

Today is *Part 3* of the sermon series entitled, *God's Original True Church*.

We've covered how God's original true Church began its existence back on Pentecost of 31 AD and has continued on to this present time.

I thought I'd mention, too, that there are writings in the past (I saw one last night that I wouldn't mind taking another look at, a couple things this author has to say), but some of the things we have in our past as far as some of the research and things that have been done, there are things that are a matter of speculation oftentimes and that isn't always good because some have tried to put together, piece together the various eras, what happened to the apostles, where did they go, and candidly, as far as some of the things that are stated about the apostles and what they did, we do have information about them dying and some of the things that happened to them, but as far as where they went and where they travelled to we know that John even addresses, and it's addressed in other places as well, but there are indications that they went to different parts of Europe, that they went to the other tribes of Israel. Yet we'll come to that scripture later and talk about it because there are things that sometimes we don't grasp and don't understand and we can read into what is recorded in the Bible. That's a common thing that is done (oftentimes a big mistake), because if it isn't given by inspiration, if God doesn't reveal what it is, sometimes then, obviously, it's just a matter of what one thinks they're reading at that moment in time and sometimes just the present truth.

So I thought I'd make it clear, because some have asked this question about the apostles and where they travelled to, there is absolutely no proof whatsoever that anyone went anywhere into Europe as far as history is concerned. It just isn't there. Though there are a lot of things written out there, especially even in Great Britain area and around the college where we used to be up around Radlett and St. Albans, that the apostle Peter had been in that region. He may well have been because it was a part of the Roman Empire. Right above where we were at college out there, there's a wall that was built by the Romans. Ruins of it are still there. He could have easily travelled to that part of the world, and we just don't know; we don't have absolute proof.

So some of those things are a matter of speculation. I look forward to all those things being given later in time, that we're able to grasp even more fully what they did do, what they did say in different areas, and so forth.

Anyway, there's also quite a bit covered about another church as we have been going through this, that began to emerge on the world scene that also called itself Christian, if you will, and later became known as the Roman Catholic Church. It began to emerge well before 325 AD when it finally had the backing of the Roman Empire and we understand a lot of that history, but new

people who come along, they don't understand their own history. They don't understand where their church began. Some may have some ideas of when a particular group, organization began, but if you're talking about the Catholic Church most people don't really know about its beginning in the sense of what happened in 325 AD especially, and yet it does go back farther in some of the things that began to happen in the 100's and the 200's as well. But again, very sketchy here as to some of the things that transpired during that time, but we're seeing two contrasts of two different organizations, two different things that were being taught totally opposite of each other, in that respect, and so that's the history of churches and one true Church, original Church that has continued through time.

We've been going through, then, and talking about some of the eras because God gave to Jesus Christ to give to John, things that were written in Revelation about specific periods of time, Church eras and we have talked about some of those eras, and as the different eras of God's Church have been covered it was emphasised in *Part 1* and *Part 2*, and needs to be emphasised again how that in the second through the fifth period, which is Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, and Sardis, God did not give an apostle or prophet to the Church during that period of time and the very fact of things being built upon the apostles and prophets ought to make that very clear because nothing was given after the time of John to the Church until the end-time when God raised up Mr. Armstrong and began to work with him. Then things began to be added again upon which the Church was built, has been in the process of being built. That goes along with understanding, too, why Mr. Armstrong emphasized so many times about the 19 hundred year time cycles. The hundred times nineteen - 1900 - and how that God had raised him up to begin doing things as far as a work is concerned at the end-time. So he spoke often about 1900 years since the gospel has gone out and even when it began to go out in Europe. That's an awesome history.

Again, perhaps one of the most incredible things that was covered in *Part 2* was the knowledge God did give to Mr. Armstrong; He began to restore truth to the Church, because the point being is that before this during that period not only was nothing new given, in the sense of what had been given to Peter and to the other eleven apostles, and to Paul, and especially John being the last apostle at that particular point in time, but during that period of time then leading all the way up to Mr. Armstrong nothing was being given to be built upon. Mr. Armstrong was raised up, as he talked about, to restore truth to the Church that had been lost over that period of time, nearly 1900 years it took for those things to begin to be diminished through time. Like we talked about in Thyatira, they held on to certain things. By the time you get to Sardis those things began to totally disappear; there were three truths by the time it was over.

So again, an awesome history about God's true Church and what it has gone through in time, and again, what God gave to Mr. Armstrong then that we talked about last time in the sixth era of Philadelphia about the key of David. I find that awesomely inspiring, to think about the history of what happened when a particular period of time went by and Jeremiah and the individual who travelled with him, they took two, as it were at that particular time, daughters of the lineage of

Judah with them. They went down into Egypt and then in time began to migrate up through Spain and up to Ireland. That's the history. This was well before the birth of Jesus Christ. Awesome what took place as the kings of Judah, the lineage of Judah, as far as the males were taken into Babylon and they all died. They were killed and died during those captivities that were taking place at different times that Babylon was there taking people up into Babylon from Judah, but a lineage escaped. Again here, showing that God's promise of continuing with the line of Judah through David and not just of lineage there, but again, it was from King David on that those things continued and they never stopped.

I was thinking about that stone, the Stone of Scone, the Stone of Destiny, Jacob's Pillar Stone, things that it's been called through time. We were talking last night, something I did forget to mention before, it is speculation, but it makes a lot of sense because it's been talked about a lot during Philadelphia by different ones, and that is that that stone, if you see how they carried it as well, the poles that they went through the rings of it, they carried it on their shoulders much like you would carry other things like the ark and so forth, and they carried this thing with them all the time. They were in Egypt and that stone was still there. They took it out of Egypt with them when they left and there is that speculation that when God told him to basically strike a particular stone, there wasn't a question of which stone you're talking about out in the wilderness, that it very well may have been that particular stone.

So again, incredible things through history that have been handed down and some of those things are just incredibly awesome to me as far as what has taken place and how things continue on. People don't even understand it. To this day people don't understand the depth of the reason why there is such strong sentiment and feeling about this coronation stone between that which is in Scottish history and that which is in Great Britain and their feelings toward this. It's powerful, it truly is. They don't even understand why those things exist to the depth that they do, but they've been handed down from generation to generation by generation for hundreds of years.

Anyway, let's go back here to Revelation 3. Let's notice some of the verses in Revelation that spoke of the sixth era of Philadelphia over which God and Jesus Christ made Herbert W. Armstrong their apostle. In going back through some of these things I am amazed, again, of what happened during Laodicea and some of the sentiment and feelings of people and what they did later on. I'm going to come to that a little bit later, but it's incredible how they felt toward this particular individual, toward this man.

**Revelation 3:7—And to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia write; These things said he who is holy, he who is true, he who has the key of David, which we talked about, making it clear that this is speaking of Jesus Christ who has that key and obviously the key to it all anyway, when you understand what it's talking about, it's about him and about him coming to take over the reign of that lineage that's been handed down through time, because he has not yet been made King of kings. Yet that's his destiny; that's his purpose. God's going to do that in what He does as Jesus Christ returns to this earth. ...he who opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no**

**man opens.** Again, speaking of Jesus Christ. When doors are opened up no one can shut them. When they're shut by him no one can open them and yet Laodicea tried, all the different scattered groups out here, as a whole, kept trying to open up a door that they don't understand, didn't grasp had been shut.

It goes on to say, **I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door,** so it was a door that was opened by Jesus Christ. He said it's an open door. There was a work to be done. Awesome what took place in raising up the Church at the end of this age. **...and no man can shut it: for you have a little strength, and have kept my word...** I think of that little strength and things that have been talked about in times past and how in the Old Testament when it speaks of the strength being in your arm, and even Mr. Armstrong's name, being a man but God worked through this man to do what He did in a very powerful way. "You have a little strength." So when it talks about "your arm" and the work that you do, to me it's an inspiring thing to grasp the importance that God has always placed on names. Just like the names that have been added in the sense of "Church of God." The Worldwide Church of God and then toward the end here, The Church of God—PKG. All these things have great meaning. They truly do.

And so it says here, **you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name.** Now, we're going to spend some times reviewing a few things written about the sixth era and Mr. Armstrong beginning on page 122 of *Prophesy Against the Nations*. I'm going to put this on the video and read through some of these things at this particular time here just to, again, remember our history and for others who come along to understand what took place when God began to raise up this man who came on the scene, God calling him and his wife, Loma, and in the 1930's, early 1930's there some of the things begin to happen as far as they were concerned as God began to reveal more and more to them about the truths that needed to be restored in the Church that had been lost. Because there were only three truths left by the end of Sardis, which had to do with the name of the Church, The Church of God. It was God's Church. It carries His name and the matter of 1<sup>st</sup> tithe, not the rest, just a matter of 1<sup>st</sup> tithe because by that time the holy days, understanding of the holy days, had been lost. They certainly didn't understand the importance of 2<sup>nd</sup> tithe because they weren't even keeping the holy days. And, of course, then there was the Sabbath, the seventh day. So not the annual Sabbaths, but the seventh day. So, incredible how it came down to that point and then God began to restore things at the end-time.

Anyway, page 122. I'm going to take the time to read through this and comment perhaps on some of it as we go along.

Since he would go from one region to another, once he left an area his absence created a vacuum for others to step into and take up his religious practice.

Now, we're breaking into the story here about Simon Magus and some of the things he did in the beginning there. So this is where this story is picking up, and basically, when he went into a particular area and began to raise up certain things, when he left there was

a vacuum there and others rose up who were somewhat like disciples of his, in a sense. Well, you know, human beings are so often impressed by power and wealth and the various things, and so they gravitate to this and these individuals then began to mimic some of the same things that he did and portray themselves as being different apostles, some of the other apostles. That's why it talks about "you have tried those who say they are apostles and are not, but have found them to be liars." There were a lot of those throughout these particular regions. So this is where we're breaking into the story here. When he left there was a vacuum and it was easier for other individuals then to step in and to continue with where he left off because it had gained in popularity and there were followers, and there's money involved, and the power that goes with it, political power, sway, if you will, that goes with it in addition to this. So, anyway, this is what it's talking about here.

Since he would go from one region to another, once he left an area his absence created a vacuum for others to step into and take up his religious practice. Such individuals could mold this practice into their own style and teaching, but always with the motivation of financial gain, political influence, and notoriety...

They liked to be recognized. That's why they are condemned later on when they are organized as a particular church because it speaks of the flaunting of wealth, the flaunting, if you will, of the kind of things they wore and the kind of recognition they received from the public around them. They were looked up to in a very powerful way by others. So it goes on to say:

...as many began to follow these religious ideas in a superstitious kind of way, just as they had been doing in their pagan practices.

That's why that particular religion, if you look at it, is filled with superstition, superstitious kind of practices. Truly is! And even with the different kinds of "saints" and the ideas people have about the different "saints," as they call them, a lot of superstition involved in this. This is something that was rampant and has been rampant in pagan type of religions that went way back before the time of Christ. People lived in a superstitious kind of way, different ideas that people had. They were like a mysterious kind of thing. It's like the stupidity of not stepping on a crack in a sidewalk, or whatever it is, or walking under a ladder. These things then when you add religions to it become far, far worse. That's why the ideas about Mary, ideas about a cross and kneeling down before it, that somehow there's this power involved, just as the Israelites kept this pole with a snake on it, there's this mystery, this superstitious kind of idea that goes along with it. It's not because of faith and belief in God and Jesus Christ in this at all. There are different ideas that come with it.

And so this religion is filled with superstition and superstitious ideas because that's what people tend to gravitate to in the world. And so again, going on here:

Since so many of them already had the pagan beliefs that they did, the addition of those things about Jesus Christ and the stories of the apostles just made it all that much more attractive and humanly desirable in a very carnal and distorted kind of way.

Because that's the way human nature is - distorted, very carnal, the kind of thinking and ideas that people come up with, "Oh, yeah, there's that." And not only that but there's a being behind it and when you get a spirit world involved in something and they're able to do certain things it's easier to believe in some of those superstitions when people see some of the kinds of things that they do. There are things that people have seen because of a spirit power of manipulating physical things in the world and most of that has been taken away from them but they still have certain abilities. This adds to this superstitious notion of what things were like and how they thought. Anyway, going on:

These practices were incorporated into religious services as was done in the worship of other gods like Baal. These services were cloaked in lavish ceremonies, brightly colored and flamboyant attire, and always with many religious relics and objects that were themselves supposed to have contained powers and/or served as a kind of talisman that was like a window or key that opened communication to God...

That's why there has been through the centuries or at different times these ideas that if you had a piece of the cross, a piece of wood... They've had enough to build huge buildings by all the wood that went out supposedly from this cross, and it's like these things have power contained in them because you have a piece of wood that came from the cross and some of the ideas that go along with this, like there's some kind of mysterious power that goes with having this, just as much as that pole with the snake on it. There's some kind of power to heal because people tend to be superstitious when not grounded in God's way of life, when not given of God's holy spirit. That's the only thing man has to rely upon, superstition, thoughts and ideas about things that have mystical or mysterious kinds of power associated with it. So that's what these people were doing. They had extra help, obviously. Going on:

... always with many religious relics and objects that were themselves supposed to have contained powers and/or served as a kind of talisman that was like a window or key that opened communication to God, Christ, or "saints" that were said to be in heaven. Some simply came to believe these talisman kind of objects could themselves exude special powers and favors. These groups actually even began to call themselves Christian. In time, some even referred to Simon as being the chief apostle, Simon Peter. By about 150 AD, two distinctive kinds of people began to exist side by side and each identified themselves as being Christian. However, only one retained the name of the Church of God, and only one continued in the true teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles.

To me that's an awesome thing to understand, that if you were trying to find something in history you would certainly seem to think, at least by sound reasoning, that whatever they were teaching

agreed with the Bible. That's why so many things have been twisted and distorted in scripture in order to fit into their ideas. Just like why things have been translated as they have been into English, as an example, back, if you read that which was written as far as the King James translation is concerned and you find words like "hell," and they used all these Greek words to kind of lump it into one and they try to build up this idea of a fiery, burning kind of place of torment. So they twist and distort things talking about "hellfire," "gehenna fire," to create a kind of fear associated with religion. Again, the superstitious kind of thing, and on and on it goes; ideas about heaven that are nothing new for different religions in the world, and that this is where people are to go. Incredible!

However, only one retained the name of the Church of God, and only one continued in the true teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles. The false movement only taught "about Christ" and not what he taught concerning what they should believe, what they should obey, and how they should live. This false movement went through an evolution of its own over the next 100 years. It was not long after this that it began to gain powerful recognition in the world as these false doctrines began to be established as the official state religion—the official religion of an empire.

Incredible, the power that was there, the popularity because it was backed by a Roman government, if you will and to believe anything else wasn't a popular thing. It wasn't good. A matter of fact, it could oftentimes mean your death because the other was backed by the government that said that if you do something different you can be put to death for it. Incredible! So how hard is it then to live God's way of life under that kind of environment when you know it means that it can very well mean your life? It did take the life of a lot of people.

Then under the heading, "Herbert W. Armstrong":

The next chapter will address some of the major false doctrines that became an official state religion, but for now it needs to be noted that there has only been one Church that has continued on since it began in 31 AD. It is the Church of God in which God and Christ have provided a lineage of apostles to lead it.

See, we understand what that means. That doesn't mean there was a lineage of apostles in between, but we understand what it means to have such a thing when it's God's purpose to do so and what He's going to be doing then as a result of giving someone that responsibility because you know there's going to be something to be built upon that hasn't existed before. So God used Mr. Armstrong in a very powerful way to build - not only to restore truth, but to build upon things that had not been understood in the times of Peter and even Paul and John and so forth because God's inspired different things to be written at different times that sometimes, not just sometimes, but the reality is they didn't really fully grasp everything that was given to them, everything that was written. That's kind of a unique experience, to write something and not fully understand it, but that's the way it's always been, even to this present age. Going on:

It is the Church of God in which God and Christ have provided a lineage of apostles to lead it. That Church has never died out, although Satan has often tried to destroy it. In the story flow I gave at the beginning of this chapter that was about my calling, God had finally opened my mind to understand the teachings of the apostle He had given His Church. As I mentioned, it was Herbert W. Armstrong.

That's why I marvel at what happened in the next era because they became jealous of him; they became envious of how people looked to him and not to them, and they tried to destroy then many of the things that were about him. Even ministers when it came time for the Apostasy could only say, if they said anything positive at all, that he was really a good teacher and he taught me a lot of good things. But you think, "You wouldn't have known diddly squat if God hadn't worked through that man to give you every understanding you have," because every truth that was restored to the Church is the only reason we know the kinds of things that we do, that God did indeed give through a particular individual, His apostle at the end of an age during Philadelphia.

Although many in different areas of the world became familiar with his name because of the *Plain Truth* magazine and his radio broadcasts and television telecasts of "The World Tomorrow" program, most never knew the significance of who he was. Although he was identified as an apostle, traditional Christianity never acknowledged him as being every much an apostle of God as the original twelve were.

The Church of God has always remained relatively small, especially when compared to other religions in the world. The Church in Mr. Armstrong's day grew to be around one hundred and thirty thousand, which included both children and adults. The churches of traditional Christianity, whose worldwide numbers were approaching two billion at that time, hated God's Church whenever they came in contact with its teachings, and that is because they hated the doctrines it taught.

It's, again, an awesome thing just to understand that. When you have something that powerful going out in the world, because there was no other religion, if you will, in the world, that had as much television, radio time, and that kind of a message going out in the magazine in the world as did the Worldwide Church of God through the leadership of Mr. Armstrong, and so it was a threat to them, the truth was a threat to them because of what he was saying that was diametrically opposite of what they believed. They knew that it condemned them as well and so there were those, especially in the head of those organizations, that loathed and hated and printed much literature against him and against the teachings of the Church. That's just carnal human nature. Going on:

The teachings of God's Church have never been popular. Quite to the contrary, most people have hated the true teachings of God, Jesus Christ, and the Church of God ever since it started in 31 AD. Much of that hatred has been taken out on members, but the focus of the bitterness

and hatred has always been first and foremost upon the leaders of the Church, as they have always been seen to be to blame for any such following because of their teaching.

Of the original twelve apostles, there is only one who is believed to have lived to an old age to die naturally, and that is John. He lived into his eighties and very possibly a little longer, as some details are lacking. He wrote one of the original books referred to as the Four Gospels, the Book of John, and also 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John.

However, John wrote one more book that focuses on end-time events at the end of the age of mankind's self-rule on earth. God and Christ gave John the ability to envision things depicting certain prophesied events for the future and he then wrote these things in the Book of Revelation. All that is written in Revelation was given to him on the Isle of Patmos, where he was imprisoned for a time by the Roman government. John was a very unique apostle, as none of the other early apostles held an office within the ministry of being **both an apostle and a prophet**.

However, concerning all the other early apostles, it is believed by much tradition and writings that all of them were imprisoned, and some several times, but then all eventually killed at the behest of the government and Jewish leaders, just as Jesus had been. Even before Jesus was killed, John the Baptist had been killed by being beheaded, and of course, Stephen was killed shortly after the Church had begun.

It states that Herod killed James, the brother of John, with the sword.

So some things are written in scripture, others are not, about what happened specifically to different ones.

Paul, the apostle to the gentile world, was beaten, stoned, imprisoned, and then kept under house arrest in Rome for an extended period of time before he was eventually killed. Candidly, ever since that time, people have continued in great hatred of the message that God's apostles and teachers have brought, and as a result, many other leaders of God's Church have been imprisoned and/or killed.

At the time of my calling, Mr. Armstrong was God's apostle. He died in January of 1986, and yet to this day the Internet is filled with written content that contains intense hatred for him.

That boggles my mind. You look on there, you look up his name, and there is page after page after page of filth and garbage and hatred and bitterness. To me that's absolutely astounding, but it's there. It shows human nature.

Most of what is written contains things that have been contrived, twisted, distorted, and just plain lied about concerning him and the life he lived. Yet it is amazing that most people who read such things "choose" to believe all or at least part of what is written because their mind is

prejudiced against him solely due to the doctrine he taught, the truths of God, some or all of which they reject.

It's human nature and that means people who are scattered in the Church as well that have taken on some of the same kind of thinking. I think of a book that was written (I can't think of the exact time) about him by a well known individual in the Big Sandy area at that particular time. Anyway, some people got a hold of that. It was stopped, if I remember rightly, because of the lawsuits and because of things that were there and they would have gotten the tar sued out of them for liable and the lies that were contained there, but for those who did read it a lot of people went by the wayside because once it's in the mind, that kind of garbage and that kind of filth, it's almost like, "Well, some of it must be true. Some of it. Something of this must be true because how could this be written about by different ones or said by different ones?" Yet they were. Incredible, the things that have taken place.

There are many who have written things that are on the Internet who had been part of God's Church at one time, but in time turned against it...

And whenever that happens that always makes for a "good source." You know, when people get mad about something. I think of politics today and how people are. When someone gets offended, when someone gets mad at someone else it's amazing what they do. Sometimes they'll go almost swing in an opposite direction of what they have been doing before and what they've actually backed before just to get at someone else. That's happening a lot today. Just to get at someone else, just to hurt someone else. It all has to do with pride, jealousy, envy, bigotry, prejudice that's in the human heart. Once that gets stepped on people strike back, and sometimes they never forget, they can never forget. So people who have been put out of God's Church, people who have left over various things that they, for whatever reason, so often it becomes their mission to fight against the Church, to fight against the leadership of the Church, and so forth. This is nothing new. This has gone on from the beginning. It's just a part of the ugliness of human nature.

We need to be perceptive to understand that. We need to be able to understand and grasp those things that happened toward, as an example, this man in the work that he did for as long as he did it. So again:

There are many who have written things that are on the Internet who had been part of God's Church at one time, but in time turned against it just as God and Christ said would happen. These are those who had been given opportunity through a direct invitation from God to enter into a new creation, yet in time began to reject what God was offering and teaching them. They turned from the grace, the favor, that God had shown to them.

Those numbers have been far greater than those who have continued on, far greater through the history of God's Church. Many are called, few are chosen. Very powerful!

Some of those have gone so far in their bitterness and hatred that they have done exactly what Lucifer did and their minds have now become set against God.

That, to me, is a horrible, hideous thing, but that's what can happen to the human mind when it begins to fight against, to lie against God and what God is doing through the power of His holy spirit - because what God does in whatever work, through whatever period of time He's worked and worked through different individuals, for people to turn against and to lie about those kinds of things, they're doing exactly what Lucifer did, lying about God, lying about why God is doing the things He's doing and begin to try to get people to take their side because it's all part of a process oftentimes of individuals trying to justify themselves for what they're doing. Yet there's something else involved that especially God's Church needs to understand: there is a power out there that feeds that, that's greater than what they are. There is a power that feeds that's greater than what they are because once someone severs themselves from God's spirit and from the calling that God gave to them, once that's done they make themselves open to a spirit world that they are cast there for that very purpose. Those beings want to work through them. They want to distort and twist things because of all people they are the ones that can be used in a very devious and deceitful way to try to get to others who are still a part of a body. That's the way it's always been. That's the way it worked through Worldwide, through Laodicea, and so forth. Even through the present time those things have still gone on.

Some of those have gone so far in their bitterness and hatred that they have done exactly what Lucifer did and their minds have now become set against God. God will not force anyone to receive His way of life if they do not want it, even if after having accepted His invitation, they later turn away...

Now, that doesn't mean that happens to all who turn away, by any means, but there are those when they begin to attack and they begin to make that their mission in life, in that respect, that the danger there then of their mind becoming set in that is far more realistic and likely to take place as time has gone on. It's far better when they just go off and don't do anything, just asleep.

God will not force anyone to receive His way of life if they do not want it, even if after having accepted His invitation, they later turn away that is their free choice. God's creation within the mind of mankind cannot be completed in anyone who does not want it.

Herbert W. Armstrong was raised up by God to become an apostle in His Church and to fulfill a specific prophecy that is about the end-time. It concerns what Christ gave to the disciples about signs that would precede his coming. They asked Christ, *"Tell us, when shall these things be? What shall be the sign of your coming [the sign of his coming into his Kingdom as Messiah] and the end of this world [Gk. word for 'age,' and in this context, the 'age' of mankind's self-rule]"* (Matthew 24:3).

The disciples believed that these things would yet be fulfilled in their lifetime and that Jesus Christ would then take over the reign of government over the earth. They had no idea that he was going to first be killed, resurrected to spirit life, and then remain in heaven at God's side for nearly the next 2,000 years. Even after Jesus was killed, they still believed he was going to return during their lifetime.

That was their continual thought and some of that continued until Paul finally wrote what he did in 2 Thessalonians 2. That's why he wrote what he did. That's why God inspired him to write what he wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2 having to do with an Apostasy, that the Kingdom of God would not come, Jesus Christ would not return in the Kingdom until this event took place within God's Church. Awesome! Going on:

Mr. Armstrong understood that there was a very specific scripture that applied prophetically to him and the primary commission God had given to him to fulfill. He very often made reference to that commission and that specific verse because God had given to him to **know** that this was for him to accomplish. He was as certain about this being his commission from God as he was about each and every truth that had been given to him as well.

He knew where it came from, and it was from God. How could he have been so very certain and so dogmatic about such things?

It may be easier for a person to understand how the early apostles were able to be so certain and dogmatic about what they taught because of the experiences they had of personally being with, and then taught by, Jesus Christ himself. Even Paul had a powerful experience that brought him to conversion after being struck blind and being spoken to directly by Christ, although Christ was not literally in front of him to perform this, but in heaven.

Now, that voice and everything he heard didn't mean that Jesus Christ returned to the earth and was standing on the earth, and the things that took place during that period of time. But his voice, what which he spoke out in the air, that has the power to do right in front of him and the light that was there, and so forth, those things that happened that were manifested, doesn't mean that he was physically there because he's spirit and he did it from heaven just as God the Father manifested Himself in the form of Melchizedek and did the things that He did at different times, when He wrestled with Jacob and so forth, different things that have happened throughout time that God did in different ways with different people and how He worked with them, not literally there but has that power and that ability to do something that it's hard for the human mind to grasp and comprehend, let alone the creation of everything.

So what about Herbert W. Armstrong? He had an absolute "sense of knowing" because of what has already been addressed about how God can communicate directly with the human mind. People expect that voices must be heard or that the personal presence of an angel or Christ himself is the means God uses to give direction, instruction, and truth to His servants.

This is really hard for the human mind to comprehend if they don't know the truth about God and how God has worked with people and don't understand the truth anyway, because it's something that really needs God's spirit to give that ability to grasp and comprehend. Because, again, it's hard for the human mind because we think physically and so there's this thing that's like, "Well, what did you hear? How did God say this to you? Or, "How do you know this is what God says or is communicating?" "Wasn't there at least a dream or a bush that spoke to you?" Anyway, going on:

Those are physical expectations from a very human mind and way of thinking. Yet that is not the main way God has worked with His apostles and prophets.

It is true, as stated in the Book of Hebrews, that God has spoken to the prophets in many different ways through time. Moses had the experience of hearing God speak to him directly out of a burning bush. It was mentioned earlier how Abraham was spoken to by God while He manifested a literal, physical body before Abraham that conversed directly with him. But that body was not Almighty God. It was simply a physically manifested body in human form and appearance that God used in order to visit with Abraham, or better said, so that Abraham could visit with Him.

God revealed Himself to some through Melchizedek, and He sent Michael the archangel to some. There is even an account where God spoke through a donkey to a man.

And when I read that one there I can't help but think of an individual that made a comment to me one time who had left the group: "If God can speak through a donkey," he said something else because he wanted to put that in there, "I suppose He could possibly speak through you." Something like that anyway. Okay, I know where you're coming from.

For most everyone since the disciples, however, God has communicated directly to the mind of an individual.

That's an awesome thing. I think of everyone who's been called. When I meet someone for the first time some of the best kind of conversations are about their calling, and even sometimes I haven't heard everybody's stories. Just like at the Feast of Tabernacles, you can't get around and visit with everyone. That's why we go out to different areas, so we can may be have the opportunity of (if the hook-up and everything doesn't cause me too many problems) visiting a little bit with people. So we have some things that we're going to have after services, and that gives us the opportunity to visit a little bit because it's difficult. You can't talk to everyone at the Feast, but what an awesome thing when you're able to sit down with someone at a meal, or whatever, and ask them, "How did you come into the Church?" "How?" "What was the process that God began to open your mind?" To me, every story is unique and incredible, how God begins to work with a mind to open the mind, what their situation was because it's different with everyone, but God begins to work with and draw and open up things in the mind which He has to do by His spirit that we're able to perceive and understand things all of a sudden that we could never

perceive before. Because the truth, you can't grasp and comprehend unless God begins to open the mind. That's an awesome thing! There are some basic things that people might be able to latch on to, but they can't "see" everything or "see" things on a spiritual plane yet until God opens the mind because that's how He communicates. He communicates with a spirit essence that's in the mind, something that science, that mankind doesn't grasp but God's Church does.

For most everyone since the disciples, however, God has communicated directly to the mind of an individual. For most of the Church, it has been a matter of God using that means to reveal truth and spiritual understanding to those whom He has called.

That's why it's always in my mind; it'll always be there. Sitting down one night at about 10 o'clock after getting home and all of a sudden hearing things about the Sabbath, hearing things about Israel and their migration through Europe and everything that was said I knew it was true. It's not something you can go prove in a book to yourself. It's not, even though we should strive to learn what it says in the book, in God's word, and we do that in time if we yield to and choose that drawing that God is giving to us, but all of a sudden to see something that you never saw before and you just know it whether it's something you heard that someone else said, or something you happen to read, whatever it is, and all of a sudden things click for you that before you never saw, never could understand, never grasped nor comprehended, and if you really understand yourself to know that if that hadn't happened, that knowing in the mind, you wouldn't have accepted it. Because I know my mind. I knew the way I was before I came to that point in time and I know that I would have mocked and made fun of what was being said - if something wasn't happening up here to where all of a sudden I just knew it was true. The seventh day Sabbath, the holy days, the migration of a carnal, physical people through Europe and where they are to this day. It's just a knowing that's in the mind. To me that's awesome how God communicates to us. It's inspiring.

And every one of us should take encouragement from those kinds of things whenever you're going through some hard times or some difficult times, and just to remember why you know and see the things you do. That's why I encourage people about the 57 Truths, of one of which is being tweaked a little bit right now. Not changed, but tweaked, added to. I'm deeply inspired by it. We'll probably have to have a sermon or a couple sermons about it because God's continually adding to and giving us more understanding and it's taken a process of time of experiences we've had to go through to get to this point, but that's just one of those carrots. Anyway, later on.

But isn't it awesome how you were called and what you are able to see and understand? So take heart in those things because I know people get discouraged from time to time. I know that people go through various trials and sometimes because of those trials doubt or whatever it might be that enters into the human mind. It should never, ever, ever take place in God's people, truly, because we should remember quickly, "Why do I see the things that I do? How am I able to see the things that I do?" It's only because God gives it. Because as soon as a person's gone, as soon as a person gets cut off from the body they begin to lose those things. It's only a matter of time, depending on their response to God and what they're doing, if they have a desire to return and be

back in the Body. Most don't! Most don't because by the time they've gotten to that point they've done too much damage up here and haven't yielded to and fought the fight like they need to. That's why I cry out to people and I did at the Feast of Tabernacles. If you want this way of life you have to fight for it and you have to fight against your own human nature with all of your being. We should want this above anything else and be willing to sacrifice anything else in order to receive and keep what God gives to us. Because, see, my experience is through time, going back, it doesn't matter how far it goes, one year, two years, five years of people I know and see go by the wayside, fifteen years ago, twenty years ago, people that flash into my mind that I can see right now, they have not only lost but in so many cases perhaps even turned to, or so many have, fighting against the truth that was given to them, but totally oblivious and not able to distinguish things between things in the Protestant world and the truth that God gave to them in the beginning that were so clear to them. And all of a sudden for Sunday worship to be maybe more plausible than the Sabbath? What happened to that mind? But, see, you can lose everything! You can lose everything and begin to go back and embrace everything that you had or thought you had or believed in the past that was in error, that was wrong. That's some scary stuff, truly is. To me it's a horribly scary thing that can happen to the human mind, but it's happened over and over again.

For most of the Church, it has been a matter of God using that means to reveal truth and spiritual understanding to those whom He has called. For apostles, it has been more than that, as He has also given them direction and instruction or simply the sense of knowing certain things that they are to do that is beyond simple revelation of His word in order to lead the Church in a manner that God and Christ are leading them.

Herbert Armstrong's life was filled with experiences of God communicating His will to him of things he wanted him to do or to accomplish. So it was with this scripture; he knew it was about himself and the commission that God had given him to fulfill. Here is that verse that he so often quoted as being his commission: "*This good news of the Kingdom shall be preached in [into] all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come*" (Matthew 24:14).

There was never a time before when this happened, never a time before when such power was used and the power of radio that did blanket, in essence, the world and what was out there available, whether people chose to listen to it when they came across it or not was their own choice, and that doesn't mean that all were supposed to hear it. But it went out. It went out all over the world very powerfully so and then it said, "...and then shall the end come." That's why I've always marveled at this verse, because he never went on to the next verse. He never went on to the next verse because it wasn't about him. It was about us. It was about what was going to happen at the end. Incredible! He stopped right there.

It would be good to include here more about how Herbert W. Armstrong spread the gospel (the good news) of God's true way of life and of the Kingdom of God. As it has already been

mentioned, it was done in a very powerful way through printed literature that was sent out free to any who would ask for it and through the media of radio and television. But there was another means which God opened to him in order to reach out to other areas of the world, and that was done directly with world leaders who themselves were accountable to the people of their nations—accountable before God. [That's how God held it for them.] This too was a further fulfillment of Matthew 24:14.

You have very likely never even heard of this man whom God and Christ raised up to do a work before actual end-time events would begin, when an actual countdown to Christ's coming would start. Since his death, many things in the Book of Revelation have already been fulfilled, [since Mr. Armstrong's death]. They are things not seen by the world, but by God's Church. That has been changing somewhat beginning in 2008, as other prophetic events of a more physical nature began to be fulfilled. So let's give some consideration of what God did through His apostle whom He gave to fulfill that prophetic verse in Matthew 24:14.

I'm taking time to go through all this because these things need to be deeply embedded in our minds, and for anyone who may be new coming along later on to understand a little bit of history of how we are here today, of what God did during a period of time to raise up a Church to continue, to have a Church that could continue on through some of the worst times of earth's history that's coming. Going on:

Although Mr. Armstrong received awards and honors from leaders of various nations, with many being drawn to him with a remarkable fondness, they still rejected the gospel message he brought them about the Kingdom of God.

I think of those eight Japanese members of the Japanese Diet who basically referred to him or themselves as being his sons. That's the kind of fondness. That's unheard of, to have a religious leader from this country be recognized by members of the Diet of Japan and by different ones who led the entire nation as far as being over the nation. It's incredible, some of the things that have taken place in different countries and with different people.

Early on, Mr. Armstrong received a very unique award from King Leopold III of Belgium. It was a watch made from a cannonball taken from a battlefield in World War I by Leopold's father, King Albert I. King Albert had the cannonball cast into four watch cases with the desire that they would be presented to the four individuals that he felt had made the most significant contribution to world peace.

That alone is awesome if you know the story of how he felt when he was on the battlefield and what he saw when he saw the kind of thing that had taken place there during that great war, and then had this particular cannonball that he used and had it melted down to have this significance and his feelings and his thinking and wanted to present these things to others.

The king never found anyone he felt worthy to receive the fourth watch [though he did the three others], and so, he passed it on to his son, who was moved to give it to Mr. Armstrong in 1970.

That's profound for something like that to take place with world leaders, or a world leader in this particular case, toward a religious teacher and leader of a religion. Going on here:

Mr. Armstrong became known to many as an “ambassador without portfolio for world peace.”

Do you know anyone, anyone who's had any kind of a title like that before or since in this modern age? Never. Doesn't exist.

He carried the gospel message to Prince Mikasa and a number of the members of the Japanese Diet. Emperor Hirohito conferred upon Herbert W. Armstrong the Order of the Sacred Treasure, Second Class—one of the highest decorations that can be presented to a non-Japanese. During a period that covered two decades, seven successive Japanese Prime Ministers counted Mr. Armstrong as a personal friend and counselor. [Awesome!] Some members of the Japanese Diet referred to themselves as being his Japanese sons, [which I already mentioned]. Yet none of these leaders accepted the message of the coming Kingdom of God.

Just the fact that they had this attachment to him is dumbfounding. What most people don't understand is that God gave it. God gave that to those individuals. God has incredible power to influence individuals and how they think about certain things. In this case here Mr. Armstrong was given incredible favor in their sight. They didn't understand why. They didn't comprehend what was taking place, but they did it because of that influence that God had upon them by the power of His holy spirit to give them that. This wasn't just an accident that took place or something because of such a great personality. There is so much more involved here that has to do with God's spirit, because it was a work that God was doing. A lot of that has to do with those who would be raised up in time within in the Church to be able to look back and be in awe of what God did, to receive strength from those kinds of things. We have so many things in our history that should give us strength and encouragement of how God works in life and yet I think of the people who have been so evil, so evil in turning against and saying the kinds of things they have toward him, to him, and so forth, about him. Some members, they don't know what they've done. They're doing it against God and they don't have the foggiest idea what they're doing or have done.

Mr. Armstrong was endeared in friendship with King Hussein of Jordan, King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit of Thailand, and Prime Ministers of Israel, including Golda Meir and Menachem Begin.

You know, names that a lot of young people today don't even know. They don't know the kind of people these individuals were. Yet growing up I remember what they were like. I remember the kind of influence and notoriety they had in the world, and it was a lot. They were highly respected, some of these individuals like this, incredibly well known. Golda Meir? Loved mightily by so many people, respected mightily by so many people because of how she led that particular country and what she did there.

Others who counted him as a personal friend were Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat; Jomo Kenyatta, Founder and first President of Kenya; Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia; Mayor Teddy Kallek of Jerusalem; and long time friend, Nagendra Singh, who was a Justice at the World Court in The Hague, Netherlands.

I had the opportunity of hearing him when he came to Ambassador College one time because he was visiting Mr. Armstrong there and he came and spoke to the entire student body. It's incredible some of the perception of some of these people and how they view the world and what they were trying to accomplish, yet they can't bring peace to the world, but they heard something in the message that God used to attract them to a mindset here, a need for this to exist on the earth and what mankind is like and what governments are like and how they fight and resist each other. Going on:

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

To me that is so incredible to think about the friendships that existed, but they didn't receive the message. They liked what he had to say about various things and they were drawn to him and they didn't even understand why.

President Ferdinand Marcos decorated Mr. Armstrong with the Presidential Merit Medal "for his moral presence and compelling influence in moving people toward the creation of a just and peaceful world order."

That's how he felt even though he had all the kind of problems he did in working with the Philippines and some of the things he did that aren't too nice as far as his history is concerned, yet he was drawn to him in this regard, of something that he perceived that he was attracted to, but he didn't grasp it.

He received the decoration of "Commander of Our Most Noble Order of the Crown of Thailand." Yet neither of these leaders nor their people received the message of the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

Other leaders with whom Mr. Armstrong met included President Allende of Chile; President Suharto of Indonesia; South Vietnam's President, Nguyen van Thieu; and he was invited to Romania by President Nicolae Ceausescu, [who was not a good man].

But again, some of these people were drawn for whatever reasons. Going on:

Mr. Armstrong also met with Deng Xiaoping of the People's Republic of China and was the first recognized Christian leader to officially visit leaders inside China...

I'd probably go so far as to say he's been the only one ever in all history to have done this, especially on the scale that he did.

...yet this went unreported in the world. In this unprecedented visit, he addressed officials from 76 nations in the People's Great Hall in Beijing.

Now, that's just something unheard of. How many presidents have done that? How many presidents in this country have ever done that? How many leaders in the western world have ever been invited to do such a thing, let alone a religious leader? This is unheard of, especially at that time of China's history and of what they believed and how they lived and the thinking that took place in their minds. Yet they gave him such honor.

He spoke concerning the way to real peace and why humanity fails to achieve it.

Herbert W. Armstrong received numerous other honors and visited many other world leaders, but it went fully unnoticed by the western world to whom God had primarily sent Mr. Armstrong to proclaim His message. [They wouldn't do it no matter what anyway.] It should also be noted here that a very specific nation, to whom he had been sent, did not acknowledge or receive him. It was the United States of America... [Isn't that amazing? He lived right here.] ...who is the beginning focal point of cataclysmic prophetic events that unfold during the final period of the end-time. Toward the end-time, God fulfilled a promise to make this specific people the wealthiest and most powerful nation the world has ever known. It was a promise God fulfilled concerning one of the brothers—one of the tribes—mentioned earlier, and yet even after these blessings, they still rejected the one whom God sent to them.

Incredible history! Incredible to know and understand these things, of what has taken place through time. Anyway, we'll stop there, but I'm moved by that history. I truly am. I am moved by the opportunity of having been called during that period of time and having opportunity of being taught the things that I was taught. I know that God gave it, but still worked in a very powerful way through someone who has been so looked down upon by even so many whom God has called through time in the end-time.

We have covered six eras of God's Church that went from Pentecost of 31 AD to January the 16th of 1986 when Mr. Armstrong died. I marvel that the next era, Laodicea, could not understand this transition and what had taken place. The seventh era, just reading some of my notes, the seventh era is a highly prophetic period that would see the greatest attack ever against God's original true Church that would consist of prophecy that would declare a final countdown to the date of Christ's actual return as the King of kings to reign over this earth.

On January 16<sup>th</sup> of 1986 the sixth Church era of Philadelphia came to the end when Mr. Armstrong died and the seventh and last era, Laodicea, began.

We have an incredible history, we truly do. I think of those who tried to continue on doing what Mr. Armstrong did; they wanted to be on TV. I think of United that I was with for a time in the beginning there after the Apostasy because the belief, the thought was God's government has to be raised up again here to help God's people because people are hurting because of what's taken place, and the need to help people is immense out here. Yet there was this desire when conferences and people got together to continue doing what Mr. Armstrong had "failed" to do. That's what was stated, that basically he didn't finish sending a gospel into all the world. You think, "God's handicapped? God can do that through the one He raised up to do it and you want to continue on with a magazine just like all the other different organizations?" They need to have a magazine and they want to have the same type of magazine, similar to the same name but not the same name. If it can't be, "The World Tomorrow," it's got to be the other way around, "Tomorrow's World." Whatever, different things that have to be close. One was right here for a time, the "Good News." I think it came out as the "Good News" for a time in the one publication there, and wanting to be on TV and the different thing that were out there. So different ones have tried to do that, and the larger ones have been able to financially try to do some of those things, but haven't profited from them at all.

**Revelation 3:14—And to the angel...** I marvel here of how this is stated about Laodicea, because I lived a part of Philadelphia, not all of it because I wasn't called until 1969. It began in the early 30's there, but I came in the Church in 1969 so I lived the latter part of it and saw the things that were taking place that was leading up to an Apostasy and a Laodicea spirit that began to creep in even during Philadelphia, toward the latter end of it. And then to live this period of time? Incredible, the history and the experiences that are inside of you that you learn that no one can take from you. Just like your calling and when God opened your mind, no one should be able to take that away from you. It should be so deeply embedded in your mind, the memories of those things of how God first began to communicate with you and to draw you to His truth, but I marvel at how many people shrug it off and don't value it with all of their might, with all of their being.

**Revelation 3:14—And to the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write; These things are said by the Amen, the final and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.** Now, sometimes people have gotten confused when they read some of these things. Every introduction here to every era is about one, one person, one in the godhead, and one alone, Jesus Christ.

Every description that's given at the beginning of the introduction of every era, as a whole, as you go through this story is about Jesus Christ, and it makes it very clear. So here it's talking about the one who is the beginning of the creation of God. That's why I love it when I think about those things and what it means because the reality is nothing began to be created until everything was determined about the Son of God and how God would create Elohim. Everything that followed from that moment on, the creation of a spirit world, for the purpose of creating spirit beings, angels, God did because of His Son. All, everything, is built upon His Son. Everything is established on His Son, who is the cornerstone of everything He's building. That is awesome to understand, it truly is. So when it talks about the beginning of the creation of God, he is the beginning of the creation of God. Nothing else would exist if it weren't for this. Awesome to understand that! How beautiful, how meaningful that is!

Yet he didn't come into existence until possibly billions—we don't know time—and billions of years later. We don't know. How long did it take for the creation of the vastness of the universe? It had to take a long, long, long time if you talk about earth years, perhaps trillions of years. We don't know! It didn't happen overnight. It wasn't like God said, "Let it be," and all of a sudden everything existed out there. No, it was for a purpose of what He, how He, why He created the angelic beings anyway, to do the things that they were able to do. They worked. They worked with God to do God's bidding, powerfully so. There is much we're going to learn about that as time goes along, the things that they were involved in.

So again, "the beginning of the creation of God." So everything created was built upon him, upon the Son of God, as it all leads to Elohim, because that's why God began it all in the first place. It's about His Family, of which, indeed, Jesus Christ is the beginning.

**Verse 15—I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot.** What a horrible state! What a horrible state! What a horrible thing that happened to the Church! That's why I can almost hear Mr. Armstrong's words toward the end, as time got closer and closer to the end of his life and the end of the work that God gave him to do, and making the comment in such power that he did, because he would hit that podium, that lectern sometimes, and you'd think, "How could that fragile hand take it?" Because on the cameras, you would see it, and the bones that are showing, and in time I know mine will be there. You know, they're starting to get those wrinkles in the skin. You know what happens when you start getting older, and after a while you just see the bones. The older you get, when you get up in the eighties and nineties as he was, and to see him hit that thing and be as strong as he was in what he had to say when he said, "I wonder if even 10% of you," in essence, "are living Philadelphia," if 90% weren't already Laodicean! That's what he was referring to. Incredible that he saw that taking place within the Church.

And he did because he saw it taking place first and foremost in the ministry because his closest contact with everything was not the membership of the Church out here. He didn't have the ability and the time, and so forth. He relied upon those who were around him who gave information about what was happening in the different areas. He perceived and understood by

the things they said where they were. He knew where they were spiritually. He knew where the evangelists were spiritually. He already knew what was taking place in the Church and wondered. He was speaking first and foremost to the ministry, if you don't know and understand that. That's who he was speaking to because he knew them, different ones he taught in Ambassador College when he started Ambassador College and he saw the changes in their lives, just as anyone in a position of that kind of responsibility can see changes in people's lives. So often if it fits into something like this it is not good. You know, if people yield to the wrong things and what it does. This is what he saw. He saw another era approaching. He didn't grasp that, what it was, because at that time there was the feeling that Philadelphia and Laodicea would co-exist to the end. Not so. But that wasn't given to him to know, to understand at that point in time, and so the Church had this belief that something happened, I guess, or whatever, but two eras would co-exist through time. No, an era is an era. When one's over the other one begins, but that wasn't the present truth back then.

Again here, reading these verses, **I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I would that you were cold or hot.** Do you know why it's said this way? This is like a drum in my mind because of what it says. It blares out as a powerful trumpet, if you will, in a gigantic blast, what this is saying, because the desire is from anyone who works with God's people, from God to Jesus Christ to those whom God calls to work with God's people, it is the desire to see that indeed we are hot for God's way of life, that we are on fire for God's way of life, that we are fighting for it, that anything that comes along out here that might interfere with it, whatever it is—financial troubles—whatever it might be when people start doing some of the stupidest things they do, when they don't tithe properly, when they don't save 2<sup>nd</sup> tithe like they should, which happened at this year's feast as well, which I know has happened at other feasts. It happens at every Feast of Tabernacles when some haven't saved up what they should be saving to obey God, to observe what God has given them to do. I marvel at that and I think, "Why are you doing this? Why are you kind of playing this middle of the road thing in your life?" We go to Sabbath services and we go like we're going inside the temple, and yet we're playing around in the courtyard? See, my desire is that you be hot! And if it's clear that you're cold then that's an easy one. You're disfellowshipped. It's this middle of the road garbage that is hard because we've finally come to a time when God isn't allowing that now at the end-time, see? That's all being gotten rid of in God's Church. It's going to continue to be gotten rid of until this is over with.

So that's why I am in awe at things like this when it says something to this degree, because I know what God is saying, powerfully so, "I wish that you were cold or hot and not doing in this middle ground," because it's harder to judge sometimes. It isn't hard for God to judge, let me tell you that right now, but it's hard for His servants to judge those things sometimes, to discern how to deal with various things when you know things aren't as they should be to the degree they should be. How do you deal with that and how much time do you give? How merciful are you to be? Yet those are good things to learn and have embedded within you, but it isn't what you desire.

So Laodicea is something we saw in a big way. You think, "Oh that we could all be hot and on fire because then it'd be obvious we're on fire." When someone's on fire and they're excited for God's way of life you can't hide that! But here during Laodicea that didn't exist and it was getting worse and worse and worse to where it was just lukewarm. The point is God will not work with that which is lukewarm. He can't. His spirit can't. You can't give something to somebody that they're not wanting. If they don't want it why should God give it? That's the example that Jesus Christ gave over and over again, and about prayer, and if you pray for those things God promises He will give it. What is it about? It's about His spirit. It's about the spirit we need day in and day out in order to live this way of life, to obey God. That's God's greatest desire, is to give us of it. That's why He called us, to fill us with His holy spirit, yet if we don't desire it with all of our being and we're not striving to obey Him with all of our being and fighting against our own carnal nature and against the world and whatever the forces might try to pull us away from God, from the Church? So it's pretty obvious when there is that which is on fire, when there is that which is hot, but this middle of the road garbage that still continued on since Laodicea? Because this is still one of the big problems because of the age we live in, because of all that we have out here, all the ease of life and that just lends itself to being Laodicean, to have that kind of spirit though we're not in Laodicea now. God has even made that clear.

So again, I get worked up when I read something like this because I think, "Oh, if it could only be that we're just on fire, that everybody is on fire for God's way of life and fighting for it." So he says, **I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I would that you were cold or hot. So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.** You're not hot for this way of life. It's not a matter that you're totally cold and doing your own thing. You're still going through the motions. You send in your tithes (if you do), you're still going to Sabbath services and the holy days, and there are certain motions you go through. "But is that what I desire? Is it to offer up bulls and goats on the altar? Am I looking just for the physical routine part of it or am I looking for the spirit in it and the reason we're motivated to do things we do because we're desiring to worship God in spirit and in truth?" In the truth! We can't be in a lie. We have to worship God in spirit and in truth. So that fits so powerfully of what's being said here.

So he says, **because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.** It's a word that can mean, in essence, vomit, but it means "to spew." It's something in the mouth, just like you're expecting some hot coffee and its cold coffee. And me, I know some people order it at Starbucks—I can't comprehend that—but it's just like the English, they think when you order a cold tea over there something is wrong with you because to them it's all hot. It has to be hot tea. So if you order a cold tea over there it's strange because to them that's kind of repulsive. It's the same way with cold coffee to me. So if I were to get something in a cup and do that I'd feel like spewing it out of my mouth. So that's what it's talking about. I don't want it in my body. "I don't want it in My body," that's what God said to Laodicea. "I don't want you in My Body. You can't be in My body. You can't be in the Body of Christ. You're going to be spewed out. You're

going to be totally separated from Me, period." Awesome, what's said here. And that's exactly what took place.

So he says, **because you are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, I will spew (spit/vomit) you out of my mouth.** That's how the word is in the Greek.

But notice what it says here, **But you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.** It's an attitude of mind that doesn't recognize what it needs. It's a spiritual state of thinking, "I'm doing well. I'm doing good. We're doing okay." We lived through that in the Church through Laodicea. "I am rich and increased with goods," almost to the degree that some began to think that better things were coming along when in actuality horrible things were coming along because that began to affect different people's minds. It's a self-reliance not a spiritual reliance on God. There's the difference. It's a self-reliance of how individuals could see themselves but not realistically before God on a spiritual plane.

**Because you say, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and do not know...** Interesting word here in the Greek because it means "do not perceive or see." See, it's a spiritual thing. You don't get it. You don't see. You don't perceive, see, spiritually that you are **wretched**. That's why I love the only other place where this word is used by Paul when he said, "Oh wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" Because that's what we're like as far as our own human nature is concerned. We have to be able to see ourselves, that we need to be delivered, that we have a fight every day of our lives, and to repent of sin when it's obvious in front of us, when our carnality is what it is, when we give in to it, which we all do. Every day of your life there is some carnality that you give into. There is selfishness that you give into, that you are ruled by, that you have not conquered yet. You cannot help it. As long as you're in a physical body there are going to be times it's going to creep up and smack you right in the rear end, right across the face.

**...and don't know that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.**

That's how Laodicea had become spiritually. God said, "You're not even clothed properly. You're spiritually naked and you're blind to what you're really like. You think you're better than what you are. You don't see yourself realistically." That's a horrible state, and yet it can be a state of mind that can happen to people, does happen to people, and still happens to people, but it was one that depicted and magnified this particular era because it affected everyone, everyone who lived in it. That's why when others came along 2007, 2008, 2009, whatever it might have been, whenever it was when you were drawn, sometimes it's hard to grasp what was lived back then during Laodicea because you don't have that experience because you never lived it, and it's hard. The mind can think, "I'd never do that. I wouldn't have been like that." In those conditions you would have done exactly the same. The same thing would have happened to you. It's just the way it is. It's hard for people to understand what we're capable of as human beings under certain specific kinds of conditions and because of what was taking place after Mr. Armstrong's death, what was being fed to the Church, how it affected the entirety of the Church.

So it was when the Apostasy took place on December the 17<sup>th</sup> of 1994 that God did spew the Church out of His mouth. It was fully separated from Him in the sense that all were cut off from the flow of God's spirit into their lives, every one of us. It was not a fun experience. Thankfully for some it was short-lived and God began to do something different with those that He chose to do something different with at that particular time.

So what happened during this period that led up to the Apostasy? It's good to understand some of that history, if you don't know it. In a period of about the first two through three years after the death of Mr. Armstrong God gave to Mr. Tkach Sr. insight into some things that needed to be addressed in the Church. Now, it's God's Church and there are certain things that God desired to give to His Church even through this individual at that time, because in essence he was over the government of God on the earth. That was passed along to him by Mr. Armstrong. So he wasn't an apostle but as far as the government and what was taking place God worked through that for a period of time, for a purpose, an awesome purpose that is so hard for people to grasp and comprehend what really took place.

So God gave to him things. I think of how sometimes people say, "Well, look what he did later on. Did God know?" Yes, God knew exactly where things were going to go, but just like with Solomon, look at all that God gave to Solomon and what Solomon wrote, yet God knew what Solomon was going to do through time there, of what he would do with all that because of all the wives that he had and the kind of personality and thinking that he had, of how that was going to affect Solomon in time, how that David's own son in time was going to turn against God. Yet God gave to him scriptures that we read in the Bible because they're inspired by God; they come from God. They didn't come from Solomon, they came from God. So God can do whatever He wants whenever He wants through whomever He wants in time. He had a specific purpose through what He did here with Mr. Tkach. It was about the prophecy that was given to Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2, that there would come a time when this would take place at the end, and then, then the Kingdom of God would come. Before that it wouldn't come. That's why it's a countdown to a specific time and we're learning as we go along what that timing is. That's why the last chapter of the book, writing through some of those things, I'm dumbfounded by seeing some of those things and how God works in a very specific and perfect manner in the sense of how He is organized and how He does things in a timely way, and has through time.

So in a period of about the first two through three years after the death of Herbert W. Armstrong God gave to Joe Tkach Sr. insight into some things that needed to be addressed in the Church, things that needed to be given more balance, if you will, just on a physical plane, which is a spiritual plane if people understand the spirit of it. It had to do with some things such as the use of make-up. It had to do with the observance of birthdays, and etcetera. Not big things, but some things that needed to have greater balance given to them.

Now, this caused a lot of problems; it has caused a lot of problems within the ministry of the Church first and foremost. It brought out things within the ministry of the Church. So during this

period of time Joe Tkach Sr. began to experience greater resistance from the ministry because it started to reflect something that was wrong in the ministry anyway. I think of one of the greatest things that God did through Mr. Tkach, and that is when the ministry would be brought into headquarters - that would go through a cycle of about 2½ years, if I remember rightly by the time all the ministry had gone through a cycle of being brought into headquarters for a week or two, or whatever that training might be and refreshing. They called it the Refresher Program. So around the world ministers would be brought in to headquarters in Pasadena and they'd have different ones teach them in various classes. Sometimes Mr. Armstrong would come in. I remember when Mr. Armstrong was going through *Mystery of the Ages*, and showing the book and how excited he was about that coming out when we'd go into refreshing programs. So Mr. Tkach kept on with the same practice in the sense of bringing people in and working with them to teach and train the ministry.

So there was a period of time there, and I believe it was approaching 1987, in that period of time of about 2½ years, some time just before that and a little after, when all the ministry was brought in and Mr. Tkach was given ability in a very strong way to begin talking to the ministry and teaching that there is a gigantic difference between shepherding and shepherding within the Church. Now, this was hard on a lot of the ministry because the power in which he gave this message wasn't from him, it was from God. I remember a particular year that followed that after I'd gone into the refreshing program because there were things I knew I had to change because I'd learned some wrong things through some other ministers that had influence in training and working with and so forth in times past. I also learned from others who had more of that attitude and it began to mean more when I saw that shepherding attitude in mind. So there are certain things. I don't even want to get into the history of some of that.

But anyway, the problem was that the ministry as a whole didn't address it and they didn't change. They didn't accept what was given to them and because of that it led into some of the things that the Church has had to suffer through because of that. They didn't change, that was the problem and yet it came from God. So what was the attitude of the ministry? So Mr. Tkach began to have this resistance toward him. People didn't like this. They didn't like what he was saying, and it was to that degree that some began to justify their actions that were actually against the government of God in their life and because of that they suffered and the Church suffered mightily because of it.

So again here, I think of the groups of ministers that were brought in, the jealousy that began. Well, I'll talk about that in a moment. But anyway, first of all here about the ministry and about the attitude of much of the ministry toward Joe Tkach Sr., a movement began that worked to get rid of literature written by Herbert W. Armstrong. So this went on even past this. So there was that period of time in the first two to three years that there were things that God gave to help the Church to see that there were things that needed to be addressed, that needed to be changed. Then there was this resistance that began to grow within the ministry. Some, I think of

one organization that got started not too long because this individual that began to write some of the things he did even referred to him as being the "man of sin." Then when he died he changed that to his son being the "man of sin," but yet it was true. But what he did and why he left was so very, very wrong, because he left on the grounds of various things that he believed that Mr. Tkach didn't have the right to address and change, when yes, he did in the time period he did it. There were things here that needed to be addressed in God's Church and God was addressing them, and he was addressing things toward the ministry.

So to me, the history of what we've gone through is absolutely incredible. So going on here, a little bit as time went along there began to enter in this jealousy from Joe Tkach Sr., and Joe Tkach Jr., and some of the ministry out there at headquarters because they didn't like how some were referring to Mr. Armstrong so often and looking still to Mr. Armstrong. It was like if you change or address anything that's changed here then you're wrong. Some things needed to be addressed.

So again, this stemmed from something that wasn't sound and wasn't right, but what they did in response was very unsound, because jealousy, envy, so they started getting rid of literature. They started rewriting booklets and started sending things out in a different way. Some of it almost identical. Some of it with a little twist here and there, a little watering down here and there. But in the very beginning some of it was right on target, but as time went along some of that began to change with a little bit of a twist because they kept interjecting various ideas and thoughts. So it's a very subtle thing that took place during Laodicea and during that period of time in the later 80's and early 90's. Then after a while they even had, basically I think it was a bonfire at Pasadena and burned up tonnes of books out there. It was like, what is this? Past literature of Mr. Armstrong. Incredible, what took place. There was this sense of... I don't know even how to describe it all, but it stemmed from jealousy and envy, but they didn't perceive it as this. It was like striking out at something that was harmful and held the Church back, and people latched on to that. There were different ministers that began to latch on to that kind of thinking. Others that saw it for some of the sickness that it was, but not like they should have.

So again, it was becoming more apparent as time went along that Mr. Tkach, especially his son and some of the others there at headquarters were jealous, envious, maybe not even seeing that in themselves, just resentful towards how some would speak of and use Mr. Armstrong's name. So there was a massive effort in the rest of that time period of Laodicea to besmirch, to get rid of any influence that might have come from the use of the name of Mr. Armstrong, and people wouldn't even use it anymore. That's why by the time we got to the Apostasy some ministers when they came back together in various groups and so forth, they could only say about Mr. Armstrong, "Well, he was a good minister. He was a good teacher and I learned a lot of good things from him," but not give him the honor that was due, the fact that he was God's apostle. They wouldn't even say that or that fact that indeed they learned everything they did because of what God gave through him. So things like that just boggle my mind, how human beings can come to that point. I

hope that's meaningful to all of you, to understand what happened, what took place in the minds of individuals.

So people were becoming jealous at the very mention of Mr. Armstrong's name, and some in the ministry began to attach themselves to some of the same kind of thinking because it was a matter of power. It was a matter of power and influence that they wanted to have that didn't remind them of the past or of the strength in essence (they didn't call it that) that came from Mr. Armstrong.

So as time went on the Church became weaker and weaker spiritually. That's Laodicea; just weaker and weaker spiritually in every way. It was becoming more divided than ever, factions rising up, things that were happening - really sick, until finally the Apostasy took place. Then came to the Apostasy when Joe Tkach Sr. gave his infamous sermon in Atlanta on December the 17<sup>th</sup> of 1994 where he began to overthrow every major doctrine of the Church and he began to lead it back into Protestantism, traditional Christianity, into those doctrines that were established by the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. Just unthinkable that such a thing could even happen in an organization, let alone within the environment of God's Church, that they would be attracted back to the very doctrines that became the cornerstone, if you will, the traditions, the cornerstone of the Roman Catholic Church.

Again, the Apostasy took place on December the 17, 1994, and that was the day that the 1<sup>st</sup> Seal of the Book of Revelation was opened. God made it clear as we went along what had actually taken place spiritually to His own Church. That was when the 1<sup>st</sup> Seal was opened, the beginning of the kinds of things that took place that were about the Church, not about the world, because the Church had always thought that the first four Seals were about devastation that was going to take place upon the earth. No, they're spiritual about the devastation that would take place in His own Church. We came to understand that as time went along. Incredible history!

Now, I have said something that people have found fault with that I'm going to explain a little bit about today because I made the comment that there came a period of time of 280 days. As a matter of fact it will be discussed in another sermon. But I'm going to say it here today again, that when I talk about "to the hour," or "within the hour," how it's used biblically, anyway, when it talks about "in that hour" that certain things happened, to a certain day or whatever it might be scripturally. Now, I wrote that at a specific time—I don't know the first time I wrote it—and different ones found fault with it because of the timing of what took place when it stated in Atlanta, and it was obviously three hours difference in California. I thought about it at different times. I don't know why I wrote it that way. I really didn't. When I look back and I thought, "Well, it's obvious it's not three hours difference in that regard because it's much earlier out there and he didn't die until the early afternoon. So what does this mean?"

Well, I'm just letting you know, and I'll bring it up in a later sermon, it's going to remain exactly as it is, because I'm talking about that area of the world. What would you do if you were in some

other part of the world and you had been in another time zone? But if it happened still at that time of day, that a certain thing takes place after it's over with, after it's been said and done, after it's been given, he had already did what he did concerning God's Sabbath and tried to dismantle every teaching that the Church had been given, and he died? I don't care whether it was his time zone. I don't care if it's a matter of when God took his spirit. I don't know at what point He did. I don't know if there was any life support or anything else but I know that came from God. So, just to let everybody know it is what it is because there are those who find fault with those things and say, "See!" "See, it's wrong." So I believe it's not wrong and if I thought it was I would be the first to change it, to address it.

Revelation 12:12. This will come out in another sermon when we get to it. We're just not there yet. There are certain things I know that have to do with the present truth. There are other things that when it's given, which I will talk about in another sermon later on that I mentioned earlier that's going to be coming, but as God's adding more to it and giving more to it that's to me is awesomely exciting. But there are certain things when God gives it, it is what it is. It's like an absolute knowing of something when God gives it that's what it is. It's His Church, His spirit, He gives what He wants, and we live according to it.

Anyway, I think of what took place here when the 1<sup>st</sup> Seal was opened and I think of what followed because what followed is awesome, if we understand it. Revelation 12:12. Because we went through an incredible prophetic period at that time and the first of seven distinct end-time periods of 1260 days that are following that, that we know about now, but the first one here is this period here.

**Revelation 12:12—Therefore, rejoice, heavens, and you who dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea!** When it talks about things like this it has to do with the entirety of the world, but it's more than that. It has to do with peoples and nations and the Church as well, of things that are going to take place, that are going to come to pass. But let's go on: **For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time.** Now, I don't know when that happened. Mr. Armstrong felt that this might be when the State of California came after him. It may well be. That may be the time when this specifically happened, I really don't know. God hasn't given it to me, but that very well may be the case. God may have given him to see that at that particular time and maybe that was the time at the very end of an age that from that point on Satan was going to go out and do some of the things he's going to try to accomplish and do through the period of Laodicea because Mr. Armstrong's getting closer. God gave him a period of time to restore things in the Church, but also to put the Church back on the right track later in the last several years from the time that he had that heart attack to the time he died in '86.

But here it's talking about a particular period of time that followed then. It says, **For the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time.** Satan knows that more now than ever before. So he's getting closer and closer to that period of time.

The things that are going on in the world right now have so much to do with that, with what he perceives, with what he believes, though he fights against it, but they've learned to believe what God says, that He's going to do it.

**Verse 13—And when the dragon saw that he was cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man *child*.** Well, that's about the Church. So that's what he was doing. When he was cast to the earth he began to strike out. That's why Mr. Armstrong made that comment that he did. I think of what followed that then. So he wasn't able to destroy the Church at that time, though he started to try to attack. He did try to make an effort to destroy the Church at that moment in time, but he wasn't able to do so. But the period that followed, because of what happened with Mr. Armstrong dying, then he had more power to do the things he did because of Laodicea, because of a spirit of people and their attitude, and letting down, and not being spiritually strong. So he had everything he needed to begin to interject his mind, his thoughts, his broadcasting into the mind primarily of the ministry and of so much of the Church into this spirit and attitude of being lukewarm spiritually and of deceiving people, that they're doing well, that they're rich and increased with goods, that what they're doing as far as the work was concerned is good, when it wasn't good at all.

So it says here, "And when the dragon saw that he was cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man *child*." So this is what led into the period that followed the Apostasy, that there had to come to a point in time that what was happening under the leadership of Mr. Tkach, what they were doing in trying to tear down everything about Mr. Armstrong and what he taught, there was movement underway by the son and by several friends at headquarters that began to have a greater influence upon Mr. Tkach and he began to yield to those ideas more and more. It was a natural course of events to where it finally came to the point that he was committed to changing every major doctrine of the Church. He did so ahead of time because the timing wasn't in his hands, it's in God's. So when he was in Atlanta it all began, a prophetic period of time that God has determined to fulfill and accomplish. He was going to give a different sermon but he didn't. He was motivated by whatever reason to give the one that he gave, the Apostasy.

And what followed that then, and it says, **And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place where she is nourished for a time, times, and a half a time,** that 1260 days, that prophetic period, the first of several. We didn't know but it was that first period following the Apostasy. Awesome that it leads up to Pentecost of 1998. 3½ years exactly from the time that began to this point in time. It says the Church, in essence, was protected **from the face of the serpent**, from Satan for that period. I've talked about this in times past, but to me it's a marvel to realize our history, to know what we went through, to know that the Church was scattered. If he'd been able to continue to attack and do the things that he was doing at that point in time it would have been far, far worse what happened to the scattered Body. But God chose that period of time to begin to do something that

was a command, that was something given to the Church in Laodicea. I'll just come to that next week because we're getting so close to the end.

But to me it's exciting, the rest of what it says in Laodicea. You can look at it yourself because it was that period of time that God used to turn things, that 3½ years to begin raising up a different group that He was going to bring out of the Apostasy and that's why we're here to this day.