

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

April-June 2000

BLITZ ZEIT

There is no expression that can fully capture the uniqueness of the time in which we are living, yet this article has coined a phrase that is intended to help you focus more earnestly on the importance of our time right now. If we were to consider all of human history, those who are living now do not have the slightest inkling of the paramount importance and magnitude of this present period. Although brethren in the scattered Church of God may grasp that we live at the end of an age, most do not have a realistic grasp of the significance of this current time. Do you?

To emphasize this present moment in all earth's history and to more fully focus the reader on the message of this article, a rather unique title has been chosen. What is "blitz zeit?" Perhaps you have heard of the German word "blitzkrieg" that began to take on a significant meaning during World War II. It is a word for "lightning war," which takes on the meaning of a sudden, swift, large-scale offensive warfare, which is intended to win a quick victory. The early strategy of the Germans was indeed to sweep down suddenly on other countries, conquering them in a quick and massive onslaught.

"Blitz zeit" may not be a common expression or even an acceptable one, but it is intended to emphasize the seriousness of and give greater understanding to the weeks and months that lie directly in front of us. "Zeit" is the German word for "time." We live in a time when conditions around us are changing rapidly, often with quick and massive onslaughts on our lives that totally alter the conditions surrounding us. We have not fared well with what we have already been experiencing. Are you prepared for the acceleration of such events in the weeks and months

ahead? Are you ready for more intensive moments to unfold from prophecy—moments that will turn into the most dramatic times of all human history? Most don't even begin to grasp the slightest depth of such a statement.

"Blitz zeit" on the World

Once prophecy concerning tribulation on the Church has been accomplished, then prophecy will begin to speed forward and unfold on this world. Unimaginable events will unfold and emerge quickly, and the rapidity of repetition will intensify with devastating results. It isn't a pleasant thing to consider such realities.

When those times unfold, people will no longer be able to deceive others with the message of "peace, peace" as this world is presently doing. The same spirit that is in the world, especially in the Israelite nations of Britain, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and the United States, is the same spirit that is within the Israel of God, spiritual Israel, the Church. Most leaders in the environs of the Church, like these Israelite nations, are focusing people on a facade of growing prosperity and better lives for all. Human nature loves the message of "peace, peace."

Paul is making it clear, to those who hear him, that the ministry must depend upon the power of God to work in them to preach His word. A minister cannot rely upon his own human reasoning and skill to preach to others, but sadly many do.

However, the Book of Ezekiel accurately identifies the true message that this world and the Church should be heeding, but is largely ignoring. The words of prophecy concerning the times in which we are living was unrolled before Ezekiel, and the message was not one of peace! "And

when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe" (Ezekiel 2:9-10, KJV).

Don't allow yourself to become weary of this message God gave through Ezekiel, because far too many have not only become weary of hearing it, but will not even consider it. God's word is going to be accomplished whether we hear or not. Ezekiel's words are for us! God told Ezekiel about those whom he was sent to warn. If the Church will not accept that Ezekiel was sent to us with this warning, how much less the world?

"And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOD. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them" (Ez 2:1-5, KJV).

Have we forgotten some of the most basic understanding concerning the majority of the prophecies contained in the Bible? Don't we remember being taught that nearly one third of the Bible is prophecy? Do you remember how much of that was estimated to be about this very time in which you are now living? Nearly 90% of all prophecy is about our time now! It is incredibly sad that most

brethren fail to realize that so many of those prophecies are about the Church and what we have been experiencing over the past few years and are continuing to experience. Even sadder is the failure to grasp that most of those prophecies concerning the Church have already been fulfilled with not many prophecies remaining to be fulfilled before tribulation begins unfolding on this earth.

Is this world prepared for "blitz zeit" when prophecies begin unfolding swiftly and in rapid succession? The world will be just about as prepared as the Church was. It wasn't!

The Book of Joel begins by God asking if there has ever been a time in history that such catastrophic events have been reported. There has never been the like of such events in all history. What happens at the end of this 6,000 years is the most monumental of all time. This is true not only for the world, but for the Church covering the past 2,000 years. There has never been a time like this upon the Church, but most refuse to believe what God says about it.

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Mat. 24:21). Christ clearly said that the time in which we now live will be the most momentous during the whole period of time that man will dwell on this earth, past and future.

Once the seventh seal of Revelation is opened, the seven trumpet plagues and seven last plagues are indeed going to be a blitz zeit upon this world. There has never been a time that has even come close to the kind of quickly unveiling fury that will be poured out upon this earth. Even in our most focused state, we cannot begin to grasp this paramount time of human tribulation. It is almost impossible for us to fully grasp that we are indeed living at the brink of that very moment.

The eyes of the world are blind to the depth of volatility that exists around the globe that will one day burst into great fury. Few seem to grasp the significance of events in Europe that are moving them closer to

a union that will emerge quickly and powerfully out of her midst. It will not be the European Union that is now on the scene. This current union is simply the forerunner that is helping to mold and fashion the minds of people to embrace the beast that will arise in her midst. Europeans will not allow their dreams and efforts of the past fifty years to be threatened or thwarted. Do you really believe they are the kind of people who will turn back from the euro and let it die?

"Blitz Zeit" on the Church

Time is rapidly becoming of greater importance to each of us, because, as it has been said before, "Time is not on our side!" Many within the environs of the Church have already been so shell-shocked by the quickly changing events around them that they have become disoriented and disillusioned or have simply given up and quit. That has happened to well over a third of all the people who were once in our midst.

If you are still holding on as a remnant of the true Church of God, then you have witnessed many quick changes in our midst. Just look at all the splintering and scattering that has continued for the past few years. Those sudden events, of themselves, have been enough to cause great destruction. Such sudden moments in time (blitz zeit) have already worked to lead more than 130,000 people from our midst.

Such losses seem to do little to shock and sober brethren into reality. Too many do not want to confront the realities before them concerning the true health and spiritually weak condition of the Church. The method of escaping this true reality has been, and continues to be, the practice of preaching "peace, peace" and the willingness of brethren to believe such a message. Not only is there a willingness to believe such a message, but there is a concerted effort on the part of many brethren to seek out such visions in order to escape this current "moment in time." But it is the very reality of what is before us that should be forcing us to admit our errors and repent in order to draw closer to God

in spirit and in truth! Escaping the reality of the moment only delays repentance or moves it farther from our grasp.

Indeed, we have failed to grasp the consistent destruction that rapid changes have brought upon the members of the Church. These changes have come with such quick repetition that, as was mentioned, many just became so disillusioned by what was happening that they simply gave up and quit. Others, however, have become doctrinally polluted by some of this spiritual blitzkrieg that has come upon the Church. We live in a time of spiritual tribulation upon the Church (the spiritual Israel of God).

Spiritual blitzkrieg has hit the Church over and over again these past few years. The greatest onslaught, geared to conquer and destroy the Church, took place at the beginning of 1995 when most major doctrines were abolished by the leadership of the Worldwide Church of God. There were many smaller blitzkriegs before that time, and many people were lost in those battles. Some failed to realize that those smaller blitzkriegs worked mightily to pollute the minds of many brethren. The results of that pollution are now being felt within the scattered Church with increasing intensity. People latched onto distorted and unbalanced ideas during those times. Those ideas and false beliefs, whether hidden or suppressed in those brethren, are now being brought to the surface for all to see.

The peripheral damage from those smaller attacks and that great attack of January 1995 is now manifesting itself through ministers and would-be preachers. These false teachers are now resuming those blitzkriegs against the Church with their false teachings. Some of those false teachings twist and distort the most basic understanding of the meaning and timing of Passover and Pentecost. If brethren can be confused and misled concerning the basic doctrines about the beginning of God's plan, how many other areas are there where they can become deceived? Such things should sober us to repentance and a deeper

understanding of our need for God and His continual presence in our lives.

Other doctrines and teachings being polluted and changed include truths involving the Kingdom of God, government, God's ministry, tithing, the timing of the first resurrection, predestination, God's calendar, the nature of God, prophetic events, our very history, etc. These attacks often come unexpectedly, subtly and generally from sources that brethren do not expect. Brethren are not on guard spiritually, as they should be, and therefore become easy prey.

The startling truth is that not many years have passed since we witnessed the destruction of nearly 130,000 in our midst. Not much remains, but who wants to think about that? Not many want to face what continues to befall the Church. Time is not on our side, and prophetically, it is rapidly coming to an end.

Brethren are being tried in the fire as they continue to experience the swift changes that suddenly come into their lives. How are you responding? Are you prepared for more quick change? The most momentous events are yet ahead! You need to understand that you can prepare yourself and be ready. This is indeed a time to make certain that we are preparing ourselves more than ever before. You can become stronger and draw even closer to God during the months ahead, or you can be caught off guard and fall with the rest of those who have been conquered over the past few years. The choice is yours! If you are not on the mailing list for sermon tapes, you need to request the two-part sermon series entitled "Focused In Reality."

The Pace Has Quickened

Over the past few years, the Church has suffered a great deal of devastation at repeated intervals. Within those periods of time we have seen the vast majority of the Church either quit or separate themselves spiritually through false doctrine. Not much remains that can be recognized as a remnant that is holding to the testimony of Jesus Christ and the commandments of God. It does take time to sift and refine us

as a people, but that time is rapidly coming to an end.

How many years did it take us to drop from 150,000 people to our current scattered numbers? It wasn't long, was it? In early 1995 the greatest part of that devastation took place. How many difficult times have you seen since then? We have been living through a kind of blitz zeit, from one tragic moment to another.

Several years ago we could not have begun to conceive of all that we would go through during such a short period. In the past, it may have taken a few years before people began to move away from the truth or to give up all together because of the truth being watered down and false doctrines being introduced or just becoming complacent or disillusioned, but today this process occurs much quicker. It doesn't take as much time as it did in the late 1980's or early 1990's. This process can begin quite abruptly today and move brethren away from the truth at a much faster pace than it did the first time around.

If you have witnessed that the pace for the time it takes brethren to separate themselves from the Church through deception or defeat has quickened, then you should be further sobered to understand that the time for sifting is quickly running out. If it took only a few years to see 130,000 go by the wayside, then you should be moved to the stark realization that, if things are not reversed or halted, it wouldn't take much longer before nothing would be left.

Such reality should give greater meaning to the words, "*And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened*" (Mat. 24:22, KJV). Don't forget the duality in many scriptures that has a physical, as well as a spiritual fulfillment.

The scattered Church, which could potentially be considered a true remnant, is rapidly growing smaller. The numbers alone should cry out to us just how quickly we are drawing near to the end of the tribulation and the scattering that is upon the Church.

Now Is the Time!

The few who remain in the scattered Church and the many who have gone by the wayside are a testimony and a witness to the truth of God's word contained in prophecy concerning the Church. If we believe God, then we will be moved more now than at any other time in our lives to prepare ourselves for all that lies ahead. Blitz zeit is going to intensify. Now is the time to be repenting more fervently and seeking to become far more zealous toward God, His truth and way of life. Time is indeed running out for such opportunity.

God spoke through Joel about the time that is now in front of us. It is a time for some of the most intense chastening ever for those who continue to resist God and refuse to accept His correction. Yet most who are scattered refuse to believe that God is addressing His people in this way. Instead, people seek to believe better of themselves.

If we fail to believe who we are, then we fail to receive God's correction. We tend to believe that we are doing pretty well, getting things back to normal, growing once again and establishing peace in our midst. It is hard to grasp our true needs. If we knew where we were in prophecy, and if we knew who we are as a Church at this time, then we would know that the primary, overall condition of the Church is one of being "wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17, KJV).

But the reaction to God's word is haughty and arrogant. Most people refuse to hear God and therefore believe that those words are "not about me and they certainly are not about the organization with which I am affiliated." Such people may believe that this is about other brethren or other organizations, but only as each of us is able to admit to the time in which we live, and admit who we are, can we then begin to clearly grasp the battle that is before us. If we can admit we are Laodicean, then we can respond in the way God tells us. Only then can we truly repent and become

genuinely zealous toward God in spirit and in truth.

But any who would dare tell others this truth are looked down upon, scoffed at and ridiculed. Why? Because these things cannot be about us! Such refusal to hear God carries a devastating penalty. Let's notice carefully what God has to say to people with such attitudes.

"And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land" (Amos 7:15-17, KJV).

For the Israel of God that is the Church, this attitude is one that refuses to believe that God would prophesy against them. Even today, there are ministers and brethren alike who refuse to believe that we are scattered, let alone that we have been spued out of God's mouth. So God declared that such a refusal to receive His words against them would mean that a family member would turn to spiritual adultery by turning away from some of the truths of God. As a result of one baptized member turning away from God through such sin, others in the family would become weakened and fall by the wayside as well. In the end, a continual refusal to receive God's corrective instruction will lead to one's own demise, dying spiritually in polluted doctrine.

Such words are hard to receive. Most think that it is foolish to believe that such words could apply to the Church. But if we could only be truthful with our recent history and our continuing demise, then we could begin to see overwhelming evidence of these things within the Church.

Yes, we are at the brink of witnessing even greater correction on a people who stubbornly refuse to

listen. What a shame and testimony this is against us. If we are willing to receive God's correction, then we will respond in the way He wants for each of us. He receives no pleasure in chastening us. He loves us, but we must repent!

Let's understand—God has declared that a trumpet be blown in Zion, in His holy mountain, to warn us, if we will hear, that greater chastening lies ahead for all who refuse His correction. He clearly tells us what we must do.

"Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil" (Joel 2:12-13). Turning to God in such a way is the genuine process of repentance and acknowledgment of sin. These verses clearly tell us that God has been very patient, and He has a desire to extend great kindness toward us. The phrase, "and repents him of the evil," means that God wants to change from the necessity of having to chasten us with such severity. He seeks not to punish us if only we will respond and truly repent.

The intensity of time is going to begin crashing down on those who refuse to hear God. Time is not on our side! The choice of what lies ahead for each of us is in our own hands. We alone must choose what our response will be.

"As God has so often placed these words before us, throughout our spiritual development, let's understand that they should be ringing in our ears more powerfully than ever before. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:" (Deuteronomy 30:19, KJV).

A Remnant Will Repent

If we can begin to more deeply understand our plight and the reasons for it, we will begin to grasp the

urgency of our time. A loving Father has instructed those who live in Laodicea to *"be zealous therefore, and repent"* (Revelation 3:19, KJV). Those words should burn in our ears.

All who fail to see themselves as Laodiceans will fail to repent. Such people see themselves in a better light and will not accept the reality of the moment.

As we read earlier in Ezekiel, the trouble and woe that is upon the Church should cause us to have deep lamentation and mourning for such a condition. That kind of response is one that is being more honest with our plight and can lead us to true repentance. Are you among such brethren that grasp the true condition of the Church?

There will be a remnant of all who have been scattered who will respond truthfully to the times in which we live. Do you see peace and safety for the Church with time going on much longer in order for us to accomplish bigger and better things, or do you ache for the true condition in which we find ourselves?

Do you believe that the time may be now when God is looking at our response in order to separate us from the punishment that is yet to come? Ezekiel's words may be more pertinent than some believe. *"And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof"* (Ezekiel 9:4, KJV).

There is a remnant, composed of scattered brethren, that will repent and be delivered by God. We read where Joel warned that we are to turn to God with fasting and mourning through heartfelt repentance. Notice God's promise to all who obey that admonition. *"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call"* (Joel 2:32, KJV).