

NEWS WATCH



the CHURCH OF GOD —
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News for the scattered Church of God — by Ron Weinland
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THIS IS THE END-TIME! Pt. 2

Before we examine the third area of proof that we are in the very end of this age—that we are living in the midst of end-time prophecies that are being fulfilled, we need to stop and consider the spiritual health of the Church. The seven areas of proof that we are examining in this series of News Watch manifest the depth of spiritual sluggishness and sickness that exists within the Church.

When God revealed the Sabbath to us, how many areas of scripture did we have to examine before we could see the truth? How many complete chapters of scripture are written for us that exclusively focus on the Sabbath? As we are called and led by God's spirit into truth—if we seek to be in harmony with Him—we will readily accept such truths which are based on relatively few scriptures. What about our belief concerning Atonement? How many areas of the Bible reveal the truth on this subject? What about the doctrine of second tithes? What about the Last Great Day and the great resurrection at that time? As you begin to examine many of the beliefs we have received from God and the very few areas of scripture that have convicted us of His truth—when He has opened our mind through the power of His spirit—then you must ask, "Why are there so many scattered brethren who will not accept what God has to say about this end time where we now find ourselves?" Why is the truth now being resisted?

The proof is overwhelming that we are in the end! Why do God's own people resist His Spirit and refuse to accept what He wants us to see? The failure of so many brethren to acknowledge where we are in time—the failure to accept our recent history as being in absolute harmony and fulfillment with the Word of God should help us to see the depth of blindness and weakness that exists in the Church. And this too is proof of where we are.

It takes a humble spirit to accept correction and chastening from God. It takes humility to admit sin and weakness. It is because of pride and haughtiness that we are unable to hear what God desires to give us. We are going to experience a great escalation in the shaking of this earth, and the hope for the Church is that this will turn our attitude away from pride and

bring us to humility so we will stop resisting our God.

There are far more scriptures that cry out to us that we are in the midst of the fulfillment of end-time prophecies than there are for almost any other truth or doctrine God has revealed to us. Do you remember how Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong spoke so often about the Bible being nearly one-third prophecy and that around ninety percent of that prophecy is for the end-time? We have already been living through many end-time prophecies, and we are about to be catapulted into the time of great physical tribulation during a final 3½ years that leads to the very return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on this earth.

3rd AREA OF PROOF

Now we are going to examine an area of scripture that concerns momentous events about the Church, events which are prophetic in nature and are going to occur in the end-time. Not only do these end-time events revolve around the Church, they actually constitute a proclamation and revelation to the Church that the return of Jesus Christ is no longer being held back, but that now He is coming.

We are going to delve into a chapter in Thessalonians that has been interpreted as being about an event that will happen in the last 3½ years of the end-time concerning a religious leader who will exert great power during that time. However, this religious leader, who is part of the Beast power referred to in Revelation, is not the same as what Thessalonians is addressing.

It is easy to understand how the two accounts could be mistaken as the same event, but as with so many things that have happened to the Church over the past several years, the actual fulfillment of these events should readily reveal to us the truth on the matter.

There is an example we need to follow which was set by the early Church. Although many in the Church believed they understood the will of God concerning the gospel message, they had to face the reality that they were deeply mistaken and had to repent and change their entire focus and course of action

concerning the preaching of the gospel. This was in the matter of circumcision and the gospel going to the Gentiles. As God worked with James, Peter and Paul, they began to come into harmony with the actual will of God in this matter. And above all, they could not deny what was already happening in the Church, because to do so would be denying God. God was giving His Holy Spirit to the Gentiles. How could anyone deny God? How could anyone hold to an incomplete understanding of the role the Gentiles were to play in God's plan?

We too should not deny events that have happened in the Church, especially when we see that they are in perfect harmony with the word of God. It is not wise to refuse the will of God, nor the fulfillment of His word. To do so would be to resist God in order to hold to our own will and selfish design.

Let's begin looking at 2 Thessalonians and notice the context of what Paul is addressing in chapter 2.

"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;" (2 Thes.2:1-3, KJV)

The subject matter of the context is quite apparent. Notice the phrases: 1) "by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2) "and by our gathering together unto him," 3) "as that day of Christ is at hand," and 4) "for that day shall not come." Paul is very clearly addressing a time which the Church has always looked forward to—the coming of Jesus Christ and the day we will be gathered together unto Him. Paul was explaining that the day of Christ would not be at hand until something else first occurred within the Church.

That "something else" is twofold, and both tie in directly with each other. These are not separate accounts dealing with the world on the one hand and the Church on the other. Both are about the Church at the end of the age, just prior to the return of Jesus Christ.

Two-fold Prophecy Revealed

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;" (2 Thes.2:3, KJV). Brethren have long known that a "falling away" or "an apostasy" (in the Greek) would take place in the Church. There have been many times over the past two thousand years when brethren have fallen away from the truth, when they have left those truths that God revealed to them—that He gave to them through the power of His spirit.

What would make this time different from other times when brethren have fallen away? Why would this specific falling away stand out as being unique? We can know the answer because of one primary difference; this verse also tells us that this time of apostasy would be accompanied by the manifestation of the "man of sin."

Our very experience—our recent history cries out to us concerning the fulfillment of this horrible event. There has never been an account within the Church of God when the principle leadership turned against God and betrayed Jesus Christ. There is one other account mentioned in scripture where a "son of perdition" betrayed Jesus Christ. These scriptures tell us that before Jesus Christ returned, there would again be a great betrayal when another "son of perdition" would be revealed.

The evidence should be obvious to all, but many will not face this issue, nor readily admit its truth. We should be able to stop right here and have everyone agree that this has been fulfilled, but many do not understand.

So the question should be asked, "Who could be labeled in such a way, as the man of sin and the son of perdition?" This betrayal could not be done by someone outside a direct relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church. It certainly could not be a label for anyone in some false religion, because such people have always worked against God and Jesus Christ. This man of sin is unique and has the capacity to betray a great trust given to him.

Notice what else is said about this person. *"Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God"* (2 Thes.2:4, KJV). This kind of description should not be foreign to God's people. We should understand such an expression and what it means.

First, we need to consider the kind of circumstance where someone could be described as one who sits in the temple of God. Is this a physical temple that is yet to be built? The answer should be clear to all who

have their roots in the Worldwide Church of God, going back to at least the early 1980's. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong spoke on this subject several times during that time period. From his book, "Mystery of the Ages" on pages 245 & 246 is the following quotation.

"The CHURCH is the spiritual Body of Christ—not a secular or worldly organization, club or institution. Yet it is HIGHLY ORGANIZED.

Notice how thoroughly organized: 'Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.' Notice the Church is a FAMILY, even as GOD is a divine FAMILY—the household of God.'

Continue: 'And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building—the Church is a building 'fitly framed together' (WELL ORGANIZED—all parts joined and functioning together in harmony and teamwork)—'groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit' (Eph.2:19-22). This scripture plainly reveals the temple to which the glorified world-ruling Christ shall come at his soon Second Coming. There is no scripture foretelling the construction of a material temple in Jerusalem before Christ's appearing. The 40th chapter of Ezekiel, however, describes the building of a temple after the return of Christ.

The Church, then, is to grow into a HOLY TEMPLE—the spiritual TEMPLE to which Christ shall come—even as he came to a material temple of stone and metals and wood the first time."

Yes, those in the Church of God are described as being a holy temple, which is spiritual. *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are"* (1 Cor.3:16-17). Understanding this truth will help us to understand what we are being told here in 2 Thessalonians 2 and in other scriptures as well.

No one could be in the spiritual temple of God unless they are a part of the Body of Christ, the Church of God. This verse is not talking about someone who sets down to relax in a chair, but someone in authority who is set in the Church bearing authority. This word in the Greek actually means to "cause to set," as to set, appoint, or to confer a kingdom on one (from "The Word Study Dictionary" of Spiros Zodhiates). Consider several other places this same word is used in scripture.

"And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28).

"And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom" (Matthew 20:21).

"Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:" (Matthew 23:2)

"When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha" (John 19:13).

"If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church" (1 Cor.6:4).

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Revelation 3:21).

There has been only one man in this modern age that was "set" in the Church of God who had been given great trust and authority, who betrayed Jesus Christ and was found to "oppose" God. *"Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God"* (2 Thes.2:4, KJV).

This is the same thing that mankind did from the very beginning. Adam and Eve began to decide for themselves what was right or wrong. They no longer looked to God as the true source of all that is right and good, who alone determines good and evil. By taking on a prerogative that is only God's, they raised themselves above God. *"And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life"* (Gen.3:22-24). It was for this very reason that mankind was cut off from God.

We have lived in a time when a twofold prophecy has been fulfilled which marks a specific time in mans history that would in essence announce that Jesus Christ was now going to return to this earth. The fulfillment of this twofold prophecy was to conclude at a

time when there would be a “falling away” from the truth that God had delivered to His people coupled with the influence of a leader who was set in great authority within the Church. This leader would rebel, betray a great trust given to him, and even oppose God by raising himself above God thereby taking on a prerogative that is God’s alone—to determine what is true and false, what is good and evil, what is right and wrong.

If we can be true to God and faithfully acknowledge what we have witnessed as God’s people, we will readily admit that a great falling away has occurred and that it was as destructive as it was because of the unfaithful leadership of Joseph W. Tkach, Sr. who set out to destroy what God had been building. Can we as God’s people be honest and faithful before God with those things we have witnessed? Does our recent history agree fully with the faithful and true word of God?

In the days of Sardis, God told the Church that it was spiritually dead and that what they had remaining was ready to die. They only had three foundational truths remaining. God ushered in a new era for the Church in which doors were opened to restore truth to His people—truth needed for salvation. That was accomplished through His apostle, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. As Mr. Armstrong was nearing death in January of 1986, he was moved to transfer his authority as the earthly head of the Church from himself to Joseph W. Tkach, Sr. That transfer of authority was made very clear to the Church, so much so that Mr. Armstrong was moved to say that “our very salvation depended upon” faithfully following and supporting that transfer. This was Mr. Armstrong’s final “binding and loosening” decision upon the Church. But when Joseph W. Tkach, Sr. turned from God and changed the very foundational doctrines of the Church, God had already taught us what we are to do in any such circumstance—we are to FLEE spiritual fornication and idolatry! When Lucifer rebelled against God, none of the angels were to stay around and support him, rather they were to flee and remain faithful to God.

The Countdown Has Begun

This end time event is unprecedented in all the history of the Church. That is why such rebellion and destruction is spoken of as being abominable to God, because it sets out to destroy the very temple of God—the temple that He Himself is building. “*When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him under-*

stand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:” (Matthew 24:15-16). Yes, all who escape that desolation will have had to obey God in order to do so and flee as He commanded. And then they must continue to flee any destructive power working to weaken the temple of God. The abomination that is still making the temple desolate is not confined to the Worldwide Church of God.

As we return to the story at hand, we need to see why this unique event is so pivotal to end-time prophecy. Notice the blocked parenthesis that have been added to give explanation in the following verses.

“*And now ye know what withholdeth* [Gk.-restrains, holds back, detains] *that he* [the man of sin] *might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth* [Gk.-restrains, holds back, detains] *will let, until he* [the man of sin] *be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:*” (2 Thes.2:6-8).

What is being restrained, held back or detained from happening? It is the same context that Paul was addressing in this entire subject matter that is found in verses 1 and 2, “*Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.*” The very return of Jesus Christ was being held back until this event occurred in the Church.

But this event should be noted for what it is. It is a revelation to the Church that this long-awaited event is now going to occur. It is like a great announcement that reveals the countdown for His return has begun. Prophetic fulfillment of end-time events would now begin to unfold before our very eyes. It is God’s word to us that the way for the coming of Jesus Christ has now been opened, illuminated—no longer being held back! Do we have eyes to see?

This twofold prophetic fulfillment of 2 Thessalonians is a cry to the Church that the bridegroom is coming and that we are to be making ourselves ready. That should be our focus now more than ever—preparing for the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

This is the only great event spoken by God to His Church that announces the countdown has begun—marking a specific time in the nearly 6,000 years of human history which declares that Jesus Christ is now coming.

Notice and remember that when this man of

sin was revealed, when this son of perdition was made manifest so you could clearly see his rebellion and opposition to God, that it was precisely 40 Sabbaths to the day and hour that his life came to an end. Was this of God or just a coincidence? Is a judgment containing the number 40 a declaration of the very judgment of God? Do we remember the flood that lasted for 40 days and nights because of the rebellion of man? Do we remember the wandering of the children of Israel in the wilderness for 40 years because of their rebellion? And, do God’s people remember that a man in great authority said that the Sabbath was no longer a sign for God’s people? Is it any wonder that on the very Sabbath that Joe Tkach, Sr. said the Sabbath was no longer commanded for God’s people that God Himself gave a judgment upon him that would be accomplished exactly 40 Sabbaths later—to the hour?

Now we should better understand—“*And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness* [illumination] *of his coming:*” (2 Thes.2:8). Yes, God said He would destroy the man of sin and that these events would illuminate the very coming of Jesus Christ.

Does anyone **dare** to stand before God and deny what we have witnessed in these matters? Yet far too many deny these and other end-time events that are unfolding before our very eyes. It is indeed a very shameful thing to deny God and to fail to be a true and faithful witness of the Word of God!

“*And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*” (2 Thes.2:8-12).

God makes it clear that for such an event to occur within the environs of the Church, this man of sin would be empowered by Satan with great strength to deceive through a cunning show of charisma and other outward signs that would work to delude others. This lying spirit would move in an astonishing way—a lying wonder—upon the Church because of the Church’s failure to zealously love the truth that God had restored. This is a

God given ability that must be sought after, because this is “agape”—God’s love that must be working in us in order to have such desire and affection for His truth. But as Matthew 24 warns about the end of this age, the love (agape) of many began to wax cold.

Again, these warnings could only be to the Church, because only those called of God can receive this kind of love into their lives. “...If we love [agape] one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit” (1 John 4:12-13).

The only ones that can be saved—the only ones that can be deceived—the only ones who are able to believe the truth are those that God has called. Yes, this prophecy is about the Church, it is not about a deceived religious world around us. “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” (2 Thes.2:13).

4th AREA OF PROOF

This next area of proof that we are in the very end of this age is one that every member of the Body of Christ should be very familiar with and find easy to acknowledge—to admit our history as the true Church of God which is in perfect agreement with the Word of God. Yet that is not the case, because most are not faithful witnesses to this history.

This area of scripture is covered in large part by the article “Dead, Revived, Rejected!” in our booklet “Time Is Running Out,” so we will only touch upon a few high points contained here in Revelation 3.

As was mentioned earlier in this article, God told Sardis that it was spiritually dead and that the truth they had remaining was dying out. If God had allowed that to happen, the Church would not have survived to the return of Jesus Christ. But God has made it plain that the Church would be alive at Christ’s return and that the gates of hell could not prevail against it. So the Church had to be revived. Truth that was dying out had to be restored.

This restoration of truth should be an easy thing to acknowledge—that it did occur during the leadership of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong and the period of time we know as Philadelphia. Yes, God revealed foundational truth to His Church once again. This era kept His word and did not deny His name. Sardis was known for just the opposite—letting the

word of God die out as they themselves were dying spiritually—denying the life of God to live in and through them.

Our history is testimony to the truth that God used Mr. Armstrong to restore truth to His Church. Doors were opened by God that made this task possible—doors that no one could shut. Scriptures foretold of an Elijah to come who would restore all things. Today, people argue over this rather than acknowledge the truth of what stares them in the face—again, more proof that the word of God agrees with our history as being the true Church of God spoken of in prophecy.

Jesus was asked by his disciples about the Elijah to come. “And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things” (Mat.17:11). What needed to be restored before Jesus Christ could return to this earth? A great sign that we would be at that end-time would be when this occurred. It is a needful part of the history of the Church! God revealed that the truth would die out toward the end and the Church would begin to die spiritually. In order to prevent that from happening, God restored all truth necessary for salvation that would once again give life to His Church. Truly, the Elijah would first come and restore that truth to the Church. Can anyone deny what God performed through His end-time apostle during the era of Philadelphia?

Yet today there are many who are tearing down this understanding. One evangelist is placing doubt in the minds of brethren by criticizing what **was done** during Philadelphia. Such tactics only serve to weaken the Church even more.

Faithfully reviewing our history and acknowledging that this history is in perfect and complete harmony with the word of God and end-time prophecies should serve to strengthen brethren and sober us to the reality of how little time we have left to prepare ourselves. Yet this evangelist “of a large organization” waffles back and forth on this subject. He even plants the thought that there are experts who believe one of the two witnesses may fulfill this role of the Elijah to come. How could such a man be so blind, especially after all that he experienced in the Church during Philadelphia? And who are these “experts?” Have these experts written commentary about this subject, and are they supposed to be “Bible scholars,” who are in fact actually outside the Church—without the spirit of God dwelling in them? Do we look to experts outside the Church to help us understand the true word of God and those things

that can only be revealed through God’s spirit? What would either of these two witnesses restore in that last 3½ years before Jesus Christ returns? That question alone should show how foolish this evangelist has been in presenting such suggestions!

The restoration of foundational truth to a dying Church is witnessed by our history and the work God did through Mr. Armstrong. That is why Jesus Christ concluded His instruction to Philadelphia by saying, “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Rev.3:11). God worked long and hard through Mr. Armstrong and the Philadelphian era to restore His truth to the Church, and His great desire toward us is that we **hold fast** what He gave.

Rather than being faithful witnesses of those things we have witnessed at the end of this age, pride has filled the Church with self-importance about our own good and our own ability in handling the word of God. And rather than be faithful witnesses of all that has come upon us, brethren would rather turn inwardly by building up the self or one’s organization in order to keep from acknowledging the truth they must eventually face! Such attitudes have led to spiritual blindness, nakedness, complacency, and lukewarmness. These attitudes grew very strong in the late 1980’s and are still active to this day.

This is the very reason we are scattered and are continuing to be scattered—because there is too much pride to admit that we have been spued out of God’s mouth because of pride. So brethren will not repent and become zealous to God as Laodicea is instructed to do. The refusal to admit our state of being, the refusal to admit our weak condition and the refusal to admit we are scattered and spued out of God’s mouth are testimony that we are in the very last era—an era that is steeped in pride. Refusal to admit the truth is the very thing that prevents us from repenting in the way God instructs. That is why so many want to cling to some identity with Philadelphia because they cannot admit—cannot repent of a powerful Laodicean spirit that is working in the Church. We tend to see ourselves as better than that—richer spiritually than that. Could the verses of Revelation 3 be any stronger testimony of where we are in time? Laodicea is the last era mentioned by Jesus Christ. There is not another to follow. How close to the end of Laodicea are we? Jesus Christ is at the door and ready to come back to this earth. The opening of that door is rapidly closing in on mankind and the Church. **NW**