

Awesome Feast. Quite incredible where we are in time. Hope that everyone is beginning to grasp some things about the period of time we're in and have been in for some time and how God has been working with His Church and putting it in a perspective that there is a lot more in scripture that we haven't known in times past even though we might have had a glimmer here and there because of certain things that God gave to us.

But to come to see that there is so much more that is about this period of time, it's quite incredible and shows the importance that it is as a part of God's plan, meaning that those whom God calls in this end-time, in this period of time, shows how important you are in that plan as well, the opportunity you have in that part of His plan. That's being magnified a whole lot more here of recent time and that's continuing on with this sermon today.

Just before this past fall Feast season, we began to go through a series entitled *The Rebuilding of Jerusalem*. *Part 3* was given in The Netherlands the Sabbath before the Feast began, and I think, well, I know you had it here last Sabbath in this area. Today we're going to continue with *Part 4*.

As it was mentioned toward the end of *Part 3* we have reviewed a lot concerning the captivity of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and then the long period of time that involved the process of Judah being allowed to return after the Medo-Persian Empire conquered Babylon, and as they began to rebuild on the temple and the city itself of Jerusalem and the walls around it.

It was a long process, and though that was a long process there are types in there that have a lot to do, if not almost everything to do with what was going to happen later on in the end-time here concerning God's Church.

Hopefully, we're becoming more keenly aware that there are things that God has planned long before mankind was put on this earth about the entire process of 7,100 years. None of it has been left to chance. All of it is by design.

He is creating Elohim and we only see that in such a small portion, but we see so much more than we have in times past. We've been given so much more. The early disciples, the early apostles, they didn't have these things. They didn't know these things in the intricate manner we do now. They had a primary focus concerning Joshua, concerning the Messiah, and that was what they preached. That is what they went out to do. That's the job, the responsibility that was given to them.

Because that was the primary focus of that time, the beginning of the Church, the establishment of the Church, a means whereby God was going to now begin working with far

more numbers of people through the Church. Because it was more an individual thing through the previous 4,000 years.

Now there was going to be that body, the Body of Christ through which God would work to draw people and then to be worked with through a more organized manner, in that respect, compared to the first 4,000 years. Joshua being our High Priest and the power that God had given to him to do and accomplish what He was going to do through the Body of Christ. So, the primary part of 144,000 is going to come from that.

Now we're down to the final finishing of that portion of the temple, the finishing touches of it. That's always an awesome process in any kind of a construction project, the more intricate it is, the more important it is the more that last part of it is, again, incredibly important, especially when you understand some of the things that have to do with this. And so, we're very blessed to be a part of that finishing part and to understand what has been taking place and what God is preparing after that, that some have an opportunity for as well.

So, there are these things that are taking place concerning the captivity, concerning things that led up to it, of how Judah responded to God, how the different kings responded to God, and then that time finally when it was time for that great kingdom to emerge that God said would be the head of gold, the beginning of a prophetic period of time that would lead up to ten nations in Europe at the end.

So, all this is all planned out. That's an incredible thing when you think about the book of Revelation. Because John wrote it; he had no idea what these things were all about that he was given on the Isle of Patmos to write. It wasn't time to reveal those things. So, he wrote what was given to him. Then to know how much has been given at this period of time now at the very end concerning that.

Because even there, there was an outline given to Herbert Armstrong of some of those things that had to do with the very last portions of the statue if you will, the toes of the statue and what was going to come to pass with that, the feet, the iron mingled with clay.

When you see Europe today, what could be a better description in a statue than something like that to show there is power there and yet there is incredible weakness? There's not good cohesion, it's not solid, in that respect, very flimsy as far as a construct is concerned. You look at it today, it's a mess, but it's still there. There are those who are predicting its demise, its downfall, the euro is going to collapse, the whole EU is going to collapse. It is, but not in the way they think. We understand what that's going to be.

As a matter of fact, it's going to gain a lot of power just toward the very end. That's when they come together and agree on certain things. We're blessed to know those things. But all that's been mapped out by God, and He's the one bringing it about, allowing certain things.

Even in the demonic world, for them to do certain things, giving them—well, I shouldn't say "opportunity"—giving them time to do the things that they do. He knows what they do, and He

uses that and gives them than that which is in the hearts of mankind in the first place, they go out and intensify and magnify and speed up those things to bring them to pass more quickly.

Again, God is in control of not just the physical world but the spirit world in bringing those things about. So, we know so very little about that power and how He is able to do these things. But we should be in awe of it. It's all about Elohim. It's all about what mankind must go through, what all mankind must come to see and understand about what we are and what we're like, and that we will if we were given the time, we would destroy ourselves. We have a good start on that already. The solutions that mankind comes up with are nuts, insane, off the wall, and they can't do anything about it.

Anyway, we are so blessed that we have a peace of mind knowing exactly what's coming, why it's coming, and the need for it to take place. That's a part of coming into agreement with God, to understand though it be horrifying the kind of destruction, that it has to come to pass.

To understand that so many then of those who have an end of life have an opportunity for life again. It's not the end, but in a world now that is governed by God, by His Son, by His Family. Awesome! One Church, one government ruling the earth. Mankind has never known that; never experienced such a thing. Incredible.

Though this return took much time there are lessons for us to learn within that as well, that there are things that God does for a reason and some of these stages are really quite incredible, what took place.

Anyway, I'm going to continue on with it. So, we see then where the first return was under Zerubbabel, that Cyrus had given the go-ahead to return and begin building. He saw his name written. It was written, it was given through the prophet Isaiah right at two hundred years even before this (almost, not quite), but anyway, 150 for sure. You know, keeping up with some of these years and some of the times is almost exhausting and I don't have my little chart in front of me. But anyway, it was a long time.

So anyway, this period here when they were being sent back was 538 BC. We've gone through all this. It was between the first and second return to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, nearly sixty years after the first return commanded by Cyrus and given to Zerubbabel to accomplish that the king, Xerxes, referred to as Ahasuerus, made Esther the queen. So, right in between the first and second return that's where the book of Esther fits in. We've been through that recently.

To me, that's awesome and exciting to see these Persian kings that were moved to have a liking toward Judah, toward the people. They're the primary ones. Judah, they were the primary ones entrusted within the palace. It's an incredible story. I think it's Nehemiah that we're coming to who was the king's cupbearer. Now, I may have that mixed up. But anyway, that means that before he drank anything, he did. He not only served the king in these things, but

they would drink or whatever to make sure its okay, that somebody hasn't poisoned them. What a job to have!

So, some of these things are quite incredible when you go through them. They were entrusted. They were given trust on a continual basis. So, there was this kinship, if you will, between the rulers, several of them down through there, all the way starting with Cyrus. God gave that!

That's something that we have to grasp and comprehend that there are times in our lives where we're given favor by others that are a great benefit, and I believe to the point there are times that companies are blessed because of one person that works there. Wrap your head around that one a little bit. Because God has that kind of power in order to give favor to an individual in a job, whatever it might be. This has happened so many times in God's Church it boggles the mind. Example after example after example of things that I've experienced in the Church and seen.

Then later the second return took place that was under Ezra around 458. So, we've gone from 538 when it began to 458, right at 80 years after Zerubbabel had returned. Ezra was given incredible wealth, as obviously was in the beginning here with Zerubbabel, but Ezra was given incredible wealth to take back with him as well by Artaxerxes, to return to Jerusalem.

Now we come to another, I want to call it as I did before, another great return to Jerusalem in 445 BC, just 13 years after Ezra had returned, 93 years after Zerubbabel. Now, this third return was under Nehemiah, and it was only Nehemiah. This wasn't a gathering of a lot of Jews who went back with him. That isn't what happened here. This is a unique story. Nevertheless, an incredibly great return because of what is written in the book of Nehemiah, what his function was, what his job was, what God had given to him to do.

So, it was a great return because of what he did. It wasn't about the numbers of people returning and so forth; it was what was accomplished here.

Nehemiah 1:1—The words of Nehemiah, the son of Hachaliah. Then it came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, that Hanani one of my brethren came, he and men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped and were left over, in other words, from the captivity. So, they had already gone back. All this time has passed and he's wanting to know what's happened with them, with some who had actually gone through some of the captivity, others who were born during the captivity, much more that had returned then.

It says here, so he wanted to know **about those left over from the captivity and concerning Jerusalem. So, they said to me, The remnant that are left over of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach.** See, I read that, and I read something else that's present because this is a type.

This is something physical, but what we're living through and what we've been living through is very much a type of some of these things that took place, a time when a type of captivity, if

you will, came upon God's Church, and if God hadn't intervened it'd all been destroyed. But there are things that God brought to pass, had a purpose in, and very much about some of, again, what we experience.

So, this is a very physical thing of what took place because of different people in the region. They hated the idea that Jews were coming back to rebuild Jerusalem, to rebuild the temple, and to rebuild the walls. They were attacked at different times; they were ridiculed most of the time. Things continually happened over all this period of time because they so hated it. Because they had lived there for a long time in the region, other peoples had from other areas of all the areas around there. They had moved in there, they had homes, they had their own farms, they had their own living, and so, and they hated the idea that the Jews would be coming back and that they had any authority or power to do so whatsoever.

So it says **they were in great affliction**. After all this time, after 93 years this is what is still happening. They're still under great reproach and great affliction.

I think of scriptures that come to light that God has helped us to understand more clearly about what it means to go through great tribulation and to understand that wasn't just a term to be used at the end-time about what's going to happen to a physical world, but things about the Church. That everyone has to go through great affliction, great trials, great tribulation in order to become part of the 144,000, and especially then toward the end of what was going to occur because of the Apostasy.

Our history. We're going back through here and we're reading about history, our past, history about how God worked with people in our past or the past of those with whom He worked. Many different ones at different times being molded and fashioned because they're going to fit into the temple. These individuals experienced a lot of different things because of where they're going to fit within the temple. We don't know where that is. One day we're going to see it all and be in awe, even greater awe than what we are now with the slight way in which we can see these things. And so, he was going through expressing some of this.

This is what we have gone through. There are different times within the Church people have gone through different times of history of horrible things that they've experienced. Ours is unique to us. I think of the beginning of the Church, they went through some horrifying things. So much of that was on a physical plane, of people trying to kill them. People just trying to kill them, governments trying to imprison them, kill them, get rid of them. They were a threat.

They didn't like the beliefs of what it stemmed from, Judaism. They hated Judaism in the first place in most of the Roman world, and then this group came along, and they learned to hate it even more. A lot of tribulation, hardships people went through of things we can't even begin to imagine that were on a physical plane.

Ours is more on a spiritual plane and it's not a pleasant thing to go through that, because when you go through that it's in the mind. There are things you have to battle that are in the mind.

It's one thing to deal with something physical that comes at you, life and death, because of what you believe, it's another thing when there are things you have to deal with in the mind. A lot of this is a result of some of that.

So, I'll go into this a little bit more as we go along here.

But again, "reproach," those having to do with people who not just expressed disapproval but the criticism, the rebuke, and the hatred that people can have toward you. We've experienced a lot of that in God's Church. Sometimes those things are difficult to deal with because it can come from family, it can come from people we knew in the past, people with whom we walked to God's house side by side, and counsel blended sweet. Those things hurt in the mind.

So, they went on to say, **The wall of Jerusalem is also broken through, and the gates of it are burned with fire.** 93 years later and they're still being attacked, so much so that the gates to the city have been burned. So, they're destroyed. There's nothing there to prevent anyone from coming in. So they have to deal with some of these things from period to period.

"They're burned with fire." So, in other words, what is allowed in and out of the city, they didn't have the same kind of control. I think of some of the things we've had to go through on a spiritual plane because it has to do in our case with the truth, of things that have tried to work their way in. There is no ability to keep it back and it works its way in through different ones. We have gone through that over, especially in the beginning, over and over and over again. Doctrinal things, weird things, different ideas that came along primarily to try to destroy the Body. That's what it's about.

So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for days, and was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. So, here he's in this situation desiring to hear, wanting to hear good news, obviously, but it wasn't good at all. After all that time, so long, and these things are still going on.

For me, this is not a mystery when it comes to what we've gone through. Because we've gone through barrage after barrage after barrage, berating, all these things here, reproach on a scale that's incredible of people we've known in the past especially, and within the ministry of those who are scattered out there as well.

So, one thing that came to mind in part of this was some of our history. This is their history, 93 years. How long has it been since the Apostasy? I think of that first 3½ years and the blessing God gave for some to begin to be worked with and to make choices. This was offered to a lot of people. Satan was kept away. Those scriptures in Revelation 12 are awesome when you understand what God did at that moment in time. Satan was not allowed to have any ability to come after His Church at that point in time. Afterward, it was allowed again.

But God was re-establishing His Church, strengthening it, and there would be a remnant that would come out of all of that. It's awesome! Something we're not to forget. Something we're to hold fast. Something we're to fight for, just like they had to fight for. They had to fight over

and over again, of people who wanted to come in and destroy, actually destroy the temple again, to destroy Jerusalem again. They didn't want the Jews around. They wanted them destroyed. If they could do it they were going to try to do it.

So, there's a spirit world out there that works through human beings as well that's tried to do that to God's own Church. Nothing new. I often think of you can't understand minds that are so perverted and distorted, a being who would try to kill and destroy the Son of God. After all he's seen, millions maybe billions of years of things he's witnessed and seen, and to think that somehow he's going to work through human instruments to thwart God's plan, to somehow stop this process of God creating Elohim?

Because that's been his objective. His mind is so perverted that's what he's been trying to do for nearly 6,000 years. He still believes it. If there is any hope at all, that's what he's trying to do. Insane that kind of mind, that kind of thinking. You can't reason with that kind of thing. You can't try to understand it.

That's why I so often marvel at people who try to understand why somebody is so distorted in their thinking that they want to kill people, or they do kill people, and "Well, if we could just understand what was in their background and maybe we could help them and maybe..." That in itself becomes insanity. God tells us what human nature is like. He tells us what our nature is like and it's enough that we look at self and strive to change self and not try to understand others, of why they might do the things they do.

Anyway, I think of a process we went through, battle after battle after battle, and I think of one of the first places we started was in *News Watch*. Little more history. It was established for this very purpose, to address the things that were trying to come in, to keep it out.

That's what the gates were for. The walls had to be fortified too, and this still isn't, hasn't been done. 93 years and those walls are still broken down! They rebuilt the temple; they dedicated the temple. They began to work at, later on, even here, some of the housing and so forth. It wasn't fully established yet because they worked on certain areas first. But in time that began to be a part of it as well, and little towns and so forth around. But Jerusalem, it went through siege after siege after siege, if you will.

So, we're going to take a little bit of time to go back and look at some things that on a spiritual plane are things we've gone through and why. I can't stress this enough. I think of Herbert Armstrong getting up every Feast of Tabernacles that I can remember—maybe it wasn't every one, but I feel that it was—and he'd go back through a history of where this all began, the chaos and confusion that exists in the world. He'd go back to Lucifer. He'd talk about the rebellion there. Then he would focus in on things having to do with Israel and the things they went through with the various kings and the like and their split up, Judah, and all the things that were a part of history that we're to learn lessons from in the Church.

Because this is why he was preaching it. He was showing the problems having to do with government, having to do with not putting God first all the time, not being in unity and harmony, and subjection to government, to God's government. This was very much a message that he continually gave, and at the Feast of Tabernacles looking forward to a time when God's government is finally going to be established on the earth. So, he was very focused on those things.

Again, I think of the very first truth accredited, in that respect, as far as putting them in order or having a list of them. It was about government. Number four. Sardis had three, here is number four. So, this was very important to him. This is history. 6,000 years of this. God wants us to understand what we've done to ourselves, what mankind has done to himself, why we can't govern ourselves, that Israel couldn't govern itself, Judah couldn't govern itself, nobody can govern themselves out here because it has to come from God. That's the only source of true government.

We have to have those things deeply embedded in our minds and be in agreement with that. Absolutely, nothing works. This country doesn't work. Europe doesn't work. Communism in China, whatever, wherever you want to look in the world, nothing works, and nothing has ever worked. It's only caused chaos and confusion and suffering and wars and everything that's evil as far as evil is concerned.

How convicted are we of that? The more convicted you are the more you'll strive to be at one with God, the more you'll know there is the answer and there is no other answer. If we ever see those things in ourselves we've got to conquer them and overcome them. Because my history in God's Church as far as the time I've been in since 1969 I've seen nothing but division. Not that I haven't seen things that are good and things where God's spirit has been relied upon by people, but the other, the other is horrifying because of what it does and what it did in people's lives. Rebellion after rebellion.

Those are the things that cry out in my mind. Different rebellions that took place in the Church. Always having to do with government, always having to do with disagreeing with God's apostle back then. In '72 and '74 and later on in the '70s and then the late '70s and early '80s. Over and over and over again because the Church hadn't learned its lessons about history and how government works.

And if we're not convicted of that in our minds we're going to screw up and we're going to do things we shouldn't do, and we're going to say things we should never say or think things we shouldn't think because we still don't get it, that there's a way that God's government works. Which means, if we really grasp it, there is a way that God's spirit works in our lives.

We are not in a relationship with God that is separate from God's Church, that somehow we can harbor ideas and thoughts, and teaching that's contrary to what God gives through His Church. Because that has to do with how His spirit works in our life, and if we do we begin to cut off His

spirit. That's happened in people's lives over and over and over again. It's caused nothing but turmoil and heartache and evil.

So, that's why we're going through this sermon series. That's why we had this sermon series leading up to the Feast, because of things that were given during the Feast and things that are continuing on now after the Feast. God wants us to get it because it's still going on. Little things happen here and there that sometimes if I had hair I'd want to pull it out. Right now if I did, I'd have to use tweezers, and that's hard.

So anyway, we're still fighting. We're still fighting things that try to come through a gate. Hopefully, I know we are, getting stronger and stronger and stronger, and God has been doing that through PKG. But boy, we've had to do a lot of rebuilding and a lot of building, and a lot of work in the walls, a lot of work on the temple to make it stronger, to be working to make it at one with God because that's something we're each individually involved in.

That's why I marvel at where we're going in some sermons as well, especially after the meeting in November, some more that's going to come along, because it's all going in a certain direction.

So, I think of *News Watch* and why it was established - for the very purpose of trying to build up the walls again, trying to work on the gates of the city, of that which would come in or out. Remember, Jerusalem has a lot to do when it's a matter of prophecy and of things that were taking place back there that are a type, with government. It was, in that respect, where the government came out of to the rest of Judah. It came from Jerusalem. And of course, the temple of God being there in the midst of it all says it all because it has to come from God. If it works right then that's the way it's going to work through the government that administers throughout all of Judah, in this case.

Anyway, going to take a little bit of time to go back through some things in the TRO (is what we called it), *Time is Running Out*¹. The first article here, "The Stones of the Temple." The first scripture that was quoted, and I'm obviously going to change the name and use the right name, Joshua. Back then it was written a little bit differently, obviously. We used the other name that we no longer use.

"[Matthew 24:1-3] Then Joshua went out and departed from the temple, and his disciples came up to show him the buildings of the temple. And Joshua said to them, Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

I look at that now and I think we had to go through a lot to get to that point. It didn't happen immediately. It took a little while before we could even see some of the destruction that had taken place and what God wanted us to focus upon. This didn't happen overnight where we came to understand what we had gone through in an apostasy, when the Church was attacked like it was and so much of it literally had gone into captivity. Went right back into traditional

¹ https://www.cog-pkg.org/publications/booklet/time_is_running_out.pdf

Christianity. Another third that just gave up, and in a sense, if you will, disavowed God at all, that there is any God because they couldn't grasp how such a thing could happen.

Then we had the mess left over, the mess, one-third that was so disorganized, so disoriented, going all the over the place primarily because of human nature and people's lusts for power and people's ideas that now were out in the open.

You know, sometimes trials happen for a purpose, to bring things to the surface so everything that's ugly can be seen. Everything that was ugly in the Church began to be seen because of ministers and their ideas of things that weren't right. 14/15th Passover began to come to the surface.

We saw our battle. We saw what the Church had been battling. We saw what existed during the days of Herbert Armstrong within the ministry. God brought it to light: "These are the ideas that many had had." Just like that 14/15th Passover and the Dr., which shouldn't have had a Dr. in front of his name in the first place, Hoeh, you know, teaching all these ministers at Ambassador College about 14/15th Passover. Sick mind!

And yet students were in awe of him because they were young and easily impressed, and they saw when he was in Sabbath services he would be reading a book when Herbert Armstrong was giving a sermon. This was like, "Isn't this awesome? He is so smart, so intellectual that he can hear God's apostle in a sermon and be reading a book at the same time." I think, no, he was an absolute moron, stupid for doing such a thing, evil for such a thing because he didn't set the right example to others around him at all.

I'm sorry for some of those words. I know, "Shouldn't use that word!" Well...? Anyway, sick, sick, sick, sick. So, a lot of sickness was brought to the surface.

"Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down." I was thrown down. Anyone who came through the Apostasy, we were all thrown down. What an incredible thing to come to where you have to see that. But what a blessing to be able to see it, to acknowledge it. "Yes, we did. And you know what, we're guilty."

That's why I think of that third that left, because it's like, "If this is God's Church, how could God let such a thing happen to His Church?!" So, they lost all hope. It's like, "Well, if we could really take this through step by step in the way it needs to be taken you ought to realize, yes, God is all-powerful and almighty, and He has every power to protect His people, and His Church.

So, what prevents that? Sin. When you sin and when you live through a period of time known as lukewarmness, Laodicea, lethargy, and you begin to think of yourselves as being rich and increased with goods? Like nothing else was coming our way. It sure didn't come through the one who was leading the Church at that time, and God's apostle was gone so nothing more was coming along in the sense of any growth that was taking place, so what happened to us? We got weaker and weaker. Thought we were doing okay until God revealed to us, no, you're not.

Just like with Judah, “No, you’re not doing okay and you’re going into captivity, and this is why. Because you’ve been disobedient, you’ve dishonored Me. You turned away from Me. You’re not following the commandments. You’re not living the way of life you should be living. You’re not on fire. You’re not full of zeal. You’re not watchful and alert. That’s why the walls got torn down. That’s why the city was destroyed. That’s why the temple was torn down. Because you weren’t watchful and alert!”

That’s us. That’s what we experienced at the end of this age with the Apostasy. If we don’t know our history, if we don’t understand why things happened the way they did, you won’t learn the lessons you need to learn and have them deeply engraved in your heart, your mind, and your being that you know these will never happen again. Because your mind is in tune with God, you agree with God. You’re going to fight whatever you have to fight.

“Now as he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?” I look at this and I think, he didn’t tell them, “Well, 2,000 years from now this is what will happen.” Because what would that do to people? You know you’re not going to live to see it so what’s going to happen, what do you do? Well, human beings let down. That’s what happens. Because it’s easy to not be watchful and alert and on guard.

That’s why I love what God has done through Philadelphia with Herbert Armstrong. Always had a sense of urgency. Because if you don’t maintain that, if you don’t have that in God’s Church, you’re going to let down. You’re going to let down, and you can’t let down spiritually. You’re going to be off guard; you’re going to begin to see things in a hazy manner that isn’t really right and true in the sense of strength and power and might that comes from God.

God wanted His people, the Church, to experience that at the end of an age. Why? It’s one of the greatest lessons a human being can ever learn because people were deceiving themselves oftentimes in through that period. They didn’t grasp and comprehend the seriousness of what it means that we have God’s spirit dwelling in us.

If you are a temple for God’s spirit to dwell in, if you are a part of the temple and God’s spirit dwells in you, that’s not a small thing. Yet we can treat it as a small thing and not grasp how important it truly is that the Great God of the universe desires to live in you and through you to the transforming of the mind, to help you to think differently, to grow and to mature so that one day you can be born into His Family.

Sometimes we don’t count that with the richness and the beauty and the awesomeness that it really is. We get caught up in our daily lives and our daily routines and the longer it goes, it’s like since the Apostasy, the longer it goes the more dangerous it can be for some unless you’ve learned the lessons you need to learn. I’m just going to say, not everyone has learned those lessons yet because every year it happens.

Anyway, further down this article, it says, "The physical type of the destruction of the temple can be likened to the kind of destruction that took place in 70 A.D. Some have even thought that this may be about the destruction of a reconstructed temple at the end of this age." Isn't it amazing? Even in God's Church through Philadelphia and in Laodicea we still saw things on a very physical plane because we weren't there yet. God was reserving various things to be revealed later on, candidly, after the Apostasy.

But here we lived through some of these things in the Church where there were ideas and thoughts that the temple has to be reconstructed in order for the abomination of desolation to occur. Most today here in God's Church, especially those called since the Apostasy, these are important lessons that we understand, that are deeply embedded in us to understand what happened and why. But it's too easy to listen to the story and see a story, and maybe be dumbfounded that such a thing could happen, and we need to learn what we need to learn from it and understand what we need to understand. As much as when Herbert Armstrong got up and talked about Lucifer and what he did, and what happened to Judah and Israel and why they became split and why one was taken into captivity and became lost in the sense of no one knowing who they were. Great lessons.

But the last one, the last one is the greatest of all because it's spiritual in every respect. The greatest lesson for God's people to ever learn - you can have God's spirit and not use it as you're supposed to, not treasure it as you're supposed to, not grasp what you need to grasp, and it can go by the wayside. What a horrifying thing to think it's eternal life or this life and our focus is what we accomplish in this life. It only has meaning if God is in it. This physical life only has meaning if God is in it, otherwise, it's just physical life; people live and people die.

That's been our history. And if we don't grasp what God is offering us and how Eternal life can come about? That's why all the lies are out there. Satan wants to deceive mankind into thinking "Oh, everyone is going to have opportunity for eternal life. It might be in that place where it's burning and it's pretty hot, but..." Anyway, sorry. Weird.

Some have even thought this may be about the destruction of a reconstructed temple at the end of an age. We couldn't understand what that meant, the abomination of desolation, so, in order for that to happen surely something has to be re-erected so that—and it even went this far—so that a swine, a pig could be offered up as a sacrifice in order to do the same thing that happened here with Antiochus Epiphanes and how the temple was desecrated in the manner that it was. It's almost like, "This is the way it has to happen again." Not understanding it's about the Church. That wasn't even in a thought.

Then some of us just take it for granted because that's what we've learned. There's more to the story and we better grasp it.

Going on: "The importance of this prophecy is not about a physical temple, but a spiritual one. Joshua the Christ is going to return to a spiritual temple, not a physical one." That's even going to come up later on again in the next booklet.

Can we grasp today, to look at this and we understand it, we know it, of course, he's going to return to a spiritual temple. There's not going to be something built in Jerusalem. To all of us, that just sounds ludicrous. Back then it wasn't ludicrous. Thousands and tens of thousands of people in God's Church believed this, that something had to happen. Smear of ministers and evangelists believed this and carried it with them. They didn't learn from God's apostle before he died, what he said. Because he put that to rest. But many didn't hear him.

"Neither the Jews nor the disciples understood Joshua when he said, 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.' In three days I'll raise it up." Well, we look at that now and we think, it's so simple. They couldn't see these things. And yeah, he did it, and it's about what he did in three days and nights thing as well. So, we can clearly see these things and understand what he was talking about as far as his life was concerned.

Going on further down: "When Joshua said that we should take heed that no one would deceive us, He was not speaking to the world, but to the Church." The reason that is mentioned here is because this is what we thought, that someone in the world, the great false prophet that was going to raise at the end-time.

It's why some of those things are misunderstood in Revelation. Because it was looked upon as being a pope, a "papa," and what he was going to do, and people were going to be deceived by this guy. And you think, how can anyone in God's Church be deceived by those false doctrines?

So, it shows how young we were spiritually at that particular time. We are judged by what we had and that's the way it's always been. Abraham didn't have a whole lot, but he was judged by what he had and how he lived his life, how he thought toward God, how he thought toward others. That's enough to be judged, to be an incredible part of God's temple. God does those things in a spiritual plane of things we can't grasp in the mind.

That's why if we really grasp it, the further we've gone in time, the more God has given, the more we come into unity and oneness with that, we really don't grasp what He's molding in us and how we're going to be able to serve into the future.

Going on: "The world is already deceived. Only those who know the truth can become deceived." Isn't that so simple and so basic? But we couldn't see it back in Philadelphia. Some of you think you did? You didn't.

"We have tended to focus on Matthew 24:5 as primarily being about false ministers in this world. 'For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.'" Doesn't that seem ludicrous to you now? It's like, how could we ever believe that, even before the Apostasy, to believe that something like this would happen, that eventually within the Church itself many false ministers are going to come along and deceive people throughout the Church, people in the world. And here, all along it was about us. Isn't that incredible?

“Many will come in my name.” Who can come in his name? Who has that power and authority? The ministry of God’s Church. It’s not about people in the world. It’s not about false ministers that wear this little white collar and some of the stupid garments that people wear and somehow this makes people holy. Or wear, you know, some draping robe that goes way back in time and still wearing them, and it has to be black. I’m so glad we don’t have anything like that. God separates His people far, far away from those things. But look what Satan did, brings that kind of stuff along and people look up to it and think that they’re something special. No, there’s nothing special there.

“For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.” That’s what happened to us. That’s what the Apostasy was all about. Incredible! Things that now we can look at and say, so simple to see. But you didn’t always know this. When you learned it, at whatever point that was, it was because it already existed in the Church because God had established it in the Church.

But you didn’t know it, and people before—be in awe of that—they didn’t know these things! Sometimes we don’t know how wealthy we really are, how much God has poured out upon us. Sometimes we get tired of hearing it. Pathetic, sad such things can happen. We are so blessed. When we don’t understand how blessed we are how can we thank God and be thankful to Him and praise Him and glorify Him for what we have, for what He’s given to us?

Because this is about the mind and our thinking toward God, knowing how blessed we are and crying out to God with thankfulness, sometimes in tears to know how blessed you really are, that it chokes you up inside to know what you are. If you know what you are as a human being, not a pretty sight.

And to know God has mercy upon us and has given us a Passover where nothing is remembered, given as far as our past when we repent of it and we’re able to go before Him any time of day? Awesome. How blessed are we? We don’t deserve a bit of it. Just thankful we have it. Make the most of it. Be thankful. But you have to know what to be thankful of, don’t you?

“The story in Matthew 24 continues,” so this is farther down in the article, “by saying, ‘**And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold**’ (verse 12, KJV).” Whew. Well, that started happening at different times. A few here and there you’d see in Worldwide in Philadelphia. Not as much because as a whole it was more of a cohesive fraternal type of brotherhood. Love toward one another, a kinship there that was unique to us because of the Church. We knew that. Though we understand now that there is that love which has a whole lot more meaning that we want to embrace and live which comes from God.

So, it says here, “The love of many shall wax cold.” So, that’s what began to happen. The farther we went into Laodicea the worse it got until finally a lot of people were being killed spiritually. I think of one day it’s going to be interesting to know how many, how many were hurt in their mind, in their being to perhaps commit the unpardonable sin because of what

some other minister or someone else foisted upon them in deceiving them. Now, we all have choices to make but what a horrible thing to think that you're guilty of such a thing.

That's why I think of Ezekiel when it talks about the ministry, different ones who are guilty of murder. It's what it's about, the blood of others. See, we think physically. No, we have to see beyond that and understand what it's all about when it comes to God's Church.

Going on: "We began experiencing this during the 1970s, and it continued to increase until it mushroomed in the early to mid-1990s. Because of sinful lives, brethren were being cut off from the flow of God's spirit in their lives." The more that happened within the ministry the worse it became in the Churches because people tended to emulate those kinds of things and the wrong things that they saw.

I remember being in this area and seeing some hideously wrong things being done toward God's people from ministers and how people were treated, and how people were given this idea of how they were supposed to do many different things. It wasn't from God at all.

Going on, this is further down again: "The next verse brings us to the event, that Christ mentioned at the beginning, about how there would not be one stone left upon another in the temple. **'When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso reads, let him understand:)' (verse 15).**" I marvel at this, that we saw this only physically. That somehow something had to happen—at least that's what we were taught—in a physical temple so that this could come to pass. When it came to pass then we would know.

"Now we come to an event that was to take place within the temple itself." So, the question was asked, "Is that temple a physical one or a spiritual one?" Because this is what it all came down to, isn't it? It's about us. There's a lot more about us in the Bible than what we have ever comprehended. That's why I am in awe of what God has been giving us up to the Feast and after the Feast. All the sermons we've gone through is about some of this process, truly is.

Did we hear it all? Were we able to drink in of it all? Are they just stories or do we understand what we're being given about a spiritual temple, about how important even this period of time is to God that's written in scriptures over and over and over again in the Bible? Ezekiel, Isaiah, Daniel, the minor prophets.

I think of how Herbert Armstrong used to talk about how so much of the Bible is prophetic, in that respect, for the end-time. He'd give those percentages and so forth and it's like, this is amazing! How much of that is for this period of time? Most of it, because this is the fulfillment if you will. In other words, I'm trying to think of an analogy. Think of a volcano. Anyway, this is the height of it all, in that respect. This is what it all was to come to, this period of time.

Another section was entitled, "Dead, Revived, Rejected." You know, going back through some of these things I've just been in awe of what God gave us piece by piece by piece to put us together. This is the rebuilding of the temple. This is making it even stronger. This is rebuilding of the walls around the temple and the gates. God has made a very strong Church. We have

more as a body than the Church has ever had. I don't know if we can grasp that and appreciate that to the depth of what's really there, to understand it.

I can't imagine the time the disciples had and the time of the early apostles in the Church and the things they saw and how God was building up the Church, in the beginning, to push forward and establish things that had never been known. Because people hadn't understood that which was spiritual in scripture.

Christ came along and explained so many things even about something basic about the law. It's not a physical thing. Yes, you have to understand that part to grasp the spiritual and to build upon it. How exciting that had to be for them! To know these things, that all of a sudden, they could grasp and comprehend. Then time going on. Then Herbert Armstrong coming along and re-establishing things that had been lost through Thyatira, and especially through Sardis, and then adding more.

God gave him a lot more than what even the disciples had. Well, I don't think we need to go through all that, but it's amazing, truly is awesome what was given. That's why I marvel sometimes when I hear people "We're tired of hearing about the two trees." If you ever get tired of hearing about anything—well, just say it for what it is—God's apostles give we're in bad shape. People were in bad shape back then. People are in bad shape now if that's the case.

Under this "Dead, Revived, Rejected": "The history of the Church, over the past 100 years, might best be reduced to three words: dead, revived, and rejected. Do you believe our history?" And we have the opportunity of seeing it and knowing it. How easy it is to lose some of that and to begin reliving some portions of it? Because this has happened to us over and over again, or to people in the Church.

"Do you believe what God says to His own people? Many today don't or won't!"

Then farther down: "Although there are those who have tried to change the focus of the following verse, it is one we need to understand ever so well. **'And I say unto thee, That you are Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my Church; and the gates of hell (grave) shall not prevail against it'** (Matthew 16:18, KJV)."

So, even here what an incredible thing that God gave us to understand through his apostle at that time, that this wasn't about Peter, that God was building His Church upon him as one, that great church has believed, and they have this statue there in the Vatican and you can go by and look at its toe. It's a huge statue, rock. I'm not sure what kind. Maybe it's marble? I don't know what it is but it kind of looks like it to me.

But we had the opportunity of just seeing it. I had the he-bee gee-bees walking through the whole place. But anyway, I don't know how to describe that. It's like this is eerie; get me out of here. But anyway, went through it one time. That's all you need. But I went by that statue and here's that big toe. It's a big toe because it's a big statue, and it's dented in because of so

many people kissing it over time, kissing the rock toe of what they say is Peter. It wasn't Peter. But anyway, that's another story I don't want to get into.

But can you imagine a rock and it's getting kissed so many times by so many people? They weren't worried about Covid. But that's still in my mind, and you see that little curvature in there and it's like, this is nuts. And it was!

He was talking about, understanding the difference in the words used here, Peter, basically, a "small stone," and upon the Rock, this Rock, speaking of himself, speaking of God and himself. Because God is referred to as the Rock in the Old Testament. He's referred to as the King of Kings. He's referred to as the Lord of Lords. We didn't even understand that back in Worldwide. We saw Christ having those names being given to him, but first they belong to God Almighty, and He's given all things to His Son, including those names to carry for himself, for what he is to do.

"...and the gates of the grave shall not prevail against it. Joshua the Christ was telling Peter about the Church that he was going to build. It was a Church that would not die out but would continue until he returned to receive his Kingdom on this earth." That's an encouraging thing. So, that's why some when it came down to the Apostasy lost hope, because "if this is God's Church how could this happen to God's Church? What do we have now?" Understanding, no, God's Church is going to continue on. Where is it? Might take a little while before you find it. Took us a while to find what God was doing.

That was a horrible time. The mind was wrung at times, wrung out. The heart was wrung out at times. Things you go through spiritually on a spirit plane of the mind when you go through something so horrifying that's happened to so many people, and the pain and the suffering you see as a result of it and wanting to fight for, to get something back of what God had given to us, how we were called out, and trying to get back to that, to the trunk of the tree, was not a simple matter. It was a horrible thing. We're to learn from that. It was meant to be horrible, excruciatingly painful.

So, we went through things of God re-establishing His Church, went through battles of all kinds over and over and over again. Be thankful you haven't had to live through that, most of you. The majority of you haven't had to live through something like that. Because if you do, if you had to, the majority wouldn't come through it. That's the way it was. The majority of it couldn't come through it. It was too devastating, too powerful.

We're very weak as human beings, and in God's Church you can't rely on self, you have to rely on God Almighty and Him leading you and guiding you and directing you and showing you what to do, how to do it, where to go. That doesn't mean you get your answer immediately all the time. Sometimes it takes a long time to get an answer. Sometimes a very long time.

Sometimes you'll never get an answer in this age. That's the way it is. Does that change your thoughts about God and your love of God and the truth? On the contrary. You keep fighting for what He's given to you. Lessons to be learned.

That's why we have to go through sometimes one thing after another, one battle after another. But you have to keep fighting and knowing in time God will lead you to what you need to see.

I think of different things different ones had to go through. "What are we going to do?" What do you do when you have an apostasy? What do you do when there is no government anymore? Well, there's one over here that left, well, two of them that left fairly early on. One left a few years before. They say they're Philadelphia. Okay. Knew too much about his past, or enough, anyway, let's put it that way. Knew that wasn't an answer. That isn't where God is working.

Then another one popped up fairly quickly early on and same sort of thing. It's like if it's so obvious why isn't everybody going to one spot? Because it wasn't obvious. There were things that were wrong out there. I don't want to go through some of those things. But I think of the struggle and how long it took before God finally showed us what He was doing. You keep fighting. You keep moving forward and He'll show you.

That's why I think about what we're going to go into in this November meeting. If I die, my wife and I both die, is that going to shake the Church? It's going to shake some if that were to happen, I can just tell you that. That's the way it would be because you're human beings. What do you do? You better know.

Because there might be a period of time in there that you don't know about yet where God's going to allow certain things to take place for a purpose and for a reason. But He's God and you're part of the Church, and He'll show you. You might not get your answer right away. You might have to struggle for a time. What do you do?

Well, that's part of what we're going through in November, whenever it comes along, December. You keep moving forward. You hold on to with all of your might what you have, and you know you're God's people and you know that God has not abandoned you and God will lead and guide and direct you. It's God's Church! It's God's Church. It belongs to God and His Son, Joshua, and you keep doing what you've been given to that point in time.

That's what you do. You keep living it. Then in time, God's time, He'll show more.

That's what we had to do after the Apostasy.

Another section of scripture given by Paul, so I'll just read part of the article here: "God's truth is not discovered by personal intellect and scholastic insight."² Boy, that's a big lesson we had to learn in God's Church. There are not a few, but so many people in the Church, this is why so many began to move away from the trunk of the tree because of this idea that somehow we can study our Bibles and prove all things. Now, that was taken in a wrong way. It wasn't a matter of

² *What Am I To Hold Fast?*

studying to prove God's word, it was a matter of proving to yourself, "Well, I can learn this, and I can study this, and I can prove what is right and wrong. I can prove these things because I'm pretty good in the Strong's Concordance and I can go through these words and look them up."

People were encouraged to do that, to a point. Anyway, that mindset began to come into the Church where there were so many ideas floating around out there that weren't in unity and harmony with what God had given and surely didn't agree with what God had given through His apostle Herbert Armstrong. That's what happened through Laodicea. People became rich and increased with goods and thought they had the answers to many things, many ideas about many doctrines.

One of the greatest battles... well, it wasn't the greatest, it was right up there with a whole bunch of others, but after we were reorganized after the Apostasy, and so many people wanted to get up and preach. So many of the men had so much to say that they wanted to give to the Church. They wanted their moment to get up and give their sermonettes or to give their sermon or their split sermon. I could tell you some interesting stories about all that but I'm not going to.

It's like people came out of the woodwork because they believed they had so much to give that God was giving to them that they could study, and they had studied certain things and others in the Church needed to see it as well. It's like, "Why aren't you recognizing me?" (I'm sorry.) It's about God's spirit. It's how God's spirit works.

This here, we had to go through some horrible things to help people to start to see that "God's truth is not discovered by personal intellect." How could we not understand that? You know what, a lot of this had to do with the fact that people lost sight of the fact that God does the calling. God puts it in your mind. It'll be through something you hear, perhaps on the radio, perhaps in a magazine, perhaps in some other literature, whatever it is, maybe a sermon. Of course, back then we didn't have it like we do today. But anyway, same sort of thing would be existing today.

But it's like, how do we learn it? God puts it into our mind. That's something we can never forget. That's why I repeat it so often. You can't come to truth, nor can you even hold on to truth without God's spirit in your life, in your mind. See, and thousands of people go by the wayside because they lost that. When you lose God's spirit you can't hold on to it anymore. You can't navigate through what is true and what is false. It's impossible because you're a human being. God has to give it to us. That's why our reliance has to be on God. That's why you have to cry out to God in prayer for help to hold on to what you have.

I'm saying these things knowing that it's not being received fully. That's just a reality. We're in different levels depending on where we are, and yet it's something you should want with all of your being, to always know, to always understand whatever is true has to come from God and He has to give it to you in your mind. You can only hold on to it or even receive it Sabbath by

Sabbath. It's the primary reason we're to pray in the manner that we do Sabbath by Sabbath, "Help me to hear what You have for us, because it's spiritual, it comes from You." It's of the spirit. Not just stories. We're not going through the Old Testament just to see stories. We're to learn from it.

"No amount of human research can piece together the plan of God that is revealed through His spirit. Do we truly believe God's own word about how He reveals truth to us, or do we actually believe in something else? Our recent history reveals that the overwhelming majority of brethren have come to believe in something different." That's what we experienced.

"Let's be reminded of how this supernatural revelation of truth is able to come into our minds and become a part of our understanding. The apostle Paul made it clear that what he preached was not a matter of his own human intellect or reasoning. [1 Corinthians 2:4] **'And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom...'**" I've heard a lot of sermonettes and sermons in times past that were only a matter of human so-called wisdom. True wisdom we understand is that which comes from God, not when people rely upon their own wisdom and their own ability to see and understand various things, what they have read in a commentary.

We were taught in some of the last few refreshing programs for the ministry, in California during Laodicea, that we should use things like commentaries and study the way that other ministers in the world organize and prepare their sermons. There's a word for that, and I'm glad I don't remember it fully. Something like hermeneutics. Anyway, and you think, and ministers are going to do that?

He says, **"'And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power.'"** Something in the past. We used to have Spokesman's Club where people would get up and give speeches. Some would get up and give sermonettes. I never, never, never looked at how well, how polished an individual was in their speaking. Always looked at is there God's spirit in it and is it evident? Are there lessons here that are spiritual in nature? That's how it should be judged. If we don't see and hear on a spiritual plane then what is being said has no value. We had a lot of that in times past.

That's why I was excited about this year's Feast. I'd already heard the sermon, the first one... well, the first one everybody heard, and the uniqueness of that, because it was of God's spirit. That was something that was obvious and evident. It wouldn't have mattered how polished or how good an individual is.

Like Garner Ted Armstrong, he was naturally a good speaker. But God's spirit was missing there. He could talk about things of evolution and give some really interesting things. I think of one booklet. *The Tale of a Whale*. Anyway, there were different old booklets out there, and he gave a telecast on those things and he just had charisma about him, he just didn't have God's spirit. Where is the spirit? What is to be learned from this? Is it just a matter of whether people believe in evolution or not?

So, when you know it's of God's spirit it's because of God's spirit working in your mind that you're learning things of a spiritual plane, in that sense that you are moved by things spiritually. I hope that makes sense. That's what we should have. When we hear God's word, we should be moved by what He's giving us on a spiritual plane because that inspires us, meaning His spirit is there moving us in our thinking, in gratitude and appreciation, excitement for what He gives and knowing why we're so blessed to have what we have. Awesome!

Paul said this with boldness, **“My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power.”** In other words, it comes from God. Those who are being called, they're going to see it. That's what's exciting. Those who are being drawn by it, they're going to hear it and they're going to be drawn to it. They have choices to make along the way, but they can hear it. What a blessing to be able to hear spiritually.

“That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men...” What a horrible thing. Because there are many in God's Church who tried to do that, that it's a matter of their knowledge and what they thought their understanding was when they preached. They preached a lot of bad things in some cases, like some that I knew here.

I'll just say it - one that was so oppressive that I served under that I had to fast extensively in order to go through it and pray to God for deliverance. Truly! Knowing it was so wrong, knowing it was so hard to be under that, and back then you had to handle that in a unique way. God had mercy upon me and upon my wife and on our family, and eventually, we were moved along into something worse. That's how we got prepared for the Apostasy. Pshew, the things we go through.

“So that your faith,” what we have, what we stand on, what we believe, what we based everything on. In other words, what we're able to believe that God gives us the ability to believe, **“should not be in the wisdom of men,”** because that's impossible, **“but in the power of God.”** Beautiful verses in through here and it really shows how God works in our lives.

“Paul is making it clear, to those who hear him, that the ministry must depend upon the power of God to work in them to preach His word.”

I remember an individual in the Toledo area was given the opportunity to give a split sermon. This was just before we broke up in Toledo, almost to the end of that. I already knew he had a battle of being intellectual in his own thinking because of his job and other things, thinking that he was doing pretty good. That was his battle.

After he gave a split sermon I knew that he'd had help. I went up to him and I said, “Don't ever forget how you were able to give this, that it came from God and not from you.” It wasn't long and he was gone with a whole bunch of others. Sad. Because that kind of thing, it happened over and over and over again in God's Church.

Going on: "A minister cannot rely upon his own human reasoning and skill to preach to others, but sadly many do. **Verse 7. 'But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery,'**" sometimes it's confusing to people. It's just because others can't understand it. In other words, what God gives to His ministers, talking about even Paul here in this case, and whatever he preached, no one could understand him except those whom God was drawing. That's the point. Because it's in a mystery.

Others around can hear some of these things - that's why some people pick up on various physical things - but they can't hear what's really being said by God because it's a matter of His holy spirit. That's what Paul is talking about here. "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery." It's not a mystery to us because of God's spirit. We see it.

"...even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." If we could just grasp this verse what an awesome thing, more deeply than what we do. Or the more deeply you can grasp it the more awesome it becomes, because what it's telling us here, in other words, to grasp that it's to our glory. God is the one who glorifies us because of His truth. We live in that state.

Sometimes we don't grasp how blessed we are and what it means God dwells in us. That should be almost overwhelming in the sense of understanding how blessed we are. God Almighty, the creator of all things, dwells in us. He wants to. He wants to mold and fashion us. He wants to work with us. He loves us. He's prepared some things for us that we can't even begin to grasp and comprehend. Whether it be in the 144,000 or those who live on into a new age you can't begin to imagine the glory that awaits.

That's why you can never take it to yourself. You share in. God wants to share. That's what life is about, it's about sharing. That's what fellowship is about, it's about sharing of life. We have something that's in common that we're able to share with one another that others in the world can't share with us because they don't see it. This is the height of relationships and it'll be that much greater in God's Kingdom.

Anyway, going on: "That mystery is the hidden truth which contains the plan of God and the gospel of the Kingdom of God, which God alone can reveal." ...and of course, Joshua.

"Today some ministers are boldly and defiantly teaching against the need to hold fast to the eighteen truths revealed through Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong." What an incredible thing we had to go through that. Seems almost unimaginable. But even after the Apostasy and those who were scattered that came through it in the sense of trying to get reorganized and hold on to the Sabbath and the Holy Days and get some kind of function going again, except too many wanted to be in charge and wanted to have their own organization here, and somebody else wanted to have an organization over there because they couldn't agree with each other about government in the first place because there was no government there. (I'm sorry.)

So, we had to address this. "Today some ministers are boldly and defiantly teaching against the need to hold fast to the eighteen truths revealed through Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong." This is our life! That's why, how do I put this? Well, that's why I loved it in the Feast when I heard in the sermon going back in the history of some of the things we've gone through, things that were written at different times, things that were written from a camp over there that some call "prison," which I try to just refer to as "camp." Things that happened, other things we have, the truths we have.

Incredible, how blessed we've been. All the things that God has given to us. The beginning of all those truths having to do with coming out of the Apostasy, re-establishing things, building upon things that had never been established before, had never been there before in the sense of grasping one of the most incredible times of all human history. We lived through it.

So, for some ministers to come along and talk about how "he was a good teacher, and I learned many things from him," you know it makes my blood boil. If blood boils, that's what makes my blood boil. It makes me want to slap somebody. Namely, them if they were around. Knock some sense into them because I love them. Loved them for the things that they did do right at a time but abandoned and want to see that come back someday if it's possible. For some, it won't be possible. Some have made decisions that they screwed up their minds like Lucifer did.

"Instead, the idea of holding fast to such things is minimized, criticized, ridiculed, discredited, and disparaged. Efforts to debunk or detract from the genuine importance of these truths, as being restored to the Church during Philadelphia, are hideous acts of false witnessing." What could be worse than to be a false witness? Because that's really what antichrist is about, false witness. Because what should come out of our life, what should come out of our mouth is agreement, unity, and oneness.

One thing that really hurts my ears is when I hear division, when I hear something said that's not in unity with the Church. My blood may boil a little bit then too. I think, of all times, where we are now, how can this be? But then I'm always reminded every year it's going to be that way no matter how long time goes on.

So, let's go back to the beginning of what was recorded in Nehemiah. **Nehemiah 1:1—The words of Nehemiah, the son of Hachaliah. Then it came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, that Hanani, one of my brethren came, he and the men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped and left over from the captivity and concerning Jerusalem. So, they said to me, The remnant...**

You can read this as a remnant if you want in the sense of something physical that happened then, but it's there for a reason for us.

The remnant that are left over. How much is left over? It's pretty sad. It's enough to have the kind of reaction that Nehemiah had when he heard what he heard. "You mean this is the state of everything?" That's what his reaction was. When I think about some of those things, this is what crosses my mind because I think of, I see faces right now of so many people who came

along in the very beginning. We have hundreds of people that have come along and gone. Different things that got different ones all along the way.

It's enough to tear you up inside, but they're responsible for their own choices and their own decisions, as we all are. We're to learn from that. But it still doesn't mean it doesn't hurt. It does hurt.

So, they said to me, The remnant that are left over of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken through, and the gates are burned with fire. That's why I went through *Time is Running Out* and went through a few things, because these are the things that we had to address in the very beginning very early on because the walls were torn down, there were gaps in the wall, the temple had been nearly destroyed, and on and on it goes. We're blessed to be a part of rebuilding.

So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept. I still have occasions of times of thinking about some of those things. It cuts deep. ...**and mourned for days, and was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.**

Nehemiah 2:1—Now, it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him. And I took up the wine and gave it unto the king. Now, again, he was the cupbearer, trusted. Had to be pretty trusted to do that job. In other words, just to be around him.

Now I had never been sad, the word having to do with "distressed or troubled," **in his presence. Therefore, the king said to me, Why is your countenance sad? Troubled?** In other words, one that shows distress. ...**seeing that you're not sick?** Now, a lot of times reading through something like this you miss, you could easily miss what's being asked here.

He trusted him, yes, but now he sees a countenance that causes questions, "Why are you acting like this? Are you doing something? Are you trying to pull off something on me?" They had to be on guard in their thinking like that. That's why they had these people around them like they did. This is what he's going through.

This is nothing, it says, "**but sorrow,**" but that's not the word. The word is "evil." **This is nothing but evil,** "badness," another word that's used in the Hebrew, **of heart.** Whew. "If your countenance isn't good around me, what's going on?" To him as a king in the environment he is used to this is not a good thing. "This is what it's reflecting to me."

Then I was very much afraid, so I said to the king, Let the king live forever! "Yeah, I'm not trying to kill you. I'm not pulling anything off here."

Then it goes on to say here, "**Why should not my countenance be sad?**" Not even in scripture in that regard, how it's translated. He's saying here, **My face appears grieved for the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchers is desolate, and the gates of it are devoured with fire.** So, that's what he's responding to him saying.

Then the king said to me, What would you like to request of me? So I prayed to the God of heaven. Isn't that interesting? You can pray to God at any moment in time. It's not in words, it's in the mind. He prayed to God right there asking for help. He was crying out in the mind to God for help. He didn't go off and leave the king. The king was right here, and the king wants an answer, so he prayed to God. Smart. You don't know what an answer should be? What's our response? Something is important, meaningful, ask God for help. That should be just automatic with us. It was with Nehemiah. Good to learn from.

Then I said to the king, If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you would send me to Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchers, that I may build it, or, work at the building of it. Then the king said unto me (as the queen was sitting also by him), How long will your journey take? And when will you return? So, it wasn't just to go back. So, "Okay, you want to go back. And when do you plan on coming back?"

So it pleased the king to send me, and I set him a time. In other words, that he return.

Moreover, I said unto the king, If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me to the governors beyond the river, that they may accompany me through until I come to Judah. Now, this is something they constantly did because he knew that the governors beyond the river, they didn't like the Jews. They didn't want them there, those who were governors in that area under the Persian kings any more than they were under the Babylonian kings. They, basically, hated the Jews. Nothing changes much through time.

So, he said, **give me letters,** and so forth, **that I might take them,** in other words, to show that yes, they're to not only escort me but he has the right by the king to be doing this.

...and also a letter for Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he should give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which pertain to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I will enter into. In other words, also authority here to have plenty of timber to do all this with in the rebuilding.

So, the king granted me according to the good hand of my God upon me. In other words, he recognized that he'd received favor from God. He prayed to God, he asked God for the right things to say, and this is the result of it.

Verse 9—Then I came to the governors beyond the river and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me. Awesome! Not other people of Judah, but he sent, basically, soldiers, whatever, with him. **And when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite heard it, it grieved them exceedingly that a man had come to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.** They weren't happy that someone else is coming down now, and more coming from authority... Anyway.

So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. Then I rose up in the night, I and a few men with me; and I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do in Jerusalem. Amazing how you find these kinds of things over and over again in scripture that the prophets

went through, and in the mind, in the heart, he knew. It wasn't something in words that were spoken, nothing out of a fiery bush. Here he knew this was from God.

There was no animal with me, except the one that I rode upon. And so, I went out by night, by the Gate of the Valley, even before the Dragon Wall, and to the Refuse Gate, and viewed, or in other words, inspected **the walls of Jerusalem.** He didn't do this right away right in front of everyone. He did it for a purpose. He wasn't telling everyone what he was doing there or why he was there in the very beginning.

...which were broken down, and the gates thereof that were consumed with fire. Then I went on to the Gate of the Fountain, to the King's Pool, and there was no room for the animal under me to pass through. In the night I went up by the brook and viewed the wall (inspected it) and then turned back and entered in by the Gate of the Valley as I returned. So, the rulers did not know where I went and what I did; and neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor the nobles, nor the rulers, nor the rest who did the work.

Then I said to them, You see the distress that we are in... This gave him greater boldness to say what he needed to say when he saw all this and saw the shape of everything. It was what he needed. He was moved by God to do what he did. God knew what he needed in order to do what he was going to do now.

You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem is waste, and the gates of it are burned with fire. I read that. If you went through the Apostasy you couldn't look around without seeing waste and desolation and destruction. This moved him on a physical plane because of something that was physically destroyed around him and in disarray to the degree it was. The temple would have been rebuilt, but again, all this other stuff that was still a mess.

To understand that on a spiritual plane, to go through something like that, to see people, not just buildings. That's why sometimes (I hate to take up the extra time here but I'm going to), I think of how very early on the group that we became affiliated with, it was called "An International Association." Anyway, right at the very beginning basically had 14 million dollars to spend. Didn't know how to do it, what to do. Another long story, they misused it. Went against everything that they had written in their bylaws.

Anyway, they wanted, there were those who wanted to buy Big Sandy. Why? Because they had these feelings toward Big Sandy. It's like, we need to buy it, maybe use that for a headquarters or something. It had an attachment to many who had gone there. This is the last of something we can maybe purchase and have, because others out there, they have ruined it in the Apostasy and so forth. So, maybe if we just had Big Sandy.

It's like, you're going to spend everything in order to have a piece of land. God's not there. What's there? It's a piece of ground. It's a piece of land. There are some buildings there. What are you going to do with it?

Hope you understand what I'm saying. It's the people. It's not a piece of property that's important, it's what's given and how you give and give more.

Then I said to them, You see the distress we are in, how Jerusalem is waste, and the gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem and put an end to the reproach. So, not that people aren't going to keep attacking, but it's basically said in a vein of that they not have room to do it anymore when they see what God has done. That's what this is all about.

Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me, as also the king's words that he had spoken to me. Then they said, Let us rise up and build, and were strengthened to put their hands toward this good work.

You read it as a nice physical story, but we've been living it for quite a long time now.