here, that another church finally did follow him and of the things he said about God and twisted and distorted other various beliefs of the world around him into this concoction of something different that was not told to the Church at all. So it wasn't hard for the Church in the early stages here to see someone that might come along and they said that they were sent from Jerusalem, or whatever, they came from Jerusalem and they're to teach certain things, and they've been sent by Peter because these things happened. Did the Church listen to them? It didn't take very long. They could... Can you? It doesn't take very long does it? If there aren't certain things being said and they're said in a different way, you think, "Oh, you're not from the apostles at all. You're not an apostle."

**Verse 3—And have carried much, while having patience, and all for my name's sake have labored...** So they did; they went through a lot, because the Roman world, the Jewish world, they hated this way. That's why they killed Jesus Christ. They hated it, and the Roman world as well; they didn't like what was being done there. They didn't like the Jews in the first place. They hated the Jews. The Romans hated the Jews. They hated anything to do about "their God." They didn't adopt "their God." They conquered somebody, and it was like conquering someone else that had different kinds of gods. They had their own gods and they sure didn't like "this God" the true God of what the Jews had to say about God, and all that they went through. So they weren't loved in any fashion or form, those who were a part of the Church.

So it says, **you have carried much**, in other words, you have labored under much; this hasn't been easy. This has been hard. I understand. God says, "I know what you have done and you have done it **patiently**." And as Christ says here, **for my name's sake you have labored**, you've worked hard, **and have not fainted**. You've not given up and quit, so even in the most difficult of times, when people are out to put you in prison, when people are out to kill you. Look at what Saul did before he became Paul. He was out to destroy the Church because he'd been given power to do so and he had people that could do his bidding. He was responsible for putting Stephen to death, and then giving his nod, "Kill him. Put him to death. Stone him." So it was his responsibility because it fell on him and he did it. Incredible what took place.

So if you're a part of that Church, do you think people did faint and give up? For some it was too much. But as a whole, those who were faithful to God, those who continued on in the era of Ephesus, this is the description God gave for them, of who they were and what they were like. I think of people who give up in the easiest of times and the richest of times and the wealthiest of times, as far as human life is concerned. We have such abundance in this country. We have such ease in this country, and even around the world in so many parts, and I think of people who give up for the most flimsiest of things in life. Choices, choices, choices. It's just too hard. It's too hard to save second tithe and first tithe. It's just too hard. "My budget. How am I going to do this? Give up cable TV? Are you nuts?! To change my budget that I should have..." I've dealt with this as a minister in times past of people in Worldwide who wanted assistance, who needed assistance "they felt" from the church, because things were just too tight, and you would suggest certain

things in the budget that would be good to get rid of, and to tighten down here and to start budgeting your money. Cable TV, or whatever it was at that time. You think, "Give me a break." What are we willing to give up? What are we willing to sacrifice for that which is far, far greater if we grasp the depth of the importance of it?

It's like some didn't go to the feast this year because they didn't save second tithe, because they didn't have enough money to go to the feast. It happened. They haven't been talked to yet; they're not on that list you have. I hope they'll come to me and acknowledge what they did and repent, because then God would be merciful because if I have to do it as God's servant, sorry, because I'm going to ask you, when I'm out there visiting you in different in areas. I'm going to look you square in the eyes and ask you, "Did you faithfully save second tithe?" And if you don't contact me ahead of time and tell me the truth about the matter and acknowledge what you did wrong, I'm going to say, "Sayonara. Dos Vedanya. Auf Wiedersehen," and all the other expressions you can use for saying "good-bye." You do not belong in this body because you are a liar and you're a cheat. You're cheating God; you're lying to God. How can we not give to God what is God's? You think, "Well, I gave Him my first tithe," and I wonder about that one sometimes too, because I know some don't. So, "I gave my first tithe. I gave a holy day offering." Well, what about the portion He gave to you to keep faithfully so you could attend the Feast of Tabernacles? What about that portion? Are you faithful in what God gave to you to observe and keep His holy days in a unique way? Did you do that? Because if you didn't, it doesn't matter whether it was first tithe or holy day offerings or whatever, you lied to God, you cheated, you stole, you used it someplace else, in your own finances to pay something else.

Do we not all go through things? Some people don't know what some of us went through in Worldwide in the beginning, when we had three tithes and you did it faithfully because you loved this way of life, you loved what God gave to you, and you budgeted and you had to back off of things you might otherwise desired to have because you couldn't afford them. You do what is right because God comes first! It's simple. God comes first. What a novel thing in God's Church.

That's why I'm saying these things because the time for playing games, the time for lying, and cheating, and being deceitful is over with. There is no patience and time anymore unless individuals repent. I have no qualms about that whatsoever, because the more I think about it, and the more that God gives me of His spirit to think about some of these things, to think about lying to God! During the feast I've had people lie to me. How can you lie to God's apostle? How can you lie to any of God's ministers, look them in the eye and lie, and say, "Well, I didn't do that. I do this and I do that." Then someone else comes along and says, "Do you know what someone did and said?" I'm like, "Yeah, I'm not surprised. They just lied to me in my face at the Feast of Tabernacles." Sorry. Let's get back to this. We can't lie to God. God's people don't lie. They can't lie to God. You can't live that way.

So God says this of them, about apostles that aren't apostles. **You have found them liars and have carried much, while having patience, and all for my name's sake have labored, and have**

**not fainted**, haven't given up or quit. **Nevertheless, I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love.** Now, the farther time went on into the 80's, by this time almost all the apostles, if not by this point in time, were dead, except for one and the ability for him to reach out to others was far more difficult, impossible, and unable to travel. Paul came to a point where he was unable to travel. He was restricted to Rome before he was killed. During this time there were ministers who visited Paul in Rome where he gave to them word that they then took into various areas of Asia. Some apostles even went into other areas of the world, but mostly the original 12 went throughout Judah and farther north into the regions of Samaria as they were striving to reach out and preach this way to them. But what happens in time when people go through struggles and hardships and there's not someone there to continually help them and work with them? I can't really comprehend that, except that God had to pour out more of His spirit and more of His help upon people and they had to make choices then of what they did. But still, it's not that difficult for a human mind to become weary. You go through the 50s; you have certain things that have been sent out to you that you can read if you can have access to them. The 60s, it's getting more difficult. The 70s, so many have already been killed. The 80s, John's here. The 90s, John's here. John's on the Isle of Patmos, if they even knew that, or that he was even alive. What does that do to people? What does that do to those who are ministers out there? It's pretty tough. They did travel. Some of them did travel. You'll find that with even Paul. He makes a count of different ones who would come to them and he would send them back out. So this was their primary way of communicating because they weren't able to travel. So different ones were sent out, but it was a very difficult time to continue to do the work that they had to do back at that age. So, it was very unique. Really, to me an amazing thing that God kept His Church going, did not let it die, called people, worked with people at different points in time, gave them the help they needed and yet they had battles because of everything that was working against them.

He says, "You've left your first love," so they had to recapture that. They had to work at recapturing that. They were warned. They were given admonition. Here it is by the time of John, this is what's being said. So if they hear something like this and you think about when you were called, maybe you were there. Maybe you were there at the very beginning, one of those who was still in Jerusalem, still alive. Awesome! You see you've let down, you don't have that same zeal as you've had before, you don't have that first love for what God was revealing to you as you did in the beginning. See, this is an admonition that can go to every era of God's Church, to every person who was ever called. The longer you live, because of human nature, the easier it is to let this slip, that first love, that zeal and that excitement for when you hear God, hear what God's giving to you, of things you never knew before. You come to see that the world is deceived and they don't understand and you begin to see things about Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, the holy days and what they mean, and then the fellowship that God gives within His Church and those things that you hold dear. Awesome! And sometimes we have to ask God to stir up His spirit within us. No, you don't have to ask for that once in a while, it's something you've got to continue to do, isn't it?

**Verse 5—Therefore, call to mind from where you have fallen;** see, because it's not right. It's not right to let down. It's not right to begin to drift. It's not right to begin to coast. It's not right to become lukewarm. It's not right to let up and to not be stirred up in spirit, because there's something there in a relationship with God that's missing and if that isn't alive within us and that love of God's word isn't in us and what God is doing and the purpose of what it's all about and we're not stirred up by that then we've gone astray. We truly have. **Therefore, call to mind from where you have fallen and repent.** That's what we have to do. Whenever we let down in life, wherever we let down in life that's where we repent and ask God to forgive us, to help us to change and to stir up His spirit within us. So this was a hallmark, if you will, of the Church of Ephesus up to the time of John in the 80's, 90's, and a little past.

It says, **and do the first works.** Do what you did when you were first called. Have that. Seek to have that kind of enthusiasm and zeal for the Church and for God's people and for what you're doing and for what you're sacrificing for as you did at that time when your mind was first opened up and God began to reveal to you incredible things about His plan and purpose and your opportunity in it. ...**or else I will come quickly and will remove your candlestick out of its place—except you repent.** So something to an entire Church, God said, otherwise your time is over and another one begins. It'll be cut short, your time.

So by the time of John's writing the Church was, again, growing weary and was losing its zeal for the message that they'd carried for so long, but they were losing that.

**Verse 6—But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans.** A lot of garbage out there on the internet about the Nicolaitans, a lot of ideas people have had even in our history of some who had done certain things of history within the Church, about the Nicolaitans and what they were and who they were. The reason there's a lot of confusion sometimes, if people just think about it a little bit, there is a great church that has tried to suppress and bury a lot of things that might be talking about them. So they have to turn it to a different area, different definitions. Incredible! And that's true here.

So this had to do with different ones who had different ideas and beliefs mixing in things about God and Christ and of apostles and so forth and the power they like to have and exercise over people because theirs is more about exercising power over others and it wasn't about serving and it wasn't about the ministry and God's way of life being taught. So, anyway, incredible things that are learned from some of this. But he says, "You hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans," because what they were doing and how they were doing it was wrong. It's like things that I witnessed, that I loathed and hated when I saw it in an era called Laodicea, of power that people are influenced by sometimes and how that affects the mind and you see that this isn't good. This isn't right. Something's wrong here. You're not to misuse and exert power for self, for self-benefit. That's wrong. God doesn't want us to do that as His people. So, anyway, what was true back then, except they had a different direction they were going of false things that were being taught. It's the same through time. Human nature is the same.

So He says, "You hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans; I hate that too." "I hate the way people oppress and hurt people, and it's not right. It's not from me," God's saying.

**He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the Churches. To him who overcomes,** and this word means "conquer." It's about conquering self. It's about fighting against whatever it is our period of time we live in. ...and I will give to eat of the tree of life, I love this, **which is in the midst of the paradise of God.** Hopefully from the feast we grasp what this means in a great way. It's similar to the things, expressions used about Jesus Christ and the marriage supper of the Lamb. From then on able to eat of the tree of life forever and forever through time and what that means. It's not a tree. We tend to think of this big tree and, "I wonder what this fruit was like and what we're going to eat forever," or whatever. Anyway, it's spiritual.

Notice, going on here, the next era to come because after Ephesus that period came to a close and another era came along which was Smyrna and then Thyatira. And candidly, very little is known about them, very little, because, again, there's this great big church that has the greatest amount of writings. They don't just let people have access to them. I don't know if some of you are aware of this, but there was a period of time where there was this one individual who was Seventh Day Adventist. Bacchiocchi. Anyway, he was allowed to go into some of the old writings concerning the Sabbath, and he did. He was allowed access to some of the books that the Vatican had and they gave him access to things and he was able to go and read various things about the Sabbath, which was his primary objective, and then write about it. So, it's incredible. They have a lot of old books, but they don't let a lot of people have access to them and there are great reasons for that. There are things that are not too complimentary to them in there in some of those writings. How do you explain all those things away? Anyway, sick, sick world.

So there's not much out there in history about what happened down through time because there's a church that tried to wipe everything out and rewrite things in the way they wanted it written. Think that happens? That's happened from the beginning of time. Nations have done it. Religion has done it, too, to wipe things out in order to have what you want remain and be taught. Incredible what's happened through time. And so for whatever, however how long it was after John - it may have been as soon as he died, and likely was because I believe God has revealed that there was not apostle until Mr. Armstrong. There wasn't another apostle through time until Mr. Armstrong. That really should be quite clear to us if we understand what God says about a function and a job and a responsibility that He gives and what is accomplished.

So there were evangelists and there were teachers and preachers that God raised up to work with His people to teach them, to help them as they were able to pass along various things that had been given to them and some of the books of things that had been written that we have here in this book. So God raised up people at different times in different areas through different leaders, and it didn't take very long, because after you have no more apostle as they had been accustomed to things happen, and it did happen to the Church. They did lose that first love. Things began to go by the wayside and God raised up another era, Smyrna.

So we come to that point in time here where it says, **verse 8—And to the church in Smyrna write, These things, the first and the last who was dead, and is alive, speaking of Christ. I know your works and tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich).** So again, people have gone through a lot of things, but here it's talking about some that went through some very difficult times on a physical plane. Poverty. God's people suffered. But you know, God can use anything we go through in human life, that we can go through, to mold and fashion us, to teach us things that otherwise could not be molded and fashioned within us. That's why everything has not been the same through time because different parts of the temple have different things that God is constructing. Of necessity there needs to be different experiences. Just like we talked about at the feast about experiences, there are things you cannot teach. There are things you cannot give up here in the mind. There are things that have to be molded and fashioned through time. Otherwise it would be a much easier job to bring everyone into God's Family, but God places people in different places and different responsibilities and different positions. It's like a construction job like He gives. It's a building, spiritual building, and we're not all the same and we all have to experience different kinds of things in order to be molded and fashioned. Here's one they went through poverty, and yet God says, "You're rich. Focus on that. Look at what you do have."

...(you are rich), and *I know the*... And sometimes this is something that people need to realize when they're going through a hard time financially, especially maybe when they're first coming in the Church because you're not the first to have to address things, to change things in your life financially in order to get things in order. Especially in today's society people live to the max. Well, where's that edge, wherever that edge is, its right there; it's the max. Every paycheck, it's the max. It's just the way it is. So when you come into God's Church you learn about first tithe, you learn about second tithe; there are great changes that have to be made. And you're not able to work on Saturdays anymore; there are big financial things you have to address in your life. And so we do. It's just the way it is. Because we're rich. We've been given the greatest riches that have ever been given to human beings.

**I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan.** Hmm, I wonder who that's talking about? A church that's getting bigger? An organization of people getting bigger but not yet having the kind of power that they really seek after, that they're going to be given about 325 A.D.? But these things were in the working before that, just like with what was happening with those referred to as the Nicolaitans, and it just continued to grow and become bigger and stronger, and not fully organized yet, and there was a lot of fighting going on, but someone was organizing it. There was a great being who was bringing it all together. They didn't get along with each other in different regions, and so forth, and that's a part of why the things that happened in 325 finally took place because there was an individual moved by a being to bring it under power, his, and to set it in the direction that he was moved to see it needed to go. He was the one over it. He was the one who established it, speaking of the

one who was over him, if you understand what I'm saying, speaking of Satan. "They are of the synagogue of Satan." Not the truth, not God's way of life, but something totally false.

**Fear none of those things which you will suffer. For behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried, and you shall have tribulation ten days.** So there have been a lot of thought, discussion, and candidly we don't know absolutely what this is, a period of ten years that existed and what they had to go through during that period of time when they were highly persecuted; later on, whenever that hit, whenever it happened, whenever it began to take place, we really don't know. But it led up to what would come later in 325. So they suffered a great deal. It talks about some of this, what they went through. They were in times of poverty, they were in times of hardship on a physical plane, and they were being persecuted in an intense way for wherever God had raised them up. We don't have the history. We have this, a lot of conflicting things and ideas in history.

It says, **But be you faithful until death.** You know, that's said of everybody. Here it was more pointed because the reality was many of them were going to die. That's what this is all about, "You're going to suffer. Be faithful unto death." And just as what happened there there were people who continued on out of Ephesus into another era, just like what happened with Philadelphia. There weren't that many, if you will, that were raised up during Laodicea in comparison to those who came out of Philadelphia and went on into a new era, see. There were people who went on from Ephesus, then, that went into this period of time and it just got harder, more difficult - and they had to go through a very difficult period of time, ten specific years.

And He says, **be faithful unto death**, people who'd already been worked with, people who began to let that first love go by the wayside, and what they experienced. **And I'll give you a crown of life.** So that could be said to everybody, "Be faithful to death," because you gave your life to God; that's what you did. **Who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the Churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.** When I read verses like this I just marvel because I think, who in the world of traditional Christianity talks about a second death? How could you die twice as a physical human being? It blows the mind, doesn't it? They have no idea. They can't teach it. They don't want to touch this. So, they do something different. "They can't be hurt by the second death."

So it would be good to interject here that from the time of the second era of Smyrna and on up to the fifth era of Sardis, again, just to emphasize this, there is no record, no writings or evidence of any kind that any of these eras had an apostle over the Church. Again, there were ministers and levels up to that of an evangelist; not a prophet, no prophets, and no apostles - of necessity. But God's purpose through this period of time was not to utilize those offices at all, and for great reason.

Let's notice Ephesians 2. Because something had to happen that led up to the end of an age, to where God would raise up a man who would become an apostle, who would begin to restore truth

to the Church, to fulfil other prophecies that God had given. Incredible, the beginning of that process of those things to be fulfilled in a greater way of the Elijah to come, frankly, and of that that's been repeated over a period of time here at the end of the age leading up to what Christ will fully fulfil.

**Ephesians 2:19—Now, therefore, you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.** It's God's household. That's what we're called to, God's household. ...and are being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Awesome, because, what does this mean? It means that God puts into the Church what He will at any time. He reveals things to the Church in a way of things that were not understood before, and it's just what God does. He did that with the apostles.

Jesus Christ brought so much, as the Church was to begin and then he worked with those apostles, prepared them for what they were to teach, and what they were to write because this is what the Church has been built upon then when you start reading things in the New Testament - things that were recorded about what Christ had to say, and then their teaching as they went out and began to build upon those things of what God gave to them to send out to the Churches, including Paul and what went out then in the gentile world. All those writings established what has been taught in the Church.

Those are the things that we were called into if you were called into the era of Philadelphia. That's what God restored and gave to us, understanding of those things that are written there. We're built upon that foundation because of what God gave there, what God gave through them, and more so than what's written in the Old Testament. That's a part of the process because that's the prophets, but it's magnified in what is written throughout scripture about Christ, about what Christ had to say that's recorded in the prophets, yes, but look how much more was added later on in spiritual understanding. Look at all the things. Go through Corinthians, Romans, whatever it is, Hebrews, you know, Peter, John, whatever, Thessalonians, Timothy, wherever you go. All that is contained there is awesome in what God gave to the Church. The Church is built upon all those things. I love how it says it here, "Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." That's how the Church is built, upon that structure, upon those teachings, upon that truth. ...in whom all the building is fitly framed together, and growing in a holy temple, in the Lord. In whom you also are being built, as it is, together for an habitation of God through the spirit. We understand what that means. It's beautiful. It's how we grow. It's how we are able to be taught. It's how we are able to grasp and understand things that are spiritual, but God does the building.

So I think about what God has built at the end of an age here. I'm humbled by it. I marvel at it. I think of what God gave through Mr Armstrong. I went back through and was reading through some of the things in *Time is Running Out* and *Time Has Run Out*. In *Time is Running Out*, and I thought of that great big giant tree that we used in the picture there. I think of a young child's picture in there. He's grown now. Anyway, I don't mean to embarrass him thoroughly, but go ahead and turn red (he's starting to). Anyway, I think of those pictures then and I think of what it was talking

about there of what is it we're to hold fast? And the article that goes through and starts talking about the 18 truths that were added on top of the other 3, things that God restored to the Church through Mr Armstrong, and that God then began to build upon those things even more that the apostles didn't even understand and know. They wrote about things that they didn't grasp and comprehend that were for the end of an age, but God gave Mr Armstrong. Then the Church, Philadelphia, was built upon those things. Then Laodicea had that building, foundation, if you will, that part that was given to them to lead us into what we had to go through and experience as well. But anyway, I marvel. You'll go through these things, you read things about them and what God has done through time, and what has taken place and it is a marvel, truly is.

Again, we have the beginning with Ephesus, apostles, and after that no more because God makes it very clear that if there are going to be apostles there's more that's going to be given to the Church, that the Church will be built upon. There is nothing given through the periods of Smyrna, Thyatira, Pergamos, all those, Sardis, until you come to Philadelphia. Then God begins to give more, because why? What was Mr. Armstrong given that's so awesome? We're at the end-time. Jesus Christ is going to return to this earth. We live at the age and the time when mankind is able now to annihilate itself, and God has to intervene to keep him from doing it. Incredible.

So, with that, next week we'll continue on and look at the latter eras, because, candidly, there's not a whole lot you can learn about the other eras except for what it says that's unique about them, except to understand that when you go through and look at the period of Thyatira, that it covered over a thousand years. It covered a period of time that a great church was being raised up on the earth and to confuse the entire earth. And it continued on until finally the printing press came along and then a new way to raise up daughter churches to cause greater confusion even to those whom God called, because now things were being said and stated that made it even more difficult for God's people. If you look at what is printed then in Bibles, and how people were able to come up with their own ideas of religion, because now finally books were going out more to masses, whereas before that didn't exist.

What an awesome history, to see such a period of time, and then all that period of time from the printing press on up to the time when God called Mr Armstrong, Sardis, the truth took a beating. The truth, the way of God took a beating during that period of time because of all that was out there and all the different ideas because before there was only one big church, harder to distinguish, but now these other kinds of churches were coming along and saying they disagree with it and some of these things began to sound like, "Well, this makes a little sense." It's sick what happened through Sardis, to where by the time you come to the end of it you only have the name of the Church, The *Church of God*, first tithe and the Sabbath day. The Church that was nearly destroyed, but God didn't let it happen. Awesome history all contained in seven eras of God's Church.