

TIME HAS RUN OUT

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P.O. Box 14447, Cincinnati, OH 45250

theCofG@aol.com & www.CoG-PKG.org

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Articles Written By
Ronald Weinland, pastor
the Church of God—PKG.

– INTRODUCTION –

By all rights, this booklet should prove to be one of the most sobering you have ever read. This world is at a pinnacle in all human history. We are at the very time that many thought Jesus Christ was speaking of during his ministry. In Christ's day many of his followers believed he was the prophesied king who had come to deliver the Jewish people from under Roman rule.

On Jesus' last day of human life, Pilate asked him if he was a king. Jesus responded by saying that his kingdom was not for that time—that age. But the book of Revelation makes it very clear that it is this same Jesus Christ who will one day return to this earth as King of kings. The very gospel message of the Bible, the gospel Jesus taught, is about the coming Kingdom of God to this earth—a Kingdom that will rule all nations.

Mankind has finally come to that point in time! We live at the time—the very age when Jesus Christ will be King over all the earth. But just before that finally happens, man must go through the worst times of his entire 6,000-year history. It is a time referred to in scripture as great tribulation.

You may be reading this booklet after this tribulation has already begun. God reveals that this time will last for 3½ years. Destruction will engulf the entire world with suffering of truly unimaginable proportions. The gospel—good news—is that God's Kingdom will come to this earth as soon as this tribulation is brought to a close by the return of Jesus Christ.

This booklet is written first of all to those who were once united as God's true Church in a single organization called the Worldwide Church of God. But as God forewarned His Church, in the end-time there would be a great apostasy (falling away from the truth). This booklet speaks of those things that have already come upon God's people at the end of this age. None in the scattered Church will receive what is written in this booklet unless they have been called to become a final remnant of all that were scattered from that one organization. If this is true, then what you read will ring true only because of God's Spirit drawing you. If that happens, then you and you alone will decide whether to respond or not.

Secondly, this booklet is written to give aid and some understanding to any God may be working with during this period of time—those who have not been part of the end-time Church of God. If you are reading these words and that time has come upon all the world, then perhaps you are being given the opportunity to repent and become a part of a physical remnant God is calling. That remnant will come through this end-time into a new world where Jesus Christ will establish the rule of the Kingdom of God over all nations. This is part of the very outline of prayer that Jesus Christ gave his disciples when he said to pray, "*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come*" (Mat. 6:9-10). This time in which you are now living is that time—when that Kingdom will come to this earth! **TRO**

Now IN the End-Time

About a year ago someone sent me a taped sermon given by a minister who is in one of the larger organizations that split off from the Worldwide Church of God. In that sermon, he mocked the idea that we are now “in” the end of the age. If anyone in the scattered Church of God fails to truthfully acknowledge our recent history—fails to be a faithful witness concerning the truth of those things we have been experiencing as a Church, then they will not be able to grasp the awesome importance to their spiritual well-being that we are indeed IN the end of this age.

Every one of us who has been a part of the Body of Christ should know the time in which we are living. If we believe we are indeed the true Church of God (those who have the impregnation of God’s Holy Spirit—who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ in their lives), then we should be able to easily acknowledge the truths about our history over the past 80 years. The events of this period of time reveal more fully that we are indeed God’s Church at the end of this age.

Nearly a third of the Bible is prophetic, and the vast majority of prophecy is about this time in which we are living. The Church has been in the midst of fulfilling a great deal of prophecy that focuses on end-time events that lead into a final period of great physical tribulation that will come upon this whole world. This article will be the first of several in this booklet that will focus on different areas of scripture that prove we are IN the end of this age.

The clearer you see and are able to believe the truth of who we are and where we are in time, the greater your spiritual strength can become, the stronger your faith can be, and the better prepared you will be for the traumatic time of great physical tribulation that concludes all end-time events.

Failure to acknowledge these

scriptural proofs that we are in the end of this age will result in brethren drifting farther into spiritual sluggishness and sleep. This kind of blindness causes people to grasp at false security. Too many find it more comfortable to trust in lies concerning the Church. Such lies include the false teaching that this is a time of growing peace within the Church—a time when people are successfully regrouping and are once again working together in harmony, after a troubled time of great chaos experienced in the Worldwide Church of God. If you know that this is the end of this age, then you will know that such teaching is false and only works to move brethren farther away from working at the things they are supposed to be doing.

Failure to believe what God says about His Church at this end-time is a refusal to accept the true testimonies of God—**His witness** of our condition at this time! It is this very refusal that has permeated the Church for the past seven years and has become a witness against us. That is why *Time Has Run Out* for the scattered Church of God. The articles in this booklet can only serve now to aid brethren in their repentance as God brings them to this understanding. Only a small remnant will be called by God to repentance out of the scattered Church.

Prophetic duality for both the world and the Church.
“For when they shall say, ‘Peace and safety,’ then sudden destruction cometh upon them.”

If you believe the words of God concerning the end of the age, just before the Kingdom of God comes to this earth, then you will know that you are living in that very time. You will believe Him when He tells you that this is a time of mourning, lamentation and woe. You will believe Him when He condemns the lie about this being a time of peace and safety. Any minister or organization that distracts brethren from what is true is working against God and

the power of God’s spirit that should be leading into greater understanding, truth and faith.

Although brethren throughout the ages have been able to profit spiritually from many scriptures that focus on the warnings and admonitions that refer to a very specific time at the end, those same scriptures are never-the-less focused on very specific events that do occur at the end-time. One example that fits very closely to what we just touched upon in the previous paragraph is found in 1 Thessalonians. *“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober”* (1 Thes. 5:1-6). This is much needed instruction at this time! If we are indeed following the lead of God’s spirit, we will be in the light—able to understand the truth that there has been a great ongoing thrust within the environs of the Church that

deceitfully seeks to persuade people that now is a time of peace and safety.

Ezekiel records some very pointed words regarding what God has to say about ministers who seek to persuade brethren that times are positive concerning the Church—portraying a picture of peace, great works, and positive growth and safety within their fellowship.

“Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination,

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The Ten Virgins

(Matthew 25)

The following articles covering specific areas of scriptural proof that we are in the end of this age are by no means the only areas of scripture that prove where we are in that time, but they are some of the most complete and important areas we need to understand. You need to also be aware that some of these areas of scripture contain many proofs by themselves.

The first area of proof is contained in a parable. This parable has always had valuable lessons for brethren in the Church, but it also contains information that applies even more specifically to the time in which we are now living. This area of scripture is contained in Matthew 25 in the parable of the ten virgins.

As we discuss each area of proof, the article will focus on important points that need to stand out in our understanding. The articles are not meant to be exhaustive in covering each area of scripture because that has been done more fully in a series of sermons which are listed at the end of this booklet and are offered free upon request.

It should first be noted in this parable concerning the virgins that all ten were guilty of failure to perform what they were supposed to be doing. Although the wise virgins had been more fully prepared by seeking God's spirit in their lives (the oil), they failed to use it as God had commanded. They did exactly what the foolish did at a time that was spiritually critical for them. They all slumbered and slept. Because of pride, there are far too many brethren who have a difficult time admitting that this is exactly what began to happen in the Church in the late 80's. This same thing is happening again in this new century in those who have been scattered.

We are all guilty of having slumbered or slept. Are you able to

admit that this happened in your life? If this did not happen in the Church—if the Church was not spued out of God's mouth because of this very condition, then perhaps the Church has not really been scattered. But, if we are truthful with God and with ourselves, then we should be able to admit the obvious—but many can't! And, those who can't won't want to see the remaining areas of proof because they do not seek to reconcile or understand that who we are and the times we have been living through during our recent history are in perfect agreement with the word of God.

The Church came to a time when it had to be awakened because brethren were either in the process of drifting off to sleep or were already fast asleep. A prophetic and powerful event occurred in the Church (which will be covered in another area of proof) that worked to awaken much of the Church. It was an event prophetically marked by an apostasy—an apostasy that moved from the peak of leadership and fulfilled a scripture that pointed to this very time as being a revelation for the Church that Jesus Christ is now coming—that we have now entered the end-time. Before this occurred, Paul recorded that the coming of Jesus Christ could not occur until this astounding event first happened to the Church. It is a CRY that went out to the entirety of the Church, but not all of the Church heard because they were too deep into a spiritual sleep.

When people are tired and drowsy, they gradually begin falling to sleep or go to sleep quickly. When told to awaken, some are able to wake up immediately, while others simply roll over and continue to sleep. For the Church, this process of falling asleep and being awakened took place over several years. Even though some woke up earlier, there was a very specific time for the Church when this "cry" was

most intense.

Regardless of the timing, the Church did begin to fall asleep in the mid to late 80's and began to be awakened throughout the 90's with the strongest part of the cry occurring in the mid 90's. We have lived through this time and should be able to easily see ourselves in this parable.

A cry went out to all the Church that the bridegroom was coming and that we were not to be sleeping, but making ourselves ready. We are to be preparing ourselves more fully than ever for the soon-coming Kingdom of God—the return of Jesus Christ.

Our sad history is a witness that most did not choose to respond to this great cry. Almost all of those who did at first respond by being awakened have been living the process all over again—drifting back to sleep or asleep already. This is not the time to allow that to happen again, but this is the time to be making ourselves ready for the soon-coming of the bridegroom. We are to be alert, watchful and on guard! That is the opposite of drifting off to sleep!

Those who properly respond to God's cry will be drawing closer to Him now than ever before in their lives. They will be more alert to the danger and pull of becoming lukewarm and spiritually sluggish. They will have a renewed zeal toward God and His plan and purpose for us. Then, when the bridegroom comes, those brethren who have made themselves ready will be able to go in with Him to the marriage.

"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Matthew 25:6). We have been living through that time of midnight upon the Church when sleep has overtaken us. The task before us has been to seek to be fully awake and watchful—making ourselves ready for the coming of God's Kingdom.

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The Spiritual Temple (Matthew 24)

Another area of scriptural proof that we are in the end of this age is found in Matthew 24.

This chapter begins with the account of Jesus walking with His disciples around the area of the Temple in Jerusalem. As Jesus turned their attention to the temple, He said that the time would come when there would not be one stone left upon another which would not be thrown down.

The conversation had evidently sparked a strong, inquisitive response from the disciples because they asked him what would be the sign of his coming and the end of this age. They had no concept that nearly 2,000 years would pass before this would happen because they believed he would come into Jerusalem to rule during their lifetime.

The fact that these questions were a response to what Jesus had earlier told them, concerning the stones of the temple being cast down, reveals that the conversation was directed to events that would lead up to Jesus Christ coming as King of kings. He began to tell them about the events that would lead up to His coming. He concluded His remarks to them by saying, *“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”* (Mat. 24:30-31). And the previous verses show what would happen at the end, just before His return.

In the last few years of his life, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was given understanding that Jesus Christ was not going to return to a physical temple, but to a spiritual one, which is the Church. He made it clear that a physical temple

was not going to be rebuilt so that Jesus Christ could return to it. He made those statements because that is what some professing Christians believe must first happen before He can return. There were also people in the Worldwide Church of God who believed that a physical temple had to be built, and Mr. Armstrong wanted to make clear that Jesus Christ was returning to a spiritual temple.

The same minister referred to in the “Introduction,” who also carried the credential of Regional Pastor in the United Church of God organization when he gave his sermon, mocked the belief that many of the statements made here in Matthew 24 could have anything to do with the state of the Church today or that we could now be in the end-time. He spoke of a physical temple

Where were all these ministers who should have listened and learned from those basic truths God revealed through His end-time apostle? Why did these disciples fail to learn what God gave to the Church?

that had to be built in Jerusalem first. Where was this minister when Mr. Armstrong began to correct such false notions? This minister was a church pastor, but he failed to grow with the Church. Such notions should have been dispelled long ago.

There are many ministers in the scattered organizations who hold to the belief that a physical temple must be rebuilt. Dr. Meredith of the Living Church of God organization has also stated this belief or that at least an alter must be erected in Jerusalem. Their literature also attests to this belief. Yet Mr. Armstrong stated in numerous sermons given in the late 70's and early 80's that Jesus Christ would return to a spiritual temple and not a physical one. He even explained that no one on this earth at this time could build a temple that would be considered by God to be

holy. Therefore, in the end of this age, there could be no abomination of desolation in a physical temple nor on any alter because those things would not have God's presence in them and would therefore fail to be His.

Mr. Armstrong, in the book “Mystery of the Ages,” makes it clear concerning the temple to which Jesus Christ would return. As he referred to verses in Ephesians 2:19-22, he went on to say, *“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”* (Chapter 6, page 246).

Where were all these ministers who should have listened and learned from those basic truths God revealed through His end-time apostle? Why did these disciples fail to learn what God gave to the Church?

Because of our experiences in the past few years, it should be abundantly clear that in Matthew 24 Jesus Christ was speaking of a spiritual temple and the events that were going to happen at the very end of this age, just before He returned. We have been experiencing those events Jesus Christ told His disciples about when they asked Him the sign of His coming and the end of this age. The notion that a physical temple must be rebuilt should be foolishness to us.

The Bible also uses other terms to speak of the same end-time events upon the Church just prior to the Kingdom of

God coming to this earth. Many prophecies speak of a scattering with only a remnant remaining. Revelation describes a time when the Church would be spued out of God's mouth—the result being the same when speaking of a scattering of the Church. Jesus described a time when the stones of the temple would be thrown down. We have been experiencing these events. We have been living through the pain and suffering of such events.

Mr. Armstrong was filled with purpose. He understood the commission that God gave to him, which was contained in these end-time events being spoken of by Jesus Christ. *“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”* (Mat. 24:14). Mr. Armstrong was zealously focused on accomplishing this verse. It was given to him to fulfill—not to any individual or group living today. God opened doors for Mr. Armstrong to visit with numerous world leaders in the last several years of his life. A righteous God was accomplishing a great purpose by showing that, even in the end of this age, with all his advancements, sophistication and technology, man would still be the same and leaders would still reject God. This is indeed a witness against them.

The same account in Mark also makes it clear that God intended that there be a witness against world leaders in the end-time. *“...and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony [same Greek word as “witness” in Matthew 24:14] against them. And the gospel must first be published [Gk. “proclaimed”] among all nations”* (Mark 13:9-10). These verses specifically apply to a commission God gave to Mr. Armstrong and the Philadelphian era to fulfill. Some either do not think that it was given to him to fulfill or that he did not finish doing it, and therefore, others must finish accomplishing it.

Why can't pastors and church leaders admit or acknowledge that these verses have indeed been fulfilled? If we are able to agree with the truth of this fulfillment, then we will better understand the battles before us today, and we will understand more fully what our focus

should be, just as much as Mr. Armstrong and the Church understood what their focus was when Matthew 24:14 was being fulfilled. That time is now past! We are now deep into the time of Matthew 24:15. Grasping the reality of how far we are in completing the fulfillment of verse 15 should sober us deeply and stir up an incredibly strong sense of urgency on our part—an urgency that has sadly been lacking for several years now within the scattered Church.

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:” (Matthew 24:15-16).

Our experience over the past few years ought to loudly proclaim the obvious fulfillment of these two verses. Daniel spoke of an abomination in the temple. When we understand that the temple Jesus Christ is speaking of is a spiritual one, we should easily grasp that the abomination occurs within the spiritual temple of God, the Church of God, and works to produce desolation. How much of the Church still remains today? How long will leaders and pastors continue to refuse the obvious? The Church has been suffering horrible destruction.

When the power of desolation began to grow in the WCG, brethren began to flee into different organizations seeking a safe haven. People wanted to escape the falling away that was beginning to destroy so much of the Church.

These verses are telling us that when we see these forces at work in our midst—we are to flee. We are to flee for our spiritual lives. These are fearful times. When the power of desolation began to grow in the WCG, brethren began to flee into different organizations seeking a safe haven. People wanted to escape the falling away that was beginning to destroy so much of the Church.

We have always understood that mountains refer prophetically to governments or nations. How could this apply to the scattered Church? When an abomination of desolation began to

work upon the Church, God's Church began to scatter. This scattering also resulted in the fragmenting of the government that had existed in a single organization called the Worldwide Church of God, where the body of Christ—the spiritual organism of the Church of God—had existed for several decades. When scattering occurred, the previous government began to emerge in the form of prophetic mountains—new organizations, but scattered. Brethren had a kind of safety for a time from the immediate destruction that was working upon the Church as the abomination of desolation began.

Sadly, within only a short time, this same destructive power began to work in the scattered organizations that initially fled the onslaught of the first great wave of destruction.

What some do not seem to fully recognize today is that this power of desolation upon the Church was not confined to the Worldwide Church of God. This power spilled over into many groups producing a more massive scattering over many years. Most of the destructive power upon the Church has come through ministers who failed to repent when they moved from one organization to another. They carried their false ideas and/or hypocritical lifestyles into other organizations and

perpetuated the process of destruction upon the Church. All organizations have experienced this. Who can deny this is true? These false ministers began to teach false doctrines in their church areas and more brethren fell victim. This is still going on!

Other false ministers have been lulling brethren back to sleep because their sermons no longer have the inspiration of God in them. They have grown weak through disobedient and hypocritical lives. When ministers begin living a lie—preaching one thing but living another—they quench God's spirit.

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The Man of Sin

(2 Thessalonians 2)

The man of sin spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2 is an area of end-time proof that is no longer prophetic in nature, but is now a matter of history for the Church—end-time prophecy fulfilled. Not only did this end-time event revolve around the Church, it actually constituted part of a proclamation—a revelation **and sign** to the Church that the return of Jesus Christ was no longer being held back, but that now He is coming.

This chapter in Thessalonians has partially been interpreted as being about an event that will happen in the last 3½ years of great tribulation concerning a religious leader who will exert great power during that time. However, this religious leader, who is part of the Beast power referred to in Revelation, is not the same person being spoken of in Thessalonians.

It is easy to understand how these accounts could be mistaken as the same event, but as with so many things that have happened to the Church in recent years, the actual fulfillment of these events should readily reveal to us the truth of the matter.

There is an example we need to follow which was set by the early Church. Although many in the Church believed they understood the will of God concerning the gospel message, they had to face the reality that they were deeply mistaken. They had to repent and change their entire focus and course of action concerning the preaching of the gospel. This was in the matter of circumcision and the gospel going to the Gentiles. As God worked with James, Peter and Paul, they began to come into harmony with the actual will of God in this matter. Above all, they could not deny what was already happening in the Church because to do so would be denying God. God was

giving His Holy Spirit to the Gentiles. How could anyone deny what God was doing? How could anyone resist and stubbornly hold onto an incomplete understanding of the role the Gentiles were to play in God's plan?

We too should not deny events that have happened in the Church, especially when we see that they are in perfect harmony with the word of God. It is not wise to refuse the will of God or the fulfillment of His word. To do so would be to resist God in order to hold onto our own will and selfish design.

Let's begin looking at 2 Thessalonians and notice the context of what Paul is addressing in chapter 2.

"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;" (2 Thes.2:1-3)

A sign to the Church that the return of Jesus Christ is for our time now—no longer held back!

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;"
(2 Thes.2:3, KJV).

The subject matter of the context is quite apparent. Notice the phrases: 1) "by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2) "and by our gathering together unto him," 3) "as that day of Christ is at hand," and 4) "for that day shall not come." Paul is very clearly addressing a time which the Church has

always looked forward to—the coming of Jesus Christ and the day when all firstfruits will be gathered together unto Him. Paul was explaining that this day would not be **at hand** until something else occurred first within the Church.

That "something else" is twofold; both tie in directly with each other. These are not separate accounts dealing with the world on the one hand and the Church on the other. Both are about the Church at the end of the age, just prior to the return of Jesus Christ.

Twofold Prophecy Revealed

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;" (2 Thes.2:3, KJV). Brethren have long known that a "falling away" or "an apostasy" (in the Greek) would take place in the Church. Oftentimes over the past two thousand years brethren have fallen away from the truth. It happened when they left those truths that God revealed to them through the power of His spirit.

What would make this time different from other times when brethren have fallen away? Why would this specific falling away stand out as being unique? We can answer those questions by referring to one primary difference; this time of apostasy would be accompanied by the manifestation of the "man of sin."

Our experience from the recent past cries out to us concerning the fulfillment of this horrible event. There has never been a time within the Church of God when the principle leadership turned against God and betrayed Jesus Christ. However, there is one other account mentioned in scripture where a "son of perdition" betrayed Jesus Christ. These scriptures are telling us that before Jesus Christ

could return, there would again be a great betrayal when another “son of perdition” would be revealed. That has happened!

The evidence should be obvious to all, but many will not face this issue or admit its truth. We should be able to stop at this very point in this article and have everyone in the scattered Church be in full agreement that this has indeed been fulfilled, but many do not understand.

Since so many cannot see this or have chosen not to see, the question must be asked, “Who could be labeled in such a way, as the man of sin and the son of perdition?” This betrayal could not be done by someone outside a direct relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church. It certainly could not be a label for anyone in some false religion because such people have always worked against God and Jesus Christ. This man of sin is unique and has the capacity to betray a great trust given to him.

Notice what else is said about this person. “*Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*” (2 Thes.2:4). This kind of description should not be foreign to God’s people. We should understand such an expression and what it means.

First, we need to consider the kind of circumstance where someone could be described as one who sits in the temple of God. Is this a physical temple that is yet to be built? The answer should be clear to all who have their roots in the Worldwide Church of God at least as far back as the early 1980’s. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong spoke on this subject several times in those days, and you will find the following quotation on pages 245 & 246 of his book, “Mystery of the Ages.”

“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)—‘groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are 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.”

There has been only one man in this modern age that was “set” in the Church of God.....who betrayed Jesus Christ.

Yes, those in the Church of God are described as being a holy temple, which is spiritual. “*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are*” (1 Cor.3:16-17). Understanding this truth will help us to understand what we are being told here in 2 Thessalonians 2 and in other scriptures as well.

No one could be in the spiritual temple of God unless they are a part of the Body of Christ, the Church of God. This verse is not talking about someone who sets down to relax in a chair, but someone in authority who is set in the Church bearing authority. This word in the Greek actually means to “cause to set,” as to set, appoint, or to confer a kingdom on one (from “The Word Study Dictionary” of Spiros Zodhiates).

Consider the following six places that this same word is used in scripture:

1) “*And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Mat. 19:28).

2) “*And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom*” (Mat. 20:21).

3) “*Saying, The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat:*” (Mat. 23:2)

4) “*When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha*” (John 19:13).

5) “*If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church*” (1 Cor.6:4).

6) “*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne*” (Revelation 3:21).

There has been only one man in this modern age that was “set” in the Church of God who had been given great trust and authority, who betrayed Jesus Christ and was found to “oppose” God. “*Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*” (2 Thes.2:4).

This is the same thing that mankind did from the very beginning. Adam and Eve began to decide for themselves what was right or wrong. They no longer looked to God as the true source of all that is right and good. God alone determines good and evil. By taking on a prerogative that is only God’s, they raised themselves above God. “*And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the*

LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen.3:22-24). It was for this very reason that mankind was cut off from God.

We have lived through a time when a twofold prophecy was fulfilled which marked a specific time in man’s history and announced that Jesus Christ was now going to return to this earth. This was a **sign** to the Church that He is now returning. The fulfillment of this twofold prophecy was to conclude at a time when there would be a “falling away” from the truth that God had delivered to His people coupled with the influence of a leader who was **set** in great authority within the Church. This leader would rebel, betray a great trust given to him, and even oppose God by raising himself above God by taking on a prerogative that is God’s alone—determining what is true and false, what is good and evil, what is right and wrong—turning from the truth that was once delivered to him.

If we can be true to God and faithfully acknowledge what we have witnessed as God’s people, we will readily admit that a great falling away has occurred. That falling away was as destructive as it was because of the unfaithful leadership of Joseph W. Tkach, Sr. who set out to destroy what God had built. Can we as God’s people be honest and faithful before God with those things we have witnessed? Does our recent history agree fully with the faithful and true word of God?

In the days of Sardis, God told the Church that it was spiritually dead and that what they had remaining was ready to die. They only had three foundational truths remaining, so God ushered in a new era for the Church in which doors were opened to restore truth to His people—truth needed for salvation. That was accomplished through His apostle, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. As Mr. Armstrong was nearing death in January of 1986, he was moved to transfer his authority as the earthly head

of the Church from himself to Joseph W. Tkach, Sr. That transfer of authority was made very clear to the Church, so much so that Mr. Armstrong was moved to say that “our very salvation depended upon” faithfully following and supporting that transfer. That was Mr. Armstrong’s final “binding and loosening” decision upon the Church. But when Joseph Tkach, Sr. turned from God and changed the very foundational doctrines of the Church, God had already taught us what we are to do in any such circumstance—we are to FLEE spiritual fornication and idolatry! When Lucifer rebelled against God, none of the angels were to stay around and support him, rather they were to flee and remain faithful to God.

That is why such rebellion and destruction is spoken of as being abominable to God, because it sets out to destroy the very temple of God—the temple that He Himself is building.

The Countdown Has Begun

This end-time event is unprecedented in all the history of the Church. That is why such rebellion and destruction is spoken of as being abominable to God, because it sets out to destroy the very temple of God—the temple that He Himself is building. “*When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:*” (Mat. 24:15-16). Yes, all who escape that desolation will have had to obey God in order to escape, by fleeing as He commanded. And then they must continue to flee any destructive power working to weaken the temple of God. The abomination that is still working to make the temple desolate is not confined to the Worldwide Church of God.

The verse we have just read in Matthew, concerning the abomination of desolation that is upon the temple, is the very culmination of what Jesus was telling the disciples would be the sign of His coming. He spoke of those things that would lead up to this great end-time event which would be the very sign that the end-time had come. This is the very same sign being spoken of in 2

Thessalonians that explains more fully the primary cause of desolation that was to come upon the Church and the great apostasy that would be revealed.

As we continue the story in 2 Thessalonians, we should begin to see more clearly why this unique event is so pivotal to end-time prophecy. Notice the brackets that have been added to give explanation in the following verses.

“And now ye know what withholdeth [Gk.-restrains, holds back, detains] that he [the man of sin] might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [Gk.- restrains, holds back, detains] will let, until he [the man of sin] be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:” (2 Thes. 2:6-8).

What is being restrained, held back or detained from happening? It is the same context that Paul was addressing in this entire subject matter found in verses 1 and 2, “*Now we beseech you, brethren, by the **coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that **the day of Christ is at hand.*****” The very return of Jesus Christ was being held back until this event occurred in the Church.

But this event should be noted for what it is. It is a revelation to the Church that this long-awaited event is now going to occur. It is like a great announcement revealing that the countdown for His return has begun. Prophetic fulfillment of end-time events would now begin to unfold before our very eyes. It is God’s word to us that the way for the coming of Jesus Christ has now been opened, illuminated—no longer being held back! Do we have eyes to see?

This twofold prophetic fulfillment of 2 Thessalonians is a cry to the Church that the bridegroom is coming and that we are to be making ourselves ready. That should be our focus now more than ever—preparing for the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

This is the only great event spoken

of by God to His Church that announces the countdown has begun—marking a specific time in the nearly 6,000 years of human history declaring that Jesus Christ is now coming.

Notice and remember that when this man of sin was revealed, when this son of perdition was made manifest so you could clearly see his rebellion and opposition to God, that it was precisely 40 Sabbaths to the day and hour that his life came to an end. Was this of God or just a coincidence? Is a judgment containing the number 40 a declaration of the very judgment of God? Do we remember the flood that lasted for 40 days and nights because of the rebellion of man. Do we remember the wandering of the children of Israel in the wilderness for 40 years because of their rebellion? And, do God's people today remember that a man in great authority said that the Sabbath was no longer a sign for God's people? Is it any wonder that on the very Sabbath that Joe Tkach, Sr. said the Sabbath was no longer commanded for God's people that God Himself gave a judgment upon him that would be accomplished exactly 40 Sabbaths later—to the hour?

Now we should better understand—*“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness [illumination] of his coming:”* (2 Thes.2:8). Yes, God said He would destroy the man of sin and that these events would illuminate the very coming of Jesus Christ.

Does anyone **da**re stand before God and deny what we have witnessed in these matters? Yet far too many deny these and other end-time events that have been unfolding before our very eyes. It is indeed a very shameful thing to deny God and to fail to be a true and faithful witness of the Word of God!

“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause

God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thes.2:8-12).

God makes it clear that, for such an event to occur within the environs of the Church, this man of sin would be empowered by Satan with great strength to deceive through a cunning show of charisma and other outward signs that would work to delude others. This lying spirit would move in an astonishing way—a lying wonder—upon the Church because of the Church's failure to zealously love the truth that God had restored. This is a God given ability that must be sought after because this is “agape”—God's love that must be working in us in order to have such desire and affection for His truth. But as Matthew 24 warns about the end of this age, the love (agape) of many shall wax cold.

Again, these warnings could only be to the Church because only those called by God can receive this kind of love into their lives. *“...If we love [agape] one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit”* (1 John 4:12-13).

The only ones that can be saved—the only ones that can be deceived—the only ones who are able to believe the truth are those God has called. Yes, this prophecy is about the Church, it is not about a deceived religious world around us. *“But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:”* (2 Thes.2:13). **TRO**

Now “IN” the End-Time

Continued from page 3

whereas ye say, The LORD saith it; albeit I have not spoken? Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies,

therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD. And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD. Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace;” (Ez. 13:7-10).

Lies concerning our true condition turn brethren away from understanding. Our ability to understand where we are in time will help stir up a greater sense of urgency in our lives which will in turn help move us to draw closer to God, become more spiritually alert and better prepared for the difficult times yet ahead. Faith and confidence are multiplied when we trust more fully in the word of God—when we believe those things that are now being fulfilled in our lives exactly as He said they would be, by **His true testimony**.

We are far into the prophetic period of time at the end of 6,000 years of man on this earth that scripture refers to as being the time of the end. It is a period of time that precedes the day that the Kingdom of God comes to this earth. It is a period of time that includes that final day as well as a period of time of great physical tribulation on this earth that will last for 3 ½ years. Other end-time events spoken of in scripture precede even this final time of great tribulation. These events go back to a time where prophecy revealed that the “end” would come at a time when great desolation began on the Church.

Few seem to understand that we are indeed “far” into the end-time spoken of in prophecy. We are now at the end of a prophetic scattering of the Church, and great physical tribulation will soon follow! Are you indeed preparing for the very soon-coming Kingdom of God? Sadly, there will be some who will not read these words until they are “in” the final great tribulation.

The following articles give absolute proof of where we are in prophecy—where we are “in” end-time events (at the time this is being written). These are the testimonies of God—the sure word of God for this end-time! **TRO**

Final Eras of the Church (Revelation 3)

The area of proof that will now be addressed, that we are in the very end of this age, is one that every member of the Body of Christ should be very familiar with and find easy to acknowledge—to admit our history as the true Church of God which is in perfect agreement with the Word of God. Yet that is not the case because most are not faithful witnesses to this history.

This area of scripture, covered in large part by the article “*Dead, Revived, Rejected!*” in our booklet “Time Is Running Out,” will only touch upon a few matters in a brief overview of Revelation 3, which identifies the last three eras of the Church.

As was previously mentioned, God told Sardis that it was spiritually dead and that the truth they had remaining was dying out. If God had allowed that to happen, the Church would not have survived to the return of Jesus Christ. But God has made it plain that the Church would be alive at Christ’s return and that the gates of hell could not prevail against it. So the Church had to be revived. Truth that was dying out had to be restored.

This restoration of truth, which occurred during the leadership of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong and the period of time we know as Philadelphia, should be an easy thing to acknowledge. Yes, God revealed foundational truth to His Church once again. This era kept His word and did not deny His name. Sardis was known for just the opposite—letting the word of God die out as they themselves were dying spiritually—denying the life of God to live in and through them.

Our history is testimony to the truth that God used Mr. Armstrong to restore truth to His Church. Doors were opened by God that made this task possible—doors that no one could shut. Scriptures foretold of an Elijah to come who would restore all things. Today, people

argue over this rather than acknowledge the truth of what is apparent—again, more proof that the word of God agrees with our history as being the true Church of God spoken of in prophecy.

Jesus was asked by his disciples about the Elijah to come. “*And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things*” (Mat.17:11). What needed to be restored before Jesus Christ could return to this earth? A great sign that we would be at that end-time would be when this occurred. It is a needful part of the history of the Church! God revealed that the truth would die out toward the end and the Church would begin to die spiritually. In order to prevent that from happening, God restored all truth necessary for salvation that would once again give life to His Church. Truly, the Elijah would first come and restore that truth to the Church. Can anyone deny what God performed through His end-time apostle during the era of Philadelphia?

Yet today there are many who are tearing down this understanding. One evangelist is placing doubt in the minds of brethren by criticizing what **was done** during Philadelphia. Such tactics only serve to weaken the Church even more.

Faithfully reviewing our history and acknowledging that this history is in perfect and complete harmony with the word of God and end-time prophecies should serve to strengthen brethren and sober us to the reality of how little time we have left to prepare ourselves. Yet this evangelist “of a large organization” waffles back and forth on this subject. He even plants the thought that there are experts who believe one of the two witnesses may fulfill this role of the Elijah to come. How could such a man be so blind, especially after all that he experienced in the Church during Philadelphia? And who are these “experts?” Have these experts written

commentary about this subject, and are they supposed to be “Bible scholars,” who are in fact actually outside the Church—without the spirit of God dwelling in them? Do we look to experts outside the Church to help us understand the true word of God and those things that can only be revealed through God’s spirit? What would either of these two witnesses restore in that last 3½ years before Jesus Christ returns? That question alone should show how foolish this evangelist has been in presenting such suggestions!

The restoration of foundational truth to a dying Church is witnessed by our history and the work God did through Mr. Armstrong. That is why Jesus Christ concluded His instruction to Philadelphia by saying, “*Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown*” (Rev.3:11). God worked long and hard through Mr. Armstrong and the Philadelphian era to restore His truth to the Church, and His great desire toward us is that we **hold fast** what He gave.

Rather than being faithful witnesses of those things we have witnessed at the end of this age, pride has filled the Church with self-importance about our own good and our own ability in handling the word of God. And rather than be faithful witnesses of all that has come upon us, brethren would rather turn inwardly by building up the self or one’s organization in order to keep from acknowledging the truth they must eventually face! Such attitudes have led to spiritual blindness, nakedness, complacency, and lukewarmness. These attitudes grew very strong in the late 1980’s and are still active to this day.

This is the very reason so many people have remained scattered—because there has been too much pride to admit to being spued out of God’s mouth. So most brethren have not repented and become zealous to God as Laodicea is instructed to do. The refusal

to admit to such a state, the refusal to admit one's weak condition and the refusal to admit to having been scattered and spued out of God's mouth are testimony to being in the very last era—an era that is steeped in pride. Refusal to admit this truth is the very thing that prevents a person from

repenting in the way God instructs. That is why so many have clung to some identity with Philadelphia because they cannot admit—cannot repent of a powerful Laodicean spirit that has been working in the Church. We tend to see ourselves as better than that—richer spiritually than that. Could the verses of

Revelation 3 be any stronger testimony of where we are in time? Laodicea is the last era mentioned by Jesus Christ. There are none to follow. How close to the end of Laodicea are we? Jesus Christ is ready to come back to this earth. The opening of that door is rapidly approaching. **TRO**

Overwhelming Scriptural Proof !

As we examine the proofs that we are **in** the very end of this age, we need to stop and consider the spiritual health of the Church. As you focus on each of these proofs, you should begin to be deeply sobered to understand that we are not only living in the midst of end-time prophecies that are being fulfilled, but many of these prophecies are finished and are now history. These prophecies bring to light another matter that should begin to sober you even more deeply—these proofs manifest the depth of spiritual sluggishness and sickness that exists within the Church.

When God revealed the Sabbath to us, how many areas of scripture did we have to examine before we could see the truth? How many complete chapters of scripture are written for us that exclusively focus on the Sabbath? As we are called and led by God's spirit into truth—if we seek to be in harmony with Him—we will readily accept such truths which are based on relatively few scriptures. What about our belief concerning Atonement? How many areas of the Bible reveal the truth on this subject? What about the doctrine of second tithes? What about the Last Great Day and the great resurrection at that time? As you begin to examine many of the beliefs we have received from God and the very few areas of scripture that have convicted us of God's truth—when He has opened our mind through the power of His spirit—then you must ask, "Why are there so many scattered brethren who will not accept what God has to say about this end-time where we now find ourselves?" Why is the truth being resisted now?

The proof is overwhelming that we are in the end!

Why do God's own people resist His Spirit and refuse to accept what He wants us to see? The failure of so many brethren to acknowledge where we are in time and the failure to accept our recent history as being in absolute harmony and fulfillment with the Word of God should help us to see the depth of blindness and weakness that exists in the Church. This too is proof of where we are.

It takes a humble spirit to accept correction and chastening from God. It takes humility to admit sin and weakness. It is because of pride and haughtiness that we are unable to receive what God desires to give us. We are going to experience a great escalation in the shaking of this earth, and the hope for the Church is that this will turn our attitude away from pride and bring us to humility so we will stop resisting our God.

There are far more scriptures that cry out to us that we are in the midst of the fulfillment of end-time prophecies than there are for almost any other truth or doctrine God has previously revealed to us. Do you remember how Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong spoke so often about the Bible being nearly one-third prophecy and that around ninety percent of that prophecy is for the end-time? We have already lived through many end-time prophecies, and we are about to be catapulted into the time of great physical tribulation, during a final 3½ years, that leads to the very return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on this earth. We are so close to that final time that some who will read these words will actually be living in that final period of great physical tribulation on all the world.

Spiritual Temple

Continued from page 6

When they begin to teach false doctrine they also quench God's spirit. Unsuspecting brethren may like the individual minister but not recognize the slow decay that works through their weak, empty sermons.

Some brethren have seen these destructive forces at work in organizations

or with local ministries and find that they must flee again to another organization, or another church area in the same organization, in order to escape and seek refuge. That process has been at work for several years within the Church. How can anyone deny it? How can any deny that this is indeed the fulfillment of a very specific end-time event? If we know these things, we will also come to more deeply understand that we do not have

much time left until all these words of Jesus will be fulfilled. We are in the very end of this age! The proof is overwhelming! But most continue to refuse that very proof which is witnessed in their lives through their experiences within the Church. Are we going to be faithful and true witnesses of those events? Are we going to believe the very testimony (witness) of Jesus Christ and God our Father—by their own words?

Ask God for Help

This article is not meant to be exhaustive concerning the verses in Matthew 24, but only serve as a framework to address very pointed and specific issues—that, with God’s spirit moving truthfully through our lives, we will be able to see. A more in-depth search into these verses is offered in accompanying sermons that are offered at the end of this booklet.

As you begin to see the overwhelming content of so many areas of proof and instruction that God has given us concerning these very times we are in, you will be moved with greater awe and a vivid sense of reality of the times we are about to enter. Ask God for help to understand what is true concerning these matters. It is only by God’s spirit living in us—leading us, guiding us and revealing truth to us—that we will be able to grasp His words.

God loves us, and He will help us to be fully prepared for what lies ahead. The pangs of labor are going to become more intense and more rapid before Jesus Christ finally returns. Don’t you want to be prepared? These articles can help you do just that! **TRO**

Ten Virgins

Continued from page 4

The parable does not say that only the wise would be able to respond and make themselves ready. To respond properly to God, both the wise and foolish must repent and do what God has called us to do—seek the Kingdom of God, watch and make ourselves ready. We have not always been doing that! That is why we must all repent. The good news, for those who have not applied themselves in the past by seeking to fill their lives with the oil from God, is that they can begin doing so upon repentance—just as much as the wise who must also repent of not properly using that oil to make themselves ready. All those among the wise and foolish who properly respond to God’s cry to awake and make themselves ready to meet the bridegroom will be able to go into God’s Kingdom at the return of Jesus Christ. *“And while they went to buy, the*

bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut” (Mat. 25:10).

Although Matthew 25 is a generalized story in the form of a parable, it never-the-less focuses upon a very specific time just before the return of Jesus Christ, and it tells of the condition of the Church at this critical time in history toward the close of 6,000 years of mankind. Do you believe we are those people at that very specific time? If not, then who are you and where does the Church fit into the timing of prophesied events that occur just before God’s Kingdom comes? **TRO**

Desolation of the Temple

Continued from page 15

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, saith 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 ye 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, saith 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 ye shall know that I am the LORD” (Ezekiel 20:33-38).

The scattering of the last third of the Church has already come 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.

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 tithing expression *“and I will cause you to pass under the rod.”*

The scattering of the last third of the Church has already come 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 3½ years of great physical tribulation on this earth—then the Kingdom of God will finally be here! **TRO**

The condition of the Church over the past several years is a witness that testifies to the fact 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 by refusing 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

Desolation of the Temple (Ezekiel 5)

Ezekiel 5 is a profound proof that we are living in the end-time. The events in this chapter are dual because they include end-time fulfillment for both the Church of God and the present-day nations of Israel. Ezekiel 5 is going to be fulfilled in a physical way on the nations that make up modern-day Israel. They have almost been completely fulfilled on a spiritual plane within the Church—the spiritual Israel of God.

“And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair. Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them” (Ezekiel 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 as well.

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 physical tribulation could begin within a few months from the time this booklet is published. That is just how close these events are to actually occurring. That is how sobering these times should be to us! Yet sadly, there will be many who will not be able to read these words until this time has indeed come!

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

Our very history testifies and is witness to the truth that this prophecy has almost been completely 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 approaching complete fulfillment upon the Church. If everyone within the environs of the Church would be truthful, 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 everyone should be able to acknowledge that we have been living through times of great tribulation upon the Church. We have always known that great physical tribulation would come upon the modern-day nations of Israel, but great spiritual tribulation has already come upon the spiritual Israel of God—the Church of God.

When Mr. Joe Tkach, Sr. gave a sermon in December of 1994 that was a complete doctrinal reversal, he unleashed the greatest destructive power ever thrust upon the Church.

When Mr. Joe Tkach, Sr. gave a sermon in December of 1994 that was a complete doctrinal reversal, 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 was 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. The spiritual fulfillment of this sword should be obvious, even as it is stated in Ephesians 6:17 “...and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:”

The greatest challenge to the scattered Church has been the trial and testing upon brethren as to whether they would be faithful stewards to the truths that God 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 very 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 reveals what is in each of us. “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor 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 also sobering to understand that only a remnant of that last third will come through this tribulation. “Thou

shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy 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 in 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 thy 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. The expression “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 from the whole, which God reveals is only a tenth of that last third.

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

“And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith 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” (Zechariah 13:8-9). Yes, the last third remaining will have a fiery trial to test them. And those who will zealously 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 finally be chosen as a remnant.

“Hear ye 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 saith 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 saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye 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, not to rise again to her former state in the end-time, although some have believed and still 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, and 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.

Continued on page 13

End-Time Elijah—Fulfilled

(Malachi 4)

A prophecy of profound importance for the Church today is referred to by Jesus Christ when he told his disciples, “*Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things*” (Matthew 17:11). This prophecy concerning an Elijah to come was to occur before a final great tribulation could come on this world as a final judgment on mankind at the close of 6,000 years of human history. God said, “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:*” (Malachi 4:5).

This end-time proof contains fewer scriptures than the previous proofs, but it may very well prove to be one of the most important areas of prophecy that needs to be understood by the Church today.

It is likely that most of the scattered Church today would not acknowledge this proof as being fulfilled prophecy, let alone acknowledge it as being critically important to our salvation, which it is, and that will be explained as we go through this proof. Denying this proof would be tantamount to denying the truth that God has revealed to His Church in these end-times.

“*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse*” (Mal. 4:5-6).

These verses, of and by themselves, are not sufficient to understand the importance of this prophecy. Other verses that speak of this fulfillment must be examined along with this prophetic announcement that is to be accomplished before the “*coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.*”

Debate has fluctuated within the environs of the Church as to whether or not Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong fulfilled

this prophecy of the end-time Elijah. Rather than get bogged down with all the arguments pro and con, it would be better to simply focus on what is true concerning this subject as well as what is true about our history that is in agreement with this subject.

Don't Confuse Scriptures

Sometimes people become confused with what is being stated in other related scriptures and this prophetic announcement in Malachi. A long-time evangelist in the Church recently gave a sermon on this subject and was himself confused about these scriptures.

Don't confuse this prophecy in Malachi with things said about John the Baptist.

“*And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist*” (Mat. 17:10-13).

Debate has fluctuated within the environs of the Church as to whether or not Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong fulfilled this prophecy of the end-time Elijah.

John the Baptist was not involved in any restoration, but he did come in the spirit and power of Elijah to accomplish part of a dual fulfillment concerning this prophecy of an Elijah to come. It is really quite simple because John was to pave the way for the first-coming of Jesus Christ—doing so in the spirit and power of Elijah. But the prophecy is dual because another person was to come in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way for the second-

coming of Jesus Christ.

Part of the purpose in this duality is revealed by Gabriel as Zacharias is being told about his future son, John. “*And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*” (Luke 1:17). John the Baptist would be involved with helping to make a people ready for Jesus Christ's first-coming.

This verse is simply showing part of the process involved as people are turned from their own ways, through repentance, to the ways of God. Those referred to as the “*fathers*” are those mentioned in the Old Testament who embraced the righteousness of God—whose hearts had been turned to God—whose lives are written in scripture as instruction and inspiration in the ways of God. The same spirit that worked with these men of old, “*the fathers*,” was now working with their descendants, “*the children*,” so that their hearts could now be turned to God and prepared for Jesus Christ.

Another person was to come before the end of this age who would fulfill the other part of the duality in these prophecies by preparing a people for the second-coming of Jesus Christ.

Another area of scripture that some confuse with these prophecies about an “*Elijah to come*” is found in Acts. “*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise*

up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:19-26).

This prophecy concerning Jesus Christ should not be confused with prophecy concerning an “Elijah to come.” The disciples asked Jesus about an Elijah to come. *“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things” (Mat. 17:11).* When Jesus said Elijah would restore all things, he wasn’t referring to himself or to the “times of restitution of all things” spoken of in Acts 3.

Acts 3 concerns the time when the Kingdom of God comes to this earth, when the government and law (way) of God is restored. That is something that will be accomplished by and through Jesus Christ as King of kings.

Don’t be mistaken, as others have, concerning the Elijah to come. The times of restitution of all things spoken of in Acts is not the same account; instead, it refers to a time that begins when the Kingdom of God has come to this earth. Understand that there is duality involved in the “Elijah to come,” as John the Baptist fulfills the first part of this prophecy concerning a people being prepared for the first-coming of Jesus Christ. But before the Kingdom of God would come to this earth, another person would come in the spirit and power of Elijah preparing a people for the second-coming of Jesus Christ.

The Elijah to Come

When the disciples asked about the Elijah to come spoken of in Malachi, Jesus added an important description about his function. It is the most

important thing to understand in order to identify who this person would be.

The disciples had asked Jesus Christ about the prophecy of Malachi right after the transfiguration when some of them witnessed a vision concerning the coming Kingdom of God. Before the Kingdom of God should come, they knew it was written that an Elijah was to come on the scene first. *“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.” (Malachi 4:5).* The coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD must occur before the Kingdom of God is established.

This Elijah to come would fulfill a duality with John by helping to prepare a people for the coming of Jesus Christ—in this case the second-coming. These people would also have to come to repentance and have their hearts turned to the ways of God just as their “fathers” of old had done. This matter is a spiritual one, although the fruit of it should also help produce a similar result in a physical family as the hearts of parents are turned more to their children by living God’s way.

So, in the end-time a person would come in the spirit and power of Elijah to help prepare a people for the second-coming of Jesus Christ. The “heart of the fathers”—that attitude of mind and spirit of righteous men of old who had a close relationship with God—was now being opened up to (turned to) those that God called in this end-time. As people responded to that calling, their hearts were turned to receive that same spirit of the “heart of the fathers.”

What did Jesus Christ add to this prophecy? *“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things” (Mat. 17:11).* This Elijah would be involved in restoring all things. This did not apply to John the Baptist in any way. Nothing was restored through John the Baptist.

This is not a difficult matter to understand in the true Church of God. All who are led by the spirit of God—all who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus

Christ living in them—will understand the truth of this matter, for it is of vital importance to God’s people. Those who have a right relationship with God will be led by God’s spirit to see what is

One can be begotten into the Church, but can quench God’s spirit in their lives and become weak, sickly and spiritually asleep.

true. This is absolute! If anyone cannot see this, then there is a reason why. A lack of God’s spirit dwelling in them is the reason. One can be begotten into the Church, but can quench God’s spirit in their lives and become weak, sickly and spiritually asleep.

The understanding of who fulfills this “Elijah to come” is most basic to the Church of God in the end-time. This will be understood by all who grasp the history of the true Church of God over the past few decades.

This matter was touched upon in the article “The Final Eras of the Church.” It is needful that part of that be quoted again:

“As was previously mentioned, God told Sardis that it was spiritually dead and that the truth they had remaining was dying out. If God had allowed that to happen, the Church would not have survived to the return of Jesus Christ. But God has made it plain that the Church would be alive at Christ’s return and that the gates of hell could not prevail against it. So the Church had to be revived. Truth that was dying out had to be restored.

This restoration of truth, which occurred during the leadership of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong and the period of time we know as Philadelphia, should be an easy thing to acknowledge. Yes, God revealed foundational truth to His Church once again. This era kept His word and did not deny His name. Sardis was known for just the opposite—letting the word of God die out as they themselves were dying spiritually—denying the life of God to live in and through them.

Our history is testimony to the truth that God used Mr. Armstrong to restore truth to His Church. Doors were opened by God that made this task possible—doors that no one could shut.

Continued on page 38

Clarifying the Seals of Revelation

In the preceding articles, we focused on powerful proofs showing we are now in the end-time that is spoken of so often in Bible prophecy. Most people within the scattered Church refuse to acknowledge that our recent history agrees fully with end-time prophecies concerning the Church. Those prophecies which have been fulfilled over the past couple of decades actually testify to the truth that we are indeed the true Church of God. Yet most have refused to acknowledge that our recent history is in fact fulfilled prophecy about God's Church.

It is now needful that the opening of the seals of Revelation be clarified, considering the fact that people have not understood that so many end-time prophecies are indeed about the Church. It is difficult for brethren to grasp that the first five seals are exclusively about the Church and not the physical world around us. Even the sixth seal is very much about the Church because it reveals a time for the end of spiritual tribulation upon the Church and the beginning of physical tribulation upon this world.

The reason these seals can be so difficult to understand, on a spiritual plane, is that the Church has only understood them on a physical plane in the past. We need to grasp that there is a very important reason for that being true. And when we grasp that reality, we should be in even greater awe that the sequence of these seals reveals yet another powerful proof that we have been living through the end-time. Not only are we in the end-time, but we are **far** into it.

We Need to Understand

God gave us His written word. In all that He gave us, nearly a third is prophetic and nearly ninety percent of that prophetic word is for the end-time in which we are now living. We are

living through awesome times. The focus of nearly a quarter of the entire Bible is for our time. It is hard for us to grasp that the time in which we live is the most momentous in all of human history, yet the last three decades of the 6,000 years allotted to mankind is the focus of a fourth of all that is written in your Bible.

During the time of Philadelphia, God used Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong to restore truth to His Church. All truth had nearly died out by the end of Sardis. In the first booklet, *Time Is Running Out for the Scattered Church of God*, we covered those foundational truths that God restored in order to once again give life to His Church and to accomplish His Work at the end of this age. But God did not restore prophecy through Mr. Armstrong. Prophecy is not something that must be restored. Prophecy is something that must be revealed!

God did not reveal complete understanding of prophecy concerning the Church or the world because it was intended that we live by faith and be tried and tested through those things that would happen to us later.

It was not God's purpose to reveal prophecy, concerning the end of this age, to the Philadelphian era. God had a different work that was to be accomplished during that time. It was a "work" of restoring truth to the Church and raising up a Church to help support "a work" being done through His apostle, Mr. Armstrong. This truth, going into all the world—especially to world leaders, would be a witness that man is the same in this age of great technology as he has ever been over the past 6,000 years. Man still rejects the truth of God! This witness was essential in order that the end **could** come as the result of a final judgment on mankind at the end of his allotted, first 6,000 years on this earth.

That is why it is written, "*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*" (Mat. 24:14). It is only after that witness had gone into all the world that the end could then come, thus fulfilling the righteousness and justice of God before bringing end-time judgment upon this world.

During Philadelphia, God gave certain prophetic keys to Mr. Herbert Armstrong, especially those that were needed concerning the truth as to the identity of the modern-day nations of Israel. Although this was given, as well as the revelation that the Olivet prophecy was the key to understanding the seals of revelation, God did not fully reveal understanding of everything that was contained in the Olivet prophecies given by Jesus Christ. So concerning end-time prophecies, God only allowed us to see through a glass

darkly, as the apostle Paul had explained concerning other matters on a spiritual plane.

God did not reveal complete understanding of prophecy concerning the Church or the world because it was intended that we live by faith and be tried and tested through those things that would happen to us later.

It should be such a basic truth to all of God's people why prophecy could not be revealed during Philadelphia and why it would only begin to be revealed during the time of Laodicea. Everyone in God's Church is aware of a statement God made to Daniel but still fails to grasp that this is also a very basic truth concerning the timing for the revelation of end-time prophecy.

God's people through time have wanted to know more about the specifics of those things God has said would come on this world at the end-time; Daniel was no different. When he asked God about these end-time wonders, because he wanted to understand the prophecies God had given him to record, God simply said, *"Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end"* (Daniel 12:9).

If God sealed the understanding for end-time prophecy until the end, then certainly those things could not have been revealed during the time of Philadelphia. Although this era saw a great restoration of truth through Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, it was not yet the end-time. Philadelphia existed next to the end-time era, but it was not the end; God did not unseal prophetic understanding at that time. Again, only prophecy that affected the restoration of the truth to the Church, which primarily involved the understanding of the modern-day identity of the nations of Israel, was restored.

Once truth was fully restored to the Church during Philadelphia, the time would come for all to be tried as to whether they would be faithful to that truth. The means of trying the Church was through end-time prophecies that would now become reality—prophecies that would now be fulfilled.

The unsealing of end-time prophecy, when God would bring these events to fulfillment, would actually begin when Jesus Christ began to open the seals of Revelation. Jesus Christ alone was given the responsibility to open these end-time seals, of prophetic events upon the Church and upon the world, that were to come to pass—to be fulfilled upon those who lived in the very end-time.

Understanding this great truth is one of the greatest proofs of all that God Almighty reigns and that we are **far** into the end-time of all prophetic events spoken of in a quarter of your Bible. The end could only come—end-time prophecy could only begin to be made manifest—when Jesus Christ began to open the seals of Revelation because God Himself had sealed prophecy until such time!

Once Prophecy—Now History

When written prophecies are fulfilled, they become history. Some of these prophecies are those concerning the rise and fall of kingdoms. We are all familiar with prophecies concerning the many resurrections of the Holy Roman Empire. We know that one final resurrection of that empire remains before the Kingdom of God is established upon this earth.

Yes, the first seal that Jesus Christ opened, as recorded in Revelation 6, is about a time of great trying and testing upon the Church. It was the time when many false ministers flooded the Church with power to conquer....

We are also familiar with prophecies that God gave concerning Israel, and we know the timing that was involved in those prophecies. So many of those are now history, and we see that God is true and performs His promises just as He said. We see a royal monarchy that still exists to this day because God revealed that Jesus Christ would come back to claim that existing throne to rule not only over Israel, but all the world. We see that God fulfilled His promise concerning national greatness through Joseph, and we see through those promises why Great Britain, as a great nation and company of nations, fulfilled God's word concerning the tribe of Ephraim. We see God's prophetic promise fulfilled toward Manasseh as the single greatest nation on earth in the modern-day United States of America. The truth of these prophetic matters was revealed and restored to the Church through Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. The restoration of those truths was a revelation concerning prophecy that was mostly historic in nature and only partially current in time. But God did not reveal the understanding of prophecy yet future, prophecy still sealed.

We live in a time when much of that end-time prophecy, contained in a quarter of your Bible, has now become history because the first five seals of Revelation are now history! For those who have ears to hear and eyes to see, our recent history as a Church is witness to the opening of those seals! You can believe it or not, but if you refuse to acknowledge it, you alone will be held

accountable for those horrifying things that will come upon your life for refusal to heed your God. If you refuse to listen, then God's testimony will be against you! If you refuse to hear God, and thereby refuse to repent, then you will not receive the favor and protection of God during the end-time physical tribulation on this earth. The Day of God's wrath has come, and, ever so sadly, many in God's Church have

refused to hear.

Yes, the first seal that Jesus Christ opened, as recorded in Revelation 6, is about a time of great trying and testing upon the Church. It was the time when many false ministers flooded the Church with power to conquer those who would not remain faithful to the truth God had previously restored to the Church.

The result of the first seal being opened led way to massive destruction through the twisting and misuse of God's word by unfaithful ministers. This was the opening of the second seal.

The result of false ministers wielding a great false sword was that peace was taken from the Church around this world—throughout the Worldwide Church of God. Ministers and brethren began to turn on one another—brother against brother, father against son and children against their parents. Such betrayal and hatred led to horrible destruction and spiritual death within the Church. Yes, this was the opening of the second seal that for the most part is now history, although the affects of that seal being opened are still ongoing in the scattered Church.

A further result of this great false sword being wielded by false ministers and the result of brethren turning on one another led to the proliferation of many false doctrines and the consequences that followed—spiritual food became scarce. The prophesied end-time spiritual famine had finally come upon God's people with tremendous power and force. This is when the prophecy written by Amos finally came to pass,

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.” (Amos 8:11). This was the opening of the third seal.

Even today, many brethren deny the truth that great spiritual famine has come upon the Church. Instead, false ministers or ministers who are yet asleep say this famine spoken of by Amos is not yet upon the Church because they say we are still being fed strong spiritual meat. They are liars! They deceive God’s people and thereby lull them to sleep. These ministers and evangelists lie against the truth, they lie to God’s people, they deny God’s spirit that exposes such lies, and they bring swift destruction upon themselves and others who listen to them. Yes, they are the primary cause of the destruction from the spiritual famine.

After the initial destruction caused by the first three seals being opened, the Church was scattered, but the destruction did not end. The scattering did not mean that everyone repented of the **reason** these things came upon the Church (for all of us were guilty of becoming spiritually sluggish and falling to sleep). The Church became so weak that God spued it out of His

mouth—He separated it from His presence and has only been bringing some back into His presence who are brought to repentance.

So all in the Church were scattered, but all would not repent. The failure to repent caused the continued scattering and destruction of that smaller portion that yet remained. This was the opening of the fourth seal.

So again, the result, from a massive failure of so many to repent, was the opening of the fourth seal. This was simply a continuation of the same kind of destruction that took place in the first three seals previously opened—a repetition of the same destruction upon the last third that was scattered.

Confusion About the 5th Seal

Now we come to a seal that has been deeply misunderstood—an interpretation that has been in error. We have been blind to a glaring contradiction which was printed in past literature and given in past sermons. The reason we have not seen the truth of this matter must be repeated again. Although we wanted to know the meaning of end-time prophecies, God had not yet revealed them. It was not time! This prophecy had not yet been unsealed.

The unsealing and understanding of

end-time prophecies could only be given after Jesus Christ began opening the seals of Revelation. Although God had given us several keys and basic building blocks to end-time prophetic events, He did not reveal specific understanding of most events because they yet remained sealed.

We once believed that the opening of the 5th seal was a time for the beginning of the great tribulation. We even had charts in our literature showing that the period of time for this seal would be 2 ½ years of the entire 3 ½ years of great tribulation.

In the booklet “The Book of Revelation Unveiled At Last” we are shown that the opening of the 5th seal is a time of religious persecution and national captivity. On page 26, some in the Church are described as “*truly Spirit-begotten Christians who have become so lukewarm, so out of prayerful contact with God, that they will not be accounted worthy to escape all these things.*” Further down on the same page, notice what it says. “*Notice that! Here is the Great Tribulation! And this fifth seal pictures it as a time of martyrdom of saints—of truly converted, begotten children of God!*”

During this period of the first 2 ½ years of the Great Tribulation in the

★ **Time-line with previous understanding from old literature.**

★ **Corrected order. (This is NOT a time-line.)**

— 2 ½ years —

First Seal	Second Seal	Third Seal	Fourth Seal	Fifth Seal	Sixth Seal
White Horse	Red Horse	Black Horse	Pale Horse	Great Tribulation	Heavenly Signs
Deception	War	Famine	Pestilence	National Captivity	
False Ministers	False Doctrine	Spiritual Famine	Repetition of the first 3 seals on the scattered Church	Announced that spiritual tribulation is nearly over	Sealing of the 144,000 & announcement of great physical tribulation about to begin

— **Great spiritual tribulation upon the Church** —

fifth seal, not only was there to be a great spiritual martyrdom of lukewarm saints, but this same booklet says it would also be a time of national captivity. *“And this is speaking of the final Great Tribulation. It will be a time of war and national invasion and captivity of God’s nation Israel! Not Judah! These prophecies refer to the so-called Lost Ten Tribes of Israel”* (Page 27).

In another booklet, “Inside the Book of Revelation” (pages 13 & 14) it states that, *“The fifth seal pictures a time of great tribulation—including a martyrdom for religious convictions. The New Testament, along with Revelation, emphasizes its impact on the spiritual people of God—his own Church. The great tribulation also falls on what was God’s physical nation—the House of Israel, or the descendants of Jacob’s 12 sons.”*

In sermons and in literature this great religious persecution and time of captivity of the modern-day nations of Israel has always been described as being caused by the final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire, composed of nations that unite in Europe under the Beast power that emerges at that time. We have always believed that the ancient nation of Assyria would be used

by God to take the modern-day nations of Israel captive, and this was to occur at the beginning of the great tribulation. If you are a part of the scattered Church, isn’t that what you have always believed as well?

So everyone in the Church, who had any basic understanding of what we believed concerning the great tribulation which was to last for a final 3 ½ years, believed that when the tribulation started the final revival of the Holy Roman Empire would emerge out of Europe and take the modern-day nations of Israel into captivity. But there was a great error in this.

As we cover this, you may want to occasionally look at the chart provided which shows what we once believed. The same chart also shows what God has now revealed to be true in this matter. Understanding has now been given because Jesus Christ has already opened the first five seals and revealed by our recent history that these seals have been about the Church and not the world.

In the booklet “The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last,” we move ahead to a time described as the “first woe” which occurs when the fifth trumpet within the seventh seal is blown. When the seventh seal is

opened God reveals that seven trumpets are now to sound with each one revealing different segments of the wrath of God on mankind at the end of 6,000 years. On the old chart you will notice that the timing of this event could only last for less than a year because the last year of the final 3 ½ years of tribulation is shown as beginning at the opening of the sixth seal.

So now we find ourselves well into that final year when we come to the fifth trumpet that is being blown. *“The first WOE, which is also the fifth trumpet, is described in chapter 9, verses 1-11. The power that causes the destruction, this time to men, comes out of the symbolic ‘bottomless pit.’ This is interpreted in Revelation 17:8-14. There we learn that a rebirth of the ancient ROMAN EMPIRE is the power which emerges out of ‘the bottomless pit’ or abyss—a condition of underground existence not visible to the world. Verse 7 shows this FUTURE power will be a WAR-making, revived fascist power”* (page 38).

The time for captivity of the modern-day nations of Israel, that was believed to occur during the fifth seal, could not be done in secret by a large military

Continued on page 29

1 year

A very short time

Seventh Seal: Seven Trumpet Plagues

First Trumpet	Second Trumpet	Third Trumpet	Fourth Trumpet	Fifth Trumpet	Sixth Trumpet	Seventh Trumpet: Seven Last Plagues						
				1 st Woe	2 nd Woe	3 rd Woe						
				Beast Power		1 st Plague	2 nd Plague	3 rd Plague	4 th Plague	5 th Plague	6 th Plague	7 th Plague
				Last revival of the Holy Roman Empire								

Beginning of great physical tribulation upon the world

First Five Seals Opened

This area of end-time proof should be very sobering when you stop to consider the time frame upon which we are about to focus. As we have addressed in this booklet, we have not always understood end-time prophecies that pertain to the Church. Instead, where the Church was involved, we have focused more upon a physical fulfillment rather than a spiritual one. 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. Read those prophecies again. 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 that this was a warning for all brethren since the day it was written, we failed to grasp that 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 the "many" within the Church. We have now lived through that time. As a result, we in the Church of God 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, exactly as Jesus told the disciples it would be just prior to His coming.

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

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!

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. Herbert W. Armstrong and the Philadelphian era. There are far too many who have believed that he did not fulfill this prophecy, therefore they have not believed we are in the end-time—but only getting closer to it. They have believed 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. It was not revealed before its time 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 many 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 several 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 the article "The Man of Sin." 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 fellowcitizens 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)—'groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded 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.

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 to the Church through Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong.

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. God used Mr. Armstrong, in the office of an apostle, 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 very 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 of revelation 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, even as Daniel, who wanted to understand the very words of the book that he himself was writing, but 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 the Israelites are today.” This revelation

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.

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 Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. It listed 18 truths restored to the Church through him and 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 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 restored to the Church as God fulfilled the role of the “Elijah to come” through him.

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 this world has rejected that warning.

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 this article it was stated that, “*This area of end-time 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 end-time proof because it needs to be understood in the light of our recent history. This area of proof covers Revelation 6.

This chapter starts with the beginning of the opening of the seven seals that leads up to the return of Jesus Christ and the coming Kingdom of God to this earth. It is important also to understand that Matthew 24 and the other Olivet prophecies parallel this same account found in Revelation 6. In addition, the first four seals of Revelation 6 have always been seen in light of a physical fulfillment and are often referred to as the time of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse.

It is good to understand how the book of Revelation leads up to this account. Chapters two and three of Revelation cover a period of nearly 2,000 years. 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 end-time 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 these 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.

The first seal opened in Revelation is not about people becoming deceived in this world, for they are already deceived.

“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” (Matthew 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 readeth, 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 first 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 the article, “The Near Destruction of the Church.” In that article, 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 upon the Church is nearly complete to 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 in which 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. However, as the seals are opened, 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.

We have been living through the aftermath of the opening of the first four seals! Now, we continue preparing for the Kingdom of God.

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 fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” (Revelation 6:9-11).

After the destruction upon the Church from the opening of the first four seals, there is a time of reflection to acknowledge 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, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”* (Revelation 7:13-14). Yes, all who are arrayed in these white robes are one and the same.

It is sobering to realize that most of Revelation 6 is now history, and perhaps, at the very time you are reading this, we may be much farther along, into the time of great physical tribulation on this earth when the final seal is being fulfilled.

But for now, for those who have actually experienced the Church of God being scattered, there are questions for you to consider. 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?” If you are among this group of people who have been scattered, then you know that 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 yet to come upon this world that must fulfill a time of great physical tribulation, and then finally, the return of Jesus Christ! **TRO**

The Sixth Seal of Revelation

The sixth seal of Revelation marks an awesomely dramatic time for all human history. It sets the way for the conclusive events that must take place before the Kingdom of God can finally come to this earth. This seal establishes the fulfillment of a very specific work that God has been doing for the past 6,000 years. It is at this time that the calling and choosing of all who will be resurrected first into that Kingdom will have been fully determined by God.

This momentous occasion is unveiled amidst the backdrop of the revelation that the time for God's end-time wrath has now come and is about to be unleashed upon this earth. But before this final time of great trouble on earth is released, the finalized total of all who will be in the first resurrection is sealed.

"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of

For nearly six millennia, God has called people to repentance from their own ways to the development of holy, righteous character. This has been the work of Pentecost....

heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. 6:12-17).

The opening of the sixth seal is the announcement of a transition in time, when the moment for great physical tribulation has finally come, as the end

of a great spiritual tribulation is finally concluding. The end-time has finally come for all mankind, toward the end of his allotted 6,000 years of self-rule, and the foundation of this earth will be shaken. Mankind is going to be brought face-to-face with an impending annihilation if God does not intervene.

This last section of Revelation 6 gives us an overview of the great cataclysm that is about to follow and the result for all quarters of mankind who will be seeking to hide and escape this wrath.

The Long Work of Pentecost

The sixth seal not only gives an overview of what is about to come upon this world, as a transition is about to take place (a focus from the Church to a focus on this world), but it also reveals the completion of a process that entails a work of God that has covered this span of 6,000 years. It is during the time span between the sixth and seventh seals being opened that this great event is finalized.

For nearly six millennia, God has called people to repentance from their own ways to the development of holy, righteous character. This has been the work of Pentecost, most of which has been done during the past 2,000 years within the Church. Firstfruits have been called by God to be in His Kingdom which will come when Jesus Christ returns as King of kings. God has worked for a long time to come to this moment for the opening of this sixth seal when this process will be finalized and all those who will make up His Kingdom will be sealed.

The seventh seal cannot be opened until this process is complete. Angels are actually held back from unleashing their phase of end-time devastation until all who are to be in the first resurrection have been made ready, chosen of God and sealed.

"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of

the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (Rev. 7:1-3).

These four angels, who are being withheld from releasing devastation, are the first four angels who will sound their trumpets after the seventh seal is opened. The destruction that follows the blowing of these trumpets is what leads to the final period of three and a half years of great tribulation that begins when the fifth angel sounds his trumpet.

The first four angels of the seventh seal are held back from unleashing the beginning of physical tribulation upon this world until God has completed the final determination of all who will be in the first resurrection. All who are dead in Christ have already been determined and are in the count of Pentecost—firstfruits who will be in the first resurrection. Their destiny has already been sealed, and now, the destiny of those who are yet alive, who will have been chosen by God to be part with them, is about to be sealed.

Those who return with Jesus Christ, in His Kingdom, make up the work of Pentecost—those who will be part of the temple that God has been building. Because God is the Builder, that structure is very exact! God made the blueprints and has shaped every stone. These stones are exact in number—not too many and not too few, and they will fit into the temple exactly as He has fashioned them. The ability to accomplish such a feat is a glory to the awesome greatness of God and His power to perform it. This temple is exact in every detail, just as God had predetermined it, before the foundation of the world. *"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation*

of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated (Greek—“pre-determined”) us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph. 1:4-6).

The opening of the sixth seal reveals a time for awesome fulfillment in the Work of God over the past 6,000 years. All who will become part of His family, from the first harvest of all mankind, will have been determined and sealed before final tribulation comes on this world. But before these firstfruits can enter into that family, the world must first go through a time of trouble such as it has never encountered throughout all human history.

An Exact Number In Pentecost

Just as we must count an exact number of days to know when to observe Pentecost, there is an exact

God reveals that the spiritual temple, which is spiritual Israel, will bear the names of twelve tribes. Even as the holy Jerusalem is described in Revelation 21, it reveals that spiritual Israel is divided into four sides with three tribes listed on each side and each entrance containing the name of a tribe of Israel.

number of firstfruits that make up the work of Pentecost. God is perfect in all His ways, and what He builds is exact! God has been building upon a spiritual temple over the past 6,000 years. That temple comprises all who will be the firstfruits in His family when His Kingdom comes to this earth.

“And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel” (Rev. 7:4).

This number of 144,000 is exact and complete in perfection according to God’s will. Only these will be resurrected as part of the family of God at the time of Jesus Christ’s return. The number twelve for perfection is used as God describes these firstfruits as being 12,000 each of the twelve tribes of Israel. This is spiritual Israel—not the physical tribes of Israel.

Paul revealed to the Church that Gentiles (those of the uncircumcision)

in the Church are spiritual Jews. *“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God”* (Rom. 2:28-29).

In like manner, the Church is sometimes referred to as being Israel, but in such cases that does not mean the physical tribes of Israel. Actually, Israelites and Gentiles will make up the family of God, but they must first become a part of the Church by being begotten of God’s spirit. *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Paul preached continually that salvation had come to the Gentiles. When Gentiles are called and begotten of God’s spirit, they become spiritual Jews by a circumcision of the heart.

It is important to understand these basic truths concerning all who God calls. Regardless of one’s background or nationality, we all become a part of a spiritual family—not a national family. Yet all will bear the name of Israel spiritually.

God reveals that the spiritual temple, which is spiritual Israel, will bear the names of twelve tribes. Even as the holy Jerusalem is described in Revelation 21, it reveals that spiritual Israel is divided into four sides with three tribes listed on each side and each entrance containing the name of a tribe of Israel. That is why God mentions the names of twelve tribes, each containing 12,000 who comprise the full number of 144,000 who are resurrected first as firstfruits.

There has been some confusion in the past because, as the Church continued to grow much larger in the late 60’s, 70’s & early 80’s, it was believed that 144,000 would come out of Philadelphia. Now we know this is not true, and

what God has now made obvious is that this number is the total of all who will be in the first resurrection. Some of this confusion has existed because of not understanding the story in Revelation 7.

All One And the Same

It is important that we fully understand the clearest account that speaks of the 144,000. *“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God”* (Rev. 14:1-5).

The account is clear. The number is exact! These are called firstfruits who have been redeemed from among mankind. The process is complete.

The number of firstfruits should not be difficult to understand. These are all who have been redeemed from mankind over the past 6,000 years. This clearly sets the number of those who make up the work of Pentecost.

In reality, both accounts of the 144,000 (Revelation 7 and 14) are one and the same. At the point in time of Revelation 7:4, that number has not yet been fully achieved, but it is about to be. When we arrive on the scene in Revelation 14, that number is complete, and they are now with Jesus Christ, having been resurrected.

This group in Revelation 7 is not about a specific number of physical Israelites who are going to receive physical protection from the end-time tribulation. Also, it is not about a specific number in the Church who are going to be protected.

After the twelve tribes are listed, notice what is said. *“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;”* (Rev. 7:9).

This is not some new mysterious group. This is neither a group of Gentiles, nor the Laodicean Church that is going to be delivered out of great tribulation in the end-time, as some still believe. This verse is simply projecting ahead in time and showing the outcome of the 144,000 that were earlier sealed in verse 3.

No man could “number” (Greek word “arithmeo”) these. The point being made is that only God knows the number, since it was God who brought this number together. We have no means of knowing how many God redeemed from each millennia, but He told us the total (verse 4) which only He knows. Even if this were an account of a physical nature, no man would be able to look out over such a great multitude and number them.

Yet this multitude clearly stands in the same place as those mentioned in Revelation 14—those redeemed from among mankind. These are the same because they are clothed in white and have *“washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”* (Revelation 7:14).

The question is even asked about who this multitude is. *“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them”* (Rev. 7:13-15).

This group makes up the temple of God. The following verses make it clear that they have been changed from mortal to immortal. They are now spirit—in the spiritual family of God. They did not arrive easily. All who are called and begotten into the spiritual

family of God must go through intensive refining, trial and testing in order to be molded and fashioned into stones for this temple.

With some of the final instruction that Jesus Christ gave us on Passover night, He said, *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33).

Paul later spoke of the same thing when he said, *“Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: That no man should be moved by these afflictions (same Greek word for “tribulation”) : for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know”* (1 Thes. 3:1-4).

Tribulation and suffering is not new to God’s people. We understand it is part of our calling. That is why the example of fire and refining of gold and silver is so meaningful to us. We know it takes much fire to try us in order for us to be transformed—to mold and fashion holy righteous character within us. As Peter said, *“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:”* (1 Pet. 1:7).

So when we are told, concerning this great multitude, that *“these are they which came out of great tribulation,”* we need to understand that all who are able to become a part of the family of God, in the first resurrection, must come through much tribulation in the world. That is the process whereby we are able to be transformed. So those being spoken of as coming out of great tribulation are not restricted to only those who come out of the end-time physical tribulation that comes on the whole world. All 144,000 have had to come through great tribulation in order to be among those in the first resurrection.

Yes, before the seventh seal is opened and the end-time physical tribulation is unleashed upon this earth, the work of Pentecost will be concluded. All who are to be in the first resurrection will have been determined—all will have been sealed.

It should be profoundly sobering to understand that at the time this book is being written, we are in the time when the sixth seal has been opened. We are at a transition in time when end-time spiritual tribulation upon the Church is about to conclude and end-time physical tribulation on this world is about to commence.

This time, between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals, is when the final determination of all who will be firstfruits—the temple of God—is completed. When the sealing is complete, great destruction will come on this earth because the first four angels of the seventh seal are no longer restrained.

Draw close to God, as His Kingdom is about to come to this earth! **TRO**

Clarifying the Seals of Revelation

Continued from page 21

power that would emerge in Europe as the final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire. The whole world will witness this horrific event when it comes. God makes it clear that when the Beast power does arise in the form of a final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire, a final world war will come on this world and the modern-day nations of Israel will be conquered. We have always been correct in understanding that a final rebirth of the old Roman Empire will occur during the blowing of the fifth trumpet of the seventh seal!

So, when we understand the truth in this matter that the emergence of the Beast power, in the form of the last resurrection of the Roman Empire, does not occur in the opening of the fifth seal, but during the fifth trumpet of the seventh seal, then other matters will also become obvious to us. Those will be covered in the following articles. **TRO**

Opening of the 7th Seal

It has indeed been a sobering revelation for the Church to learn that the first five seals of Revelation have been about itself and that these seals are no longer a matter of future prophecy that is yet to be fulfilled, but are now a matter of history—seals that have already been opened.

It is a unique period of time between the great spiritual tribulation that came upon the Church in the opening of the first five seals and the beginning of great physical tribulation when the seventh seal is opened.

As we have covered before, Jesus Christ is the one who opens the seals. Although the Church has understood some basic knowledge concerning those seals, much has remained hidden because it was God's will that most revelation be given at the time that Jesus Christ opened the seals.

Before we go any farther, it must be understood that there is still much that cannot be known about the seventh seal because it has not been opened as of the writing of this article. So this article will focus on those things that God has given His people to understand before that seal is opened. However, when this seal is opened, it will no longer be a mystery as to its timing!

And some will be correct in one thing—it is the end-time! It will not be the end of the world, but it will be the end of man's self-rule on this earth over the past 6,000 years.

Because of those things we have already experienced as a Church and because we are rapidly nearing the opening of the last seal, God has given more insight into what is to come so that we can be more fully prepared and ready when it does take place. We are to be watchful and spiritually on guard as this time approaches. The time is extremely short!

Then, for those who read this article after the seventh seal has been opened,

you will be able to more fully grasp the truth of those things written here. When you do come to that understanding, it will be time for you to seek after God and repent of those things that has led to the need for this world to be brought low before God's Kingdom comes to this earth with Jesus Christ coming as King of kings. And as you repent, take hope and courage in knowing that this great tribulation on the earth will last but a short time and then God's Kingdom will be here on earth, ushering in true and lasting peace and genuine prosperity for mankind.

Great Confusion

From now, up until the time this last seal is finally opened, and continuing on as each trumpet is blown, there will be great confusion in this world, especially in the so-called religious world.

Man has long been aware of things written in scripture that speak of events at an end-time, although man has not understood those things. Those who claim to be religious will flood the world with nonsensical theories as to what is unfolding, just before and after this seventh seal is unveiled. And some will be correct in one thing—it is the end-time! It will not be the end of the

world, but it will be the end of man's self-rule on this earth over the past 6,000 years. It will be the end of the world as man has

known it. It will be the beginning of a new world where God establishes His reign on the earth. Mankind will finally learn why God established the seven-day week. The first six days were given to man, but the seventh is His. He has given man 6,000 years to learn a true witness that man is incapable of ruling himself. God will then establish His Kingdom on earth for 1,000 years to witness how only His ways bring true peace and meaning to life.

As we take account of where we are now in this end-time and as time progresses farther toward the period of final tribulation, religious profusion and confusion will gush out of the mouths of people as they try to explain what is happening. Yet they will not grasp the severity nor the condemnation of their own evil ways, false beliefs, and pride-filled hypocrisies that fill their foolish reasoning and vain interpretations. Do not listen to their foolish ways or turn to their lying beliefs. Look instead for two witnesses whom God will be using in a powerful way as part of His final message and warning to man at the end of this 6,000-year period. It will become abundantly clear who they are because what they do is done only by the power of God. They are given power to perform signs and wonders not witnessed on earth since the days that similar events were accomplished through Elijah and Moses. Heed their warning and turn to the true God whom they declare.

Even those who have been scattered within the true Church of God will be filled with confusion, although closer to the truth of what is taking place because they were given basic truth of this time long ago. But most will still not understand! Why?

Most scattered brethren will not confess—will not acknowledge—the time we are in now. Most cannot accept that we are in the last Church period of time known as Laodicea and that the time of Philadelphia is long over. Not only that, but they cannot accept the truth that God completed a work through His end-time Elijah, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong—a work that many believe they are continuing or that they themselves are going to fulfill. Not only do most not accept this truth because they refuse to believe what God says to the Church, but many become very indignant when anyone tells them that God has already completed His work of the gospel going into all the world.

It is by this very refusal of so many that they condemn themselves to a stronger, hard-hearted pride and arrogance against what God would otherwise lead them to see. This is the very reason they will be so confused when the great tribulation finally strikes. It will not happen in the way most have believed, although all have been given basic understanding of the foundational elements of the seals of Revelation. We have already covered most of those in this booklet, as God has blessed us to build upon them. Most cannot build upon the basics given to us through Mr. Armstrong because they cannot admit our history in the light of Bible prophecy which has already come to pass. That refusal has led to great ignorance of what is yet to come.

Last Warning

God has shown that we have reached the end of time for any more warning witness to His people through any publications. Time has run out for the scattered Church of God.

The time of God's judgment upon His Church is complete and only a few are going to be called to become a final remnant of all that was scattered earlier. God will call a tithe from the third that was scattered. All who were scattered received an opportunity to repent of pride and a lukewarm spirit. The witness—the testimony is

established and judgment set. By this point, we have either heard His voice and repented and are seeking to become more zealous toward Him or we have stubbornly held onto our own ways of seeing Him and have become more deeply entrenched in hard-hearted pride—resisting God's grace.

If God calls you out of the scattered era of Laodicea, will you hear Him and repent? You may be among a very few who will be given a final opportunity to become part of a remnant that He is going to call. This is the last published warning given by any means whereby a few may respond to become part of a final remnant of the last era of the Church! God's word through Joel will now come to pass upon Laodicea. *"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).

God seeks to deliver those who will hear Him. The seventh seal is nearing the time it will be opened. Seven trumpets are about to be blown! They will change the course of this world. They will bring this world to its knees. It will also bring some of the scattered Church to its knees, but not all! Even in the midst of such chaos and tribulation in this world, most of the scattered Church is going to die while in rebellion to God, but a few of those in rebellion will be brought through it all as a witness against all who stubbornly hold to their own will. Thankfully there will also be a few who are brought to their knees in true repentance who will also be brought through this time of great tribulation.

But for now, religious confusion continues to escalate in the world and in the scattered Church. Due to growing problems in the Middle East, and

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primarily those things involving the nation of Israel, religious leaders from many different backgrounds are theorizing and attempting to interpret Bible prophecy concerning the end-time because, increasingly so, many are sensing a growing threat of massive destructive potential upon this world. That fear will prove to be well-founded and far worse than any can imagine.

Religious confusion can be expected by those in the world who have never known the true ways of God. But sadly, most of the scattered Church will also be in confusion and be completely blind-sided by what does finally come to pass. Why is that?

Because brethren have failed to repent of going to sleep spiritually, result-

ing in being spued out of God's mouth and scattered, they have failed to learn the lessons and receive understanding that comes from admitting we are deep into Laodicea. As a result they cannot see that Matthew 24 is about the Church and that Christ's Olivet Prophecy parallels the first five seals of Revelation.

So instead of scattered brethren understanding that the first seals being opened are about the Church, they will be holding onto an older belief that leads to a united Europe rising up during the fifth seal that is supposed to conquer the modern-day nations of Israel at that time. But, as we addressed in the article entitled "Clarifying the Seals," such is not the case. The opening of the fifth seal was not about the beginning of great physical tribulation on this world.

The Beginning of Tribulation

"And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets" (Rev. 8:1-2).

The great physical tribulation that will come on this world will actually begin when the seventh seal is opened. God has divided the opening of this seventh seal into seven specific stages. These stages are revealed through the blowing of seven trumpets. Each trumpet announces a specific disaster—a specific calamity that is to come on this world.

The reason that so many in the scattered Church will be totally caught off guard and in confusion over what is happening is that they do not expect the great tribulation to begin at the blowing of the first trumpet when the seventh seal is opened. When the great tribulation begins, they will still be looking for Europe to rise under the combined leadership of ten rulers who give their power as one. Yet, this does not occur until the fifth trumpet of the seventh seal is blown.

Notice how the great tribulation does begin. It comes swiftly upon the world

because the first four angels sound their trumpets at the very beginning. They had previously been held back from unleashing the beginning of this great tribulation until the sixth seal had been accomplished, which was the time for the final sealing of the remaining firstfruits of God's plan.

"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea. Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (Rev. 7:1-3).

However, once the seventh seal has been opened, those four angels will sound and great tribulation will come on this earth.

"And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of

them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise" (Rev. 8:6-12).

God has not yet revealed what this specifically means. We will know when

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it is unleashed upon this earth because, when the world experiences this destruction, it will be of catastrophic proportions.

These then are the very events that finally bring together a fully-united portion of Europe that will fulfill even more prophetic events that bring even greater destruction on this earth.

The Fifth Trumpet

Great destruction is brought upon this earth as a result of the first four trumpets being blown, but even more devastating events are about to unfold when the last three trumpets are blown. *"And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!" (Rev. 8:13).* Each trumpet that remains to be blown is given as a great warning to mankind—a "woe" upon the earth. The first woe comes as the fifth angel sounds his trumpet.

"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power" (Rev. 9:1-3).

The previous four angels that sounded are the catalyst that prompts this event, when the fifth angel sounds his trumpet. It is at this time, when the fifth trumpet is blown, that Satan has

power to stir up certain European nations to combine their power as one. The locusts coming upon the earth has long been understood by the Church to be a great army that is given power to conquer. The key that opens this bottomless pit is what releases Satan to once again do his bidding over a final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire.

The real power behind this final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire, that emerges out of the bottomless pit, is indeed Satan. *"And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon" (Rev. 8:11).*

This last resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire is described even more fully later in the book of Revelation. We are given more understanding about the influence that Satan has had over the previous resurrections of this same empire and the final one that is about to come on this earth.

"So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns" (Rev. 17:3). These verses have long been understood by the Church to refer to the seven resurrections of the Holy Roman Empire beginning in 554 A.D. under the rulership of Justinian. He was the first to recognize the supremacy of the Pope and submit to him. Thus, this became the revival of the old Roman Empire that was now the first revival to become known as the Holy Roman Empire.

There is a unique verse that could only be understood as actually occurring in one moment of time. It was revealed to Mr. Armstrong at the very time it was prophetically taking place. *"And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space" (Rev. 17:10).* The sixth revival actually occurred

during the life of Mr. Armstrong.

God revealed to Mr. Armstrong that five rulers had already arisen and fallen in the Holy Roman Empire and that he was actually living through the sixth revival during the time of Mussolini and Hitler. Even the title of “Third Reich” gives some truth of what was being attempted by these leaders. (Of interest, look up the meaning of “Reich.”) There is only one time in history that this verse could be understood as actually being fulfilled. It was when Mr. Armstrong came to understand that seven rulers were to emerge who would prophetically fulfill seven revivals of the Holy Roman Empire. When God gave understanding of this verse to Mr. Armstrong, five revivals had already arisen and fallen and one existed now (the sixth revival)—“*one is*”—at the very time this prophecy was revealed to him. Mr. Armstrong was also given understanding that one more was going to arise—the seventh and last resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire.

“*The beast that thou sawest was* [This beast has been the one who has influenced and led all the previous revivals of this Empire.], *and is not* [This is prophetically true right now, just as Mr. Armstrong understood verse 10 to be true in his day. In other words, this beast was over six previous revivals and is not over any at this very time, but is about to emerge over the last revival.]; *and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit* [This is referring to the seventh and last revival of the Holy Roman Empire mentioned in Revelation 8 at the time of the fifth trumpet in the seventh seal.], *and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is* [People will once again witness the power and influence of this being that has led each revival of this empire. He has exerted his power over this empire six times before—“*the beast that was*”—and yet at this very time he is not exercising power over this empire until its time comes—“*and*

is not”—but he has always existed on this earth and exercised influence over man from the very beginning with Adam and Eve—“*and yet is.*”]. *And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth* [This is the false religious system that gives the so-called name of “Holy Roman Empire.”]. *And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space*” (Rev. 17:8-10).

“*And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.* [Satan “*was*” the one behind the previous six revivals. Yet at this very time he “*is not*” over a revival, but soon will be over the seventh and last one. Since he has been over all seven, “*is of the seven,*” he is counted as “*the eighth.*”]

God is about to intervene and bring an end to 6,000 years of man’s self-rule and usher in His Kingdom to reign on this earth when Jesus Christ returns a second time—this time as King of kings.

And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast” (Rev. 17:11-13).

Again, verse 3 previously mentioned that there were seven heads and ten horns, and as was stated, the Church has long understood these seven heads to be the seven revivals of the Holy Roman Empire. What is unique in Revelation 17:12, that was just quoted, is that there will be ten kings who “*have received no kingdom as yet,*” because the seventh revival has not yet occurred. These ten horns [vs. 3] or ten kings [vs. 12] are ten leaders of ten nations that will comprise the seventh and final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire that is about to be revealed to this earth. The one who has true power over these leaders and this seventh and final resurrection is the beast that has already been mentioned—Satan. When the fifth angel sounds the fifth trumpet of the

seventh seal, this being will emerge from his place of restraint (translated into English as “the bottomless pit”) as the beast over this final revival.

Last Two Woes

Once this revival of the Holy Roman Empire emerges for the final time, with her powerful army that seeks to take control of this chaotic earth, then some far-eastern nations prepare for war in order to seize control over much of the earth, which eventually brings them into a final and great conflict with the seventh revival of the Holy Roman Empire. It is the result of the fifth trumpet being blown—the first woe—that leads to the second woe when the sixth angel sounds his trumpet.

“*One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter. And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,*

Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four

angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them” (Rev. 9:12-16).

This second woe is harsh upon the earth and a third of all mankind will die because of this fierce army.

Six trumpets have been blown. The time of great physical tribulation will now begin to come to a close as we approach the time of the seventh and final trumpet that remains to be blown—the third and final woe upon this earth. It is at this time that God will bring an end to both of these powerful armies which have come upon the earth bearing so much destruction. God is about to intervene and bring an end to 6,000 years of man’s self-rule and usher in His Kingdom to reign on this earth when Jesus Christ returns a second time—this time as King of kings.

The great army that emerged out of the far east will eventually be drawn

into a final conflict with the final revival of the Holy Roman Empire. They will come together to do head-on battle in an old Hebrew area known as Megiddo.

“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. [These are the nations of the far east that united as a 200-million-man army when the sixth trumpet was blown.] And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. [Satan moves the revived Holy Roman Empire to gather for this battle against the hordes coming out of the east.] For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Rev. 16:12-14). This is the time that God will intervene to destroy both of these great armies when they have come together for their great confrontation. It is God who has brought these armies together in order to swiftly bring an end to great physical tribulation on this earth. *“And he [God] gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon”* (Rev. 16:16). There is much more to this story, but to summarize it, these armies, that have come together for the purpose of destroying each other, will actually turn to fight against that which they then see coming out of the heavens. They do not understand what they behold, but they fear what they see.

They will behold a sight that man has never seen or been able to conceive. Hollywood has imagined many spectacular events in sci-fi movies, but this event far surpasses those imaginations. It is at this very time these nations come together for battle that Jesus Christ will return and take control of all rulership on this earth. His Kingdom will come at this very time! When He returns, it will not be as a lamb when He first came to this earth as

our Passover sacrifice, but now, He will return in a great and swift war to conquer these armies.

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in

We should be able to clearly see that great physical tribulation does not begin with a revived Roman Empire, but with great devastation unleashed when the first four angels sound their trumpets.

blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him...”(Rev. 19:11-20).

Caught Off Guard

These seven trumpets, that are blown after the seventh seal is opened, bring about a swift and final succession of end-time events. Not only will this world soon be caught off guard as to

what is about to come, but most of the scattered Church of God will be caught off guard as well. As we have already covered, when the seventh seal is opened, the first four angels will sound their trumpets and great destruction will begin on this earth. This initial destruction of great physical tribulation is not caused by a revived Holy Roman Empire, as many believe.

Remember, the seventh seal has not yet been opened and there is knowledge and understanding that God has not yet revealed. But because of a basic outline of understanding that God gave to His servant Herbert W. Armstrong and due to our having lived through the first five seals that have already been opened, God has given us a much clearer outline of those things that are close at hand.

We should be able to clearly see that great physical tribulation does not begin with a revived Roman Empire, but with great devastation unleashed when the first four angels sound their trumpets. Although we cannot know exactly how this is made manifest, we can know the result in the lost ten tribes of Israel being brought to their knees as great end-time nations on this earth. The old Biblical nation of Ephraim (Great Britain and her old commonwealth of nations—including Canada, Australia and New Zealand), Manasseh (the United States of America), and the rest of the “lost ten tribes” (nations of Biblical Israel that make up other modern-day nations of Western Europe) will be made impotent as world powers by those events that accompany the blowing of the first four trumpets.

This is what leads to the timely emergence of a great revival of the Holy Roman Empire for one last time. Ten nations will swiftly come on the scene to fill this power vacuum that is thrust upon the nations of this earth. Portions of Europe already have the desire in their hearts and minds to unite in greater power and influence. A United States of Europe has been in the making for a long time now, but the time “is not yet” for them to fully exert

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A Time for Two Witnesses

This article is the conclusion to all that has been written in this booklet. You have now come to a point where you can read about the most important information that God has compiled for mankind toward the close of 6,000 years of man on this earth. Your response to what you read will have a direct bearing on the possibility you may have in living through this end-time and into a new world. The time just ahead of us is what the gospel message has been—from God to man—since man was first created.

We are living in the period of time just before the great tribulation, yet it is so very unfortunate to realize that most people, reading this article and learning these things for the first time, will not place much credibility on what has been written. But such attitudes will change dramatically once people are living in that time. Then people will begin to have the capacity to acknowledge that the things written in this booklet are true. It is indeed sad that it will take such drastic means to humble the minds of people in order that they can begin to receive the awesome words of God.

The gospel given through Jesus Christ was about this time that is almost upon us. The gospel, “good news,” to mankind is about the Kingdom of God that is coming as soon as the great tribulation is over. It is the time spoken of by all the prophets, a time when Jesus Christ will rule as King of kings on the earth.

God gave witness of this truth of His Kingdom through His end-time apostle who was also the end-time Elijah spoken of in scripture. The world rejected the “good news” that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was sent to proclaim. His time is past. We are now at the time when two end-time witnesses will be used by God to give the final warning and proclamation to this world about why this world has been brought to such a time of suffering

and tribulation—the worst the world has ever known! It is a time for the world to be brought to humility and repentance before God.

What a shame that so many in the scattered Church have been caught off guard and have failed to hold fast to those truths revealed to them through God’s end-time Elijah. But because of pride, most will not receive what God is telling them, even now! Just as the gospel has gone into all the world at the end of this age, as a witness, a witness has also gone into the scattered Church, but brethren have not believed God’s own witness.

When God gives a witness of man, it is indeed sobering. As this booklet has testified, God raised up Mr. Armstrong as the prophetic “Elijah to come,” to restore foundational truth to His Church that had been lost by the end of Sardis. He also used this same man to preach the gospel throughout this world “as a witness.” The gospel—good news of

It would be good for everyone to stop and consider the extent, both small and great, of this message that went out to the world “as a witness,” that witness being that mankind would reject the message!

God’s soon-coming Kingdom—was sent out to this world through the mass printing of a magazine called “The Plain Truth.” (It needs to be mentioned here that this same magazine, as well as other material published by the Worldwide Church of God, became fully corrupted through the 1990’s after the leadership of the Church turned from the truth of God to the false teachings of traditional Christianity.) The true gospel message also went out through extensive worldwide coverage on radio and television. Mr. Armstrong also went personally to world leaders with this same message.

It would be good for everyone to stop and consider the extent, both small and great, of this message that went out to the world “as a witness,” that witness

being that mankind would reject the message! It is also good that we consider the leaders who received this witness. Although Mr. Armstrong received awards and honors from some of these leaders and nations, with many leaders being drawn to him with a remarkable fondness, they nevertheless rejected the message he brought them of the gospel about the Kingdom of God that was soon to come to this earth.

Early on Mr. Armstrong received a very unique award from King Leopold III. It was the fourth watch made from a cannonball taken off a battlefield in World War I by King Albert I of Belgium. He had the cannonball cast into the four watch cases, with the desire that they would be presented to the four individuals that he felt had made the most significant contribution to world peace. The king never found anyone he felt worthy to receive the fourth watch, and so, he passed it on to his son, Leopold III, who was moved to give it to Mr. Armstrong in 1970.

Yet today, many do not know the name of Herbert W. Armstrong, even though many world leaders were drawn to him. God is the one who gives favor to whom He will, and he gave favor to Mr. Armstrong in the eyes of world leaders, yet they still did not receive the message he carried about the Kingdom of God that was soon to come.

Mr. Armstrong became known to many as an “ambassador without portfolio for world peace.” He carried the gospel message to Prince Makasa and a number of the members of the Japanese Diet. Emperor Hirohito conferred on Mr. Armstrong the Order of the Sacred Treasure, Second Class — one of the highest decorations that can be presented to a non-Japanese. During a period that covered two decades, seven successive Japanese Prime Ministers counted Mr. Armstrong as a personal friend and counselor. There were members of the Japanese Diet that referred to their

relationship with Mr. Armstrong as being his Japanese sons. Yet none of these leaders received the message of the coming Kingdom of God.

Mr. Armstrong was endeared in friendship with King Hussein of Jordan, King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit of Thailand, and Prime Ministers of Israel including Golda Meir and Menachem Begin. Others who counted him as a personal friend were Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, Jomo Kenyatta who was Founder and first President of Kenya, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, Mayor Teddy Kollek of Jerusalem, and longtime friend Nagendra Singh who was a Justice at the World Court in The Hague, Netherlands.

Mr. Armstrong also had personal meetings with leaders like Margaret Thatcher who was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Juan Carlos, the King of Spain, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Yet of all these world leaders, none received the message he carried of the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

President Ferdinand Marcos decorated Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong with the Presidential Merit Medal “for his moral presence and compelling influence in moving people toward the creation of a just and peaceful world order.” He received the decoration of “Commander of Our Most Noble Order of the Crown of Thailand.” Yet, neither these leaders nor their people received the message of the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

Other leaders with whom Mr. Armstrong met included President Allende of Chile, President Suharto of Indonesia, South Vietnam’s President Nguyen van Thieu, and Mr. Armstrong was invited to Romania by President Nicolae Ceausescu. Mr. Armstrong also met with Deng Xiaoping of the People’s Republic of China and was the first Christian leader to officially visit leaders inside China. In this unprecedented visit he addressed officials from 76 nations in the People’s Great Hall in Beijing concerning the way to real peace and why humanity fails to achieve it.

Mr. Armstrong received many more honors and met with and visited numerous other world leaders. But the gospel message that God sent throughout all the world through Mr. Armstrong stands as a witness in the end-time—toward the close of 6,000 years of man on this earth—that man is still the same since creation—he rejects the message of God of His coming Kingdom to this earth.

Yes, at the end of this age, a gospel message went out to world leaders, was preached for years over radio and television, and was published in numerous publications—primarily through “The Plain Truth” magazine, yet th Again, how blind and how ironic it is that the very name by which unrepentant Loadiceans want to see themselves (Philadelphia) is a name that only describes a love that humans are capable of without God’s spirit. They seek to hold onto a description is witness that went into all the world was rejected by the world. That is the witness! Man is still the same as he has been from the beginning. Only a few received that message—specifically those that God personally called into a relationship with Him.

But in the scheme of things, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong did not meet with all world leaders during the time of Philadelphia. Neither did “The Plain Truth” nor the World Tomorrow broadcast reach the whole populations of this earth during Philadelphia. In reality, only a few million Plain Truth magazines went out monthly, and those were mostly in the United States and English speaking nations. But all of this worked to be a sufficient witness of mankind in the end of this age—man still rejected the gospel message from God.

A Witness to Laodicea

There is a parallel and a type to the witness that went into the world as a witness during the Church era of Philadelphia. It is a witness that has been given in the scattered Church of God during the last Church era of Laodicea. God has been giving a message to the Church that is a witness

of this end-time era. Most will not hear! Only a few that God specifically awakens and calls to be a remnant of this last era are able to truly hear. Not every minister, not every person in the scattered body must hear that message to Loadicea. The entire world did not have to personally hear the gospel message and warning, and neither does everyone in the scattered Church have to personally hear the warning message given to Loadicea in order for it to be a witness of the primary spirit of Laodicea.

It is because the overwhelming majority of the scattered Church is filled with a haughty estimation of itself that it has not repented and believed God. It is a spirit that looks down on many within the Church. It is a spirit that sees itself as an image that claims to be of a different spirit than Laodicea—an image that reflects a kind of goodness seen in “being Philadelphian.” Such brethren fail to see the purpose of the era—the time of Philadelphia and the work that was to be accomplished at that time. Instead, brethren have created an image of being Philadelphian that is better than reality, an image of self that could not be guilty of those things God says to Laodicea—which has been spued out of God’s mouth and away from His presence. That means it happened to everyone who was ever a part of the Worldwide Church of God. How ironic that it is only through the admission of who they are that they can truly come to repentance and again become zealous toward God. All in the scattered Church must choose whether or not they **believe** God’s own witness against them concerning the description He gives Loadicea because only when they believe God are they able to truly see themselves and repent!

Again, how blind and ironic it is that the name by which unrepentant Loadiceans want to see themselves (Philadelphia) is a name that only describes a love that humans are capable of without God’s spirit. They seek to hold onto a description that defines a human fraternal love and not the true love that comes from God—agape.

Some that will yet be awakened are being called by God to repent and believe Him—to believe His witness against them. It needs to be stated again that God promises there will be a remnant called by Him out of the sleeping, pride-filled, lukewarm spirit that has engulfed the scattered Church. That is the Word of God contained in the book of Joel that should give encouragement to all who will receive and believe what God says to Laodicea! *“And it shall come to pass, that who-soever 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).

The spiritual condition of the Church, at the very time when end-time prophecies are being fulfilled and Jesus Christ is nearing His return as King of kings, is a condition of slumbering and sleeping just as the parable of the ten virgins declares. All ten virgins failed to be spiritually on guard and alert to the return of Jesus Christ. No person can awaken someone out of a spiritual sleep. Since this is a spiritual condition, it requires that God do the awakening.

The witness at the end of the age is that there was a large portion (the last third) of the Church that was shaken and given opportunity to be awakened as the result of being scattered, when God spued the Church out of His mouth because all were slumbering and sleeping and had become spiritually lukewarm. All have not accepted God’s correction or faithfully recognized their Laodicean condition, much less repented of that condition of which all have been guilty.

The Church did not fully repent when the last third was initially awakened and chastened by God. That was a strong witness! The condition of the Church has been so bad that it has been going back to sleep ever since God severely chastened it. But He has been working to again awaken people out of that condition in order to call them to be a final remnant. This calling is not a second-calling to receive His Spirit, which is given once after baptism and the laying on of hands, but

a calling that involves further chastening in order to bring about a remnant, humbled and brought low, to repent and once again become zealous toward God—if they will exercise ears to hear. Some are given this choice, but not all—for it is by the grace of God that we can now come to the kind of repentance necessary to be included as a remnant! None of us deserves this grace and mercy, yet God has a purpose to call a remnant (Joel 2:32) out of the last third of the Church that was scattered. These are called to be a faithful witness of Laodicea and the end of this age.

There will also remain a great witness of those scattered who live on into the millennial period and some that will even be in the hundred years to follow—a witness that even with the impregnation of God’s spirit, man can refuse God—man can fall asleep spiritually and become spiritually lukewarm—a condition that God cannot work with in order to bring one to spiritual maturity. If the unpardonable sin has not been committed, then repentance will be offered during this time to serve as a witness of Laodicea.

One of the greatest lessons that man can learn is contained in the witness and warning of Laodicea! Lucifer, one of the archangels at the pinnacle of God’s creation in the angelic realm, was made of spirit, yet became filled with pride and chose to turn away from God. The great lesson from Laodicea is akin to this, in that mankind, who is able to receive the impregnation of God’s spirit, can become filled with pride and turn away from God.

Receiving the impregnation of God’s spirit does not mean one will remain faithful to God. Unrepentant Laodiceans have made the same error as Lucifer and the unfaithful angels that followed him. All became lifted up with an attitude of self-centeredness that reflected their belief that, from within themselves, they possessed great spiritual wealth (rich and increased with goods), rather than understand the beauty of sharing in that wealth that truly comes only from God.

Yes, many will be caught off guard.

That is the final testimony to any who will hear it! Have you been given the ability to see and hear something that you are still resisting and fighting against? Repentance is still being opened to some, but not many more, because even the remnant that God will bring through all this is limited. It is God’s purpose to give witness of those who will hear and those who cannot or will not. If you are in the scattered Church, in which category do you fall?

This world and the modern-day scattered nations of Biblical Israel did not receive the message given to them by God at the end of this age. That witness was against them. Yet there was another witness at the time of Philadelphia. God **called** a few out of this world so that they could spiritually see and decide if they would respond to the gospel. Of this “few,” thousands responded, but many more thousands refused it even when they were given the ability to hear it!

In like manner, spiritual Israel, during the time of Laodicea, is going to be a great witness in God’s plan. Some have been **called** out of that lukewarm condition as a part of God’s design and purpose. Few in Laodicea have been given the opportunity of being spiritually awakened and called to see. Two-thirds of the Church became a part of a desolation very early on and the remaining third was shaken, offered the opportunity to be awakened and given warning by being scattered—spued out of God’s mouth. Of all that remain, only a few will respond to God and have opportunity for another kind of calling to be a remnant of that final third that was scattered. If you have been called to that, are you repenting and becoming zealous to God?

Just as many were given the ability to see the truth through a calling to the Church in these end-times, with only a few responding, there are many who were given the opportunity to be called out of a lukewarm spirit, out of a pride-filled spirit, out of spiritual slumber and sleep, yet have not responded to that calling. Indeed many are called, but few are chosen!

What a remarkable thing! An Ezekiel warning went out to this world at the end of this age. There is a witness of this world and especially the modern-day nations of Israel that would not hear God and there is a witness of a few who were called to a special ability to hear and choose that calling. An Ezekiel warning has also gone out to God's Church, to the degree that God determined would be sufficient to fulfill His righteous judgment upon the Church, just as a warning went into all the world to the degree that God determined would fulfill His righteous judgment on this end-time world.

The primary thrust of God's warning to this world was over when Mr. Armstrong died. The primary thrust of a warning to the Church has also come to an end. The witness of Laodicea is complete and agrees with the testimony of Jesus Christ concerning Laodicea. Laodicea has been judged! Now, in the Church, only those called to be a remnant can repent and seek God's deliverance.

Some will be able to receive the benefit of both Ezekiel warnings as this end-time concludes during the great tribulation. Yes, even some in the world will benefit along with some in the Church. But most will not!

If only it could sober each of us to the core of our being—the Kingdom of God is upon us! We are so very close to the opening of the final seventh seal. When you read this, that seal may have already been opened with God's two end-time witnesses already doing their work—just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. But as of this writing, we are rapidly approaching the blowing of the first four trumpets that bring great physical tribulation on this earth. Remember—it will last but a short time, although it will be the worst of times upon mankind in all of his 6,000-year history on this earth—it will be followed by a new world. That gospel message means more now than ever before. The Kingdom of God follows this great tribulation. It is our hope and the only true hope of all mankind!

As was stated in the previous article, when great physical tribulation comes

on this earth, God's two witness will be telling humanity that judgment has come upon this world due to man's rejection of God and His ways over the past 6,000 years of human history. These two witnesses will remind the world that they rejected the gospel message sent through God's own end-time Elijah. Their message will also show that mankind must humble himself before God, repent and seek His Kingdom that is coming to rule all nations. This will be the time to listen to their words, heed what they say and seek repentance before your God.

So, whoever is reading, it would be wise to search out all that you can find concerning those things taught by God's end-time apostle, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. The world rejected the gospel that was sent through this end-time Elijah. Will you now repent and accept it? **TRO**

End-Time Elijah

Continued from page 17

Scriptures foretold of an Elijah to come who would restore all things. Today, people argue over this rather than acknowledge the truth of what is apparent—again, more proof that the word of God agrees with our history as being the true Church of God spoken of in prophecy.

Jesus was asked by his disciples about the Elijah to come. 'And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things' (Mat.17:11). What needed to be restored before Jesus Christ could return to this earth? A great sign that we would be at that end-time would be when this occurred. It is a needful part of the history of the Church! God revealed that the truth would die out toward the end and the Church would begin to die spiritually. In order to prevent that from happening, God restored all truth necessary for salvation that would once again give life to His Church. Truly, the Elijah would first come and restore that truth to the

Church. Can anyone deny what God performed through His end-time apostle during the era of Philadelphia?"

To deny that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was the Elijah to come before the end-time is either ignorance or willing denial of what is true concerning our history and what God did through him. It is God who restored necessary truth to the Church so that a people would be ready for the second-coming of Jesus Christ. God said that the "gates of hell" would not prevail against His Church. The Church could not die out before Jesus Christ returned, yet that was exactly what was happening toward the end of Sardis. God saw to it that His word remained true (the Church would not die out) because He restored truth to His people through an end-time Elijah. What could be more basic?

It is not a light thing for anyone in the environs of the Church to deny or be uncommitted in this matter of Mr. Armstrong being the end-time Elijah. The fact that foundational truth was restored in these end-times and that such a thing could only be accomplished by God is truly a matter of acknowledging (confessing) or denying God.

Why do so many refuse or resist the clarity of truth concerning this matter? The answer should be plain. It is all a matter of the spirit and our true relationship with God. Do you see it? If you do, thank God, because there is only one way you can.

This may well prove to be the most important of all the proofs covered showing that we are in the end-time. The reason? ...Because it will reveal much about our attitudes toward the foundational truths restored by God Almighty to His people. Do we see a man or do we see God?

This article has been very much to the point, geared more to those who have a history, over the past decade or longer, in the true Church of God. There is no excuse for any to deny what should be an obvious truth. More will be stated toward the end of this booklet about how God used Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong in this end-time as the prophesied "Elijah to come." **TRO**

Opening the 7th Seal

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this power on the earth to the magnitude that they are destined to fulfill in a great and final resurrection of the old Roman Empire that God gave prophecy concerning long ago to the prophet Daniel. God gave prophecy concerning our time today about a revival in the Roman Empire when He revealed to Daniel the emergence of three world empires that were to follow the Babylonian Empire. God revealed to Daniel the Medo-Persian Empire that would quickly come to pass, the Greco-Macedonian Empire, and finally the Roman Empire that would emerge out of Europe with many revivals leading up to the end of this age and the coming Kingdom of God that will begin to rule over all mankind, when Jesus Christ returns a second time as King of kings.

Yes, few will see and few will understand. The world will be caught off guard and most of the scattered Church will be caught off guard. Most who hear will not believe right now, but many will come to believe God as He brings this world to its knees through great tribulation on mankind.

All of this is necessary. There is no other way that God's Kingdom can be ushered in except that mankind be humbled as never before throughout the 6,000 years of human history. Mankind will be humbled, brought low in order to be called into the Church of God during a time when the knowledge of God will fill this earth. Mankind must first be humbled so that he can receive the truth of God, and with God's design be able also to receive of His spirit.

We are at the time in all human history when one final revival of a world Empire will come swiftly on this earth. The physical tribulation that is about to come on this earth will be the worst the world has ever witnessed, but mercifully, it will be for a short time. *"And there are seven kings: five are*

fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space" (Rev. 17:10).

When great physical tribulation comes on this earth, God's two witnesses will be telling humanity that judgment has come.

What Will You Do?

If you have been a part of the scattered Church and now find that God has given you to understand that the things written in this booklet are true, (just as when God first called you to His truth), then will you repent and turn to Him—away from your spiritual lukewarmness and sleep? To repent now is your choice. Will you respond to become a part of the remnant God will call?

If you refuse His calling to be part of a remnant, then you choose to enter a deeper sleep for one thousand years—and that means to die without deliverance during the time of great physical tribulation.

If you are part of the modern-day nations of Israel, then you will be experiencing great physical tribulation and devastation in the country in which you live. Two-thirds around you will die. All that remains will be scattered and go through further physical tribulation during the last 3 ½ years before Jesus Christ returns to this earth.

Of that last third, as it was with the last third of the scattered Church (the spiritual Israel of God), only a remnant of ten percent will survive. All who are called to be a part of this remnant will have to respond to God in like manner. You must repent of your ways and turn to God—not to God as you have been taught in any of the religions of this world, but turning to the true God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. You may think you know the Eternal God, the Creator of the universe, but unless you have been a part of the true scattered Church of God in these end-times, you have not known the true God and His son Jesus Christ. Most so-called Christians think they have known, but **they have not!**

When great physical tribulation comes on this earth, God's two witnesses will be telling humanity that judgment has come upon this world due

to man's rejection of God and His ways over the past 6,000 years of human history. These two witnesses will

remind the world that they rejected the gospel message sent through God's own end-time Elijah. Their message will also show that mankind must humble himself before God, repent and seek His Kingdom that is coming to rule all nations. This will be the time to listen to their words, heed what they say and seek repentance before your God.

The true God of all mankind was revealed in the end of this age by the true end-time Elijah that Jesus Christ said would come. This was God's end-time apostle, Mr. Armstrong, who died in 1986. If you want to know more, seek God's help to find out more about what he taught and the message of the gospel of the Kingdom of God that God gave to him to deliver as a witness to this world before Jesus Christ's second-coming. If you are able, search out his last book "Mystery of the Ages." If you have means, search the internet for his name and you will find much of the truth that God delivered through him and restored through him. Many hated him, so do not believe their lies about him, only seek out those teachings and truths revealed through him.

Because of pride, most so-called Christians will hate these words and will not respond as this article has directed them to do. Their choice also is death during this time of tribulation. God makes it abundantly clear that all who come through this time will have humbled themselves and come to very deep repentance. Haughtiness and pride will not endure!

Whenever you read this, repent that God **may** deliver you. That will be between you and God and much will be determined by how you humble yourself before God and seek Him. Not only may God hear your heart-rending cry for deliverance, but He may pour out favor on not only you, but those of your household. The decision is yours and yours alone. What will you do? **TRO**

Revelation of God's Plan for Mankind

Introduction

This article is being written for those God will begin to call during the time of great tribulation which will lead to the coming Kingdom of God. It is written to those who have little or no knowledge of the true Church of God. The Church was established on Pentecost of 31 A.D. and has continued to this day. Most people, particularly those who are part of traditional Christianity, have never known God's true Church, yet, it has existed for the past 2,000 years from the time the early disciples began to teach the gospel message.

Most people in traditional Christianity know of only one Church that goes far back into history. Almost all history has been recorded showing a large movement, calling itself Christian, known as the Catholic Church. It isn't until the 1500's that we see another church coming out of the Catholic Church. That was the Lutheran Church which developed from the teachings of Martin Luther.

After that time, other Protestant churches began to be born. In the past century, countless numbers of churches have sprung up all over the world calling themselves Christian. But with all these churches came doctrines that varied and conflicted with one another creating a world of religious confusion.

Traditional Christianity is far from the truth of God. The Pharisees and Sadducees, whom Christ condemned, were closer to the truth than traditional Christianity is today. There is only ONE way of life—one truth that comes from God by God's spirit—not hundreds of different ones. *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all"* (Eph. 4:4-6).

As already stated, the vast majority of mankind has not known about the true Church of God, nevertheless it has existed since the Day of Pentecost, 31 A.D. It is not the great false church that emerged from history after the second and third centuries A.D.

The Catholic Church has no resemblance to the true Church of God except that it uses God's name and speaks of certain things that are Biblical.

Unlike this large false church and all the large church organizations that sprang from her, the true Church of God has always been small. For the past 2,000 years it was God's purpose that it remain small. Even during the first 4,000 years of man, only a few are recorded in scripture as being righteous and having a relationship with God. God's Church began on the Day of Pentecost with around 3,000 people, but it has always remained small even as Jesus said, *"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you*

the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). As you begin to see God's plan unfold in this article, you will see why it was God's purpose that the church remain small. It has been God's purpose that only a few through time be called into a special relationship with Him—receiving His truth.

God's amazing plan will be exciting to you as it is revealed—IF you are being drawn by God's spirit to see it! And even then, much will depend upon having an attitude of repentance. This world will enter a new era—when the great tribulation is over. Jesus Christ is about to return to this earth and establish the Kingdom of God—God's government over all nations.

When Jesus Christ returns as King of kings, he will bring exactly 144,000 with him who have just been resurrected—those who have been redeemed from the first 6,000 years of mankind and will now have a part in reigning with Jesus Christ in that new government. That is why, in large part, God has called so few throughout man's history, as well as why the Church has always been small. This is **part** of the overall purpose of God's plan of salvation for everyone.

Again, the purpose of this article is to help those whom God is calling to enter into that new age—when the Kingdom of God will rule on this earth. If God is drawing you at this time, then you will begin to see those things that have been hidden in the Word of God—things that the world has not understood. (1 Cor. 2:7-14).

God reveals His plan in a profound way. Once you come to understand it—SEE IT—you will be in awe of the great God and how He draws you by His spirit!

The basic truth of God's plan, covered in this article, almost died out during one of the latter eras of God's church known as Sardis (Rev. 3). As previously mentioned, God called Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong to fulfill the role of the "Elijah to come" during the Philadelphian era which followed Sardis. God worked through Mr. Armstrong to restore these truths to the Church.

Today, we are in the very last Church era mentioned in scripture—Laodicea. There are none to follow. When this Church era comes to an end, so will man's allotted 6,000 years of self-rule. Then, God's plan will be magnified beyond our imagination, and the Church will no longer be a little flock because the truth of God will be given to all who dwell on this earth—to the millions who will survive the final great tribulation.

Yes, God's true Church, however small, has continued since the days of the early apostles. It has always carried the name of God—the Church of God. It does not bear the traditional denominational names of today's churches. The true Church of God has the truth of God and obeys it! This article will go on to explain God's plan as revealed through God's appointed holy days.

7th Day Sabbath

The world has been kept in darkness concerning the true ways of God. Long before man was created, the archangel Lucifer rebelled against God, and nearly a third of the angelic realm rebelled with him. These spirit beings were cast to this earth. Lucifer became known as Satan, and the fallen angels that followed him became known as demons.

Mankind is ignorant to the reality that spirit beings exist and that they continue to fight against God's plan to this day. For the past 6,000 years they have worked to keep mankind in ignorance of God's plan—deceiving man from the very beginning.

It is part of God's plan and purpose to allow these beings to be on the earth. It is part of His plan to bring man to maturity so that in His time, everyone will have the opportunity to choose God and His way of life which leads to an eternal spiritual life beyond this physical one.

Again, this world has been kept in darkness by a deceptive being called Satan. God's plan is to deliver mankind from the bondage of deception and ignorance of His purpose. God's plan is a perfect process whereby man, who was created as a free moral agent, can—in God's perfect timing—come to **freely choose** between his own selfish ways or God's one true way that brings true fullness and happiness of life.

Notice what God has to say about the extent of Satan's deceptive power. *"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth [out of heaven], and his angels were cast out with him"* (Rev.12:9, NKJ).

God's word is true! Satan has been deceiving the whole world. Only a few that God has called over the past 6,000 years have been delivered from that power of deception. When God called the apostle Paul, He told Paul that he was being sent to the gentiles to do a work because He was also going to call some into the Church from among the gentiles. *"I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, 'to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me'"* (Acts 26:17-18, NKJ).

As will be explained later, we are at the end of man's 6,000 years of self-rule. We are now going through a transition on this earth where God is about to usher in His Kingdom over all the nations of this earth. As He does this, part of His plan is to begin opening the minds of all mankind to His truth. If you are able to understand the things written in this booklet, then God is blessing you with the ability to be called to Him, to be called into a new age for mankind. His truth can only be understood if He draws you by His spirit, giving you the ability to understand those things that are spiritual in nature because they cannot be understood by the natural mind of man.

*"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery [a mystery to the world—man cannot know the truth of God unless God reveals it], the **hidden wisdom** which God ordained before*

the ages for our glory [for those He calls to see His truth], which none of the rulers of this age knew [none of the Jewish or Roman leaders]; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written; 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man' The things which God has prepared for those who love Him' [quoted from Is. 64:4]. But God has revealed them to us [those He has called] through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him [..save by his own natural physical ability to reason]? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who [which] is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God" (1 Cor. 2:7-12, NKJ).

The Beginning of Revelation

God is going to begin opening the minds of all mankind as He humbles this world through a great tribulation on this earth. The tribulation will be brought to a close by the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings over all nations.

God will begin to introduce His truth, plan and purpose for mankind to the small percentage of the earth's population that comes through this great tribulation. As God establishes His Kingdom on this earth, His truth will no longer remain a mystery to man. Man has been deceived by Satan for 6,000 years, but that is about to come to an end.

The framework of God's plan will begin to be **revealed** by a very basic truth. That truth is about God's Sabbath!

Although the Jewish people have understood when the Sabbath was to be kept, they have not understood it or kept it as God intends. Jesus Christ condemned their hypocrisy and foolish application of the law, telling them that they made the way of God a burden to others rather than a joy as God intended. Jewish leaders continually found fault with Jesus Christ in matters pertaining to the Sabbath day because they simply did not understand it! They still don't understand it today.

Yes, Satan has deceived mankind concerning the Sabbath. The Arab people, primarily descended from Ishmael, Abraham's son, believe they are to worship God on Friday. The Jewish people, also descended from Abraham, have known the correct day for the Sabbath, but they have failed to understand it and have made it a burden.

Most professing Christians in today's traditional Christianity observe the first day of the week (Sunday) to worship God. The plan of God, that is revealed through the seventh-day Sabbath, remains a mystery to man.

All are in error. All have been deceived! Now is the time for people to begin to come to repentance and learn what is true! When God reveals His truth concerning the Sabbath day, people must choose if they are going to repent of going their own way which began in childhood. Most people perpetuate the religious beliefs which they learned from their parents. Then deception is passed on from generation to generation. When you learn what is true, will you repent and begin to obey God?

You must begin with the Sabbath. If you are unwilling to receive this basic truth from God, then you are unwilling to humble yourself and admit that you have been deceived. Unless you are willing to do this you cannot hope to receive God's favor to be able to live through the great tribulation and on into His new world that will follow.

The weekly Sabbath is on the seventh day of the week and has been since the days of Adam and Eve. Even as the week was established from creation week to be seven days, God's plan for mankind was set to encompass 7,000 years. Even as the first six days were set aside for man to do his own work and the seventh day being God's time—the Sabbath, so have 6,000 years been set aside for man to live his own way, but like the seventh day, the last 1,000 years belong to God!

Few believe the story that God delivered Noah into a new world. We live at a time that people will find even harder to believe—that God is about to deliver mankind into a new world where the Kingdom of God will rule all nations. Yet, that is exactly what is drawing very near!

The Beginning

Let's learn about the Sabbath. To do so, we need to start where it started. *"Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made"* (Gen. 2:1-3, NKJ).

It should be clear to anyone that God set apart the seventh day by personally sanctifying it. God didn't do that for any other day of the week. To be sanctified means to set apart for holy use and purpose. He did not set apart the sixth day (Friday) or the first day (Sunday) for holy use and purpose. God's purpose from the beginning was to set apart the seventh day for all time, as a Sabbath for mankind.

Notice further what God said about the very establishment of recordable time. *"Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs [the "marking" of time] and for seasons [Hebrew – "appointed times"], and for days and years;"* (Gen. 1:14, NKJ).

The Hebrew word for "seasons" means "appointed times," much like we speak today of appointments. Time is exact. God made the keeping of time a calculable factor of life. We can establish or set specific moments in time for any purpose we choose. From the very beginning of creation week, God established time, that He would personally set with mankind, to be appointments that we should keep with Him. The weekly Sabbath is one such appointment that never changes. Every seventh day mankind should keep this appointment with God!

God drives this point home in the book of Leviticus. *"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: The feasts [Heb.—"appointed times"] of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations [Heb.—"commanded assembly"], these are My feasts [Heb.—"appointed times"]. Six days shall work be*

done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings. These are the feasts [Heb.—"appointed times"] of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times [Heb.—"appointed times"]. On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD's Passover. And on the fifteenth day [an annual holy day] of the same month is the Feast [this word in the Hebrew does mean "feast"] of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven day you must eat unleavened bread" (Lev. 23:1-6, NKJ).

Most people in traditional Christianity have sought to do away with this command concerning the seventh-day Sabbath. They find no fault with nine of the ten commandments, but they have sought to "do away with" the fourth commandment that says *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy"* (Ex. 20:8). Even as it says a few verses later *"For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it"* (Ex. 20:11). Yet man has tried to set apart other days for holy use and purpose. But God said that observing the Sabbath is a perpetual covenant! (Ex. 31:16).

The Levitical system, with its ceremonies and sacrifices, was changed through Jesus Christ from what is commonly referred to as old testament times to new testament times. Through that time period, however, the law of God contained in the ten commandments was never changed.

The apostles and new testament church observed the seventh-day Sabbath and annual Sabbaths. The apostle Paul, some thirty years after the death of Jesus Christ, taught the importance to God's people of observing the Sabbath.

"For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works" (Heb. 4:4, NKJ). Paul was explaining that Israel had refused to hear God's instruction and was incapable of doing so because they lacked the faith that is made possible only by receiving God's spirit. Paul was actually showing that there is a specific day set aside whereby people may hear God's voice—His instruction. *"Again, he limiteth a certain day [God limited—sanctified the seventh day], saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts"* (vs. 8).

Paul went on to explain that, for the Church, *"There remaineth therefore a rest [Greek word— "Sabbatismos"—a keeping of the Sabbath] to the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest [into God's weekly Sabbath rest], he also hath ceased from his own works [ceased from his own carnal ways by seeking to live God's ways], as God did from his [in like manner as God rested from the beginning on the seventh day]"* (vs. 9-10).

The Sabbaths of God (weekly and annual) are an identification—a sign of God's people because only His people know and keep them in spirit and in truth—as He commands.

"Hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God" (Ez. 20:20). If you want to know God, the Sabbath is the place to start!

Passover

As we have just covered, the weekly Sabbath reveals a basic overview of God's plan that covers a span of 7,000 years. That plan is magnified further through the annual observances that God established as appointed times.

Leviticus 23 lists all of God's appointed times that He gave man. The annual observances begin with Passover. "*In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD's passover*" (Lev. 23:5, KJV).

This annual observance is to be kept each year as a memorial. It is not an annual Sabbath, but it is a vitally important day because it is the beginning of God's plan of salvation for mankind. We cannot continue into the rest of the meaning of the plan of God without first receiving the fulfillment of this day in our lives.

Many are familiar with the story of the exodus out of Egypt. It was at this time that God gave the Passover observance to the Israelites. "*And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months [comes in spring]: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house... Your lamb shall be without blemish [symbolic of Jesus Christ who had no sin (1 Pet. 1:18-19)] a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:*" (Ex. 12:1-5, KJV).

"*And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it*" (vs. 7).

"*For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will **pass over** you and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt*" (vs. 12-13). This pictures what Jesus Christ would fulfill for mankind. He is our Passover and by his blood we can be saved from the penalty of sin which is eternal death. "*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Rom. 6:23).

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, was God's passover sacrifice given to mankind whereby we can be saved from death. This is where we must begin in God's plan of salvation. It begins with Jesus Christ. All of us face the death penalty for our sins unless we accept the sacrifice of Christ to remove them. Only the blood of Christ in our stead can remove that penalty. This is God's Passover for us.

"*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*" (Rom. 5:12).

The Passover is the beginning of God's plan of salvation. We must be forgiven of our sins in order to enter into a relationship with God the Father. Only upon repentance and baptism can we begin the process of being delivered from

the pull of our selfish human nature and the power of Satan to hold man in darkness and deception because of sin. This is God's plan of deliverance from spiritual Egypt. "*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:*" (Col. 1:13-14).

The Church observes this annual memorial of the death of Jesus Christ in the very same way Christ gave the disciples to observe it on Passover night after he had his last supper with them.

The apostle Paul gave instructions concerning this observance. "*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you [how to observe Passover] that the Lord Jesus the same night [the Passover night] in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, *Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: **this do** in remembrance of me* [they were to do this each year at Passover time]. *After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup [an annual observance], ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.* (1 Cor. 11:23-26).*

Unleavened Bread

Once we have received the Passover, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ paying the penalty for our sins, we can proceed with the plan of God. The next area we must focus on is contained in the meaning of the observance of the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**.

"*And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein*" (Lev. 23:6-8, KJV).

There are two annual Sabbaths in the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The first and seventh days are annual holy days. This entire period of "appointed time" is one week in length. During this week of observance, we are to eat unleavened bread. We are to have no leavening in our homes during this period of time, and we are to refrain from eating products with flour containing leavening agents.

The symbolism in this observance is that leaven puffs up just like pride puffs up. Leaven is symbolic of sin. It is an expression of pride against the laws of God. We live as we please rather than express God's will in our lives.

After we are baptized and our sins are forgiven, we are to begin changing our lives. Unlike the teaching of traditional Christianity, we are not to remain the way we are simply accepting grace, but we are to change by becoming a new creature (Gk.— creation) in God. We are not to continue living the same way we did before baptism, however, we will have that same nature in us which we will have to resist all our lives.

Paul was correcting the Corinthians in a matter that involved two people in their midst who were flaunting their disobedience before the Church. The Church was preparing to observe the Passover season and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, so Paul used this occasion to show them their error.

“Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? [Their sin of condoning disobedience to God was like leaven and would spread throughout the Church if not corrected.] Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump [They were to get rid of the sin and live a new way of life.], as you are unleavened [They were not fully rid of sin in their lives. Humans will always find leaven (sin), but we are to get rid of it when it is revealed to us. This is speaking of the fact that they were observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread and had gotten rid of leavening products for this period of time— “as you are unleavened.”] For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast [Paul was telling them how they were to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread so that the lesson would carry on into their everyday lives.], not with old leaven [not our old ways of disobedience and sin], neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth [...with the absence of sin, living true obedience before God in His way of life]” (1 Cor. 5:6-8).

Although those in traditional Christianity teach that the laws of the Old Testament are done away, it should be obvious that they are not done away because the early Church of the New Testament kept the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, and from the example of Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians, it is clear that the Church observed the annual Sabbaths as well. Obedience to God in these matters was just a way of life for the Church and different accounts throughout scripture reflect that truth. The New Testament is not written in the same way as the Old Testament when Israel was given the law of God. The New Testament time is simply a witness of how the Church sought to live by the law of God. It is not a matter of trying to convince people of the validity of the law of God.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread teaches us that after we have been forgiven of sin through the blood of Jesus Christ, we are to begin a journey out of spiritual Egypt—out of sin and the bondage it holds over our lives. We are to begin a process of change with a new way of living. When the scriptures speak of being converted it means we are to change from our old ways of carnal human nature to a new way of righteousness in God’s way of life.

Churches in this world fail to tell this truth. Instead, they teach that we are under grace by the sacrifice of Christ and the law has been done away. They believe grace is free from the law of God.

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? [If the law is done away through grace, should we sin even more so that God’s grace might be even greater in our lives?] Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized [Gk.— fully immersed in water] into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we

*were buried with Him through baptism unto death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, [A part of God’s plan is to take us through this physical life by a complete change in our lives that will produce right character within us so that we can be given eternal life in a resurrection.], knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be **done away with**, that we should no longer be slaves of sin” (Rom. 6:1-6, NKJ).*

It isn’t the law of God that is **done away**, but it is the old man of sin that is to be done away. We are to come out of the watery grave of baptism and begin living a new life as a new creature (Gk.— creation) in God, just as Paul told the Ephesians “...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:22-24, NKJ).

Coming out of spiritual Egypt, becoming unleavened in our lives, is a life-long battle. As Paul explained in Romans 7, there is a constant battle against the carnal human mind in us, but this phase of God’s plan shows us the beginning of a process of being freed from bondage as we enter into a war of fighting against sin. We have to fight against our human nature and strive to live by God’s true way of righteousness.

Pentecost

The next step in God’s plan of salvation is pictured in the meaning of Pentecost. Pentecost in the Greek means to “count fifty.” The date for keeping this appointed time with God can only be known if we understand and observe the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. God very specifically tells us when to begin counting, from within a period of time inside the Feast of Unleavened Bread, so we can know when to convene before Him.

The story of Pentecost is powerful. God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt and took them through the wilderness to Mt. Sinai where, on the day of Pentecost, He gave them His law in the form of the ten commandments. However, the whole history of the Israelites is that they could not keep the law. Carnal human beings, of and by themselves, are incapable of keeping the righteousness of God’s law. Even to this day, one tribe of Israel, known as Judah and generally referred to as the Jewish people, are the epitome of this story. The very best that man can do, on his own ability, is reflected in the life of the Jewish people. None of the other tribes of Israel held to the law of God as the tribe of Judah did. All others rebelled against God long before Judah.

Man’s best example of adherence to God’s laws is found in the Jewish people. But Christ found himself being attacked by the Jewish people, revealing that although they had an appearance of holding to the law of the God of the Old Testament, they did not understand Him and His ways.

If they had, then they would have recognized Jesus Christ as the Messiah whose first appearing was in human flesh to fulfill the role of Passover as the Lamb of God. In their blindness, the Jewish people refused the teaching and instruction that came to them from the Son of God.

The witness, in their lives and the lives of all the Israelites, is that mankind of and by himself is incapable of living by the ways and laws of God. Pentecost reveals what is lacking in their lives—why they have not understood the teachings of the Old Testament and did not recognize the Messiah when he came and spoke to them nearly 2,000 years ago.

The book of Acts reveals the importance of Pentecost in the plan of God. After Jesus Christ died and was resurrected, he appeared to the disciples. This is the story in the opening of the book of Acts.

“The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:1-3, NKJ). The gospel—good news—that Jesus Christ taught the disciples was about the Kingdom of God. We’ll focus more on that as we continue with God’s plan.

“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’” (vs. 4-6). The disciples did not understand that Jesus Christ came the first time to fulfill Passover and that it would be nearly 2,000 years before the Kingdom of God would come. They thought that he might fulfill prophecy by bringing that Kingdom to them at that very time.

“And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witness of Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’” (vs. 7-8).

The coming of the Kingdom of God to this earth was not for their time, but as this booklet has shown, God has revealed to the Church that it is for our time. It is only a very short time away.

But concerning the day of Pentecost, Jesus was making it very clear to the disciples that they were to stay in Jerusalem until they received the promise of God’s spirit. More of this account and the pouring out of God’s spirit upon the disciples can be read in Acts 2. As many witnessed this great event on the day of Pentecost and became convicted of the words of Peter and the others, they asked what they needed to do next. *“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy*

Spirit’” (Acts 2:38).

Although the law of God was given to the Israelites on the day of Pentecost, God revealed to mankind that His way of life cannot be lived through human effort alone, but by the power of His spirit living in them. That is what was lacking in the children of Israel and is still lacking in the lives of all who dwell on the earth, except for those in the true Church of God whom the Father has called to understand His truth. God’s word and way of life is a matter of the spirit, and one must receive that spirit in order to understand the true will of God. Otherwise, man will only have the ability to read His words in scripture and come up with his own ideas and beliefs about God and Jesus Christ. That is why there are so many religions on this earth—all conflicting with one another in their teachings. There is only one true Church and one truth—one way of life that comes from God.

Firstfruits

There is another aspect of God’s plan revealed in the day of Pentecost. It is also referred to as the Feast of Firstfruits.

*“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your **harvest** unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf [symbolic of Jesus Christ being presented to God for us after his resurrection] *before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it”* (Lev. 23:10-11, KJV).*

God has used the agricultural example of harvesting to reveal another part of His plan of salvation for mankind. The early spring harvest reveals the first harvest of souls (lives) among mankind. This early harvest is contained in the story of Pentecost or Feast of Firstfruits. The larger fall harvest will be explained later in another holy day period.

Those in the first resurrection, who will come to this earth with Jesus Christ when he returns, are referred to as being the firstfruits of God, the early harvest of lives given salvation. Even Jesus Christ is referred to as being part of this earlier harvest. *“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept”* (1 Cor.15:20). Christ is actually the first of the firstfruits. But over the past 6,000 years, all who have been called (especially over the past 2,000 years of the Church) to have a relationship with God—called first from among mankind—are in the first harvest of lives to receive eternal life. Those God has redeemed from the earth over the past 6,000 years, who will come with Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God, are described in this way. *“These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins [spiritually]. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb”* (Rev. 14:4). Paul spoke of the same thing when he said, *“But each one in his own order; Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming”* (1 Cor.15:53).

After the wave sheaf was offered the Israelites continued with the early spring harvest leading up to Pentecost. Leviticus 23 continues by explaining that Pentecost is a holy convocation for God’s people—an annual Sabbath.

Feast of Trumpets

God's annual Sabbaths will continue to reveal more about the plan of God, but the remainder of these holy days will be covered by focusing more on the very basics of their meaning, although there is much more to be learned about them.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation” (Lev. 23:23-24). This annual Sabbath is next in the order of God's plan.

The Feast of Trumpets comes in the fall of the year. It reveals an exciting time for us today because it concerns the second-coming of Jesus Christ, not as a lamb, but as a King who will rule on the earth. This is the time you live in now! This world, after 6,000 years of man's rule, is about to make a dramatic change. It will be ruled by the Kingdom of God, with Jesus Christ as King of kings.

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep [those who have died in the faith over the past 6,000 years], that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him [they will all return with Jesus Christ when he comes]. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord [those who are in the Church who have the spirit of God dwelling in them and called to be a firstfruit] shall not prevent [Gk.—precede] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive [those alive in the Church called to be firstfruits] and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thes. 4:13-17).

Paul described this same thing to the Corinthian church. *“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”* (1 Cor. 15:52). This is when all the firstfruits will be resurrected. Nearly all of the firstfruits are dead, but will then be resurrected to immortal life. Those few firstfruits who are alive at this time will also be resurrected—changed from mortal to immortal spirit beings.

All the firstfruits called over the past 6,000 years will be resurrected on the day the last trumpet sounds, the seventh trumpet of the seventh seal. *“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever”* (Rev. 11:15). This is the day when Jesus Christ will come to rule all nations on this earth.

The return of Jesus Christ will bring an end to all wars. Man has sought to accomplish this very thing, but has failed miserably. The very statue in the United Nations garden, that depicts what man has wanted to do in bringing an end to all war, is taken from this very prophecy that will be fulfilled

through Jesus Christ. *“And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more”* (Is. 2:4).

On the day the seventh trumpet sounds Jesus Christ will return and put an end to war. When he returns, he will destroy the armies that have been destroying life during the great tribulation. *“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS”* (Rev. 19:11-16).

Day of Atonement

*“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a **day of atonement**: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls [a time of fasting and humbling ourselves before God], and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God”* (Lev. 23:26-28).

This annual Sabbath pictures the entire process covered from Passover to Trumpets. Christ will be on the earth at this time, but every human being still must go through the same process as those called in the first 6,000 years. The Day of Atonement pictures the entire process of being atoned to God—reconciled to God. All must come into unity and oneness—**at one** with God. It begins with Passover and being reconciled to God the Father by the blood of Jesus Christ. We must repent, come out of spiritual Egypt (sin), be baptized, and receive God's spirit. As we grow spiritually and overcome our nature, God can begin to transform (Rom. 12:1-2) the very way we think and bring us into unity and harmony with His one true way of life. After someone has successfully gone through this entire process, they will be able to be made fully at one with God by a change from mortal to immortal, from physical to spiritual into the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is the Family of God. It will be composed of spirit beings who were once physical. They will be at one with God for all eternity in His Family.

The day also pictures the time when Satan will be removed from the presence of God and man. That, too, is part of His plan to bring atonement to this earth.

Feast of Tabernacles

Again, this will be a condensed, basic focus on the meaning of this holy day season. Leviticus 23 continues with the annual holy days and describes a final observance that lasts for eight days. The first seven days is called the Feast of Tabernacles, with the first day being an annual Sabbath. This period of seven days is followed by an eighth-day observance which is also an annual Sabbath—the last in the revelation of the plan of God. It is called the Last Great Day.

As the weekly Sabbath pictures the last 1,000 years in the 7,000 year plan of God, the Feast of Tabernacles focuses on this same period of time. This very time is about to be ushered in on this earth. All who live through the great end-time tribulation will continue living in that new world. In this final 1,000 years all will live under one government on the earth. It is the government of God, the Kingdom of God, that will rule all nations during that time.

That very time is spoken of in Revelation 20 which occurs after the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (covered in Revelation 19). It is a time when Satan will no longer be active and will no longer have power to deceive the nations (except for a short time at the end of that 1,000 years).

*“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years [part of Atonement], And cast him into the bottomless pit [abys— a place of restraint], and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them [the firstfruits of Pentecost]: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded [“cut off” from the world through their calling] for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands [The mark or sign of the Church is the Sabbath and reveals what we believe (forehead) and when we will work or not work (hands) concerning the Sabbaths of God. The mark of the beast is revealed by Sunday observance.]; and they [firstfruits] lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection [The first resurrection refers to the firstfruits who have been resurrected first in God’s plan of salvation]. *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power* [All who are in the first resurrection have been given immortal life as spirit beings], *but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years* [These same members, who are resurrected first into the Kingdom of God, will reign with Jesus Christ over the nations of the earth.]” (Rev. 20:1-6).*

There is much more to the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles, but this will help you to see the basics of this portion of the plan of God.

Last Great Day

This eighth day following the Feast of Tabernacles is traditionally referred to as the Last Great Day. It is the seventh and last annual Sabbath. It is an exciting revelation in the plan of God. As the early spring harvest of firstfruits is pictured in Pentecost, the larger fall harvest is pictured in the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day as the rest of mankind is offered salvation.

The Last Great Day pictures a time of great judgment that follows the 7,000 year plan of God. It is a judgment period that covers a time span of 100 years.

“But the rest of the dead were finished” (Rev. 20:5). Who are “the rest of the dead?” Previously we explained the first resurrection (and those in it) which occurred at the end of the 6,000-year period. That brings us to the “rest of the dead” which is the vast majority of mankind having lived and died to this point in time. These are the billions who have lived in deception and ignorance of the purpose and plan of God. The time has now come for them to be resurrected to physical life a second time! Now read the following verse. *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power”* (Rev. 20:6). The firstfruits have already been given immortal life and are spirit beings in the God Family. They can never die again!

No one has been in heaven (except Jesus Christ) or in a place of eternal torment. People have simply been dead—returned to dust. But God has the power to give life again.

“And I saw a great white throne [time for the great white throne judgment—the last great day of mankind], and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God [All who ever lived and died will be resurrected at this time—those forgotten in time and those remembered by history.]; and the books were opened [The books of the Bible are opened now for all to understand—by God’s spirit]: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. [It is now a time for judgment. Each person must choose whether or not they will walk in the ways of God.] And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [Gk.—the grave] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. [and at the end of that 100 years....] And death and hell [Gk.—the grave] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:11-15).

Everyone will have the opportunity to choose God’s way of life and grow in righteousness until the end of the 100-year period at which time they can become part of the Family of God—the Kingdom of God. Those who refuse will die a second time—death for all eternity. That is the story of the Last Great Day.



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theCofG@aol.com
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