

NEWS WATCH FOR *the* CHURCH OF GOD

News for the scattered Church of God—by Ron Weinland

1st Qtr. 2002

THIS IS THE END TIME! Pt. 3

This issue of News Watch covers the 5th and 6th areas of scripture that prove we are indeed in the end-time. We are living through the many prophesied events that are to occur in this world and in the Church at the end of the first 6,000 years of man—just before Jesus Christ returns and the Kingdom of God comes to this earth.

5th Area of Proof

The 5th area of proof that we are living in the end-time is found in Ezekiel 5. The events in this chapter are dual because they will be fulfilled in both the Church and in the nations of Israel. Ezekiel 5 is going to be fulfilled in a physical way to the nations that make up modern-day Israel, and they have already been almost fulfilled on a spiritual plane within the Church—the spiritual Israel of God.

"And you, son of man, take a sharp knife, take a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon your head and upon your beard: then take balances to weigh, and divide the hair. You shall burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and you shall take a third part, and smite about it with a knife: and a third part you shall scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them" (Ez 5:1-2).

These verses speak of a prophetic time in the future—far beyond the days of Ezekiel. We have always understood these verses to be prophetic, referring to the nations of Israel in the end-time. But what we have not always understood is that these events would also happen to the spiritual Israel of God—the Church.

Ezekiel prophesied about a time when there would be such great destruction upon Israel that one-third would be destroyed almost immediately in the days when this tribulation begins, and another third would be destroyed over the following few months. Through this traumatic time, the last third would be scattered as a result of this devastation, but that is not the end of the tribulation because

the last part of verse 2 makes it clear that a sword of destruction will come upon this last third.

These words are truly sobering. Such destruction never came upon physical Israel. This kind of destruction didn't come upon Israel even when they were taken into captivity in the early 700's B.C. Although Ezekiel's prophecies were directed to Israel and not to Judah, he didn't even write these prophecies for more than 250 years after Israel had been taken captive. They were written for a time far into the future, toward the end of the age, prior to the coming of the Kingdom of God to this earth.

We are rapidly approaching the time when these prophecies will be fulfilled in a very devastating way upon this world. This time of great tribulation could begin within months or a very few years. That is how sobering these times should be to us!

The Church has understood these prophecies are rapidly approaching their time for fulfillment upon the modern-day nations of Israel, but what we failed to understand is that they are also going to be fulfilled upon the modern-day Israel of God—the Church of God.

Our history is witness to the truth that this prophecy is already being fulfilled upon the Church. That is why this area of scripture stands out as irrefutable proof that we are in the end-time. We know, or at least we should know, where the Church of God is today. Our recent history cries out about this truth, and it agrees with what God said would happen to us in the end-time. Our recent history and what we are currently living through agree perfectly with the word of God concerning what he said about the Church at the end-time. All these areas of proof that we are covering are witness of the true Church of God at the end of the age.

Prophecy Being Fulfilled

Ezekiel 5 is now being fulfilled upon the Church. If everyone within the environs of the Church would be truthful with themselves, then all

would agree that the Church has been scattered. We should also be able to agree that incredible devastation has already taken a great toll upon the Church, and we should all be able to acknowledge that we have been living through times of great tribulation upon the Church. Just as great physical tribulation will come upon the modern nations of Israel, great spiritual tribulation has already come upon the modern-day Israel of God—the Church of God.

When Mr. Joe Tkach, Sr. gave a complete doctrinal "flip-flop" sermon in December of 1994, he unleashed the greatest destructive power ever thrust upon the Church. Almost immediately, about a third of the Church simply gave up and quit. Within the next few months, another third had either turned back to the false beliefs of traditional Christianity or simply compromised with the word of God by passively submitting to the rule and administration of a new false system (which isn't really new at all). Although some of these people claim they did not compromise, they continued to give support and tithes to this new destructive power that was working to destroy the Church. Certainly their allegiance to God was no longer genuine and undefiled.

With two-thirds having fallen, one-third yet remained that had been scattered in many directions. But, as the second verse of Ezekiel 5 explains, these people who are scattered do not have it made simply because they escaped the initial destruction. God said that He would draw out a sword after them as well. The spiritual fulfillment of this sword should be obvious, even as it is stated in Eph. 6:17 *"...and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"*

The greatest challenge to the scattered Church of God has been the testing and trial upon brethren as to whether they would be faithful stewards to the truths that God had restored to the Church during Philadelphia through Mr. Armstrong.

There has been attack upon attack against the word of God—the truths of

God that have been restored to the present-day Church. The test is whether we will repent of our own ways—lethargy, complacency and pride. The abomination of desolation that has been working to destroy the Church is the power that works to dilute and change the word of God—the truths restored.

We are in a great spiritual war, and we are being tried and tested as to whether we will remain faithful stewards of the treasure of the word of God that we have been given. God's spirit will make manifest our spiritual condition. A sword has indeed been drawn out after all those who are scattered. It will reveal what is in each of us. *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"* (Hebrews 4:12).

Yes, prophecy has already been fulfilled concerning the magnitude of destruction upon two-thirds of the spiritual Israel of God. This is a powerful witness that we are indeed closing in on the end of the end-time. This portion of Ezekiel 5 has already been accomplished. It is very sobering to see what is now being fulfilled upon the Church. This is current—happening now! The last third was to be scattered and a sword drawn out after them.

It is sobering indeed to understand that only a remnant of that last third will come through this tribulation. *"You shall also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in your skirts. Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; for thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel"* (Ez. 5:3-4). This last third, having a sword drawn out after it, is to be cast into the midst of a fire. Again, the spiritual fulfillment of fire is one we understand. This time is characterized by fiery trial and testing—testing faithfulness to the word of God—the truths God has given us. Only a remnant will come through it.

It is interesting to note the expression *"...and bind them in your skirts."* The word for "skirts," as the margins of some Bibles show, is the

Hebrew word for "wings." This shows a kind of protection for those who will respond to the correction of God. Repentance is required of everyone who will receive this protection. This expression of "wings" should remind us of other places in scripture that reveal protection for God's people.

This description of a final third being scattered is described in other places. It reveals that only a remnant will remain of the whole, which God reveals is only a tenth of that last third.

"And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, says the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God" (Zech. 13:8-9). Yes, the last third remaining will have a fiery trial to test them. And those who will repent and call on God's name will be spared and protected, but not all will repent.

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call" (Joel 2:32). This prophecy concerns a deliverance that is both spiritual and physical for the Israel of God at the very end of this age. There will be deliverance for those who are called to be a part of Mt. Zion—the Church of God. A remnant is to be delivered. It is somewhat like a second calling because of the condition of the times in which we live. Without God's mercy and correction everyone would stumble and fail under this devastation. God's purpose is to call a remnant out of this last, scattered third. God is using this tribulation and scattering to help bring us to repentance. The last third is being called to repentance! Those who hear and respond will become the final remnant. Of this third, scattered and called to repentance, only a few will be chosen as a remnant.

"Hear you this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O

house of Israel. The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up. For thus says the Lord GOD; The city that went out by a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth by an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel. For thus says the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek me, and you shall live." (Amos 5:1-4)

The Church is referred to as being like virgins. This prophecy speaks of a time when the Church has fallen and will not rise again to her former state in this end-time, although there are some today who believe they are going to accomplish the latter. Of those scattered, as the expression is used of those who went out of the city by a certain number (scattered), only ten percent would remain. God shows again that the means to survival—the means to protection—the means to becoming a part of the final remnant is to "seek God." That involves repentance. The fallen virgin is the result of sin and disobedience to God.

God makes it very clear that there is a need to repent and seek Him zealously. This is exactly what the Church is directed to do during the time of Laodicea—the last era before Jesus Christ returns. This time of desolation and tribulation upon the Church is spoken of in very direct terms, especially in Ezekiel 20.

"As I live, says the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein you are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, says the Lord GOD. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and

they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and you shall know that I am the LORD" (Ez. 20:33-38).

The condition of the Church over the past several years is a witness showing that the people have been scattered in many different directions. The scattering itself is revealing what is inside each one of us. Who will be faithful stewards of what God has given us? Our scattering reveals just how diverse the thinking truly is among brethren. So many truths have been watered down or totally destroyed by various individuals. We are in a very sickly, spiritually sluggish condition. But many are too proud to admit that this condition is reality. Truly we are in the time of Laodicea when brethren primarily see themselves as wealthy, unable to admit they are wretched, blind and naked as a Church.

God makes it clear by these verses in Ezekiel 20 that He will get rid of all who continue to resist Him and refuse to repent. These are rebels choosing to remain in their sins. Those who refuse the correction of God will not *"enter into the land of Israel."* For those in the Church, that means they will not be a part of the first resurrection!

Yes, the witness—the true testimony of these verses in Ezekiel 20—should be plain for all to see. We have been scattered, and God is seeking to bring us to repentance. He has been pleading with us through the very things we have been experiencing. He will accomplish His will by bringing a full tenth through this, and that is what is meant by the expression: *"and I will cause you to pass under the rod."*

The scattering of the last third of the Church is rapidly drawing to a close. Ezekiel 5 has nearly been completed upon the Church. We are indeed closing in on the end of the end-time spoken of in scripture. We are about to enter the worst times in all of human history when Ezekiel 5 will be fulfilled upon the physical nations of Israel in the final 3_ years of great physical tribulation on this earth—then the Kingdom of God will finally be here!

6th Area of Proof

This area of proof should be very sobering when you stop to consider

the time frame upon which we are about to focus. In the previous areas of proof we have consistently addressed prophecies that pertain to the Church. We have not always understood those prophecies in that light. Instead, we have focused more upon a physical fulfillment rather than a spiritual one that involved the Church.

This can be difficult for people because we tend to look for physical answers first, and obviously many prophecies do have a physical fulfillment. Still other prophecies have a dual fulfillment—both physical and spiritual. Sometimes there is strictly a physical fulfillment and sometimes only a spiritual one, but we tend to look for a physical fulfillment first.

Why didn't we grasp the spiritual fulfillment of many of these prophecies we have already covered? The reason is because God did not reveal them before His time to do so. We were given what we needed—when God determined we needed it. We have been given great understanding of God's purpose involving much of what will come upon this world in this end-time, but we were not given many of the specifics involving the Church.

We have always understood that a great falling away would occur at the end, but we did not grasp how. There are reasons for that! As an example, we were given warnings throughout Matthew 24.

We were warned about false prophets and false ministers, as well as famines, wars and pestilence. But we could only see these as pertaining to an overview of history in a physical way, growing in intensity as we drew closer to the end. We were warned in verse 4 to *"take heed that no man deceive you."* Although we recognized this was a warning for all brethren since the day it was written, we failed to grasp it was also pointed directly at events toward the very end—upon the Church!

We knew that false ministers would arise from time to time, but we never fully grasped that "many" false ministers would rise and deceive "many" within the Church. We have now lived through that time. As a result, we in the Church have been

tried and tested to see how we would respond when it finally happened—and it happened exactly as God said it would! But we have believed that these matters only applied to the world of traditional Christianity and their power to deceive. Now we can see that these words were directed at the Church for the end-time.

We are told in verse 12 that *"because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."* As we matured, we came to see that this can only refer to the Church because this word for love is the Greek word "agape," which is the love of God—experienced only by those in the Church. The world does not have access to this love. Yes, this love was to wax cold for many within the Church.

Mr. Armstrong always understood that his commission was in verse 14, which says, *"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."* There are many who do not get this! They grasp neither what the purpose of this witness was, nor what God accomplished through Mr. Armstrong and the Philadelphian era. There are far too many who believe that he did not fulfill this prophecy, therefore they do not believe we are in the end-time—but only getting closer to it. They believe that they themselves or those they support must fulfill this verse.

Matthew 24 was understood in part, because that is all God revealed until these times in which we are now living. After verse 14 was accomplished, God said the "end" would come. It was not intended that we grasp the fulfillment of verse 15 upon the Church until after it came to pass, therefore we could only conceive of it happening in a physical way. The reason it was not revealed before its time is because it was intended to try and test us. The abomination that makes desolate in this verse is about the Church. For several years now we have been experiencing an abomination at work that seeks to tear down and destroy the Church—making it desolate. It is an abomination to God because it is about destruction within the spiritual temple of God. We could

not conceive of such a thing happening within the Church, so we believed this could only be about a physical temple.

There are ministers in the scattered Church who still foolishly believe that this is about a physical temple that is yet to be built before Jesus Christ returns. They believe that the end-time will not be upon us until this physical temple is built or until a physical altar is set up with sacrifices offered upon it.

How many had ears to hear when Mr. Armstrong revealed to the Church, in the last few years of his life, that the temple Jesus Christ would return to was a spiritual one and not a physical one? This was covered in Proof #3. Perhaps it would be wise to repeat the quote he made in "Mystery of the Ages" on pages 245 & 246.

"The CHURCH is the spiritual Body of Christ—not a secular or worldly organization, club or institution. Yet it is HIGHLY ORGANIZED.

Notice how thoroughly organized: 'Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.' Notice the Church is a FAMILY, even as GOD is a divine FAMILY—the household of God.'

Continue: 'And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building—the Church is a building fitly framed together' (WELL ORGANIZED—all parts joined and functioning together in harmony and team-work)—'grows unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit' (Eph.2:19-22). This scripture plainly reveals the temple to which the glorified world-ruling Christ shall come at his soon Second Coming. There is no scripture foretelling the construction of a material temple in Jerusalem before Christ's appearing. The 40th chapter of Ezekiel, however, describes the building of a temple after the return of Christ.

The Church, then, is to grow into a HOLY TEMPLE—the spiritual TEMPLE to which Christ shall come—even as he came to a material temple of stone and metals and wood the first time."

God did not reveal the spiritual fulfillment of 2 Thessalonians 2 concerning the "man of sin" before it was time to be fulfilled. If we had understood how these verses applied to the Church, then what finally happened would not have been much of a test or trial for us. We would have been expecting a leader of the Church, as the son of perdition, to betray Jesus Christ, and we would have been on guard to his changing the foundational truths God had previously restored.

Instead, we previously believed that these verses applied to the leader of a great worldly church. We only understood that these verses seemed to go together with scriptures in Revelation that spoke of a great, false religious leader who would do "great wonders" when a final beast power arose. Now we can understand that these are two completely separate prophecies.

Prophecies Sealed

God did not reveal the specifics of many prophecies concerning the Church. But as His people, we have sought to understand those prophecies because during these past few decades we have known that we are nearing the fulfillment of the soon-coming return of Jesus Christ. God gave us that understanding. As a result, we have sought to "watch" the events unfold around us that are leading up to that momentous time of the coming Kingdom of God.

God restored foundational truth through Mr. Armstrong, but He did not reveal understanding of all the prophecies that pertained to this end-time. Some people have been troubled because they lack this understanding, while others have ridiculed Mr. Armstrong because they have used such occasions to find fault and discredit him. Others have called him a false prophet because of such misunderstanding.

On occasion, like during and immediately after World War II, some have found fault with things Mr. Armstrong said as he pursued understanding while "watching" world events as they led closer to the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. As an apostle, God used Mr. Armstrong to restore foundational truth to the Church. He did not use Mr.

Armstrong as a prophet to prophesy. Prophecies had already been written and recorded in scripture. Mr. Armstrong sought only to understand them and encourage others to "watch" those things that would shortly come to pass. As we saw the end drawing nearer by being "watchful," we were sobered to be alert and have a greater sense of urgency that worked to help us draw nearer to God.

As an example, people have found fault with things Mr. Armstrong wrote in the booklet "1975 In Prophecy." That booklet helped the Church to focus more fully on just how urgent time was and how close we truly were to the end of this age. We were moving in a direction of progressive revelation in a way similar to how God progressively revealed and restored foundational truth through Mr. Armstrong. This is a maturing process of growth and movement toward the light—towards a brighter understanding of the things of God. Refusing the truth or any revelation from God is moving away from the light, which is moving in a direction away from God. Mr. Armstrong always moved in a direction toward greater understanding and revelation from God.

In the past few decades it was expedient for the Church to live in a unique state. Understanding that the end could be very near, we needed to plan our lives accordingly with a true sense of urgency, coupled also with the need to plan five and ten years ahead, knowing that the exact timing of these end-time events were not yet revealed to the Church. This booklet helped the Church grow in that understanding—that only God the Father knows the exact timing of events. God will reveal such matters to us when we need to know them. This booklet was part of a process of being led more fully into understanding of prophecy. Did error still exist? Yes! But more was **still** being revealed as we were being led more fully into the light. When Mr. Armstrong first began to have understanding about Pentecost, some error still existed, but he was always moving toward the light, never away from it! God did not reveal the exact timing for the observance of Pentecost until nearly another 40 years later.

Did Mr. Armstrong's inability to understand all truth perfectly reveal a false ministry or that we were not the true Church of God? Absolutely not! It simply manifests the process whereby God leads us more fully into the truth and the way in which He reveals His word to us. Such a progressive manner requires a maturing process on our part. It is God who reveals truth through whom He chooses and in His own time.

God's people have always had a burning desire to know when the Kingdom of God would come to this earth. But even as God told Daniel, who wanted to understand the very words of the book that he himself was writing, God said, *"Go your way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end"* (Daniel 12:9).

Yes, God has been revealing end-time prophecies to the Church. Much understanding has been given to the Church through one revelation alone. That revelation is one of what we have come to recognize as the 18 truths restored to the Church. Number 15 states that "Prophecy can only be understood if you know who are the Israelites today." This revelation and restoration of truth to the Church has given us deeper understanding of prophetic scriptures regarding end-time events involving the physical nations of Israel today.

The *Worldwide News* of August 25, 1986 carried an article honoring Herbert W. Armstrong which listed 18 truths restored to the Church through him. It stated the following under #15: *"Mr. Armstrong had a clear picture of which prophecies apply to us today, since he saw clearly who the descendants of Israel are. As well as proclaiming the Gospel, he preached the Ezekiel warning (Ez.33) which was meant for the descendants of Israel at the end time. The Great Tribulation will be the time of "Jacob's trouble" (Jer.30:7). Those who are following in the footsteps of Mr. Armstrong today are also preaching the Gospel and giving the Ezekiel warning."*

As a result of this revelation from God, we have deeply understood prophetic events that are unfolding in the nations of this world in this end-

time. However, still limited, we could only see the physical fulfillment of those prophecies. We did not grasp the full impact of many of those prophecies because God had not fully revealed to us what was to be fulfilled in the Church, the spiritual Israel of God.

We have understood for decades that Ezekiel 5 (covered in Proof #5) was about physical Israel at the end-time, but God had not revealed that this prophecy was also dual for the spiritual Israel of God—the Church.

The same is true about other prophecies. We have sought to understand them in light of whatever God had revealed up to that point in time. We were truly on the brink of greater understanding when God revealed to Mr. Armstrong, in the seven to eight years preceding his death, the significance of Jesus Christ returning to a spiritual temple and not a physical one. God had begun to reveal even greater truth to us, but it was not yet time for a complete revelation—a spiritual one.

As a result of what God began to reveal to Mr. Armstrong before his death, we are now able to understand that Matthew 24 is addressing end-time events that would occur in the Church before Jesus Christ's second coming. By knowing that Jesus Christ is returning to a spiritual temple and not a physical one, we are able to understand that He was speaking of a spiritual temple whose stones would be cast down as part of a prophetic fulfillment about the Church. Such knowledge has helped us to understand several other prophecies, like the one mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2 about a man of sin who "sits in the temple of God." Now we can understand this as being part of the abomination of desolation that would work to make the Church desolate, just before Jesus Christ would return to this earth.

All understanding of prophecy regarding the end of this age was not revealed to Mr. Armstrong. Foundational truths were revealed through him and that will be discussed even more fully when we cover Proof #7.

Brethren need to be aware of three specific areas that affect our

understanding. Those three areas are: 1) "revealed truth" that is foundational and never changes, 2) "watching" events in the light of prophetic scripture, and 3) "revealed prophecy" that is made manifest when God no longer keeps it sealed. Brethren have often confused these issues, not grasping how God works with us.

Quoting again from #15 of the restored truths, *"Those who are following in the footsteps of Mr. Armstrong today are also preaching the Gospel and giving the Ezekiel warning."* If brethren could truly understand our recent history and the prophecies being fulfilled as a result, there would not be so much confusion as to the task (work) that lies before us. God used Mr. Armstrong to preach the gospel in this world as a witness to all nations or perhaps better said, as a witness "of" all nations at the end of 6,000 years of man on this earth. He finished that job—the work that God gave him to do. That prophecy has been fulfilled through Mr. Armstrong, but the preaching of the gospel goes on. Today we are being tried as to whether we will remain faithful stewards of the truth—the gospel God gave us in this end-time.

Yes, the gospel should still be preached throughout this world for God's people wherever they are scattered. The world rejected that gospel message which was a witness against them in this end-time. After 6,000 years man is still responding in the same way he always has—rejecting the truth of God. The gospel message that went out "to" this world in this end-time is a testimony—a witness "of" all nations! This is a powerful testimony of how the world has received God's Word during its period of greatest prosperity and technological advancement.

An Ezekiel warning was given to this world along with the gospel message that was preached to it, but all was rejected. Only those "called" were able to receive it. If we understood these things then we would clearly see that the Ezekiel warning for today is for the Church. Even many of those who have been called will reject the Ezekiel warning that is

directed toward them. Pride will keep them from being able to receive it, just as with this world.

Along with the gospel being preached in all the world, the Ezekiel warning was given to physical Israel, and they rejected it. The Church is doing the same today. Most of the spiritual Israel of God is rejecting the Ezekiel warning directed toward the Church.

Sobering Revelation

In the beginning of Proof # 6 it was stated that, *"This area of proof should be very sobering when you stop to consider the time frame upon which we are about to focus."* We have had a rather long introduction to this area of proof because it needs to be understood in the light of our recent history. This area covers Revelation 6.

This chapter begins with the opening of the seven seals leading up to the return of Jesus Christ and the coming Kingdom of God to this earth. Matthew 24 is closely related because it addresses the same time period. The first four seals have always been seen in light of a physical fulfillment.

Chapters two and three of Revelation cover a long period of time. Here it addresses the characteristics of the seven church periods, which cover the entire time of the Church, from its very beginning until the very return of Jesus Christ. Much instruction is given to the Church in these scriptures.

But the rest of Revelation begins to focus on some very specific events. These events are prophetic in nature and reveal a very specific unveiling of events beginning with the opening of the seven seals. In the seventh seal, it is revealed that seven trumpets must sound, which also unveil specific events leading up to the seventh trumpet sounding and the seven last plagues being unveiled. All these activities are indeed about the unveiling of specific end-time events that lead up to the very return of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Kingdom of God when that seventh trumpet—the last trumpet sounds.

Revelation 5 is about the beginning of this process, and it reveals that Jesus Christ is the only one who is

worthy to open the seven seals which unveil those things that will happen on this earth in the end-time. Daniel was told by God to shut up the book he had written about end-time events because it was sealed until the end. Many prophecies throughout the Old Testament have been sealed until the time of the end when they would be opened.

"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer" (Revelation 6:1-2).

If you refer to our previous publications, you will find that when these verses are spoken of they are understood to coincide with the same things spoken of in Matthew 24. We were given understanding only in part, and we could only see these in a physical way upon this world—increasing in momentum until the very end. But it is more than that! The physical is only a type of what was to be accomplished spiritually upon the Church—specifically at the end.

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Mat. 24:4-5). There is indeed an increasing momentum revealed through these verses as they lead up to the very end. This is about the Church! This warning is about those things that will increase with greater power and growing devastation in the very end.

There have always been false ministers, within the environs of the Church, who have gone astray or were never a part of the body. They used the truth in a deceitful way to lead people away from God and toward themselves. Such men have often been difficult to identify because they spoke "using" the truth.

The first seal opened in Revelation is not about people becoming deceived in this world, for they are already deceived. False ministers, who claim that Jesus is the Christ and speak to brethren "using truth," are very cunning, deceitful and difficult to

identify, therefore they have great power to deceive. Although this has existed throughout time within the Church, this was to be magnified many times over in the end.

Consider what has occurred over the past decade. "Many" ministers have preached the truth that brethren recognize, yet they cunningly slipped in deception as they preached. This has happened with every foundational truth God revealed to us, and many have been devastated by these methods.

These verses in Matthew are speaking of a time when this kind of deception will grow with intensity until the first seal is opened. Many have been deceived in this end-time, and the height of this deception became climatic as the destructive power spoken of in Matthew 24:15 was made manifest. *"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso reads, let him understand:)"* Of course, as we have previously mentioned, this account also parallels the story in 2 Thessalonians 2 concerning the man of sin who "sits" in the temple of God.

The account of the man of sin, the opening of the first seal, and the escalation of false ministers leading to Matthew 24:15 are all prophecies about the same event. All three areas focus on the same moment in time when great spiritual tribulation strikes the Church with its greatest intensity.

The result of this turbulent condition coming upon the Church automatically led to other consequences that would naturally follow. That which was to follow the first seal being opened is a direct result of the destructive power unleashed when this seal was opened. When false ministers go astray, spreading their deception, there is always conflict within the Church. As the manifestation of false ministers intensified, more rumbling and warring erupted within the Church. *"And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that*

they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword" (Revelation 6:3-4).

Yes, when false ministers are made manifest on a spiritual plane, the result is one that brings fighting, destruction, hatred, and death (spiritually). The sword of false ministers is false doctrine and with that comes great devastation and spiritual murder.

"And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine" (Revelation 6:5-6).

As false ministers and false doctrine grew in power, brethren became weak and fell victim to the growing famine that accompanied these events. We have always understood that these scriptures spoke of famine, but we looked at them on a physical plane, even though we knew that in the end-time there would come a great famine of the Word of God. We simply were not able to put it all together before its time. God has to reveal these things to us when it is His time to do so.

"And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth" (Revelation 6:7-8).

This is simply another way of describing what we have already covered in Proof # 5 of this issue. Ezekiel 5 begins with great destruction that comes swiftly on Israel. As we have already covered, this prophecy has a physical and a spiritual fulfillment. The spiritual fulfillment has nearly been accomplished upon the Church and will be followed by the physical fulfillment upon the physical nations of Israel.

The first four seals of Revelation describe the first fulfillment of Ezekiel

5 which is upon the Church. As with the account of Ezekiel 5, these seals are describing the same account where a portion of the Church initially survived the first wave of destruction that came upon it. But as this fourth seal also reveals, the sword comes again with death and famine upon those that remain.

These first four seals of Revelation are about the Church and those things that would come upon her with great destructive power at the end-time. As the seals are opened however, a shift begins to take place as the power of destruction being revealed begins to turn its focus away from the Church and upon this world. The first four seals reveal destructive power unleashed upon the Church which is a great spiritual tribulation.

We have been living through that great spiritual tribulation upon the Church. Devastating power has been working to make the Church desolate. But God will not allow this abomination of desolation to destroy the temple. This is part of the overall process of trying and refining the Church. A remnant will survive and be changed at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

A Transition In Time

The fifth and sixth seals unveil a change in focus from events happening to the Church (spiritual Israel) to events that will happen to the world and especially physical Israel—the modern-day nations of Israel.

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (Rev. 6:9-11).

After the destruction upon the Church from the opening of the first four seals, there is a time of reflection to acknowledgment that a "little

season" remains before all will be complete and the Kingdom of God will be established on the earth. Obviously, those that are dead in Christ are still dead. They do not speak. However, a long time has passed as we approach the end, and those still living have experienced great suffering, because of the events of the first four seals, resulting in a common spiritual cry, "How long, O Lord?" God comforts His people by telling them that all who have suffered will be requited soon and that we are near the end of the complete fulfillment and purpose He is working out in the first phase of His plan of salvation for mankind. All who suffer and hold fast to the word of God and the testimony which they hold will be clothed in white robes. *"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, Who are these arrayed in white robes? and from where do they come? And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:13-14).* Yes, all who are arrayed in these white robes are one and the same.

Do you have this hope in you that is revealed in the unveiling of this fifth seal? Do you earnestly call out to God because of the suffering you have experienced and cry, "How long, O Lord?" We have experienced the worst of assaults upon the Church! We have been living through the aftermath of the opening of the first four seals! Now, we continue preparing for the Kingdom of God as we await those things that are about to come upon this world in a great physical tribulation.

Do you grasp it? We have already lived through the opening of the first five seals of Revelation. **Time is short!** Not only have we lived through the opening of the first five seals, but we have just entered into the time of the opening of the sixth seal!

The next issue of New Watch will continue with a closer focus upon where we are now concerning the opening of the sixth seal. This will be an inset to the story flow of what we have covered in Proof #6—we are in the end-time.