

Okay, we're starting a new series today. This is a little different than most because we're going to go through the section that we're going to be putting on the website again that's been off for several years now, called the *Topics* section. It's going to be called something like *Teachings and Topics*. Basically, it's the teachings of the Church that are broken down. Not everything but things that people have an interest in as far as new ones who come along and start reading. They can go there and see basically the beliefs of the Church in a nutshell.

And we've taken off all the sermons that used to be posted there because they were quite out of date in many cases. And as far as the world is concerned, when they first have an interest and start looking at something like a topic, they're really not interested in going in and searching in sermons and so forth. So, in order to bring that up to date basically just put in things that were in the new book or so forth or other literature that we have that they can easily check out.

So, anyway, we're going to start the process of going through this. This is the first portion. I'm about two-thirds of the way through as far as starting the editing process. It's gone to Jeremy, Audra just sent it back to me, and now it's going to be going to Sarah (in case she didn't know it).

So, we're going to start with the first one. Just alphabetical order because the Church really needs to know exactly what we believe in all these areas. I don't know how often or if individuals go through this from time to time, but since it hasn't been on the site for so long I have updated some things, changed some things, streamlined some things, and so I thought it'd be really a good thing for everyone to be on the same page – unity and oneness.

The first one is entitled "*Abomination of Desolation.*" Just goes through alphabetical order. This one here is an amazing one to me in the sense of understanding what this is, that we in the Church grasp this, we've lived through it, and yet even looking at it objectively in a physical way, if someone would just do that as a whole, this is not that difficult to grasp and understand.

If you look at different religions and what God said was going to happen at the end here there's never been anything like this ever happened in any religion, in that respect, as far as what has taken place, what we've experienced where someone came along and flip-flopped every major belief of an organization. So, it states here:

Abomination of Desolation: The “abomination of desolation standing in the Holy Place” is an event prophesied by Daniel and referenced in the New Testament in Matthew 24:14-16.

Thought it'd be good if we just go back there and read some of this, backing up a ways to verse 1, actually, in chapter 24 because of the context and understanding what it's talking about. **Matthew 24:1**

—Then Joshua went out and departed from the temple, and his disciples came up to show him the buildings of the temple. Now, this is right toward the end now before he is put to death, and they have this discussion then as they are around the temple.

So, Joshua said to them, You see all these things. Do you not... yes... Yet I say to you, Not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down. And I think of the process we went through as God began to show us what we had experienced, that we had experienced an apostasy, that the man of sin and all those things were a part of this, and this being a part of it.

The stones of the temple. We are the stones of the temple in that respect as far as especially the 144,000, but as well those going into the future and that will go on into the Millennium. And in this respect, because it happened almost thirty years ago now – in December it'll be thirty years. It's almost hard to believe that it's been that long since the Apostasy took place. And yet, this is something that took place at that time where the stones of the temple at that time being people in the Church, those who were baptized, that...

We know the story. Everything was not bound in that respect as far as what this is describing here in what Christ was describing and obviously, all the other references about this particular time as well that are in scripture concerning that which is in the era of Laodicea, what would happen to Laodicea. And these are things we had to face up to. We had to come to a point where we recognized we had fallen asleep, that we were not just lethargic in that respect, lukewarm.

God made it very clear lukewarm is not acceptable. You can't become a part of God's Family being lukewarm in this life seeking to conquer and overcome self. We have to be on guard. We have to fight. And it's a continual fight from the time we're called until it's over with as far as this physical life is concerned.

And so, we got hit by a lot of things all at once, but God went from one point to another. I think of the ten virgins, all the things that God began to reveal to us that were about this specific time period.

And he says, "Yet I say to you, not one stone shall be left upon another that should not be thrown down." And so, when God vomited us out of His mouth it all happened at that same time. It was the same thing, the same event. And to understand what happened to all of us, to understand the process of God beginning to draw some back and beginning to help us to grasp and understand what we'd gone through.

Now, as he sat on the Mount of Olives the disciples came to him privately saying, Tell us, when will these things be? So, they wanted to know, when is this going to take place. They didn't understand it spiritually. They didn't have God's spirit in that sense. It was drawing them, it was working with them, with the disciples during that time they were with Christ, but they didn't grasp the things he was saying as a whole. They only saw bits and pieces here and there. Primarily the belief that he was the Messiah.

That was very strong in them. God gave them that because no one can grasp and know those things in truth and in spirit unless God gives it.

So, He was drawing them, working with them until the time of Pentecost when His spirit would be poured out upon them and they would have that impregnation in the mind to be born, in that respect, begotten, if you will (better term) into Elohim, begotten sons of God, children of God.

And so, they wanted to know, “When is this event going to take place?” And undoubtedly in their mind, all they could grasp was the temple. And sadly, in many respects, because it hadn’t been given yet for two thousand years, it’s been very much about the physical temple.

There have been groups and different ones talking about what some of the world talks about, that things are going to have to be rebuilt, at least, as one group said very early on, there’s going to have to be an altar placed there in order for the abomination of desolation to take place. Well, what was that all about?

Well, because the history, the knowledge we had up to that point in time was that what Antiochus Epiphanies had done when he offered swine upon the altar of the temple. And they could only see these things in a physical way then, that it’s going to be desecrated and this is going to happen again. And so, in order for something to happen like that, there has to be at least an altar there. And there have always been these stories about different boulders being cut out in advance or they’re preparing to start reconstruction of a temple.

And you think, if they try to bring one stone in there there is going to be a giant war, you know, Muslim world and so forth. And just not realistic.

It’s about the Church. I marvel too that in the early 80’s Herbert Amrstrong started hitting – I think it was around ‘82 (I may not be correct on the date) but started hitting the fact that the Church is the temple. And it wasn’t long into Laodicea that wasn’t being taught anymore and it was lost again. And so, the concept of things happening in the end went back to some of the physical things totally. It wasn’t about the Church.

What an awesome thing to understand that as we got weaker, got more lukewarm, falling asleep, so many things were gone. The eras weren’t being taught in the Church anymore. A lot of things just weren’t being focused upon. And that’s why it is so important that we review things from time to time. God has us go into the Holy Days every year, every Holy Day because He wants it deeply embedded in our minds, to have that focus and that vision of what His plan is all about. And there are so many other things as well that we have to have that vision of, the understanding of. And we’re reminded of them regularly as God inspires them.

Just as we went through tithing. We don't go through it all the time, but every once in a while, like we just went through tithes and offerings, there are things we have to look at and then hopefully grow in understanding, greater understanding of any subject that God gives to us. A continual building process.

And so again, **As he sat on the Mount of Olives the disciples came to him privately saying, Tell us, when shall these things be and what will be the sign of your coming?** So, they understood enough as far as physical knowledge was concerned to this point in time of things that Christ had been telling them, that this is all connected – the destruction of the temple, the things that are going to take place were tied into his return, to his coming.

Now, again, they didn't understand much about this because they didn't grasp he's getting ready to die. They didn't understand that until it happened. And then as time went along there Christ was with them for forty days and they had to stay there a little bit longer and then all of a sudden they could see it all because of God's spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Awesome!

So **...when will these things be and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?** Now, we read this, and we don't grasp that, again, they didn't understand that we were going to have six thousand years for mankind. They didn't comprehend. Nothing like that was given to them yet. It wasn't given to the early Church to understand all those things. It was given to Herbert Armstrong to understand those things more clearly, "We are in the end-time. Mankind is about at the end of six thousand years. That's what was allotted to mankind to rule and govern himself." The disciples didn't understand this at all.

So, "What will be the end of the age?" Because Christ had talked to them about different things, but they could only see it on a physical plane. They didn't understand what was going to happen. Neither did we – not clearly, not fully by any measure. We had sermons about Christ's coming. We had sermons about the abomination of desolation. We had sermons about things at the end-time, an apostasy. We knew the meaning was in 2 Thessalonians 2. "There's going to be a great falling away!" We didn't even come close to grasping what that was. Far, far greater than anything we ever imagined.

So that's, it says, "What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?" So, they tied it together. It was there in the sense of what was to be recorded in scripture even more so for this time, for the end-time, that these things are fully tied together.

Then Joshua answered and said to them, Take heed that no one deceives you. Well, doesn't matter what period of time you lived in, whether it was Ephesus in the very beginning, that era, or all the way through, something that people have to always be on guard against, making sure that you're on guard, that you grasp and comprehend the things that are being given, and on and on.

Take heed that no one deceives you. So, it gets more specific as he says, **For many will come in my name...** Now, we didn't even understand that clearly in the Church when the Apostasy occurred, or even

before it occurred. Who can come in his name? Only the ministry. To serve, to do whatever is given. That's what it's about, "For many will come in my name," in essence that it's their job as a ministry to teach, to guide, to direct, to lead, to work with the Church, or whatever.

...saying, I am Christ. They're going to say that Joshua – in this case here before that was given to us, that Jesus, that the things we have been given to understand in the Church whether it was toward the end of Sardis or other things that Herbert Armstrong was given there over the years to understand and comprehend, the truth. And so again, as long as ministers remained faithful, serving in Christ's name...

I've known of times past when people would sign their letters "in Christ's name," or various other things of that nature. No one can do that unless they have an ordination, that they are sent in Christ's name. And so, in times past there are some we've warned and told it's not a good thing to do that, it's not a smart thing to do that in that respect because if you're not ordained you're usurping something to yourself as a teacher or whatever it might be that God hasn't given. Hope that makes sense.

And so, **For many shall come in my name saying, I am the Christ,** in other words, pointing to various things about Christ and the like, **and will deceive many.** So, you think of all the knowledge we had throughout the period of Laodicea. And as time went along ministers and the Church, we all became weaker and weaker. But there is that which took place here where different ones began to go off on different tangents. They had a lot of knowledge.

That's why I think of... I don't care which one you picked, the Church eras as an example, people quit teaching about it. I didn't teach about it as a whole. Got to the point where I wasn't going through that and giving that in sermons. And yet very much alive, very much a part. There are things we didn't comprehend and so forth – thinking that Laodicea and Philadelphia would co-exist – and we had to go through various things to come to a point in time realizing, no, they don't co-exist.

Anyway, we've had to go through a lot for God to reveal to us a lot. There are things you can learn by experience that you can't have just as a matter of knowledge. There are things we've gone through as far as the Apostasy is concerned because of the experience that we grasp and comprehend in a much deeper way because it's the experience of it. It's not just a matter of knowledge. We start out with knowledge, but we have to build upon that, and we grow then in understanding of God's way of life or God's word.

And because of what we went through in the Apostasy we understand things in scripture now in a way that (just like this here) that the Church never did in nearly two thousand years. It was never given. Even though certain parts of this were given to Herbert Armstrong it wasn't all there until we went through the experience of it. And then God used that to help teach us more and to give us greater understanding then of the purpose of it all and why it had to be this way.

So, they're going to deceive many. That's a lot of power. That happened early on, started happening very early on as far as Philadelphia was concerned. Started happening at a period of time... I think of some of the first things that ministers especially had a great effect on certain Church areas. When he wrote one of his first books about having to do with the incredible human potential, and there are people who could only see it (ministers), who could only see it on a physical plane saying that he was beginning to teach the immortality of the soul because they didn't get what he was saying. They didn't understand about the spirit impregnation of the mind.

What an awesome thing God gave to us through Herbert Armstrong at that time, that there is a spirit essence that God has given in the mind for all human beings that gives us the ability to think and to reason. That's by revelation. It's not by science fully even though he incorporated some things that some scientists were saying. But still, how can you prove such a thing? You can't. It's a matter of faith. It's a matter that God's apostles was given this, explained it to the Church, and it's like, "Oh, right. We all have a spirit essence in us that makes us different from the animal kingdom where theirs is all done by instinct."

Can they learn certain things? Yeah. I watch squirrels once in a while outside trying to figure out how to get to the food. And sometimes it's a marvel. They'll try certain things and sometimes they'll figure it out until I figured out a way that they're never going to jump that far ever again. So, you keep moving it until, "Ah, that's the location!" But they try different things and they remember certain things didn't work.

I shouldn't tell this one story, but I will. They were jumping out of this one little tree. I mean, I thought I had it all figured. Here they were jumping out of a huge tree down to it, but they could jump across pretty good too. So, I had it over on one side. We have these cylinders that have cayenne pepper in it, that it doesn't affect birds. They eat it and it doesn't hurt them. But squirrels or deer, if they get a hold of it? It doesn't take very long.

We had a squirrel that got on top of the one bird feeder, jumped over there and was eating on that. It jumped right back over on the one little house we had where the seed was and it was wiping its face back and forth on top of the feeder because it got that stuff in there and it was like, it was hot. So, if you've ever had cayenne pepper you know how hot that can be. Then he jumped back over on the thing and started eating again. Little slow. This time he jumped down to the ground and he was going through the dirt that way. He was running his mouth all the way through the dirt, and he didn't come back.

So, yes, people have argued about things. They think, "Well, animals can learn. You can teach animals." Yeah, but only to a certain point. The majority of what they do is by instinct. It's programmed in them. That's why I love examples of migrations and so forth. Science can't figure that out. How can one type of bird fly several thousands of miles and then they come back to the same spot? How can butterflies go through four generations to get down to an area in Mexico and it takes three generations to get there

and then one generation to come back? It's mind-boggling the things that God has created and how He has done it!

But those things are by instinct. They don't think it out. They don't have some kind of navigation system in them.

Anyway, we have the ability to think and reason and plan, remember. It's awesome. And then to understand, as he revealed, when you're baptized you receive the impregnation of God's holy spirit with that spirit essence in the mind where you can actually begin to have your mind changed. By choice, you can have your mind transformed. You can begin to think... That is the most awesome thing that mankind could ever be given, is that kind of knowledge and understanding. To realize we can change! God has made a way for the human mind to be changed. And it's not easy. It's through suffering. It's through constant choices and keeping moving forward of a conviction that is there. And you have to fight for it. Awesome!

And it's the only way to enter into God's Family, is that everyone has to go through that process.

So, some began to think differently, began to teach others differently, and people went out of the Church and followed the ministry. Then it got worse in '74. Now it was about Pentecost and Herbert Armstrong let the Church know he's going to let a period of time go by – I don't think he said specifically a year – but right at a year went by where he let others research into it within the ministry there at headquarters and so forth and then compile different things. He went through it all. He wasn't going to change the date unless he was deeply, deeply convicted this is of God and this is the right thing.

And because he took that length of time there were those who said he's taking too long, and they became disruptive. And there were others who said if he changes, we know it's on a Monday, we're gone. Thousands of people left at that time because of ministers who came along and began to teach things different than what were being given through God's apostle at that time. And then it just got worse. His son began to do things. Toward the late '70's more left. He had to be put out. Many more thousands went then.

I think of different Church areas. I think of Washington, D.C., I think of Hawaii. Hawaii got hit several times. The entire Church in some of these areas went. Everybody! Nobody was left! Incredible. They had that kind of influence and that kind of sway after being there for six, seven years, and they got to know them and so they listened to them, put more emphasis upon it rather than relying on God's spirit.

That's what this is all about, things that were going to continue to build up until finally we had this abomination of desolation take place within the Church. So, Christ was warning them, **Many are going to come in my name saying, I am the Christ.** In other words, there are going to be certain things that are true there but they're going to deceive many because when it's all said and done...

I think of one evangelist, Ron Dart, highly intellectual individual. Had incredibly high scores of his... I can't think of what... Anyway, well known for that, that he was extremely smart (as was Dr. Hoeh). Anyway, those things can go to your mind. And it went to his and his sermons became such (he went with Garner Ted), and his sermons were such that the truth was there through most of the sermon until the very end. And then he'd put that hook in there where it was totally off the wall. But people got...

They were impressed by that, the clarity of what he had to say to that point in time, and then they would swallow the rest just like a fish on a hook. And by that time they weren't able to see then the things that he twisted and distorted. He was really good at it, twisting and distorting the truth. And because of that hundreds more, if not a few thousands continued to come along with that group and with him separately when he broke away from their group. Because when you have a split things happen in time and people split again because... Anyway.

...and will deceive many. And that's how it happens. That's why we have to be on guard, have to be alert, have to be sharp in what God has given to us.

Verse 6—Now, you will hear of wars. In the Church as a whole, we have only seen this physically. We saw it as the end-time and there are going to be wars, and everything in Revelation is about wars. But it wasn't seen as that which would happen within the Church, and yet that's what Christ was talking about.

There have always been wars, six thousand years of wars. Now, they're going to get worse as time goes on. World War I and then World War II because of technology, and finally World War III. But that's not what this is fully about by any measure. There is a duality in part here in a sense, but this is about the Church. There are going to be battles. That's what the word means, battles, wars, fighting within the Church. That's what took place.

Herbert Armstrong had to put up with a lot of battles and fighting that was going on within the ministry. It wasn't until long afterward that finally began to understand the ones he was addressing the majority of time were those in the ministry. He got to a point where he couldn't trust anyone within the ministry, even to be the treasurer of the church, because he knew whoever was the treasurer, they have a lot of control. Basically said, they control the Church unless they're faithful to God's apostle.

That's why he called in Leroy Neff from Houston, where we were at the time, to come to headquarters. He was a pastor in the Church, not an evangelist. Came to headquarters and Herbert Armstrong made him the head of the church in the treasury, finances, because Herbert Armstrong couldn't trust one of the evangelists at headquarters.

Now, we didn't grasp that at the time. Only later on. Why didn't he bring someone else in? Well, then it became clearer. Incredible.

"You're going to hear of battles." And we did early in the 70s. Didn't know the people, but we heard of those things, of those who were claiming that Herbert Armstrong was beginning to teach the immortality

of the soul. And he wasn't saying anything like that but that's all they could see because some were, and before that, they'd gone off track.

...and rumors of wars. Constantly at different periods of time.

See that you are not troubled, for these must come to pass. But the end is not yet. Look how long things have gone on.

That's what's an amazing thing too, is understanding our time is not God's time. We think in a very short range, seventy years. A lot of time as far as a human mind is concerned. Those who are in their twenties and thirties – "Seventies? That's a long..." Not even a need for insurance or anything else happening in the future because it's just out of the mind. It's like that's not going to happen. It's like you don't really believe it. But you know what, it comes around. And then you wonder where did time go. That's the way we're created.

With God, it's a blurb of time. It's just like a wink in time. It's hard for us to think in those ways. So much of what God has to say has to do with time. But our thinking is different as a whole than God's.

So he said, **but the end isn't yet. For nation...** It's kind of an interesting word. It's a word that's oftentimes even translated as "gentile" but can also mean "any organized group that comes together." It doesn't mean... See, we think physically and so we take a word and we, because of what the world has done, they've made a specific translation from it, "nations," has to be. Well, why was it translated "gentiles" at times? Well, it depends on the context of some things, how they were done.

But if it applies to the Church, what does that mean? Because it's about the Church again. It's government, governments, different things rising up. It happened with Garner Ted. It happened with those back there at one... As soon as they broke away from the truth in that respect and began to teach something else and had their own groups following them, they became separate.

And so it says here, **For nation will rise against nation.** This happened powerfully so toward the end of Herbert Armstrong's life starting in the late '70's all the way up to '86 when he died. This was happening. This was taking place. People were thinking and talking in that respect, as far as the leaders, evangelists in the church, "He's an old man and he's going to die. Who is going to take the helm." That's what it was about. And so, these different factions.

Again, hindsight you sometimes can have 20/20 vision. While it's happening you don't see it all. You don't know it all. You don't hear of all the stories of different things and who is doing what until later on. But the reality was there were several evangelists that had their little backing of ministers that were backing them. Because if they were the ones to take over...? What was it, one of the Coles? I can't think. Was it John, his name? There was C. Wayne, then there was... It was brothers I think. Anyway, one of them was one that caused a lot of problems at the takeover of the church by the state of California, and he was in cahoots behind part of that.

Because he's going to have control? He's going to seek the control of the church? He's going to be the one? Herbert Armstrong is going to be kicked out so who is going to be put in there? Can the government put him in? Well, if you cooperate with the government they might try.

You think of what happened to us as a Church. It's mind-boggling. But God let it happen. We learn from these things. God lets us go through a lot of things to learn. It's the experience that helps us become stronger in what is true.

...They'll rise against nation, kingdom. In other words, the ruling powers. One Church organisation, right, and then they are against others. And then finally when the Apostasy took place, look at all the fighting that took place between groups! People wouldn't come together. People fought each other, had different beliefs.

And there will be famines. Hunger. We didn't know what we were going through in Laodicea but there was a lot of hunger. When you're not fed spiritual food what happens to people? What happens to the Church? People become weaker. And we experienced that, famine of the word.

...pestilence. You know, things that are distorted and messed up so bad that the best way to describe some of it, physical things that reflect things that people take in then because it's not right food and then the disease that takes place in the mind and the being as people get unbalanced and unsound in various ideas and doctrines.

...earthquakes. The only way this has ever been seen through Philadelphia and Laodicea, earthquakes, literal in the world. And it's not about that whatsoever. It's about great shakings. It's a shaking. An earthquake is a shaking, and the word has to do with shaking. And the Church has had the tar shaken out of it several times. Every time there's been something that's happened it's ... I think of the Apostasy. You talk about a shaking? Rattle your teeth. And it needed to to wake us up.

...earthquakes, shakings in different places. That's all that was taking... Wars. It all goes together.

...all these are the beginning of sorrows. And they were, especially during Herbert Armstrong's time. That's when they started. He knew we were in the end-time. Didn't know fully what was yet ahead, obviously.

Verse 9—Then they will deliver... It's a word that means "betray; hand over." That's literally what it means, to betray. **Then they will betray you up to tribulation.** "To be afflicted" in other words. That's what it means. Going to betray you. In other words, for their own end, whether it be the individual I mentioned, the Cole or Garner Ted or whomever. It's about themselves. It's about their own power.

They're not concerned about what is true fully. The mind becomes so distorted that people can begin to believe that what they're doing is the truth. 14/15th. They become convicted that that's right. The more that God is left out, the more the truth is rejected that they had been given.

Because all these things as far as the truth was God had given it to them already, to the ministry. That's why the ministry got to a point where the majority began to talk about him as being, "He was a good teacher, and I learned a lot of things from him." And that's the one that gets my blood boiling.

Because the reality is without what God gave through Herbert Armstrong there would be no knowledge of the truth whatsoever in God's Church, period, exclamation mark! So, "He was a good teacher?" No, he was far more than that! He was an apostle of God Almighty and God gave him the truth to give to the Church! Just want to slap them on the face in the spiritual sense, [Whap!] "Wake up you idiot, you fool! Don't you know what you're doing, what you're saying?"

That's pride and haughtiness in its ugliest form because it turns against what is true and begins to believe things that are false. And so, giving people up to tribulation, to be afflicted. That's what they were doing because they were so desirous of power themselves.

...and kill you. What a horrible, horrible thing, because it's not about that which is just physical, it's far, far worse. It's one thing for mankind to die a physical life, it's another thing if the mind becomes so distorted and polluted that it begins to be so twisted that it... ..anyway, dies spiritually. That's far, far worse. And those things are a matter of God's judgment and God's time, and there are so many different things that are...

My wife and I have talked about some of that recently because of things that have happened. Everybody is in a different kind of judgment because of what they have or what they didn't have, and we were thinking about different ones who have become baptized just because it was the thing to do in the church as you grew up. It wasn't because of knowing or seeing or being convicted of it, it was just kind of expected. And there are hundreds of thousands of young people in the sense that did that.

So again, a different kind of thing in life. Sometimes people did it because in families, husbands or wives, or whatever it might be, or a mother or father. So, if the mother or father got with that group then to be together with them? I've known of many in the church like that. And others went along with them because that's where the family is.

Not always. Because individuals know what they have done, that they have turned against Christ. So again, that's God's judgment and God's time. Also know that there are far, far too many, especially within the ministry, of what happened leading up to the tribulation and different groups who did do those things, who did go against their mind and their conscience and things they were convicted of that they lived for thirty and forty years and taught and then turned against it. That's far different and far, far worse.

...and you will be hated of all nations for my name's sake. Nations? Germany? Iran? Israel? Pakistan? Is that what this is about? We're going to be hated, different ones? No. It's about the different groups, especially after the Apostasy. And this came true very powerfully so.

...even then many will be offended. So, as things get closer to the end and Christ's coming, comes... It says, "Many are going to be offended" – "cause to stumble." That's our life. That's our history even after the Apostasy. "To take offense; cause to stumble" is what the word is about.

...will betray one another and will hate one another. What a horrible thing that people who were part of God's Church got to the point where they could hate. It's happened; happened a lot.

Even many false prophets. "False or lying" as it says here. And the word "prophet" here again and understanding here that "interpreter or a forth teller of the divine will." In other words, anyone who was a minister fits this category. Anyone who takes on the role of a minister without being ordained does this because they're telling forth, in other words, telling others about what they believe is the will of God, what is the truth, what is from God. That's what it's about. It has to do with the way it's interpreted.

...will rise up and deceive many. We've lived through that powerfully so more than any other age. That's why I think of this, one of the things that in the very beginning, wrote an article about it, this thing about building bridges. Because people felt that they could come back together again in fellowship and tolerate one another's differences. If you believed something different about Pentecost or you believed something different about Passover or you have some other beliefs, but as far as most of them we're pretty close, we can build these bridges and somehow come together again and have larger groups in the Church again.

That's what United ended up doing. All the different ideas and so forth that they've kind of thrown together and won't address any too strongly. Horrible. That's why I think about 14/15th Passover and the large number of ministers there who believed in that and slowly but surely wanted to begin teaching some of that. And before we left, before we... and past that, it wasn't being addressed because if you address something strong as an organization, saying it's the 14th, nothing was on the 15th, you know what happens? Those who believe in 14/15th go off someplace else and so does the money.

Horrible to think that way, but that's what happened.

We have lived Matthew 24 in a profound way. Christ gave it nearly two thousand years before it came to pass, and yet this is what he's telling his disciples that leads up to the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet as we're going to come to.

Even many false ones, prophets here will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound... That's what happens when, if a body, Church gets farther from the truth. There is more sin, more lawlessness, more that's happening that shouldn't be happening. That's what happened during Laodicea.

And because of that, because people were doing things they shouldn't be doing God's spirit was being choked, stymied, if you will, stopped. It says **the love**, and this is the word "agape," God's love. Because it's about God's spirit. To have God's love within us, to have any of that mind where we're able to see

where we come short and see our selfishness and recognize this is falling short and I want more of that kind of mind and love that God says we can have and pray for it and ask for it.

But if that's not being done then the body becomes weaker and weaker and that's what this is about.

The love of many will grow cold. We've experienced that.

But any who endure to the end shall be saved. What an awesome thing! If you endure to the end.

That's why I love the word "Israel," "to persevere." That's what we're to fulfill. To become a part of God's Family you have to persevere, you have to keep fighting.

I think of Leroy Neff, again, having mentioned him, how he used to say that it's like walking in the mud, and you just keep picking up one foot out of the mud and you go another step. Because you get bogged down and you've got to fight to do that and to keep doing that and then not give up. You've just got to keep putting one foot in front of the other even though it's hard.

But any who endure to the end shall be saved. Even this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come. Even this. Physically, that was the motivation, that was the push as a whole through Philadelphia. And it was God's purpose that it should be, that there was that kind of thinking that in order for the gospel to be preached in a very powerful way. And it did go out very powerfully so throughout the world when you think about *The Plain Truth* and so forth. So obviously, a definite duality here.

But again, it's about, still about the Church primarily first and foremost. And we hear it, we're able to receive it, the Church became larger and larger, changed it from Radio to Worldwide and it was all over the world. That's why the name was changed, the Worldwide Church of God. Because it was a matter of what God was doing powerfully so.

And the witness? When we understand that it's about what lives in us, what lived in the Church in all the different nations during Philadelphia as a whole, and that life that we could live as God's people. That's what the witness is all about. It's about the reality that Christ dwells in us, that God the Father dwells in us and we in them. And this is the witness that goes into the world that is meaningful on a spiritual plane. That which is physical had a purpose, obviously.

Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation... Takes us right up then to the Apostasy. And so Christ says, when you see this **when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing—standing—in the holy place...** What an awesome thing when we see it so clearly now because it was spiritual, and we know that. It was about the Church. Standing in the holy place? In the Church with the authority and the power that he had – speaking of Joe Tkach, incredible. But again, we can see it so clearly.

But before this, it wasn't seen and understood as a whole. It was seen as something related to Antiochus Epiphanies and there had to be this altar. Even after the Apostasy teaching those kinds of things, that

there has to be at least an altar. If the temple can't be started at least there'll be a temple there so it can be desecrated. Incredible! No, it's about the Church.

...whoso reads, let them understand. Does that mean anyone who reads this can understand it? No. It's a message to God's people, to God's Church. If you're able to understand it you know where it comes from. It comes from God Almighty. The only ability to know and to understand what has taken place is because of God's spirit.

Because you look at all the different groups that are scattered – still don't believe an abomination of desolation has taken place. Still don't think that there is ... every stone was cast down, that everyone was spewed out of God's mouth. Until someone admits that, acknowledges that, they're not going to be worked with on a spiritual plane. Because it's a matter of realizing "That's what I was guilty of!" Anybody who went through the Apostasy and will not acknowledge that they are a part of the problem, "I fell asleep. I became lukewarm," and acknowledge and admit that God can't work with that because it's against His holy spirit.

At some point, whether in this age or in the age to come. It'll be a whole lot easier then, no one can argue. "There's 144,000. There's Christ. I guess I was wrong." And yet amazingly enough there are going to be some, and maybe a lot of them because of pride, will not admit it, will not humble themselves even when Christ is standing before them, or they know of him being there.

Then let those who are in Judaea flee to the mountains. What an incredible statement to make. What do you mean, "Let those who are in Judaea..." See, look what happened within the Church. "Flee into the mountains." That's what we did into the different... Six hundred different groups popped up in a short length of time after the Apostasy, and that's where people who were trying to hold on to some resemblance of what they were before, they fled. And that's what it was about. That's part of what it fulfilled here.

But in time, actually, three and a half years of time that God kept Satan away that he couldn't harm any more people during that period of time—people went their different ways and so forth—and then God began to work with us. What an awesome thing, called out of that and to be blessed to see and understand things that... Anyway, we are very, very blessed.

So again here, let's read that first sentence in the topic again.

The "abomination of desolation standing in the Holy Place" is an event prophesied by Daniel and referenced in the New Testament in Matthew 24:14-16. ... This prophecy was fulfilled in Atlanta on December 17, 1994, when Joseph Tkach Sr. gave his infamous sermon where he set forth to change the laws of God. This sermon attempted to defile and destroy the very "temple of God" which is the Church of God. As a result, the Apostasy or the "falling away" was initiated.

What an awesome thing if you're able to see it and you know it. Incredible, it really is. One of very, very few in the scattered Church who is able to do that.

Then it references here *The Fall of the United States*, Truth #25 as well.

Next one here:

Alcohol: Some religions claim that God forbids the consumption of any type of alcoholic drink, but this is not true. The apostle, Paul, mentioned that a little wine could be beneficial for the stomach when it's upset.

I was pretty healthy yesterday. I'm just... Some of us went on a trip up to Napa so we had some wine tasting.

One of Christ's first miracles was turning water into wine, and deeper study of the words reveals it was indeed wine, not grape juice.

It's amazing how some religions out there, "It was grape juice, it wasn't wine. It wasn't alcohol." Yeah, it was alcoholic.

Without delving into all the scriptural references on alcohol, it can be summarized that scripture only forbids the excessive use of alcohol that leads to drunkenness. God's Church teaches that alcohol should be used in moderation and never to excess. It should not impair speech, thinking, alertness, reactions, or motor skills, especially when considering activities like driving a motor vehicle. In cases where someone has lost control over their alcohol use and become an alcoholic, moderation is unwise.

This is something that the Church has had to deal with and for a long, long time because it's always been there within the ministry and within the Church. And it's something that people succumb to like so many other kinds of things that happen in life. And alcoholism is a horrible one that people have to deal with if that's something that they have to battle. Just to finish up the sentence here...

For an alcoholic, avoiding alcohol altogether is necessary.

So, it's not a matter that if someone is an alcoholic they can go back to trying a little bit, a little amount here and there. The reality is a person has to come to a conclusion, an understanding that no, you can't deal with it because of a weakness in your system, in your body, whatever it might be, and it's better not to ever touch it, period, ever.

So if anyone ever has that kind of a battle that's what they have to come to, is to realize, no, can't touch it, period. It's too easy to fall back into the same kind of quagmire and pit. It's a strong pull.

That's why I think about drugs and so forth, what a horrible thing that is. It's even far beyond that of alcoholism when it comes to various kinds of drugs. And you think of what's happening in this country, all the garbage that's coming across and borders and so forth and coming out of China and...

You know, if things were really done right there probably should be a war to end it. Say, "We're not going to have this coming across the borders ever again. Yes, we'll have a wall and it'll be big, and we're going to have borders like every country that desires to have borders. If it's going to be done, it's going to be done legally."

Think, where is the soundness of mind today? And if it's going to be certain kinds of drugs that are killing more than wars we've had in times past, in one year's time? Insanity! This world is absolutely insane. So, if you look at it on a physical plane couldn't blame someone for not saying, "There'll never be another cartel left. No one left alive." But we don't live in that kind of world. Some understand what it would take to stop things like that, but you think, what a horrible, sick world we live in that you talk about a hundred thousand people can die in a year's time over something like that. It's insane!

Used to be people would die in car wrecks every year, of forty-some thousand, forty-five thousand, whatever it might be, and here this is more than double that every year. Insane! We live in a sick world? Absolutely. It's getting sicker? Absolutely. Out of control? Absolutely. Can't govern ourselves? Absolutely. Not able to do it. And God is letting the world see this in a very powerful way, we cannot...

I don't care where you go in government, whether it's here or different countries. Europe right now, it's an absolute mess. Unable to agree; don't know what to do. don't know how to do it. Can't agree on things; fighting with each other. You talk about clay and steel or iron, it's horrible. There is strength there but the ability to bring it together, to cooperate, to use it?

The next one:

Antichrist: Antichrist is not about the Pope...

Believed by the Church for a long, long, long, long, long, long, long, long time, until after the Apostasy. Basically, going to be about the Pope and what the Pope ends up doing. Or some have felt that it's going to be some world leader, is going to be the antichrist. And people don't understand. No, it's about the Church. Because the world is deceived.

Think the Pope is going to come along and deceive the Church? What were we thinking? It's a clear hallmark we weren't. We couldn't because God hadn't given it to us yet. So, there was this not knowing, who is it going to be. Actually looked at different popes coming along and their backgrounds. One had a German background it's like, "He's the one because he's German." Nope. Came and gone. So, who is it? Incredible.

Antichrist. So, even for us as God began to allow the Church after Sardis to begin to put on the right track once again in the sense of truths being blessed to be able to come back into the Church, to raise up the Church toward the end-time. And yet there were things we had to go through on a physical plane because until it's God's time to give the full meaning of something we can only deal with what we see

physically. And this is all we could see physically. Antichrist. And it seemed to fit who can do something like this because we saw things on a worldwide scale – and must be the pope. We believed that.

Any of you here ever believed that who were a part of the past? That's what we had. That's what we were told. So, it's like, okay. It's the only thing that seemed to fit. Just like the disciples when Christ was telling them things he did, they didn't understand it. They couldn't. To think there is two thousand years? To think that every Church era was told, "Well, now it's not two thousand, it's only seventeen hundred and fifty years before he returns." It's like, "Oh..."

That can devastate people! Because God's people have constantly desired to see God's Kingdom established on the earth; they've wanted to see the Messiah! Even the prophets of the Old Testament, they wanted to see the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. And there were different ideas through time because it wasn't time for them to see it and grasp it. Not to think that "You mean there is four thousand years yet?! Brother! Can you give me some more good news?!"

And so, I think if we had known in 2012 how much time there was there'd been people say, "You've got to be kidding." If God said, "Tell everyone this is how much time is going to be left." "Oh, you've got to be kidding me. You weren't right about that so this can't be right either, and if it's that far away then God's not here." That's how the human mind works. And so, even going back in Herbert Armstrong's time you think in 1986 to be told that there's going to be that much time, forty years, forty plus before Christ returns? You mean we've got to do this the rest of our life?

And that's a good thing to understand. You do this all your life no matter how long you live. It is what it is. Everything is in God's hands, God's timing, and it'll be right when it's there. And we do our part while we can, and we keep fighting to the end. That's our part. Awesome!

Again:

Antichrist is not about the pope, a world leader, or any other single individual "in the world." It refers specifically to those within the Church who work against Christ and God's purpose in their lives. As revealed in 1 John 2 there have been "many," antichrists throughout the ages of the Church. This passage makes it clear that these individuals were part of the true Church of God but left the truth and opposed Joshua the Christ's purpose of "living in" the members of the Church through the power of the holy spirit to complete God's work in them.

Even that, to comprehend fully what we've been blessed to see, about God dwelling in us and us dwelling in God. What an awesome thing to know, to understand, that Christ is coming in the flesh, that that's what it's about. It's about us.

Antichrist simply means "against Christ." The world has never been called to the truth and has not been given the opportunity for God's spirit to dwell "in" them. If someone "works against" this

purpose they become an antichrist. Not allowing God and Christ to dwell within oneself due to the refusal to repent of sin, is to deny the reason Christ died for us as our Passover.

These are awesome things to understand. Awesome!

He died for our sins so that the Father and the Son could dwell within us.

The next one:

Apostasy – Falling Away: The word “apostasy” comes from a Greek word used in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 that is often translated into English as “falling away” and “rebellion.” The context of 2 Thessalonians 2 is for the end-time before the return of Joshua the Christ and not for the period of the early apostles. The Apostasy had to occur before the unfolding of end-time events that would lead to the return of Joshua the Christ.

That’s why everything in Matthew 24. He gave them an outline of those things that would happen just before he returned. And yet some of it started with the understanding of what was taking place during Philadelphia on through and it’s been a long time, been a long journey for God’s people. But we’re there.

Another one here:

Apostles: In what is often referred to as Old Testament times, God worked primarily through His prophets to reveal future prophetic events and to give His truth, law, and judgment to mankind.

So, even within the Old Testament to understand it wasn’t just a matter of things that were written. A lot of time we just think of a prophet, and we think of the things written as far as prophecy is concerned and about the future. But for those who were living the truth came through them. They told, foretold, if you will, the will of God to what God was giving to them at that time, the present truth. Whatever it was that God desired His people to have or those with whom He was working to see and to know and to understand, like David and different ones (who is referred to as a prophet as well), God gave them understanding of His will, of His purpose, of what was to take place. Not just in future time but what was to take place as far as God’s purpose, how we were to live, and so forth, how we’re judged.

They were judged by what they were given. Awesome to understand that. Because they weren’t given a whole lot. Abraham wasn’t given a whole lot, but he was judged according to what he did have, what he had to that point in time, what he was given to see and understand here, and his response to it. Incredible how God works with the human mind.

After the life of Christ, God established apostles as the primary individuals through whom He would work within His Church to reveal and record truth. There have also been a few prophets whom God has raised up in His Church to fulfill specific functions, especially geared toward the end-time.

God reveals that He is building His Kingdom through the work of both prophets and apostles.

And then quoting Ephesians 2 here.

“Now, therefore, you are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God [a spiritual temple] and you are being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Joshua the Christ himself being the chief corner stone in whom the whole building is fitly framed together and **growing into a holy temple** in the Lord,” [“...in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God through the spirit.” (Ephesians 2:19-22)]

And we read this now with complete understanding spiritually. We’re the temple. We didn’t grasp those things fully in any respect during Philadelphia until Herbert Armstrong started teaching them for a period. And then that became lost as a whole during Laodicea. We are the temple so often referred to, again, over and over again throughout scripture.

We weren’t meant to be able to see all these things clearly during Philadelphia or Laodicea. It wasn’t time yet. To know certain things, to see certain things would be different responses. And the reality was God was going to give only a specific amount that would lead to specific results by human beings making choices.

And that’s sometimes a difficult thing to grasp, that God allowed the Church, His Church to fall asleep, to go through a long period of time where God’s spirit would be choked off and people would begin to become lukewarm. “Then that’s God’s fault!” Now, some people come to that kind of conclusion. No, no, no, no, no, no, no.

God is showing us our faults. God is showing us the minds of human beings even when called into the truth and given so much truth as was given during Philadelphia what we can do as human beings. We’re the problem. We have to change. We have to make those choices to change. But we can’t do that if we don’t see ourselves. If we don’t grasp what we are, if we don’t understand that, where is the battle then?

And so God allows us to go through things that hurt, that are hard, that are difficult so we can come to by experience. You can’t be just given the knowledge of certain things. That’s not nearly enough. Just to funnel knowledge into the mind that is true has no power. It really doesn’t unless there is experience that leads to understanding.

That’s why I love the direction some of the Feast sermons are going to go in this year again and build upon some of the things we’ve been given in times past. It’s an awesome thing to understand how God works with this human mind and how it’s up to us, the choices we make. Awesome, awesome, truly is, to know what we have been given, to grasp what we’ve been given, to see these things as we do.

So, I want to read it again, **Ephesians 2:19—Now, therefore, you are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.** Again, a spiritual temple. **And you are being built up on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Joshua the Christ himself being the**

chief cornerstone. So, God gives us understanding of what they wrote, of what was written in the Old Testament, of things that are written in the New Testament. We see that we're able to see them in a spiritual plane and constantly build upon them as God gives us more to see and understand.

...in whom the whole building is fitly framed together and growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God through the spirit. In just that one there alone I think, what an awesome thing that God gave us to understand, that that's what makes His Family different. In Elohim, He will always dwell in us. Not part of the time or in different segments of our human life today like we are with the begettal of God's spirit within us. That's a growing stage and because of our choices we get cut off from God from time to time or we quench the spirit. And we keep fighting and we do things right and then make choices and then God helps us. And we cry out for those things.

But you have to understand that in the future it's about this oneness and unity that's only possible because God literally will be in us forever and forever. His Family. Nothing more beautiful. Really, nothing more beautiful in life than to know that reality, to see that reality, to grasp what God has placed before us to be in Elohim.

To realize that this physical life is just a means to an end. It's a short blurb in time. It's a wink. It's a blink of the eye in time. To us, it seems so long. What we're going to do and how long we're going to do it? We can't comprehend. I can't comprehend that. I can't comprehend what's even out there let alone the time and the things we're going to be doing. I don't know! But I do know it's going to be awesomely exciting because God shows us and tells us and that it's all out there for us.

We're going to inherit it all. What are you going to do with it? There's so much!

But there will be things that we do that are going to be awesomely inspiring to us far, far, far beyond anything we could ever think physically in a physical life. And yet we tend to as human beings hold on to the physical things of life, things we want, and sometimes the things we shouldn't have. And then people get pulled in those directions and something happens in the mind. It's about the mind and whether the mind can be molded and fashioned and changed and whether we want to be changed.

The next one here, "Atonement." We aren't even out of the "A's." Okay. I thought I'd be whirling through this fast.

Atonement: Atonement is about the process by which mankind can become reconciled to God. The process is revealed through God's fifth annual Sabbath called the Day of Atonement.

When someone is called by God into a relationship with Him they can begin a process of spiritual growth. This involves overcoming their own nature and allowing God to transform the way they think (Romans 12:1-2), bringing them into unity and harmony with His one true way of life.

And those are choices. The harmony, the unity only comes as a result of when it's given to us to see and then we make the choice, "Yes! I love it. I agree with it. I want that." And that has to come then through different experiences we have, and then being able to come to make choices. Not because of knowledge but because of understanding things that we experience.

"Bringing them into unity and harmony with His one true way of life." It takes a lifetime to do that. Can't be done in a few weeks, a few months, or a few years. You have to go through a struggle and a lifetime. Ten, twenty surely the minimum, I don't know.

After successfully going through this entire process a person can be made fully **at one** with God by being changed from mortal to immortal, from physical to spiritual entering the Kingdom of God.

Next one here:

Apocalypse and Armageddon: Both terms "Apocalypse" and "Armageddon" have been horribly misunderstood and misinterpreted from scripture. Many view end-time events through stories about the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse which are often misguided.

The real meaning of the word "apocalypse" has changed over the centuries, primarily due to confusion created by traditional Christianity through the various interpretations of John's Book of Revelation.

And the Church has been guilty of that as well, hearing certain things that other religions have done and picking some of those things and changing a little bit here and there. But again, because it was only seen in many ways on a physical plane.

The word "apocalypse" first appeared in Greek and Latin. John used the Greek word "apokalyptein" in his writing which means "to uncover, disclose, and reveal."

That's an awesome etymology. But again, words that change. Etymology of words, to me, is an awesome thing through time, especially if you look at various words going back several hundreds of years. Just in a few hundred years, just things that are written in English, Old English, and to realize in time certain words totally change in their meaning and how it's used by the world or society and so forth.

Anyway, this here goes into interesting one about those particular words.

Nearly three hundred years later when the Catholic Church commissioned the Bible to be translated into Latin the word "apocalypsis," meaning "revelation," began to be used. Much later, during the period of Middle English, this word carried the meaning of "insight or vision" and even "hallucination."

So, just because a word is a certain way it's like...? Anyway.

In the mid-1800s interpretations of the Book of Revelation began to give the word “apocalypse” a prophetic meaning implying “cataclysmic events” and a belief of an imminent end of the present world.

Isn't that amazing how things have changed through time like that just because of different ages and different periods of time, and then how mankind looks at it now, some of these things? And we've gone through some of the same things as far as the Church is concerned. Because we have to experience, we have to learn where the world is wrong.

To me, one of the most beautiful things is when the more you're able to see something that's true the easier it is to see what is false and what's distorted. It's quite a process.

Over the past few decades, traditional Christianity has greatly exaggerated this terminology, creating interpretations that now suggest a completely different definition that involve a complete, final destruction of the world, great cataclysmic tribulation on earth before WWII begins, theories about a final armageddon (the last completely destructive battle of mankind), and a great battle between God and mankind.

So, all these different ideas that are out there, and there are a lot of different groups that have different ideas because they see the world right now getting worse and worse and there are those fears. That's why certain religious groups, and especially when certain books get written or whatever, and then they think “We're there!” Well, the reality is, yes, these are all signs of things that are leading up to it, and it's coming, but not as people think. Because they don't see God, they don't see the Church, and they don't know the truth. And one day they're going to. What an awesome thing when they do.

“Armageddon” refers to events of the Sixth Trumpet of the Book of Revelation. Specifically, it describes the final events during WWII, just before Christ's second coming. The events of the Sixth Trumpet primarily involve the destruction caused by China and Russia through the massive use of nuclear weapons which lead to Christ's intervention to end the war.

That's why I marvel how the world just recently now has become startled, a bit of in shock that Russia and China now are such buddy-buddies. Just the other day (I don't know if you saw some of this), but bombers from Russia and from China at the same time heading toward Alaska, an area, a region of Alaska. And they have to intercept or whatever.

And you think, people just keep pushing, countries keep pushing because this is where we are in time, and we realize it's going to come. But you see these things happening in the world and you think... And the world becomes startled by it. And yet I think how God has blessed the Church to understand it's going to be China and Russia. Herbert Armstrong gave that. Long, long long time ago God gave it to him to understand they would be aligned. Not necessarily knowing it's the Sixth Trumpet but that they would be aligned.

The Apocalypse and Armageddon are not about the complete destruction of the earth or mankind. They describe end-time events that lead up to the establishment of a new world ruled by Joshua the Christ who will bring an end to mankind's 6,000 years of failed governments.

"Birthdays," "B's". Isn't it funny that we'd even have to write something like this about birthdays? But for the world and for the scattered Church people have some messed up minds, unbalanced, a lack of balance, if you will, or soundness of mind.

Birthdays: Due to the differing teachings of churches there is often the confusion about the observance of birthdays.

For many families, a birthday is a natural time to remember the beginning of someone's life.

I mean, that's so sound. In a family, you mean, you're not going to remember, we're not going to observe it, but you never forget. A mother never forgets—husband hadn't better—for their children and on it goes.

There is nothing wrong with recognizing such important times, just as someone would remember important anniversaries such as a marriage. Remembering such occasions and acknowledging them as natural and good it's beneficial to express gratitude and love toward others whether verbally or through cards or letters. However, sometimes people tend to go overboard in their celebrations.

So, they used to look at different things and try to pick out why. It's almost like it's associated with, well, Christ wasn't born in the time of year so we shouldn't celebrate that anyway then, so if you do know his time of year, shouldn't celebrate it. No birthdays should be celebrated. Think, where does that come from? But it's just not sound, not balanced, not from God until God gives it.

And so, even this there have been people... I guess even, what was it, Job? Because they would go celebrate birthdays, the family did, and they were destroyed, and it's like, "Oh, see, you're not supposed to celebrate birthdays." Kind of like "Jezebel wore makeup so nobody should wear makeup!"

We had things we had to go through. We had to learn by experience. And then in time, God showed us that that's not a scripture that proves that you shouldn't do it or that you can't use certain things to moderation. And so, what a blessing that God through time has shown this aspect of moderation and balance and soundness of mind – something that is horribly lacking in the world today.

You look out there and you think, where are the minds of people? How can people think the way they do today? Never thought I'd see anything like this, never even thought about it, now we think about it because we see there's just... And it's hard to understand minds that can think the way they do. The things you hear on TV and commentators and things that people say it's like, "What's wrong with you?" Well, it's the way of mankind and it's getting worse and worse.

Some people celebrate in ways that lead to sin such as excessive alcohol consumption or underage drinking. Matters of sexual immorality, drunkenness, and other improper conduct are sometimes associated with various celebrations. This is obviously wrong.

The caution in celebrating birthdays is that yearly parties should not be conducted where many people are invited, and gifts are expected.

You know, what a horrible thing when it gets to a point where people think they have to take gifts to all kinds of things. And think, that's not what that's about. It's a time to get together and if you want to celebrate something and you do it and you have a special meal or cake and whatever, no big deal.

Such celebrations often foster a spirit of "get" ...

That's the way people think. We have a bad enough problem with "get", selfishness, and sometimes it's not good to fuel that. Anyway, balance, soundness of mind.

It's often better to recognize special milestones in life in unique ways that give more recognition than usual. For example, celebrating milestones at age 13 (becoming a teenager), 21 (coming of age), and 50 (a significant milestone) [is similar to recognizing a 25th or 50th wedding anniversary.]

...or sixty or seventy, or even eighty! Those are milestones. And then you break it down into five. Eighty-five, ninety! Anyway. I really don't want to see that much, I really don't.

The milestones and celebrations can vary according to individuality and personal choice with no absolute right or wrong. There is nothing wrong with having a special meal or a cake for an anniversary or a special occasion. It's perfectly fine to participate in any celebration that upholds right standards.

You know, you shouldn't even have to say things like this, but that's where the balance is.

Such celebrations might include birthdays, anniversaries, national holidays, and personal occasions like graduations. These decisions should be based on personal choice and the spirit of the celebration.

Now, we've had people who went through the Apostasy that have had trouble making this transition. It's hard to change when you believe something all your life and then you change in certain things and God shows you a balance that is right, that's healthy.

And it's like going to doctor's. It's like taking medications. We've gone through some transition with some of those things because of what we believed in the past. And God has had to show us what the greater soundness of mind and balance is in all these things. It's beautiful when we come through that. But we have to learn it through experience. We had to experience the wrong way first in order to learn the right way.

Another one, "C":

Christmas - Origin: The observance of Christmas has no basis in scripture...

I shouldn't have to read this, and I know that you all know this but we're going to spend time going through these topics.

The observance of Christmas has no basis in scripture and is not the time of year when Christ was actually born. According to historical accounts in scripture, Christ was born in early fall. Information on this is readily available through Internet searches.

Isn't that amazing that the world is becoming more aware now that he wasn't born around that time period, and they can actually do a little bit of reading on their own and realize where it did come from. It's not a hard thing nowadays. Back in the Church and farther back in time in Philadelphia, this was not in the world. But today with the Internet it's like the world has really changed a lot, it really has.

But then people don't think it's a big deal. Isn't that amazing? It's like, "Well, it's not a big deal." Yeah, it is.

The idea that Christ was born near the winter solstice was assimilated into a religious observance by the Church of Rome in the 12th century. At that time, a festival established by another Roman emperor, Aurelian, already existed. Sol Invictus ("Unconquered Sun") was the official sun god of the later Roman Empire and a patron of soldiers.

On December 25, AD 274, Aurelian made Sol Invictus an official deity alongside other traditional Roman deities. The reason Christmas became recognized by the Roman Church is documented in an annotation to a manuscript by a 12th-century bishop, Jacob Bar-Salibi. It states:

It's amazing how these things are out there and now you can find them more easily, whereas before it was so hard to find some of these things. And now they're readily available.

"It was a custom of the Pagans to celebrate on the same 25 December the birthday of the Sun..."

You know, nowadays people don't have to get mad at you or the Church. Get mad at Wikipedia or somebody. But there was a time when people would get mad at you for saying such things and it's like, "No, it's on the Internet. It's everywhere. Go look it up yourself." And so, it helps to take away some of that pressure that has been in times past on God's people. And people have children, that they're sending them to schools and saying, "I don't want to be a part of that because..." and... Look it up in Wikipedia. Isn't it the know-all nowadays? I'm sorry, I hate Wikipedia, but anyway, that's another matter.

"It was a custom of the Pagans to celebrate on the same 25 December the birthday of the Sun at which they kindled lights in token of festivity. In these solemnities and revelries, the Christians also took part. Accordingly, when the doctors of the Church perceived that the Christians had a leaning to this festival, they took counsel and resolved that the true Nativity should be solemnized on that day."

Isn't that a great reason for doing something? "Ah, they'll be with us then. We'll all be together." You think about what Satan did, you think about what that church did, and it's really kind of mindboggling that it actually happened over centuries of time, that things got so messed up and people began to think this is God, this is Christ, this is... Anyway.

Christmas is a creation of the Roman Catholic Church, combining "Christ" and "mass," the central liturgical ritual of the Catholic Church. The overwhelming majority of those in traditional Christianity observe Christmas, but this has never been recognized by God's Church or by those Christians who trace their doctrine and lineage back to the original Church of 31 AD.

Some may ask, what is the harm in observing Christmas if Santa Claus is a fable and it is not really the time of Christ's birth? It matters if you care about what God instructs regarding the intermingling of practices and customs in the worship of other gods.

Think shouldn't even have to explain things like that, but with the world you do. It's amazing how some things even in Europe are changing more and more to the customs that we have here in the States, like even Halloween. Because it's a commercial thing. Stores, because they can sell more, so they advertise, they commercialize these things, and you think that's what it's really all about. It's about the festivals and the big money and raking it in.

Another one here:

Church of God – PKG: The subject of who is the Church of God-PKG (Preparing for the Kingdom of God) is best understood by seeking God's guidance and revelation about His own Church. God and His Son, Joshua the Christ, are the only ones who can reveal the true Church of God. This is a spiritual matter and not one determined by human logic, discovery, study, intellect, or past knowledge.

It's amazing how you can write something like this but, you know, it goes right over the tops of heads of people. Because you can't know it unless God just gives it to you.

The Church of God-PKG is not "Ron Weinland's" Church; it is God's Church.

I guess that must have been put in there for the scattered Church.

Membership in the Church is not a matter of physical enrollment. One is either baptized into the Body of Christ, the true Church of God...

You know, you think about some of these things and how church organizations think you have to belong to something, you have to sign up or whatever it might be. So, sometimes when people write in it's like what do you have to do to join? And it's a tough thing for people to grasp this isn't like churches where you come just as you are, which is one of the topics we come to in a moment, that there are requirements of that you have to choose and start doing right and living right if you really want to be part of God's Church. It's like why is that so hard to see? But it is.

One is either baptized into the Body of Christ, the true Church of God (which is spiritual), or not. If a person has the impregnation of God's spirit (begotten of God's spirit) and has not been cut off from its flow into their life, then such a person is IN God's Church.

The physical organization of the Church of God-PKG is precisely that—a physical organization. It receives the tithes of God's people and uses them to teach and lead those whom God has called (or is calling) and to cover all other expenses associated with the work God has given His Church to accomplish.

The Church of God-PKG is incorporated...

And the reason this is in here is because there are some in the scattered Church who get all... Some people have gotten so far off to the right it's like you can't be incorporated, you can't do things with the government, you can't do... Because to them, that isn't spiritual. What a horrible thing to get so messed up. Worldwide was incorporated and that's what they came from. You'd think...?

The Church of God-PKG is incorporated to manage the business needs of God's Church. By receiving government recognition of non-profit status, people in many regions can legally deduct tithes and offerings on their tax returns, providing the benefit of personal financial savings.

"Clothing Styles" – this is a quick one.

Clothing Styles: See "Makeup, Clothing, and Hair Styles" [in this *Topics* section.]

I'll read one more to get through this. I want to get through this.

Conspiracy Theories, Misguided Ideologies, and Philosophies:

Kind of broke this up a little bit more than what it was before, just conspiracy theories, but really it's more. And it's amazing to me how many people have left God's Church over things like this going well back into Herbert Armstrong's time in the Church, in the 70s, into the 80s.

There are many conspiracy theories, as well as very misguided ideologies and philosophies in the world alleging that various groups such as bankers, Jews, the CFR, Trilateral Commission, Illuminati, Masons, Bilderbergers, and others are conspiring to control or take over the world.

And people get really all twitterpated about some of these things. Why?

Other unsound ideas under the definition of "conspiracy theories" include beliefs that the earth is flat, that mankind never landed on the moon, and strange notions about black helicopters, chemtrails, and RFID chip implants in humans, among many more.

The Church of God believes that studying into such writings or theories is unwise and of no benefit whatever. In actuality, they can be very harmful to sound human reasoning.

Many of these are devices of Satan, offering supposed “hidden” knowledge that can lead people away from God’s truth. Studying into such things can actually work to turn a person away from what God reveals is true.

It’s happened over and over in the environment of God’s Church in times past.

Focusing on what is true helps to reveal what is actually in error in mankind’s ways.

Indeed, “power centers” do exist within business, political, and economic organizations around the world. All segments of our society are responsible for their national woes, sickness, and immorality.

The one behind it all is the master deceiver, Satan the devil, whose goal is to thwart the plan of God. Revelation 12:9 states, “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, **who deceives the whole world**. He was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

So, there are organizations. They try to change various things. But the point is to get caught up in those, to worry about what they’re doing, or to think that they’re doing the right thing is misguided. And there have been many people—not a few—in God’s Church who have gone in those directions. Incredible.

The bottom line is that no government, organization, or secret group will succeed in controlling events in this world to bring about any lasting change they seek through their efforts. The truth is, we are at the very end of mankind’s self-rule on this earth, and even Satan’s rule is about to end. Nothing and no one can stop this from taking place!

Anyway, with that we’ll continue on next Sabbath, *Part 2*.