

Where and How the Worldwide Church of God Went Wrong

From its hey-day in the late 1960's, to today, the Worldwide Church of God has undergone significant changes, both in policy, operations, and basic doctrines. What does it all mean? Is Joseph Tkach really carrying on the legacy and tradition of Herbert W. Armstrong? What happened to the Church that Herbert Armstrong thought he was leaving to his successor?

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(Please note this article was originally written many years ago soon after the death of Herbert W. Armstrong. Even so this is a very helpful and useful historical account of the well known problems in the Worldwide Church of God. Updated February 2018).

Initially, when Herbert Armstrong began serving God, he did not found a Church but rather an evangelical work. As it grew, and members were baptized, he called it the "Radio Church of God." In those days he acknowledged that the Church of God, Seventh Day, and others, were also parts of the body of Christ.

But after the Church grew big, and powerful, individuals began referring to the "work" as "the Church." By the late '50s and early '60s Herbert Armstrong himself began denying the fact that others could also be part of the body of Christ, and began calling virtually all other groups "counterfeits." This trend continued and grew more flagrant, as the Church increased in power, income, and membership.

There is a mortal danger in any organizational structure, whether ecclesiastical or secular. As growth continues, management systems are brought in, and faith and inspiration become overlooked and neglected. Systems replace faith; numbers crunching replaces inspiration. Human logic and reason and planning take the place of looking to Christ and expecting miracles to do the Work! Specially designed "co-worker letters" are sent to people to maximize the monetary returns -- taking advantage of widows, older people, and those who are ignorant of the methods of modern evangelism!

"The Organizational Trap"

The organizational trap swallowed the Worldwide Church of God, and a hierarchical structure developed, with the ministerial elite on one level and the plebeian masses of Church members down at the bottom. Soon ministers were expected to always be called "Mr." and never addressed by their first name! The examples and instruction of Christ and the early Church were completely ignored and bypassed. Jesus Christ said, "The kings of the Gentiles LORD IT OVER THEM; and those who exercise AUTHORITY over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:25-27).

As hierarchies develop, brethren begin looking to the lofty ministers as their spiritual guides and masters, and not to Christ! The ministry becomes an inflated, self-serving, ego trip! Humility is swallowed up in pride and pride leads to arrogance!

Herbert Armstrong incorporated the Radio Church of God in 1948. One 19 year time cycle, later, Loma D. Armstrong died -- in 1967. One 19 year time cycle later, Herbert W. Armstrong died -- in January, 1986! These numbers illustrate the fact that God was working with the Church of God, during this time, even though mistakes were made by the human leaders. Perhaps the greatest single mistake made by Herbert Armstrong was the establishment of a governmental system of hierarchical superiority -- the so-called "pyramid" structure -- which is nowhere taught or commanded in the Scriptures. Rather, as Herbert Armstrong himself wrote in a 1939 article on Church Government, the pyramid structure of Government comes straight out of BABYLON and is PAGAN to the core! But as the Church grew, he felt the need to establish lines of authority, and began ordaining various "levels" of ministers thinking he was following God's way, not realizing that ministerial "gifts" are NOT "ranks," but divinely distributed GIFTS of the Spirit of God (I Cor.12:1-11). GOD is the one who appoints spiritual offices -- not men! (I Cor.12:27-31; Eph.4:9-13).

By establishing a ministerial hierarchy, Herbert Armstrong was falling into the trap of Satan the devil, and setting up a GENTILE form of Church Government, the very thing Jesus Christ warned against and condemned (Matt.20:24-28; 23:8-12). He thereby created and injected the seeds of the Church's eventual destruction and take-over by Satan the devil!

Herbert Armstrong's Own Sense of Church Government

Interestingly, Herbert Armstrong wrote an article in 1939 in which he lambasted the concept of a centralized and powerful Church government. In that article he argued that the power really rested with the people and local leadership of the Church, and that power should rest with each church and local ministry in charge of its own government and affairs, under Christ. He went so far as to declare that centralized Church government was patterned after the government of the Roman Empire, and thus traced back to ancient Babylon!

It is reported that in October, 1975, Herbert Armstrong ordained to the ministry a certain Marc Segall (who later changed his name to Courtenay), who graduated from Ambassador College in 1973. He later served as a full-time elder for 20 years in the Church. According to Marc Courtenay, Mr. Armstrong told him, at his ordination, that in retrospect, he felt that the concept of church government he had written about in 1939 would have worked, but that he had been afraid he would lose control if he adopted it.

John Robinson, editor of *In Transition*, and a former minister of the Worldwide Church of God, spoke with Courtenay, and Courtenay confirmed the accuracy of the report. Robinson writes:

"He said he was seated next to Mr. Armstrong during a meal when the conversation took place. Mr. Courtenay said he had at the time recently read Mr. Armstrong's 1939 article on government.

"I asked Mr. Armstrong about the article,' Mr. Courtenay recounted. 'At first he gave me the standard explanation that he hadn't fully understood government at the time.' Mr. Courtenay said he then gently pressed Mr. Armstrong on the issue and asked him again about the article.

"He said that Mr. Armstrong became reflective and then gave him a more thoughtful, candid response.

"He said that the New Testament reflected a collegial approach to church government and that what he wrote in 1939 was the ideal. Mr. Courtenay said Mr. Armstrong added that if he had had more faith he would have continued that practice, but he 'was afraid of losing control.'

"I asked Mr. Courtenay if anyone else heard the conversation. He said his wife, Lisa, had. I talked with her at length on the phone . . . She said the conversation was as her husband remembered.

"It was on the day Marc was ordained,' she recalled. 'In fact, Mr. Armstrong ordained Marc. After the ordination we were at a restaurant eating with Mr. Armstrong and some other ministers.'

"She said she remembers the conversation clearly. She said there were times when

Mr. Armstrong would speak candidly, and that was one of them" (*In Transition*, Jan. 31, 1997, "WCG governmental history traced up to Tkach era," by John Robinson, p.24).

Approaching the Transfer of Power

As the Worldwide Church of God organization grew, and the money poured in, problems also grew in size and scope. In 1974, a rebellion among the ministry led to scores of ministers leaving the Church together, with one or two thousand members. In the 1970s, liberal elements in the Church sought to invoke changes in major doctrines, and conservative ministers balked at every suggested change, leading to more defections and terminations.

Some doctrines were changed, such as the Divorce and Remarriage doctrine. Others were altered slightly, such as the healing doctrine, although many people were left confused on the healing issue, since ministers seemed to imply that "faith" for healing was required of members to be considered in "good standing," and yet members were permitted also to seek the services of medical doctors, if they so chose.

In 1978, Herbert and Garner Ted Armstrong had a falling out, leading to their irreconcilable separation, and Ted started up his own Church, the Church of God, International. In the meantime, Herbert Armstrong seemed to come to depend more and more on Stanley Rader, attorney for the Church. In 1979 the state of California put the Church in receivership, due to complaints and a law suit filed by disgruntled ex-members, and Herbert Armstrong depended on Stanley Rader to lead the fight against the state. He did so and in the process he and local elder Joseph Tkach were ordained as "evangelists" in the Church by a grateful Herbert Armstrong.

Were these men truly converted Christians who deserved such a ministerial rank? Or were they false shepherds who had stolen in amongst the flock? Were they men of God, or agents of Satan who had wormed their way into the ministry? Jesus Christ said, "You will know them by their fruits" (Matt.7:20).

Throughout history, beginning in the first century of the Church, Satan influenced evil men to infiltrate God's Church, and rise up to positions of leadership. The early apostles had to wrestle with them constantly and wrote of their nefarious workings (Acts 20:28-31; II Pet.2:1-3; Jude 3-4). Such men, no doubt, looked "good" on the outside, and dressed snappily, and acted like loyal, obedient servants -- yet sooner or later, began to teach error, and began to go astray and apostatize.

Even so, Paul, Peter and Jude foretold the same sort of apostasy would occur in the last generation, before the coming of Christ! (II Tim.3:1-11, 4:1-5; II Peter, and Jude). Paul wrote, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the return of Christ] shall not come, except there come a FALLING AWAY FIRST, and that man of sin be revealed . . ." (II Thess.2:3). The "mystery of iniquity" was already at work in Paul's day, he said (v.7), but it would rise to a consummation of deceitfulness and pinnacle of powerful delusion, in the last days (v.8-12), so that those who do not

have a "love of the truth" will be deceived, led astray, and ultimately destroyed -- judged and punished with the wicked.

Who can deny that massive changes have occurred in the Worldwide Church of God since the death of Herbert Armstrong? Over ninety major and significant doctrinal changes have been documented by observers of the Church! Our article "90 Doctrinal Changes in the Worldwide Church of God" documents them, one by one.

It should be obvious, then, that Herbert Armstrong made a serious error in judgment when he picked his successor -- or in allowing the process to occur in the way it did. On the other hand, perhaps he was trusting in "faith." But it appears he put a lot of "faith" in the men around him, who it turns out were untrustworthy and plotting scoundrels, several of them seeking to gain control of the Church in opposition to each other.

Strangely, Herbert Armstrong himself has admitted many times that he was a very poor judge of character. Yet even he suspected that there were men waiting for him to die, so they could take over the Church. Perhaps the biggest visible threat he saw was in his own son, Garner Ted Armstrong, and that is the reason why he refused to meet with his son or allow him to gain a foothold back in the Church, refusing to reconcile with him out of distrust. He may also have had Stanley Rader in mind, as it was reported that Rader had plotted to have Herbert's wife Ramona to have Mr. Armstrong committed to an institution in Arizona as being incompetent and unable to function and perform his duties. Whether or not these allegations were true, it was reported that a tape recording had been made of such a conversation between Ramona and Rader, and later played for Mr. Armstrong on board the Gulfstream jet, as it flew over Los Angeles. According to those supposedly in the "know," it wasn't until this time that Herbert Armstrong really woke up to the danger that Rader posed for himself and the Church, and determined to have him removed from all Church responsibilities -- even if it cost the Work "millions" to force Rader into retirement, and pay off his contract.

At any rate, concerns about successorship was heavily on the mind of Herbert Armstrong the year before he died. That is why, less than one year before his death, Herbert Armstrong wrote in the June 24, 1985 *Worldwide News*, at the conclusion of an article entitled "Recent History of the Philadelphia Era of the Worldwide Church of God" the following plaintive, thoughtful words of concern:

"A final personal word. In a few days I will be 93 years of age. For some years now, there have been some, like vultures, waiting for me to die. They would like to come back and take over the leadership of the Church in my stead. I have been deeply concerned about this, but in no sense worried. This is the Church of God, not of any man. Jesus Christ is the living Head of this Church. I am not. . . .

"When I have, even rarely, mentioned my concern in this category, the response of members has always been the belief that God will keep me alive. I hope that He will, and I do try to take every care of my health and physical condition, but whether God keeps me alive 10 more years, or only 10 more minutes is entirely in God's hands. Brethren, put your faith in Christ and the living God and not in me. *If Christ should remove me, He will direct the Advisory Council of Elders to select one of them to continue leading you* until the coming of Jesus Christ in power and in glory. Pray that God will keep YOU in His Church until He replaces this evil world and brings the wonderful, peaceful and blessed Kingdom of God."

Herbert Armstrong wrote this in June 1985 -- just six and one half months before his death! Strange, isn't it, that only a few days before his final death, or thereabouts, a mysterious "letter" appeared, supposedly "signed" by Herbert Armstrong, which seemed to appoint Joseph W. Tkach, Sr. -- a man who never amounted to much, and was a local elder for years -- a man who was uneducated, of Russian stock, and who never finished high school, let alone ever graduated from any college or university, including Ambassador -- to take over the reins of the Church!

Strange, isn't it, that Herbert Armstrong AT NO TIME gave verbal, obvious, unconditional and clear instructions to the Council of Elders, to select Tkach, and appoint him as the "Pastor General" of the Church?

Judging by what is known, it was his *intent* that the Council of Elders would pick his successor. He did not want to do it himself. He wasn't sure who to pick! Therefore he never made it clear who his successor would be.

But in the weeks before his death, as he lay sick and weak, in bed, his health failing, it seems circumstances raced ahead of him, and he was unable to really handle the matter of his successor in a public, assertive, wise manner. So we are left with questions -- theories -- and more questions.

According to John Robinson, publisher of *In Transition*, a monthly newsletter published for the remnant churches that came out of Worldwide in the past several years, Herbert Armstrong *intended* for Joseph Tkach to answer to the Council of Elders, after Armstrong's death -- so said Aaron Dean, Herbert Armstrong's personal assistant, at the time. But according to Dean, within months of Armstrong's death, Tkach grew restive and tired of the "constraints" that had been placed on him, and according to Larry Salyer, a high level Tkach minister at that time, Tkach demanded that WCG lawyer Ralph Helge draw up papers to make the changes necessary for Tkach to receive all Armstrong's titles and powers.

The Council of Elders, which had always been a "rubber stamp" kind of group, anyway, acquiesced and caved in to Tkach's demanded "changes," and enabled him to accomplish his desire.

They were, of course, accustomed to "government from the top down," and being "under authority," as that is the form of government Herbert Armstrong had been using for many years. So they apparently did not "smell a rat." They naively failed to do as Herbert Armstrong had willed for them to do, and allowed Joseph Tkach to seize complete power and control over the Worldwide Church of God!

Whether this story is entirely true or not, I do not know. Other mind-boggling possibilities and explanations of events in the last few days of Armstrong's life have been whispered, circulated, and suggested, concerning the means by which power was really transferred from Herbert Armstrong to Tkach -- including rumors of skull-duggery, deceitful manipulation of an aged man who naively trusted his aides, suggestions that important documents were signed unwittingly, which Herbert Armstrong never fully understood or read, and even suggestions that Armstrong's signature may have been "forged" on certain letters which appeared to appoint Tkach as his successor and transfer power to Tkach.

Some rumors have even been in circulation which suggested the possibility of foul play -- even murder. The last night anyone saw Herbert Armstrong still alive, there was no nurse in attendance. There was no security guard in his room, or nearby. Interestingly, the last one to see him alive was none other than his trusted assistant Joseph Tkach, Sr., who was to replace him as Pastor General of the Church and "apostle." After Tkach left his bedside that night, no one entered Armstrong's room until the next morning, when his body was found dead. Contrary to an article which appeared in *The Worldwide News* at the time, he died in his bed, and not sitting up in his wife's favorite chair.

Did Satan the devil pull off a master-stroke at the death and passing of Herbert Armstrong? Was the "passing of the baton" a notorious, nefarious FRAUD? Was Herbert Armstrong, while on his death bed, surrounded by only a few "trusted" aides, deceived, and taken advantage of? The horrendous possibilities are mind-boggling!

Whatever Happened to the Council of Elders?

Herbert Armstrong fully intended for the Council of Elders to select his successor, knowing full well his own limitations and weaknesses. Why then, are we supposed to believe that he suddenly "changed his mind" while on his death bed?

There is an interesting prophecy in Isaiah, where God says: "Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see! Who is blind, but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one committed to me, blind like the servant of the LORD?" (Isa.42:18-19). In his old age, Herbert Armstrong was partially deaf and partially blind. This is a prophecy referring to him! He made many mistakes, yet he was a servant of God.

I don't think Herbert Armstrong saw, grasped, or was fully aware of the possible danger he was in, as he lay on his death-bed, with no clear decision having been made as to his successor. Books

have been written suggesting that Pope John Paul I was actually murdered in the Vatican by a conspiracy of high-ranking cardinals, to perpetuate their own authority and doctrines. Other books have been written suggesting that John F. Kennedy was actually assassinated in Dallas, Texas, in 1963, in a massive conspiracy, involving U.S. government agents, the CIA, FBI, as well as the Mafia. Some have suggested the murder of the president may have been approved and engineered by Lyndon Baines Johnson, his "successor," whom Kennedy had ruled out as his running mate when Kennedy ran for re-election.

Was Herbert Armstrong also the victim of a cabal, a sinister plot of Satan the devil, to take over the Church? Whether or not his death was due to sickness, or foul play, the results of his unwillingness to name a successor early on, and his lack of creating a real functioning Council of Elders, proved to be the "Achilles heel" of the Church. The "fruits" of the government and leadership of the Church since his death prove beyond doubt that he would personally be gravely disappointed in the decisions and leadership of his successors.

***The Church After Herbert Armstrong --
the Laodicean Era Rises Up!***

Since his death in 1986, the Worldwide Church of God has suddenly veered off into doctrinal heresies and distortions, reconciling doctrines with Protestantism, and seeking to find favor in Satan's world! The Church has VEERED OFF THE TRACKS and plunged into error and wickedness -- a full-blown Laodicean condition which Jesus Christ condemns!

Now we are living in the FULL-BLOWN LAODICEAN ERA of the End Time remnant Churches of GOD! Prophecy was soon relegated to the dust bin; Herbert Armstrong's booklets were all carefully "revised" and "rewritten." All his own original writings have been scrapped, including booklets on "Who Is the Beast?", "The Key to the Book of Revelation," and "Revelation Unveiled At Last!", his *Autobiography*, and all his foundational doctrinal booklets!

His book *Mystery of the Ages*, praised at first, was soon thrown out on the trash heap. His book *United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy* likewise was soon withdrawn from circulation, and quietly destroyed. Prophecy and the identity of the lost ten tribes of Israel is no longer of major concern or interest to the new Church leadership.

For years I have been watching, documenting, and observing, as the Worldwide Church of God, under Joseph Tkach, changed EVERY MAJOR DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH once taught by Herbert W. Armstrong!

I have been warning members and ex-members since 1987 of the fundamental, awesome changes taking place, as the Church plunged heedlessly headlong back into the mainstream of Protestantism and modern "evangelical" Christianity -- so that it now receives raving reviews from such "Christian" magazines as *Christianity Today*.

One of the major doctrines of the Church in times past was that "Christians" are not really "born again" until the resurrection, when we will be literally "born" of God -- born into His Universe-ruling Family! But now the Worldwide Church of God, under Joseph Tkach, Sr., now deceased, and currently run by his son, Joseph Tkach, Jr., teaches that Christians are "born again" at reception of the Holy Spirit!

Worldwide no longer believes in a 6,000 year plan of God. Nor do they stress the millennial reign of Christ over the nations. The Church actually claims the Kingdom of God is already here, now, *in the Church* -- implying that if anybody leaves the Church, they are cut off from God's "government" and will wind up in Gehenna fire!

Yet, at the same time, Worldwide now accepts ALL Christian churches and denominations as being part of God's "true church" -- including even Catholics, Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists, you name them -- all, that is, *except the churches which have sprung out of Worldwide itself due to its massive changes!* These churches, such as Global, United, and Philadelphia Church of God are looked upon as sects, cults, and heretical bodies, serving Satan the devil.

The greatest changes in Worldwide today, however, plain as the nose on Jimmy Durante's face, is the new teaching that the New Covenant abolishes the need to observe the Sabbath, the Holy Days of God, and all elements of the "Old Covenant"! Even "unclean meats" may now be eaten and devoured with cheerful abandon and gluttonous desire.

Truly, if Herbert Armstrong were alive today, he would turn over in his grave. He would roar with thunderous indignation. He would put the scoundrels currently running the Worldwide Church of God out of the Church quicker than you can say "Joe Junior"!

Worldwide Church of God now endorses Christmas observance, Easter Sunday observance, and the Good Friday-Easter Sunday crucifixion-resurrection scheme. They preach "grace" and claim the "law" of God is abolished and is contrary to grace.

And the most amazing thing of all, to me, is that scores of thousands of people appear to be going along with their historic rejection of the truth of God, and turn to apostasy and rebellion against the laws of God!

How blind, how weak, how deceived, can once "enlightened" people be?

Like the proverbial frog that is put into a pot, and the heat turned up gradually, so that it feels comfortable and warm, until its energy is sapped and it loses its strength, so that as the water begins to boil, and bubble violently, it dies a scalding death, so these erstwhile "Christians" and children of God are APPROACHING SPIRITUAL DEATH -- *AND DON'T EVEN SEEM TO REALIZE IT!*

If you want to know more about the tragic plunge into apostasy of the Worldwide Church of God, under the new leadership, then write for our articles: "The Mafia Apostle," "Is Joseph Tkach an Apostle?" "The Plain Truth about Joseph Tkach," "Joseph Tkach -- Saint? or Monster?", "Crisis in the Worldwide Church of God!", "Where the Church Went Wrong," "The Plain Truth about Church Authority," "The Pancake Apostle," "The Great Apostasy," and "End-Time Apostasy!" Also, write for the article, "90 Doctrinal Changes in the Church of God!" Hopefully, these articles will help open your eyes, or the eyes of some of your loved ones who have been deceived by this end-time deceiver!

What Does God Say to Do?

Where will the diabolical, Satanic heresies END?

What should MEMBERS of such a Church do about their affiliation? And what about members of the other apostate, Laodicean churches, whether on the right or left "wing"?

Isaiah the prophet thunders, "AWAKE, awake; put on thy strength [the whole armour of God - Ephesians 6:10-20], O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments" -- the robes of righteousness (Isaiah 52:1, Rev.19:6-10). "Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that my people is taken away for nought? *they that rule over them [their shepherds or "ministers"]* MAKE THEM TO HOWL, saith the Lord; and my name continually every day is *blasphemed*" (verse 5). They blaspheme God's name by their practices, their filthy deeds, their disfellowshipment procedures, their false doctrines, their calling God's TRUE servants and prophets "false prophets," "Satan-inspired," and other epithets. They blaspheme God by their every action and word, every day, as they abuse, beat, and browbeat the sheep under their control.

The prophet Ezekiel wrote, "The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, prophesy against the SHEPHERDS of Israel; prophesy and say to them: "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: WOE to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have RULED THEM HARSHLY AND BRUTALLY. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them" (Ezek.34:1-6).

God thunders, "I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will REMOVE them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves; I will RESCUE my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them" (verse 10).

God Himself says, "As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will judge

between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. . . . See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, I will save my flock, and they will no longer be PLUNDERED" (Ezek.34:17-22).

Almighty God, and Jesus Christ, both have a severe "bone to pick" with the End Time Church of God generation -- the people of God today. God says to His flock, His people, who have strayed into the paths of sin and Laodicean compromise and error: "Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your INIQUITIES have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt. Your lips have spoken LIES, and your tongue uttered wicked things. No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity.

"They rely on empty arguments and speak lies; they conceive trouble and give birth to evil. They hatch the eggs of vipers and spin a spider's web [the name "Tkach" literally means "to spin a web"!]. Whoever eats their eggs will die, and when one is broken, an adder is hatched. Their COBWEBS are useless for clothing [rendering people "naked" spiritually!]; they cannot cover themselves with what they make. Their deeds are evil deeds, and acts of violence are in their hands. Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood [to disfellowship so-called "dissidents"!]. Their thoughts are evil thoughts; ruin and destruction mark their ways. The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths [they "cover up" the sins of the ministry, and refuse to judge individual cases with righteousness, but always support the "minister," right or wrong!]. They have turned them into CROOKED ROADS; no one who walks in them will know peace" (Isa.59:1-8).

God's Rebuke and Warning

This is a very serious rebuke and stern correction. This is a description of the End Time Laodicean Church, with all its "glory" and wickedness! The oppressed sheep of this Church cry out, "So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. LIKE THE BLIND" -- Laodiceans are "BLIND," remember -- "we grope along the wall, feeling our way like MEN WITHOUT EYES. At midday we stumble as if it were twilight; among the strong, we are like the DEAD. We all growl like bears; we moan mournfully like doves. We look for justice, but find one; for deliverance, but it is far away" (Isa.59:9-11).

In the middle of Great Tribulation, many of the people of this remnant Church will finally cry out to God, confessing their sins and wickedness. They will pray, and say, "For our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities, rebellion and treachery against the Lord, turning our backs on our God, fomenting oppression and revolt, uttering lies our hearts have conceived. So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; TRUTH has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. TRUTH is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey" (Isa.59:12-15).

In their distress they will finally call on God, in deep remorse and repentance for their sins, and God will forgive them, and wipe away their iniquities. He will deliver them from the Great Tribulation, those who remain alive, and Christ Himself will rescue them (verses 16-18). "From the west, men will fear the name of the LORD, and from the rising of the sun, they will REVERE his glory. For he will come like a pent-up flood that the breath of the LORD drives along. The Redeemer will come to Zion [the remnant Church in captivity], to those in Jacob who REPENT of their sins" (Isa.59:19-20).

The Job of God's WATCHMEN

What about you? Will you repent now? Or will you have to experience the pangs of bitter travail and Great Tribulation to bring you to your senses?

God has called prophets and watchmen to WARN His erring, sinning, straying people to RETURN to HIM, before it is too late! That cry and warning is going out!

God thunders to us, "Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice LIKE A TRUMPET. Declare to my people their REBELLION and to the house of Jacob their SINS" (Isa.58:1).

God tells His people, "I have posted WATCHMEN on your walls, O Jerusalem [the Church]; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, *give yourselves NO REST, and give Him no rest*, till He establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth" (Isa.62:6-7).

God says to His modern day watchmen,

"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word that I speak and GIVE THEM WARNING FROM ME. When I say to a wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or SPEAK OUT TO DISSUADE HIM from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself" (Ezekiel 3:17-19).

God also warns us of the alternative:

"Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, and I put a stumbling block before him, he will die. Since you did not warn him, he will die for his sin. The righteous things he did will not be remembered, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But IF YOU DO WARN the righteous man not to sin and he does not sin, he will surely live because he TOOK WARNING, and you will have saved yourself" (Ezek.3:20-21).

If the wicked repent, and turn from their sins, God will forgive them. But if they are warned, and refuse to repent, their blood is upon their own head -- they are responsible (Ezek.18:14-23). On the other hand, if the righteous man "turns from his righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked man does, will he live? NONE of the righteous things he has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness he is GUILTY of and the SINS he has committed, he will DIE" (Ezek.18:24).

End-Time Apostasy and You

The apostle Paul warns us that many will be deceived and carried away by this terrible, end-time apostasy because "they refused to *love the truth* and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe THE LIE and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness" (II Thess.2:10-12).

What is "the lie" which these people will swallow, hook, line and sinker? It is not just any old lie -- it is THE lie -- the very lie that Satan deceived Adam and Eve with in the Garden of Eden! It is the lie that God lied when He told Adam the day he sinned he would die. It is the lie that if we follow Satan's ways we will become as "gods" to know good and evil (Genesis 3:4-5). It is the lie that Satan brings truth and God is a liar, the Word of God cannot be trusted, that the doctrines of the Bible are false, that we can change them and still be saved! It is the lie that we should believe a NEW gospel - - the gospel of "human salvation" instead of the "kingdom of God," which Jesus and the apostles all preached! It is the LIE that we are "born again" at conversion, when we "accept Christ," rather than at the resurrection, when our bodies are changed to SPIRIT!

The Phillips Translation has this passage, "The lawless man is produced by the spirit of evil and armed with all the force, wonders and signs that falsehood can devise. To those involved in this dying world he will come with *evil's undiluted power to deceive*, for they have *refused to love the truth* which could have saved them. God sends upon them, therefore, the full force of evil's delusion, so that *they put their faith in an UTTER FRAUD* and meet the inevitable judgment of all who have refused to believe the truth and who have made evil their playfellow" (II Thess.2:9-12).

What about you? Do you still have the "love of the truth"? Or have you "lost your first love," like the Church of Ephesus? (Rev.2:4).

How important is TRUTH and doctrinal purity to you? does it make any difference? Are you willing to compromise "a little bit," with error and falsehood? Are you willing to stand by and accept doctrinal "changes" which you have not "tested," or "proven"?

The apostle Paul exhorts each one of us, "Continue to WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION with fear and trembling" (Phil.2:12). Peter exhorts, "Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE. For *if you do these things*, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet.1:10-11).

"COME OUT from among Them!"

In the midst of all the apostasy occurring all around us, where do you stand? What are YOU going to do about it? Your own eternal salvation -- and that of your family and children -- is at stake!

God gives us perfectly clear instructions on handling such matters in His Word. Some try to tell us, today, that the appropriate action is to *do nothing -- stay right where you are -- and WAIT for God to CHANGE Worldwide and bring it back to the Truth!*

Is that what *God* says?

God commands us further: "My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and *MEDDLE NOT with them that are given to CHANGE*: For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?" (Prov.24:21-22).

Some today even admit that the Worldwide Church of God has become "the synagogue of Satan." They admit that the leadership of the Church is led by Satan the devil. Yet, on the other hand, they claim that as true Christians we should continue to submit to church authority, in Worldwide, and WAIT for God to bring the Church back to Him!

But is this how God works? When the various churches of God went astray in the first century, and became the "synagogue of Satan," did God bring those churches back to Him?

No, absolutely NOT!

The Gentile churches throughout the Roman Empire, in Rome, Antioch, Ephesus, Alexandria, and other major cities, which eventually became the Roman Catholic Church, NEVER RETURNED TO THE TRUTH OF GOD!

In other words, those very churches which led the charge into apostasy in the first century, and departed from the truth, *NEVER RETURNED!* In the centuries that followed, they only strayed further and further from the right path!

The lesson ought to be terribly clear to us of this generation. *To stay in an apostate church, waiting for it to repent, and God to bring it to repentance, is STUPID -- INSANE -- AND SPIRITUALLY DEMONIC!*

Paul makes the course of action we ought to take when the Church we have belonged to departs from the truth perfectly clear. He writes: "Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Belial [Satan]? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God, as God has said, 'I will live in them, and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore COME OUT FROM THEM, and be SEPARATE FROM THEM, says the Lord, and TOUCH NOTHING UNCLEAN; then will I welcome you, and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty'" (II Cor.6:14-18, NRSV).

The apostle John, in the book of Revelation, also makes the truth abundantly plain. He says we should have nothing to do with the pagan, apostate "Babylonish" churches -- including those which at one time had the truth of God!

John writes: "Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'COME OUT OF HER, my people, so that you do not take part in her sins, and so that you do not share in her PLAGUES'" (Rev.18:4).

That is plain language! I fear for those people who refuse to depart from an apostate church, who listen to the pied pipers of rebellion, who wistfully deceive themselves into thinking that *if they just hunker down and quietly remain, GOD will straighten out the Church!* In all history, *God has NEVER done that!* Rather, *He lets them go -- and increases their punishment -- until He casts them into GREAT TRIBULATION!* And *if they STILL do not repent -- they will end up in the LAKE OF FIRE!*

What about you? What ARE you going to do about it? What Church do YOU attend, today? God commands, "*Choose you this day whom you will serve*" (Josh.24:15, KJV).