

This is going to be a long series which is *really* exciting for me. Because it helps me to know long range here that there is a lot planned out that God is going to have me give and it's really interesting going back through our history; it's very inspiring to see the things that have happened, to realize where we've been, where we've come from, what God has done in our lives and when you go back and look at it as I'm doing in this particular series it really drives the point home about that process of what we went through after the apostasy leading up to the apostasy and all those things as well. Today we're going to return to the sermon series entitled: *Our Journey of Faith* with this being *Part 3*.

We need to pick up just a little bit of the context before we continue on of where we left off two Sabbaths ago. We begin this series by focusing on some of the timing of things that God has brought us to, things that are still not fully known until they're seen, until there is physical evidence that will be brought forth in the Trumpet blasts that are directly in front of us beginning with #2 and then finally everything ending by Pentecost, May 27, 2012. We went to Hebrews 11 and talked about faith because this sermon is about faith, it's about a journey of faith for God's people. As I've been going through a lot of this it reminds me of some of the things written in the book of Acts of things that they went through thru a period of time and as we look through a period of time we see some of those things that God is doing with us.

Hebrews 11:1 - just a few verses here to bring us back on course again; where it says here - **Now faith is the substance**, in other words the ground, the support if you will, that which holds everything up, or holds everything together concerning those things that have to do with our response to God's word when He gives us His truth. So again **...faith is the substance of things hoped for**. There are a lot of things we 'hope' for; the primary thing that God's people have hoped for through time, for 6000 years – a part of that which is brought out here in Hebrews 11 is about a city whose builder and maker is God. **Faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen**. As far as we're concerned it's absolute. We believe God; we believe what God has told us, that is our evidence, what God has given to us, the ability to believe, the ability to see those things that He has told us and given us in His truth.

Verse 6 - without faith it's impossible to please Him: it's impossible to please God without faith; it's something we have to live by, something that God gives to us; He gives us the ability to see His truth, to believe His truth. We have to make the choice of whether or not we're going to do that, whether or not we're going to believe and follow through with those things that God has given to us. If we don't live by it then we can't please God because faith is a process whereby we're saved – in the sense of being able to have that attributed to us, accounted to us for righteousness. It isn't by how we live; it isn't by how good we are. We strive to live right; we strive to obey God's word. We seek God's help to live His way of life, we seek to conquer and overcome and fight this flesh, but we still have sin and we can't be saved by how 'good' we're able to live this way of life, how well we're able to do it. On the contrary, that's a must. We should strive to do that but the reality is it's by faith. It's by believing God and He accounts that to us then for righteousness. And so **without faith it's impossible to please God**, because without being accounted as righteous God wouldn't dwell within us. Without being able to be forgiven of sin God wouldn't dwell within us. So, **without faith it's impossible to please Him; for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them who diligently seek Him**. And so we talked about that, the importance of being diligent towards God as I've been going through this series –

it's really inspiring going back and realizing the process whereby God awakened us, whereby He was making us stronger and stronger so that we could stand once again: because we came to a point in time when the Church couldn't stand any longer, where we were very easy prey for what took place because of being sluggish, complacent and Laodicean in spirit.

It'd be good also to go on here to **verse 25** to bring this into context about Moses' journey of faith. And it says in **verse 25 - choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.** That's a unique way of stating something when we think about the Church because that's the way it is for all of us, something that we choose to do. Every one of you who has been called, every one of you who is new – this should mean something special to you because this is exactly what you are going through. Talked to some coming in here today about some of their battles, some of the things they've been going through and that's what it's talking about. **...choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God,** to be with God's people Sabbath after Sabbath you make choices and things don't always go well with you when you do that. Usually on the job. At the very beginning you go tell your employer, "I'm not going to be here any longer on Saturday, or Friday night,"... or whatever it might be and things begin to change around you. Your co-workers begin to treat you different if you're not fired on the spot. And that's just a beginning: family, friends, different ones that begin to see you differently because you are different, you're changing, you're making changes in your life and sometimes even in marriages. I know of many people in marriages where a mate begins to tell the individual, "I don't know you anymore. You're not the same person I married." And they shouldn't be! But they still want that other person. They don't want someone who is living by God's way of life, who is obedient to God. That isn't the person they married. It's amazing some of the things we go through.

It's a choice – **choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.** And so we make a choice for God's way of life. **Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt:** means a lot to us because we do that as well; **the reproach of Christ,** because of how you're treated. He told us that "they have persecuted me, and they're going to persecute you." ...so not to be surprised by that. It's just the way it is. And then it goes on to say, **for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.** An attitude of mind toward what God places before us; that that's our treasure, that that's where our heart is; that that's where our desire is and we begin a journey. All of God's people have had a journey of faith.

In Part 2 of this series that was given a couple of weeks ago we looked at the time of our history when the man of sin was made manifest to the Church. We covered some of that time period as it's revealed in Revelation 6 and that being in the first 4 Seals of the book of Revelation what took place when the very 1st Seal was opened when that sermon was given in Atlanta back in 1994. And we also focused on a corresponding time period as is covered in the book of Revelation concerning the Laodicean era. So we went through that period of time and that's basically where we ended that last sermon. I was going through the story of Laodicea and what happened to us, that we were spewed out of God's mouth, that we became so weak – we couldn't stand any longer. We weren't strong enough to stand against what was thrown at us. Slowly over time, over years we became weaker and weaker after Mr. Armstrong died. I marvel at some of the sermons going back in time and looking at some of the things that he had talked about...and of course with this in His mind always knowing that Laodicea was coming; but thinking at that time, and the thinking was that Philadelphia and Laodicea would continue to the very end. Because the concept was at that time that there would be 144,000 who were going to come out of Philadelphia alone, out of that era of the Church and that they would live up to the very return of Jesus Christ. That's why those ideas were there about Philadelphia continuing on and that Laodicea

would be running beside it at the same time and then in time there'd be a great multitude as well called out of the period of Laodicea.

There was this idea that 144,000 would come out of Philadelphia, but the Church only had a total of around 150,000 people worldwide, at its height, and only about 96,000 of those were baptized at that point in time in that particular era and what did we witness? What did we see? Complete breakdown in the Church – a third almost immediately who accepted new doctrine, new ideas – which wasn't new at all, it's the old stuff that we were called out of – the protestant world ideas that go way, way back in the Catholic Church. And so about a third of the people – some of them so anxious, some of them so upset even with Worldwide at that time – not because they were making the change, but because they were doing it too slowly; so they went out right away to different churches in the world that some of them were called out of. They couldn't wait to get back to some of the Churches of traditional Christianity. And others continued on with Worldwide thinking it was the Church and you could never leave the Church; so whatever the church did could never be wrong yet Mr. Armstrong always commented and brought out how that an organization is not the Church, it doesn't make up the Church but people didn't flee the organization when they should have.

Another third just quit; over a short period of time they just quit, went by the wayside because what is there? Once you've proven things about the Sabbath and the Holy Days, and all of a sudden everything's turned upside down – what do you do? It pretty much shatters you if you don't have answers for it and we didn't have answers. Then another third of us were just scattered all over the place as it talks about in the various hills and mountains and so forth; the different areas of organization where the government of God was scattered.

So again, we've been through a lot, but we were spewed out of God's mouth. We weren't able to stand any longer from the period of time – slowly but surely after Mr. Armstrong died. He used to cry out at different times about, "Do 50% of you even get it?" Because he believed at that time that that was the indication, that the Laodicean Church was already here, it was already upon us, and that break, that division was already getting ready to take place: 50% would continue on as Philadelphia and 50% continue on as Laodicea. But toward the end it became far worse and he said, "I wonder if even 10% of you get it," because of all that he saw – and he was right. We were that weak before he even died and he spent the last 7 years of his life striving to get the Church back on the right track because when he came back after his heart attack after nearly dying... well, he did die in essence and was revived and he came back stronger than ever before. God gave him more power than ever before and his continual focus was on getting the Church back on the right track. Incredible what took place in our history.

Let's continue on now going to **Matthew 24** and reading about some of this history; again, things we read in Revelation 6; things we read about in II Thessalonians 2; and now Matthew 24 because all of these cover some of the same period of time. Matthew 24 goes back a little farther and it brings in a little bit more of the history and it's good for us to be reminded of our history, to learn from our history; it's incredible as I've been going back through and reading some of these things and preparing some of this: where we've been, where we are and where we're going. It's truly inspiring when you see God's hand at work and what He's doing in ways that sometimes, when you're going through it you don't see it in the same way, with the same ability, in the same magnitude of what God is actually doing. Going back here to **Matthew 24:1** – incredible story where, **Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His disciples came with Him to show Him the buildings of the temple.** Sometimes in our travel, something I enjoy doing – I enjoy architecture and I enjoy different styles of different parts of the world and different ages of mankind as well, things that have been built. And it's quite awesome. It's a marvel

what man is able to do with the things God has given to us – that ability that He put within human beings, the creative ability to design, to bring things together; the ability to work to create some of the things that we're able to enjoy and involve ourselves in. And so this is what they were doing. They were going around looking at the marvels of what had been built.

And Jesus said unto them, you see all these things? Truly I say to you, that there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. And there were those then through time here who had mocked Jesus for making such comments, the type of comments that were made, you know, “destroy this temple and in three days I'll raise it up.” They didn't understand what He was talking about. They thought He was talking about something physical and when He was talking here He wasn't talking about something physical but there are people in the Church that was scattered... it's amazing the ideas that are out here that fit into this area where they still look at the physical – stones of the temple, and that physical stones have to be brought back, or at least an altar has to be set up in order to have an abomination of desolation – like Antiochus Epiphanies who sacrificed swine upon the altar; the ultimate of an abomination, to take pig, something unclean and the blood of a pig to offer up toward God, upon the altar. Antiochus Epiphanies did that for that reason obviously and yet people think that something like that has to happen again in order to have another abomination. What blindness. How could we have become so blind? I've gone back through News Watch and some of the things written there of pleading with people to look at the reality of what we have lived through and what we have witnessed, what we have experienced and why can't we acknowledge what we have lived through and what we saw. That it's about the temple – the spiritual temple, the Church of God. Incredible that our eyes can become so blind that we can no longer see and yet that happened to us.

Verse 3 - And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying; tell us, when shall these things be? -and what shall be the sign of Your coming, and the end of the world? The end of that age that Jesus Christ had spoken of, that the prophets had talked about so often. And so they wanted to know what everybody's always wanted to know – when? When's it going to happen? And they thought it was still going to happen in his lifetime at this point. They had no idea what He was going to do, that He was going to die and then he was going to be resurrected after 3 days and 3 nights. They had no concept of those things. They thought as He was coming into Jerusalem toward the end that He was actually going to come back and establish God's Kingdom at that time. Incredible what people thought – even His disciples, they didn't understand and know when so this to them was all going to happen soon but how soon? They wanted to know. They had no idea 2000 years would lapse and so they had that desire to know, “When shall these things be?”

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no one deceive you/that no man deceive you, because from the very beginning it started. Soon as the Church began there were those out there who sought to deceive. It's the way Satan's always been...especially when it has to do with what God is doing. And it goes on to say, **for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ;** and what do we see in the world? What do we see happening by 325 AD and that great false church began. People talking about Jesus Christ and misleading to a different idea, to different doctrines. So they're going to acknowledge that Jesus Christ lived, that He existed and then they're going to build something else upon that. And it says, **and shall deceive many. And you shall hear of wars and rumours of wars:** things that have happened through time and so there are many people through time, because they have seen things written in the Bible, things that have been written by the prophets, things that are written by John at the end, who have thought we were at the end of time, the end of the age, maybe the end of the world because they didn't understand. This is not a new thing where people have looked at or thought that we were coming down to an end-time – that Jesus Christ is going to return to the earth, or

other ideas that are involved with some of those things. So He said there are going to be wars and rumours of wars. In other words, when those things happen it doesn't mean that the world is come to an end or the age is coming to an end or that Jesus Christ is about to return – because these things are going to happen through time.

He said; **see that you are not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.** There are things that have to happen before the end can come. **For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in different places.** He talks about physical things on the earth but He's really teaching spiritually toward the Church about things that are going to happen. And it talks about how; **these are the beginning of sorrows. ...or trials, or travail.** It's things that are written prophetically. He was answering something that would lead up to an end-time; things that would take place on the earth and things that would take place through time as well, but if we understand them, these things really have much to do about the Church and what the Church would go through.

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake. Well, that's nothing new, that's gone on through time. **And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.** It's been our history through time and these things started happening even after the Church began to be revived during Philadelphia which was after Sardis. This is the time that's upon us because this is the time that is thrusting us into the return of Christ. Jesus Christ, as He began to tell them the time period, was zeroing in on a period of time beginning primarily with Philadelphia on into Laodicea and right up to the end. That is what He is discussing here and so He talks about things that are going to happen. He says, **they shall arise and shall deceive many.** This isn't talking about the world here now. These things are not about the world and yet in part we can see what happened in the world and certain warnings He gave that would come in time but now He's thrusting us forward even more so and talking about things that are going to happen at the end-time, toward the end...that many are going to be deceived. And I think of the Church. I think of what we lived through in Philadelphia. I didn't come in until 1969 so I didn't see some of the things that had happened before but before that there hadn't been large numbers of people who were leaving. You didn't see that in the 50's. There were people who left, people who didn't hold on to the truth, people who were not well grounded even in the example that Jesus Christ gave about some of the different things that would happen. Some seed would land on stony ground and all those analogies and parables that are given. That's happened through time but this is unique of what was happening here because after I came into the Church in 1969, beginning very early then in 1972 began some of the first of great rumblings in the Church, some of the great battles that began to emerge with false teachers and false prophets as they began to teach things different from what Mr. Armstrong had given. And then in 1974 it got a lot worse and there were whole areas of the country who left. I've talked about that when I mentioned the Washington D.C. area and Hawaii and different scattered areas around the country. Unheard of! And I remember those times in the sense of thinking, "How could this happen in God's Church?" It was an awesome thing that such a thing could take place in the environs of God's Church. And then we began to learn more how that could happen and why it happens.

And because iniquity shall abound, lawlessness, sin, because people sin: lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; they're no longer stirred up with God's spirit, they're no longer seeking to obey God and follow God. Instead they get caught up in a world, and **the love of many,** it says, **shall wax cold.** And that's what began to happen more and more and more. I remember as early as 1974 when Ambassador College in Bricketwood closed down over in England. I was back in the States

working at that time because I could come back here and work during the summer and make enough money to fly back and forth so staying here to work for the summer was better than over there on the work program. I got a telegram that the college had been closed down and not to return and that we could choose either of the other two remaining campuses to go to. So I chose to go to Big Sandy at that time but I was dumbfounded. The fall of 1974, seeing the condition that the college was in and the friends, about half of them, half of the college went on to Pasadena; it was about half and half. And talking to various friends over there and they were talking about how much worse it was over there – how liberal it had become and what some of the teachers were teaching over there. It blew our minds, truly did. I was appalled. We might have been a little far to the right but I'd rather be to the right than far to the left. I'd rather be a little more conservative than liberal and in time God'll balance the rest of that out. To make a long story short, it was an awesome thing to see what was taking place because we saw deterioration taking place even back then and people changing, **the love of many**, the agape. God's love was leaving; the spirit of God was leaving because of sin.

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. It's always been a battle and a fight but some of the things at the end time here have been mighty when it comes to battling. **And this gospel**, awesome verse here, **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.** Mr. Armstrong knew he lived in the end-time. He knew that there was going to be one more era, one more period of time to go through and so if you look at the Church over 2000 years, God gave to him the ability to know things, especially that we were toward the very end because of what was going to happen. Germany was going to arise again, Europe was going to arise, 10 nations were going to arise – one more time. God had given that to him to understand and he knew he had a commission to do at the same time. But this had to be fulfilled. Mr. Armstrong knew that verse 14 was fully about himself. He mentioned it over and over again and he knew this was his job. He knew this was his commission and so indeed the gospel was preached, the good news was being preached. I marvel at what an organization of the size that it was, was able to do what it did because there were other organisations, some much larger and with a lot more money than what the Worldwide Church of God had and yet they couldn't do what the Church was doing when you look at the Plain Truth, the numbers of Plain Truths going out throughout the world, the numbers of booklets and books and the television program and the radio broadcast, those things that were going out in the power that they were. Incredible what God did with His Church! That's why I marvel sometimes at how small we are and yet what we've been able to do with what we've been given.

Mr. Armstrong understood many things but he didn't understand all of the timing. He didn't understand that Philadelphia and Laodicea were not to be side by side. He didn't comprehend and understand that Philadelphia would come to an end when He died and Laodicea would begin; that Philadelphia wouldn't continue on, that there wouldn't be 144,000 coming out of Philadelphia, on the contrary – look what happened to us. That's why there are still some groups out here that think they have to become larger than worldwide in order to have a great falling away because they don't believe it's happened yet. I don't have words to describe that one. How insane! How incredibly blind that is; to refuse something that happened to us.

Again, he knew that this was his commission, he was sent by God to do a great work during the era of Philadelphia; however it was a long time from the beginning before he came to know that he had been sent. You know, when he started, he didn't know that his job... because that's what an apostle means: a messenger of God, one who is sent by God. He didn't know that he had been sent. He knew he had a commission, he knew he had a job to do, but to fulfill a specific job of apostle – he didn't know that until

much later on and then some at the college, some ministers and evangelists began to talk about it and Mr. Armstrong began to acknowledge, to understand that indeed that was his role.

It was a long time before he came to know that he'd been sent, understanding that's what the job of an apostle means in the Greek language, 'one sent by God, or from God, one who is a messenger of God.' The commission God gave to Mr. Armstrong as 'a messenger' or 'as one sent' is an important part of the history of the Church. Awesome to understand what God did. We went through a series recently talking about prophets and apostles; that that's the only way, *it's the only way* that God gives truth to the Church, gives His word to the Church – is through that means – no other means whatsoever. So that's why we went through that particular series here recently.

As I think about some of that, understanding that's an important part of our history as it also has much to do with the Church today and the job that God has given to me as a prophet. And I didn't know that and as I've been going through News Watch here, I think of the time period and some of the things that God began to give, especially just before 2000, Y2K. That was the first experience I began to have of God showing some things having to do with prophecy and things that were going to come to pass and wouldn't come to pass and so forth and yet I didn't know that there was a job I had till a few years down the road. And then when I saw it I very much fought against it. So to explain a little farther here it's good that we look at how it is God's purpose that those whom He has made apostles and prophets declare such to those they have been sent to deliver God's message. Because I've experienced over the years, even within the environs of the Church at times that some have had a little bit of difficulty with, and the world does especially relating to how I tell everyone what my job is. "Why are you telling people that you're a prophet? If you're a prophet isn't God going to tell everyone and let everyone know?" No, He tells them to tell it. When the different prophets went to the Kings; they were to tell them, "God has sent me to you." Over and over again, and so often they had a really unique response – especially the kings of Israel. "We don't want to hear you! You're just telling us bad news." Because of their sins, they didn't come with good news. When they were sent out it wasn't with good news. Very rarely was a prophet sent in to give any good news to different ones.

Romans 1 – We'll just look at a few verses here before we go on. We need to be reminded of a very basic truth - when God sends His apostles and prophets, they're to make known that God has sent them. **Romans 1:1 - Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle**, He's writing to the Romans and he's telling them from the get go – "that's my job! I have been sent to you." That is his authority. Incredible. **Called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which He had promised before by His prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord**, and so he's even telling what he has been sent to talk about, that which has been given to him that's already been prophesied through time and now it's come to pass and now it's even been given to the Gentiles... **which was made of the seed of David**, speaking of Jesus Christ, **which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:** people on the earth who had never heard of such things. What do you mean a resurrection from the dead? Paul had their attention. When Paul went to Mar's Hill... I've been there and was in awe of just standing there in the same place and you can see where the different ones were sitting on top of this huge rock, those who considered themselves to be the highly educated – they would come together and share ideas and talk with each other. When Paul went by and started talking about certain things they wanted to hear more – 'we'll hear more on this matter', but they couldn't see it. But they were dumbfounded by some of the things that they were being told because they'd never heard such things; the scholarly, the educated. And so again here Paul is revealing some things to the Romans telling them about this Son of God. They had different ideas about gods and

families. You look at different ideas of gods and families of gods in different places of the world and an example, Mar's Hill, right there on the top of that hill, some of the gods that they had and some of the families that were taught – because they were in families as a whole and some of the warrings and the battling that took place within god families and now Paul is talking about someone who's born, in this case here, of the seed of David, one of the kings of Judah of Israel in this particular case here, of Israel at that time. They were still united. And talking about how there would be one born of him of the flesh but also was going to be and indeed was the son of God.

Again, **according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: through Whom, (verse 5), through Whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name: among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ.** So he's talking to the Church here, to Gentiles in the Church and this is an introduction into the book of topics he's going to discuss.

Chapter 11; just in a few chapters. Again, a reminder here to them of who he is. **Verse 13 - For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles,** so there was no other apostle to the Gentiles. Peter wasn't, John wasn't, all the rest of the disciples, the original disciples – none of them. They were all apostles but none of them were sent to the Gentiles and Paul was letting them know that it was his authority... God has placed him here; Jesus Christ had placed him here to do this job. **For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry: If by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh, and save some of them.** He's going into some things talking about those of Judah still, his desire for some that are of his flesh, of his nationality if you will, of peoples, and a desire to provoke some of them that maybe something being said in these areas will provoke them, move them, stir them, but obviously that wasn't the case here, or it didn't happen. Things we have desires for sometimes of wanting to see different ones called or drawn and worked with, that maybe something we say, or maybe something we do will ignite a spark and yet we come to learn very powerfully so that God does the calling. But just in case, we still have that hope and desire because you never know when He's going to give them that calling! And so we still have that hope and there are things we sometimes do and we look for an open door: is there a door here and if there is we're going to go through it and sometimes we go through it when we're not supposed to – we push it open, we try to push it open, we try to unload everything we know...and it's not well received if the door's not open.

I Corinthians 9:1 - Paul making it very clear who he was and what his role and job was. **I Corinthians 9:1** he says - **Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?** He was showing them that he had authority – to the Church! And had rights that the other apostles had as well. **Are you not my work in the Lord?** In other words, aren't you here because of what I've been doing, because he wasn't taking it upon himself, but he was making it very clear here that he had a job to do and all in the context of other things said in Corinthians; it's what God is doing, but he's showing them here, aren't you evidence of my being here, of my work? **Am I,** it goes on to say here, **If I am not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you for the seal of my apostleship is that you are in the Lord.** See, this shows that I have been sent to you – one who is sent. One who is sent as a messenger to you, and so that's why he told them, back in Romans that he was an apostle to the Gentiles. He made that very clear at different times as well over and over again here... it's part of the job to tell who you are – see? Because the reality is only certain ones can believe it – those who are drawn by God will believe it, just as we heard in last week's sermon – they'll follow because we hear His voice – Jesus Christ – because He's the head of the Church. And the power of God's spirit that works in our lives. And only those can hear and accept such things as this. These are the things sometimes that divide, that delineate, that make it clear who is of God and who isn't of God. That's why sometimes I make comment that it doesn't

take very long in talking to someone new, that newly contacts us, where they are because it's in what they're able to see and believe from the get go in some of the most basic things. Because if they see, because God's given them the ability to see, then it's easy for them. As they hear, they make choices along the way and hopefully they continue to make the right choices, you know, as they go forward. But again, it's something that God has to give.

I'm going to read several others here, you don't need to turn to them but...**Galatians 1:1** says - **Paul, an apostle**, so again, verse 1, starting at the very beginning of the letter, letting them know his authority to speak to them, to write to them. **Paul, an apostle**, and then it says, **(not of men, neither by man**, see, Mr. Armstrong was unique in being able to say that because no one laid hands upon him to make him an apostle, you know, that which was given to the early apostles here. Paul is making it very clear he's not an apostle because of what was given through them to him. See, Paul was unique in that respect – it wasn't because of the apostles, it was because of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ set him apart for a very specific job, you know. So he says... **(not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead;)**. When I talk about being a prophet it is the same thing, something that Jesus Christ did, something that God has done and that I wasn't ordained that way by anyone, wasn't given that by anyone in the sense of that which is passed along or given to someone through ordination.

Ephesians 1:1 - Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. He stated his role, job and purpose over and over again here, to the different areas where Paul was sent – letting them know who he was, what his job was. "I am your apostle. I have been sent to you." And he adds teeth to it, **an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.** Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, but everything – everything, everything, *everything* starts with God the Father. He does the calling. He gives us to Christ and Jesus Christ fulfills His Father's will in life and the more we come into unity with God the more awesome that becomes – how we're able to do the will of God in life where we're of the same mind with God because all precedes first from God the Father. **Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:** not to the unfaithful because they won't listen. So it's showing that to those of you who are faithful, you who will listen, I'm sent to you. And they understood and received that.

I Timothy 1:1; over and over again - **Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour**, it's a commandment, the charge is from Jesus Christ to him, **by the commandment of God our Saviour**, and it talks, **of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, who is our hope;** It wasn't a strange thing to us then when Mr. Armstrong began to speak in such terms to the Church. It was easy to see, easy to understand. By that time there was plenty of history behind to make it very clear and easy to see.

And speaking of Jesus Christ Paul wrote in **I Timothy 2:7 – For whom I was appointed a preacher, and an apostle, (I am speaking the truth in Christ, and not lying;)** amazing that he was moved to say such things, because of some things that some have said in some areas, in some regions in times and people letting down. He goes on to say, **a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.** Amazing! Everything said a little bit differently here – adding a little bit more each time in different ways, but very powerful in what it is stating.

I Peter 1:1 - Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Even Peter making it very clear here as he speaks and talks to different ones, and who sent him.

I **Peter 1:1** again, it says, **Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ**, so even Peter here at the beginning making it clear as he's writing to different ones... as he says, **to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia**, so again here over and over again.

II **Peter 3:1** where Peter says, **beloved, I now write to you; this second epistle, in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder: That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of us the apostles of our Lord and Saviour:** He's talking about that which is sent out from them, from the apostles, to them, to the same peoples there that were being written to. As he said, this is the second epistle, the second writing to them and again reminding that there are apostles that have been sent of Jesus Christ.

I thought this was interesting too – I thought I'd bring this in – an admonition over here in **Hebrews 3**. It's good to notice how an admonition is given concerning Jesus Christ here in **Hebrews 3** as Paul is writing to the Hebrews. And **verse 1** it says - **Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;** So even Jesus Christ is referred to as an apostle because He was one sent by God and so He had many titles; the Son of God, the Christ, the Messiah, and even as He proclaimed who He was.

I think it's good to note that – let's notice here in **John 4**. Jesus Christ didn't try to keep it a secret. I mean He did in one respect in different ways telling certain ones not to say certain things and knowing human nature, and that's exactly what they do then – they go out and tell it. But in some cases here telling certain ones who He was, making it very clear – that's how the disciples knew, because they were told various things and they believed what they heard. **John 4:17** – and we're breaking into part of the story flow here. This is the woman at the well – always marvel at the book of John because the book of John, over and over and over again, starting real powerfully with the story of Nicodemus who came to Christ and, at night time, and reasoning with Him and Christ just letting him know that there are things he couldn't understand because of the spirit and everything that he was hearing, because they would talk about being born again and he wanted to know how could you go back in your mother's womb and be born a second time when you're an adult, it's just so far out of his mind and he couldn't conceive of what Christ was talking about. He didn't understand spiritual things and over and over again here and this woman at the well was the same. This story here is where she goes down every day to get water and Christ talks about giving living water and she wanted that so she wouldn't have to be coming back to this well everyday – it would ease her workload tremendously and that's all she could think of was that which was physical. Breaking into the story here **verse 17** it says, **and the woman answered and said, I have no husband. And Jesus said unto her, you have well said, I have no husband: For you have had five husbands; and he whom you now have is not your husband: in this you said the truth. And the woman said to Him, Sir, I perceive that you're a prophet.** You know, how can anyone know these things and here you meet someone, He's telling you all these things and "I perceive..." well, that's pretty good! You know? But she comes to deeper conviction as the story goes along here so it's kind of a cute story in part of this, how it's written here because He could tell her these things and so she went on to say, **Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and you say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. And Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.** It's not about a location in other words. And so again she couldn't understand these things. These things weren't written for her, they're not said for her; they're written for us, their written for His people through time, those who are given the ability to see and learn and in time during the Millennium everyone's going to be able to see it as a

whole – those who choose God’s way of life during the Great White Throne, they’re going to be able to read these things and understand them. And some of the same people He’s talking to here.

He says, **You worship that which you don’t know: you know not what we worship: and, or salvation is of the Jews. For the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth:** speaking of the Church and how we worship God. It’s a spiritual relationship and always in truth. Throughout scripture here, especially in the book of John, it’s always about the truth. That’s why constantly, continually we talk about the truths that God has given to us. That is our strength. That is our life if you will. That is what gives us strength and power and confidence and boldness because of the truth that God has given. And so again here it says, **in spirit and in truth. For the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a spirit: and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.** If it’s not in the truth, you can’t worship God because you’re cut off from God, you become cut off from God and you can’t have the flow of God’s spirit in your life. Only if we have the flow of God’s spirit in our life can we have a relationship, can we have fellowship with God. That’s why I love the scriptures even when Paul talks about this communion, ... I hate the word in the sense of how it’s used in the English language because of traditional Christianity but it’s a word that means fellowship when it starts in chapter 10 of 1 Corinthians and it leads into chapter 11 where it talks about the Passover, observing the Passover. And it talks about this fellowship, communion we’re able to have. Within the Church, with God the Father and with Jesus Christ, there is a fellowship and it’s because of God’s spirit that dwells within us. If we don’t have that spirit we don’t have any relationship. There is no relationship.

That’s why today all the Church that was scattered, they have no relationship with God. There’s nothing there. They were impregnated with God’s spirit but right now it’s just dormant, there is no life there. They’re on their own in the sense of what they’re able to see and understand from their past until God awakens them out of a spiritual sleep – because they are in deep sleep. There is no life living in them until God begins to bring them to repentance... That’s how He wakes us up. He brings us to repentance. We go through a repenting process so that as we repent He can begin to again dwell within us, to live within us. And we can begin once again to have this relationship with God. And that hasn’t been a well received message through time – not even in the Church at times when we started addressing some of it because it was like, well, I know so and so over here and I know so and so over there and ... this idea that they’re cut off from God totally and that God isn’t living in them anymore was almost more than some could bear – and yet we had to bear it because it’s the truth. We had to learn something from that. **God is a Spirit: and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.** It’s the only way to have a true and a right relationship with God.

And the woman said unto Him, I know that the Messiah comes, who is called Christ: when He is come, He’ll tell us all things. Isn’t that an amazing thing? Here He is right there in front of her and she doesn’t know what she got herself into so she’s talking about what she knows and there’s coming a time when we’re going to know all things; and because He’s talking about this relationship that people are going to be able to have with God, that she doesn’t know what she has right now, she doesn’t know where salvation is and **Jesus said to her, I that speak to you am He.** What an incredible story. Here all of a sudden they’re having this conversation and she brings this up and that’s who she’s talking to.

Verse 39, let’s drop on down a little bit into the story: **And many of the Samaritans of that city,** she was a Samaritan and the Samaritans were those who were brought to live in the areas of Israel when Israel was taken captive. The Jews were still there for a period of time until they were taken captive but they were able to come back into the area of Judea; but in those regions in the North and some of them

moved farther down into that area then in time because of the captivity – but the Assyrians, the Germanic people, when they conquered that area, what they would do is bring in a different people that they conquered. So they brought in the people of Samaria into that region of the world and that's why the Samaritans were there at the time of Christ. And so they picked up on different things that were being taught at that time about God and so forth, things from the Old Testament... incredible how people have copied things of various religions. Some, when they were taken captive to different areas, began to take upon the gods of that land, like what happened in Babylon. Different ones came together in Babylon and they began to give up their former religions and accepted the ones that were there – except the Jewish people. They were taken back with the truth, with their way of life, with what they understood at that time.

Verse 39 – And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, who testified, her witness – what she heard, what she saw – that's what she was doing. She came back and told everyone what had taken place here. And so others began to believe because of what was told to her and she said, **He told me everything that I ever did.** He didn't do that but that's the way she came across with it; some of the things here of how they can get exaggerated sometimes. He could have, but that isn't what happened. **So when the Samaritans were come unto Him, they besought Him that He would stay with them: and He abode there two days. And many more believed because of His word;** So because of what He was saying they began to believe the things that He was saying, to the degree that they could, just as much as some of the disciples did. **And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of your saying:** not because of what you've told us, **for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.** Incredible what God was doing at that time and helping people to receive a little bit, not everything, but a little bit of conviction of things that tingle in their ears when they heard it – a knowing to a degree, not fully, but to a degree – that this indeed was the Christ, the Messiah. Jesus Christ, again, told them who He was; told the woman who He was; told these who He was and they believed it because of all the other things He gave to them and told them as well.

Let's go over to an example of something we heard last Sabbath: **John 9:24.** This is the story about the blind individual here and you remember his parents were brought forth and they wanted to find out from the parents and basically the parents said, "Well, ask our son, he's the one that this happened to." They didn't want to be put out of the synagogue and so forth. We're going to look at it from a different perspective today. **Then again they called the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether He be a sinner or no, I don't know: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.** Amazing, some of the reasoning going back and forth here of what he's saying and the help he was being given to say it.

Verse 26 - Then they said to him again, What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes? You know... dumb question! We get asked the craziest things at times. I get asked some of the craziest things out here by people of the world. I think about how people write in and ask questions and last night I answered a bunch to somebody who had a magazine of some sort and anyway... over and over again here, some of the things and ideas that people get because they can't understand. They don't understand how God works. They have different concepts and ideas of the world and from traditional Christianity and from what they've been taught and so they have questions here and these people are supposed to be those that are wise, that are the teachers of the Jews.

Verse 27 – and He answered them, I've told you already, and you didn't hear: wherefore, why would you hear it again? Will you also be His disciples? Wow! He's being given a little bit of help here in

standing his ground in some of the things being said there. **Then they reviled him, and said, you are His disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.** Amazing the smugness sometimes of people and they have no idea who it was that they were speaking of – that Moses had spoken of a prophet that was to come later on that everyone was to hear and here they were rejecting Him. **We know that God spoke unto Moses: as for this Fellow, we don't know where He's from. And the man answered and said unto them, Why herein is it a marvellous thing, that you don't know where He's from, and yet He has opened my eyes.** It doesn't take a lot of intellect to figure this one out fellows! That's sort of the way he's saying this. He didn't say it that strong and that straight but basically that's what he's conveying to them. And we know how they received that one...how people are.

Verse 31 - Now we know that God doesn't hear sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and does His will, him He hears. Since the world began has it ever been heard that a man opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this man were not of God, He could do nothing. So he's reasoning with them with sound reasoning – all the way through here. How can you deny this? Why isn't it you don't understand where He's from – see? **And they answered and said unto him, you were altogether born in sins, and are you teaching us?** Are you our teachers? **And they cast him out.** They did not like what he had to say. “We're righteous, you're not, and God works with us” was their attitude. That's the smugness of religion in the world. Incredible! It's really like smugness in the Church that was scattered today as well, the ideas that people have that a prophet can't come from that group – an end-time witness...riiiight... “He's really gone over the deep end and so has everyone that's supporting him”.

And so Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, Do you believe on the Son of God? And he answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I may believe on Him? Good Question. You ask me a question... who is He? **And Jesus said unto him, you have both seen Him, and it's He who is talking with you.** See? Incredible! **And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.** Over and over again through the scriptures, different ones were sent by God to do a job and they were to tell what their job was: they were to let people know what they were doing. How else are they to learn? How else are they to make choices – especially when God is working with them, to plant certain things in their mind to give them certain ability to see and understand things to a degree. Not necessarily for a calling because all these things weren't a matter of a calling; but one day it's going to come back to them in a very powerful way, every one of them that had these experiences – very powerfully so.

We have just reviewed numerous examples given in scripture and also regarding Mr. Armstrong being an apostle and how that no man had placed them in their position, but God: Jesus Christ had specifically. And so after reviewing those things concerning Mr. Armstrong and the early apostles and Jesus Christ that we just read about, it's time that I reveal more about what God has given me to declare as an end-time witness and as a prophet. In addition to the fulfilling of the 6th Thunder concerning God's witness at this end-time, this is what this is about. I've made mention in the very beginning of this series that it would be about the 6th Thunder and if you've read up on the 6th Thunder you know what it's about. This has to do with me and the job that has been given me as the spokesman of the two witnesses and although God has made me a prophet to His Church beginning on Pentecost of 1998 He also gave me another job that He has only now revealed that I told I would give in this particular sermon series. Several sermons back I gave a series entitled, 'A Unity of Belief' and I've already referred to that today, in which it was stressed that God has only revealed doctrine and truth to mankind, and especially the Church, through apostles and prophets and through no other way. Never, never, never, than from God Himself... of course. And in that sermon I stated that I was a prophet making it clear that by the truths God has revealed in and through me, that they could only be done through a prophet or an apostle.

That was the point of that entire sermon, because that's the only way God works. And I made it clear that I was speaking 'as a fool' to say or think that I was an apostle, because I've always believed with all my being that Mr. Armstrong was the last apostle in God's Church for the end-time. But God has now shown me that to deny the truth would be foolish and that I would not be speaking as a fool to say that I was an apostle: for that's exactly what God has revealed. As John was both an apostle and a prophet, and as I am John's counterpart, I too am both a prophet and an apostle. So it just makes the gap wider and wider between the Church that was scattered and gives people more ammunition and more fuel. And I have to say that this has made me very, very uncomfortable – I talked to the evangelists about it first – I told them about this – what God had given to me. At the beginning of this series we were driving down the road going to Detroit that weekend; as I was working on some of this and I guess I got a pretty bad expression on my face and my wife asked me what was bothering me and I said, "nothing" which wasn't totally the truth because there was something bothering me and it was this here, because God had just shown it to me as I was going through some scriptures and she asked me again then as I was going through some of it because it's not something that I really want to do. Just like I didn't want to say I was a prophet when I had to write that in a book. But I have a job to do and so I have to become comfortable with it. I remember the first time I had to tell a congregation, "I am a prophet." I categorized it at that time in the sense of not accepting fully a full prophet but that I was a prophet in the sense of what Mr. Armstrong gave in the New Testament as one who is inspired to reveal, with inspiration of God, prophecy and yet God showed me later on that it's more than that: it is a prophet indeed and an end-time prophet indeed. So all these things have been revealed through time and I thought I'd just read from '2008 – God's Final Witness' talking about the 6th Thunder because this is a part of that. It is a part of my job; it is a part of something that God has saved specifically for this time to now be given and there are reasons for that because of what's to follow... because there are things to follow now as we go forward in time, especially once we have the fast in February.

'2008 – God's Final Witness' page 108 – starting there at the very bottom under the heading here...

The Sixth Thunder

And so as with everything through time here, I have to become more comfortable with it. I have to say that this is very uncomfortable for me right now, but I have to become comfortable with it, of being able to say it boldly. I am an apostle and if people don't like it, they don't like it. They haven't liked much of anything I've had to say for several but I have a job to do and that's a part of it, proclaiming that; stating that...and there's more to come.

The Sixth Thunder

This thunder also concerns both the Church and the world. It started very small with the publication of my first book, *The Prophesied End-Time*. The content of that book is strong concerning the announcement of prophesied end-time events that have already begun, but the pronouncement that I am an end-time prophet is a declaration that will have profound significance for God's Church.

The growing manifestation of proof that I am God's end-time prophet and that I am the spokesman of His two end-time witnesses is a thunder that will become powerfully stronger all the way up until the very return of Jesus Christ.

And so again, it's progressive. Everything that God is doing here, just like as the Trumpets sound – progressively get stronger and stronger and stronger. Under this section here...

#6 The **Sixth Thunder** is the growing **revelation of God's end-time witnesses**. That revelation is that I am the spokesman of God's two end-time prophets—the spokesman of His two end-time witnesses.

That's why obviously an apostle is more meaningful in that respect: one sent, one who is a messenger to bring the message of what God has for the end-time and leading up to the return of Jesus Christ.

This thunder will grow louder as the events described in the previous thunders continue to unfold with ever increasing intensity, proving the validity of what has been written and that what I am saying is true. Radio and television interviews will become more the norm as curiosity, news, controversy, and fear increase in proportion to the growing intensity of these thunders.

So again, it has been very minor compared to what's coming, even with the Trumpets that are coming...

A few quotes need to be repeated here. They are recorded earlier in this chapter, and they have everything to do with this Sixth Thunder:

And so this is the quote that was given earlier...

The Seven Thunders will be declared in the remainder of this chapter. Those thunders have never been announced before now. Everything else that John wrote, concerning the Seven Seals, Seven Trumpets and the Seven Last Plagues, was each declared by an angel.

The Seven Thunders did not come from angels. John heard the sound of Seven Thunders. That was a message about an end-time prophet of God. The specifics of the Seven Thunders were left for this end-time in order to be declared—to be pronounced—by God's end-time prophet, the spokesperson of the two end-time witnesses. More about this will be explained in the Sixth Thunder.

And going on here, set from that quote as well...

The Seven Thunders have much to do with **how** God will reveal His two witnesses. These thunders serve as a prelude to the final tribulation and the greater manifestation of those two witnesses.

The revelation of the Seven Thunders has everything to do with the revelation of God's end-time witness **about** man and God's revelation of His two witnesses **to** man!

Sadly, most will **choose** to ignore what they hear.

God did not allow the apostle John to write about the Seven Thunders. John did not hear what each specific thunder was, but he heard part of what was said about how the thunders would be revealed. John was an apostle and a prophet, in that he recorded all that God inspired him to write. He wrote the Book of Revelation, but it was not given to him to understand all that he had written. As John's counterpart, God has given me the understanding of the revelations given to John. In addition, I am the spokesman, one of the very end-time prophets and witnesses that John wrote about.

I don't need to go on any farther. I'll stop there with that, but just again, to drive the point home about what was written about being a counterpart with John. That's what God has given me as a job. I marvel sometimes when I go back and look at some of the things that God gave concerning what was written in I John, II John, and III John concerning Jesus Christ coming in the flesh and what those things mean and... in the spirit that God gave a long time ago. Candidly, a very great truth given to the Church because the Church has never really understood that. You didn't hear it anywhere else; you didn't learn it from any other source – nobody did. It's how God works and so those things; understanding about Jesus Christ coming in the flesh, of what it means, that He's living within us and to understand those things in I John, to understand John 14, the Church never, never, never taught it in times past. And again, a marvel because it's evidence and proof at least to God's Church of how God's spirit works, and where it works.

So that's one of the things that I knew I'd be giving in this particular series here that I need to become comfortable with. I need to become quite comfortable with it before I write it up the webpage – www.ronaldweinland.com because I'm going to be writing it up there as a posting coming up and it's going to take a while to work on that one.

I've accepted a couple of interviews as well on radio coming up before long, one of them's going to be about 2 ½ hours long. I hope it's decent, but it's a pretty long program and I know that all these generally happen for my training and I know that a lot of this is for me to become comfortable with what I'm bringing out here today because that's going to be in the next post and it just so happens a part of what they're going to be discussing is what I'm putting on the posts... so that will be the most recent post that will be there and so they'll have that to go through and they're going to be discussing what I write and what I've written in the last book here as well plus a few other things.

I have to become more comfortable with that, bolder in it and sometimes it takes time to feel comfortable with what God gives you to do so you can do it boldly.

But anyway, there are some who are going to have a heyday with what has been given, but that's what this is all about. That's part of the witness, that's part of the job and that's just a portion of some of the things that God's going to have as time goes along here, of things that are going to be done before they begin. Let's go to **Matthew 24** where we were going in this particular flow and read some of the things here as we continue on with some of the story about our history.

Matthew 24:15 – we just read verse 14 where it 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.** Mr. Armstrong

knew that was his commission, but he didn't know the next verse. It's an amazing thing here: **When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso reads, let him understand),** It wasn't to happen in his time. This is something that was to happen later and so he stopped at verse 14; he didn't continue on as he read. He didn't know what verse 15 was about. God didn't give it to him. Incredible.

Verse 16 - Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: it's about the Church – flee into the mountains as I mentioned earlier – the government of the Church had been scattered. Evangelists, pastors, ministers, all over the place. Different organizations popping up in different places because the Church had been scattered and so people fled from one place to another. And so it was at this time here...jumps from one particular place in time where it talks about the gospel is going to go out to all the world – and what an incredible thing to look at our history and see what happened. A man was placed over the Church, set in a position of authority and he would be the one through time who would turn against Jesus Christ; who would betray what was given to him. It had never happened in 6000 years. Never had a prophet of God betrayed God. Never did an apostle betray God. God didn't allow it, but He allowed this to take place. He allowed him through his own human nature to choose his own course. In time, because of sin, things began to happen. In time he began to become jealous of Mr. Armstrong. In time he began to see to it that books were being burned. They were having bonfires of Mr. Armstrong's books. Incredible some of the things that took place – things hauled out, put in the rubbish – incredible. Jealous of Mr. Armstrong; became very obvious through time here something was changing, something was happening. In the very beginning there were things addressed that needed to be addressed. As time went on, however, a little bit here and a little bit there and we were being weakened and finally it led up to this taking place – the abomination of desolation in the temple of God – the Church of God. That someone seated in power and authority would turn everything upside down and say the laws of God, the Sabbath are no longer required for God's people. Incredible! ...that such a thing happened. We lived through it. One of the most gut-wrenching times of my life. Only those who lived it – only those who experienced it can even begin to comprehend what I'm talking about.

If you haven't lived it, you cannot understand it. You can appreciate it to a degree, but to understand the agony, the pain, the suffering as different people were making choices – people you loved for so long: you'd walked to God's house side by side and now you were standing on opposite directions. Some ministers who would talk to headquarters, especially to Joe Jr.... one day I'd be talking to them, the next day they'd let me know they'd just talked to him for 2 hours, and I was talking to someone I never knew – someone who totally changed overnight. Got to the point where we used the term from a sci-fi movie, 'Invasion of the Body Snatchers.' Yeah, really! Because their minds were gone; they were not the people I used to know – literally – minister after minister I talked to on one day and the next day I didn't know them – I didn't know them! Their minds were different. Their beliefs were different. Their speaking was different. And it's like having a knife plunged into your heart and twisted around and around and around as you saw people going by the wayside, as you saw some of these things happening. Incredible what we experienced because of an apostasy, because of what it says here. **...when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place,** and the holy place was the temple of God, the Church of God.

And so that's exactly what happened. So much of the Church was destroyed – two thirds right from the get go – within the next 6 months – two thirds of it was just gone and another third was scattered all over the place into different organizations and organizations trying to get started. I remember what we did in the Toledo area. We became incorporated as the 'United Church of God –Toledo'. We didn't know what else to do to hold on for a while and... ugh... horrible history of things we experienced.

God took us through a period of time as we talked about in II Thessalonians 2, apostasy upon the Church; all the stones of the temple were thrown down. They were all cast down. God spewed, vomited the Church out of His mouth. It was at that point there. Incredible to understand that at that point was the opening of the 1st Seal of Revelation. We didn't know it at the time and so much of what we learned, we learn as we're able to look back and see what God has done. The greatest example in scripture I have of that, that has had the most profound effect upon me in the sense of how God has worked with me, is exactly what happened to the disciples and the apostles. When they began to learn what God was already doing with the Gentiles. God was already giving them His holy spirit and so for them, they had to learn some things, that God was going to the Gentiles – that circumcision was not of the flesh, but of the spirit, of the heart. And God began to give them the understanding through time, but that was a hard transition for them to make. That wasn't an easy thing for them to go through, but it came to a point when you're able to see what God is doing – who are we to argue with God? You better learn from it, you better start understanding some of the scriptures. That's why they came to understand the scriptures – which is written in the Old Testament – about the circumcision of the heart, that it's not a matter of the flesh. They came to understand what it meant. There are so many things in the Old Testament today we still don't understand. You know why? Because they're not written for our time yet: they haven't been revealed yet. There are going to be things about the Millennium that are in there that we still don't understand. Just like this year at the Feast when we came to understand there are things there that we had *taken* for the Millennium that aren't meant to be applied to the Millennium – they are about the Great White Throne – there are things we don't understand until it's God's time.

And so it was with the apostles; when Peter began to understand the vision he had of the cloth descending three times. 'Peter, take it and eat.' Acts 10, when you go through there. It had all these unclean things on it and he said, 'no, not so Lord, from my childhood, you know I've been taught what unclean foods are. I'm not going to eat it.' And so he was told, 'what I say is not common and unclean – don't you call it unclean.' And he began to understand that this wasn't about food. Even in chapter 10 – you know, there are people in the world that try to use it and say, "Oh see, God has shown now that it's okay to eat unclean food." That isn't what the scriptures go on to tell you in chapter 10. It goes on to tell you the meaning of it. Incredible what people read into scriptures like that – willingly so – ignorant. Ignorantly so because they choose it, that's what they want to believe.

Over and over again things here that God has given that we understand and it's one of the primary ways that God has worked with me. I'm able to look back. That's why when I gave that sermon, and then a few weeks later... read some scriptures, and all of a sudden God puts it in my mind as He's always communicated with me... Yeah, that's what you are too. You're an apostle. Get used to it.

God revealed to the Church that He had judged the man of sin. We've gone through those things – from the moment of the apostasy it began a period of 280 days as we learned later on. I marvel... I'm thankful too, that God revealed that there's a basic 1260 days. Mr. Armstrong was right – there is 3½ years; there is 1260 days. Now we understand what it means more minutely so if you will, how it's divided up in a better way, in a more accurate way as to what it means, but the time period is still the same and how that that ended on Pentecost of 1998. The timing of certain things as they happen... you can't plan it that way, I am moved by it and I hope you will be too as we continue to go through some of these things – to see the timing of certain things and how it all worked out and how we learned from that.

God allowed Satan to continue attacking the Church up to a certain period of time. That's why that first 280 days is so important – to understand that we were protected for a time. I think it'd be good to go back there to Revelation and read some of that again because now we're able to understand this in a clearer way – as to exactly what transpired, as to exactly what took place because what happened with the 1st Seal, the 2nd Seal, the 3rd, Seal and the 4th Seal – there are things that continue to happen on the Church – especially the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. There's a period of time we went through where the Church was being mercilessly attacked, torn apart and things that people continued to go through for a period of time that we lived through and people changing at different points all along that spectrum if you will... all the way up to the time when Mr. Tkach finally died. From the moment it started, when the 1st Seal was opened – powerful what began to happen there – but it didn't happen overnight. It took time.

I think of the period of time in talking to different ministers into March and April and different ones that began to change at different points in time; who did flip-flops. Some did it immediately, but others through time there – a little bit at a time because Satan kept attacking. We were weak. We couldn't stand any longer on our own and frankly, because of that, because of what happened it was at that moment in time that God spewed us out of the Church. We were *ALL* on that day, at that moment in time, if you will, cut off from the flow of God's spirit. God said, "Enough." That's basically what He said to the Church, "Enough!" That's why Satan was able to do what he did. Do you realize Mr. Tkach went there with a different sermon to be given? He had this one in hand as well, but toward the very end this is the one he came out with? Because it was time. Because of the things that were happening there in Atlanta and it gave him that extra shove and that extra push and it came out a little early. Headquarters wasn't prepared for the onslaught and they had to quickly write up articles and so forth and get them out to people as quickly as they could. They were so unprepared they sent out some stuff from some other organization, another individual that was written about the Sabbath and the doing away with the Sabbath, you know? What was that thing called? Do you remember? That piece of garbage and swill! The 'Verdict', yes... whew... any of you that remember that going back in time here that was sent out to all the ministry in the Church – something called the 'Verdict' of an individual who turned away from the Sabbath and they used this as various proofs and so forth and the reasoning there and...anyway...

So again, there was a period of time of 280 days. We were attacked mercilessly by Satan and God let him. We were scattered all over the place. God began to help some of us through a period of time there, through repentance and so forth but we were still separated from the flow of God's spirit – we truly were. And God finally brought us up to a point – that's why it's important to notice in **Revelation** when it talks about some of this – about this 'time, times and a half a time' of what took place, of what it states here in **chapter 12:14 – and to the women were given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness in her place where she is nourished for a time, times and a half a time from the face of the serpent.** We were so weak. And so God let us experience what it's like to be attacked and the Church was attacked on every side, over and over again, 2nd Seal, the 3rd Seal opened up and things of what ministers were saying and doing and seeing people going by the wayside right and left on a continuing basis there and it went on for a long period of time, until the end of 280 days and then finally we entered into what is referred to as 'a time, times and a half' and God then began to give us protection so that Satan couldn't fully destroy us – otherwise we couldn't have made it. God had to give us special protection – special help. Truly. And to help us become re-established again, to give us strength and so Satan had to be kept at bay in a special way while God worked to re-establish the Church.

I think of the timeframe of some of these things and how this led up to a period of time as I mentioned in Pentecost of 1998 but before that, while we were still being protected, and the protection that God

was giving to us... I think of another moment in time that I really didn't put much emphasis on until I have gone back through all this, but on Pentecost 1997 I gave my resignation to United Church of God. 1997 and 1 year later God had re-established His Church again, so we could stand...to a time when we *could* stand. But before this we couldn't stand and that's why we had to be protected, so that we could stand once again. Incredible.

And so on Pentecost of 1998, coincidentally on my 49th birthday, the 980 days of 'time, times and a half' came to an end: May 30th, 1998 and God had re-established His Church once again in one organized body. Took that long to strengthen the Church, to get us back on track, to help us to be strong so we could stand, so that once again when we were established as a Church *we could stand* on our own, in the sense of not having that protection: in other words, where Satan no longer would have power over us – why? Because God is dwelling in us fully again, living in us fully again. We'd been strengthened and re-established in the doctrines that we needed to be re-established in once again, in a stronger way than ever before...and I marvel when I go back through the history and see some of these things of what happened in that period of time.

So, again, 1998; it was at that time – Pentecost, that God made me a prophet and an apostle and I had no idea that I was either one, not for several years – especially about the apostle.

Matthew 24:17 it says - **Let him which is on the housetop not come down and take anything out of his house:** the basic principle here of what Jesus Christ is teaching, what He was giving to the Church about the Church was when the abomination of desolation takes place and people were to flee. When it is talking about fleeing to the different mountains – those of Judea, those who are part of the Church spiritually – this is what it's talking about; those who are of that region in life and time? We were to flee. We *were* to flee; to get out of the Worldwide Church of God as an organization and it says, **let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house:** individually people had to make choices. Don't try to salvage anything; don't try to keep anything...even when I started to leave I lingered for 3 more Sabbaths after I resigned because I thought some would come up to me and ask me, "Why did you resign?" And they didn't ask so I came to understand that it was futile in staying around. But there are people, because of family, because of those relationships that are strong of people, that weren't ready to leave, they tried to save; they wanted to help them and some of them then, because they didn't flee right away, became imprisoned. Gave into it, couldn't flee when they had the chance and so that's a part of what is being covered here.

It says don't try to take anything with you and don't take anything of what you've been given here with you. **Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!** That lasted for a long time for the Church when you realize that if any new ones were to come along, any new ones who'd grown up in the Church – how horrible is this for them because they're so weak as it is when you're young, when you're new, when you just have the beginning of God's spirit in your life and if you're not being fed spiritually what's going to happen to you? It's a horrible time for someone new. It was a horrible time for those who were old, let alone for someone who was new. That's why God wasn't calling people. God made it real clear later on that He wasn't calling people to the scattered Church. People weren't being called out of the world. It came to a screeching halt. We didn't see a lot of new people coming in wanting to be baptized! Why would God call people into a dysfunctional family? You know? And we were highly dysfunctional for a long time.

So it says; **woe to them who are with child, and to them who give suck in those days! But pray that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day:** I've given sermons talking about what this is about, talking about those things that have to do with doctrine, those things that have to do with excuses that we so often make as human beings, you know, I can't go out there, it's too scary, it's too foreboding. I'll stay in here for a while. After all, we were told this was the Church; I'll stay in here for a while. We were told never to leave it; I'll stay in here a little longer. It's too scary out there on our own. It was scary out there. That's why I made comment... what do you do? ...where do you go? That was a horrible time. That was a horrible time in 1997 when we didn't know, we didn't even contemplate having our own Feast site because to me that was just unthinkable, to be so presumptuous, it takes God's authority to do that. It has to come from God to do that and so we didn't do it, so we went to different places where we thought maybe God is there, and we prayed about it...and God revealed He was not there. And so we were left with only one option by the time it came around the following year. The only way to have a Feast of Tabernacles is if you have the Feast of Tabernacles and obey Me and keep it. So we did – Niagara Falls in 1998.

So He says, **pray that your flight be not**, in essence, **over**, such things: you know, don't let those things hold you back as human nature so often does. **...for then shall be great**, and the word is 'megas' in the Greek, 'mighty', **tribulation**, we've always called it great tribulation, **such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be**. And because so many of these things were all about the Church I've felt very strongly that this is about the Church. But, yes, there some types here of physical things but not until of recent time have I come to a point in time where God is making it clear – there is duality in these things, very much so... **And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened**. Awesome to understand what we're being told here, things we went through in the Church, of protection that God has given to us, of things that He has shortened for us, even for the end-time here. If God didn't have mercy upon us in some of these things, we wouldn't have survived. There's no way on earth we could survive, let alone human beings survive on this earth. If God didn't do things exactly the way He's doing it – see? That's why I marvel; how far are we into this and we don't see mighty physical things happening yet...and because that hasn't happened it has given full room for people to have authority – they think – room, they think – to mock and ridicule and make fun of and I've learned a long time ago it's water off a duck's back; you just keep going forward and thank God.

Mark 13:19 – I want to read this because it goes along with this. It says, **For in those days shall be affliction**, or tribulation, **such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created and unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved:** A different way of saying it but again, it's dual both for the Church and for the world. Sometimes I marvel that we've been able to continue on. There have been times that we've had to battle that and there are spiritual battles out here but God has made us strong enough that we can stand. So again here, it says...**but the elect's sake, whom He has chosen, He has shortened the days**. You know why? Why does it say it this way? Why is it talking about this? Because everything has always been about the Church. It's about the Church, truly is, and for the last 2000 years and even before that but especially in the last 2000 years – the vast majority of those who are in the 144,000 came out of the past 2000 years – and the 4000 years before that not many people, not many are a part of the 144,000. Very few in numbers... that's why the Church began, that's why Jesus Christ started the Church, that's why 2000 years ago it began that larger groups and peoples could be worked with and moulded and fashioned very powerfully so with the truth, with the doctrine they were given, with greater life living within them, the word of God living and dwelling within them. So they were given much more whereby they could be moulded and fashioned.

And so, very powerfully so, in the last 2000 years God has prepared a group of people for the resurrection that's coming here very soon now. But again, it's all about the Church, and it's still about the Church. Because that's already been sealed. Those who are going to be a part of the 144,000 – that was sealed, but the Church is still being strengthened. There are people who've been called to continue on as the Church – see? The foundation, the beginning of the Church is going to live into a new age and so many of you have such incredible opportunity to be a part of that, to be the first part of that – more than you can comprehend right now – how great that blessing is.

Going back to **Matthew 24** – so much of what God is doing with the world, and how He's doing it with the world is because of the Church; His mercy upon the Church... those who are alive now and those who He's going to continue to call in the next several months that are going to be able to be added to the Church and the protection He's going to give in order to bring them into a new age. It's awesome to understand what God is doing. And so the timing of things is perfect in every way and those who mock and ridicule, I feel for them because if you're only physical and if you're taught things of this world of traditional Christianity you'd be in the same boat: ridiculing and making fun of things – sad thing.

Matthew 24:23 –And then if any man say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; don't believe it. For there shall arise false Christ's, and false prophet's, that shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive, and this scripture has been misquoted many times, **the very elect.** It doesn't mean the 'very elect', it means, even the elect, that's all it means. There are some who think there's this elite group of elect out there. It's not how it's being used. It just means even the elect; that even the elect can be deceived. All of God's people – we are the elect of God – and so it's making it very clear here the way this doesn't happen, the way it can't happen is that you stay close to God, you're to be watchful and on guard and alert spiritually and stand in the truths that God gives to you, otherwise you can be deceived. And so we've had those things happen within the scattered Church. We know a family in one particular case that are in 2 different organizations, and my wife was talking with one of them about it, reasoning with her in part of it and she doesn't understand why one is in one organization. One of the family members is in one and why is one in the other... it's like, we can all be worked with by God, but if they really believed the same thing, why wouldn't they be in the same one? And they don't understand that, they don't grasp that because certain ones believe that God is working here, not over there. If they really believed that God was working over there then that's where they would be. Ministers? If they truly believed some of that but they believe that they're right. That's the way human nature is: everyone believes their right and only one in the world can be right, or the other option is – everybody's wrong. But the reality is only one can be true, only one can be right in life when it comes to God's way of life.

For there shall arise false Christ's, and false prophets, again, over and over again those things that have happened throughout the Church; things that as I go back through News Watch and read about and think about some of the doctrines different ones were teaching out here and what they were saying. Some were following that, some were believing those things and believing that's where God was, that's where Christ was and because of that, they're so asleep now.

Behold, I have told you before. (verse 25) Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; don't go forth: behold, He is in the secret chamber; believe it not. There are going to be things happening even as we continue, of peoples saying things, even in a physical way, but these are more spiritual than they are physical in that respect, but... **Verse 27,** so it leads right up to the very end – that's the point about tribulation: it's something that leads right up to the very end. That's what God is

showing. **For as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.** All the way to the end. There's going to be a time when everyone in the world is going to see it, but in the beginning the only ones who can see it is the Church; they're the only ones who can see that Jesus Christ is returning. You're the only ones that truly believe that He's returning May 27, 2012. Others make fun of that, they don't believe that, they think you've lost your marbles. They don't believe you even have any marbles anymore, you know? That's how bad you are to them. Incredible! And so for us, it's that powerful. We can see it. We see things in the world; we see things that are happening in this country and around the world.

And it goes on to say, **For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.** Now that scripture is an amazing scripture because what it's saying in certain terms here is that wherever God's Church is, that is where the vultures are going to be – those who want to pick it apart, those who want to tear it apart, those who want to devour it. So if you look in the days of Mr. Armstrong, there were those who hated him with a passion and they didn't go after other organizations and other people like that, but they did after him. I'm thankful we didn't have the internet back then. In some ways I wish we didn't have it now because it makes it a whole lot easier for people to be heard and anyone can be heard out there that wants to be heard. And they can put their foolish things out there and people... you know, when you see so much of a barrage of so much that's so negative... but that's what that's about – it's about the vultures, that's where they are gathered together. Why aren't they out there with some of the others? "Well, they're not as far out in left field as you are, son!" You know? That's where God has placed us. He's placed us here for that purpose and God is going to show what He's doing by His great power and it's an awesome thing to live through.

So we're going to continue on with this series. It is very inspiring to understand the process of what God has taken us through, to understand our history, to understand some of the things we've gone through, it truly is... so with that we'll close for today and continue on next Sabbath.

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