

NEWS WATCH FOR *the* CHURCH OF GOD

News in the world and church — to give warning and help for God's people — by Ron Weinland

January 2000

BEWARE OF Y2K!

January 1, 2000 has come and gone without any major problems anywhere in the world. The doomsayers, false prophets, and alarmists should all recant and eat humble pie. Even within the scattered Church, there were false prophets concerning Y2K.

For the world, January 1st proved to be a great day for traveling, especially by air. Nearly 80% of all flights were canceled by airlines and those traveling loved it, because airports were 80% less crowded.

The world averted a predicted disaster. Isn't it simply great what man can do? At least that is the attitude of many. Can anything stop the progress and growing prosperity of man? Don't be fooled because that same attitude can infect you spiritually.

The impending possibilities of Y2K helped serve to at least dampen the greed on world markets this past year. In the fall of 1998, world markets were jittery and began to fall. Several countries' true economic condition fueled fears of disaster, but this was short lived as greed finally got in the way. Some currencies and stocks got so low that large numbers of investors began to drool at the potential for quick profits. For the time being, the world averted a crisis because of greed.

The year 1999 realized incredible profits for investors. But the true economic condition of many nations is still in deep trouble. The investment in greed has given some of them a little breathing space. However, the potential for problems has only been magnified as stocks are continuing to balloon with over-inflation. Who is worried? Can't we conquer and avert any obstacle in this world? Such attitudes are prophesied to be at their peak at the end of this age.

Y2K for the Church

Brethren need to beware of Y2K. Of the past few years, this year will prove to be one of the most dangerous yet to God's scattered Church, because the spirit and attitude that is in this world is also the spirit and attitude within the Church.

The spirit of pride is the predominant attitude in this world and within the Church at the end of this age. That is the spirit of Laodicea that must be repented of and conquered. This spiritual condition produces blind self-confidence, apathy, complacency and lethargy toward the otherwise realistic conditions that actually surround us.

The blind pride and false confidence of investors, corporate planners, politicians, and other movers and shakers in this world will prove to be their downfall in the not too distant future. Such people refuse to be sidetracked by the realities around them. They don't even want to be bothered by the knowledge of true evidence that should be helping to mold their daily decisions. This rank attitude has been increasing mightily over the past few years.

The Church has been battling this same condition, or has it? Have you been battling the spirit of Laodicea? Too many haven't. As a result, just like this world, many are falling deeper into sleep. But what a shame this is to anyone in the Church. Brethren should be deeply ashamed for not watching— for not being spiritually alert.

Matthew 25 contains the parable of the ten virgins. It is a valuable parable for any who have been a part of the Church since 31 A.D. But it is an especially important parable for those who are alive just before the return of Jesus Christ. It therefore applies more

specifically to us than to any other time.

All ten virgins failed to do their job. All ten were slumbering or sleeping. None were watching as they should have been. They were awakened and warned to make themselves ready to meet the bridegroom, and that is exactly what has happened to us as a Church. Although this awakening has occurred at different times for different brethren, nevertheless God has given us a shaking from our sleep. This awakening resulted through various circumstances in our lives where conditions have existed to help shake us into reality. There are many brethren who have too much pride to admit they were asleep or at least that they were falling off to sleep. Until we are able to admit our sin, we cannot repent of it. To fall asleep spiritually is a sin, because it denies the life of Jesus Christ to live within us, regardless of how much knowledge of truth we possess.

God has given the Church the opportunity to repent of this spiritual condition. A Laodicean spirit does not allow us to see ourselves, or the conditions around us in a truthful way. Such a condition actually leads us to close our eyes to the true evidence that surrounds us. People afflicted by this attitude refuse to hear what is true, so they become like the proverbial ostrich that sticks its head in the sand rather than face reality.

Since being awakened, spewed out of God's mouth, and scattered throughout this world, most are now choosing to go back to sleep.

Although this condition of drowsiness has been growing stronger for the past several years, the year 2000 will prove to be much more

devastating for the remnant of the Church. *News Watch* has been repeatedly publishing evidence of the statistics regarding our recent history, but it doesn't shake many. Hence, the spirit embroiled by the Church. If you have bothered to do a little research and crunch a few numbers, you know that less than 15% of the Church remains that is holding fast to the commandments of God and has the testimony of Jesus Christ. But, some will argue that there may be five or even ten percent more than that. Such figures should still be shocking to us. But are they? Actually, 15% is a very generous number if we are willing and able to be truthful with the evidence of the reality that surrounds us.

A True Witness of the Evidence?

Yes, you should beware of Y2K, because now is the time that many are going to fall into a deeper spiritual sleep, and others will tend to follow. The later part of this *News Watch* will explain why this is true, and to understand it is a matter of being able to understand our recent history so it won't be repeated. This very year will likely prove to be one of the most important for the larger percentage of brethren that still remain in the scattered Church. The past few years have been devastating for the Church, but this year will prove to be even worse. This is not a message of "peace, peace," but a message that addresses the true evidence surrounding us and seeks to warn you of the reality so you can escape.

Will you escape this negative spiral that continues to affect the Church? Do you want to escape? The spirit of Laodicea is greater than you are. You cannot resist it. Only by God dwelling in and through you, as you are being spiritually watchful, can you have hope in conquering such a spirit. If you truly desire to successfully come through this year, you must be willing to fight against the pride of Laodicea.

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome [conquered] them:

because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 Jn 4:4, KJV). *"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh [conquers] will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"* (Rev. 3:20-21).

News Watch has previously addressed the problem of organizations' preach-ing "peace, peace" to the Church, when that is not the truth at all, but many prefer to believe that it is the truth. Such messages are Laodicean in spirit because they refuse to focus on the true evidence in front of them. A message of "peace, peace" is being a false witness and should be seen as such. Any group preaching that the scattered Church is growing, becoming healthier, and experiencing increasing peace is lying, and the truth is not in them. You can speak what the truth of God is in doctrine, yet lie about what is true. True doctrine does not make you spiritually true because you can possess the truths of God and still be a false witness. Can you be truthful with the evidence of what has been happening in God's Church over the past several years?

Some organizations, ministers, and brethren cannot admit the truth that the Church is scattered. What is the true evidence? Some believe that the gospel has not gone out into all the world at the end of the age as God prophesied it would. Did God do as He said He would? Did God fulfill that task through Mr. Armstrong? Or is it yet to be fulfilled through others as some are implying or actually teaching? If it has not been accomplished, is someone else doing a better job than Mr. Armstrong? Do they show any signs of the kind of growth that was experienced for so many consecutive years in our past? What is the true evidence?

Are the millions of dollars that are being pumped into publications, advertising, and media producing anywhere close to our past figures of growth or are only infinitesimal amounts actually being produced by comparison? Has God become weak all of the sudden? Is He not able to perform as He did in the past? Or is God doing exactly as He intends? What is the true evidence? Can't we see where God is and where He is not? This should remind us of the example of Elijah mocking the ministers of Baal because the evidence revealed who and where God truly was.

Are you a faithful witness? Are you being true to yourself and to God? Or has Laodicea been conquering you? If so, you can repent and return to God in all honesty and with zeal, and He will lift you up.

Too many today are lifting themselves up, kidding themselves that they are doing God's bidding, yet all the while denying the true evidence all around them. To lift ourselves above what is true and falsely esteem an organization and its efforts while ignoring the truth, is the epitome of Laodicea. However, an organization of itself is not wrong, but it can be used in a wrong way.

Many brethren are going to be found guilty of working against God's will, not for it. They are not actually doing His work, but they believe they are. Lifting up our own efforts, as being God's, is idolatry. Stubbornly supporting things that are false and lifting up an organization or a ministry that denies the true evidence is idolatry. Spiritual idolatry was the great sin that led us to being spewed out of God's mouth. Idolatry is sin, and sin separates us from God.

A college can be a good instrument to serve the Church as well as an organization. And the ministry is an excellent tool for caring for the body of Christ. A quality magazine, broadcast, or telecast can be splendid means of giving added help to brethren

and adding to the Church (if God is using it to do so), as well as powerful means to warn this world or witness to it, if that is God's purpose. What has been the evidence of such things in the past and what is that evidence today? Was much of the reason for falling asleep associated with lifting up these things above what God intended? It is sad that some are so asleep that this obvious question is lost on them. If it is lost on you, please pray that God help you to see what is true.

Laodicea Is Spiritual Idolatry

Idolatry is the result of pride. It is mixed with attitudes of haughtiness, complacency, apathy, lying and deceit. It results in blind-ness to the true will and purpose of God. The Church of God has been witnessing something that is unprecedented in time. After the gospel went out to this world as a witness, to the exact extend that God intended, the doors to fulfill His will in this matter were closed. No one has been able to open them again. Is that a true witness or not?

There are some very humble brethren, not well known by the ministry, that have a far deeper understanding of some of these basic matters than does much of the ministry. These brethren put former evangelists to shame by their understanding. Some of them ask, "Why would God call large numbers of people into a dysfunctional organization at this time?" These humble brethren understand what those learned among us don't, that God is a perfect Father and knows how to nurture and best care for His children. And for the few He does call, you can rest assured that He will provide what they need to successfully go through these times.

What is God's obvious concern and primary work today? Is it to rebuild our media thrust of the past? If so, God appears quite weak. But we do not serve a weak God! Humble babes in Christ know the answer to this! God's work today is about His remnant Church. The focus is first and foremost on those He

has called to salvation now. We are first and foremost the work of God, His firstfruits. Any who deny this and seek to make God or His work something different is deep in idolatry.

Idolatry is once again on the increase as it was in the late 1980's. Brethren are being lulled to sleep by false visions of peace, prosperity and growth. The spirit of pride during Y2K is going to conquer more within the scattered Church, and there isn't much left of the present day Church to be conquered. Now is the time to flee idolatry! Now is the time to repent of pride.

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You need to be alert now more than ever. This is not the time to support false visions. Now is not the time to bury your head in the sand, as we all did once. Shame on us for doing it again! You may not like the truth. The truth always hurts when pride is in the way, because pride fights against humility and seeks to hold on to self-justification. Now is not the time to

remain stubborn and hold on to false security. We did that once! Remember?

You need to be spiritually watchful this year so that you can become stronger. You are going to need that strength for 2001. We have been living through distinct cycles within the Church. God is dealing with us in a timely manner, but time is not on our side! It is fast running out. We live in the end. The words of John the Baptist apply more than ever, because now we are rapidly approaching the second coming of Jesus Christ. *"Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"*(Matthew 3:2, NKJV).

If you prefer to hold onto and support false visions, you will drift off to sleep. You will not be able to help it. Then, when you need God most, you will likely not find Him. As every week goes by, more people give up and quit and more become deceived by false doctrine. This is a result of the spiritual idolatry of Laodicea.

History Is Repeating Itself

Rather than holding fast to the truth God restored to the Church during the time of Philadelphia, brethren continue to apostatize and leave the truth. Instead of fleeing spiritual fornication, it has become almost vogue in many circles to delve into different ideas apart from the truth once delivered. That which is true, that has been miraculously revealed to us by the power of God and the result of His direct intervention in our lives, is now no longer exciting and inspiring to much of the Church. Most of the articles in *The Journal* are a perfect example of the confusion, apostasy, and distorted ideas of false teachers.

This ever increasing abandonment of the truth is the result of a repetition of our recent history. Spiritual idolatry began to move more speedily into the WCG in the late 1980's. This was the result of a pride-filled, Laodicean spirit. This spirit always leads brethren

into drifting off to sleep and into deeper idolatry.

As that spirit becomes stronger, spiritual sluggishness and sleep make one weaker. When this happens, people turn in one of two directions. Brethren in both cases begin to turn inward, cutting themselves off from the flow of God's love (agape). The remnant of brethren should be keenly aware of this kind of thing because we all witnessed it in the WCG.

One direction that people turn, who begin to let God's love wax cold in their life, is that they begin to foster a counterfeit, fraternal love in order to feel better about what they are doing. Such people often step up the rhetoric about God's love and tend to speak of Jesus more than would otherwise be normal. That certainly would not be a bad thing if it were real and motivated by God's spirit, but it comes from within the human spirit and fools many. The ministry of such groups is generally able to be identified by a more liberal approach to almost every aspect of church life, where brethren are given more of a free hand in running the affairs of the church and get more involved in doing so. It is much like what we witness in the Protestant world. That is why so many of these kinds of people begin adopting more of the terminology, and even music, that is used in the Protestant world. They can't help it, because they become spiritually blind.

The other direction that brethren turn is at the other end of the pendulum, and these too are experiencing the love of God waxing cold in their life. Generally this can be identified by a ministry that practices strong manipulation and control over the brethren. This kind of group tends to hold more conservatively to the truth once delivered. They tend to talk more about such things, but show little practice of it within the Church. Such brethren tend to be less active in the affairs of the church. They also tend to hold onto a more controlling kind of ministry that gives them a false sense of

security, which leads to their being more easily manipulated by that same ministry. Such a structure is often referred to as "sheriffing" and "herding" rather than loving and leading the brethren. In such environments, brethren often have the justifying illusion of holding onto the truth, since they tend to have a more conservative approach to matters. But having the truth, even all the truth in the universe, is of little value if God's love is not deeply involved in all relationships. Manipulation and control are not of God and His love, instead, it is only oppression. It would be wise for such brethren to consider scriptures like Isaiah 30:8-14 and 59:9-15.

Both extremes of the pendulum, the liberal left and the conservative right, are producing their own works apart from God—not by His spirit, nor through His love. There is a soundness of mind that is able to know the balance between the two. It is one that has repented of the Laodicean spirit that has infected the scattered Church. That balance is spiritually discerned and is from God. God alone can give the balance and soundness of mind of what is true in action, not just in belief and doctrine.

As brethren begin to move away from God and turn in one of these two directions of spiritual idolatry, the next destructive step by both is into spiritual fornication. Slowly but surely, doctrine and truth will begin to be polluted. Apostasy will follow. We have witnessed both extremes in the WCG. Some went to one side of the pendulum and some to the other. Both began to depart from God and eventually apostasy followed. The Church was scattered as a result. God shook us at different times through this period in the WCG, and we were given the opportunity to awaken and begin to zealously prepare for the coming of the bridegroom. But sadly, because of our weak human spirit and the power of a Laodicean spirit, that repentance has been short lived by many ministers and

many brethren since they have drifted back to one of the former extremes of our past. Liberal nor conservative is of God. Truth, righteous judgment, and agape are His. Do you have what is His or are you drifting back to a former time and letting history repeat itself?

Be Honest With the Evidence

It isn't a pleasant thing to look at the destruction and carnage of our recent past, but if we can be honest with the evidence of our past and present, we may be able to avert repeating history all over again. This article has addressed some tough issues in our lives. In the scattered Church this past year there has been an incredible escalation of drifting back into deep spiritual idolatry. Y2K is now upon us, and the natural course to follow is a repetition of what we have already witnessed in the WCG. Can we be honest with ourselves in these matters and flee as fast as we can, if they are indeed at our doorstep?

Spiritual idolatry has been rampant the past couple of years. Now spiritual fornication is increasing. Brethren are turning away from basic truth, a little at a time. Such things escalate in horrifying fashion if not quickly repented of by those making wrong choices in their lives. Some are again drifting away from the basics and sound understanding of government. Some are being deceived by false ideas and teachings about tithing, while others are beginning to accept false teachings about the timing of Passover or Pentecost. This year, greater battles over these basic issues are looming on the horizon, and more will be deceived.

Sometimes we find it is even hard to be honest with what might appear to be little things in our lives. Let's see if we can be honest with ourselves about some very basic concepts. Perhaps we are not yet guilty of committing spiritual idolatry in these areas, but

many brethren are! You must be the judge and faithful witness.

Calling ourselves by some other name does not make it true. We bear the name of God as the Church of God. We are to be faithful witnesses of that calling. Be careful of false hope and false security that can come by adding to that name. Don't allow yourself to be lulled to sleep.

"United" is far from true. We certainly are not that. We are scattered. God has made it so. Calling ourselves by something that is not true can be a false witness of the true evidence before us. It can also be a mockery of the very lessons God is teaching us. Does "united" lie against the truth?

Does "restored" lie against the truth? The truth is that we are scattered and only a remnant remains. That is the true evidence. "Restored" is a lie. God's Church is far from restored. Truth was restored to the Church through Mr. Armstrong, but since that time most have abandoned and rebelled against that truth. So truth has not been restored into the scattered Church at this time. We are commanded to hold fast to what God restored. Seeking to be restored to our former state of unity and strength can certainly be our hope, but we don't have it yet.

Philadelphia describes a period of time for the Church. That period is past. Calling oneself by such a name does not make it true. And why would someone only want to attain to a level of social or fraternal love that is capable in man apart from God's spirit. Shouldn't we rather desire to be filled with agape, God's love? And does such an oppressive and controlling administration reflect agape? How did we manage to be brought into the Church in times past without "Malachi's Message?"

Global has now been shown the truth. It most certainly is not global now. We are not now global like we used to be worldwide. We do need to be careful of the visions we place before us. International is another example of

potential idolatry. Is it functioning well on an international level? Was it ever? Did it come even close to achieving Worldwide status? What happened to it? Do we lack ears to hear what God tells us? Does Intercontinental make it true? What is next? The Galactic Church? We can make a mockery of God, and we most certainly can be a false witness. We can become a laughing stock to others. Such foolishness should remind us of prophecies that speak of such things. God warns His rebellious people that He would make them as a laughing stock and that foreigners would mock them.

Why is it so hard to be a faithful witness? Can we humbly see ourselves as God does or do we insist on lifting ourselves up? What is the evidence of our recent past? Was Ambassador College lifted up above what God intended? Was the organization of Worldwide lifted up? Was the ministry? What is the true evidence?

A faithful ministry that truthfully administers the ways of God is essential for nurturing and bringing the body of Christ into unity of Spirit (Ephesians 4). The Church will not mature and grow without good organization, but the ministry and organization are not to be lifted up beyond the level that God reveals for their purpose. The Jews mistakenly lifted up the importance of their teachers above God. They even lifted up the importance of Jerusalem beyond God's intended purpose. A location, a physical structure, an organization, or even a person is valuable to the degree of God's sanctified purpose and presence.

Brethren have sought to hold onto a magazine, a telecast, a minister, an organization, a building, or even a name more than they have sought to hold true to God. That is idolatry. Ambassador College is no more. The Plain Truth, Worldwide, and Ambassador Auditorium have all been polluted by the alters of Baal. God's presence and sanctified purpose are no

longer being accomplished there. Are we guilty of trying to set up new alters after our liking and image?

These things are not said to hurt people. They are not said in order to lift up self. They are not said out of jealousy or anger. They are given out of love and a deep desire to warn of the dangers before us. We are all capable of falling into the old trap of pride. That is the battle we must fight. Any of us can become guilty of spiritual idolatry. We need to continually examine ourselves and ask God for the courage and integrity of spirit to be honest with the evidence that surrounds us. All of us will stand before God and Jesus Christ to answer for our actions. May God help us be true and faithful witnesses. Please beware of Y2K and the attitude of pride that accompanies it. **NW**