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The Stones of the Temple

"And Jesus said ... There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2).

Do you understand the reasons why God's Church is scattered today? Do you know where we are in the timing of prophecy? Are you aware of all the prophecies that have already been fulfilled in recent years and that are currently being fulfilled? Are you filled with a stronger confidence because you "know" what God expects of you at this time? This publication is focused on helping you answer these questions and concerns.

Some things you read may shock you, and indeed they should. We have been living through some of the most shocking and deeply sobering times in our nearly 2,000 year history. You need to understand recent events in precisely that kind of setting.

"Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.' Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'" (Matthew 24:1-3, NKJV). Notice what else is added to this account: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" (Mark 13:4).

We tend to read scripture from a physical vantage point as we consider physical explanations. Many prophecies have both a physical type and a spiritual type. Again, we generally focus on the physical type first.

The physical type of the destruction of the temple can be likened to the kind of destruction that took place in 70



A.D. Some have even thought this may be about the destruction of a reconstructed temple at the end of this age.

The importance of this prophecy is not about a physical temple, but a spiritual one. Jesus Christ is going to return to a spiritual temple, not a physical one.

Neither the Jews nor the disciples understood Jesus when He said "destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." They thought His words were about the physical temple. We in the Church are not much different concerning our first response to scripture.

The timing of the words of Jesus should not be difficult to understand. The stones of the temple, being thrown down, are related to the sign of His coming at the end of this age. We have always understood that the age He is referring to is the end of the 6,000 years of man.

Is it difficult to discern this account

of Matthew and Mark? We need to understand that the fulfilling of the time for the stones of the temple to be cast down is at the end of this age. So we should also understand that the stones of the temple, being cast down, are directly related to the sign of His coming!

We are living in some of the most momentous times of prophetic history, but few grasp the true depth of this reality. The very events that Jesus Christ spoke of in Matthew 24 are first and foremost about the Church at the end of this age.

When Jesus said that we should take heed that no one would deceive us, He was not speaking to the world, but to the Church. The world is already deceived. Only those who know the truth can become deceived.

We have tended to focus on Matthew 24:5 as primarily being about false teachers in this world.

"For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many." Certainly the false teachers in this world, who speak a great deal about Jesus Christ, play a big role in helping to keep the world deceived. But those same false teachers hardly play any role at all in deceiving anyone in the Church. It can happen, but as a means of initial deception, it is indeed rare.

In the mid 1980's, we would not have conceived of the possibility that this warning about false teachers was principally speaking about false ministers in the Church who would deceive brethren in our time. But since that time, we have seen most of the ministry turn to deceiving brethren from the truths God first revealed to us. Remember, the only ones who can become deceived are those who are not already deceived.

The story in Matthew 24 continues by saying, *"And because iniquity shall*

abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (verse 12, KJV). We began experiencing this during the 1970’s, and it continued to increase until it mushroomed in the early to mid 1990’s. Because of sinful lives, brethren were being cut off from the flow of God’s spirit in their lives. Being cut off from God’s spirit, as a result of sin, means that the flow of God’s love (Gk.-agape) ceased to work in their lives. God is the source of this kind of love spoken of in verse 12. Man cannot work up this love, nor can he fake such love. Experiencing and living by this kind of love requires a continual flow of God’s spirit into one’s life. Again, these verses are talking about the Church and not the world. [These verses in Matthew 24 are more thoroughly covered in a sermon series titled “A Time to Judge.” You may request your free copies.]

The story flow continues, “*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come*” (verse 14). Foolishly, there are many in God’s Church who have lost sight of the meaning of this verse. But again, this is something that was to be accomplished at the end of this age. The fulfillment of this event marked the beginning for end time events to commence; events that would finally climax in the very return of Jesus Christ. [The importance of this verse is discussed more fully in the article “Dead, Revived, Rejected.”]

The next verse brings us to the event, that Christ mentioned at the beginning, about how there would not be one stone left upon another in the temple. “*When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)*” (verse 15). Now we come to an event that was to take place within the temple itself. Is that temple a physical one or a spiritual one?

“*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but*

fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22, KJV). “*To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*” (1 Peter 2:4-5, KJV). Do we not know who we are? We are stones in the Temple of God.

What is this abomination that works to make the temple of God desolate? [This subject is covered more fully in the article “Time Is Running Out!”] This prophetic event, which occurs at the end of the age, has been in the process of being fulfilled, within the Church, ever since it began to be made manifest in late 1994. We have been living through some of the most momentous events prophesied in the Bible. Almost 2,000 years ago the disciples quizzed Jesus about this very event. Do we not grasp the magnitude of living at such a time as this? It should send chills up your spine.

The verses that follow the account of the abomination of desolation describe a time of fleeing and tribulation upon the Church. We have been living, and we are still living, in a time of great tribulation upon the Church. Not much remains as a result of all the destruction.

During one period of time, toward the end of this age, the Church was blessed to be organized in one large, worldwide fellowship known as the Worldwide Church of God. That is no longer the case. That fellowship has been so shaken that nothing remaining in it can even be considered to be part of the Temple of God. The only

ining for anyone being able to once again be brought back into the Temple of God is through fleeing and repentance. Indeed, not one stone would remain upon the other without being cast down.

All have been cast down! All have been spued out of God’s mouth. To be a remnant of God’s chosen people at the end of this age, everyone must flee the idolatry and the abomination that works to destroy the Temple of God. This requires repentance on every person’s part and a renewed zeal for God and His work! We have been shaken, shattered and scattered from our original condition. Yes it is true, we have lived through the time when one stone was not left upon another, but Jesus Christ will return to this Temple!

Do you see what has been happening to us? That which has already been scattered continues to be shaken and scattered even more. We need to understand why these things are continuing to happen. We also need to understand that the apostasy, which started many years ago, is still ongoing. The Church is being sifted and refined, and only a very small remnant will remain. If you desire to be part of that remnant, you need to know what God expects of you, because there is work underway to rebuild on the Temple of God before Jesus Christ returns! [For more on this subject, you may request the sermon series “**Rebuilding On The Temple.**”]



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The history of the Church, over the past 100 years, might best be reduced to three words: dead, revived, and rejected. Do you believe our history? Do you believe what God says to His own people? Many today don't or won't!

God has described His people at the end-time in terms summed up by those three words. He told the Church that it had come to the point where it needed to be revived from a condition that came to best describe His own people as "dead." After it was revived and blessed with wealth never before experienced to the same level or degree, the Church became spoiled and filled with pride. Along with that pride came spirit bred complacency, lethargy, and self-satisfaction, which in turn led to being rejected by God. If you haven't understood our history in that light, maybe it is time for you to consider the words of God concerning this matter. Understanding our circumstances in such realistic terms has proven to be a difficult matter for brethren to accept and admit.

A DEAD CHURCH?

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

Jesus Christ was telling Peter about the Church that He was going to build. It was a Church that would not die out, but would continue until He returned to receive His Kingdom on this earth.

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [Greek: "precede"] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the

dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain [at Christ's coming] shall be caught up together with them [those who died in Jesus Christ and were resurrected first] in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17, KJV).

Clearly, the Church would not die out before Jesus Christ would return to this earth to receive His Kingdom.

Today many do not believe in the eras of the Church, yet our history cries out to us concerning that truth. We can deny neither our history nor God's instruction and warnings which cover these seven specific periods of time. Yes, there are people who have carried the understanding of eras beyond their intended use, but at the other end of the pendulum are people who have totally rejected any understanding of them. As you think about what God says to the last three churches mentioned in Revelation, try to give honest and truthful consideration to our history.

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the

seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead” (Revelation 3:1, KJV). It may be startling for us to hear God say this to His own Church. Jesus Christ told them they had a name that they lived, which is the Church of God, but He said that their overall description as a people in the Church was that they were dead! He said there were only a few who would overcome during this time. “Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy” (vs. 4).

After nearly 1900 years, the Church was about to die out. It had lived through some very dark and suppressed periods of time in human history. If the Church was to survive, it had to be revived. It was fast coming to a spiritual

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end. Jesus Christ told them, “*Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God” (vs. 2).*

If we believe the uniqueness of our calling and how God has worked with us as a people, we will understand our history and be encouraged to respond to the instructions of Jesus Christ that are found in Revelation.

God's purpose for the Church was that it continue up until the very return of His Son to this earth. Only God could revive a people that were spiritually dying out. Our history testifies to the reality of these last three eras.

If we fail to believe the reality of our past and the calling God has given to us as His people, then we will make ourselves no different from others who claim to be Christian in this world. Our ideas and actions will become liberal, and we will begin believing that there are brethren in all kinds of divergent and conflicting groups.

There are numerous efforts underway to destroy the uniqueness of our calling and open the door to varying doctrines and beliefs. Destroying the validity of

our past and undermining how God has worked with us are primary means of introducing new doctrines and new teachers. These new doctrines seek to change the truth that God revealed to us in the beginning. Such doctrines, that conflict with the truth once revealed to us, are promoted by false ministers, and there are far more false ministers in the environs of the Church than there are true ones. You need to be more watchful than ever, proving all that you hear.

GOD REVIVED THE CHURCH

During Sardis, truth was being lost from the Church. The Church was dying out, and it was time for God to revive it and restore all that had been lost. God raised up a man, Herbert W. Armstrong, to do that work. He was His apostle for the end of this age.

There are people who hate this part of our history and seek to destroy our understanding of this era in God's Church. The reason for the hatred and loathing that so many have toward Mr. Armstrong is because they do not like those truths that God restored during this time. People who seek to destroy this understanding of our history and how God has worked with us are enemies to the Body of Christ. They are antichrist because they have set out to fight against Christ's work in the Church. The plain truth is that if God hadn't used some man to revive the Church from its dead and dying condition, none of us would be here, neither would we know the plan nor the ways of God as we do today.

Although there are people who seem to be repulsed by the thought that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was the principal person God worked through during this era, the fact remains that he was the one through whom truth was restored to the Church. Everyone in God's Church today, minister and member alike, has been drawn by God the Father through the power of His spirit. As a part of that process, all have been brought to the knowledge of the truth through the

reviving and restoring that God accomplished through Mr. Armstrong. No one has come to be part of the Body of Christ in this age as a result of God working directly with them, as He did Mr. Armstrong. Do you know anyone who has come to such understanding by some other means? If they have come to understanding through the aid of one of the splinter groups, it is still the result of what God did in restoring truth through Mr. Armstrong!

The Church was dying during Sardis, and God was going to revive it. In order to accomplish the purpose of His Father to revive the Church, Jesus Christ said some very unique things to the Philadelphian era. He said that He had the ability to open that which no man could shut and to shut that which no man could open. He did exactly that through Mr. Armstrong. Understanding, that had been lost to the Church, would once again be restored, especially the understanding of His purpose for man revealed through the Holy Days. Sardis rejected that knowledge, therefore Mr. Armstrong had to leave that fellowship to obey God. The more he yielded himself in obedience to God, the more God continued to reveal truth to the Church. Doors of understanding and doors for preaching this knowledge of the gospel into all the world were increasingly opened up to the Philadelphian era.

Read Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong's comments in a brethren and co-worker letter dated October 25, 1985. “*Christ's true gospel message is THE KINGDOM OF GOD. Jesus taught and proclaimed no other gospel. It sounds incredible--almost unbelievable, I know--but it's TRUE! THAT gospel had not been preached to the world for 18 1/2 centuries! Many have, as Jesus foretold, come in his name, claiming to represent him, SAYING that Jesus is the Christ (Matt.24:5)--even proclaiming his shed blood--preaching about GRACE (but turning it into license)--and have DECEIVED THE MANY! God's true Church has continued to exist, through every generation, until now, as a small and persecuted Church. Yet it had not proclaimed Christ's true gospel, in an organized manner to the world, until A.D. 1934.”*

Mr. Armstrong expounded on this

subject in a letter dated November 22, 1982. *"No one had proclaimed that Gospel to the world for nearly 1,900 years. I began proclaiming it then, but only to a small area in and around Lane County, Oregon [referring to the first Plain Truth in February of 1934]. Within 19 years I had proclaimed it by radio and the Plain Truth over the entire United States. Then, the first week of 1953--precisely 1,900 years (a century of time cycles of 19 years each), I began sending out this Gospel to all Europe over the world's most powerful radio station, Radio Luxembourg."*

This Philadelphia era of God's Church had an open door before it to accomplish a very specific work of reviving the Church and preparing a people who could continue on and be present at the return of Jesus Christ. But today there are ministers and organizations that seem to fancy themselves doing what was given only to Mr. Armstrong to accomplish as an apostle. He was sent to do a very specific job. If people believed what God said to these last three churches in Revelation, they might better understand what has happened to us as a people and why we are in our present condition. And, if we truly understood our present condition, we would understand what primary "work" was now before us. That work is not the same work that was given to Mr. Armstrong which was to revive the Church and preach the gospel as a witness to this world.

Some seem to misunderstand the statement contained in Matthew 24. *"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come"* (verse 14, KJV). That gospel has been preached within the Church and in those parts of the world where God called His people over the past 1900 years. But when He revived the Church, it was also time to fulfill this and other prophecies God had determined for the end-time, just prior to establishing His Kingdom on earth. At the same time the Church was to be revived, the gospel was to be preached into all the world on a scale never done before. With the advent of mass publishing, radio and then television, it was

now possible to do this in a way never dreamed possible before.

When Mr. Armstrong died in 1986, the great physical tribulation did not come on this earth. Since many seem to believe that a "great physical tribulation" is what is meant by "the end," they began to believe that many of these kinds of prophecies were yet to be fulfilled through others. But if we could only understand our history and what these last three eras teach, we would know that "the end" *has come* upon us. The last era is here, and there are no more to follow. This is the end! Events taking place within the Church agree with prophecies concerning end-time events just before Jesus Christ returns. [See the article "Time Is Running Out!"]

Jesus Christ told Philadelphia there was an open door to accomplish what needed to be done. The Church had to be revived and restored in truth in order to fulfill God's plan for His soon coming Kingdom. The gospel also had to be preached in all the world as a witness toward the end. That "work" went throughout the world via several million *Plain Truth* magazines, television, and radio. It was unique to the period of time covered by Philadelphia.

Israel has already received the height of a warning witness given through the Philadelphia period of time, and they rejected it. That is a witness against them!

The purpose for this gospel being preached throughout the world was twofold. First, it was to revive the Church that needed to be restored in truth. People needed to be revived to be a part of this end-time work as well as being prepared for the return of Jesus Christ. The witness of God dwelling in the Church, through the lives of converted brethren, was to continue throughout the whole history of the Church, up until Jesus Christ returned. Secondly, it was to be a witness that even at the end of this age, in the midst of great technological development, mankind and governments would still refuse God's good news for mankind.

The door which was opened during that period of time is now closed. No one can open it, yet many are trying. What a vain thing to work against the

will of God! Don't we know what "work" now lies before us? Let's be honest with our recent history—proof of the condition of the Church is staring us in the face and is crying out to us for help.

The work for the Church is about the Church! It is about reaching out to help scattered brethren, those brethren who are already called and are crying out from the spiritual depths of their being. It is a time to help a people make themselves ready as the bride of Christ and to help brethren survive this time of tribulation which is upon the Church. The Church has been going through great spiritual tribulation. Prophecy warned about this being an end-time event. The end is upon us and unfortunately most of the Church has gone by the wayside as a result of this tribulation.

The work today is not about copying what God did through Mr. Armstrong. Those doors are closed. If you try to open a door Christ has closed, you will find yourself working against your Lord and Master. So is He indeed your Lord and Master? If He is, then you will listen to Him and do His will, but if not, you will probably do as so many are today.

Today, some believe they are first and foremost to be giving a warning witness to Israel. What a puny effort we see. If and when God gives a witness to Israel, more than He already has, you will know it. Israel has already received the height of a warning witness given through the Philadelphia period of time, and they rejected it. That is a witness against them!

The next great witness will be obvious. It will be given when God will not need to use a large organization to sponsor and support it. There will be such miraculous events accomplished at that time that much free publicity will be given. The work of that witness will consist of such newsworthy events that it will be widely reported in this world. There will be no need for a large organization to sponsor such efforts.

That future witness to Israel will be one that will remind them of the earlier witness they refused to heed during the Philadelphia era. It will tell them, once the physical tribulation has begun, why they are suffering! It will also be a message to the whole world of what is soon to follow—the coming of Jesus Christ as King of kings to set up the Kingdom of God on earth. That job of witnessing has been set aside for “two” to accomplish by the power of God. No church organization is going to do it, and no individual is going to be able to set himself up as God’s apostle to do it. It is for the “two” who are yet to be sent by God.

So today we find that the witness some organizations believe they are doing is actually a witness that God already did during Philadelphia. According to prophecy, the only great witness that remains is the one God will do through His two witnesses at the very end.

The primary “work” today is to warn, nurture, feed, and seek to give healing help to those God has already called to become firstfruits. These brethren are currently scattered all over this earth. As they respond to the correction that we have all been receiving, they will be repentant and desire to renew their relationship with God, in spirit and in truth. If we truly love our brothers in Christ, how could we do less than seeking to help rebuild a shattered Temple?

There are others who believe they are to raise up the Church again as was done in recent decades, yet what we see are feeble, puny attempts to do what God has not given us to do. Only God has the power and might to draw and call people into His Church, and at this time God is calling only a very few. The tools of mass media are no longer needed to accomplish what God did when He was reviving His Church. There are far too many who haughtily go about spending God’s money, while trying to raise up the Church, with a focus toward growing numbers of new people. The truth is slapping organizations in the face, but they refuse to pay

attention. These numbers are overwhelmingly coming from people who are already called and are going from one organization to another or from people who have had some contact from the past. It would be good for some to pause and consider the warning of Malachi 3:8-10 in a spiritual context toward the Church.

Today too many are denying our history by insisting we are still in Philadelphia. They understand neither our history nor the lesson contained in the last three eras of the Church. Philadelphia is over! No one is living in that period of time, but some people insist on carrying the label of that time because they believe it best embodies the vision they have of themselves. Why hang onto a name that only describes human love apart from God or God’s spirit? Philadelphia is only a fraternal kind of love; it is not a Godly love at all.

During Philadelphia, we were blessed to be part of a “work” that Jesus Christ had revived by opening doors to perform that work. At that time, we were blessed to be bound together in a fraternal fellowship of a single organization called the Worldwide Church of God.

During Philadelphia, we were blessed to be part of a “work” that Jesus Christ had revived by opening doors to perform that work. At that time, we were blessed to be bound together in a fraternal fellowship of a single organization called the Worldwide Church of God. That work and those open doors are no longer before us, consequently that era is gone. No one belongs to that era anymore! Our desire should be to receive the warning and instruction of the era in which we now find ourselves. We cannot afford to ignore it!

REJECTED

Today, the Church is living in the end time or the last era. The hour of temptation, held back during the time of Philadelphia, will come during this last period. It has already begun for the Church. We are living in the time of great spiritual tribulation for the Church, and as soon as that is complete, the whole world will come under a time of great physical tribulation. Nothing like this time has ever been seen or ever

will be seen again.

Our recent history testifies to the reality of the time in which we live. The best description for the Church, for well over a decade now, is found in the description of Laodicea. But because of pride, people cannot humble themselves to accept that this is what best describes us as a people. Instead, many stubbornly hold on to the descriptive title of Philadelphia, because they choose to see themselves as better than that which God has described us as being. We do indeed live in the time of Laodicea.

Pride is the principal error and attitude that blinds the eyes of those living at the end, just before Jesus Christ returns. People are lifted up with pride and envision themselves as doing great works. Today, the thrust of many organizations is to duplicate what God did through Mr. Armstrong, but they fail to accept the obvious, that those doors have been closed and the work

for that time has been finished.

The “work” today is different from Philadelphia and should be obvious to people who love

God, those who have been called by Him. *“And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him”* (1 John 4:21-5:1, KJV). Those who were revived during the Philadelphian era and are living on into the Laodicean era, including their children, should be the principal concern, care and work of the Church today. What a shame that most organizations are not focused first and foremost upon seeking to serve and help heal a people who have been so brutally attacked and so widely devastated.

So today, we see a Church that had earlier been revived, but is now scattered. The real work of God today should focus first and foremost on the Body of Christ, the scattered Church of God that He has called as the firstfruits of His plan of salvation. Those who are working against that plan and purpose are working against God. We should

exercise caution of those whom we choose to support and seek God's help to make those judgments. "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*" (1 John 4:1, KJV). This is truer today than at any other time in our history. Jesus Christ warned us of such things in the Church. Too many act as though those warnings are about false ministers who are in the world, who have no relationship to the Church. You should be able to easily spot those false teachers in the world, but you must be close to God to discern false ministers within the environs of the Church.

For most of the others who have not taken part with those focused on doing the "works" of Philadelphia, the focus seems to be on new teachings and doctrines that they believe have not been correctly understood during the Philadelphian era. The sad truth is that most of the doctrines and foundational truths restored to the Church by God are being attacked more vigorously now than when the Worldwide Church of God attacked them in the late 1980's and early 1990's.

People seem to think that if they can focus on the man, Herbert W. Armstrong, and tear him down, along with some of the doctrines that came through him, then they can teach their newly revealed, intellectual understanding. They envision others as having need to come to this same new understanding. Such foolish people are unwittingly attacking God and what He did to revive the Church and restore truth in it.

Yes, Laodicea describes both groups of people quite well. It describes the stubbornness and haughtiness of those who envision themselves as doing what God did through the Philadelphian era of the Church, with Mr. Armstrong as apostle. It also describes quite well the haughtiness of those who seek to tear down what was restored to the Church during Philadelphia, through Mr. Armstrong, by the power of the Almighty God.

Foundational understanding about things like Passover and Pentecost, how God works through the ministry as a part of Church structure, tithing, post-

ponements, our calling, and Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong being God's apostle at the end of this age and the one God used to restore truth in the Church are a few of the examples of things being attacked and changed by people who see themselves as new restorers of truth. They fail to understand our history or how God called us and worked with us. They fail to grasp that truth had to be restored to the Church by God and that what they are actually doing now is tearing down the very work that God Himself did.

God cannot and will not work with the haughtiness of such people or organizations who seek to duplicate what He has already done or who seek to tear down what He did. The answer for such attitudes is given to Laodicea. Repent! Such people, who see themselves doing such great works, are chided by God. Jesus Christ tells them their works are useless, that they are neither cold nor hot. Such people fail to see their wretched condition because they believe they are enriched by doing ever increasing, greater works. They see themselves as being blessed in their great efforts, and they preach the good news of their growing riches. Sadly, they fail to see the wretched condition of the Church as they blindly preach that we are growing in "peace and safety."

Most who see themselves as having escaped the first wave of destruction are filled with the same Laodicean attitude that led to our initial scattering and rejection.

God rejected this spirit of pride which is the very reason He spewed the Church out of His mouth in the first place. That persistent spirit of pride and complacency is why so many remain spewed out of God's mouth. We have been rejected by the master potter. We have been devastated as a people. Most of the Church, as we have known it, has gone by the wayside. We are scattered because of God's rejection and correction, but the haughtiness remains. Most who see themselves as having escaped the first wave of destruction are filled with the same Laodicean attitude that led to our initial scattering and rejection. That haughtiness has actually increased. To return to God and be accepted by Him requires deep

repentance and a genuine change from such attitudes.

A sobering word is used and translated as "scatter" in Daniel 12. It is a word that means to shatter, as a potter who rejects a piece of pottery and casts it to the floor to shatter it.

God cannot work with pride and haughtiness. Our answer and our hope to be restored to the grace of God is for us to deeply repent of such a spirit and seek to become zealous for those things God worked to restore in the Church during Philadelphia. (Revelation 3:19).

We must humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and admit our wretched condition. Humility will accept the truth and admit the reality of our history, but pride will refuse and become more blind and naked, thereby having no value to God. Again, our choice is to repent!

"I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee. When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high

and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:12-15, KJV).

If we have ears to hear, Jesus Christ tells us we do not have to be separated from God during Laodicea, but we can overcome. He instructs us to repent and be zealous.

We must repent of the pride of our works that oppose God. Most don't see themselves in such a light and will not repent.

If we will repent and humble ourselves before God, we can begin to receive His help once again to be zealous in His calling and purpose in

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TIME IS RUNNING OUT

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14).

We are near the very end of this age, closer than most are willing to believe. Do you know why this is true? You need to understand the reasons why time is rapidly counting down for those of us remaining in the Church of God. Time is not on our side.

Some people have preconceived ideas that hinder their ability to recognize or admit some facets of our recent history. These ideas hinder growth and usually lead to false conclusions and judgments about today's Church. We need to look honestly at our history if we are going to be able to grasp the seriousness of the times in which we live.

It is astounding how some ministers are still looking for a future falling away within the Church, even after the devastation we have experienced in recent years. If we are able to admit that the vast majority of the Church has either quit altogether or left the truth that God initially delivered to us, then that in itself should plainly cry out that an apostasy or falling away has indeed already occurred. It is difficult to grasp how a minister of God could be so blind and refuse to acknowledge what is staring him in the face. Perhaps some need to ask if such a person is indeed a minister.

Some ministers and brethren believe, and even teach, that the Church must grow large again so that the commission of the gospel being preached into all the world can be fulfilled. Because of these ideas, they go on to say that time must go on longer in order for them to accomplish this. Can such a belief and teaching actually deny God? Why is it

so difficult for people to acknowledge that the commission to do this has already been done through Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong? The bottom line is that either it has or it has not been fulfilled. What

mean when they say such things.

What is the truth? Did God not do a mighty work, growing continually greater until the year of Mr. Armstrong's death? Has that work continued to grow since that time? What is the evidence? What is the true witness and testimony?

Some have based this false belief, that the gospel has yet to be preached into all the world, on a lack of understanding about this scripture. *"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14, KJV).*

What Is "the End?"

Some say this gospel could not have been preached into all the world because the end has not yet come. The conclusion drawn is that if the end has not yet come, then someone other than Mr. Armstrong must fulfill that commission or that someone else must continue the work of that commission which has not yet been completed.

What is "the end?"

Is the end a specific final point? Is it when Jesus Christ returns? Is it the time of the Day of the Lord? Is it when the time of great physical tribulation begins on this earth? Is it the end of the millennium? Is it the end of the Great White Throne Judgement? Is it the time when many end-time events are to occur, which have been prophesied to occur at the end, just before the return of Jesus Christ? You would be wise to consider the reality of the latter question.

Are we blinded to what has been happening and continues to happen within the Church? Can we not grasp the most basic reality of where we find ourselves now? The end has come upon us! We are living in it! Are we too blind



do you believe and why?

People need to be cautious as to what they deny and what they reject as being true. Some will find that they have indeed denied and rejected what God has done, not what any man has done.

By denying what God did through the Church and Mr. Armstrong up until the mid 1980's, we can be guilty of denying the "work" of God. There are many ministers who believe they must teach about a "Work of God" yet to be accomplished through their efforts and those of their organization. Brethren need to understand what they actually

or asleep that we cannot see the obvious? The time for the Laodicean Church is at the end. There is not another era to follow it. Laodicea is the last one, and many prophesied events will take place during this “end” time.

We also need to be careful how we use the term “God’s Work.” God has worked to accomplish His purpose over the millennia, but His specific focus has varied according to what needed to be accomplished at a specific period of time. For nearly 2,000 years His work has been primarily about the Church, about those He has called to be first in His family. The gospel, going into all the world, was to take place toward the end of this 2,000 years. It was to be a specific and unique work toward the end. Notice again what Mr. Armstrong had to say about that work and that commission in his letter to the Church dated November 22, 1982. *“No one had proclaimed that Gospel to the world for nearly 1,900 years. I began proclaiming it then, but only to a small area in and around Lane County, Oregon [referring to the first Plain Truth in February of 1934]. Within 19 years I had proclaimed it by radio and the Plain Truth over the entire United States. Then, the first week of 1953--precisely 1,900 years (a century of time cycles of 19 years each), I began sending out this Gospel to all Europe over the world’s most powerful radio station, Radio Luxembourg.”*

Is that phase of “the work” over? Is anyone coming close to accomplishing what was being done through Mr. Armstrong in preaching the gospel to this world? The truth is that no one is; no one is even coming close.

The fact is the gospel has been preached in all the world as a witness precisely as God intended. After that was accomplished, the end did come upon us. Read again verse 14 and notice the next verse that follows.

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)” (Matthew 24:15, KJV).

Mr. Armstrong always stopped at verse 14 because he understood this was the commission, the work, he was given to do with the Philadelphia Church. God revealed this to him. After that commission had been accomplished, then verse 15 would unfold, but would have nothing to do with neither Mr. Armstrong nor the Philadelphia era. The abomination of desolation was to occur at the end, after the gospel had been preached into all the world as a

After that commission had been accomplished, then verse 15 would unfold, but would have nothing to do with neither Mr. Armstrong nor the Philadelphia era. The abomination of desolation was to occur at the end, after the gospel had been preached into all the world as a witness.

witness. Too many today do not believe that Mr. Armstrong and the Philadelphia Church finished the work God gave them to do. Our work today is to endure and hold fast to the foundational truths God gave us during Philadelphia and to be preparing ourselves for the soon coming Kingdom of God.

We live in the time of Laodicea. It is the end time when the abomination of desolation will be working upon the Church. The physical type of what is spoken of in Daniel is about the abomination that worked to destroy the physical temple, but the spiritual type is about the Church, the spiritual temple, and the abomination that would work to destroy it at the end of this age.

The Hour of Temptation

God told Philadelphia, *“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth”* (Revelation 3:10, KJV). Does this verse say anything about physical protection from great physical tribulation?

To whom is this message directed? It is directed to those in the Church who were living in the time of Philadelphia. That time is long past; now we are deep into the time of Laodicea.

What was this promise of God? Was it about keeping Philadelphians from having to suffer physically during a time of great physical destruction and tribulation that is yet to come upon this

earth? God will indeed keep many brethren safe from physical destruction and horrific suffering during the time of great physical tribulation that will come upon this earth just before the return of Jesus Christ, however this promise is not about physical protection!

This promise was given to the Church of God when it was given a great commission to support and accomplish. We correctly understood it and referred to it as the “Work of God.”

It was the work of God during Philadelphia. It was a work of reviving the Church and of supporting the gospel going into all the world. That is not the same work we face during Laodicea! That phase of God’s work was given to Philadelphia and is over. It is past! During the time of Philadelphia we were protected and spared experiencing the events of the “end” referred to in Matthew 24:15 concerning the abomination that would work to make desolate, which is about the Church.

God told the Church that during the time of Philadelphia they would be kept from the hour of temptation *“which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”* Do we not understand? At the end of this age both the Church and this world will be tried. Both a physical and a spiritual fulfillment apply to so many prophecies. The Church will be tried first and go through a great spiritual tribulation, followed by this world going through a great physical tribulation. Never in history has a time come close to comparing to the magnitude of trouble that will be experienced by the Church and this world.

The Church is now being tried in this end time which is upon us. The scattered Church, throughout the world, is being tried to see if it will repent and be faithful by holding fast to the commandments of God and the testimony (witness) of Jesus Christ. Not many seem to be doing that today.

The time of temptation, for the

Church, was to occur during Laodicea, when brethren would be enticed and lured to leave those truths restored to the Church during Philadelphia. The very meaning of Laodicea has become evident as we find ourselves in the “hour of temptation.” Laodicea means “the people judge.” The description of Laodicea in Revelation 3 is about a people who have lifted themselves up in pride and judge for themselves what is the truth of God.

Laodicea has made the same mistake as Adam and Eve, who had to be separated from access to the spirit of God. God removed them from the tree of life because, as He said, “they have made themselves as one of us, to know good and evil.” They took upon themselves the prerogative of deciding what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false. That describes the

Laodicea has made the same mistake as Adam and Eve.... They took upon themselves the prerogative of deciding what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false. That describes the scattered Church today.

scattered Church today. People are judging for themselves what they will accept as true and are deciding for themselves what is false, rather than remaining faithful to those foundational truths that God miraculously revealed to us from the beginning. This is why God commands Laodicea to repent and return with zeal to the truths they were given.

Understanding God’s Instruction

Let’s look at the admonition given at the end of Philadelphia, just before Laodicea was to come on the scene. *“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown”* (Revelation 3:10-11, KJV). Do you understand why God gave this instruction to His Church before Laodicea replaced Philadelphia?

Philadelphia was a time of great restoration of truth to the Church. Great wealth was being entrusted to brethren, but with time, brethren became spoiled

and began to see themselves as rich, rather than truly seeing God as the source of those riches which He was entrusting to us. That is why the task before Laodicea is to hold fast to what God entrusted to the Church during Philadelphia. The last era would be a time when brethren would be enticed and lured through temptation to leave the truths God had restored. If we are faithful stewards of the true riches of God, we will hold fast to them.

Before the return of Jesus Christ, the last era of the Church is found to be spiritually lacking; it is actually drifting off to sleep or already asleep. It was so filled with pride that God described it as having to be spewed out of His mouth. How many have awakened to these events and fully repented of the pride, apathy, and complacency that came upon us and still holds the over-

whelming majority in its grip?

In 1986 the WCG had nearly 150,000 people attending worldwide. In 1999, the WCG had only 6,160 attending the Feast in the United States (November 1999, *Worldwide News*, page 27). In this same issue is a report of people taking communion at Feast sites. Could there be many left who might yet escape? The rest of the Church, that has escaped and is scattered in all parts of this world, is not healthy either. We have been going through incredibly trying times as a people.

Most of what we once knew, as a Church, is now destroyed. It is indeed desolate. Early in 1995, approximately a third of the Church simply gave up and quit. Within a few more months, “traditional Christianity” had engulfed another third of the Church. This destruction and desolation has furiously continued ever since. Now, not much remains.

Ask yourself some questions. What is more important? Is it more important for those living during Philadelphia, who live on into Laodicea, to be protected and saved from physical pain and suffering later on in the great

tribulation or was it more important, during Philadelphia, to be kept from the kind of spiritual destruction and desolation that has engulfed the Church for several years now?

When you look at this realistically it seems silly to ask such questions. Most of those who were in the WCG, at the close of the Philadelphian era, have now gone by the wayside. The enticement to take the easy way out by quitting altogether or to leave the truth and accept false doctrines has already engulfed nearly 85 percent of the Church. The “hour of temptation” has led these people from the Church. The Church during the time of Philadelphia was indeed kept from what we have been experiencing for many years now. But no one has been kept from the spiritual tribulation now engulfing us during the time of Laodicea.

The hour of temptation that came upon God’s people everywhere they were in this world, has resulted in a great scattering and desolation upon the Church. That hour of temptation is now upon this last period of Laodicea. It is upon all the Church throughout the world. There has been an abomination working within the Church to make it desolate, and it is still working. The Church dwelling upon the earth during Laodicea is not promised to be kept from the hour of temptation. On the contrary, we are in it!

Ears to Hear?

These things should be plain to us when we consider what we have gone through as a Church. Do we have ears to hear what the spirit says to the churches? The “work” of preaching the gospel into all the world was a commission given for the period of Philadelphia. After that was accomplished, to the extent that God determined, the beginning of the end did come upon the Church.

In recent years, we have been living through the time of Matthew 24:15, when brethren have had to flee for their spiritual lives, while the Church was being scattered in all parts of this world. There has been an abomination at work to make the Church, the spiritual temple, desolate. What is the evidence?

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WILL YOU ESCAPE?

People in God's Church have long hoped to escape the great tribulation that will descend on this earth just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. No one likes to suffer, and we certainly do not want our loved ones to suffer.

We have long known the kind of devastation and destruction that one day will come to pass. We are familiar with prophecies that describe horrifying carnage. We are well aware of passages like Ezekiel 5 that speak of two-thirds of Israel being destroyed early in this tribulation. We are also aware that the last third will suffer mightily throughout this period, as death and destruction continue.

World events that could easily thrust us into this period of time have accelerated in intensity over the past few years. We know that one day a catalyst will finally draw 10 kingdoms together that will "give their power and strength to the beast" (Revelation 17:13). When this happens, we know that physical tribulation will erupt.

These are not pleasant things to contemplate, but they are the reality that will prevail in the near future. Although we have focused a great deal on this soon coming physical tribulation, we have been amiss in neglecting the devastation of the dual, spiritual tribulation that has engulfed the Church for several years now.

WHAT TRIBULATION?

We have been experiencing incredible devastation, and the only way to reverse this ever-weakening condition of the Church is for each of us to

willingly admit our true state and repent of its cause. Perhaps one of the greatest signs that reveals the depth of weakness pervading the Church is that many ministers and members are stuck in the physical.

Spiritual apathy within the Church of God is eroding the ability to grow in depth of understanding of God's Word and to exercise true discernment and sound judgment. Minds have become so clouded and vision so dimmed that the spiritually obvious is escaping large numbers of brethren in the Body of Christ.

Let's build upon a case in point. Much of the prophecy concerning the end of this age is dual—having a physical and a spiritual fulfillment.

"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of this world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:21-22, NKJ).

We have always known there will be a physical fulfillment of this event, when God will have to intervene to prevent humanity from annihilating itself. But God is also going to have to intervene to save His elect, not only physically, but also spiritually.

God will save a remnant of His elect out of the physical tribulation. Jesus Christ is going to return to His temple. Much of that temple will have to be resurrected from the dead, but some of it will still be alive, at His return, as part of the Body of Christ. The Church of God cannot be destroyed, and it must exist all the way up until His return. For

the sake of His plan and purpose, God will intervene and save a remnant of the present-day Church. There will indeed be those whom God will protect and preserve in safety, until the return of Jesus Christ.

Such protection and deliverance will be from a great physical tribulation that will come upon all this world. But before that happens, there is a greater, more immediate danger from tribulation that we must address.

Far too many brethren are missing what should be obvious, and they are failing to recognize that this prophecy, for the elect, is dual. There will be a great physical tribulation that will come upon this world just before the return of Jesus Christ, and God will intervene to provide physical protection and deliverance from this tribulation, but this prophecy also concerns a great spiritual tribulation that is of far greater importance to His elect. If we are not saved through this spiritual tribulation, then the physical deliverance from a physical tribulation will not be an issue at all!

Can we not grasp the true state of the Church? The end-time, great spiritual tribulation is *already* upon the Church, and later, a physical tribulation will come upon the world. In the meantime brethren are denying our true condition and therefore failing to address the cause of our current spiritual tribulation. This leads to a failure to repent that will in turn keep us from being able to escape this tribulation. The vast majority of the present-day Church has already fallen and failed to escape.

The second chapter of 2 Thessalonians prophesies about today's Church. It

reveals what will happen at the very end of this age, just before Jesus Christ returns. As a matter of fact, Jesus Christ cannot return until this event has happened in the Church. One of the very last things that had to occur before His return was a great falling away within the Church. We knew that time would come, and now it has! The destruction and desolation far surpassed anything we could have comprehended. But sadly, some are still waiting for this “falling away” to happen. As a result, they are blind to the urgency of the times in which we live.

The height of this apostasy came after Mr. Joe Tkach, Sr., gave his infamous sermon in Atlanta on December 17, 1994. That sermon attacked the very core of beliefs that exists to give nurture, hope, direction, and vision to God’s people. It sought to dismantle the Sabbath, Holy Days and the system of tithing. In the few months following that sermon, over two-thirds of the Church had fallen by the wayside. Of that total, nearly a third simply gave up altogether while another third drifted back to traditional Christianity, from which God had earlier delivered them.

Brethren need to do the arithmetic. In your own area alone, stop and consider how many people have left the church you attended. How many simply gave up? How many have returned to traditional Christianity? How many are truly holding onto the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ? It is even more sobering when we reflect on our loved ones by looking at old pictures taken at Spokesman Club, sporting events, picnics, and other congregational activities.

We need to be watchful and pause to consider the potential meaning of what we have been experiencing and witnessing. Was the beginning of this end-time great tribulation upon the Church the very time when that destructive sermon was given? The resultant magnitude of devastation that came upon the Church parallels the account of Ezekiel 5, which is yet to be fulfilled upon physical Israel. Isn’t the initial loss of two-thirds of the Church worthy to be called a time of great tribulation?

Are we being watchful and do we

understand that the carnage is not yet over? Since that time, the Church has dwindled in size as it continues to be scattered. What will be left? Who will survive? The term *remnant* takes on new meaning for God’s people.

When we think of the great tribulation, a period of three and a half years may come to mind. If so, we may then conclude that since our experiences surpass that period of time we could not be in the time called the great tribulation. We may then regrettably disregard the relevance of these events and miss the spiritually obvious.

In times past we have tried to wrap everything into a neat package. We have often tried to place all references to three and a half years (the time, times and half a time, or forty two months, or 1260 days) on top of each other, concluding that they are all one and the same. Don’t be hasty! These are prophetic periods of time, but do all of them do not describe the same events? Some of them have dual meaning –spiritual and physical.

There are other prophetic periods toward the end of this age that speak of seven years, or 1290 days, or 1335 days. We have always tried to understand all these events. But even as Daniel was told concerning some of these very times, “...*the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end*” (Daniel 12:9, KJV). The end-time is upon us. Do we have ears to hear and eyes to see? There are many reasons why all timing is not understood until or even after it has been fulfilled. We are to be watchful and weigh events by God’s Word because we do not know when or how all these events will be fulfilled. If we close our minds to obvious events, then we will neither be watching as we should nor will we understand what we are going through.

A prophetic cycle of 1260 days was accomplished on the Sabbath preceding Pentecost of 1998. Pentecost of that year may well have been the beginning of a final phase of prophecy concerning spiritual tribulation for the Church. If Pentecost does mark the beginning of a final phase of prophecy for the Church, then we should take special note of the meaning of this day. Pentecost pictures the firstfruits of God’s great plan. Such

a division in time can have great meaning for us because this may be the final period where the count is fulfilled that completes the 144,000 who will be resurrected at the return of Jesus Christ. Are we in a time where the Church is being measured to determine who will be in the final count of Pentecost? After prophecy is fulfilled concerning the tribulation upon the Church, then conditions can quickly ignite on the world scene that lead into great physical tribulation.

Great tribulation on the Church can certainly occupy more than three and a half years. Will it be seven years (two prophetic periods of three and a half years)? Whatever the time, we must be watchful and understand that now is the time for exercising judgment as never before in our lives, while we seek to hold fast to the truth that God revealed to us from the beginning. Time is indeed running out for the scattered Church of God!

Without preconceived ideas of how or when things at the end of this age are fulfilled, can we admit what we have obviously been experiencing in the Church? Are you going to be a part of the remnant that escapes this great tribulation? Do you see the need to escape? Is the destruction real to you or are you still looking to the future when 2 Thessalonians will be fulfilled? Are you still waiting, as some are, for a scattering of God’s people? Are you oblivious to the famine of God’s Word that afflicts today’s Church?

How much more of the Body of Christ must be weakened, splintered or destroyed before we as a people awake to the reality crying out to us from the carnage of fallen brethren? [For a deeper and more sobering view of the Church, you may request the two part sermon “**Focused In Reality.**”]

WHERE IS THE LOVE OF GOD?

As Matthew 24 states, the love (Gk., *agape*) of many has waxed cold. This is one of the signs within the Church that Jesus Christ said would be fulfilled before He returns. This statement about the waning of God’s love is directed at the Church and the Church alone! The world does not have access to this kind of love because it does not have access

to God's Holy Spirit. Over the past few years, God's love has been disappearing from our midst. Brethren do not love one another as they should. It is ironic when we consider that we, of all people, have the capacity to love one another with godly love. [You may request the sermon, "**Law & Love.**"]

The Passover itself is a witness against us and of our failure to yield ourselves to Jesus Christ living in us. As a people, we have become very weak and spiritually sick. Most pathetic of all is that so many are falling asleep. Over the years we have been failing to grasp the depth of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ which enables us to love one another by His life dwelling in us. Many talk about love and Jesus Christ, as in traditional Christianity, but fail to exercise that love. Instead, they abandon or work to destroy truths that God restored to the Church during the time of Philadelphia.

"And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat: this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep" (1 Corinthians 11:24-30, NKJ). This can have both physical and spiritual consequences in our lives.

At baptism and the laying on of hands, we entered into a covenant relationship with Jesus Christ and God the Father. That covenant includes our desire to yield ourselves to His life dwelling in and through us. We entered into this agreement so that by the power of the Holy Spirit we might be able to confess or acknowledge the very life of God and Jesus Christ by the way we

live. Today, many do not allow that life and power to dwell in them and thereby are working against the purpose of God. Brethren are actually working against the purpose of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, not only that we might be forgiven of our sins, but that we might be saved by His life living in and through us in the Body of Christ.

"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:9-10, NKJ). We can be forgiven of sin and begin to have a relationship with God through the death of Jesus Christ. Then we can be saved by our very minds and lives being changed through receiving the *life* of Jesus Christ living in and through us. It isn't enough to be forgiven of sin; our very minds must be transformed in thinking.

When Jesus told the disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit, He said, *"it will dwell with you and shall be in you."* He went on to say, *"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you"* (John 14:18-20, KJV). These very scriptures, that we read on Passover evening, reveal what Jesus Christ said would begin to happen in the lives of all who are a part of the Body of Christ. It began on the day of Pentecost.

Too many do not understand what Jesus Christ meant when He said, *"I will come to you"* (verse 18). He was not speaking of His second coming! He was revealing what would shortly begin to happen on Pentecost in the Body of Christ and would continue to happen over the following centuries each time someone had hands laid upon them and received the Holy Spirit. The expression *"I will come to you"* is not in future tense. In Greek it is present indicative, middle voice, and is somewhat like present progressive in English. It shows that Jesus Christ will come to us and continue coming to us in

a present and ongoing way. In other words, once we are begotten of God, He is going to live in and through us by the power of the Holy Spirit. He will make His dwelling or abode in us.

This is why Jesus went on to explain, *"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home [KJV, abode] with him"* (John 14:23, NKJ). *"Abide [Gk., dwell, live] in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing"* (John 15:4-5, NKJ).

Jesus Christ suffered and died so that He and His Father might be able to dwell in us. This is the power that transforms our very minds and ultimately saves us. If we fail to yield ourselves to this, then we take lightly the death and suffering of Jesus Christ. The result will be an inability to treat one another in the Body of Christ as we are commanded. In this two-fold way, we will not be rightly discerning the Body of Christ.

Discerning the Body of Christ is spiritually profound. We must grasp the magnitude of the purpose of Christ's sacrifice for us, so He can dwell in us to save us. We must grasp the importance of His life dwelling in us producing a right relationship with God our Father and Jesus Christ, and thereby yielding right relationships within the Body of Christ.

Let's go back and read those verses in 1 Corinthians from another translation and get to the heart and core of the problem. *"This can only mean that whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes again. So that, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord without proper reverence is sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. No, a man should thoroughly examine himself, and only then should he eat the bread or drink of the cup. He that eats and drinks carelessly is eating and drinking a condemnation of himself, for he is blind to the presence of the Body. It is*

this careless participation which is the reason for the many feeble and sickly Christians in your church, and the explanation of the fact that many of you are spiritually asleep” (1 Corinthians 11:26-30, Phillips translation).

ANTICHRIST

Brethren often find it hard to believe Jesus Christ’s warning about *many* false ministers in the Church, at the end, before His return. It may be even harder to understand how the term *antichrist* could describe someone in the Church.

“*Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?*” (1 John 2:22, KJV). If we fail to yield ourselves to the life of Jesus Christ living in us, then we are liars. We are lying against God and the covenant we made. If we fail to yield ourselves to His life living in us, then we are denying His very purpose as our Messiah, who came to die for us and save us.

Truth itself is miraculously revealed to us through the power of God’s spirit, revealing it to our minds. Anyone who abandons, pollutes, alters, or attacks the truths that God has revealed to us automatically cut themselves off from the life of Christ living in them. They can no longer have true fellowship with God and certainly cannot have spiritual fellowship with other faithful brethren.

“*Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: Let that therefore abide [Gk., dwell, live] in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain [Gk., dwell, abide, live] in you, ye also shall continue [Gk., dwell, abide, live] in the Son, and in the Father” (1 John 2:22-24, KJV).*

We are to confess or acknowledge by our life that we are yielding to Jesus Christ dwelling in us. We should desire it with all our being! But what was John talking about when he spoke of that which we heard from the beginning which should be dwelling in us?

This goes back to what he was saying at the beginning of the chapter. “*He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the*

truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4, KJV). A person who professes a relationship with God but does not keep the commandments of God is a liar. The only way such a person can keep the commandments of God is by the life of Jesus Christ living in him. If he denies Christ and the Father, so that they cannot dwell in him, he is not able to keep the commandments in spirit and truth, and is therefore, most certainly, a liar. Anyone who turns away from the doctrines and teachings that God has spiritually revealed to us, from the beginning, is denying God and Jesus Christ, and is thereby fighting, resisting, and lying against God and His purpose for us.

“*But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love [Gk., agape] of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth [Gk., dwells, lives] in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you have heard from the beginning” (1 John 2:5-7, KJV).*

What is this word that we have heard from the beginning? It is the most basic law of how man is to live his life. But he has failed and been unable to keep it. “*For this is the message [Gk., commandment] that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another” (1 John 3:11, KJV).* It is an old commandment, but it is being made new through the new covenant. Now, Jesus Christ can live in our lives and make this a reality. We will now be able to live this kind of love toward others if we do not deny Him, but choose to continually yield ourselves to His life in us. “*Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth” (1 John 2:8, KJV).*

Could it be any clearer how we as God’s people are going to be known? It will be revealed first and foremost by how we relate to one another in the Body of Christ. On Passover, we read these words of Jesus Christ: “*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you,*

that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love [Gk., agape] one to another” (John 13:34-35, KJV). Only those in the Body of Christ can experience the love of God. The world does not have access to it.

Hopefully, we can now go on to gain a better understanding of God’s love as revealed through the apostle John, even as he went on to give further instruction to the Church. “*And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. This is love [Gk., agape], that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it. For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 John 5-7, KJV).*

This last verse lends itself to misunderstanding in a way similar to John 14:18. Those “*who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh”* is not past tense. It is not a reference about some who may be questioning whether Jesus Christ came as a human being and dwelt in a human body. In Greek, this word is a present passive participle, in middle voice. It is present and ongoing. It is referring to brethren who “deny” or “confess not” the life of Jesus Christ dwelling in and through them. Being impregnated with God’s Spirit is not enough. We must continually yield our lives to His life dwelling in us which will be reflected in how we treat one another. If we fail to hold fast to the truths that God has restored and delivered to us and fail to keep His commandments, then we cut ourselves off from God and the power of His spirit dwelling in us. If we are cut off from the life of Jesus Christ and God our Father dwelling in us, then we will not be able to live the kind of life of love toward one another that we have just read about. And if we fail to live such a life of love toward one another, then we manifest that we are not true disciples.

Again, this is not talking about people in the world, because they do

not have the ability to yield themselves to the life of Jesus Christ dwelling in them. This has only been granted to those who are called and baptized into Jesus Christ. John is addressing the fact that there are deceivers who do not yield themselves to the life of Jesus Christ continually coming in their lives, in their flesh.

The love of God has waxed cold in the Church. False ministers abound, and brethren find it difficult to discern what is true and what is not. *“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us”* (1 John 3:18-24, KJV).

Our lives are to reflect the life of God and Jesus Christ in us. This will be manifested in our attitude and relationship toward other brethren in the Body of Christ. If we fail to be faithful stewards of the truths God has delivered to us as a people, then we will not be able to experience this kind of Godly love with true brethren in the Body of Christ. That physical and spiritual relationship within the Church is essential to spiritual development. This is God’s purpose—to bring us into a full family relationship—first of all with Him and then with those whom He has called into His fellowship. If we fail to remain faithful to God’s truth, to His word miraculously revealed to us, then we will not be able to have a true relationship with Him, and we will be cut off from a true fellowship with true brethren.

Many brethren today are frantically trying to build false bridges of pseudo-

fellowship in an effort to recreate what is missing in their lives. Any fellowship composed of brethren who are turning away from the truth once delivered will not produce true spiritual fellowship, but only a pseudo one. Such people like to speak about love and Jesus Christ. These same people tolerate error in others or themselves and thereby work against the truth God restored to the Church during Philadelphia.

Any who seek to escape this present tribulation upon the Church must do as Paul instructed for those who take the Passover. All must examine themselves to see if they are indeed being faithful stewards of the truths God delivered to us when He opened our mind. Most have apostasized and turned from the truth God restored to the Church. Doing so has robbed them of a true spiritual fellowship with God and His Church. Turning from the truth once delivered also turns one away from the Body of Christ and from proper understanding and thankfulness for the Passover.

Do you need to recapture truth and rebuild on the Temple of God? This must be your quest if you truly desire to be among the elect at the end of this age and to escape the spiritual tribulation upon the Church.

A REMNANT WILL ESCAPE

Most of the present-day Church has been decimated. We are experiencing the end-time great spiritual tribulation. We should desire to escape and seek to be saved from it. God called us so we could be saved at this time and be in the first great resurrection.

Many have been deceived and conquered. People have been so physically minded that they have been blinded by events of recent years. Too many have had a greater focus on being saved physically in a place of safety from a physical tribulation than they have of being saved spiritually and escaping the great spiritual tribulation on the Church. Do you think God is more concerned with saving our physical life than He is about saving our spiritual life? Which is more important? Where is your focus?

Yes, too many are stuck in the physical. Is it any wonder that relationships are suffering? Is it any

wonder we haven’t been grasping the depth of the meaning of Passover as we should?

As a people, we have not lived faithfully before God. Matthew 25 reveals that all of us have either slumbered or slept. We were neither faithful to the charge of being spiritually alert and watchful, nor of being ready for the bridegroom’s coming. We must repent and seek God’s favor and help so that we may be part of the remnant that will live as the bride who makes herself ready.

The choice is yours! Will you humble yourself and cry out to God for deliverance? God promises to bring a remnant through this tribulation and for the elect’s sake He will even cut it short. *“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).

Yes, the spiritual tribulation will be cut short, or we would not survive. God will bring a remnant through this time. However, if we do not survive the spiritual tribulation upon the Church, then our hope of deliverance and safety through the time of physical tribulation on this world will be of little consequence. If we can indeed be a part of the remnant that escapes the spiritual tribulation, then we can go forward and seek a place of safety from physical tribulation.

Jesus Christ gave us the instruction we must heed regarding this time of tribulation. After describing the tribulation to the disciples, He said, *“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man”* (Luke 21:36, KJV). In the Greek, the word translated as “watch” means “to keep awake, to abstain totally from sleep.” We are to be spiritually alert. We can only do that through the means described in this article. In order to be saved we must yield ourselves to the life of Jesus Christ dwelling in us. Only by His life dwelling in us may we be accounted worthy to escape and stand before Him at His return.

What Are You Building?

There are some vitally important lessons that we can learn from an analogy of building bridges. Much of the work of many ministers, and brethren who follow them, can be likened to building two kinds of bridges that represent two extremes within the environs of the Church, both of which are bad. Since one or the other is being practiced by so many of the scattered organizations, we need to take the time to analyze each one so we don't make the same mistakes.

Several groups tend to lean toward one of these two extremes as a focus for growth and development. There is an old movie that aptly illustrates the fallacy of both kinds of thinking and practice.

God's Church could glean some valuable lessons from the old World War II movie, "The Bridge On the River Kwai." The story is about a prisoner of war camp in Burma whose plot centers around the task the Japanese gave to their prisoners to build a railroad bridge over the River Kwai. Moral was quite dismal until these down-trodden prisoners rallied around a new found purpose for direction and unity by setting out to build the best bridge they could. They were determined to prove British superiority in engineering capability over that of the Japanese.

The efforts of those prisoners, which appeared to be noble, were riddled with fallacy. The best outcome for the allied forces was achieved when the bridge was finally destroyed. If that railroad bridge had not been destroyed, the Japanese would have used it to transport munitions and troops to be used to kill or imprison larger numbers of allied forces. The prisoner's efforts being destroyed helped force them back into reality.

There is irony in the later part of the story when the bridge was finally destroyed. If people are not careful, they too can be drawn into the contradiction of that moment and the lament the destruction of such a magnificent looking bridge. As you read this article, try to learn the lessons from this movie that tends to parallel so closely the efforts of many brethren today.

The First Extreme

Of the two extremes within the Church that we are going to examine, the first concerns the sincere desire of a growing number of brethren to "build bridges" between the scattered people of God. Although this may appear to be a noble cause, these efforts are also riddled with fallacy.

The expression of "building bridges" is being used to describe an effort to reach out to other scattered brethren with an open hand of fellowship that extends beyond corporate boundaries. This effort reflects a deep desire of many to see the scattered Church begin to be brought back together. Being scattered and diminished in size, with the loss of many friends, has carried a heavy toll upon our hearts and minds.

Many have been disillusioned by those who only give lip service toward acknowledging scattered brethren. They are frustrated with the continuing movement toward corporate elitism and attitudes of superiority.

A common response to the suffering and frustration from these conditions has been the outgrowth of various groups seeking to build bridges with others. This drive becomes so great that it shifts their focus away from the true reality of why we are in this condition in the first place and shifts it to a cause that seems nobler.

As in the movie "The Bridge On The River Kwai," building bridges has helped serve as a rallying point for a common effort to unify and give new found purpose to down-trodden brethren. However, the bridge they try to build actually produces a structure of strength for the enemy, who in turn uses it against them. Some may react adversely to such a statement, but please stop to consider the danger in what many are trying to build. Some of us have already attempted to implement some of these plans, only to learn that their efforts are futile and destructive.

Attempts at reestablishing fellowship with other scattered groups is limited primarily to those who were once in the Worldwide Church of God. However, some will go beyond that by establishing relationships with others who may only have the Sabbath or even lesser standards in common.

A rallying cry used by some, in their effort to seek out others, is to focus others on how much they might "have in common" and not on how much they "fail to have in common." This reasoning is deeply flawed and quite dangerous. Efforts for building a common fellowship with others is carried to the point of ignoring doctrinal differences that should otherwise serve to warn brethren away.

We should know better than to tolerate false doctrines in our midst for the sake of a larger fellowship or a growing work; we shouldn't tolerate false doctrines at all. Allowing doctrinal differences

only serves to give our enemy a foothold to undermine and infect the body even more. Faithful brethren should be deeply convicted of the necessity to hold fast to revealed truth—foundational truth which never changes. Basic principles of how quickly leaven can spread throughout the body and how light and darkness cannot be mixed together in fellowship should cry out to us of the danger in allowing such things.

Silence about doctrinal differences for the sake of building a common fellowship with others leads to blindness instead of reality, futility—not fruit, and error rather than truth. It is sin to become tolerant of the sins of others who have moved away from the trunk of the tree and are no longer faithful to the truth God revealed to them when they were first called.

It is also quite futile to work toward bringing others into a spiritual fellowship who haven't been called of God. Too many have become so weak that they cannot even discern or identify those who clearly have not been called as firstfruits. It should not be difficult in God's Church to grasp that if someone does not believe in the Holy Days then they have not been called.

Building a fellowship with someone with doctrinal differences is like building a bridge of opportunity for the enemy. Such a practice clearly disobeys the word of God. In addition, too many ministers follow some of the same flawed practices by blinking an eye and tolerating the doctrinal differences of people in their own fellowship. The reason—to maintain or increase the numbers in their congregations or organizations. These ministers will not preach on those differences for fear of stirring up anything that might take away from their facade of unity or that might threaten to diminish their numbers.

It is such a shame when ministers become a respecter of persons rather than God and fail to preach strong doctrinal messages that help brethren hold onto foundational truths. How can brethren be faithful stewards of the truth that God has miraculously revealed when ministers aren't faithful in doing so?

The practice of increasing and developing the Church through such false ways will end in destruction. Our history and parent organization should be witness enough of such fallacy. For example, the Worldwide Church of God believes everyone should be able to have fellowship together as long as they refrain from judging their brother in their different beliefs. They have gone so far as to teach that they can have a common fellowship whether some observe the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week or on the first day of the week. They even teach that the observance of a Holy Day can be changed from

mid-week to a weekend if it better suits the congregation.

Worldwide teaches that this kind of fellowship is to be tolerated and allowed in other brethren without judgment. This is looked upon as being big hearted spiritually and pleasing in God's eyes—for someone to be so spiritually broad-minded. These actions also give the appearance of peace and unity. This is masqueraded as being a matter of deeper spiritual love toward other brethren as well as avoiding strictness with the law. But anyone seeking to hold fast to the truth knows that such practices are against the Word of God, and they definitely betray Godly love toward brethren. Today, many scattered groups are tolerating different doctrines in their fellowship by the same deceitful practices that Worldwide is using. It is simply that the issue is not generally over the Sabbath or Holy Days.

Such practices are being done in the name of being Christian toward one another, but is this what Christ taught? Is this the kind of tolerance God said we should practice toward one another? If not, then where do you draw the line for what you can and cannot mix in a common fellowship?

Begin With Passover

The Passover is a good place to begin learning how to judge and discern where balance and sound mindedness rest. Unlike what the WCG teaches, partaking of the symbols of the Passover at various times of the year is sin. Calling this ceremony by other names, so it can be observed more than once a year, is contrary to the Word of God. Observing the Passover on any day other than the 14th day of the first month, at evening, is being disobedient to the Word of God.

God's instruction regarding this day is quite simple and should not be difficult to understand, regardless of some of the arguments to the contrary! *"In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover"* (Leviticus 23:5, KJV). This does not say it can be at any other time than the 14th day of the first month. *"And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month"* (Ezra 6:19, KJV). It does not say that part of the Passover was kept on the 13th or part on the 15th, but that all of it was kept on the 14th day.

"Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season. In the fourteenth day of this month, at even [Heb., between the evenings], ye shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it" (Numbers 9:2-3, KJV). These verses about the timing of Passover are not complicated. God instructs that it was to be observed "between

the evenings” that are on the 14th and not “between the evenings of any other day! [For more on this subject, ask for the tape “**The Simplicity & Truth About Passover.**”]

The time we are to observe the Passover should be clear, yet there are many well known ministers who contradict and complicate this truth. Many begin by saying we are to keep the Passover on the same night that Jesus Christ conducted it for the disciples, on the evening of the 14th, which is true. These same ministers then continue by contradicting the fulfillment of this occasion by saying that it was kept a day later, on the

15th, in Old Testament times. They foolishly and unwittingly do as the Protestants do by making Jesus Christ look like a rebellious Son who did not fulfill His Father’s word. The truth is that Jesus Christ accomplished perfectly the timing, example and fulfillment of all that pertained to the Passover in the Old Testament. Ministers who teach otherwise are false and have moved away from this truth that was once delivered to them. Even worse, they have deceived many in God’s Church to accept their false teachings and have contributed first hand to leading them away from God. The grievous sins of the ministry and the brethren who have followed their false teachings have resulted in their being cut off from God.

If we cannot be in agreement with God on such basic matters, then how can we ever be in agreement and unity with one another? The answer is that it is impossible, no matter how many bridges we build. If we ever hope to have true agreement and unity with one another, then we must first be obedient to God in basic doctrines and teachings. That is what produces true fellowship with other brethren, because the fellowship is first of all true with God.

The Passover is a good place to begin examining ourselves (I Corinthians 11:28). If we are not in agreement with something so basic, how can we continue with further examination? Passover is the very first observance of the year that launches those whom God has called into the full meaning and purpose He has for mankind. We must begin with Passover before we can enter into unity and agreement with God on a course toward salvation. Passover has always been a focus of attack against God’s Church. Some of the greatest heresy leading into false Christianity has had to do with controversy over this subject, so is it any wonder, that in these trying times, it has been attacked again?

Some will quickly agree that what the WCG is

doing regarding Passover is contrary to God’s clear instruction. To partake of the cup of wine on any day other than the day God says is to be in rebellion to God or in ignorance of His Word.

Practicing or teaching anything other than what God commands is to disobey God. Perhaps we need to be reminded of some very pointed and clearly spoken words about these matters. Although Paul was addressing a different situation relating to Passover, the principle is the same. *“For we, being many, are one bread and one body: for we all partake of that one bread”* (I Corinthians 10:17, NKJ). *“You cannot drink the cup of*

the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?” (verse 21-22). These are direct, stinging words to anyone who would try to mix true fellowship in the Body of Christ with doctrines from sources other than God.

In God’s Church we will have differences, but they should not exist in basic doctrines that are sure and steadfast! Differences should not exist in the foundational twenty-one truths that have been revealed to us. If we fail to be in unity with God over these basic doctrines, how can we hope to have any kind of true unity with one another in the Body of Christ? [See the article “What Am I To Hold Fast?”]

Some will acknowledge that what the WCG approves in a mixed fellowship is in error, but some of these same people may not acknowledge that being half a day off or a full day off from the 14th is “all that bad.” Where do you draw the line? Is any observance beyond the clear instruction of the 14th permissible? Does it matter to God? If half a day off doesn’t matter, what about a full day? If that doesn’t matter, how many days can you go from the 14th before it becomes a sin or a doctrinal conflict with the Word of God?

This conflicting problem, regarding the timing of Passover, is so deeply ingrained in some Church organizations that ministers who embrace these false beliefs about that timing are not only tolerated, but employed by them. There are several ministers in the United Church of God, *an International Association* who believe in an Old Testament Passover being on the 15th day of the first month. Also, there is at least one long-standing council member who believes and teaches it. The Global Church of God, even before it divided, had the same problem. In such cases, these ministers have not been corrected or prohibited from teaching such heresy, let alone being fired

The truth is that Jesus Christ accomplished perfectly the timing, example and fulfillment of all that pertained to the Passover in the Old Testament.

as they should be! If the leaders in such organizations are going to faithfully uphold the Word of God and seek to protect and properly shepherd the people of God, then they will not only fire such ministers, but disfellowship them as well.

If we asked the same questions about the timing of the Sabbath, we would come to a quicker conclusion. Why do people have trouble discerning God's instruction regarding one day out of the entire year? This is far more important than some are willing to admit. Yet there is a spirit and attitude that is growing amongst some brethren that this is being too picky or that God's instruction is too vague on the subject. Some former brethren do not seem to fear changing the observance of Passover to late afternoon on the 14th or on the 15th at even. Paul was quite clear about what was to be passed on to the Church. "*For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;*" (1 Corinthians 11:23, NKJ). Did those Corinthians observe the Passover on the night following Christ's betrayal or on the same night? Did they observe the Passover at exactly the same time it was observed in the Old Testament?

Jesus Christ was betrayed on the night of the 14th. The Corinthians observed Passover on that same night. Everyone should fear to change what the scripture makes clear. Some don't fear! Others don't fear mixing fellowships together that are not in agreement about Passover and other foundational doctrines.

The unity of fellowship concerning the 14th Passover is a good place to begin examining ourselves. From there we should move on and see if we are in agreement with the observance of the remainder of the Holy Days. Brethren are even in disagreement about Pentecost, which pictures who we are. There is conflict about the proper timing of when Pentecost is to be observed and over the understanding of our unique calling as firstfruits. Today, people want to go back to a Monday observance or keep it a week later in certain years, as in the year 2001. What about the rest of the truth that God has revealed to us in this end time? Are we in unity with God concerning those foundational truths, and are we being faithful stewards of what God revealed to us from the beginning?

True Fellowship

God's word makes it clear how brethren should reach out to help others who are scattered. Brethren have no right to choose some other method that contradicts scripture. Indeed, we should be motivated with a deep desire to help others who are scattered, but we must do it God's way.

Those who are working to "build bridges" are generally quite sincere in what they are doing, but they are sincerely wrong. Sadly, there are many others at the other side of the pendulum who simply have no motivation nor desire to reach out to others. Although these people may give lip service by acknowledging that there are scattered brethren, they are lacking in constructive purpose or practical application to honestly help them. These people do not understand what it means to be our brother's keeper.

What is the best way to seek true fellowship with one another and truly reach out to give help and aid to other scattered brethren? It is not accomplished by building bridges that allow false doctrine to easily find its way in among brethren. Mixing different doctrines and beliefs in a common fellowship is not how God's Spirit functions. On the contrary, God's Spirit leads us into greater unity of doctrine and belief in order to bring us into unity with Him.

God's Spirit actually works to expose false doctrines in order to help lead brethren to repentance so they can come to a closer unity with Him.

God's Spirit actually works to expose false doctrines in order to help lead brethren to repentance so they can come to a closer unity with Him. We are either moving toward the light or we are moving away from it toward darkness. There is no middle ground.

If we fail to stand fast in sound, basic doctrine, we will not be able to lend help to brethren who have become deceived or who are being swayed by unsound teaching. Our fellowship must first be right with God if we hope to have good and right fellowship with one another. Brethren cannot successfully mix or bind together fellowships that oppose each other doctrinally. When basic beliefs are not the same, no amount of bridge building will make them compatible or bring about unity of fellowship. It only creates confusion and serves to spread deceit and sin within the Church, which is part of the ongoing abomination that is working to destroy the Temple of God.

God makes His instruction clear regarding such efforts. It is basic, and it is sure! "*Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?*" (2 Corinthians 6:14, NKJ).

Someone might say, "But if they are scattered brethren, isn't it right to bring them together in fellowship?" Yes, *if* they are desirous of coming together in fellowship in order to draw closer to God in unity of spirit and oneness of mind, as

they hold fast to the foundational truths that God revealed to us from the beginning. If brethren are willing to examine their own ideas and beliefs by the Word of God, and change where they are wrong, then it is clear that such a brother is seeking to move toward the light. If, on the other hand, brethren are close minded and insist on holding onto their false beliefs, and/or only want others to believe their doctrines, then the answer is a resounding NO! We must learn to judge such matters. Please read this paragraph again and be certain that you understand the distinction.

We have a common fellowship with one another and with God when we are first and foremost in agreement with God. Doctrines about the Sabbath and Holy Days reflect much about our relationship with Him. Even Passover reflects our true relationship with God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Not only is the timing of Passover critical to that relationship, but so is our acknowledgment of (confession, i.e. the wording in the KJV) and active love for the whole Body of Christ. If we fail to have fellowship with God in these basic doctrines, then we will certainly not be able to have true fellowship with one another.

We should not foolishly attempt to create something God forbids by walking contrary to basic truths. *“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them”* (Ephesians 5:11, NKJ). *“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1 John 1:5-7, NKJ).

We cannot create or build something that God refuses to build. As we hold true to God, others who are drawn to God in true fellowship with Him will automatically be drawn together in fellowship with one another. Then, and only then, can we have true fellowship. We should reach out to help scattered brethren, but it is their choice whether they will yield to being drawn together into a common fellowship with believers who are seeking to obey their God or not. True unity comes only *in spirit and in truth*, otherwise it is a false unity which will not produce Godly fruit.

We need to examine the fruit of our past. What is it that has always bound us together with others in the Body of Christ? It is God’s Spirit that has led us

to the same common beliefs. When people choose to believe something different from what God has revealed to us, then our fellowship changes. All of us have lost family or close friends or both to different beliefs. As these things happened, we learned that what we once shared and what drew us together in the first place was what we had in common with God. Hence, our unity and oneness with God always comes first if we are to have true fellowship and unity with one another.

Some are even trying to build a common fellowship with people who have only the seventh day Sabbath in common, but not the Holy Days. Just because someone has this day in common does not mean God has called them to a special fellowship with Him as firstfruits. Brethren who try to develop such a fellowship with people who have not received a calling from God, and therefore do not have access to His Spirit, are working in vain against God’s purpose. We have found Sabbatarians in various parts of the world, but this does not mean they are called of God at this time. If they are called of God, then they will leave their false ideas, such as speaking in tongues, and will be drawn to the truth of the Holy Days and will embrace them. Some of these people have been found in Russia in recent years, but are they forsaking their practice of speaking in tongues and accepting the Holy Days? Are these people truly called to the first resurrection? We must be able to judge such matters, or we will begin to cheapen our special calling

because we will not be able to grasp just how great it is.

Those who are working to build bridges with others who are not called of God or with those who believe false

doctrines are indeed making the same kind of fatal mistake that those prisoners of war made in that old movie “Bridge Over the River Kwai.” They are building a bridge that only aids the enemy.

The Second Extreme

That old World War II movie can also serve to point out another great deception that is working to destroy part of the Temple of God. This second extreme within the Church is only going to be addressed briefly, but it should be given deep consideration.

The prisoners in that old movie began to take their eyes off of the reality of the time that was upon them. They failed to deal with the reality of imprisonment as they should have. In war there are codes of conduct that prisoners are live by and perhaps even die by. Most certainly, they were not to become so deluded by their focus on the “work” and project before them that they would go so far as to fail to grasp how that could strengthen the enemy. Their efforts

were misguided and served only to make their reality something different than what was true.

There are organizations and brethren who will not face the reality in which they find themselves. Instead, there are many who become so focused on special projects, doing “the work” and organizational planning that they

begin to turn away from the reality in which

we are living. People begin to believe that their reality is something different than what is true. They no longer see us in a time of scattering, war, lamentation, and continuing desolation of the Temple of God—if indeed they ever did. Being deluded from true reality weakens brethren by giving them a false sense of security and preventing them from repenting of a Laodicean spirit.

Unrepentant Laodiceans are filled with pride about their efforts and vision for the Church. There are too many brethren and ministers who believe they have turned the tide of destruction that has been at work to destroy the Church. They refuse to believe that our condition continues to worsen. If we cannot admit to the realities before us, then our focus will be flawed and fully misguided.

There is really no need to address this condition any further, because those who refuse to acknowledge the truth will only scoff and fully disregard what is being said. Those who know this to be true will have to decide what they are going to do as a result of this understanding. Can you afford to acknowledge it is true, but take no action? This is the time for making difficult decisions and keeping focused on the battle before us. [Ask for the two part series on “**Focused In Reality.**”]

Seeking Balance

The Church is being attacked by pride, apathy and complacency on the one hand and false doctrines on the other. Seeking true balance by righteously judging matters with the Word of God is more challenging than ever. Yet this is what we must do. We are being tried, tested and sifted by this very process. Will we seek to do things God’s way or try to do them our way?

Ignoring scattered parts of the Body of Christ is sin. Too many brethren in larger organizations settle into a comfortable zone of denial, complacency, satisfaction, and/or superiority over others. Yet others are trying to resurrect the “Work” of the past—seeking to

rebuild what has mostly been destroyed—seeking to recapture the “glory” of days gone by. This focus is generally on “growth and good news about numbers,” usually in publications or programs. Brethren are further misled to focus inwardly on a narrower part of the Body by being told lies about peace and safety in their midst. These are not times of peace and safety, but of destruction, tribulation, lamentation, and war. We should be told the truth that this is the time to fight for our very survival!

Others, who have broken away from such hypocrisy and are beginning to be turned toward care and concern for others in the scattered Body, are discovering new obstacles in their path. They are learning that these are turbulent times for God’s people and not a time of peace and safety. They are learning that building bridges with doctrinally mixed groups of brethren is neither bringing true unity nor producing a common purpose. Such efforts will consistently remain unsettled, unfulfilled, fractious, and spiritually delinquent.

So, what are you building, and how are you working toward it? The Temple of God needs no bridges. The Temple of God is a single structure of which we are all to be a part. *“In whom [Jesus Christ] all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”* (Ephesians 2:21-22, KJV).

We are warned to be careful how we build. *“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another*

Building God’s way produces pleasant fruit. It gets rid of confusion and division and produces what we all desire. We want unity and harmony of spirit in a family consumed with love.

buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon” (1 Corinthians 3:9-10, KJV).

Building God’s way produces pleasant fruit. It gets rid of confusion and division and produces what we all desire. We want unity and harmony of spirit in a family consumed with love. Do you remember the words we heard so often in the past? *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”* (Psalms 133:1, KJV). That unity can only come when we build the way God instructs us, not in the way that we think is right.

WHAT AM I A TO HOLD FAST?

nyone with much experience around God's true Church should be familiar with twenty-one foundational truths. These truths are also referred to as "the trunk of the tree." Although most people are familiar with these truths, many have turned away from them.

It is a miraculous process by which we are led into God's truth. Brethren seem to have forgotten this process by which God has personally intervened in our lives to give us His truth. Our ability to know His truth is something that God alone can give. It is God's free gift to us. It is a serious offense to willingly turn away from those truths once they have been given to us.

God's truth is not discovered by personal intellect and scholastic insight. No amount of human research can piece together the plan of God that is revealed through His spirit. Do we truly believe God's own word about how He reveals truth to us, or do we actually believe in something else? Our recent history reveals that the overwhelming majority of brethren have come to believe in something different.

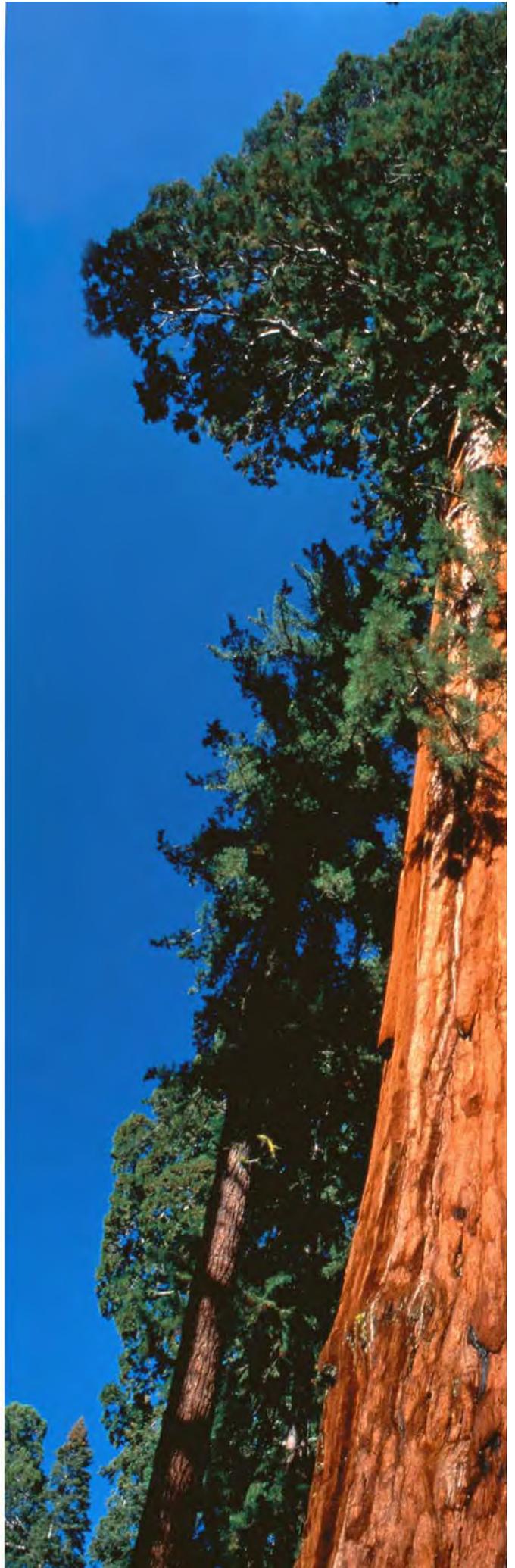
Let's be reminded of how this supernatural revelation of truth is able to come into our minds and become a part of our understanding. The apostle Paul made it clear that what he preached was not a matter of his own human intellect or reasoning.

"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:4-5, KJV).

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.

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:" (verse 7). That mystery is the hidden truth which contains the plan of God and the gospel of the Kingdom of God, which God alone can reveal.

God's ministry can only teach and lead people in God's truth through the power of His spirit working through them. Although



that truth can be written and preached with inspiration from the power of God, it is still a mystery to all who hear it, and they will not understand, unless God's spirit is also at work in them to reveal it to them.

“But God hath revealed them [hidden truths] unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (verses 10-12). So Paul makes it clear that man cannot receive the truth of God through



human ability, but that His word can only be received and understood through spiritual discernment as he says, *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (verse 14).

The truth that God reveals to us is something that is to become a part of our very mind and thinking. We are to grow in it and thereby come into greater unity and harmony of spirit with God. James explains this process in other terms that should be inspiring to us. We are told to *“receive with meekness the engrafted word”* (James 1:21, KJV).

Even more revealing, if we can only understand, is what James wrote, when speaking of God, *“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures [Gk.- creation]”* (James 1:18, KJV).

Do we grasp that the begetting of God’s spirit in our lives involves a begetting of His truth in our minds? Do we really grasp that His truth comes only from Him? He must reveal truth to us through the power of His spirit. Therefore, who are we to decide to change or disbelieve that truth? Yet, that is what so many brethren have done and continue to do.

What truth has God revealed to us? Many will argue about these matters, but the truth is the truth. The only choice before us is whether or not we will accept it. We can refuse it, but in so doing we will be refusing and rejecting God in our life. That is precisely what most have already done.

What Truth Was Revealed?

Why is this article entitled “Twenty-One Truths?” Are these twenty-one truths some official standard for God’s people? For more than a decade we have readily spoken of eighteen truths that were restored during the period of Philadelphia. Many today don’t believe that these are true. There is much argument and debate over this, but it doesn’t change what is truth.

Some of these truths could be condensed or even broadened in number. It is all a matter of how you count or arrange them. It could be done in different ways. The Holy Days could be broken down into each Holy Day, with each one being a separately listed truth, thereby adding to the number on our list. Some of these eighteen truths could be condensed and included as part of the understanding found in the meaning of these Holy Days. If we did that, we could reduce the overall number of truths well below eighteen.

The number is not important, but the truth is! You cannot change or alter what is true. Either it is miraculously received as a result of God’s direct revelation to us or it is not. In the June-July, 1999 issue of *News Watch* entitled “Dead, Revived, Rejected,” we discussed how Sardis was overall, a spiritually dead Church. There was not much truth left, as truth was dying out during this period of Sardis. There are three basic truths that still remained alive at the end of that time.

One truth that still remained concerned the name of the Church. It is God’s Church. We are God’s assembly. We are the ones God has called out of this world. Jesus asked the Father, in that last night before His death, to keep the Body of Christ in His, the Father’s, name. Those who have been given to Jesus Christ bear the name of God. We are the Church of God. A very basic truth about God’s true Church and those that God has called is that they will be called, by the name, the Church of God. All others are false and do not belong

to God. We can accept that truth or reject it.

If we understand that God must reveal the identity of His Church to us, do we also understand that He must bring us into His Church? *“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day”* (John 6:44, KJV). And, *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they*

These were later classified into a list of eighteen truths. Since this list was a compilation of foundational truths, why would anyone object to the use of this list as being basic and foundational understanding that we are to hold fast?

are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father” (verses 63-65).

Certainly the name of the Church of God is only part of knowing the identity of the Church, but that name is an essential part, if it indeed belongs to God. Not all who use that name belong to God, but all who belong to God must bear that name.

A second truth that was still a part of Sardis was the knowledge of the seventh day Sabbath. The revelation of the weekly Sabbath and what is contained in its meaning and purpose is something revealed by God. Not all who keep the Sabbath have had this understanding revealed by the convicting power of God’s spirit. Do we grasp the fullness of this truth and understand that anyone who disagrees with the seventh day Sabbath does not change the fact that it is still the truth of God?

A third truth understood by Sardis was about first tithe. This truth was rejected, at one time, by the Worldwide Church of God in early 1995, and it is still being rejected today by other scattered brethren. Today there are far too many brethren who do not grasp the truth about God’s first tithe. They do not understand its purpose and function for the Church of God. Some believe it is their responsibility to determine how this tithe is to be administered within

the Church. They fail to grasp that this tithe is God’s and that God has given it to His ministry for the purpose of taking care of what belongs to Him. This includes the ministry, nurturing the Church and using it for whatever need God leads the ministry to see. This truth was understood by Sardis and continued by Philadelphia. Has this truth now been changed as so many seem to believe and practice? Understanding first tithe and its purpose, in spirit and

in truth, is something that is given by God, not human intellect and reasoning.

We have always known the importance of these three truths that were still a part of the Church during the time of Sardis. At the end of Philadelphia, after Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong died, we acknowledged there had been many truths revealed and restored to the Church through him. These were later classified into a list of eighteen truths. Since this list was a compilation of foundational truths, why would anyone object to the use of this list as being basic and foundational understanding that we are to hold fast?

The task before us is to do what was given as an admonition toward the end of Philadelphia, just before Laodicea. *“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”*

They are true and they were revealed by God through the power of His spirit. If they were not, then our faith is in vain. If these were not revealed through the power of God’s spirit, then any or all of these eighteen things may need changing. But if God did indeed reveal these, all should fear meddling with them! The truth is that those who do not like to hold fast to these truths are actually in disagreement with one or more of them.

Former brethren have made the decision that only part of that list was revealed by God and that the rest were not. How can anyone come to such conclusions? Such reasoning totally contradicts our beliefs, understanding and doctrine.

Hold Fast

These twenty-one truths have been revealed to God’s Church, with eighteen being restored during the Philadelphian era. The task before us is to do what was given as an admonition toward the end of Philadelphia, just before Laodicea. *“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown”* (Revelation 3:11, KJV). Being faithful stewards and holding fast to what God delivered to the Church during Philadelphia would become a great fight during Laodicea.

God’s truth weathered many storms over the centuries. False Christianity, by one great church, was having a negative effect upon the Church during Thyatira. Some brethren were warned about such spiritual fornication and were admonished to repent. But to those who would not corrupt themselves with such doctrine, God said *“But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come”* (Revelation 2:24-25, KJV). They still had access to the truth; and it had not been lost.

Sardis, on the other hand, lost much

truth, and what remained was also dying out. That is why God described Sardis as being spiritually dead and said that only a few would survive. That is all the more reason He told them to *“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent”* (Revelation 3:3, KJV).

Truth was revealed and again restored to God’s Church during Philadelphia. Jesus told them that He was now coming quickly. The end was coming upon the Church, and Laodicea would be the last church to come on the scene, then Jesus Christ would come at the close of Laodicea. Our task is to be faithful stewards of what God has delivered to us. We are to hold fast to the truth He restored and revealed

during Philadelphia, the same truth He has revealed to each of us through a special calling He has given to us.

Today some ministers are boldly and defiantly teaching against the need to hold fast to the eighteen truths revealed through Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. Instead, the idea of holding fast to such things is minimized, criticized, ridiculed, discredited, and disparaged. Efforts to debunk or detract from the genuine importance of these truths, as being restored to the Church during Philadelphia, are hideous acts of false witnessing.

There are several techniques used by such ministers seeking to disparage these truths. Often they will “talk down” and seek to discredit anything that comes from men. After all, we are supposed to believe that nothing good can come through men, and you will only be disappointed in them if you follow what they say. The only problem with that is that God does work through men. Everything we have ever received that is true has come to us through men. We are to follow true ministers of God only “as” they follow Jesus Christ.

What kind of hope would we have without these truths? ...Without the truth, you have no hope!

There should be obvious reasons why some would preach that we are not to follow a man. Do you understand why their actions contradict their teaching? Do you know why such strategies are used on people? Why do ministers who teach such things bother preaching if they truly believe we are not to follow a man, nor put any trust in a man? Do they expect you to place some trust in what they are telling you? Do they want you to listen to their teaching above what someone else is teaching? Surely they do!

Another ploy that such ministers use is that they minimize the need to hold to these truths by getting people to focus on the need to hold to Jesus Christ, the commandments, or the hope set before us. These things are all true, and we should indeed hold fast to them, but such tactics tend to move unsuspecting brethren into their convoluted line of reasoning. The need to hold fast to Jesus Christ, the commandments and

the hope God has placed before us should be a “no-brainer.” But you cannot hold to these things by rejecting any of the eighteen truths revealed through Mr. Armstrong.

What kind of hope would we have without these truths? Without the truths of the Holy Days, how would we have any hope in the plan of God? Sardis was described as being spiritually dead. What kind of hope did they have without the knowledge of the Holy Days or that God’s government needed to be restored to this earth? Without the truth, you have no hope! [You may ask for a related sermon entitled **“Holding Fast to Revealed Truth.”**]

Brethren truly need to become more alert to such ploys and distracting attempts of ministers to turn brethren away from the truth or from those who are faithfully preaching it. Do you think that such men have motives for misusing and misrepresenting scripture as they do? Generally this is indeed a two-fold matter. They do not agree with one or more of these truths, and they do not want you to listen to someone who upholds and preaches them. That is a threat to them!

Remember, as we discuss the truths mentioned in this article, we are not talking about matters like refined sugar, whether a person recognizes birthdays, or if you wear make-up or not. Rather, we are speaking of basic and foundational truths!

You cannot compare the basic twenty-one truths in this article with such things as birthdays. That would be like trying to compare the failure to put a quarter in a parking meter with a man who robbed a bank, then hijacked a car with a baby in the back seat and proceeded to flee authorities at speeds over 120 m.p.h. Do you grasp the difference? Many in the Church today don’t seem to have the capacity to make such discernment.

No one has a right to change what is true. You only have a choice to accept or reject what is true. Most have been rejecting that truth. Will you, or have you already done so? If you have ever rejected some truth, you always have a choice to repent and seek God’s loving

mercy. That is a choice, but changing God’s truth is not!

Since we have mentioned the three truths Sardis still had, it would be good to list the remaining eighteen for your personal examination. Are you in agreement with God? Do you accept what He has offered you through revelation and the work of His spirit in your life?

If you have become slack in holding fast to these truths, ask God to restore to you a love and zeal for His truth. And as you review these truths, please remember that just because brethren have abused and misused God’s truth does not mean it is not truth. Truth, lived in spirit and truth, is the most rewarding experience in life.

The following list does not delve into the doctrine of these truths. It is a minimally-worded listing. If you wish to focus more closely on each of these truths, you may request a series of five sermons that covers truths numbers two through eighteen, entitled **“Restored and Revived.”** The first truth that is listed, which concerns the subject of government, is covered in a three part sermon entitled **“Do We Have Government?”** and in another important sermon, that was a follow up to that series, entitled **“What Am I To Hold Fast?”**

Before you begin this next section, you need to consider one more matter. Those who minimize and try to debunk these truths say that these should not be held up as some kind of standard for salvation. People are further confused by ministers who ask, “Did the Church in Thyatira or Sardis have all these truths, if indeed they are needed for salvation?” Please understand, these two Churches were judged by what they were given! What were you given? If you were given more, are you being a faithful steward, or are you moving away from these truths that have been revealed to you? You will be judged by what you have been given. To move away from the truth is a most grievous matter. It is a matter of salvation to move away from revealed truth, because it is sin to do so. Moving toward the truth is always wrought with blessings.

18 TRUTHS

The WORLDWIDE NEWS, August 25, 1986, page 5, carried an article honoring Herbert W. Armstrong. The title was: "God restored these 18 truths: How thankful are you for them?"

"One original Church, much persecuted and opposed, but still in existence, has these evidences [proper name and true gospel] proving it to be the original true Church. And even this Church, until after the year of 1933, had lost many vital truths. At least 18 basic and essential truths have been restored to the true Church since that year." - Herbert W. Armstrong, Mystery of the Ages, p. 251 (hardcover edition)

1. The Government of God.

When Christ comes, He will restore God's government to the whole earth. So you can be sure the one to come in the spirit and power of Elijah would restore God's government in His Church. When Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong came among the Oregon Conference era of the Church of God (Seventh Day), the church had the right name, the law, the Sabbath, and the tithing system. But they also had a government of men, with a biannual conference, voting just like they do in the world.

"Today, the government of God has been restored to His Church. That is the kind of government you find in Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12." (Worldwide News Article)

[Please note that the sermon series entitled "Do We Have Government?" explains that since 1986, when this was written, God's government has been shattered and scattered once again, similar to the

great rebellion of the fallen angels when the government on this earth was first shattered.]

2. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God. "...has been restored after 1,900 years."

Mr. Armstrong often said that the True Gospel was given to The Church which started at Pentecost 31 AD. That Gospel then began to be changed into a false gospel by the end of the 1st century. He said that God restored that True Gospel exactly 19 centuries later when he was ordained a minister in 1931 AD, on or near Pentecost.

[To clarify this point, the gospel was still in the true Church, but it ceased to go out into all the world until the time of Philadelphia.]

3. The Purpose of God.

"...that we are to be born of God and become God. God is reproducing Himself, and no other church on earth knows that or preaches it. As a counterfeit they talk about being already born again."

Mr. Armstrong was right. What other church on earth has taught that God is a Divine Family and the plan of God is to reproduce Himself through Divine Children, Christ being the first? Absolutely none! Mr. Armstrong taught that Satan hates this, because it means humans will become God, and has deceived the whole world into believing that God is a closed trinity.

4. Who and What is God.

"Traditional Christianity believes in the trinity, that the Holy Spirit is a person. God is neither one person nor a trinity. God is a family."

Mr. Armstrong taught that God is a Divine Family. God is the Father who begets us to ultimately be born into that Divine Family—just as Jesus Christ was the declared to be "the Son of God...by the

resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4) and is the "firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29).

5. What is man?

Herbert W. Armstrong would often ask challenging questions like "Why are you here?" and "What is the purpose of human existence?" He alone clearly saw why human kind was placed on this earth. Traditional Christianity has never understood this, and God's Church did not even understand.

6. The Human Spirit in Man.

Mr. Armstrong came to see that there is a "spirit in man" (Job 32:8), not an immortal soul, but a human spirit which is beyond the physical brain and elevates man far above animals. This spirit needs to be united with the Spirit of God. That human spirit returns to God after death (Eccl. 12:7). The Church of God never understood this until Mr. Armstrong.

7. The Church of God is Only the Firstfruits.

Mr. Armstrong taught that God is not trying to save the world now. This set him at odds against traditional Christianity which thinks that God is trying desperately to save as many as possible. The Church of God lost sight of this over the centuries, until it was clearly restored. What is taken for granted by God's Church today came only through Mr. Armstrong.

8. The Church is Not Yet the Kingdom of God.

The false gospel taught that the church on earth is the Kingdom of God. Mr. Armstrong clearly saw that the coming literal Kingdom of God is the message Christ brought from The Father, and that the Church of God today is only the embryo of that Kingdom.

9. Only Those Whom God the Father Calls and Draws to Him Can Be Converted Now.

"No other church knows that or believes it. That's another truth restored to the Church through Mr. Armstrong. None of us had ever heard that before, except as we received it through Mr. Armstrong. Only those God chooses and calls now can come in and become part of the firstfruits. Satan has deceived the whole world, and the Church is called out of that world" (Worldwide News article).

10. The Resurrection to Judgment.

This is when God will "save the world." Herbert W. Armstrong clearly saw that there are three resurrections mentioned in scripture. The Great White Throne Judgment is the time when all who have ever lived will be given the opportunity to become members of the God Family, just as the Church is given the opportunity in advance.

11. The Millennium.

The Church of God in the 1930s knew that Christ would be returning to set up His Kingdom, but knew little about what that Millennium would be like. The Government of God will be restored over the whole earth, and the Tree of Life would be open to all for the first time since the time of Adam. The firstfruits will reign with Christ as kings and priests—teachers and rulers.

12. The Holy Spirit Coming Into Us Only Begets Us.

The Bible is a coded book, said Mr. Armstrong, which can only be unlocked by the Spirit of God. We can only come to really know God through the Holy Spirit, and we must grow in character and understanding after this begettal until our birth into the Family of God.

13. We Are Only Begotten Now, Not Born Again.

We are not yet inheritors, only heirs (Rom. 8:17). The Holy Spirit only begets us and we are not yet born into that Family. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom (John 3:5-6).

14. The Identity of Modern Israel.

God's Church in the 1930s officially rejected this truth when Mr. Armstrong brought it to the leadership's attention. Again today it is being rejected. Mr. Armstrong clearly saw from the Bible that the descendants of Israel were to receive the birthright promises and that the English-speaking peoples are the descendants of Joseph's two sons.

15. Prophecy Can Only Be Understood if You Know Who Are the Israelites Today.

Mr. Armstrong had a clear picture of which prophecies apply to us today, since he saw clearly who the descendants of Israel are. As well as proclaiming the Gospel, he preached the Ezekiel warning (Ez. 33), which was meant for the descendants of Israel at the end time. The Great Tribulation will be the time of "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7). Those who are following in the footsteps of Mr. Armstrong today are also preaching the Gospel and giving the Ezekiel warning.

16. The Annual Holy Days.

What other church prior to Mr. Armstrong understood the annual Feast Days, much less kept them? The plan of God, as shown through the Holy Days, was revealed to the Church of God only through Herbert W. Armstrong. He and Loma kept them alone for 7 years because they saw it was commanded. It wasn't until after 14 years that

the actual meaning of the days were understood by him. The Holy Days picture God's plan for mankind depicted through seven major events. One of the greatest blessings ever to come on God's Church was the knowledge of His Holy Days. All those who keep the Feast Days today do so because God revealed it through His servant Herbert W. Armstrong.

17. The Authority of the Sacred Calendar.

The Church of God in the 1930s was confused as to when the year should begin. People are still confused today over the calendar. Mr. Armstrong saw the importance of the Jews' preservation of the weekly and yearly calendar.

18. Second and Third Tithe.

The Church of God understood first tithe, but until Mr. Armstrong, the Church did not understand that a festival tithe had to be kept since they didn't keep the Holy Days to begin with. Mr. Armstrong also saw that God provided for the needy within the Church by a third tithe. No other church had this knowledge.

This *Worldwide News* article had an accompanying picture of Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong with a caption stating: "In the early 1930's, God began to use the Armstrongs to restore 18 essential truths to His Church. Could we, today, lose sight of them?"

This article began: "How much do you value God's truth?"

This article concluded: Where would we be without these truths? Without them—without Herbert W. Armstrong's legacy of these 18 restored truths—there isn't much left."

Dead, Revived, Rejected!

Continued from page 9

our own individual lives and reach out to give aid to other scattered brethren who want help in rebuilding on the Temple.

We must also be willing to stand and fight at the breaches in the wall. The walls that protect the Temple are being attacked by false or deceived ministers and brethren. We must be zealous to hold on to those foundational truths that God worked to restore in the Church during Philadelphia, and not only holding to them, but building spiritually upon them. We must be faithful stewards of those truths that God restored to His Church at the end of this age. Yes, we must fight the good fight of faith!

Keep your eyes focused on the purpose of your calling, as the bride who is making herself ready. Seek God's help so you can one day speak these words of Paul. *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing"* (2 Timothy 4:7-8, KJV).

Time Is Running Out

Continued from page 12

What is the true witness to these events? Has it been happening or not?

Do we not grasp the abomination that

has been causing such desolation within the Church? What is it that has caused people to flee? What changed within the WCG that has brought about such worldwide destruction upon the spiritual temple?

This destruction originated from the top of human leadership. It spread wildly through the ministry, most of which became corrupt, and then it spread wildly through the Church. This is described by 2 Thessalonians as a time of apostasy or a falling away within the Church, the likes of which has never occurred before. Those who sought to corrupt the Church by changing the most basic of doctrines are those who yielded themselves to being part of the abomination that makes desolate. The very heart and core of who we are was corrupted. The Church began moving away from the truth about the weekly and annual Sabbaths, tithing, and even clean and unclean meats, to moving closer to a Trinitarian and universal church. The abomination, which before would have been thought impossible, has now been at work in the spiritual temple. What could be plainer?

Can you grasp how close we are to final end-time events and how rapidly they are approaching? There are specific events mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2 that had to take place before Jesus Christ would return to this earth. Those events are about the Church. An apostasy had to occur within the Church at the end before Jesus Christ would return. That has happened, and it has almost run its course. These events are the very thing that serve as an announcement to the Church that Jesus Christ is now coming, and we must be more zealous than ever to make ourselves ready.

Doctrines and teachings began to be attacked and corrupted in the late 80's and early 90's and led up to a climatic event. The great abomination, that began working to make the Church desolate, officially began on December 17, 1994 when Mr. Joe Tkach, Sr. gave a sermon in Atlanta, Georgia declaring the apostasy to the Church. He died exactly forty Sabbaths later, within that very hour. Does that mean anything to

God's people? That apostasy, which began officially in the Worldwide Church of God working as an abomination to destroy the Church, is nearing its end.

How much longer do you think it will be until that abomination is complete? The greatest part of this abomination concerns those things which identify God's Church—the weekly Sabbath and the annual Sabbaths. Although the official announcement in 1994 declared that such things are no longer commanded for God's people, the WCG has not completely fulfilled the abomination that has been at work to destroy the Church of God. It should cause fear in people to know how close it might be to the total fulfillment of this prophecy. This fulfillment will be officially complete when they change the Sabbath and completely do away with the Holy Days. The Holy Days will most likely be abandoned first, then the weekly Sabbath. If the words of Daniel and other prophecies are indeed about what is still going on in the WCG, then we are very near the end of the abomination that has been making desolate.

Next, on the heels of the fulfillment of the abomination of desolation, is the great physical tribulation that will come on all this world. Are you repenting and becoming more zealous towards God? That is what Laodicea is instructed to do. If we know that Jesus Christ is indeed at the door and ready to enter, we will be responding by making ourselves ready, more than ever before! We must focus more fully on preparing ourselves for the soon coming Kingdom of God and helping prepare any of our physical and spiritual family who will listen.

Are you sobered when you consider how near the end may be? God has been warning us for some time now. Are you listening? We are racing toward the end of the end. Time is not on our side. Time is indeed running out!

[You may request the taped sermons that expound more on this subject, which include: **"What Am I To Hold Fast?"** and **"Renewing Our Sense of Urgency."**]

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