

The LAST HOUR

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN
ARE PROPHECY FOR TODAY

BY GERALD FLURRY

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The Apostle John lived in the midst of a savage persecution. Many of God's churches were being taken over by traitors. When he wrote his epistles, John thought it was "the last hour" before Christ's Second Coming. In fact, it was only a *type* of our time today. Every detail of what John prophesied is now being fulfilled! John's "last hour" epistles are mainly for God's end-time Church!

Contents

<i>1</i>	<i>We Are in “the Last Hour”</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>Christ Is Coming in the Flesh</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>Fighting the Antichrist</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>4</i>	<i>The Eternal Logos Vision</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>5</i>	<i>Witness—the Word Nobody Understands!</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>6</i>	<i>Our Advocate When We Sin</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>7</i>	<i>Behold! Sons of God!</i>	<i>75</i>
<i>8</i>	<i>The Elder</i>	<i>92</i>
<i>9</i>	<i>Gaius Had the Secret of Success</i>	<i>103</i>
<i>Epilogue</i>	<i>From the Beginning</i>	<i>112</i>

1

We Are in “the Last Hour”

ON May 5, 2001, God signaled the beginning of a new phase in this rapidly fading age of man. This new phase is described in vivid detail by the Apostle John in his epistles. You need to understand this deeply to know how imminent Christ’s return truly is!

John was the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (see John 13:23; 20:2; 21:7, 20). He was somehow more compatible in certain ways with Christ, and Christ could talk about the truth to John in a more profound way than He could with the other disciples. John was closer to Christ in understanding, it appears, because of this special relationship and his living so much longer than the other apostles. He received an abundance of truth and information from Christ that the other disciples did not—as is evidenced in his writings, his unique terms and phrases. Imagine the conversations between Jesus and John. What did Christ tell him?

¹ John 2:18 in the Revised Standard Version (RSV) reads, “Children, *it is the last hour*; and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come;

THE LAST HOUR

therefore we know that *it is the last hour*.” *Last hour* is the correct translation of the Greek in that verse, rather than *last time*, as it reads in the King James Version.

God began to reveal this truth about *the last hour* to the Philadelphia Church of God (PCG) on May 5, 2001. Approximately four months later came the September 11 terrorist attacks on the U.S. I believe God allowed us to receive this physical sign that we had entered *the last hour*. The worst terrorist attack ever on American soil powerfully reinforced our *new revelation* about the *last hour*.

In the last hour, *antichrists* appear on the scene—people who *knew* God the Father, then turned away and are now FIGHTING CHRIST! The problem began with *that antichrist*—singular. But then there were “many antichrists”—numerous dissenting groups from our mother Church.

I believe John wrote these epistles about A.D. 67-68—just before Jerusalem’s fall and the 70 A.D. holocaust.

John was trying to wake people up and alert them to the war raging *inside the Church*. That is where the problems were. That is where Satan always attacks first. John sincerely believed he was in the last hour, and Christ let him think that for a short while. When the Church ought to have been *really serving God* and getting the message out, many of them were turning away and becoming, of all things, *antichrist*!

That is exactly the situation God’s Church faces today. We live in easy, prosperous times. We don’t receive much persecution from the world; the world simply isn’t concerned with God’s Church—yet. But look what has happened to God’s people. We are being attacked by self-righteous *antichrists*, spiritual barbarians, from among God’s own people! We may be witnessing the *worst hour ever* in God’s work.

These are unique times. THE LAST HOUR ISN’T MENTIONED ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE BIBLE. There is only ONE last hour—this little sliver of time Christ has given us to finish His warning to the world. What an honor to fight *for* Christ and to conquer the devil at this time!

1 John 2:18 puts TIME up on stage as the star. We are RUNNING OUT OF TIME! Don’t be misled by the fact that this

Church is *building* today. Our building program will only SPEED the process to get this work done! Things will never return to the way they were. From now on, we are in *the last hour*—a time like no other! We will experience the worst turmoil and violence ever on Earth!

How do you manage your time? How URGENT are you in organizing your time? We all need to get motivated to do MORE. We have less than an hour left!

WE NOW LIVE IN A *DRAMATICALLY NEW* AND FAR MORE DANGEROUS TIME. IT WILL BE THE WORST HOUR EVER IN HUMAN HISTORY. Thankfully, it will conclude with the greatest event ever to occur in the universe—Christ’s return to this Earth! After the epistle of Jude, I believe John’s is the most urgent message in the Bible. The danger will acutely intensify until this hour expires. Thankfully, it will only last a brief time before Christ returns.

WE KNOW IT IS THE LAST HOUR

John was an elderly man when he wrote the three epistles canonized in the New Testament. He was the only original apostle left alive. Many biblical scholars think John was writing these epistles from the isle of Patmos, where he was a prisoner. A violent persecution had been raging against God’s Church from without. Shortly after that, it appears that the worst persecution came from within, when John was writing these epistles. False leaders were getting control of some of God’s own churches. Diotrephes rebelled and took over at least one church area from John. He was the primary rebel and may have led most of God’s people astray.

The Apostle John saw these problems coming and gave God’s people the most profound and magnificent truth to combat this heresy. But most of them didn’t get it.

The phrase “last hour” (Greek: *eschatos hora*) is used *only* in John’s epistles. Christ likely talked about this at length with John. However, He didn’t want John to know the time frame until a few years later, when the book of Revelation was revealed. But Christ did reveal what it would be like in this

THE LAST HOUR

last hour. He wanted to proclaim a message that is critical to us as we prepare for His Second Coming.

ONCE THE LAST HOUR STRIKES, WE CAN BE ASSURED THAT IT WILL BE CONCLUDED BY CHRIST'S RETURN TO EARTH! That is how imminent this greatest of all events is. In God's perspective, we are now less than *one hour* away from the Second Coming of Jesus Christ!

The ANTICHRIST subject also is discussed *only* in the epistles of John. It is discussed nowhere else in the Bible.

Only John wrote about *the last hour* and *antichrists*. Please notice as you read that there are several words and phrases unique to John's epistles.

John no doubt heard about these subjects personally from Christ, when He walked this Earth. Perhaps only John had them *revealed* to him, since he is the only person to write about these subjects in the Bible.

JOHN IS TELLING US HOW TO KNOW IT IS THE LAST HOUR. We know the last hour is here when we see "*many* antichrists." Most of God's own people, at least in spirit, are fighting against Christ. Don't overlook this extremely critical point.

He continued, "THEY WENT OUT FROM US, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us ..." (1 John 2:19, RSV). The antichrists went out "from us," he said. If they were of us, they would have continued—they would have gone right on doing the work of God. Have we witnessed anything like this in these end times? Absolutely! (For more information on the split within God's end-time Church, request our book *Malachi's Message*. All our literature is free.)

This is a shocking revelation. The spirit of antichrist is rampant in this *world*. For years, we thought this was the essential understanding about antichrists. But now God has revealed, through John's epistles, that *the primary warning* about antichrists is *within* God's own Church! "They went out from us"—this is prophecy for *the last hour*.

This has been the most traumatic experience for God's own people in this end time—so far. This is understanding that even God's own Church did not have until now!

The verse concludes, "... but they went out, that it might be plain that they all are not of us." God wants to educate us about something. He wants to make it plain.

Is it plain? The Worldwide Church of God (wgc), after Mr. Armstrong's death, rejected his teachings and discontinued printing his writings, which were revealed by Jesus Christ. But they went far beyond just rebelling against God or becoming Laodicean. As a result, I believe God has given us a clear guideline on how to separate the antichrists from the lukewarm Laodiceans.

God will take His very elect to a place of safety and leave the rest of His people behind to face the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21-22, 41).

There are two categories of those who enter the Tribulation. Matthew continues Christ's prophecy: "[T]hey all slumbered and slept" (Matthew 25:1-5). Still, five of these 10 virgins were wise. The other five were foolish. That means that 50 percent of God's people will repent in the Tribulation and 50 percent will lose their eternal lives (verses 6-12).

The Apostle John shows us why the 50 percent lose their salvation in this end time: *they became antichrists*. There is "that antichrist" and there are "antichrists" who follow this evil man (see also 2 Thessalonians 2).

ANYBODY WHO FIGHTS AGAINST CHRIST'S VERY ELECT AND TRIES TO DESTROY THEIR WORK OF PROCLAIMING THE TRUTH IS AN ANTICHRIST. The wgc fought in court to destroy Mr. Armstrong's books and booklets—revelation from God! Its leaders wanted to totally blot out God's truth so nobody could read and study it. They became vile antichrists by actively supporting Satan the devil—the ultimate sin!

None of those Laodicean members who left the wgc rallied to our support in that court case. Generally, in their actions, they remained *neutral*.

WE HAD ALREADY ENTERED THE LAST HOUR WHEN WE RECEIVED THE VICTORY IN OUR LEGAL BATTLE TO PRINT MR. ARMSTRONG'S WRITINGS. This was a watershed event.

I believe God used the copyright victory to show clearly who the very elect are and who the *many antichrists* are. That

THE LAST HOUR

victory also manifested who were the Laodiceans—THOSE MEMBERS OF GOD’S CHURCH WHO DIDN’T COME TO HELP US IN OUR COURT BATTLE. The Laodiceans aren’t antichrist, but they are not fighting *for* Christ. They didn’t even want the revelation God gave to Mr. Armstrong. “THEY WENT OUT FROM US”—THE COURT CASE REVEALED THAT TRAGIC RESULT AS NO OTHER EVENT EVER HAS!

God is judging His people now (1 Peter 4:17). CHRIST USED THE COURT BATTLE TO JUDGE ALL HIS PEOPLE. NO SINGLE EVENT IN THIS LAODICEAN ERA HAS BEEN SO REVEALING! God manifested who were the very elect and who were the antichrists and Laodiceans—in *the last hour*!

Where are the defenders of the faith? God and all of His people will see who is who. “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20).

We didn’t come out of them. They came out of us. Even though our members had to leave the WCG, it was that Church that left God’s truth! We couldn’t get most of the judges who heard our case to see this, and God is having a hard time teaching this truth to His people! They forsook God and His truth. We fought in court to guard and keep God’s revealed Word—in the form of books, booklets and a correspondence course.

IS THERE A MORE URGENT EXPRESSION IN THE BIBLE THAN *THE LAST HOUR*? AND IS THERE A MORE CONDEMNING WORD IN THE BIBLE THAN *ANTICHRISTS* FROM WITHIN GOD’S OWN CHURCH? We need to study deeply into John’s epistles and meditate as never before. I believe John is the most profound writer in the Bible. Christ revealed so much to him.

ANTICHRISTS FIGHT CHRIST

Consider how *urgent* John is about this. Having antichrists come right out of God’s own Church isn’t something we should take casually. John is discussing *the* most serious matter IN THE MIDST OF THE GRAVEST OF TIMES EVER TO THAT POINT. John thought it would all be fulfilled in his time. But it was only a *type* of what is being fulfilled in our time now! We

are about to see the worst time of suffering ever to come upon mankind! What John is warning about here has happened or absolutely will happen. We cannot treat this warning lightly. It didn't come from John's mind—it came from CHRIST'S MIND!

HAVE WE SEEN PEOPLE FIGHTING CHRIST IN THIS END TIME? WE HAVE NEVER THOUGHT, BEFORE NOW, THAT THE WORST ANTICHRIST PROBLEM WOULD COME FROM WITHIN GOD'S CHURCH!

THIS IS NEW REVELATION FROM GOD!

The PCG has fought a terrible court battle over the right to print God's truth. It was a life-and-death struggle. We have struggled mightily to continue with the work that God gave Mr. Armstrong to do.

Before the court case, we printed many of his books and booklets and began giving them away free of charge. And although the WCG clearly had no interest in that material other than to suppress it, they *sued* us over the rights to it!

The WCG succeeded in stopping our presses for a short time. In other words, all that WONDERFUL REVELATION from Jesus Christ *was being* SUPPRESSED by the very Church He raised up to proclaim and disseminate it! That is FIGHTING CHRIST. They are antichrists! All this has been made *abundantly plain* by their actions.

Christ has commanded all of God's people to proclaim His revealed truth.

TWO DRAMATIC SIGNS OF THE LAST HOUR

After six years, we won the 19 works in that court battle. God, through us, conquered the antichrists. Again, we won that battle only a few months after God revealed this new truth from the epistles of John. So this revelation is for *the last hour*. Now we can *prophesy again* to this world with a message it can understand.

THIS SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE, ACCORDING TO JOHN, IS THE PRIMARY BATTLE IN THE LAST HOUR!

I BELIEVE THE 9/11 TERRORIST ATTACK DRAMATICALLY SIGNALLED THE COLLAPSE OF AMERICA, BRITAIN AND THE

THE LAST HOUR

MIDDLE EAST JEWS—AS WE BEGAN THE *LAST HOUR*.

I ALSO BELIEVE OUR COPYRIGHT VICTORY WAS A SIGN OF GOD'S WORK RISING FAST ON THE WORLD SCENE—IN THE *LAST HOUR*.

As the biblical nations of Israel fall (namely America, Britain and the Middle East Jews), spiritual Israel, or the Church, is rising in power. We must deliver a soul-scorching warning to Israel as they stumble and collapse. God is cursing them.

God has *always* sent a messenger to warn Israel before its imminent collapse—always! Its people must repent to be saved. “Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Revelation 12:12). Satan knows that his time is short, so he fiercely attacks his number-one enemy—God's Church. That is always his first target. “And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child” (verse 13).

Before this event, Satan went to battle against God in heaven one last time (verses 7-8). He was cast down (verse 9). Then he attacked God's Church and *caused* the Laodicean, or lukewarm, era to begin (verse 13). Over 95 percent of the true Church surrendered to the devil and rebelled against God.

The Laodicean era rebels are losing all their battles. But God's very elect members are winning their battles. THE COPYRIGHT VICTORY ILLUSTRATES THE DIRECTION THAT ALL OF GOD'S CHURCHES ARE GOING!

God used the court case to leave all of God's Laodicean people without excuse—to give them an opportunity to understand and repent. The court battle is a strong witness against them.

Only God's very elect have the power to conquer Satan. And the very elect will use that power to win the war.

God's very elect will be fighting Satan as he fights against Christ and His revelation. The court case gave a vivid illustration of the spirit of antichrist. IT WAS A WATERSHED EVENT THAT CONDEMNED THEM AS ANTICHRISTS. We are

FIGHTING FOR CHRIST! The WCG is FIGHTING AGAINST CHRIST! They are instruments in the hands of the devil. Those fighting FOR Christ have a real *battle* on their hands.

THESE ANTICHRISTS, AFTER THE COPYRIGHT VICTORY, ARE A SIGN FOR GOD'S PEOPLE THAT IT IS *THE LAST HOUR!*

Antichrist is ONE OF THE MOST TERRIFYING WORDS IN THE BIBLE! These antichrists were once a part of Christ's body. They knew Christ, then left Him and started fighting against Him.

Remember what Mr. Armstrong said about *Mystery of the Ages*: "Since last December I have been working diligently on the largest and most important book in my life. In real fact, I feel I, myself, *did not write it*. Rather I believe God used me in writing it. I candidly feel it may be the most important book since the Bible." Christ was *directly* authoring *Mystery of the Ages*.

Now contrast that with what Joseph Tkach Jr. wrote: "We feel it is our Christian duty to keep this book [*Mystery of the Ages*] out of print ... because we believe Mr. Armstrong's doctrinal errors are better left out of circulation." THAT IS EXACTLY THE WAY SATAN THINKS: He wants Christ's book destroyed forever! That is *the ANTICHRIST message!*

We must clearly see this war raging between those fighting for Christ and those fighting against Him. And we must deeply know who represents Christ!

We are fighting the same war that Daniel fought in Daniel 10. Michael and Gabriel helped Daniel fight against Satan. The devil was trying to destroy the *revelation* God gave to Daniel. God gives us support from the highest level. God's angels are led by the most exalted archangels. Satan is leading his demons. IT IS A WAR FOR THE MINDS OF GOD'S PEOPLE. We must use God's power or lose that war!

2 Thessalonians 2 describes a great falling away as being a sign of the end time (verse 3). Zechariah 3 shows that Joshua and his fellows are a sign that we are astonishingly close to the end (verse 8—"men wondered at" should be translated "men of *sign*").

"Little children, it is the last [hour]: and as ye have heard *that antichrist* shall come ..." (1 John 2:18). This prophecy begins with *one* antichrist. The *Anchor Bible* says of that first antichrist

THE LAST HOUR

(emphasis mine throughout), “Others are right in arguing for capitalization, for THE AUTHOR IS THINKING OF A SPECIFIC EXPECTATION”—*one man* who would fulfill that role—the Antichrist. This is the same man 2 Thessalonians 2:3 calls “the son of *perdition*,” or *destruction*! He is destroying God’s truth!

The *Anchor Bible* says, “It is not impossible that 1 John’s use of the ‘last hour’ is to be considered a specification of [Gospel] John’s ‘last day,’ as if this were the *last hour in the last day*.” Even the commentaries can recognize the uniqueness and urgency of the expression. They can see that this is referring to the *last hour* of man’s rule on this Earth. God help us if we cannot. The signs are all around!

“THEY WERE NOT OF US”

1 John 2:19 says the antichrists didn’t *continue* with us. *Continue*, according to *Thayer’s Lexicon*, means not to depart, to continue to be present, to maintain unbroken fellowship with one, to help one of the Holy Spirit. It speaks of one who cleaves, holds fast to a thing; it means not to perish, to last, to endure, to survive. *Strong’s Concordance* defines it, to stay in a given state or relation, to abide, endure, remain.

God’s Philadelphians have done all those things! We stayed right where we were. The antichrists did not. They went out from us. At that point, there was an inner court and an outer court (Revelation 11:1-2). And they didn’t just go find another church. They began working their agenda—fighting Christ and trying to destroy the truth of God. When God calls them *antichrist*, that is just what He means! We must call them what they are. The term *antichrist* is THE LANGUAGE OF WAR.

This is a towering crisis in God’s Church! It is SOUL SCORCHING! There is a *real spiritual war* going on among God’s people!

IF THERE IS AN ANTICHRIST, *someone* MUST BE FIGHTING *for* CHRIST AND DOING HIS WORK. So this war clearly shows that there is a “very elect” fighting for Christ and His revealed truth. The enemy is antichrist because it consists of men who fight against the very elect, in whom Christ lives.

These antichrists not only “cast down the truth to the ground,” they fight against the very elect—the only defenders of God’s truth! Antichrists indeed!

God is using the very elect to preserve His truth and way of life. AT THIS TIME, THE PHILADELPHIA CHURCH OF GOD IS THE ONLY CHURCH PREVENTING GOD’S REVEALED TRUTH FROM BEING COMPLETELY DESTROYED!

Events are moving at lightning speed. Christ is giving a *time countdown* in these latter days.

This battle truly reveals who is who. Nothing could be more plain.

During World War II, Winston Churchill gave a speech to stir Britain to fight against the Nazi tyranny. We need to remember these words during this last hour: “Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say, ‘This was their finest hour!’”

The end time, or latter days, started when Herbert W. Armstrong came on the scene. When he died, we entered into the Matthew 24 *end* (Matthew 24:14). Then new leaders took over God’s Church and cast His truth to the ground (Daniel 8:11-12). Shortly afterward God used the Philadelphia Church of God to resurrect the truth. That period was described as the “last end” (verse 19). Now we have entered into *the last hour*.

We are still in the “latter days,” the Matthew 24 “end” and the “last end.” But now we are specifically in the last hour of the last end of the Matthew 24 end of the latter days!

GOD IS CALCULATING TIME AS NEVER BEFORE. HE IS BREAKING TIME INTO *specific increments*, JUST BEFORE HIS SON RETURNS. NOW THE LAST HOUR IS TICKING AWAY!

IT’S ALL ABOUT THE *worst hour* IN HUMAN HISTORY! WAS THERE EVER A MORE URGENT WORK THAN THIS? ARE YOU REFLECTING *Christ’s urgency* IN THIS LAST HOUR?

May God help us to make this *last hour* our finest hour!

2

Christ Is Coming in the Flesh

THE Apostle John battled false ministers in the first century. He instructed God's people on how to discern these evil men from true ministers.

Claiming to be a prophet is quite bold. How can you know whether someone is a *true* prophet? How can you know whether his message is truly coming from God?

"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).

In the Worldwide Church of God shortly after Mr. Armstrong died, his successor, Joseph W. Tkach Sr., made a shocking statement. He said it was a mistake to believe that God's Church has a "corner on the spiritual market." Essentially he was saying that there is no one true Church. That is a very evil statement. Yet people followed him and evidently didn't think much about it. We **MUST** think about this: If we don't have a corner on the spiritual market, why are we here? Why not go to a different church? *Elijah* means "my God is God." All the others are *false gods*.

God says we must be able to know when something is from God and when it is not. He elaborates in the next verse: “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God” (verse 2). DO YOU KNOW THE SPIRIT OF GOD? What does that mean?

How can you detect a counterfeit dollar bill? You can’t, unless you know exactly what a genuine dollar bill looks like. And you must profoundly know God’s Holy Spirit to detect a false spirit.

The tense of the Greek verb translated in verse 2 as *is come* actually means *is coming*. It could read “come and continuing to come,” or “is *now coming*.” We must know deeply and precisely where Christ *is coming* in the flesh!

What could be more important?

TRY THE SPIRITS

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). Christ is “coming in the flesh” *through the Holy Spirit*. We must *let* His mind be in us. Of course, He won’t force it. That is why there are so few in God’s “little flock,” or true Church, today! God leaves it up to you.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE GREATEST GIFT IN THE UNIVERSE. God gives it to us and then says we need to understand what sets true prophets apart from false ones. And in that same context, He says we must discern whether or not Christ is coming in the flesh. In other words, here is how to differentiate between true prophets and false prophets: *Is Jesus Christ in that man or not?* With the Holy Spirit, we can know.

Many false prophets are on the scene—even some who were in the Church of God and have now gone out into the world. Those are the ones we need to beware of most of all, because we have an affinity with them from the past. We cannot judge by looking at personalities. God commands us to “try [or test] the *spirits*” that motivate the personalities. We must be extremely careful, because there are DIFFERENT SPIRITS. There is an evil spirit with great *power*—though mainly in the area of deceit. *Many* false prophets have gone

out from God's Church, and most of God's people have followed them. Today we are left with less than 5 percent of God's people who are loyal to Him.

What do those people usually do when they leave God's Church? They often come after YOU, if you obey God. I believe that is an indication that this is God's true Church and that they represent the devil. False prophets don't just leave. They come back and attack. That makes it critical that we test the spirits.

God puts the burden of responsibility squarely on your shoulders. Do you KNOW GOD'S SPIRIT? Which men are really stirred by the Holy Spirit? Which men are letting Christ live in them? You had better know! If you don't, you will be deceived. But if you do know, any counterfeit will be plain to you. GOD'S VERY ELECT *cannot* BE DECEIVED (Matthew 24:24).

The test of the *spirit* is the ultimate test. No false leader comes right out and *says* Christ is *not* coming in his or her flesh. We must look at the person's *deeds*. For example, there are leaders who served under Mr. Armstrong for years in high offices now saying they don't believe he was the end-time Elijah (Mr. Armstrong taught that he fulfilled this prophesied office, based on passages such as Malachi 4:5-6 and Matthew 17:10-11; for a more thorough explanation of this important office, read our free book *Malachi's Message*). They were too cowardly to say that while he was alive. But with God's Spirit you can absolutely KNOW that Mr. Armstrong was the end-time Elijah! And you KNOW he didn't do that work by himself—it was CHRIST IN HIM doing the job. Christ is the one who prophesied it would be done. He then *came in the flesh* and did the work through Mr. Armstrong.

We are in a spiritual war. Are we following our commander, Jesus Christ, or are we following a false prophet?

If we follow Christ, He is coming in the flesh through us. That is the *only* way we can follow Him! This is the *only* way we can know who a false prophet is. *Only* Christ can *reveal* the difference between a true and a false prophet. We must follow men *only* if they are led by the Holy Spirit.

FALSE MINISTERS ALSO HAVE POWER BEHIND THEM—THE POWER OF SATAN. THEY ARE SUBTLE IN THEIR DECEIT. BUT

THEY CAN'T DECEIVE CHRIST—WHO IS LIVING IN US!

Knowing the Spirit goes beyond hearing the *words* of a man. Get to know the Spirit of God as deeply as you can. Look at the “fruits.” The Spirit is coming in the flesh of God’s leader, His ministry and His people.

Many, however, *don’t know* the Spirit. Some, for example, have foolishly said, “I came into the Worldwide Church and proved it was God’s Church, and I’m sticking with it!” That means spiritual disaster when you realize that righteous men can become evil. If you know the Spirit, you will know when they change and God moves His lamp. If you spend any time around people like that, you will know they are not who they used to be. When God’s Spirit has departed, many of them get bizarre. *Most* of God’s people have left Him in this end time, so we must try the spirits.

THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST

“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is [coming] in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (1 John 4:3). Of course the spirit of antichrist is already in the world. But here John is also talking about it coming *inside God’s Church*. Then these deceived members, by their words and deeds, no longer say Christ is coming in the flesh.

One Laodicean evangelist said that it was a mistake to believe, as we did in the past, that Christ directly leads His Church. That is a destructive lie that will destroy God’s Church! We must see the depth of such evil. Of *course* Christ directly leads His Church! He is the Head. We experienced that for years under Mr. Armstrong. God leads His Church through one man. Many of us were taught that for years. If Christ doesn’t directly lead His Church, then how could any man be used to fulfill the pivotal Elijah prophecy and “restore all things”? (Matthew 17:11). Christ did it *through* His end-time Elijah. Christ prophesied it would be done and then did it by *directly* leading His Church.

THE LAST HOUR

That evangelist is saying Christ didn't directly lead Mr. Armstrong, who led God's Church, even though Mr. Armstrong had a gigantic work of impressive fruits.

THAT IS ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING CHRIST IS *NOT COMING IN THE FLESH*, OR CHRIST DIDN'T LIVE IN AND DIRECTLY LEAD MR. ARMSTRONG.

Mystery of the Ages is one example of how Christ directly leads His Church. Mr. Armstrong said of that book, "In real fact, I feel I myself did not write it. Rather, I believe God used me in writing it." Is that true? God wrote it through him. That is how God comes in the flesh. Unlike the rebellious leaders, Mr. Armstrong was wholly submissive to God, and, because of that, we have *Mystery of the Ages*. If Christ didn't directly lead His Church, we wouldn't have that book. And because Christ *does* lead His work, we fought tenaciously for it in court and won!

Christ always directly leads His Church—IF we submit to Him. THIS EVANGELIST SAID GOD DOESN'T DIRECTLY LEAD HIS CHURCH BECAUSE HE WON'T LET CHRIST DIRECTLY LEAD HIM! God isn't directly leading him because he is rebelling. And he is *not* producing any real fruits as Mr. Armstrong did so abundantly.

Anybody can discern whom Christ directly leads if they look at the fruits and try the spirits.

Why was the Worldwide Church fighting us in court? Is it too harsh to call that *antichrist*? It was trying to destroy the only Church that Christ is directly leading to do His work. Only we are proclaiming the mystery of God as Mr. Armstrong did. So Christ labels it exactly what it is. Even some of the judges who have ruled on our case could see the evil behind the WCG's actions.

Joseph Tkach Jr. wrote that it was his "Christian duty to keep this book [*Mystery of the Ages*] out of print." THAT THOUGHT IS OUT OF THE MIND OF THE DEVIL! It is antichrist.

By making that statement, he is not just rejecting one of God's doctrines, but all of God's major doctrines. That book was a summary of Mr. Armstrong's life-long work! He restored "all things." That book taught the foundational truths God restored through him.

Christ DIRECTLY LEADS HIS CHURCH, and He DIRECTLY leads a man, or there would be no true Church! Can you see how satanic it is to say otherwise? IF CHRIST DOESN'T DIRECTLY LEAD HIS CHURCH, THAT MEANS HE IS NOT COMING IN THE FLESH OF EACH MEMBER. At best, these members are lukewarm Laodiceans and Christ is on the outside, knocking to get in (Revelation 3:20). Through God's Spirit in the flesh, Jesus directly leads each leader and individual. Stating that Christ doesn't directly lead His Church is a more dangerous and subtle deception than the WCG taking us to court.

This foundational lie opens the door so he can believe another lie!

That evangelist also said that God's Church has different branches. He says that if you look at the history of the Church, that is how it has been in the past. Yes—that is how it was when churches were getting lukewarm or turning away from God and from their first love! But that was NEVER the case with God's very elect! How can you ever be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" if you have different branches? (1 Corinthians 1:10). How could you ever have a people act "as one man"? (Ezra 3:1).

Look again at 1 John 4:2-3. It contrasts one group that *does* confess Christ is coming in the flesh with another that does not. The word *confesseth* really means to show that you follow Christ by *words* and by *deeds*. It means faith with works, or love with deeds.

How does someone confess that Christ directly leads His Church? By submitting to the government of God. By confessing that God leads His Church through one man. No one will be born into God's family until he professes that truth.

Other Laodicean leaders have candidly admitted to experimenting with a form of government different from the one Mr. Armstrong established in the Church. That too is saying that Christ is not coming in the flesh. Did Christ not *live* in Mr. Armstrong while he established and taught the government of God? Did Christ not restore *all things*—18 major truths—through Mr. Armstrong—number one on the list being God's government? (We will send you a list of these

18 truths upon request.) We must *remember* what Christ taught through him!

Christ is coming in the flesh. He is directly guiding His Church. Does that mean He is whipping His leader into line, forcing Him every step of the way? No—Mr. Armstrong explained it, in reference to *Mystery of the Ages*: “I believe God used me in writing it.” That is a humble man, speaking of willing submission to God’s Spirit. Most men would not have given God credit for such an achievement—which is why they weren’t in Mr. Armstrong’s position. In actual fact, JESUS CHRIST *was the end-time Elijah*, THROUGH Mr. Armstrong! That is what it amounts to. That is Christ coming in the flesh and directly leading His Church. God works through a man. We must try the spirits and find the right man.

LED BY THE SPIRIT

In 1 Corinthians 3:6, Paul says that for everything the ministry does in the work, it is God who gives the increase. What we are doing amounts merely to watering what God has planted. But you may have seen a plant that appears to be dead and then, after you water it, it springs back to life. That is exactly what has happened with many who have come to us from Laodicean churches. Once they yield themselves to God, the Spirit—which is *typed* by water—begins to flow again in their lives. They come alive spiritually! That’s the effect God’s Spirit should have on all of us.

Does God directly guide *you*? “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Romans 8:14). The sons of God are *led* by the Spirit. God directly guides and leads them. He doesn’t force them; obedient sons voluntarily submit to their Father. Parents who love their children in the right way inspire a deep love from their children in return. That is what God is doing with us.

Christ set the example of obeying the Father. If He is coming in our flesh, He does the same in us.

It is not easy to know and be led by the Spirit of God. As we battle our own carnality and our own minds, we

must know the Spirit. If we have inappropriate thoughts or attitudes toward God's government or toward a decision that has been made, we must know the Spirit. When we watch television, or go to a movie, or watch sports—we must know the Spirit! We must think as if Christ is sitting right there with us. When single people date, they must date with Christ living in them—as if He were doing the dating. That will certainly influence your choices of whom you date and what you do on those dates!

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). If we get caught up in this world, we don't love the Father as Christ did and does.

Is Jesus Christ really coming in the flesh through you? In everything you do? If so, He revolutionizes your life. That is what John is talking about.

“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome [conquered] them: because *greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*” (1 John 4:4). Do you fear anything in the world? God in you is greater than any threat you may face! You need to be concerned, but you don't have to fear a threat because He that is in you is GREATER. His Holy Spirit of power is greater than any enemy you face.

Where have the Laodiceans failed? Revelation 3:21 exhorts them to overcome as Christ overcame. *Thayer's Lexicon* says that means “absolutely to carry off the victory; come off victorious.” Matthew 4 and other scriptures show that Christ overcame the devil and gained the victory. THE LAODICEANS, ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE NOT CONQUERING THE DEVIL! And let's be practical: If you are not overcoming and conquering this world and the devil, what is the reason for that failure? You need *more* of God's Holy Spirit. You need Christ coming in your flesh.

John wrote, “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” If Christ is in you, He will conquer Satan through you, as He did almost 2,000 years ago! The Philadelphians conquer as Christ did (Revelation 3:21). That is how we qualify to be kings and priests.

THE LAST HOUR

If you want life to get truly exciting, KNOW THE SPIRIT! Get to know it—get to know the mind of Christ—and the God Family will inspire you for eternity.

HE THAT KNOWS GOD HEARS US

“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6). We must know *not* only truth and error, but “the *spirit* of truth, and the *spirit* of error.” It takes Christ’s mind in us to discern the spirit of truth and error. We can have the truth and still teach it in the wrong spirit. This is a profound statement. God wants me to understand the spirit that motivates me and others. God is taking us into the world of His Holy Spirit. We must understand as God understands. We have this greatest gift in the universe and must use it! We have mind-boggling power!

HERE IS ANOTHER EXCITING PART OF THIS VERSE: “HE THAT KNOWETH GOD HEARETH US.” We are teachers to this world, even now. When people begin to know God, they want to be taught by Him, and they *hear* us. They allow us to teach them. Obviously we don’t all go out and teach people. But I do, and the ministry does. And those who are of God and know God *hear us*. Those who aren’t of God don’t hear us, and we don’t worry about that today. When Christ returns, everyone’s minds will be opened, and THEY WILL WANT TO HEAR US! They are about to get sick of this world’s evil, and they will want to HEAR GOD!

God has a group of people preparing to teach the whole world. We are training to become teachers. As Mr. Armstrong so often said, that is why we are here. We are not here just to *get* saved. God called us “out of season” to prepare to teach. Otherwise we would have been called after Christ returns with the rest of humanity. To qualify for God’s Kingdom, we must prepare ourselves to teach all people who ever lived! What a wonderful calling! God is calling you to be a king and a priest—in other words, a teacher! Priests must TEACH God’s truth! If we aren’t qualified to teach, we lose our crowns!

Mr. Armstrong was excited that we could send volunteers to Jordan to help handicapped children. He thought it was wonderful to teach them and to contribute money so they could be taught. He became so excited that he offered one of the administrators additional money to add more facilities. She responded, “No, Mr. Armstrong. We couldn’t do that because we don’t have enough teachers.”

If we are to teach the world, we must have ENOUGH TEACHERS! There must be a lot of us who can teach people to KNOW GOD. All other knowledge is worthless if we don’t learn that. We are about to confront a multitude of people who will have open minds but who will not know God. If we are not there to teach them, we won’t be able to expand God’s education to the whole world. They will all need personal attention, just as you do at this time.

Are you empowered by the Spirit? Could you lead congregations? Could you teach college classes? That is what you are called to do!

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is [begotten] of God, and knoweth God” (verse 7). If we have been begotten by God’s Spirit, and know God, then we love each other. If we don’t have the Spirit, we won’t love each other. It all comes through the Holy Spirit.

“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for GOD IS LOVE. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, THAT WE MIGHT LIVE through him” (verses 8-9). If you want to *live*, then this is the place to be! Without the Spirit, we are spiritually dead. The world doesn’t have real life. But GOD GIVES ABUNDANT, ETERNAL LIFE TO THOSE WHO HAVE HIS SPIRIT!

“God is love”—*everything* He does is motivated by love.

THE SECRET

Mr. Armstrong was *discouraged* when he gave his last Pentecost message, six months before he died. He said to the Church, “MOST OF YOU DON’T GET IT. WE ARE HERE TO TRAIN AS TEACHERS—GET READY TO TEACH OR WE HAVE NO

THE LAST HOUR

FUTURE. I COULD STAY UNTIL 1 A.M. AND I THINK MOST OF YOU WOULD NOT GET IT!"

Reading between the lines, you could certainly believe that he thought the Church was Laodicean. He came about as close to saying so as a person could.

WHAT MR. ARMSTRONG SAID WAS A PROPHETIC THUNDERBOLT! A FEW YEARS LATER, 95 PERCENT OF GOD'S PEOPLE HAD REJECTED THIS PENTECOST VISION.

Did Mr. Armstrong make even more revealing statements to some of the ministers in private?

At the September 1988 ministerial refresher, Harold Jackson, an evangelist, said that just before Mr. Armstrong died, he told Joseph Tkach Sr. a SECRET. But he was *not* to reveal it to the Church.

Several years ago, a lady in Belgium left the WCG and joined the PCG. She was upset with the WCG doctrinal changes. Her leaving also upset the WCG minister, who used to spend a lot of time with Mr. Armstrong when he visited Belgium.

According to this lady, her WCG minister told her that Mr. Armstrong revealed a *secret* to him before he died. He said the *secret* was "that the Church was Laodicean."

She asked, "Why don't you preach that to the people?"

"It would just discourage them," he said.

In 1988, about two years after Mr. Armstrong died, there was a ministerial regional directors meeting. Herman Hoeh, one of the top evangelists, gave a lecture and said that the WCG had entered into the Laodicean era.

This was a stunning clap of spiritual thunder. But shortly afterward he was silenced from repeating this statement.

Where did Dr. Hoeh get that idea? From Mr. Armstrong? Or perhaps it came through another leader or leaders who got it from Mr. Armstrong.

But more importantly, DID IT COME FROM CHRIST, WHO GAVE IT TO MR. ARMSTRONG?

Perhaps Mr. Armstrong told Joseph Tkach Sr. to work at correcting a Church that had become Laodicean. And since Mr. Armstrong was dying, revealing too much to the Church could make a new leader's job extremely difficult.

At the 1987 Feast of Tabernacles, there was a *Behind the Work* film. It portrayed a scene with two runners. One runner was passing a baton to the other. This indicated that the Church was passing from one era to another. That could only be from the Philadelphia era to the Laodicean (or lukewarm) era.

After airing at the Feast, this idea too was quickly hushed. Why?

Why did they make the film in the first place? Perhaps they didn't think it through. After considering the implications, maybe they decided to avoid this subject.

There certainly are strong indications that Mr. Armstrong thought the Church was Laodicean. Christ could have sent a few thunderbolts and flashes of lightning to the leading ministers. After all, it is Christ's Church, and He does want to awaken it without discouraging the people.

The Laodiceans have shown by their fruits that they don't hear God's Holy Spirit. God prophesied it would be that way (Revelation 3:20-22).

CHRIST IS OUR LEADER. HE IS GOING TO REVEAL WHAT IS HAPPENING IN HIS OWN CHURCH. BUT WE MUST BE WILLING TO HEAR HIM.

Read Revelation 2:7, written to the Ephesus era: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" Verses 11, 17 and 29, and Revelation 3:6 and 13, relate the same command to other eras. Verse 22, to the Laodiceans, also says, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." God repeatedly emphasizes this. The Spirit was talking to *all* these people! God reiterates it for *every era*. Hear what the *Spirit* says! Not what a man says! That is the only way you will ever understand!

Does Christ have something to say to *you*? Does the Father? You are His son. Is a parent concerned if a son or daughter is pursuing a disastrous lifestyle? Would he not say something to that child, to SHAKE him from what he was doing? Is our Father any different? Or Jesus Christ? Would He stand idly by while His wife wandered into adultery? No! The Spirit has something to say! The question is, *do you have the ear to hear?*

THE LAST HOUR

“Behold, *I stand at the door, and knock*: if any man hear *my voice*, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (verse 20). CHRIST ISN’T COMING IN THE FLESH OF THESE PEOPLE. He is on the outside, beseeching them to let Him into their lives! They are throwing away the most beautiful relationship a person can ever have! They are not hearing the Spirit.

Christ speaks to the Laodiceans through His physical leader. He doesn’t want to see anyone go through the Tribulation. But they must hear *His voice*. What else can Christ do? Beyond teaching them, what can you do if your older teenager goes astray? God will never let you get into a spiritually fatal situation as long as you are listening to His Spirit.

Christ is coming in the flesh. He did so through Mr. Armstrong. Christ “restored *all things*” through him. Yet many Laodiceans and antichrists say Mr. Armstrong was not the end-time Elijah. Some even label him a false prophet. Why? Because they refused to see that Christ came in the flesh through Mr. Armstrong. But first they have rebelled against Christ coming in their own flesh.

SEDUCERS

“These things have I written unto you concerning them that *seduce* you” (1 John 2:26). People are being seduced and led astray in this last hour. John wrote this for *you*! These rebels are after you! That is Satan’s only real passion! He is doing all he can to destroy God’s people. He is trying to prove that those who say they are the very elect really aren’t—by deceiving them. He is committed to FIGHTING GOD! We must *know* our enemy. He will continue to fight until God puts him into outer darkness and shuts his mouth forever!

The tragic theme of this age is one of *losing people* from God’s Church! Haven’t we lost enough? Overall, God is giving us growth in the Church membership. And yet we continue to lose people because of seducers!

BUT GOD’S VERY ELECT CANNOT BE DECEIVED. GOD WILL PUT THOSE WHO KNOW THE SPIRIT AND WHO KNOW HIM

IN HIS HEADQUARTERS FOREVER! WHAT A REWARD FOR REMAINING LOYAL TO GOD.

At this point, it seems that MOST OF THE PERSECUTION WAS COMING FROM WITHIN—JUST AS IT IS TODAY! That is exactly what we are experiencing today: The severe persecution is coming from God's own people who do not hear the Spirit.

However, we do expect to receive even worse persecution from the world just before the Great Tribulation.

“But ye have an *unction* [anointing] from the Holy One, and ye know all things. ... But the *anointing* [same Greek word] which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye *need not that any man teach you*: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (verses 20, 27). You don't need a man to teach you, though Christ does teach through a man. *Mr. Armstrong didn't really teach us*—CHRIST TAUGHT US! *Mystery of the Ages* was CHRIST teaching us! Obviously He uses a man, but you need to comprehend the SPIRIT that moves that man!

You must also know when Christ is *not* in the man! You must test the spirits. You must TEST THE SPIRIT IN ME! And then let Christ teach you.

There is no excuse for letting a man deceive us. If I go astray, you should *know it*. When the ministers who took over from Mr. Armstrong went astray, the very elect knew. Verse 27 ends, “*it hath taught you*” God is teaching *you*—each one of us—if we will submit. The *Holy Spirit* is our teacher.

We must have and use God's Spirit to endure this *last hour*! That is the only way to survive.

We must reason as Christ's kings and priests (Revelation 1:6). We have already been consecrated into the highest offices in the World Tomorrow! That is because we are being prepared to rule this world.

“For whatsoever is [begotten] of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). The faith that conquers comes from the Holy Spirit. We are in a war, but if we *live* by God's faith, we can *conquer* with God's faith (Galatians 2:20). That is how Christ comes in the flesh.

THE LAST HOUR

“Who is *he* that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:5). John is talking about *he* who conquers! He is making it personal and direct to *you*—those who know all about the Family of God, with the Father and the Son.

“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (verse 12). Only when Christ is living in us do we have life! He must come in our flesh. We must use the Holy Spirit to propel us forward spiritually, just as Jesus Christ did.

Mr. Armstrong said, “This means God injects His life—not only His life but also His mind and also His character, also His attitude of love, of cooperation, of giving, of concern for others as much as concern for self—selflessness. God is going to make us into His own children—into gods!”

That can only happen if Christ is living in us. That is an Earth-shaking truth. Let us always remember it.

3

Fighting the Antichrist

THE *International Critical Commentary* states that in John's first epistle, "HE WRITES UNDER A PRESSING SENSE OF DANGER." That is true of us in this last hour. We live in a time of the worst danger ever, and we are probably going to feel it more acutely than God's people ever have!

A TYPE OF OUR TIMES

It takes character and hard work to proclaim the gospel around the world. In the New Testament eras, God's people failed to do that work more than they succeeded.

After the first century, the gospel was not preached around the world again until the end time under Herbert W. Armstrong. After he died, 95 percent of God's Church again stopped doing God's work.

There is little written in John's epistles about God's work. The Church was imploding, losing its love for God's work. The work was faltering badly.

Soon the lamp would be moved to the Smyrna era.

THE LAST HOUR

THE APOSTLE JOHN NEVER LOST HIS LOVE AND EXCITEMENT FOR THE WORK. His epistles and Gospel message are some of the most profound and inspiring books in the Bible. His exemplary zeal led to his imprisonment on the isle of Patmos. There he wrote the greatest prophecy book in the Bible: Revelation.

John wrote, “I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning [some of them knew Christ personally]. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome [*conquered*] the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because *ye have known the Father*” (1 John 2:13). John knew of the *war* to be waged with the devil in the last hour. It is not a war against flesh and blood.

HOW HAD THESE PEOPLE CONQUERED SATAN? BY HONORING THE FATHER. If we are to conquer the devil, we must *know the Father*—far more deeply than we may realize. The most profound understanding in the Bible is about the Father and His Family.

This verse indicates the nature of the problem John struggled against. Notice—it is somewhat ominous. John addressed people who *had known* the Father but didn’t know Him anymore! He didn’t say, “you *know* the Father”—he said they *had known* Him. John was witnessing a great falling away. Perhaps only a small minority of the people still knew the Father, just like today. The overwhelming majority were being *conquered* by the devil!

ANOINTED BY THE HOLY ONE

“But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all know” (1 John 2:20, RSV). Do you have God’s Holy Spirit? If you do, *you’ve been anointed by the Holy One!* And if you’ve remained loyal in this last hour, you must *know* what you are a part of.

The *Anchor Bible* explains the Old Testament counterpart to this anointing: “the description by Josephus of the mixing of oils and perfumes into a ‘sweet-smelling *chrisma*’ for the anointing of priests.” Spiritually, God uses His Holy Spirit to create a “sweet-smelling *chrisma*” in His converted people. They are very different from the people of this world.

The *International Critical Commentary* states, “Anointing was the characteristic ceremony of consecrating to an office, and of furnishing the candidate with the power necessary for its administration. It is used of *priests* Those who were so consecrated were regarded as thereby endued with the Holy Spirit, and with divine gifts.”

If you are one of God’s people, that is talking about you! God’s Philadelphians have been anointed *to do God’s work*. This world is falling apart, and God needs a righteous government to take its place soon. That is why God anointed His Philadelphians—the firstfruits truly are going to rule this world!

The tragedy is that the Laodiceans were anointed too. But are they preparing to be kings and priests right now? They have rebelled against that anointing and are no longer Philadelphians.

In the King James, 1 John 2:20 reads, “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and *ye know all things*.” How do we know ALL THINGS? Because *God* reveals these things to us as we need to know them! We can hardly keep up with the revelation we receive!

When we receive revelation, that comes from the HOLY ONE! He lets His kings and priests KNOW because they fight for Him! He is the Head of the army. Though the whole world is in the dark (Revelation 12:9), there is a very elect who know *all things*.

The Holy One lets us know that we must fight for His revelation given to Mr. Armstrong. THE ANTICHRIST AND ANTICHRISTS FIGHT AGAINST THE HOLY ONE. What could be more deadly? We must *know* who the antichrists are! We must *know* who God’s very elect are!

What is it worth to have the Holy One *anoint* you and then reveal *all things* to you?

THE LIAR

“I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and know that no lie is of the truth. Who is *the liar* but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is *the antichrist*, he who denies the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:21-22; RSV).

THE LAST HOUR

John is talking about “the liar.” This is the same John who talks so much about *love* in these epistles! This liar is the son of perdition, or destruction—*the* antichrist—the man of sin who was revealed in the great falling away, or apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:3). He is an antichrist who openly and blatantly destroys the truth—even if he has to fight in court to do it.

At the same time, he tries to make it appear that he is serving Christ!

2 Thessalonians 2:4 describes this man as one “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, SHOWING HIMSELF THAT HE IS GOD.” He has the people looking to himself as if he were God! This is the liar who leads the great falling away from God’s Church today.

Verses 8-9 show that this man does his work by the power of Satan. This is a war between Satan and God. Satan has his army; God has His. *The liar* is standing up and representing the devil in this last hour! (This man is more fully identified in *Malachi’s Message*.)

People are perishing because of the deception that comes from failing to love the truth (verse 10). How much do *you* love the truth? How much do you love *Mystery of the Ages* and Mr. Armstrong’s other books? YOU WILL HAVE TO FIGHT *THE LIAR* AND OTHER ANTICHRISTS TO PROVE THAT TO GOD!

“And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe [the] lie” (verse 11). IT SHOULD READ “THE LIE,” BECAUSE IT’S COMING FROM *THE LIAR*, SATAN’S MAN. “The lie” is Satan foisting himself off as God. The Laodiceans are deceived by the devil because they don’t know him or God!

John also calls Satan a “deceiver” (2 John 7).

The *Anchor Bible* states, “Thus it is perfectly possible that ‘the antichrist,’ ‘the liar,’ and ‘the iniquitous one’ [or the lawless one], were current titles for the anticipated opponent of THE LAST TIMES.” EVEN SCHOLARS IN THE WORLD CAN SEE THAT THIS IS DISCUSSING AN EVIL PERSON TO COME ON THE SCENE IN “THE LAST TIMES.” Now that time has come, and he is fulfilling this prophecy.

God's very elect must know WHO leads the antichrist work.
God gets painfully specific and detailed—pointing out an evil man. Do we believe God?

THE COMMISSION

Is Christ too strong in His condemnation?

Consider this: In the *first sermon* Joseph Tkach gave after Mr. Armstrong died, he changed the commission of the Church. In this taped message, he said, "In the synoptic Gospels, our commission is clearly stated—which just means a general view of our responsibilities. Turn to Matthew 28. Here we are told in verse 19 to 'go you therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.' Our commission here is directly from Christ. We are an extension of the early New Testament Church, who never did complete the commission."

That is incorrect. They DID complete their commission. Mr. Armstrong had always stated that the Church's commission was Matthew 24:14—to preach the gospel in all the world. *Is it not significant that a plotting Satan the devil, through this man, changed the commission of the Church immediately after the death of God's apostle?*

CHRIST'S WORK WAS BEING OVERTHROWN. That is the *work of antichrists!*

SOME OF THOSE WCG LEADERS HAD AN AGENDA TO DESTROY THE CHURCH EVEN BEFORE MR. ARMSTRONG DIED! The fruits prove it.

The way Mr. Tkach used Matthew 28:19 has a selfish focus and emphasis on getting people into the Church. That became the number-one priority of the Worldwide Church of God. But *God disagrees with that priority!*

Mr. Tkach lacked the faith to preach God's message to the world *for a witness—not* to convert them. That means we must have God's faith and vision to fulfill His commission. Most of the people hearing that message will not heed the warning before the Great Tribulation. But millions of people, "the great multitude," will repent during the Tribulation. And

THE LAST HOUR

they will do so because of our warning message! That is when most of the fruits of our work today will be harvested.

There will be little or no support from the world for our message *before* the Tribulation. But that message is there as a *witness* against them. They can't blame God when they experience the greatest suffering ever on this planet. They will see that God's message was correct.

After suffering through the Tribulation and Day of the Lord, the people who are left alive will be humble and teachable. AND WE WILL BE THERE READY TO TEACH THEM. WE ARE CALLED NOW TO PREPARE FOR THAT JOB!

Jesus Christ is about to return to this Earth, and we must be ready to help Him rule (Revelation 19:7).

"For a witness" also reveals a lot about our future glory!

Proclaiming God's message *for a witness* makes no sense to the carnal mind. That is because it cannot comprehend God's master plan as revealed in His holy days. (Request our free booklet *Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days—Which?* to understand that plan.) It is a master plan that will inspire you as nothing else could.

If we fulfill God's commission *for a witness*, then God will bring people into His Church to support that work. If we lack God's vision, we attempt to do His work our own selfish way. Then God will *not* bless it and the work will fail.

The WCG leaders have demonstrated that truth extremely well. At the time Herbert W. Armstrong died, the WCG was receiving over \$200 million income annually. Now they receive less than \$20 million and are still in a free fall!

When 1 John 2:22 speaks of people rejecting the Father, we see that it is also referring to the Laodiceans rejecting Mr. Armstrong as our spiritual father (that is, either directly or indirectly they came to God through him; Paul fulfilled the same role to the Corinthian church—1 Corinthians 4:15; read chapter 6 of my book *The God Family Vision*). THE LAODICEANS FAIL TO HONOR OUR FATHER, AND THE SINGLE GREATEST WAY THEY DO THAT IS BY REJECTING OUR SPIRITUAL FATHER AND PHYSICAL HEAD, HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG! He was the end-time *type* of Elijah, who

restored all things. Most of the Laodiceans refuse to even recognize him as fulfilling that office. The gospel is the good news of the coming Kingdom or Family of God. God's Family is going to rule Earth and the universe. That Family will be led by God the Father. That is the most wonderful news we could hear!

Mystery of the Ages contains more *revelation* from God than any book Mr. Armstrong ever wrote. He said he wanted to get it to "the largest audience possible" and added, "I'm sure you will agree." But only the Philadelphia Church of God agrees.

The dispute in court over *Mystery of the Ages* was one war arena where people could clearly see who were the antichrists and who fought for Christ and His truth! And most Laodiceans did nothing to help us fight that battle. That may be their single most condemning failure in this end time. THEY REMAINED NEUTRAL IN CHRIST'S FIGHT AGAINST THE ANTICHRISTS! THAT COURT BATTLE REVEALED SO MUCH ABOUT GOD'S PEOPLE.

It will be even more clear when the Tribulation comes, and everyone will be able to see those God chooses to protect and those He allows to suffer. Soon the carnal attitudes will be silenced. What a stern warning from Jesus Christ.

The Laodiceans and antichrists are condemned by Christ for not loving His truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

We are not fighting against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12). We are in a *spiritual* war. IT TOOK THE ARCHANGELS GABRIEL AND MICHAEL THREE WHOLE WEEKS TO GET REVELATION FROM GOD TO THE PROPHET DANIEL (Daniel 10:1-14). They had to fight against Satan and his demons to get the message to God's prophet.

Our whole work is about *declaring* God's message to this world. Satan can delay our work by getting men to fight against it. And even those Laodiceans who only *passively* resist God's message make Satan's work a lot easier. But God's very elect are destined to win.

The good news is, THE APPEARANCE OF ALL THESE ANTICHRISTS, ESPECIALLY AT THE CONCLUSION OF OUR COURT CASE, IS A SIGN FROM GOD THAT WE ARE IN THE LAST HOUR!

Antichrist is a TERRIFYING WORD. But it is also most inspiring, because the appearance of these end-time antichrists is a sign that Christ is about to return!

DENYING THE FATHER AND THE SON

When 1 John 2:22 says that this liar *denies* the Father and the Son, it means he REJECTS the God Family vision—the gospel. He has rejected the Father and is fighting Christ! We must fight back, on Christ’s behalf, against *Satan* and HIS LIAR! God will reward His anointed ones for doing that.

The word *denies* carries a much weightier meaning in Greek than in English. It means that most of God’s people in this Laodicean era have DESERTED CHRIST’S CAUSE, as *Thayer’s* defines it. It also refers to “those who by cherishing and disseminating pernicious opinions and immorality are adjudged to have apostatized from God.” To *deny* means to renounce a thing, to forsake it.

These people have forsaken God—the God who taught them about *Mystery of the Ages* and all the other writings of Mr. Armstrong. You can’t forsake God if you never knew Him.

Who in the end time taught us about “the Father and the Son”? Who taught us about the Family of God? These people don’t want to be a part of the Family of God. They don’t want the Father to rule them.

The Father is mentioned first. He is the Head of the Family. God’s people were given incredibly profound understanding of God the Father and His family plan. “The Father and the Son” is the fullest expression of the Godhead.

WE MUST HAMMER THIS POINT HOME. This is where the Laodiceans have failed. They don’t honor their Father as the Son does! (Malachi 1:6). CHRIST CAME TO THIS EARTH TO DECLARE THE FATHER! (John 1:18).

The world has never understood these precious truths about “the Father and the Son”—only God’s people have. Everything revolves around this awe-inspiring truth.

This is at the heart of where Satan always attacks! Any physical father can relate to what a deep wound a son’s

betrayal would be.

Thankfully, God does not forsake His people. He will never turn His back on us if there is any hope. He will keep nudging us, warning us, trying to wake us up. He will always leave the door open for us. We are the ones who do the forsaking.

“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come [*coming*, it should read] in the flesh. *This is a deceiver and an antichrist*” (2 John 7). Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh—meaning He lives in His anointed ones today. If we have Christ living in us, then we will avoid this kind of deception and fight for Christ.

1 John 4:3 states, “And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is [*coming*] in the flesh is not of God: and this is that SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”

Of course, the *spirit of antichrist* is in the world, because Satan deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9). But John is warning of the spirit of antichrist INSIDE GOD’S CHURCH!

Though John was off with the timing of the last hour, he was right about every other detail. He did not *speculate* about these truths. He received them straight from Jesus Christ.

BORN OF HIM

How did John propose to *solve* all these problems?

“Let that therefore abide in you, *which ye have heard from the beginning*. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father” (1 John 2:24). When we hear something, we had better APPLY it because we are held accountable. That is what John means by “from the beginning.” God’s people cannot erase their history and the truth they have heard.

John emphasizes this point over and over: *Hang on to what you heard in the beginning*. Don’t forget what Mr. Armstrong taught. Don’t forget the new revelation God has given us in the Philadelphia Church.

The subject in this passage is *eternal life* (verse 25). What good is physical life if it doesn’t lead anywhere? Life is terribly

THE LAST HOUR

short and doesn't have any real meaning of itself. John's message leads to ETERNAL LIFE. Yet what is happening among so many of God's people? They are being SEDUCED by the devil (verse 26)—seduced from ETERNAL LIFE! The Holy Spirit is God's eternal life in you. A PART OF GOD LIVES IN US! Yet many have been SEDUCED AWAY from that eternal glory!

“But the anointing [the Holy Spirit] which ye have received of him abideth in you, and YE NEED NOT THAT ANY MAN TEACH YOU: but as the same anointing teacheth you of *all things*, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (verse 27). The Spirit teaches us ALL THINGS. What a gift! We don't need a man to teach us—CHRIST teaches us, using the Holy Spirit, *through a man*. DO YOU RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MESSAGE FROM CHRIST AND A MESSAGE FROM A MERE MAN? YOUR ETERNAL LIFE DEPENDS ON KNOWING WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT IS SPEAKING!

“And now, little children, abide in him; that, *when he shall appear*, we may have confidence [boldness], and not be ashamed before him *at his coming*” (verse 28). If we don't thunder God's magnificent message to this dying world, we are going to be *ashamed*! CHRIST WILL BE HERE AT THE END OF THIS HOUR. We should not be FEARFUL about Christ's return—we should be BOLD! In the last hour, WE MUST BE BOLD.

What will happen when Christ returns? “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that *every one that doeth righteousness is BORN of him*” (verse 29). There is about to be a BIRTH! This is more real than a human birth. JOHN IS TALKING ABOUT THE BIRTH OF GOD'S PEOPLE INTO GOD'S FAMILY—BECOMING GREAT, LUMINOUS SPIRIT BEINGS AT THE END OF THIS HOUR! We have been given a BIRTHRIGHT—a RIGHT TO BE BORN!

If we lose the God Family vision, being born as a spirit being has no real meaning. Satan knows that and wants to rob you of your birthright. We must not lose this battle.

This is the focal point of the entire Bible! IT IS THE DEEPEST SUBJECT IN THE BIBLE. And 95 percent of God's people have lost this vision. THAT MASSIVE TRAGEDY IS THE GREATEST WARNING OF ALL!

THE ALARM OF THE LAST HOUR IS THAT SO MANY HAVE LOST THIS VISION ABOUT BEING BORN INTO GOD'S FAMILY.

Here is where John had his focus. The *last hour* is dramatic, but the conclusion of 1 John 2 is what we were born to achieve! WE WERE BORN TO BE BORN! *This* is why we struggle in this warfare.

Most of humanity is about to die physically in this last hour. But the good news is that God is going to save many of those people for His eternal Family.

At the end of the hour, we will be MARRIED TO JESUS CHRIST! Are we *acutely anticipating* this glorious event? This is where everything is leading! It is all about FAMILY. Is this as real to us as it was to John? We must never lose this Family vision. What a beautiful conclusion to 1 John 2—and our physical lives!

4

The Eternal Logos Vision

THE *International Critical Commentary* says, “In the whole of the first epistle, there is hardly a single thought that is not found in the Gospel.” John’s main goal was to HAMMER HOME the DEEPEST TRUTHS IN THE BIBLE! He had been prepared by Jesus Christ personally to get this message across. And MOST OF IT IS FOR US IN THE LAST HOUR.

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* refers to John’s “contemplative character.” He did a lot of contemplating. Spiritually, he was a brilliant man. I’m sure he was also intellectually bright. He was very submissive to Jesus Christ. Probably no biblical writer has John’s depth. Christ used him for a specific job because he was so spiritually profound.

We are to use God’s Spirit to search out “the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10). JOHN WAS DOING THAT IN HIS EPISTLES. We must deeply concentrate in our studies of these books! There is so much spiritual beauty and DEPTH in them.

The introductions to John’s writings are a good demonstration of the quality of his thinking. John was no ordinary leader. Not only did he have personal, specialized

instruction from Jesus Christ, he lived a long life and had plenty of time to think on that instruction.

Notice the introduction to 1 John: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life” (1 John 1:1). IMMEDIATELY, JOHN IS DEALING WITH MONUMENTAL THEMES—SPEAKING OF THE ETERNAL HISTORY OF THE LOGOS.

“(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and *show unto you that eternal life*, which was *with the Father*, and was *manifested* unto us;)” (verse 2). John is *showing* us ETERNAL LIFE. The Word was with God for eternity. Then He came to this Earth in the flesh. John had a PANORAMIC VISION of God’s master plan. We have to study and ask God to help us understand this galvanizing vision.

The introduction to John’s Gospel is similarly penetrating: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). The furthest extreme of history—before *anything* else existed. This is the ultimate beginning. It was a time when there was only God and the Word. There were no angels, universe or human beings—a time before creation and before Genesis 1:1.

The book of Revelation begins, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John” (Revelation 1:1).

This is revelation delivered by Jesus Christ, given to Him by His Father. THE GREATEST BOOK OF REVELATION IN THE BIBLE CAME FROM *THE FATHER* (NOT CHRIST). Christ then gave it to an angel, who gave it to John. The fact that John wrote it in just this way is another powerful demonstration of his understanding of the God Family and of the panoramic sweep of history and prophecy! John had a greater, more sweeping overview than perhaps any other biblical writer.

Have there ever been three more powerful introductions written?

The introduction to each of John’s books takes us back to the very beginning. We are given the majestic overview. In the book of Revelation we are taken back to *the ultimate*

source of revelation—the Father. But the Son's supreme rule is also explained. Prophecy is put in a God Family context!

John knew Christ intimately. He fully understood that before Christ became the Son, He was the Word. JOHN KNEW CHRIST'S HISTORY. HE ALWAYS REMINDED HIMSELF THAT CHRIST WAS THE WORD WHO EXISTED BEFORE THERE WAS ANY CREATION, AND WHO BECAME GOD IN THE FLESH. THIS WAS THE PERSON WHOM JOHN AND THE APOSTLES "HANDLED." THEY HAD HANDLED THE WORD OF LIFE—NOT JUST A RIGHTEOUS MAN NAMED JESUS!

John always went back to the beginning. If we don't get the premise right—as established from the beginning—all is wrong. We must look at ORIGINS, or it is like we are coming in during the middle of the movie, and we are confused. John was able to communicate these panoramic visions in the most inspiring way.

John was the only New Testament writer to designate Christ as the Logos—the Word! IT IS AN INCREDIBLY SPECIAL WORD.

Winston Churchill said that the further we see into the past, the further we can see into the future. John saw as far into the past as it is possible to see, with very unusual depth! This gave him an amazing vision into the future. He wrote the book of Revelation, which puts all prophecy into a time frame as far as we can see into the future. He discusses the new heavens and new Earth in Revelation 21—a time when no humans remain; there will be only the God Family of spirit beings. This vision reaches as far into the future as we can see!

We have to *strain* our minds to even begin to comprehend this overview!

LAODICEANS LOSE THE LOGOS VISION

John had an in-depth grasp of extreme history, back to when there was only God and the Word. This gave him a transcendental vision into when everybody will be living as God and the Word have lived for all eternity!

This breathtaking vision staggers the mind! Do we really get it?

John searched out the deep things of God. And so must we. In John's books you will find that search exhilarating.

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, *the beginning of the creation of God*” (Revelation 3:14). Those are Christ’s own words. He revealed to John the Laodicean problem. Here John didn’t specifically use the term *Logos*, but he did describe the Word’s history—“the beginning of the creation of God.” The Word existed before creation. Only God and the Word were there. Then the Word did the creating under God’s direction (Ephesians 3:9).

WHY WOULD GOD INSPIRE THIS TO BE WRITTEN FOR THE LAODICEANS, THE FINAL ERA OF GOD’S CHURCH? BECAUSE THE LAODICEANS HAVE LOST THIS LOGOS VISION. As a result, they are lost in the present and have become “rich, and increased with goods” (Revelation 3:17).

IF THE LAODICEANS HAD THIS REACH INTO HISTORY, THEY WOULD SEE THEIR OWN SPIRITUAL CONDITION AND THEIR DISASTROUS FUTURE. They have lost God’s Family plan, which was from the beginning. They are “blind” and confused.

The Philadelphians have the “key of David” vision (verse 7). This is the greatest vision in the Bible. It reaches far into the universe and eternity (Isaiah 9:7). It is all unlocked by the key of David, which shows that Christ will rule on David’s throne forever. But you can’t understand this future unless you understand the past. What is God’s Family plan for David? What did He plan “in the beginning”?

THIS KEY OF DAVID VISION GIVES THE GREATEST POSSIBLE MEANING TO THE PRESENT!

The Laodiceans rejected Mr. Armstrong’s book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*, which contains the foundation of the key of David vision. The Laodiceans are interested in material *things* now. THEY ARE NOT EXCITED ABOUT THE GREATEST DEPTH OF HISTORY EVER WRITTEN! AND THEY ARE NOT INTERESTED IN THE GREATEST REACH OF PROPHECY EVER RECORDED! ENDLESS PEACE FOR ALL HUMANITY DOESN’T INTEREST THEM. They are wrapped up in their own selfish goals, not the *royal* Family of God.

“The beginning of the creation of God” puts us back at the “start of the movie” when there was only God and the Word. That

THE LAST HOUR

perspective enables us to understand the meaning of all creation. We can clearly see God's master plan from the beginning and on into eternity. We see the vision that transcends all visions.

IF WE COMPREHEND THE LOGOS VISION, WE KNOW THAT GOD AND THE WORD HAVE LIVED IN PEACE AND HARMONY FOREVER AND THAT THEY WILL GIVE MANKIND THE SAME PEACE FOREVER. THAT PEACE WILL EVENTUALLY PERMEATE THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE.

"The beginning of the creation of God" understanding gives us the history of what happened to the angels, why many of them failed, and how this caused God to decide to recreate Himself through man. It was the only way to bring peace to the world and the universe. Only God can rule the Earth and the universe. So man is created into God and becomes a member of the God Family.

The Word is the Spokesman for the God Family. He has a vision to deliver to man. It is so magnificent that we should never lose it. But the Laodiceans have become lost in a tiny span of time and a small amount of things. God wants to give them eternity and the whole universe! (Hebrews 2:7-8).

How pitifully embarrassing to reject that vision!

JOHN'S EXPRESSIONS

John was an expert communicator. The language he uses to illustrate this vision is incisive and colorful. Consider the depth of his unique expressions: *last hour, from the beginning, the elect lady, love in the truth, Logos, the elder, witness*. He uses powerful opposites: *light and darkness, life and death, love and hate, truth and lies, Father and the world, sons of God and sons of the devil, to have life and not have life, to know God and not know God, Christ and antichrist*. There are no gray areas with John. He thought it was the last hour—no time to soften the truth!

The books of Matthew, Mark and Luke are called *synoptic* Gospels, meaning they are all similar and overlap with one another. I believe Christ gave John something different so we could understand the other Gospels better—the *spirit* behind all those words. John dwells more on understanding God's

words, not just His *deeds*. He was contemplative. He searched out the deep things of God in a special way.

John and his brother James were called “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17). Look at the book of Revelation and you would quickly agree with that evaluation of John—it is the most prophetic book in the Bible, filled with lightning and thunder both spiritual and physical! In John’s epistles you see, in some ways, an even greater thunderclap, because they’re talking about God’s own people losing their eternal lives! What a message of thunder John delivered—and it continues to be delivered by the Philadelphia Church of God in this last hour.

THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED

John was “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” He was the only disciple who used that expression. Why? What does it mean? Why did God inspire him to use it so many times? I believe there is a message in that expression. It has a lot of meaning for us today.

Christ was teaching John a special love that you won’t find written about by the other apostles. John got the best education Christ had to offer. He had the opportunity to be instructed in a profound way by the Son of God, who was with God for eternity! Christ had an EXTRAORDINARY JOB for John, which had a lot to do with our job in this *last hour*!

Will you and I take advantage of our opportunity the way John did?

John spent a lot of time laying on Jesus’s bosom (i.e. John 13:23). What closeness they had! Christ was in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18) and was teaching John about His closeness with the Father so John could teach it to us—BECAUSE CHRIST KNEW WE WOULD ESPECIALLY NEED THIS FAMILY UNITY IN THE LAST HOUR! We need to be in the bosom of the Father and understand the love Christ had for John and for every person He creates!

When Jesus was crucified, He committed the care of His mother to John (John 19:25-27). So John was able to learn a great deal more about Christ from her, in addition to the special one-on-one time he had with Him.

When Christ appeared on Earth after His resurrection, John was the first to recognize Him: “Therefore *that disciple whom Jesus loved* saith unto Peter, It is the Lord” (John 21:7). Perhaps that reveals something about John’s perception.

GOD IS LOVE (1 John 4:8, 16). If you want to tackle a deep subject, study that expression! By the time Christ finished educating him, John probably understood GOD’S LOVE better than any other biblical writer. He gave us his Gospel, which contains deep lessons in love; his epistles go even *deeper* into true love; the book of Revelation is really about God’s master plan of love. Christ is teaching us an *unprecedented* love through John. HE IS TAKING US DEEPLY INTO THE VERY NATURE OF GOD.

JOHN SHOWED US THAT THE CLOSER WE GET TO CHRIST, THE MORE WE SEE HOW DEEPLY HE LOVES US. Then we are inspired to keep drawing closer to Him—our love for God grows. As we grow, the way John did, each one of us becomes the “disciple whom Jesus loved,” or loves. John was teaching us how personally and individually God loves us. He was teaching every person ever born how to become “the disciple whom Jesus [loves].”

God used John as a powerful instrument in teaching the supreme lesson of love to all humanity.

JOHN HAD THE SOLUTION

Things became so bad in the first century that God had to move the lamp to the Smyrna era. God’s people were losing their first love. They couldn’t get excited about God’s work.

John on the other hand never lost his first love! The more I study and reach for what he understood, the more I wonder how *anyone* could fall away from God’s truth! How could anyone lose this—the greatest truth you could ever know?

How do you solve these kinds of problems? With John’s epistles. These books reveal the solution to the Laodicean problem. God’s people in the first century didn’t understand the love of God. John saw the apostasy coming, and he sought to counter it by driving home this lesson of love! John was primarily addressing *last hour* issues. NOW IS THE TIME TO GET IT! What a DISASTER to fall away at this time!

We must DEEPLY STUDY that love in this last hour. *We will only survive if we love God.* What keeps a physical family together through rough times? Usually LOVE. If there is love, a marriage will survive. If there is love in God's Church, our MARRIAGE to Jesus Christ will survive!

God wants us to have this love and demonstrate it. This is why we are here on Earth! To say that we are becoming God means WE ARE BECOMING LOVE because God is love!

Even John's name indicates his purpose: *John* means God is gracious or merciful, God graciously gives, or God's gift. God must *give* us love. He must also give us *understanding* of love. It is not something we can intellectually do on our own. Love is a GIFT FROM GOD. He graciously gives it. We need to be asking for it and working for it—or we will end up like the Laodiceans! They turned away from God *en masse* because they didn't have this love for Him and His truth.

OUR GREATEST NEED TODAY IS TO COMPREHEND THE DEPTH OF LOVE THAT JOHN HAD!

Jesus brought this point home to Peter in one of their conversations. "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, *lovest* [*agapao*—God's love] thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I *love* [*phileo*—have friendly affection for] thee" (John 21:15). The same exchange took place a second time (verse 16).

Finally, Jesus asked a different question: "He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, *lovest* [*phileo*] thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? ..." (verse 17). Christ had questioned whether he even had the human, *phileo* love! What serious correction. But PETER KNEW THAT HE DIDN'T HAVE THE LOVE OF GOD IN HIM! Without that love, he had denied Christ three times, even after giving Christ his word of allegiance.

WORDS MEAN NOTHING OF THEMSELVES! Without God's love, we simply cannot endure our trials and remain loyal to God, as Peter demonstrated! WE NEED THE LOVE OF GOD TO SURVIVE!

The solution to our problems today—or anytime—is the love that John described.

DYING FOR GOD

After that conversation, Jesus told Peter that he would be martyred (verses 18-19). Is DYING to *glorify God* a bad thing? So far as we know, all the apostles except John died violent deaths.

But something disturbed Peter. “Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper ... Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?” (verses 20-21). He must have suspected or known that John would live after the other apostles were martyred.

“Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? FOLLOW THOU ME” (verse 22). We all have different jobs. Each of us must keep plowing forward and not be distracted by how God is working with others. As Christ said, just “follow thou me”! For some of us, that may mean having to die for God. Don’t give up—don’t give in—don’t begin to trust men, even if you’re about to die. Just FOLLOW CHRIST.

This was a hard trial for Peter, but Christ essentially told him, “Follow me *to your death!* Don’t worry about John!” How much are you loving God through your hardest trial?

By saying, *What is it to you if John tarries until my return?* Christ was allowing His disciples to think He would come back right away. He knew John would not tarry until He returned. But He also knew that lack of knowledge would undoubtedly help motivate them.

As I have stated, Christ had a powerful job for John. I am thankful God let John live and not Peter, because I don’t believe Peter could have done that job as well as John did. (Nor would John have been the leading apostle as effectively as Peter was.)

You can begin to see—if you take on John’s panoramic vision—that we must submit to Christ’s way of doing things. GOD KNOWS WHAT HE IS DOING. We know SO LITTLE! We must not challenge God or act like we are being mistreated. The fact is, WE ARE BEING LOVED BY GOD, and if we think otherwise, we are out of sync with reality!

Of course, knowing you were going to be martyred wouldn’t be easy. But what if you had the opportunity to sacrifice your physical life for God, as Christ did for you? Would that not be NOBLE?

5

Witness—the Word Nobody Understands!

NOBODY in this world knows what it means to be a witness for God. Most of God's people don't even know!

Being a witness for God is not easy, but with it comes a mind-splitting reward. So don't stop reading until you see the inspiring outcome.

The end of John's Gospel reads, "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his *testimony* is true" (John 21:24). The Apostle John gave *true testimony*.

The word *testimony* is translated from the Greek *marturia*, which comes from *martus*, meaning *martyr*. Sometimes the Christian life really is about dying for a cause. It is *always* about *giving* your life—about being a living sacrifice—for this cause. But being martyred is merely the end of a *physical* life. What follows is **ETERNAL LIFE**.

The word *testifieth* also means to *witness*, and is similar to the word *testimony*. John was a good *witness*. He was willing to be subjected to any trial—even death—in his testimony for Christ. This is the kind of *witness* Christ wants from all of us.

THE LAST HOUR

The words *testify* and *witness* REVEAL THE DEPTH OF OUR COMMITMENT AND LOVE FOR CHRIST. The word *witness* is MUCH STRONGER THAN THE WAY IT IS COMMONLY USED TODAY! We must understand what Christ means when he says “follow me,” or when we say we’re 100 percent behind God’s work.

Do we bear a righteous testimony in the way we live or die?

BEARING WITNESS

Notice again the beginning of John’s first epistle: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of *the Word of LIFE*; (For *the life was manifested*, and we have seen it, and bear *witness*, and show unto you that ETERNAL LIFE, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)” (1 John 1:1-2). This is about LIFE—about LIVING ETERNALLY!

Notice: In verse 2 John said that he was to “bear *witness*, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the *Father*, and was manifested unto us.” He was bearing witness of the Word, who had lived eternally with the *Father*. He was bearing witness of the *Father* and the Son of God, or the God Family.

The one who “was manifested unto us” made the greatest sacrifice man could ever imagine. This was God—the Word—who came to “declare the Father.” John was going to be a *witness* to Him and also *declare the Father*.

It is hard to understand how John could say more in two verses. And some of these words have a much more profound meaning than the way they are used today, making it even more exciting. Let’s look more closely at the word *witness*.

No writer in the Bible even comes close to emphasizing the word *witness* as John does. He uses this word eight times in his epistles and 21 times in his Gospel; the other Gospels use it a combined total of 18 times. The *Anchor Bible* says, “The verb *martyrein*, ‘to bear witness, testify,’ and the noun *martyria*, ‘witness, testimony,’ occur a total of 64 times in [the Gospel of] John and the epistles (verb 43 times; noun 21). The 33 uses of the verb in [the Gospel of] John may be contrasted

with a total of two uses in the three synoptic Gospels, a contrast that indicates the extent to which the *legal law and trial atmosphere* dominates [John's] thought." John talked a lot about law and trials. Why? Because it is through keeping God's law of love and rejoicing in our testing that we become God! That is how we love God and witness to mankind.

The Apostle John emphasized WITNESS and TESTIFY more than all the other apostles combined! Perhaps this was because Christ personally taught him more depth of love. John expresses that love in words like *witness*.

Westcott said, "The message that [the Apostle] John has to convey in his Gospel is the truth, and this is commended to men by various forms of *witness*. There is nothing in the synoptic Gospels to prepare for this remarkable development which he gives to this idea."

Why does John put so much emphasis on *witness*? The *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* says, "*Martus* is used as a designation of those who have suffered death in consequence of confessing Christ." In Revelation 1:5, Christ is called THE WITNESS—the martyr! 1 Peter 2:21 says we are to follow His example.

Thayer's Lexicon says that *martus* refers to "Examples that proved the strength and genuineness of their faith in Christ by undergoing a violent death." In other words, *martus* means *to bear witness of, or manifest, Christ—WHETHER YOU'RE LIVING OR DYING!*

This word *witness* gives us a deep insight into what it means to love God.

IF YOU ARE NOT GROWING IN THIS LOVE, YOU ARE DYING!

Most of God's people today are dying spiritually. You can't smell the stench of people dying this way, but God can SEE IT VIVIDLY! FOR A FATHER, WATCHING HIS SONS DIE because they don't love Him is the most terrible thing He could possibly see. That's the worst stench of all to our Father!

The Father tries and tests us to see what kind of witness we will be—how much we love Him. It's only natural that He tests how much LOVE we have in our marriage engagement to His Son! A marriage without love is awful.

THE LAST HOUR

CAN WE—THE BRIDE OF CHRIST—PROVE OUR LOVE TO THE VERY END—THE WAY OUR HUSBAND ALREADY HAS?

Notice this success story: “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John [the Baptist—not the apostle]. The same came for a *witness*, to *bear witness of the Light*, that all men through him might believe” (John 1:6-7). Did people love John the Baptist because he bore witness of Christ? No—actually he was thrown in prison, where his GREATEST WORK WAS DONE. To his last moment of life, he was being a *witness* for God. Then *Herod had John’s head delivered on a platter*. What a noble ending! Why was he a witness? That people “might believe”—both in John’s day, and for those who have read and will read about him through the ages. What an example! He died as Christ did. That is a good example of what it means to “bear witness of the Light”! We read about it today, and it strengthens our faith.

Today, we step out in that same faith so others might believe. OUR EXAMPLES ARE THE MOST POWERFUL WAY TO HELP OTHERS BELIEVE!

John “came for a witness, to bear witness.” The *Companion Bible* says that means “*with a view TO BEARING WITNESS; not merely to BE A WITNESS.*” We must be a *doer* of what we have learned—give proof and evidence to support what we say. Our deeds must match our words. When the burden is heavy, we continue to bear it. It is our *duty* to give a good, honorable witness of the light.

Because of John the Baptist’s message and example, he was thrown in jail and later beheaded. He gave his all to God, and God responded by saying, “Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist ...” (Matthew 11:11). John proved his love for God.

The Apostle John repeatedly stressed the word *witness*. He hammered hard on this word. He wanted us to understand that we are here to act like our Father’s sons—“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). That is how we witness—we live like our Father and Christ. That is how we qualify to become members in God’s Family.

WE ARE HONORABLE WITNESSES WHEN WE LOVE OTHERS AS CHRIST LOVED US! God is love, and we must express God's love as a way of life.

Our witness of love—giving and sacrificing for God's work—is how we *come out* of this world. This is a witness you see only in God's very elect.

What a profound meaning the word *witness* has!

We have been called to make God's message known to mankind through our examples and God's work—"that ALL MEN through him might believe." God's work could not be done without people who set such examples. The *only* way men can *believe* is through this message, and we teach most of all by our *example*. ULTIMATELY, WE SHALL REACH ALL HUMANITY. WHAT A NOBLE AND MONUMENTAL CAUSE!

Of course, this is not an easy message to deliver. Men of darkness always try to destroy the light.

BUT IF YOU STAND UP FOR GOD, GOD WILL STAND UP FOR YOU! That is what you want—to be able to hear, at the end of it all, those sweet words: *Well done, good and faithful servant* (Matthew 25:21). *Good witness!*

SACRIFICIAL LOVE

Even in this world, you sometimes see a child dying of cancer or something similar, and a parent so full of love they would do anything to be able to die in place of that child.

That is merely *phileo*, or brotherly, love! Yet it is certainly in the direction of the kind of love God is talking about—where you love God *so much* YOU WOULD RATHER DIE THAN DISAPPOINT YOUR FATHER! *This is my Father and my Husband*, you might think. *They've given their lives for me, and I want to be as they are! I want to act like I belong to their Family!* And so, you are very willing to die. That is the love of God. We must love our majestic Father and Jesus Christ.

That is how we follow Christ's example. He bore witness of the truth to the end. John 18:37 shows Him standing before Pilate, about to be killed, BEARING WITNESS TO THE TRUTH! Everyone around Him saw that. We read about it and know all about it.

THE LAST HOUR

CHRIST LOVED HIS FATHER AND MANKIND UNTO DEATH.

Let me repeat: To *bear witness* to the truth means to *live* according to God's truth, even if it gets you killed!

John 3:16 shows that our Father loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son. We are building that kind of love—risking it all physically because we love God's Family. This is the kind of family love that will last forever! There is nothing so beautiful as that!

Jesus said, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true" (John 5:31). He didn't bear witness of Himself! If we bear witness of ourselves, it is not true. That is what the Laodiceans are doing. We are here for one purpose, and that is to BEAR WITNESS OF GOD! *Agape* love, or God's love, doesn't flaunt itself—it bears witness of the Father and the Son.

God is love. When we say we are becoming God, it means we are BECOMING LOVE—as we live and die for Him.

As 1 John 1:2 says, Christ's eternal life was manifested as a human being. HE HUMBLING HIMSELF IN THAT WAY AND ALLOWED HIMSELF TO BE BEATEN TO THE POINT THAT HE DIDN'T EVEN LOOK LIKE A MAN (Isaiah 52 and 53). That is how He witnessed for God! We are to "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8). GOD WANTS US TO THINK AS HE THINKS! That is what conversion is all about. We need to understand the extent of that sacrifice by the Father and Son, and get our minds off ourselves. We are all far too steeped in selfishness. This is a SACRIFICING love.

Christ said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I HAVE LOVED YOU, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). This is not letter-of-the-law obedience. CAN YOU COMPREHEND THAT INCREDIBLE DEPTH—LOVING OTHERS AS CHRIST HAS LOVED YOU? AND HE WANTS US TO LOVE GOD THE WAY *HE* LOVED GOD. He called this a "new commandment" because it is only possible to obey it with the

Holy Spirit—it is TAKING THE HOLY SPIRIT INTO OURSELVES and then EXPRESSING *THE VERY LOVE OF GOD!* This is giving and sacrificing for God and for each other AS CHRIST DID.

Please read that verse and paragraph again and make certain that you understand it! You probably won't find any subject more profound in all the Bible!

This is REAL, ABUNDANT LIVING—EVEN IF WE ARE DYING PHYSICALLY! Over the years in my ministry, I have seen a few people physically rot right before my eyes and yet remain loyal to God every step of the way to the end! Though it must be one of the most grotesque sights to see, at the same time it is one of the MOST MAJESTICALLY NOBLE examples ever on Earth, from God's point of view! If someone is being loyal in circumstances like that, he or she is BEARING WITNESS OF THE FATHER! What a precious, extraordinary beauty that is! I know I will see those people again, and they will live FOREVER AND EVER! When resurrected, they won't remember that trial for very long. They will have ETERNAL LIFE!

Are *you* prepared to trust God to heal you, now or in the resurrection? *Well done, good and faithful servant*, He will say if we trust Him to the end.

ETERNAL LIFE

1 John 5:6 states "IT IS THE SPIRIT THAT BEARETH WITNESS." BEARING WITNESS THIS WAY IS NOT A *PHYSICAL* ENDEAVOR. Apart from God, we can do nothing! *Only* God's Spirit can accomplish something so mighty and wonderful!

As I have written, the Holy Spirit is the greatest gift in the universe. When Christ came up out of the baptismal waters, He saw the Spirit of God "descending like a dove, and lighting upon him" (Matthew 3:16). God wants us to realize that when we are baptized, WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE IN EMBRYO! It is IN YOU! What is that worth? We can do ALL THINGS with the Spirit of Christ in us (Philippians 4:13). With that Spirit, like John the Baptist, we can bear witness of the Light. And at the end of it all, we too can hear those words, *well done*. What a future God is offering us.

THE LAST HOUR

I can see why sometimes this life has to be so dangerous. With something so wonderful and majestic awaiting us, there has to be a certain danger for us to get there—a risk! Even God the Father and Jesus Christ had to take the ultimate risk because this is SO AWESOME—THE GREATEST FEAT GOD CAN ACCOMPLISH: TO RECREATE HIMSELF!

INTO THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son.

The Father is mentioned first because He is the Head of the Family. HERE IS SOME OF THE MOST DEEP-ROOTED TRUTH IN THE BIBLE. As we grow, this understanding is deepened and our lives become far more enriched.

There are many evil influences in this world that destroy our physical families. Satan knows he can destroy nations by destroying families.

The physical family is only a *type* of God’s Family of love. Satan knows he can destroy spiritual Israel (God’s Church) by destroying God’s Family vision!

Satan destroyed God’s work through the Laodiceans by getting them to dishonor their Father (Malachi 1:6). They no longer fellowship with the Father and Jesus Christ. FIRST SATAN DESTROYED THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE FATHER. As a result, the Church became divided; 95 percent of God’s people stopped honoring the Father. That is how the Laodiceans broke their engagement with the Son. Now Christ is no longer able to lead them to do His work. They don’t love God enough to do His work.

What is the *gospel*? It is the good news of the coming Kingdom, or Family, of God. So IF YOU DON’T HONOR THE FATHER, IT MEANS YOU HAVE LOST THE GOSPEL—you have lost the only understanding that really matters!

We must fellowship in the context of the God Family and our engagement to Christ. WE CAN’T EVEN BEGIN TO

FATHOM SUCH DEPTH WITHOUT GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT. The world does not understand fellowship with God—they are cut off (Genesis 3:22-24). Unless our fellowship is with the Father and the Son, we are just another deceived church.

Herbert W. Armstrong was a father to God's Church (as Paul was to the Corinthians; 1 Corinthians 4:15). All of us came to God through him, either directly or indirectly. Mr. Armstrong was used by God to lead us into a loving Family fellowship.

The Laodiceans rejected Mr. Armstrong's office and most of God's revelation through him. THAT WAS THE SINGLE MOST SIGNIFICANT WAY THEY STOPPED FELLOWSHIPING WITH THE FATHER. Is it logically possible for someone to have family fellowship with God and still reject the man God used to restore all things?

The Father is mentioned 17 times and the Son 25 times in John's epistles. John gives us a profound view of God's Family. And today, the Philadelphia Church of God not only *teaches*, this truth, but it *fellowships* with the Father and the Son.

We can have the most personal relationship with our Father. JOHN RELATED IN HIS GOSPEL THAT CHRIST WOULD LEAD US INTO THE "BOSOM OF THE FATHER" (JOHN 1:18). NOTHING IN THIS WORLD COMES NEAR THAT LEVEL OF INTIMACY.

Being in the *bosom* of the Father is the ultimate love for our Father. There is no closeness in the universe so intimate as this relationship! WE CAN BE IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER! HOW DO WE SHOW THAT CLOSENESS? BY DECLARING THE GOD FAMILY MESSAGE TO THIS WORLD AS JOHN DID. No other religion understands who and what God is. They don't comprehend the Father's message. They don't even remotely understand what it means to be in the *bosom* of the Father.

Each one of us needs to grow richer in this fellowship with the Father and the Son. *Only* Jesus Christ can lead us into "the bosom of the Father." This is the deepest kind of family fellowship.

What a powerful word—*bosom*! Christ is in the *bosom* of the Father and is leading us into that same rich, deep Family relationship. This word describes the depth of our love for the Father and the Son.

THE LAST HOUR

Could any word describe our God Family love better than *bosom*?

FULL JOY

“And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:4). Don’t forget, this message is mainly for the last hour. God wanted His Church in this end time to be able to study these words. He wants us to deeply fathom fellowshiping with the Father and the Son—“THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL,” EVEN IN A FIERY TRIAL, AS JOHN WAS EXPERIENCING.

IS THE PCG FULL OF JOY? IT SHOULD BE. BECAUSE WE ARE ABOUT TO HELP CHRIST FILL THIS WORLD WITH JOY. That is why we write this message in a booklet, so we can study and penetrate to the depth of God’s love. Christ is about to return!

Satan has full *misery*, and he wants to destroy our fellowship with God and the full joy it brings.

Our ministers must set an example of joy for the members—to be helpers of their joy (2 Corinthians 1:24).

If you lack that joy, stay on your knees until you get it!

Little children who are trained properly are full of joy, and they inspire adults to have joy. Spiritual children should also have joy and inspire it in others. We will set this example, if we let our Father govern our lives. It will bring *full joy*! We must become as little children (Matthew 18:1-3). When we submissively love God, we are given His joy. FULL JOY COMES FROM FELLOWSHIPING WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON. THIS IS AN IRONCLAD GUARANTEE FROM GOD!

THE VISION

The first five verses of 1 John are the foundational vision of John’s epistles. Let’s look at these verses as one unit and ponder them together. “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal

life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and DECLARE unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:1-5). Surely this is one of the most inspiring visions in the Bible. This is the transcendent vision that God’s Ephesus Church era lost. And that is why most of the members then and today rebelled!

Most people crave sunshine and light. We must learn to crave *spiritual* light. With the light, we *see* how to solve all our problems. God’s light must change our evil human nature. With Christ in us, we are the light in this dark and evil world. Soon we will help Christ *fill* this world with light.

The Laodiceans are blind because they are not in God’s light. They receive no new revelation from God to give them direction. Their work is only a small human endeavor.

In verse 1, John emphasized and exalted the Word. Why? The Father created all things through the Word (Ephesians 3:9). Then the Word, who is eternal, came to Earth, was born of flesh and died for humanity.

Word means Spokesman. He speaks for the God Family. What a *message* He has for mankind!

JOHN IS GIVING US THE GOD PERSPECTIVE—SO WE CAN SEE THIS VISION AS GOD SEES IT! If we see it through God’s eyes, we will never give up.

John is the *only* New Testament writer to explain the Word, with a capital W. There is awesome depth in the original Greek word *Logos*. This must have been a big part of what Christ taught John when He was spending so much time with him. John describes the Logos in his Gospel, his epistles and in the book of Revelation. *Logos* clarifies the God Family in a spectacular way. *LOGOS* COULD BE THE MOST REVEALING WORD IN THE BIBLE! It is a single word that gives depth and meaning to God’s master plan. If you comprehend the meaning of this one word, you know that this God Being came to Earth after

THE LAST HOUR

Lucifer rebelled and implemented a new for mankind. (Our inspiring book *The Incredible Human Potential* explains this awesome master plan.)

The apostles “handled ... the Word of life.” They knew Him intimately by living with Him for 3½ years. John didn’t want himself or any of God’s disciples in that era and throughout time to ever forget who the Word was.

This was the Logos who was with God before there was any creation—and then He came to Earth and died for us.

THE WORD BECAME FLESH—GOD BECAME A MAN—SO THAT WE MIGHT BECOME SONS OF GOD! THIS IS EXTREMELY CRITICAL HISTORY. WE MUST NOT ALLOW SATAN TO TAKE THIS FROM US.

This Logos became the “Son of the Highest.” Now there is a Father and a Son—Family. Now all mankind is to be invited to be a part of that Family and rule over the universe, a job for which the angels failed to qualify!

This history and vision of the *Word* kept John from losing his first love. Most in the Ephesus era (first-century Church) lost their first love because they rejected this vision.

VERSE 5 TELLS US THAT WE MUST DECLARE THIS VISION. THIS IS THE MESSAGE OF THE WORD, AND IT MUST BE *DECLARED* SO PEOPLE CAN FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON! OUR GREATEST PASSION MUST BE TO DECLARE THIS GOD FAMILY MESSAGE.

Does this describe you and me?

NO WONDER JOHN KEPT TALKING ABOUT DECLARING THIS VISION. THIS IS THE MOST INSPIRING MESSAGE THERE IS OR EVER COULD BE! He could hardly contain himself. He had to cry out to the Church and world about this super-incredible future for humanity. And he had a few followers who were willing to give their lives to help him no matter how hard the persecution. WHAT GOD HAD REVEALED WAS GOING TO BE DECLARED.

This is the inspiring part of being a *witness* for God.

Our Husband is the Word—the Spokesman. We are His bride and must help Him deliver His mind-boggling, awe-inspiring vision. THIS IS THE *ONLY* WAY CHRIST DECLARES

HIS MESSAGE TODAY—THROUGH HIS BRIDE! We show love for our Husband when we declare His message. This is how Christ's wife *has made herself ready* (Revelation 19:7).

LET ME REPEAT *WHY* JOHN WAS SO PROFOUND. Through his intimate relationship with Christ, HE SAW FROM THE CREATOR'S PERSPECTIVE.

The other disciples were killed, but John continued to live and learn, dying as an old man. He kept searching out "the deep things of God." And God used him to teach all of us.

NEVER AGAIN FOR ALL ETERNITY WILL ANY SAINTS HAVE A GREATER OPPORTUNITY FOR GLORY! Whatever God reveals, we either DECLARE that revelation or become guilty of the world's blood. Tragically, John was not getting nearly enough help from God's people, as we are not today. But still the message is proclaimed.

In these five foundational verses, John skips the angelic creation. That is because God now knows the angels are not qualified to rule the universe. Only God's sons, with His character, can rule the cosmos. And God is now recreating Himself in us for that magnificent responsibility.

We are now commanded to build the character of our Father (Matthew 5:48). The angels were never given such a transcendent goal. That is why we face intense trials and tests. THE FIRSTFRUITS ARE BEING PREPARED TO RULE OVER ANGELS, THE UNIVERSE AND OTHER SONS OF GOD! We must be qualified for this most exalted calling God will ever give anyone. WE ARE GOD'S FAMILY—DESTINED TO BE UNIVERSE BUILDERS!

The German politician, Franz Joseph Strauss said of beautiful Ambassador College under Mr. Armstrong, "You see what you can do for the world when you see Ambassador College."

Today we have Imperial College, patterned after Ambassador College. When you have seen the beauty of both campuses, YOU SEE WHAT WE CAN DO FOR THE WORLD AND THE UNIVERSE!

Mr. Strauss said of his full-day visit to Ambassador College, "It was the greatest spiritual lift I ever had." Just a *taste* of God's master plan lifts our spirits. Understanding

THE LAST HOUR

God's Family will *always* lift our spirits! We begin to see far—far—far into a future filled with incredible potential and full joy! We see this evil, hopeless world coming to an abrupt and catastrophic end very soon.

THE GOAL OF OUR WORK

A God from the northern heavens came to Earth and became flesh and blood, risking the loss of eternal life. FAILURE WOULD HAVE LEFT THE FATHER AS THE ONLY REMAINING GOD FOREVER.

Spend more time and ponder what failure would have meant to our Father—the rest of eternity spent as the only God in the universe! Then you can better comprehend the kind of love He has for His creation.

Can we fathom this *loving sacrifice* by God? This universe-shaking truth challenges our imagination. We are the recipients of this unparalleled act of love.

An “eternal life,” which was God, the Word, came and died for us. This ought to excite mankind beyond anything we can imagine. It was the beginning of what will probably become billions of sons in God's Family.

BECAUSE WE TEACH THIS GOD-ORDAINED MESSAGE, WE ARE ALMOST GLUTTED WITH NEW REVELATION! THIS SHOULD SHOW US WHAT THIS MESSAGE MEANS TO THE FATHER AND THE SON. Revelation comes because we honor our Father and Husband.

THE DEEPEST KIND OF *UNITY* COMES FROM GOD. THIS IS THE UNITY GOD AND THE LOGOS HAVE HAD FOR ETERNITY. AND IT IS THE ONLY FUTURE LIFE THERE IS. EVERYTHING ELSE IS ABOUT ETERNAL DEATH!

The 12 disciples saw, touched and handled this Word—God in the flesh. John says they were overwhelmed with joy. They understood how God and the Word became the Father and Son—and what that means to every human being.

THE GOAL OF OUR WORK IS TO BRING ALL HUMANITY INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND SON! Please read that again.

The Ephesus Church members quit doing God's work because they lost their first love. The Laodiceans today

stopped doing this work because they became blind to this vision. Anybody who fails to see why we do this work is blind!

We are the very elect of the *firstfruits*. Soon the whole world will be filled with second-fruits from the fall harvest. All mankind will have one mind, one faith, one love and one hope. Each person will be a witness for God!

THIS IS NOT A LIMITED HUMAN VISION, BUT AN *UNLIMITED GOD VISION*. THIS VISION ERASES ALL RACIAL HATRED AND NATIONAL BOUNDARIES. WE ALL BECOME ONE FAMILY OF GOD.

What a stirring future! It doesn't get any deeper than this. I hope you will prayerfully study these epistles of "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Then you will see how Christ was loving all of us through John.

What a vision of love. What a vision of eternal majesty!

A FAMILY OF JOY

FELLOWSHIPING WITH THE FATHER AND SON NEVER LEAVES YOU DISCOURAGED OR NEGATIVE! Just the opposite. IT BRINGS YOU ALIVE AS NEVER BEFORE.

Is God DISCOURAGED? JOYLESS? NEGATIVE? *Never!* WE MUST RECEIVE AND DEVELOP THE GOD FAMILY SPIRIT! This fellowship has worked FOR ALL ETERNITY. So we know it will work now—or anytime.

HAVING THIS VISION IS HOW WE REJOICE IN FIERY TRIALS. We know that our resurrection to eternal glory is extremely close. It's so real that we can rejoice in our worst trials. This is how we have full joy.

Do people see you as this kind of person? Do you have full joy? (This doesn't mean, however, that we don't have pain and don't fight against depression at times.)

The Apostle John was full of joy, even as most of the members were sad and falling away. He kept right on being a witness for the Father and Son, even when he was imprisoned.

In physical families, we can see a measure of joy. But it is tiny compared to our God Family—fellowshiping in full joy.

These first five verses have unfathomable depth. This is the message John got from the Logos. He began to declare it, and

THE LAST HOUR

so must we. What is revealed by our Father and His Son, we must proclaim. The message is jam-packed with *hope*.

Meditate on verse 1. It is first for emphasis. This beautiful verse must be studied, meditated on and prayed about if we are to comprehend it.

YEARN TO DECLARE!

Imperial College is here to get this message to the world. This message is for the whole of mankind. It produces the opposite of the negative fruits you see in Satan's world.

The Laodicean Church members broke down in this area. Satan destroyed their desire and strength to be *witnesses*. Then they no longer wanted to declare the Father's message.

We are declaring John's message as quickly as we can. THE JOB OF OUR MINISTERS IS TO HELP GET OUR PEOPLE 100 PERCENT BEHIND GOD'S WORK—SO WE CAN COMPLETE THIS WORK AS SPEEDILY AS POSSIBLE. WE ARE IN *THE LAST HOUR!* We must work while we can, *BEFORE* this world is plunged into the Great Tribulation.

I visited with Joe Tkach Sr. in 1988. He told me then that the WCG had changed its focus to be on Ambassador College. He no longer desired to spread the message Mr. Armstrong taught to the world. The new Church leadership no longer focused on God's commission and work. The college became an end rather than a means to an end.

Now Ambassador College is dead. And the Worldwide Church of God no longer proclaims an important message to the *world*, as Mr. Armstrong did for over 30 years. By comparison, it virtually has no work at all! *And even that is only a polluted residue of God's work through Mr. Armstrong!*

When we were first called, most of us were so excited and joyful about God's message that we talked about it to anyone who would listen. Soon we discovered that God was not calling those people yet. Sometimes we brought persecution on ourselves.

However, the emotion was good. We should all be channeling that emotion into God's work, as John did. We

must yearn and passionately desire to declare our message of joy so everyone has a chance to repent. We should be so full of joy and excitement for this message that we feel inspired to support it.

Keep that emotion and use it to support this message. We should be moved and stirred to share this magnificent vision!

If people don't accept our message, Christ will still help many of them to repent when all the Bible prophecies come to pass in the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord.

WE MUST SEE THAT THIS MESSAGE IS EVERYTHING TO A DYING WORLD! It must be declared now—in this “last hour.” It is a message from the Logos, who was with the Father.

God sent an Elijah to restore all things. It was an astounding message not heard around the world for almost two millennia!

And from the early college days to the end, Mr. Armstrong had outstanding, God-inspired spokesman clubs. There were research and writing classes. THE STUDENTS WERE NOT THERE JUST TO LEARN THE MESSAGE. THEY WERE ALSO TAUGHT HOW TO DELIVER IT, both in this age and in the Millennium.

In Imperial College, our students are taught how to write and speak like kings and priests. We have a message that must be communicated to all humanity!

Receiving God's message is just half of the responsibility. The second part is communicating it. And what a communication job! THIS MESSAGE MUST BE DELIVERED TO EVERY PERSON EVER BORN!

What good is the message if it is not *declared and taught*? WHAT A FAILURE IF WE DON'T DELIVER OUR FATHER'S MESSAGE! What a calamity. Now is the time to be a witness for God.

That is the purpose of this work. We declare God's message on television, in magazines, books and booklets and via the Internet—any means by which we can deliver it in a quality way.

Today, the media revolves around sports and entertainment—including vile music and pornography. It's all about making money, regardless of any damage to our people. And it is inspired by the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). Humanity is receiving the wrong message today.

THE LAST HOUR

The United States spreads its pornographic movies and obscene music around the Earth through the Internet. The world is becoming more and more addicted to evil until “the transgressors are come to the full” (Daniel 8:23). God will stop this global filth very soon.

America and Britain have the best technology in the world. We are better equipped than any nation has ever been to deliver a message. But our message to the world is dominated by the worst pornographic filth humanity has ever seen! It is America’s number-one worldwide business! Depraved music is our number-two export!

THE WORLD IS FULL OF VIOLENCE AND READY TO EXPLODE INTO NUCLEAR WARFARE. AND AMERICA’S STRONGEST MESSAGES TO THE WORLD IS THE FILTHIEST, SATAN-INSPIRED TRASH EVER SEEN AND HEARD!

At the same time, we ignore the Creator God who prophesies throughout His Word that He punishes for such despicable sins. Even the most violent terrorists can see and are offended by our unparalleled immorality. Surely we must believe that God would also be offended. But our people don’t care. We have descended into a kind of spiritual madness. Only the worst kind of punishment can ever awaken us. The Great Tribulation is going to be the worst suffering ever. The punishment fits the crime. NEVER WAS THERE A GREATER NEED TO AWAKEN!

The magnitude of the opportunity offered by our unparalleled technology makes our nations’ failure to take advantage of it incomparably disastrous. The whole world suffers mightily because of that failure. Never has there been a greater need for God’s message of hope.

We must give this world the only message that really matters. We will show them how to use the media.

Years ago, when the Soviet Union was strong, the Japanese were asked who they feared most. They answered that they feared Russia most militarily, but they feared America most *culturally*. (If only we could see ourselves as others see us.) And they had good cause for that fear. Today the Japanese are saturated with America’s vile culture. Our culture is

destroying us and other nations morally and spiritually. We prate about how good we are and sing “*God Bless America*”—but God is *cursing* America, Britain and the Jews in the Middle East. He will continue to do so until we see our black sins and repent.

One of the main motivations for terrorists attacking the U.S. on September 11 was the impact of our sick culture on the Arab world. God can punish us through evil men. Remember, He raises up Assyria (modern-day Germany), the cruelest of nations, against a “*hypocritical nation*” (Isaiah 10:5-7). That nation is Israel—primarily Britain and America today. They are hypocritical—*evil people who say they are good*. We talk about how good we are, but spiritually we are the sickest nations on this planet—considering the physical blessings God has given us.

IN THE BEGINNING OF AMERICA’S HISTORY, ITS GOAL WAS TO ESTABLISH GOD’S RULE ON EARTH. WOULD YOU LIKE TO COMPARE THAT GOAL WITH WHAT WE HAVE BECOME TODAY?

If only we would remember our history with God. When we refuse to learn from the past, we can’t see into the future. We lose the overview and become blind.

The PCG has bought and paid for 170 acres and all of our buildings. What is it all for? We are getting ready to help Christ rule this world and the universe!

God has blessed us mightily. Now He wants to fire our imaginations to see what a marvelous, mind-staggering future this world has. WE HAVE THE GREATEST, MOST COMPLETE MESSAGE GOD HAS EVER GIVEN TO DECLARE!

Like John, we must never lose this awesome vision of love! Then we must be a *witness* for God. This is what the world so desperately needs.

6

Our Advocate When We Sin

MOST members in the early Church didn't even see the books John was inspired to write. They are primarily for this end time. Near the end of his life, Mr. Armstrong believed that the Bible was mainly written for the end-time Church, just before Jesus Christ returns. I agree.

As I have said, John had a profound understanding of Jesus Christ. In fact, even with the record we have in John's writings, most people still do not understand Christ as John described Him. Let's look at an example of this fact, unique to John's writings.

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an **ADVOCATE** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). **CHRIST IS OUR ADVOCATE, NOT WHEN WE ARE RIGHTEOUS, BUT WHEN WE SIN.** If we sin, we have an *Advocate*, or one who pleads another's case before a judge—God the Father, in this case.

We are all sinners. We are all going to disappoint people, including ourselves—and our Father. Even the ministry is "compassed with infirmity," or weakness (Hebrews 5:2). We

all fail to be perfect like our Father. This does not mean it is *okay* to sin—it is simply acknowledging reality.

When God's people stumble and sin, we may think only of God distancing Himself from us—ashamed of us. But that's not the way it is. Do we realize that, when we draw upon Him, Christ becomes our *Advocate*, pleading our case with God the Father? When you sin, and perhaps get depressed over it, Christ is at God's throne being your **ADVOCATE**!

Jesus Christ came in human form and understands the pulls of the flesh. He knows the weaknesses of the human spirit and the flesh. With that experience, He can help us get through to the Father in every detail. He has experience the Father doesn't have. And the Father wants to hear His point of view. They both want to be absolutely just. The Father says to Christ, *I want to hear you tell me about my son. We want to be as fair and loving and compassionate as we can be.* THE FACT THAT WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE SHOWS GOD'S GREAT LOVE AND PASSION FOR JUSTICE. What a wonderful Father we have, who will sit down and talk with our Husband about how to remove our sins.

This gives us a deep insight into the character of the Father and the Son. They have gone to *extreme* lengths to see that we receive justice. Our Father is perfect and demands perfect justice. God is "no respecter of persons." God demands that every angel, fallen angel and human being receives perfect justice.

God is unlike anything we see on Earth, except in the very elect. And we are far from perfect.

We must strive diligently to understand our Advocate and our perfect Father. We are here to let God build that same character in us. Soon we will be in God's Family living like the Father and Son have lived for all eternity!

During His ministry, Christ referred to the Holy Spirit as a "Comforter" (John 14:16). The Greek word translated *Comforter* is the same word as *advocate* in 1 John 2, but the context shows the difference. The Holy Spirit certainly is a great comfort, and it helps us overcome sin. But we have *another* Comforter. Christ *personally* is a Comforter, as our

Advocate today. That job goes far beyond what the Holy Spirit does for us. We have two comforters: Not only the Holy Spirit, but also the righteous Christ is helping us to receive perfect justice by being our Advocate with the Father when we sin. Just knowing that is encouraging.

Another way to translate *Advocate* is *Encourager*. We know the Holy Spirit in us encourages us. But we also have *another* Encourager, even when we sin. How often do you husbands see your wife down and depressed, and you know she needs your encouragement? A righteous husband will be there for his wife. Christ doesn't ask us to do things in our marriage that He will not do in His marriage to the Church. We have the supreme Husband of all husbands!

Ephesians 5 is called the marriage chapter for mankind, but it's really about Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:32). Marriage instruction to God's Church is all about Christ marrying the firstfruits. Our physical marriages are a *type* of our marriage to Christ. WE MUST STRIVE TO PATTERN OUR PHYSICAL MARRIAGES AFTER CHRIST'S MARRIAGE TO THE CHURCH. *ONLY THEN* ARE WE FULFILLING THE GOD-ORDAINED PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE!

Marriage is a God-plane relationship. We must ponder this deeply to comprehend God's beautiful truth. Only God's mind in us can fathom this God-plane glory!

Because of His love for His wife, Christ intercedes between us and the Father. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever LIVETH to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). HE DIED FOR US, BUT NOW HE LIVES AS OUR HIGH PRIEST TO INTERCEDE FOR US IN ANY WAY POSSIBLE. We are saved by His life—not His death (Romans 5:10).

This is the opposite of how many people view God. To many He is a harsh taskmaster, ready to destroy us if we weaken. Actually, He is just the opposite.

Hebrews 9:11-15 convey that Christ fulfills the role of Mediator and High Priest. The *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* says, "He [Christ] is called the mediator clearly in the sense of a surety, one who becomes *security* for something." Christ

secures our calling. We have absolute security if we do our part. Christ gives us every opportunity because so much is at stake. **HOW WE ARE LOVED!**

In Old Testament Israel, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would present a sacrifice in the holy of holies once a year and make atonement for himself and the people. Jesus Christ became our *sacrifice* AND our *High Priest!*

Understanding that history clarifies John's point. Christ made one perfect sacrifice for all, but it doesn't stop there: He is now our *Advocate*—a part of His job as *High Priest*. Many people see Jesus's job being finished at His crucifixion. But this truth proves that Christ's work didn't end with His sacrifice. It really just begins there. We must see the whole picture.

Human parents often make tremendous sacrifices for their children early on, but then they become derelict and fail to finish the job of rearing them. God isn't about to pay the ultimate sacrifice and then neglect His family responsibility. The Logos **SACRIFICED** Himself, and now He **CONTINUES** His love by being our High Priest and Advocate! The job isn't finished! There is a lot of work yet to be done. Christ and the Father are doing everything they can to help us into the Kingdom of God—just as you would do anything to help a son or daughter if you are a loving, sacrificing parent. God wants us to be in His Family! He continues to work toward that end until we are in the Kingdom.

We can't afford to mope around because of our sins. Christ wants us to repent and put those transgressions behind us. Our High Priest and Husband **LIVES!**

"**WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE,**" John wrote—**NOT DID HAVE. OUR HIGH PRIEST, JESUS CHRIST, IS ALIVE AND WORKING AS OUR ADVOCATE—NOW!** That one word is a *vision* of breathtaking splendor.

We don't understand what Christ is doing today if we fail to grasp this. He is always very active on our behalf—on *your* behalf.

We are engaged to the *living* Christ. He is our Advocate to do everything possible to consummate our eternal marriage! We would never make it if not for our Advocate.

THE LAST HOUR

This word also reveals a lot about our Father. He too is *living*, deeply sensitive to every important detail in our lives. He established Christ's responsibility as our Advocate. He is a Father who has perfect love for each and every son. How can a Father with perfect love not be equally involved with each Family member? Our Father has no favorites in His Family.

HOW INSPIRING TO KNOW THAT WE ARE SO DEEPLY LOVED!

Since we are to be perfect like our Father, we must have His passion for truth and justice. He listens when His only begotten Son pleads our case. He is a Father—not a cold, calculating judge! And we must become perfect as the Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48). We must *always* be willing to hear *any* advocate to render true justice.

This is the only place in the Bible that the English word *advocate* is used. It helps us better understand the wonderful character of God. CHRIST AND THE FATHER ARE DOING EVERYTHING THEY CAN TO GIVE US ETERNAL LIFE—WORKING PASSIONATELY FOR EACH ONE OF US. This is real! Everything is at stake. *If we don't give up, we are going to be in God's Family.*

ADVOCATE is another one of those *unique*, powerful, visionary words that John uses.

SOME PEOPLE GIVE UP IN DISCOURAGEMENT. BUT THAT NEVER HAPPENS IF WE STAY CLOSE TO OUR ENCOURAGING ADVOCATE. God's people need encouragement.

Christ taught John how strong and meaningful the original word *advocate* was (much more so than the English word today). It means *God-advocate*—not human advocate. It CONTINUALLY BRINGS THE FATHER INTO THE PICTURE: Christ is our Advocate TO THE FATHER. THAT KEEPS OUR FOCUS ON THE GOD FAMILY!

What an inspiring vision!

The world only focuses on the person of Christ, not the Father whom He came to reveal. Christ is not the Head of the Family. He is "an advocate with the Father." IF YOU UNDERSTAND THE ADVOCATE, YOU UNDERSTAND THE FATHER—THE GOD FAMILY.

What majestic depth! We need to think about and study this message deeply—etching it into our minds.

THE PROPITIATION

“And he is the PROPITIATION for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). Christ is not an ADVOCATE for the *world*—yet. He will be one day. But He HAS offered Himself as a SACRIFICE for the sins of the *whole world*, which only God could do.

Propitiation means that Christ paid for our sins. He is the Lamb that takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). John brings Christ’s blood into the picture. That is what *propitiation* is all about. Christ’s propitiation, His one supreme sacrifice, is valid for every person ever born.

What does it take to save us? The blood of bulls and goats cannot do it (Hebrews 10:4). *It takes the blood of a GOD WHO BECAME A MAN!* Those Old Testament sacrifices meant *nothing* for salvation—except as they pointed to Christ. The blood of bulls and goats is only a *type* of Christ’s precious sacrificial blood.

Notice—God always puts the Church first, before the world. First John says that *we* have an Advocate today. Christ is with His Church, guiding and helping us. Then, with that Church, He will reach out to the WHOLE WORLD! His propitiation for the sins of the world make that possible. We must get that order correct.

But we must *never forget about the world!* We are no better than anyone else. Christ died not only for His Church but for all mankind. THE FATHER LOVED THE WORLD SO MUCH THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON. IF WE FORGET WE ARE HERE TO PREPARE FOR *THEM*, WE WON’T BE ABLE TO DO THIS WORK. We must reach out to the people of this world and warn them, and tell them about God’s plan.

We are to help reach the entire Earth with this message. Christ is *our* Advocate today, and soon He will be an Advocate for *all people*. The true Church—His bride—will help Him with that job in the World Tomorrow. All those billions of people who eventually come to know God’s truth will need individual attention and the Father’s great mercy. IF YOU DON’T KEEP THAT WORLD VISION IN MIND, YOU WILL GET

THE LAST HOUR

WRAPPED UP IN SELFISH PURSUITS. We must see where we fit into the big picture, especially in this last hour.

Again, Christ's propitiation is not the end. After that supreme sacrifice, the Father and the Son don't stop there. They are not like derelict parents, bringing children into the family and then neglecting them. After children are brought into God's Family, Christ then becomes their Advocate with the Father. The Father and Christ work to nurture God's Family. This is God's Family love.

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we *keep his commandments*. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3-4). Why would John say this? Because many in God's Church then said they knew God but were not keeping God's law! Again, John thought he was in the last hour, so he spoke bluntly.

If you don't keep God's law, YOU DON'T KNOW GOD! And if you say you do, you are a liar. We don't even have an Advocate if we don't repent and keep the law! John was prophesying about how blunt we would sometimes need to be in this *last hour* rebellion.

John was making the law real to a Church in grave danger. Like the Laodiceans and religious people today, they were spiritualizing away God's Ten Commandments. This is *why* they were falling away from the truth. They were rejecting God's leader at that time, the Apostle John. He alone taught God's law. He was the physical head of God's government at that time.

Today, 95 percent of God's people reject the only physical leader who implements God's law. This is a terrifying tragedy. That means they have rejected their Advocate, Christ, the Leader of God's very elect. They have lost contact with their Father. They *do not keep His Commandments*.

LIARS

If you know God, you keep His Commandments. "*He*" who says he knows God and keeps not His Commandments

is a liar (verse 4). God makes it *personal* and addresses each individual—every son. God’s Church is made up of individuals, and over 100,000 of them today stumble at God’s law and reject His government!

John first discusses our Advocate, then our propitiation, and then he hammers the law doctrine (which includes the government that proclaims that law). Why? Because this is how God’s people were falling away then, and how they are falling away now. If we don’t keep the law, our religion is vain.

Today, all of God’s own Laodicean people will go into the great nuclear Tribulation, which will bring 50 percent of them back to God—the other 50 percent will lose their eternal salvation because of their unrepentant rebellion against God’s Ten Commandments. It’s all about rebelling against God’s law.

Let’s not use God’s most encouraging words about our Advocate to water down what He says about law. Such reasoning leads to an individual or collective disaster in God’s Church.

Not only must we keep the law. We must proclaim it to the entire world. That is what propitiation is about. And only those who follow their Advocate will do that work. We are called, not to be saved, **BUT TO DO A WORLDWIDE WORK**. Otherwise we would not have been called now—“out of season.” We would have been called later with the rest of humanity. Today there is a work to be done for the world. God gives us salvation if we do His work.

One commentary states that John is really steeped in the law, as if that were a negative quality. That type of human analysis shows a bias against God’s law! People in the world and God’s own Laodicean Church are always trying to get away from the law. That is why God’s lukewarm Church and the world are headed for a massive cataclysm.

Joseph Tkach Sr., the former leader of the WCG, said, “The Ten Commandments do not require kindness, mercy, compassion ... or *love*.” That is a diabolical statement (read 1 John 5:3). We have to tell such people that *they don’t know God*—if they say they do, they are **LIARS**!

Lawbreaking brings us to ruin! It will destroy an individual or a church. How confused God’s Church has become because

THE LAST HOUR

of lawbreaking. When John saw people falling away, he didn't try to gloss over the problem by talking about God's Church having "different branches" or any such thing. He said, "You are LIARS!" They broke God's law, and lying became their way of life. Could John get any stronger than that?

We MUST understand where God's law is and the government that is enforcing it. When we talk about the law, we had better not lie. If we are LAWKEEPING people, we will KNOW GOD. "And hereby we do KNOW that we *know him*, IF we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3). Do you KNOW GOD? The answer always gets back to *law* and *government*.

7

Behold! Sons of God!

IN the first verse of chapter 2, John begins, “My little children.” When you understand this book, you know this is GOD THE FATHER speaking! John is trying to get all of God’s people to understand their Father!

John’s goal was to bring all of God’s people into the *bosom* of the Father. He, like Christ, was declaring the Father. His focus was on the message, not Christ the messenger. John had a deep understanding of God’s Family and the Father who is the Head of that Family.

The *gospel* is the good news about the coming Kingdom, or Family, of God. This is *the* message that Satan is trying to blur and destroy.

We ARE little children! We know *nothing* apart from God. What is it worth for God to call us “My little children”? God is a Father to ALL THOSE called today. We must respond by *acting* like God’s little children. That is the whole message of this book. The rebels must get back to understanding and obeying the Father.

John later referred to these same people not as “*my* little

THE LAST HOUR

children,” but as “little children” (see verses 12, 18). Perhaps they were no longer acting like God’s children—they were rebelling and getting away from God. These are times of grave danger, which is why John refers to the *last hour* in this chapter. HE IS USING THIS AFFECTIONATE TERM, “LITTLE CHILDREN,” YET AT THE SAME TIME HE IS CALLING THEM LIARS! JOHN IS TRYING TO GET GOD’S FAMILY TO SEE HOW THEY ARE LOVED AND HOW THEY ARE REBELLING! They are wandering off, not looking to their Father.

Satan is always trying to blot out and destroy the *Father*. If you lose the Father, you lose the Family, the gospel—everything!

How can you make a physical family strong? Only by structuring it the way God designed it, with a *father* at the head. If the father does his job and the mother fulfills her godly role, that family will be happy and STABLE. When ministers leave the PCG, in most cases they simply were not the head of their physical families as they should have been. They lost sight of God the Father. Upside-down families WILL NOT WORK! Family will only work if the father leads. The world does not like this message because it has too many weak and upside-down families today.

LOVE THE BRETHREN

“But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him” (verse 5). To have the love that surpasses all understanding, *we must let God’s Word abide in us*. As we keep His Word, the love of God is perfected.

“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to WALK, EVEN AS HE WALKED” (verse 6). John keeps getting personal. “*He that saith*” refers to an *individual* saying that God abides in him. If you *say* this, you had better be living it! God is judging His firstfruits today (1 Peter 4:17). We are born into God’s Family only if God’s Word abides in us.

Think about this. *Ought* means *bound by duty*. We are *indebted* to walk as Christ walked. If you say Christ abides

in you, you are BOUND to live as Christ lived! That is a phenomenal standard. If you say you obey God's law, Christ MUST LIVE IN YOU, or you are a liar!

WE ARE TO "WALK, *EVEN AS HE WALKED.*" You need to ponder that statement until it is indelibly etched into your mind. And so do I. It is not good enough to keep nine out of the Ten Commandments. That will put us into the lake of fire. James said if we break one Commandment, we are guilty of breaking them all. Christ kept all of the Commandments perfectly. That must be our goal—perfection.

Christ continues to live today, in His very elect. He is coming in the flesh. The true light now shines (1 John 2:7-8).

"He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (1 John 2:9-11). John is talking about our relationships inside God's Church. We are God's Family. We must love God and His Family above all else. That all falls in the category of love toward God (Matthew 22:37).

How do we show God that we love Him? It has a lot to do with human relations. Christ said, "... Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). WE MUST LOVE CHRIST'S CHURCH—GOD'S FAMILY! THE WAY YOU LOVE THEM IS THE WAY YOU LOVE CHRIST AND THE FATHER. Words mean nothing if they are not followed by deeds—if you *say* you're in the light, that must be reflected in your love for the brethren.

If we don't work out our problems with each other, we are not abiding in light! There is something *wrong* if we can't get along! We must get to the CAUSE to solve our human problems. If we love Christ, we will love each other. If we don't love each other, WE DON'T LOVE CHRIST!

"*He that saith he is in the light.*" Again God inspires us to make all this personal and individual. OUR WORDS ARE WORTHLESS IF OUR DEEDS DON'T UNIFY US. It's not what we *say* that counts, but what we DO.

THE LAST HOUR

The *Westcott Commentary* states, “*There is, as far as it appears, no case where a fellow-man, as man [in the world], is called ‘a brother ...’*” That means we are God’s Family and must live as God and the Son have lived for all eternity—in loving unity.

This goes far beyond physical family in this world. In the Church family, we can measure our love for God by our fruits.

John was *prophesying* that we would have rebels in God’s Church continually talking about love in this *last hour*. And at the same time there would be different “branches,” rebelling against God’s Family unity. They are not in God’s light.

It’s about how you walk, not talk. The Laodiceans talk about love as they rebel. THEY HAVE LOST THEIR VISION OF GOD’S FAMILY, WHICH MUST PRODUCE THE STRONGEST KIND OF UNITY AND LOVE. It is God’s love that binds us together as it does the Father and Son.

We must show the world an *example* of how to walk in the light—something this world has never seen, except in God’s very elect. Our words will have little or no effect if we fail to teach by example.

“I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake” (1 John 2:12). “For His name’s sake” means that without Christ’s sacrifice, none of this is possible. Again, “little children” indicates John was talking to those who were falling away, in most cases. He no longer calls them “*my* little children.” He says that those who walk in the light and love their brethren have their sins forgiven. That is how they can get back to being called “my little children.”

In verse 13, John talks to those who “*have known* the Father.” They no longer know Him! What have you LOST if you *have known* the Father? These people are losing their eternal lives! Verse 14 discusses people who have God’s truth abiding in them, and “*have overcome* [conquered] the wicked one.” There are many Laodiceans who have God’s truth to some degree but are *no longer conquering the devil!*

A BATTLE is raging between God’s people and the devil—and we have to CONQUER! If you know God, you will conquer. If you don’t know God, you will be conquered. Families will

fall apart. Problems will fester between people. John is talking about human relations in the Church!

If we keep God's law of love, we will SOLVE those problems.

Realize, God must GIVE US His love, or we won't have it. We can't just *talk* about love and think somehow we will have it. God must give it, and He will only do so if we are obedient to Him.

How often John kept driving home the LAW OF LOVE. The *world is passing away* forever. Don't become tempted by the evil world in this *last hour* (verses 17-18).

SONS OF GOD

¹ John 3 is one of the most profound chapters in the Bible. You cannot understand it without deeply studying it! That really applies to all of John's epistles. A routine study will never enable you to comprehend his immeasurable depth! YOU MUST HAVE A PLAN AND STRATEGY TO TRULY MASTER THESE PROFOUND EPISTLES.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (1 John 3:1). *Behold! Take note!* John says. WHAT MANNER OF LOVE IS IT, THAT HUMAN BEINGS—WHO ARE NOTHING BUT CLAY, WHO ARE EVEN CALLED WORMS IN THE BIBLE—WOULD BE CALLED SONS BY GOD THE FATHER? BEHOLD, THIS IS THE LOVE OF ALL LOVES! What kind of love does it take for the great God to want to give us eternal life in His Family? Why would this magnificent Being allow you to talk with Him every day and call Him *Father*? This is something to *behold!* What a Father we have! We did nothing to deserve that.

The great sadness is, when you say, *Behold! Look at this vision*, it means nothing to most of God's people today! EVEN GOD'S VERY ELECT DON'T COMPREHEND THIS DEEPLY ENOUGH! This is the TRUTH OF ALL TRUTHS! *Behold—understand!* John was pleading for their submissive attention.

What LOVE the Father has—the ultimate love. It is exceedingly difficult to comprehend, even with tremendous

THE LAST HOUR

effort! We must reach, grasp and dig, and ask God for all He will give to help us understand!

John *loved* God's people, calling them "beloved." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (verse 2). We are not only sons of God in embryo. When Christ returns, we will be GODS—born into the Family of God—with godly brilliance! This is difficult to grasp. In fact, this truth is so awesome, the world will not believe it and labels it blasphemy! What about us? Do we believe with all our hearts that we really will be GODS in a few years—born into the Family of God?

Behold! The omnipotent, supreme God of the universe makes it possible for us to call Him Father! Because we are now His sons. This truth transcends all others. It should leave us thunderstruck!

If we get ho-hum about this truth, we are becoming spiritually brain-dead. This is our greatest challenge—to understand how indescribably wonderful our calling is. How deep and unparalleled God's love is.

This world is so deceived that it didn't even recognize God in the flesh, Christ, when He came to this Earth. Then it killed Him. And now, when our potential is explained to them, many people call it blasphemy!

VISION, THEN LAW

What does it mean to deeply understand our God Family future? How does that affect us today? "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [God the Father] is pure" (verse 3). Think about that! If you truly have the hope of what John discussed in the first two verses, you will busy yourself in seeking FATHER-LEVEL PURITY!

Is it strange that God wants us to be as pure as He is? Don't parents want their children to follow their righteous example?

The first verses of this chapter are so inspiring! And then John comes right back to the *law*. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression

of the law” (verse 4). If we are going to be born into God’s Family, we must structure our lives according to God’s law. Just like children, we need direction.

THIS VISION IS WHAT THE LAODICEANS LOST FIRST OF ALL. IF YOU DON’T HAVE THIS HOPE, YOU WON’T PURIFY YOURSELF. “[E]very man that hath this hope in him purifieth *himself*” Again, we see how John *individualizes* this hope—each person *must* have this vital hope, or he will not conquer the devil, the world and himself. Without this hope, he will fall away from God.

Our goal is to be pure “*even as he is pure*.” We are to become pure as our Father is pure—perfectly pure. This must be our most exalted goal.

YOU CAN’T GO TO A BIBLE COMMENTARY TO GET THE MEANING OF THESE VERSES. YOU CAN’T EVEN GO TO MOST OF GOD’S PEOPLE TO GET THIS UNDERSTANDING! God is revealing His hope only to His very elect today. You must go to God with *intensive prayer* to comprehend where God is working now. We must use the power of God’s Holy Spirit. Then we can live with this stupendous hope, and no obstacle or trial will deter us.

This terrifying world is falling apart. Chaos reigns. It’s about to explode into a nuclear holocaust. But in the midst of this extreme turmoil and mass confusion, God’s little flock lives in peace and harmony. How? By keeping God’s *law*.

Notice the way this truth is presented in these few verses. FIRST GOD GIVES US THIS TRANSCENDENTAL GOAL. THEN HE SHOWS US HOW TO ACHIEVE IT. WE MUST KEEP GOD’S LAW AND FOLLOW THE GOVERNMENT THAT IMPLEMENTS IT.

Carnally, we have a negative view of God’s law of love. Our perception of this concept is flawed when we EMPHASIZE THE LAW *above* THE HOPE AND FAIL TO GRASP THE AWESOME VISION!

We must be like David and say, *O how I love God’s law* (Psalm 119:97). We can say that only *after* we see the hope-filled vision and then lawfully strive to achieve it.

The world and God’s own Laodiceans have a false love. John was describing God’s love in the first century because God’s own Church was being deceived into a false love! They talked of love continually, as they rebelled against God’s law

THE LAST HOUR

of love. The Laodiceans have the same problem today, which involves far more people.

The universe functions properly because it is subject to law. And so must mankind be. But the carnal mind hates God's law (Romans 8:7). THROUGH GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT, WE CAPTURE THIS VISION AND THEN WANT DESPERATELY TO KEEP GOD'S LAW. That is how we build God's character.

THE VISION MUST COME FIRST. Often parents try to hammer home God's law and fail to teach this vision (remember that God's Holy Spirit does work *with* our youth). Then young people get discouraged and want to quit. Or, if they see their parents lead a life with little or no hope, they get depressed. The parents must set them an example of a hope-filled life. That means putting God's Family ahead of the physical family. The physical family was designed as a God-plane relationship to help us qualify for God's Family.

How profound this subject is!

We are God's "beloved." John worked so hard to help us all see the depth of God's love for us. *You* are greatly loved by God. We are called sons of God today and "we shall be like Him." We are about to become like the God of Revelation 1!

What love! What hope! What joy!

God is recreating Himself. The LAW is the way He thinks. Therefore, we must keep that law. So in the midst of all the craziness in the world, there is a lawkeeping little flock that believes in God's law and government—people who are thrilled to be called the sons of God.

If you see a church or a family bogging down, this is where to look for the source of the problem. But you can't hammer at the law with people who lack vision. JOHN TAUGHT THE GOD FAMILY VISION FIRST! *Behold! What manner of love!* he said. He inspired people with the vision, and then said, *If this is what you want, you must keep the law!*

Joe Tkach Jr. wrote a book called *Transformed by Truth*. He wrote about how he rejected Herbert W. Armstrong's writings. He stated that under Mr. Armstrong he was living in darkness, as if in a cave, but that he is now in the light. Like a dog returning to its vomit, he has gone back into the blackest

kind of darkness and calls it light. And that blackness is far worse than what he knew before God called him. He has totally lost this vision about being born into God's Family.

Early in this rebellion, Mr. Tkach rejected God's *law* of love. Many of these so-called scholars have reasoned themselves into the "blackness of darkness forever"—eternal death—unless they repent! They had this God-level hope; now they have no light—only a black, black ending. No tragedy is even close to being so ghastly!

TURNING MANY FROM LAWLESSNESS

"And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 2:4). Mr. Armstrong was a *type* of Levi (for an explanation, request our free book *Malachi's Message*). God made a covenant with Levi, charging him to preach the gospel to the world in this end time. The rest of us were called to support Levi.

"My covenant was with him of LIFE AND PEACE ..." (verse 5). There is the vision. Mr. Armstrong didn't have a discouraging message. He had the message of 1 John 3:1-3! He offered real, abundant living and peace in his teaching.

Verse 5 continues, "... and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name." *Fear* is mentioned *three times*, right after that colossal vision. Mr. Armstrong had a living FEAR of violating God's law and government. And because of that fear, God poured the deepest VISION into his mind! That is the only way to receive LIFE AND PEACE from God. We must be "little children"—childlike and submissive to God.

"The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and *equity* [lawfulness], and did turn many away from *iniquity* [lawlessness]" (verse 6). God had a high opinion of this man! Why? Because he led a life of *righteousness*—of KEEPING GOD'S LAW—and he turned many *away from* BREAKING HIS LAW.

The bottom line of why God was so pleased with him gets down to LAW. THAT IS AT THE ROOT OF WHAT IT MEANS TO DO

THE LAST HOUR

GOD'S WORK: IT MEANS TURNING PEOPLE FROM LAWLESSNESS. But it can't be done without God's majestic Family vision. How MANY ARE YOU TURNING TO RIGHTEOUSNESS? How MUCH ARE YOU SUPPORTING GOD'S WORK, WHICH TURNS PEOPLE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS? GOD IS JUDGING US BY THESE FRUITS.

Why would the translators use words like *equity* and *iniquity* in this verse—obscuring the meaning of LAW? Because of their BIAS AGAINST AND HOSTILITY TOWARD GOD'S LAW! They have no vision. The creation was made subject to vanity. Human nature hates God's law because it lacks God's Holy Spirit and John's vision of hope. Our work must warn this world and also turn people away from lawlessness.

There was a man in this end time who turned *many* people away from “iniquity,” or *lawlessness*. Evil teaching against God's law was not found in his mouth. “He walked with me [God] in peace and equity”—*lawfulness*. He kept God's law of love and taught it to many.

When Theodore Roosevelt led his Rough Riders up San Juan Hill in Cuba, he didn't say “charge” and then follow his men. He said *follow me*. This is how they drove the Spaniards out. Likewise, Mr. Armstrong “walked with God” and set the example. He led the charge for all of us and lived what he taught. He set us the best example in this end time. He said, *follow me as I follow Christ*.

The Father commissioned Christ to lead His Family of spiritual soldiers. Jesus was tried and tested as no man ever was. Still, He lived a perfect, sinless life. Christ set the example for all of us. He led the charge and said *follow me*.

LEVI WAS JUDGED RIGHTEOUS BECAUSE HE “TURNED MANY” AWAY FROM LAWLESSNESS. THIS IS THE STANDARD BY WHICH GOD JUDGES US. Levi filled them with God's hope. This happened in the context of proclaiming the gospel around the world.

WE MUST KNOW WHO THIS MAN WAS! This is end-time prophecy. I know Mr. Armstrong was the man who turned *many* from lawlessness. That is what God says, regardless of what evil men say.

Today, the Laodiceans have lost God's vision, which brings *peace*. “But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused

many to *stumble at the law*; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts” (verse 8). God identifies the root of the Laodicean problem: They are rejecting the law that God used Levi to establish. Rather than turning people from lawlessness, they cause them to *stumble* at that law.

If we don’t understand that law—if we don’t seek it at Levi’s mouth (verse 7)—then we don’t have the vision of 1 John 3! We all must be subject to that law. Some criticize the PCG for referring to Mr. Armstrong too much. But he *restored all things!* God instructs us to seek the law at HIS mouth! That means we must heed Mr. Armstrong’s writings. We are only trying to put him on the level that God does.

RIGHTEOUS AS HE IS RIGHTEOUS

“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin” (1 John 3:5). Christ was born as a child, and grew, and then died for our sins—the most transcendent sacrifice ever made. And think: The crucifixion wasn’t the only difficult part; consider the suffering He endured throughout His sinless life. “In him is no sin.” That is eternal character—He has NEVER sinned! That is the example we are to follow. We need to get used to that way of life because that is how we will be living throughout eternity! We are not being asked to do anything God has not already done.

“He [Christ] was manifested.” What does that mean? It means that God became flesh to take away our sins. It takes the sacrifice of God in the flesh to pay for our transgression of the law.

“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him” (verse 6). Where do you abide, or live? God wants us to LIVE in Him! Of course, we stumble from time to time, but this is where we should LIVE. Sin is foreign to God. If we live in sin, we don’t know God.

“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he [Christ] is righteous” (verse 7). Merely talking about righteousness is worth nothing. It’s not an occasional righteous act—it’s our WAY OF LIFE. Not *self*-righteousness, but being righteous *even as*

THE LAST HOUR

God is righteous! God's righteousness in us! What a standard to live up to! That is our calling! I guarantee, we do not fully understand the depth of that statement in verse 7!

You can read John's writings about *law, love* and *righteousness* and believe you understand them. But if we aren't bursting with excitement over this truth, WE JUST DON'T GET IT!

How can God's people ever be divided if we are righteous as Christ is? Or if we abide *in Christ*? GOD AND THE WORD WERE NEVER DIVIDED THROUGHOUT ETERNITY. IF WE ARE RIGHTEOUS "EVEN AS HE IS RIGHTEOUS," WE WILL BE UNIFIED!

This is how the whole world will be united in peace and joy. What a vision for this dangerously divided world!

WE MUST BECOME RIGHTEOUS "EVEN AS HE IS RIGHTEOUS" AND "PURE AS HE IS PURE." We must keep the law to achieve such deep righteousness.

The expression "deceive you" is better translated "*lead* you astray." That means you are in dreadful danger of losing what is discussed in the first three verses of 1 John 3!

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (verse 8). This is what we should be doing in our lives and in our work today—helping Christ destroy the works of the devil. That is what Christ did through us in the court case.

Sin is the way of the devil. JOHN OFTEN MENTIONS THE DEVIL, WHO SHOULD BE VIVIDLY REAL TO ALL OF US. Christ came to destroy the devil's works.

Notice how John traces righteousness and sin to their *origins*. Then we can see the whole picture. We are a reflection of our father—either God or the devil. God makes us understand who our real Father is!

THE SIN OF CAIN

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not

of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (verses 9-10). Our lives reveal whether we are sons of God or sons of the devil. “[B]y their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20). If we love our brother as God loves him, we are of God. We must work to unify the God Family. For example, we should practice godly hospitality. If we don’t love our brother according to God’s law, we are reflecting Satan’s evil.

We must love being with God’s people, whom Christ died for. And we must love our worldly neighbors by proclaiming this message of love to them through God’s mighty work.

“For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous” (1 John 3:11-12). Why would John discuss one of the most violent crimes in the Bible—Cain killing Abel? Because God is trying to give us a picture of what it is like when we don’t love our spiritual brethren! Do you realize how God sees it when we don’t love each other? Think about the heinous murder of Abel! This is directed to God’s own people! This is the language of the last hour! Look at your sin *spiritually*, as God sees it! **WE MUST GROW IN THIS PRECIOUS LOVE OF GOD!**

Human relations must always be rooted in the **LAW OF LOVE**. Spiritually, are you acting like **CHRIST**, or are you acting like **CAIN**?

Consider how God’s Laodicean churches treated God’s very elect in the court case. Spiritually, if you hate your brother, you are guilty of murder. Most of God’s own people are committing odious murder. They are helping to destroy the faith of God’s people. And it’s a lot worse than what Cain did. He only committed physical murder. But John is discussing eternal life and eternal death!

This is *last hour* language. We must label murder what it is. **WHAT WE ARE DISCUSSING HAS ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES.**

Cain “slew his brother.” That is what Laodiceans are in the process of doing—slaying spiritual brothers.

HOW DO WE HATE OUR BRETHREN? BY NOT EXPRESSING GOD’S LOVE! If we have God’s love, we lay down our lives

THE LAST HOUR

for them, AS CHRIST DID FOR US. That means a lot of hard, sacrificing work.

We can also be guilty of blood on another level. “So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand” (Ezekiel 33:7-8). IF WE DON’T PROCLAIM GOD’S WARNING MESSAGE OF LOVE, WE ARE GUILTY OF THE BLOOD OF ISRAEL AND THE WORLD! And most of God’s own people are not supporting the Ezekiel watchman message.

LOVE THAT WILL CHANGE THE WORLD

God reveals His message today for a vital purpose. He wants that message “to reach the largest audience possible.” If we fail, we are guilty of Cain’s murderous sin.

We were called today to do God’s work. If we fail, we will lose our eternal headquarters position. And those who repent in the Great Tribulation will be in God’s Kingdom, but *not* working at God’s headquarters for all eternity. (For a biblical explanation of this truth, be sure to read *Malachi’s Message*.) We must do God’s work or pay an eternal penalty.

“Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John 3:13-14). This is the difference between LIFE AND DEATH. When we have God’s love in us, we experience REAL LIFE—just the way it will be in the World Tomorrow. Loving our brothers and sisters is a SIGN OF ETERNAL LIFE! It shows that we have life and that we LOVE GOD.

John is discussing life and death. Referring to the phrase “from death unto life,” the *Westcott Commentary* states, “The depth of the expression is lost both in Latin and English.” It should read, “THE DEATH WHICH IS TRULY DEATH” and “THE LIFE WHICH IS TRULY LIFE.” God’s love flowing into

our minds through the Holy Spirit is *truly* LIFE—the sign of ETERNAL life! Anything else is “truly death.” Without God’s love, we are dead and will die for all eternity unless we change that condition.

The majority of God’s own people are dying spiritually (2 Thessalonians 2:10). How terribly painful that is to God.

There are times when I see wonderful examples of love demonstrated in God’s people. They will go to amazing lengths in sacrifice for God’s work and for others. Those examples move me deeply. And I’m sure even God the Father sheds a few tears of joy when He sees those examples. To see people changing from evil, sinning human beings—who drink iniquity like water—into beautiful beings of godly love and character is profoundly inspiring to God!

Empty words of love are so cheap. Abundant *deeds* of love are so precious.

“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:15-16). If we have the Holy Spirit and don’t use it, then God takes that talent and gives it to another. The Holy Spirit in us is eternal. If we use it, we become eternal. We have eternal life residing in us. “[T]his is life eternal . . .” (John 17:3).

When I understand the depth of what John is talking about, I feel rather naked, spiritually. It should affect all of us that way. We don’t measure up. We should be inspired to grow more, and, at the same time, we can see how to solve the problems of this world. THERE IS NOTHING MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE LOVE OF GOD! When people take on the attitude John is discussing, this world will become more beautiful and inspiring than we can even imagine.

BOLD TOWARD GOD

“Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God” (1 John 3:21). If our heart isn’t condemning us because of sin, we will be BOLD toward

THE LAST HOUR

God—we will have unwavering, fearless and unhesitating confidence, or faith, in Him. We must AVOID SIN to have that kind of boldness.

Someone who is BOLD TOWARD GOD will have a tremendous impact on this world! Just look at Christ. If our people can develop boldness toward God, we will have no trouble getting this work done. BOLDNESS is the key to empowering this work. How bold are *you*?

Paul wrote his most inspiring letter from prison at the end of his life (2 Timothy). John wrote the greatest book of prophecy in the Bible—Revelation—while imprisoned on Patmos. These men were BOLD. How do *you* respond to trials? Do you use them to become more bold toward God? DOES YOUR EXAMPLE IN TRIAL AND TESTING INSPIRE OTHERS?

“AND WHATSOEVER WE ASK, WE RECEIVE OF HIM, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (1 John 3:22). Imagine receiving ANYTHING YOU ASKED of God! That requires more than just obeying God out of duty. John is talking about an attitude of wanting to do ANYTHING POSSIBLE TO PLEASE YOUR FATHER! THAT ATTITUDE GETS YOUR PRAYERS ANSWERED! THAT MAKES YOU BOLD. Of course, you’ll be asking for the things that please God.

How many of God’s people fail to comprehend this? Of course God is only going to give us what is good for us. But still, we urgently need to understand what God is promising His obedient people. God does say, “WHATSOEVER WE ASK WE RECEIVE OF HIM”!

We should not put limits on what we could be given, if we are obedient and ask God in a right attitude. THIS IS AN EARTHSHAKING PROMISE FROM GOD, AND WE SHOULD NOT TAKE IT LIGHTLY. THIS IS A STATEMENT FROM THE CREATOR OF EVERYTHING!

That is the formula for success that Christ followed. Jesus said, “And he that sent me is with me: *the Father hath not left me alone*; for I DO ALWAYS THOSE THINGS THAT PLEASE HIM” (John 8:29). Would a father leave a child *alone* who had such an attitude? No—he would smash a BATTALION of soldiers to

save that son! Take on that attitude, and your heavenly Father will intervene in your life and make things happen for you! With that attitude, we become bold toward God, and the doors begin to swing open.

“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 3:23-24). If we keep the spiritual law, God lives in us. It takes the Spirit of God to keep the Ten Commandments. Then we know God is backing and supporting us. Then our boldness and success grows mightily. By overcoming the sinful way of life, we become more than conquerors. We are getting ready to be born into the very Family of God!

The Elder

WHERE is God's work? Most of God's people don't even know. That is a staggering crisis with eternal consequences—no deceit is more deadly. *John shows us how to be a vital part of God's work today and forever!* Once you are a part of God's work, it should never end!

The last hour has struck. At the end of this hour Jesus Christ will return. The Earth and universe will know only peace, joy and abundance from that time forward! Nothing even remotely like it has ever occurred before. The Family of God will rule this Earth and the universe. CAN YOUR MIND FULLY COMPREHEND THAT THIS UNIVERSE-SHAKING EVENT IS ONLY AN "HOUR" AWAY?

SIX THOUSAND YEARS OF MAN RULING OVER MAN IS ABOUT TO END FOREVER!

YOU WOULD THINK THIS REALITY WOULD HAVE ALL OF GOD'S PEOPLE BUZZING WITH EXCITEMENT, wanting to do all they could to prepare for that event—to warn the world and fill people with hope.

But that isn't the case. Most of God's people have turned

away and show little or no interest in Christ's return!

JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF STARTED THE FIRST-CENTURY CHURCH. And yet, BY THE TIME JOHN (one of Christ's original 12 apostles) WAS WRITING HIS EPISTLES, THE PEOPLE WERE LOSING THEIR FIRST LOVE! That illustrates what a battle it is to conquer our human nature.

Imagine the horror if one half of a large physical family died in a short span of time. Yet that would be *trivial* when compared with the spiritual. Fifty percent of God's spiritual Family today will die *forever*! That is a mind-defying disaster. It may be the greatest single disaster ever in God's Church!

When John wrote these epistles, Paul had recently been killed, and John had taken over much of his area. This was a time when God's people should have been more urgent spiritually—but, ironically, most of them were leaving the truth!

The Ephesus-era Church was dying, just as the Laodicean-era Church is today. Spiritual death was all around. Nothing else comes close to being as tragic as that kind of crisis.

CHRIST RECENTLY REVEALED THESE EPISTLES TO GET OUR MINDS ON THE *LAST HOUR*. Why is the time factor so crucial? Because we are in an agonizing spiritual war, and it is almost over! That understanding gives us a more positive attitude. We know that Christ is going to give us the ultimate victory very soon.

Looking back on the history of the Philadelphia Church, perhaps God has revealed more truth for us from John's epistles than any other New Testament book in the Bible. Why would God want us to study so deeply into these short writings, particularly in this last hour?

Part of the answer lies in John's own attitude to the spiritual tragedy occurring around him. John was not depressed. He was greatly saddened by what was happening in the Church. But he makes clear in his epistles that he was *rejoicing*! He rejoiced through all his spiritual warfare, even though it was the worst he had ever faced. During these times, we need to learn from John's spiritual success.

THE ELDER

In his last sermon before he died, Mr. Armstrong made a profound statement: “Government is based on the principle of God’s love.” He was thinking very much like the Apostle John.

LOVE IS *SURRENDERING* TO OUR HUSBAND. IT IS KEEPING GOD’S LAW. IT IS OBEYING GOD’S GOVERNMENT. AT TIMES, IT EVEN EXPOSES THE ANTICHRIST. HOW MANY PEOPLE REALLY UNDERSTAND THAT KIND OF LOVE? The reason John talked about it so much was that practically nobody understood it at the time! Even the majority of God’s people were rebelling against God’s love. That is also true of God’s Church today.

John spent most of his first epistle talking about LOVE. In his second and third epistles, John gets more direct and specific. Both of these epistles begin with the same words: “*The elder.*” Why? Because if we are going to understand God’s law of love, we need to find out where “the elder” is—the one who teaches God’s law. When you are talking about GOD’S LAW, you really are talking about “the elder” as well! God’s chosen leader always plays the key role under Christ!

Where are 95 percent of God’s Laodiceans stumbling most of all today? Again, the majority of God’s people are led by ministers who cause them to *stumble at the law* (Malachi 2:7-8). THAT MEANS THEY REJECT “THE ELDER,” WHO TEACHES GOD’S LAW!

The massive falling away today revolves around God’s law—and God’s elder who teaches that law! Unless we can learn this lesson deeply, we are going to be led astray!

This is the *fundamental lesson* we must learn. This is why John opened his last two epistles with “the elder.” First he taught the members about God’s law of love. Then he zeroed in on “the elder” who was teaching that law.

He saved “the elder” subject until the end of his epistles. He wanted to be as gentle as he possibly could in teaching God’s saints.

In these last two epistles, John was emphasizing the serious government problems. Rebel leaders were coming who *brought not this doctrine* (2 John 10). And probably the worst rebel John faced was Diotrephes (3 John 9).

As Mr. Armstrong always said, *government is everything*. That is what John was discussing. Throughout the Bible, God has worked with one man at a time in this office of “the elder.” It is not “an elder”—it’s **THE** elder of God! **THERE IS ONLY ONE MAN THAT CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THIS CHURCH, USES AT ANY GIVEN TIME IN THAT LEADERSHIP ROLE.** This is truly fundamental. That is not my idea—it is the foundational truth of God! **WE ARE ABOUT TO TAKE THIS GOSPEL OUT INTO THE UNIVERSE—THIS TRUTH ABOUT THE FAMILY OF GOD ADMINISTERING THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD—THE SAME GOVERNMENT GOD’S MAN HAS ALWAYS BEEN TEACHING!**

Remember, these epistles were written for the last hour. If we are to understand God’s love, or God’s law and government, we must find “the elder” in the last hour.

Why was the Ephesus Church losing its first love? Because the people weren’t looking to “the elder.” Why is the Laodicean Church casting God’s truth to the ground today? Because its members don’t look to “the elder” to whom God is revealing His truth. They simply won’t let God love them!

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT GOD’S LOVE, THIS IS RIGHT AT THE HEART OF IT: FINDING THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD! There you find where God is *loving* His people, pouring out His Spirit and revelation. If we don’t learn about “the elder,” we will let God’s truth dissipate and will become Laodicean.

LUCIFER FAILED TO ADMINISTER GOD’S GOVERNMENT. GOD THEN DECIDED THAT HE HAD TO RECREATE HIMSELF IN MANKIND. THAT IS THE ONLY WAY HE COULD ENSURE THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD BE ADMINISTERED. NOW GOD’S CHURCH IS BEING TESTED TO SEE IF WE CAN QUALIFY TO RULE WITH GOD FOREVER—WHERE LUCIFER FAILED.

That awesome future is directly tied to submitting to God’s government today. God’s true ministers are always reminded to keep the members looking to Christ and *the elder*—not just with words, but also with **DEEDS**. That is where God’s government always breaks down. It is where we find the supreme test.

UNLESS WE FACTOR IN “THE ELDER,” GOD’S CHURCH GETS LOST IN ENDLESS HUMAN REASONING.

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

You can trust God to be correcting, shaping and molding that elder. And if the elder rebels and God can't mold him, then he will be replaced. Recent history in the WCG illustrates that foundational lesson.

JOHN BEGAN HIS SECOND AND THIRD EPISTLES WITH "THE ELDER." WHY? JOHN WAS EMPHASIZING GOD'S GOVERNMENT BECAUSE SO MANY MEMBERS AND PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WERE ATTACKING IT!

THIS IS PROPHECY FOR GOD'S CHURCH TODAY. We see the vast majority of God's people rebelling against and attacking God's government. The *cause* of our Church crisis in this end time was prophesied in John's *last hour* epistles!

The Ephesus Church was losing its first love for a definite reason. They were rejecting God's government through *the elder*. And in this last hour, God's people are also rejecting God's government, which is administered through *the elder*.

Reject the elder and you are pushing Christ out of the picture. This is the worst catastrophe of all. Study your Bible and you'll see God has always led His Church that way—with one man.

This is not just a lesson for you to follow God's government—IT IS A LESSON FOR ME TO IMPLEMENT IT AS WELL. There are times when I don't want to, just as there are times when we don't want to submit to it. That is the way we are humanly. But if we are going to make it through this last hour, we must think with Christ's mind.

John was talking to people who were falling away all around him, and so am I. The vast majority of God's people have fallen away, and God says He is so sickened by them that He will spew them out of His mouth! (Revelation 3:16). Fifty percent of them will be lost forever because they refuse to follow Christ—and His elder.

I'm sure there were people who criticized John for referring to himself as "the elder." *Look at the way this guy is exalting himself; as if he's the ONLY one God is using. We have to be careful of the evils of one-man rule.* Certainly Diotrephes was saying such things. And sadly, *many* of the people of God believed him!

I BELIEVE THIS IS A PROPHECY OF WHAT WILL BE THE BIGGEST PROBLEM AMONG THE PCG MEMBERSHIP IN THIS LAST HOUR!

It would be so easy for us to push this truth aside. That is what the Laodiceans are doing. They are stumbling at God's government and law. GOD'S GOVERNMENT IS A PREREQUISITE TO ESTABLISHING THE LAW IN GOD'S TRUE CHURCH.

Our battle in the last hour is going to get increasingly fierce and ferocious! And I know where the worst attack will be focused. As long as I serve God and His work, there will be people trying to destroy and discredit me. And there will be cases where we will be under fire, and I won't have time to sit down and say, *let's negotiate*. I will have to make some difficult decisions, and you will have to KNOW, DEEP DOWN, that God is using "the elder"! WE MUST LEARN THIS LESSON OF GOVERNMENT, OR WE WON'T SURVIVE THE LAST HOUR!

Many people are trying to disparage me even today. You need to KNOW whether to listen to them or not. Throughout these epistles, John says you can KNOW who Christ's leader is. If you don't know, a black future awaits you.

DRAW CLOSE TO THE MINISTRY

God gives us His government for a foundational purpose. We must take advantage of it.

It is easy for people to think they can solve their own problems, when really they need help. We all have the tendency to rely too much on ourselves. We must learn to ask for help when we need it.

People cannot be in God's Church and remain aloof from His ministry. When that is the case, we can be certain there is some kind of SIN in their minds! (There are some very rare cases, among God's very elect, where the ministers are wrong and must be dealt with. Be assured Christ will take care of the problem in time.) What is going on with people who don't really want to be close to God and His Family ministers? That is not a small problem.

Many times I have seen people leave this Church who, perhaps only a week before, told me, "I'm 100 percent behind

you.” I’m sure that most of the time people say that with a good attitude. But when you get down to it, what do words mean if they are not backed by DEEDS?

THE ELECT LADY

“The elder *unto the elect lady* and her children ...” (2 John 1). We are “the elect lady.” We are the royal bride of Jesus Christ. The word *elect* means *chosen of God*. We didn’t select our Husband or our Father. OUR FATHER SELECTED US AS THE BRIDE FOR HIS SON! He chose YOU after a lot of thinking and pondering to determine whether you had the potential He wanted in His Son’s future wife—THE ONLY WIFE CHRIST WILL EVER HAVE THROUGHOUT ETERNITY! WHAT AN “ELECT LADY”! THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE WE HAVE IS REMEMBERING WHO WE ARE!

Do you really want to turn away from that because you don’t like God’s government or His law? We should be filled with excitement and wonder because of our imminent marriage to Christ. Isn’t that how two people feel as they prepare for their marriage in this world? Yet those physical marriages are nothing compared to this spiritual marriage, where we become the royal bride of the King of kings!

This calling should fill us with excitement, wonder and awe. Do we really get it? Pray fervently that you do. God’s Family is the greatest royalty on Earth by far!

The Church is “the mother of us all” (Galatians 4:26). A mother nurtures and feeds her children. If we are going to be nurtured and fed new revelation by God, we must be IN THE TRUE CHURCH OF GOD—THE ELECT LADY.

LOVE IN THE TRUTH

“The elder unto the elect lady and her children, WHOM I LOVE IN THE TRUTH; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth” (2 John 1). John had to emphasize “love *in the truth*” because so many were talking about a *phony* love, contrary to God’s truth.

So many were turning away from God, and yet JOHN STILL LOVED THEM IN THE TRUTH! We need to understand John's depth of love, or we will become Laodicean.

Do we love each other "in the truth"? God won't force this on us. HE DOESN'T WANT A BRIDE WHO DOESN'T REALLY WANT THIS MARRIAGE. What husband wants a wife who doesn't love him? Christ rejects those people who don't have true, lawful love. He wants to be LOVED by His people! He has done everything for us, and now it is our turn to do something for our Husband.

The end of 2 John 1 in the Revised Standard Version reads, "all who KNOW the truth." If you know the truth, you KNOW where this elect lady is. If you don't know the truth, John doesn't even address his epistle to you. You don't know what love is if you don't love the elect lady. YOU MUST KNOW AND LOVE THIS LADY OF TRUTH.

FULL REWARD

"For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever" (verse 2). ONE TRILLION YEARS INTO THE FUTURE, WHEN WE ARE BEAUTIFYING THE UNIVERSE, GOD'S PRECIOUS TRUTH WILL STILL BE WITH US.

"Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, IN TRUTH AND LOVE. I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father" (verses 3-4). The Father and Son have been grounded in this truth forever. It's an inspiring God Family love.

They received "a commandment from the Father"—a command that we must walk in His Family truth.

Some of the Laodiceans no longer understand that they are to be born again into that Family. Others even believe in the trinity now. That means they have lost the God Family understanding—the gospel.

The United Church of God left the wcg and said it would experiment with a new government—different from what Mr. Armstrong taught. That meant those Laodiceans were

turning away from the Father's rule and turning to another father—another god!—the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). No wonder God is going to spew them out of His mouth.

“And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another” (2 John 5). John uses the word *lady* because he is addressing the whole Church. God's Church is *typed* by a woman in the Bible.

If we turn away, our own history condemns us—what we “heard from the beginning.” In this last hour, that expression has Herbert W. Armstrong written all over it, since he restored all things.

“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a FULL REWARD” (verse 8). Is God trying to hurt us? No—He is saying, *you must examine yourselves or you WON'T RECEIVE A FULL REWARD!* Most of the people around John were not receiving a full reward. Today, those who repent in the Tribulation will be in God's Kingdom but lose their eternal headquarters reward. And that failure will be a part of their history forever. ALL JOHN WANTED FOR THESE PEOPLE WAS FOR THEM TO HAVE A FULL REWARD FOR ALL ETERNITY!

Do you want a *full reward*? Then do not lose all you have “wrought,” or worked for. Take the Holy Spirit and examine yourself. See where you are sinning and change. God wants you to have a full reward! He wants you at headquarters with Jesus Christ forever!

IF WE ONLY EXAMINE OURSELVES WITH OUR HUMAN MINDS, WE WILL NEVER SEE WHAT WE ARE DOING WRONG SPIRITUALLY. It requires taking the Spirit of God and examining yourself, on your knees, asking God for His view. Let the Holy Spirit guide you in everything you do. This is all in the context of Christ coming in the flesh.

WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO RULE FROM HEADQUARTERS FOR ALL ETERNITY! THAT IS THE FULL REWARD GOD IS OFFERING TODAY!

God is not harsh, but He does test us. But He wants us to know that if we stay with “the elder” and the government

of God, if we really love our Husband, we will have a FULL REWARD! God is trying to give us the ultimate reward.

The stakes could not be much higher. God wants us to have some of the highest positions in God's Kingdom. And those offices last forever!

ANGEL OF LIGHT

"Whoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (verse 9). The Father and the Son are one. John kept emphasizing the Family unity that the Father and Son have had for all eternity.

"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (verse 10). This applies even more to the last hour. There are vicious wolves out there, and you have a heavy responsibility. What "doctrine" is this talking about? You urgently need to KNOW! If someone comes to you who doesn't bring this doctrine—perhaps a friend or even family member from a Laodicean church—you can't think, *I must be careful in how I reason this; I can't let them take advantage of me, because I could get into trouble if I don't really use my human reasoning*. If you begin to think that way, you've already made a serious mistake! John tells us to just shut the door! Obey God's government in this—listen to "the elder." *The elder* and ministry are placed here to "watch for your souls"—your eternal lives! (Hebrews 13:17).

There were people in John's day saying they loved God and loved the Church—while they were DESTROYING the Church! It is so easy to get seduced by words. We want to think, *They love me, and I love them*. But they DON'T LOVE GOD! And they DON'T LOVE YOU! If they did, they would submit to Christ and His ministers! John says we must realize the danger here! Eternal life is at stake, and John is labeling people ANTICHRISTS! THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT LOVE WHILE THEY FIGHT AGAINST THE GOD WHO IS LOVE!

We cannot flirt with that danger. You could have the WISDOM OF SOLOMON and still be seduced! You must realize

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

WHO IS BEHIND THAT PERSON. Satan is much smarter than you are if you don't stay close to God.

The main focus here is on the antichrists—those who “went out from us.” They come as “angel[s] of light” with another doctrine. They are not seeking the truth. Their goal is to entrap you. And they are so dangerous that you should just politely close the door.

Does that seem harsh? Remember, your eternal glory is at stake!

“For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 11). Don't even bid them God speed, or you are guilty of their sins. We must see how dangerous this spiritual war is. These Laodiceans have moved from God's camp to the devil's work. And they desperately want you to join them. Deep down they know they are wrong. Getting more partners in crime makes them feel a little more secure in their delusion.

There is danger from the world's religions. But there is far more danger from those members who knew God and then rebelled against Him. They are called antichrists because they fight against the Christ who was at one time their Head.

Even if they seem to be or are repentant, they should be directed to God's ministers. They are usually dangerous deceivers preying on your eternal life. They are dying spiritually and want you to join them!

The only safe way is to obey God's Word. This is how God protects His Family. This is about living or dying for all eternity!

Some commentaries call these rebels *secessionists*. But God calls them *antichrists*. Only He and His true Church understand how truly dangerous they are.

The Ephesus era began with more glory than any other era. Christ personally founded it. But that era was humiliated and destroyed by the devil. He deceived some of the greatest intellects in God's Church. Let's not take these words of God lightly.

9

Gaius Had the Secret of Success

“**T**HE elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, *whom I love in the truth*” (3 John 1).
It is not enough to *talk* about love.

We must “love in the truth.” Why did John keep repeating this expression? It’s similar to how Mr. Armstrong kept repeating the truth about the two trees time and time again. Why? Because the people simply weren’t getting it!

Many deceivers and antichrists were and are talking about love continually. This is the approach of most false ministers. Like Satan, they come as angels of light.

Love in the truth means love spelled out in God’s Word, the Bible. SATAN HAS A COUNTERFEIT LOVE THAT IS LAWLESS. He attacks any government that would dare teach God’s law of love.

PROSPER AND BE IN HEALTH

“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth [or, you prosper spiritually]” (3 John 2). First John mentioned Gaius—a man who was very dedicated to God’s work (perhaps not even a

minister). Then he talked about *prosperity* and *health*. THESE ARE TWO AREAS WHERE GOD'S PEOPLE ARE TESTED VERY HEAVILY. God tests all of us with a lack of prosperity and health. So we must not condemn people who are being tested in these areas. But apart from that, John is saying that THE WAY TO HAVE MAXIMUM HEALTH AND PROSPERITY IS TO GIVE YOUR LIFE TO THIS WORK! THAT'S WHAT GAIUS DID. We must realize that there is often a lack of prosperity and a lack of health because we haven't learned to put God's work first as we should.

GOD WISHES ABOVE ALL THAT WE PROSPER AND BE IN HEALTH, as we prosper spiritually! God wants to *bless* us in these areas! If you want the *ultimate* prosperity and the *ultimate* health, this is your best opportunity to receive these blessings: Give your life to this work as Gaius did!

There have been several times when I have been unwell, and I had to get something done for the work. I'd just go do it, feeling confident that it was what God wanted. Almost every time, my health improved.

Why did God discuss health and prosperity in this context? Because *everyone* wants health and prosperity. You will get the most of those two blessings if you prosper *spiritually*, the way Gaius did.

God truly is passionate about His work! Christ said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). God's work was Christ's LIFE—and still is!

If you want to help God's work with all your being, do you think that, as a general rule, God would *take away* your prosperity and health? Or will He say, *Bless that individual, because I know he will put my work first with his energy and his money!* We have to think about this the way God does. He does everything with great passion. If you want to use your prosperity and health for God's work, you are going to have more prosperity and health! That doesn't mean you will *always* be prosperous and healthy, but you will have *more* of those blessings.

If your life is filled with bad health and little or no prosperity, then you should closely examine yourself for sin. God wishes "*above all*" that we prosper and be in health. Of

course, we should be examining ourselves for sin all the time.

Like Christ, OUR FIRST PRIORITY MUST BE TO INVEST OUR HEALTH AND PROSPERITY IN GOD'S WORK.

A POSITIVE EXAMPLE

“For I REJOICED GREATLY, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth” (3 John 3). In all three of John's epistles, which were written during the worst crisis he had ever faced, John speaks about his JOY. Real joy! We do have a lot to rejoice about! Look at what God is doing for this work! Look at the steady *flow* of revelation. Look at the dedication of God's people that makes it possible to proclaim that revelation. We are witnessing *miracles* that God is performing through His people!

But don't think there won't be opposition. While God wants to give us full joy, Satan wants to take it away and make us as *miserable* as he is! The devil is doing a tremendous job of making this world miserable—getting people addicted to evils that are sapping all their joy.

God is telling you, *Rejoice with me, and I will give you full joy and a FULL REWARD!* If people don't want that, it is their choice; God won't force anything on them. But you can be sure that, like any good parent, He will do all He can to help straighten out any of His children who are hurting themselves. He wants to give us full joy.

John rejoiced when he heard people testify about Gaius walking in the truth. Gaius didn't just *talk* about doing good deeds—he *walked* in the truth! He didn't just talk about love. He expressed his love in deeds.

JOHN USED THIS INSPIRING EXAMPLE TO SHOW PEOPLE HOW TO PROSPER AND BE IN HEALTH. Gaius was a marvelous example for them to follow. His whole life revolved around God's work. How wonderful such an *example* is to God's Church. It is the most effective way to teach God's truth. This is how we achieve a full reward.

Like Gaius, if you walk in the truth, you will passionately serve God's work.

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

Why was John emphasizing this so much?

In verse 10, we read how Diotrephes was doing exactly the opposite—turning people from the truth.

So John began this epistle talking about an example who turned people *to* God and *to* righteousness. John was sad that more people didn't follow such a wonderful example; there should have been many more who did. But, nevertheless, John rejoiced because Gaius sacrificed his life for the work—and he looked to Christ and *the elder*.

There is nothing in Scripture that indicates Gaius was a minister. He was probably a laymember, helping John do the work in any way he could. Anyone John would send, Gaius would help. And other people would return to John and tell him what a great work Gaius was doing—how Gaius served them. Gaius couldn't hide his good works. None of us should be parading our goodness before anyone, but if you do good works, people are often going to know—especially those you serve!

Do *your* works impress God? If so, great things will happen in your life!

“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (verse 4). JOHN TALKED WITH THE DEPTH OF GOD THE FATHER! HIS GREATEST JOY WAS THAT HIS “CHILDREN WALK IN TRUTH.” THOSE ARE WORDS RIGHT OUT OF THE MIND OF OUR LOVING FATHER.

What depth of love John had!

John, this great man of God, rejoiced when he heard about Gaius. If you want to give joy to your minister, this is how: Like Gaius, walk in the truth; do whatever you can to further God's work. When I see God's people getting out and serving, or when that news gets back to me, I am so thankful to God! Some areas of the work would simply break down if not for people such as that!

JOHN OPENED HIS THREE EPISTLES BY DISCUSSING JOY. HE WAS IN THE MIDST OF PROBABLY THE WORST CRISIS HE HAD EVER FACED. BUT GOD'S JOY IS ALWAYS THERE FOR THOSE WHO WALK IN THE TRUTH. JOHN KNEW HOW TO REJOICE IN HIS TRIALS. God's people should always have real joy.

Do you have *full joy*?

MOVE THE WORK FORWARD

“Beloved, thou doest faithfully ...” (verse 5). *Beloved*—John used this word so often in these epistles. He really did love the people. But most of God’s people thought that John did *not* love them.

“Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; Which have borne witness of thy [love] before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well” (verses 5-6). The subject is Gaius, and what he and others like him were doing. People bore witness of their *agape*, or God’s love. How precious it is to God when He sees a family or an individual doing all they can to support His work.

In verse 6, “if thou bring forward” should read “having sent forward.” These people saw ministers who were supporting *the elder* and did all they could to *send them forward* to serve God’s work even more. I’m sure they fed them and gave whatever offerings necessary to help these men on their way. “After a godly sort” really means “worthy of God.” We all need to give service WORTHY OF GOD.

IF WE ALL KEEP THIS ATTITUDE, THE PHILADELPHIA CHURCH OF GOD CANNOT DIE! Those areas in the PCG that have leaders like this are *flourishing*! These people take it upon themselves to lead and to help build the Family of God. That is truly *walking in love*.

We are being tested and tried to prove the quality of our love. Are we doing everything we can to move this work forward? When I study John’s epistles, I realize I need to get more depth out of the Bible to strengthen God’s work! It takes real effort to understand this kind of love!

Is our effort of a “godly sort,” or worthy of God? Do we do the work in a way that God would approve? This is a beautiful expression and a profound concept. This is how God separates Laodiceans from the very elect. We must sacrifice for God’s work as Christ did.

That work may be supporting God’s television program, publishing books, booklets and magazines, or any number

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

of other projects. If we are the ones who “sent forward” God’s leaders to do the work, our reward will be beyond our imagination.

IF THE WORK DIES, THE CHURCH DIES! DOING GOD’S WORK IS WHAT KEEPS TRUE CHRISTIANS ALIVE! The Laodiceans have no open door because they stopped doing God’s work (Revelation 3:7-20). That is *why* they are dying spiritually! (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

HELP KEEP GOD’S WORK ALIVE AND IT KEEPS YOU ALIVE SPIRITUALLY! THIS IS WHY YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED TODAY—OUT OF SEASON. Our spiritual lives revolve around moving the work forward.

“Because that for his name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles” (3 John 7). Here were ministers who were so gentle with the prospective members, they didn’t even ask them for their tithes, which God commands us to give. They didn’t think of their own needs first. They treated those people like fragile flowers to help save them for God.

Gaius and other members saw what those ministers were doing and said, *I want to give my life to that. I want to move the work forward!* What would have happened if they hadn’t stepped in and provided for those ministers, to keep them moving? The work would have been stagnant at best.

What was these people’s motive? They did it for “his name’s sake”—for God. They knew and loved God. That is why they did His work. They followed the apostles’ examples, “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” (Acts 5:41).

DO YOU THINK GOD WOULDN’T PROSPER SOMEONE WHO THINKS LIKE THAT?

FELLOWHELPERS TO THE TRUTH

“We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be FELLOWHELPERS TO THE TRUTH” (3 John 8). John canonized their good deeds in Scripture for all time! This book is addressed to “the wellbeloved Gaius.” HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE A BOOK OF THE BIBLE ADDRESSED TO THEM—LET

ALONE SOMEONE WHO PROBABLY WAS NOT A MINISTER? God's feelings about Gaius are recorded for all to see. GOD HAD THIS CANONIZED SO WE WOULD SEE HOW VALUABLE IT IS FOR SOMEONE TO SUPPORT THE WORK. GOD SEES WHAT HIS SAINTS ARE DOING! He shows them how pleased He is by prospering them and giving them health and other blessings.

THIS EPISTLE IS A HUGE MONUMENT TO ALL THE SCATTERED BRETHREN WHO ARE *SERVING THE WORK!* GOD WANTS US TO KNOW THAT HE SEES IT ALL. God is aware of our deeds. How would He know to give us a full reward if He didn't know all about our good works? He wouldn't know who to reward and who to punish. Our Father knows what His children are doing!

1 Corinthians 3:9 says "we are LABOURERS TOGETHER WITH GOD." What an honor! If you realize what we are doing, who wouldn't want to participate? Gaius said, *I just want to labor with God! This is GOD'S work! I want to be a part of that!* He was loyal when most of God's people were falling away, and in the midst of a treacherous time. God says He will give such a person a FULL REWARD.

The word *receive* in 3 John 8 is translated *support* in the Revised Standard Version. I think that is a better word. You could receive some of God's laborers into your house but rebuke them for doing God's work. What we should always do is SUPPORT them.

This is one of the most beautifully instructive examples in all the Bible, and it is for us today. Ezekiel spoke of the royal sons of Zadok (e.g. Ezekiel 44:15), people who are always loyal to the throne of David, regardless of the shocks and traumas. Even apostasy doesn't faze them because they know they are LABORERS WITH GOD! No other work in the world remotely compares with it!

Mr. Armstrong said, "I have always noticed that those whose hearts—and their pocketbooks as well—are really in the work of God are the ones who remain spiritual, close to God, and who are growing spiritually. And, without exception, every single member of God's Church who has ever lost interest in this WORK OF GOD—this work of carrying the gospel to the world ... begins to fall backward

spiritually. Soon such people go off into false doctrines. Their understanding is closed. They begin to believe errors and lies. They become more and more bitter, unhappy, and they either go back into the world or they go into some false offshoot movement which bears no fruit and fails totally to carry out the commission of Christ—THE WORK OF GOD!” (*Good News*, March 1960).

In another article he wrote, “But SOME of those in the Church today will grow weary with well-doing. They will brag about being the true Church—thinking they are spiritually rich, when they are, in fact, almost spiritually destitute. Because they are indifferent to the real WORK OF GOD, lukewarm, lacking in zeal, Christ will spew them out of His mouth. THEY cannot be used in His work! THEY shall lose the very salvation they boast of having unless they repent! God help *you* never to drift into the LAODICEAN Church!” (*Good News*, January 1960).

John faced similar problems and drew the same conclusions.

DIOTREPHESES

“I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not” (3 John 9).

Here is an example diametrically opposite that of Gaius. Diotrephes was a minister, a regional director. The Greek here shows that “he loves to be first.” Gaius loved to do anything he could to help the men who were serving John. Gaius put God’s servants and work *first*. DIOTREPHESES JUST LOVED TO PUT HIMSELF FIRST! When everything was falling apart in God’s Church, HE LOVED TO BE FIRST! THAT ATTITUDE CONSUMED HIM. And he probably lost his eternal life. He was eaten alive by vanity and that vulgar desire to be number one. And all Gaius wanted to do was labor with God.

As Diotrephes descended into the gutter, Gaius was exalted to the top.

“Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the

brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church” (verse 10). The *Anchor Bible Dictionary* says this about Diotrephes: He “rejected the authority of THE ELDER who wrote 3 John, attacked THE ELDER in public, forbade anyone to receive THE ELDER’s emissaries and excluded all who did”—just the opposite of Gaius!

Interestingly, the name Diotrephes means “nourished by Zeus.” Does that give you a clue about what was happening to this man? He was just like a man in God’s end-time Church. And MOST PEOPLE TODAY THINK THIS MAN OF SIN HAS SO MUCH LOVE! THEY THINK HE SETS A MARVELOUS EXAMPLE OF LOVE BECAUSE HE TALKS ABOUT IT ALL THE TIME!—AS HE BUTCHERS GOD’S LAW OF LOVE.

Diotrephes was a *type* of the end-time antichrist. His big problem wasn’t in rejecting doctrine. He lusted for power. His big problem was that he wanted the top office! THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT SATAN’S PROBLEM WAS! This evil man operates in the spirit of Satan. He may have been possessed by the devil.

John said he would set things straight “if” he came. This indicates John could have been in prison. In the midst of such a severe Church crisis, it would surely have taken something like being in prison to keep John away!

This “prating” that John describes is prophecy for what people will say about me and the PCG ministers. In this last hour we will see a lot of slanderous charges made against us. “Malicious words” in the Greek means full of labor and pain and working mischief. People inspired by the devil are LABORING to destroy God’s work.

Do you think Diotrephes thought his wretched example might get canonized in God’s Bible for all time? What a tragedy when a minister goes bad.

At times, God gets very specific. God was naming some names—good and bad. Never forget the example of Gaius—and Diotrephes.

Epilogue

From the Beginning

I BELIEVE the expression “FROM THE BEGINNING” is the very deepest in the Bible! Only a tiny few people on planet Earth understand this vision. Only people who are strongly dedicated to God can hope to have this understanding REVEALED to them!

“That which was FROM THE BEGINNING, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life” (1 John 1:1). Notice how often John repeats the phrase *from the beginning* in these epistles, and then understand *why*.

“I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is FROM THE BEGINNING. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is FROM THE BEGINNING. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. ... Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard FROM THE BEGINNING. If

that which ye have heard FROM THE BEGINNING shall *remain in you*, ye also shall CONTINUE IN THE SON, AND IN THE FATHER” (1 John 2:13-14, 24).

“He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth FROM THE BEGINNING. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. ... For this is the message that ye heard FROM THE BEGINNING, that we should love one another” (1 John 3:8, 11).

“And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had FROM THE BEGINNING, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard FROM THE BEGINNING, ye should walk in it” (2 John 5-6).

Now let’s go back and look at this expression more closely.

THE WORD

“That which was FROM THE BEGINNING, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the *Word* of life” (1 John 1:1). *Word* is capitalized. It refers to the God who became Christ. To better understand who this Word was, we need to look elsewhere.

This same Apostle John wrote the Gospel message that bears his name. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). *He is giving us GOD’S PERSPECTIVE*—the big overview. This is the most inspiring vision we can have. Please keep that in mind.

Thayer’s Lexicon defines *Word* this way: “The doctrine which he [the Father] commanded to be delivered” and the “thing spoken”—in other words, the message from the God Family.

LET ME REPEAT: JOHN WAS THE ONLY NEW TESTAMENT WRITER TO DESIGNATE CHRIST AS THE WORD! He does so *only* in four verses: John 1:1, 14; 1 John 1:1; Revelation 19:13. Let’s look at the last verse. “And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God” (Revelation 19:13). This is the Word who created all things and

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

was eternal before the angels or the universe were created. This great Being's vesture was *dipped in blood*. He became a man and shed His blood for lowly men—for YOU!

Remember the price that was paid for your sins! THIS IS WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER "FROM THE BEGINNING"—YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND DEEPLY WHO DIED FOR YOU! THIS UNDERSTANDING NEEDS THE DEEPEST KIND OF EMPHASIS IN YOUR MIND.

John is reminding us and himself WHO THIS JESUS CHRIST REALLY WAS—WHO HE WAS *FROM THE BEGINNING*. This is the Being the apostles had seen with their *eyes* and "looked upon" (*gazed upon* is a better translation), and their hands had *handled*. This was not *just* a man sent from God. THIS WAS ONE OF THE TWO GREAT MEMBERS OF THE GOD FAMILY WHO ARE ETERNAL. John wanted to make certain he NEVER FORGOT THE WHOLE WONDERFUL STORY—*FROM THE BEGINNING*.

The phrase obviously means to go back to the beginning, when Christ was on the Earth. John then points you to the *real* beginning, before the angels and the universe were created. He always takes us back to *the beginning* when there was only God and the Word.

If you listen to John, he will keep you grounded in God's dazzling inspiration! If you grasp this message FROM THE BEGINNING, it takes your breath away!

Today, if we go back to the time of Mr. Armstrong, we see that he restored all things (Matthew 17:10-11). That was the beginning of the end-time Philadelphians. But Mr. Armstrong taught us what happened *from the beginning*. He repeatedly referred to John 1:1 as the beginning, not Genesis 1:1. The PCG does the same today.

Why is it so important that we have this view? BECAUSE IT IS GOD'S VIEW! THE CREATED MUST GET THE CREATOR'S VIEW—IF THEY THEMSELVES ARE TO BECOME CREATORS! If we are to be born into God's Family, we must have God's perspective. Then the ambition of Diotrefes becomes spiritual madness! Nothing even remotely compares to what God is offering. However, it is not easy to use God's Holy

Spirit to search out the deep things. What a mind-boggling reward God has for those who understand.

If people were listening to John, they would have thought he was about to mention Christ. But instead, he discussed the *Word*. John's goal was to show to us ETERNAL LIFE—manifested in the flesh! The Word lived eternally with God and manifested Himself in the flesh. John was trying to make this mind-splitting message real! Many were losing this understanding. Otherwise, they would never have followed Diotrephes!

LUCIFER REBELS

What was Lucifer's major sin? "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth *from the beginning*. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

Satan sinned *from the beginning*. To understand what that means, we must understand that Lucifer once ruled Earth. He sinned by failing to administer the GOVERNMENT of God on Earth. If you understand that beginning, you also know Satan's history *from the beginning*.

That means you must know that he was once a great cherub who helped to cover God's throne. He was created for that responsibility. HE WAS EDUCATED IN HOW TO RULE GOD'S WAY—WITH GOD'S LOVING GOVERNMENT. No angel should have known better how to rule! He must have sat at God's feet for many years—perhaps millions. Then Lucifer was sent to Earth to apply what he had learned.

We urgently need to understand this history from the beginning—or we will be wretched and hopeless failures.

Concerning the serious WCG problems in the 1970s, Mr. Armstrong often spoke of *Satan's* attacks on God's Church. He knew who the real enemy was. Only the PCG thinks that way today. That is not a boast—it's reality!

"Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till *iniquity* was found in thee" (Ezekiel 28:15). What *iniquity*? Satan, like Diotrephes, wanted the preeminence. He wanted to govern his way—not God's way.

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

“Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee” (verse 17). He was very vain and corrupt. He thought he could rule the universe without God’s government!

Why did the Apostle John discuss Satan? Because IT WAS SATAN WHO GOT TO DIOTREPHEs WHEN HE WANTED THE PREEMINENCE.

It is also Satan who gets to the Laodicean leaders today. Satan leads the Laodicean ministers to think they can rule with a new government—this is really rank rebellion! SATAN HAS ALREADY DEMONSTRATED THAT IT WILL NOT WORK—FROM THE BEGINNING.

When Lucifer and the angels were created, God taught them about His government and law. The same law that had kept love, peace and harmony in the universe for all eternity. The angels knew how it was *from the beginning!*

WHEN LUCIFER AND ONE THIRD OF THE ANGELS REBELLED, THEY INTRODUCED HATRED AND WAR INTO THE UNIVERSE. IT HAD *NEVER* BEEN THAT WAY BEFORE!

GOD TRIED TO GET LUCIFER TO SEE AGAIN HOW IT WAS *FROM THE BEGINNING* OF THEIR CREATION AND EVEN BEFORE THEIR CREATION—THROUGHOUT ALL ETERNITY. But they refused to repent. And now they face “the blackness of darkness forever”! (Jude 1:13).

THE LAODICEAN ERA

The Laodicean era is the final era of God’s Church. Because of the Laodiceans’ sins, God has to spew them out of His mouth into the Great Tribulation. That means the *majority* of God’s own people go astray in this end time! That is why the era is labeled lukewarm. But why? How could this happen? Because they lose this “FROM THE BEGINNING” vision. Then they descend into the evil of this world.

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION of God; I know thy works,

that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:14-16). Jesus Christ embodies “the beginning of the creation of God.” This is the same message as John 1:1 and 1 John 1:1.

The Word, who became Christ, was used by God to create all things. So this again takes us back to God and the Word, to “the beginning of the creation of God”—just *before* they created the angels.

THIS INTRODUCTORY VERSE REVEALS THE VISION THE LAODICEANS HAVE LOST. They have lost their understanding of the *Word*. “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20). Christ is OUTSIDE of their lives, knocking to get inside!

Remember, these are God’s own people. At one time, Christ *was inside* their lives. They have MOVED THE GREAT GOD OUTSIDE THEIR SPIRITUAL TEMPLE. Is there any greater tragedy? Spiritually, this is the most colossal disaster of all!

This is why God says the Laodiceans are blind. They don’t see the ultimate spiritual disaster that has struck their lives.

The Laodiceans get excited about physical *goods*—things on Earth. But THEY CAN’T GET EXCITED ABOUT BEING THE BRIDE OF CHRIST AND INHERITING “ALL THINGS”!

“As many as I LOVE, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (verse 19). Men are always used to do God’s work. So God uses a small remnant to knock and rebuke, hoping the Laodiceans will repent. Some people accuse us of lacking love when we warn the Laodiceans. Just the opposite is true. We warn them of the danger of losing what they received from the beginning. We do so because God motivates us to love them. They are losing the only great vision and purpose they ever had!

These verses reveal that the Laodiceans are not easily corrected. God knocks, rebukes, and finally scourges before some of them respond.

This is a very strong warning to all of us in this end time! Are we extremely sensitive and responsive to Christ? Are

we quick to hear His rebuke? Our *eternal future* is being shaped by HOW CHILDLIKE WE ARE TOWARD THE WORD'S CORRECTION!

“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” (verse 21). This is the same vision John discussed in his other books. There is the Father, Son and “him that overcometh,” or Christ’s bride. We get to help our Husband—the Word—be the Spokesman for our Father. We will all sit on thrones and rule the Earth’s inhabitants. God is now building His Family. We must prepare today to rule over the billions of people who are to be resurrected in the future. We are called to become teachers for God. Today we must prepare to teach the world.

The last warning to the Philadelphia era was to *let no man take your crown* (verse 11). That is precisely what the Laodiceans are allowing! They have lost God’s Family government, which was given to them by Mr. Armstrong, the same government that Lucifer rejected—the same government that has kept God and the Word united in love forever. They have lost what they were taught about crowns, thrones and their calling to rule Earth as a part of God’s Family government! They have lost almost everything that means anything!

If John were here today, you would hear him discuss the Word, as well as Christ. That would give us this magnificent picture *from the beginning*. To have a strong vision of the future, WE MUST KEEP THIS MAJESTIC VISION OF THE PAST! It is the *eternal past* vision THAT KEEPS US FOCUSED ON THE ETERNAL FUTURE! The *Word* should conjure up in our minds this fabulous past. Then we can clearly see God’s plan for His Family and our part in it—FOREVER! (Request our book *The God Family Vision* for more on this inspiring subject.)

The Word was not just a man named Jesus. Or a man called Christ. He was the Word—*from the beginning*. It is that beginning John discussed in his epistles.

John did his best to make this message plain. Still, many of God’s people lost their salvation. Many saints are making the

From the Beginning

same mistakes in this end time. It is the GREATEST POSSIBLE TRAGEDY ON EARTH TODAY! Not because of any punishment they receive, but because they are *rejecting* the HIGHEST CALLING AND REWARD THAT GOD GIVES TO ANY HUMAN BEINGS EVER!

ADDITIONAL READING

The Philadelphia Church of God produces many informative and interesting publications that you may want to request. Here are a few you might consider:

The God Family Vision

Christ came to Earth to declare the Father—the God family. He didn't come here to declare Himself, as the world believes. That deception is why this world doesn't understand God's plan for mankind. They are in the dark. And so are most of God's own people! Here is the only message that will fill us with hope. It is about bringing God's government and peace to the whole universe. It is the true gospel that mankind has never understood.

Ezekiel: The End-Time Prophet

The Prophet Ezekiel will have lived in vain if God's true Church doesn't proclaim his message today! The book of Ezekiel is clearly an end-time message. It reveals specific prophetic events that are happening right now in the United States, Britain and many other English-speaking nations. Ezekiel also reveals that these nations are headed for the worst crisis ever known. But it is all a part of God's master plan to usher in the wonderful Kingdom of God. Herbert W. Armstrong taught the prophecies of Ezekiel in a general way for many years. But now, for the first time, they are fully revealed to you through this exciting book.

God Is a Family

No subject has been more misunderstood than the very nature of God. Most who claim to be followers of Christ believe God is a Trinity. Yet, how many have actually tried to prove the Trinity doctrine according to God's inspired Word—the Holy Bible? What does the Bible have to say on the subject of the Trinity? You might be surprised!

You can write for your own *free* copies of any of the literature listed above. It's all provided free of charge as an educational service in the public interest. Locate the address of the office nearest you, listed on the next page, and write for your free copies today!

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GERALD FLURRY is pastor general of the Philadelphia Church of God. He is the author of over 35 books and booklets, editor in chief of *the Philadelphia Trumpet* magazine and presenter on *the Key of David* television program. In the fall of 2001, he founded Imperial College, a liberal-arts college, in Edmond, Oklahoma. Through writing, broadcasting and public appearances, Mr. Flurry preaches the wonderful news that Jesus Christ will intervene to save mankind in this generation, as well as a message of warning that many of God's true people are going astray in this end time.