

Royal Vision

September-October 2000

FALL HOLY
DAYS ISSUE



ROYAL VISION

September-October 2000/Volume 3, Number 5

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A picture of hope A plaque specially carved, crafted and donated by a Philadelphia Church of God member. Please read the explanation in Mr. Flurry's letter, across the page. (Photo by Joel Hilliker)

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Greetings, Brethren and Co-Workers! . . .

Greetings, brethren and co-workers!

I wanted to share with you a special gift that was given to God's work by one of our members from Norway, San Abrahamsen.

Please notice again the cover for this fall holy days issue of *Royal Vision*. It is a photograph of a plaque Mr. Abrahamsen made for our Philadelphia Church of God headquarters office. We may incorporate it into the set of *The Key of David* program.

Like the seal used by the Worldwide Church of God for many years, the plaque depicts the millennial scene presented in Isaiah 11:6-8: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den."

On the bottom of the plaque is written, "The wilderness of Paran," along with the following scriptural reference: "And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them" (Deut. 33:2). Mr. Abrahamsen created the plaque to be an emblem of our leaving the place of safety as glorified spirit beings. We shall be with Christ, on our way to Jerusalem, from where we are to rule the world. Then we will help Christ usher in a time of splendid peace and joy. At that time, it will be common to see a child with a lion, wolf and lamb.

What a marvelous vision of the wonderful World Tomorrow!

Mr. Abrahamsen worked at Ambassador College for many years, making superb-quality furniture and woodwork for its many buildings. Mr. Armstrong demanded quality, and hired the best artisans he could find. What a blessing that God provided many of these workers from among the Church members—men and women whose hearts were fervently in the work.

We intend to follow that pattern as we establish our new college and headquarters facilities.

In creating this plaque, Mr. Abrahamsen used very fine materials. The wood is Me-Tai, a precious wood from New Zealand. The background is overlaid with sterling silver. The animals and the boy are overlaid with pure American eagle gold. All of these materials were donated by our Church members: the wood by Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Froelich, the silver by Gunnar and Ruth Abrahamsen, and the gold by Tim and Melody Thompson.

This plaque is a picture of hope. So much of our work must deal with this carnal, hopeless world. But we must never forget why we are doing this work and where it is leading us.

Mr. Armstrong focused the Church and anyone else who would hear his message on the World Tomorrow. That vision permeated everything he did. That was why he worked so hard to make the Ambassador colleges stunningly beautiful. The work that went into beautifying the colleges is a type of the work that will be going on all over the Earth very soon.

I wish you all a wonderful, hope-filled holy day season!

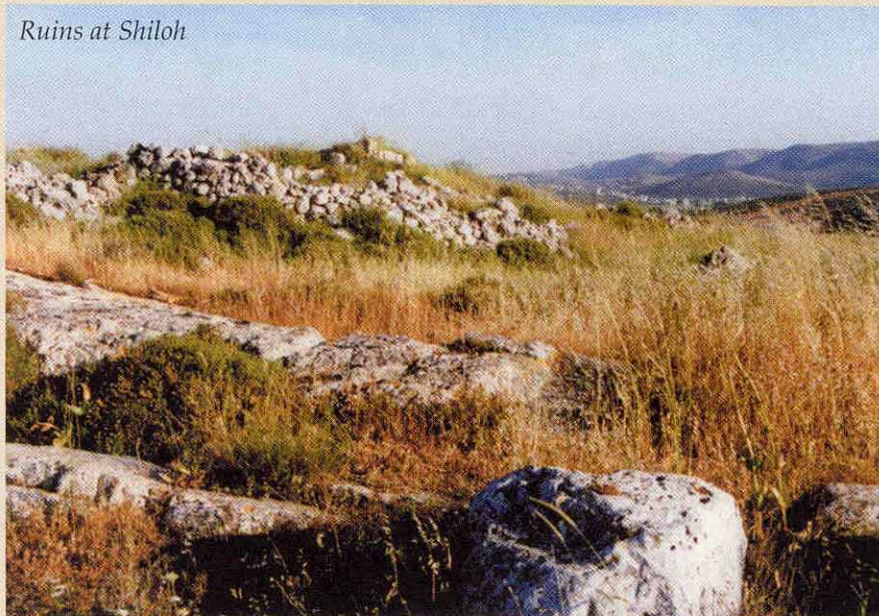


Gerald Flurry
Editor in Chief

PART FOUR

ELI'S SONS

Ruins at Shiloh



ROYAL VISION

THE STORY OF HANNAH AND HOW SHE SUCCESSFULLY REARED SAMUEL IS CONTRASTED WITH ELI AND HOW HE NEGLECTED REARING HIS SONS. THIS STORY IS PROPHETIC, AND WE MUST LEARN HOW IT APPLIES TO OUR TIME TODAY!

BY GERALD FLURRY

WHEN JOSHUA AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL ENTERED THE PROMISED Land, Joshua established the tabernacle in Gilgal. After they completely conquered the land, he moved it to Shiloh. That is also where the ark was. Shiloh is where God had all Israel look—to headquarters, to the tabernacle, to the ark. That is how God will rule the world in the Millennium. He will have people focus on headquarters.

Those who work for God at headquarters are judged more severely. In I Samuel, we see that this was the case for Eli and his family, who served at the tabernacle at Shiloh. Eli put his family above God and brought disaster upon the nation. He and his sons had the nation of Israel focus on themselves instead of God. God judged them according to their deadly sins. This example also applies to ministers today.

As we have seen in the other articles in this series, these verses are prophetic: They type the Philadelphia Church of God and the Laodicean era. The Laodiceans are making the same mistake as Eli; they are exalting men above God. The results have been extremely disastrous!

Satan is moving quickly in this end time. But God is also. Make a list of all the revelation the Philadelphia Church of God has received in its short existence, and you can see that God is moving at lightning speed. He is doing so

because He is trying to educate us. This is some of the final instruction we will receive before entering the God family. It is our responsibility to receive that education, or we will die spiritually! We must see how marvelous and wonderful it is to be with our Father and with our Husband, Jesus Christ. WE ALL NEED TO BE EDUCATED MORE DEEPLY IN THE GOD-FAMILY VISION.

This is serious business. MOST OF GOD'S PEOPLE ARE DYING BECAUSE THEY LACK THIS GOD-FAMILY VISION! Everything revolves around this vision!

Sons of Belial

Notice Eli's story in I Samuel 2. "Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; *they knew not the Lord*" (v. 12), or, as the Hebrew reads, they were *worthless*. They didn't know God.

Verses 13-14 reveal that, while performing their priestly duties, Eli's sons were taking more of the people's offerings than was their portion. Even worse, not only were they taking some of the people's portion, in verse 15 we read, "Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have soddened flesh of thee, but raw." The word "also" means *even*. So they were *even* taking from God's altar! God puts the word *even* there to show the enormity of their sin.

Eli's sons were not afraid of God, just as the Laodiceans do not fear God as Levi did (Mal. 2:4-5). They are unafraid to interfere with God's work and God's sacrificing. God says they have *robbed Him* (Mal. 3:8). They have taken people's tithes and sacrifices which should have been used to warn the world and have used them for vain purposes.

Eli's sons, and the Laodicean ministers today, have stolen from God's people AND FROM GOD. And stealing from God is far more serious.

"And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, *I will take it by force*" (I Sam. 2:16). Eli's sons were getting brutal with God's people. The people wanted to serve God. But the priests took more than their portion—by force.

This is prophecy for today. What do we do when we see this happening spiritually in God's Church? Do we just get discouraged and drop out? No! God promises to work something out. God had a plan. We often have to wait to see what God is doing. "Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord: *for men abhorred the offering of the Lord*" (v. 17). The Hebrew reads that men "abhorred the offering of the Lord," because these ministers CAUSED the people to abhor it. Have we seen this happen in God's Church?

Malachi's Message is about ministers being condemned for causing God's Church to go astray. Ministers are held more accountable. But still, we must wait for God to correct the problem—through a man like Samuel.

Ministers have a grave responsibility on their shoulders, and they will be held accountable. There are so many ways they can abuse God's work and God's people. That is what the Laodicean ministers have done. They have scattered God's people, causing a major disaster in God's Church! In Ezekiel 34, God likens them to shepherds who don't feed the flock and who allow them to be scattered.

Problems at the Top

"Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation" (I Sam. 2:22). Was God concerned about this?

Eli's sons didn't care if people saw them. And people did; and they talked. When Eli found out about it, he rebuked them only mildly: "And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress" (vv. 23-24).

The highest man in Israel at the time didn't have the courage to replace his sons. "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding *they hearkened not* unto the voice of their father, *BECAUSE THE LORD WOULD SLAY THEM*" (v. 25). Only one man—Eli—could stop his two sons. And because he failed, the whole nation began to fall apart. Jesus Christ prepared Samuel to replace Eli. Then God had Eli and his sons killed.

Anciently God had people put to death physically. Today, men die spiri-

SOME PEOPLE CALL GOD'S GOVERNMENT HARSH. But it is through government that God protects and saves His Church, and soon the whole world!

tually and eternally if they commit the unpardonable sin.

Here is an important lesson for God's Church today. Jesus Christ really is the Head of God's Church. If the physical leader fails, we must wait for Christ to correct the problem.

The Laodiceans refused to be led by the man God is using today. Our job is to warn them. But it is Christ's job to correct them.

Some people call God's government harsh. BUT IT IS THROUGH GOVERNMENT THAT GOD PROTECTS AND SAVES HIS CHURCH, AND SOON THE WHOLE WORLD! It is a government of pure love!

Men only see the present. God sees the whole picture. We must see through God's eyes. In time, the *fruits* will be obvious to everybody.

Where it says "the judge shall judge him," it should read *Elohim shall judge him*. The God family! That is what Elohim means to us, and that is what it meant to Eli. He knew about the God family. Eli knew he wasn't to put his sons above God. When we made our covenant with God, we said we would give up our mother, father, sister, brother and even our own life if it was necessary (Luke 14:26). Eli made that covenant, but he didn't live up to it.

Eli could not keep the God-family structure in his own family, despite the authority God gave him. So God vowed to slay his sons. Still, that didn't bring Eli to repentance.

If the physical leader at the top won't correct the ministers, then God will deal with them.

God's Family Government

Though the Laodiceans sit back and criticize God's family government, it is a basic truth that without this government, physical and spiritual Israel falls apart!

The gospel is the *good news* about the coming *family* of God to administer the GOVERNMENT of God. God's Church is this kingdom in embryo. It is ruled by the same government that will rule Earth in the World Tomorrow. HOW BLESSED WE ARE TO BE A PART OF A CHURCH WHERE JESUS CHRIST IS THE HEAD.

The Laodiceans chose not to administer the government of God. Some of

them will die forever because of it. That is how serious this is.

If I do not implement my role in the government of God, I know what my future is.

When His people go astray, God mercifully gives them every opportunity to repent. As we will see shortly, God gave Eli two supreme opportunities, yet he would not take them. The Laodiceans have been given all kinds of opportunities to repent, and they will not do it. Time is running out. We only have so long to get ready for God's Kingdom.

God's Solution

In the midst of these problems in Israel's priesthood, GOD WAS PREPARING A SOLUTION: "And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men" (I Sam. 2:26). Samuel was brought on the scene to replace this priesthood.

Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, had Egyptian names. Perhaps they were never converted.

"And there came a *man of God* unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house?" (v. 27). Here, a nameless prophet comes to Eli—before Samuel comes. This was the first prophet in Israel since Judges 6:8. So God was giving Israel ample warning.

Sons of Eli

The unhappy story of Eli and his sons stands in stark contrast to the inspiring story of Samuel's mother, Hannah. The opening chapters of I Samuel deal with two types of families, just as there are spiritually today. While Hannah had the proper love for her son, Eli had a kind of selfish love that became a curse to his sons.

Eli was the high priest of all Israel. God had all Israel look to this man. Every year, he would take the ephod and, on the Day of Atonement, would go into the holy of holies and do many *holy* things for God, where God's throne was—from where Samuel would hear the very voice of God!

Christ's sacrifice opened the holy of holies to all God's saints. We are kings

HAD ELI RESTRAINED HIS SONS, PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE said, "Oh, you harsh man!" So he just let them go, to the nation's harm. Which was more harsh?

and priests today (Rev. 1:6). We have access to God's throne daily.

As with the high priest, the stakes are very high for us. Eternal life is at stake for God's people today.

Eli was the top man in Israel and he wouldn't restrain his sons. He wouldn't dedicate them to God the way Hannah did her son, and God didn't take his sin lightly.

Eli wouldn't listen to God. He listened to what was popular and politically correct in Israel. Had he restrained his sons, people might have said, "Oh, you harsh man!" So he just let them go, and Israel would have been destroyed, if not for God's intervention. Which was more harsh?

"And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever" (I Sam. 3:14). It will never be purged. This is something God will keep in His heart forever.

People who have new revelation from God are those who spend time in the holy of holies—where God spoke to Israel. God is telling us, so clearly, what is going to happen today, because He wants to save us from physical—and *spiritual*—destruction. That's the love of God. Where *is* the ark today? Where are you hearing a prophecy like that given to Samuel today? Where on Earth are you hearing the God of revelation speak to the world and to the Laodiceans and to His very elect? Where *is* that holy of holies today? Where *is* the inner temple?

Samuel was a young teenager at the time he got this vision about Eli's family, and he feared to tell Eli about it. And we could fear to tell the world today about these ear-tingling events, and much worse, which are coming upon them. But Eli still had the presence of mind to ask Samuel to tell him what God showed him, saying that if Samuel didn't, those things might come upon Samuel. And, remember, Samuel was actually the second prophet to warn Eli of his problems.

Likewise in this age, there have been two messages which have gone out from two different men. Still God's family is not heeding. What is next? After the first two men come on the

scene, what happens next? What is the third event to happen to God's people today? It is THE SAME THING THAT HAPPENED TO ELI AND HIS SONS, only in a more serious *spiritual* context. This is the word of the living God!

There was a man who came and fulfilled the end-time Elijah prophecy, and then there was another work which followed him. For over 60 years, Israel has been WARNED REPEATEDLY about what God is going to do to Israel if they don't repent. If they don't begin to understand the God-family vision, they will never know the *real* solution to all their problems. With the God-family vision, they could solve every single one of them.

All of this is tied to the return of Jesus Christ, when He will restore *all things* to the world. Right now, though, His great work is giving *more revelation* to His bride. What a future we all have. What a future all Israel has.

Sons of Zadok

Hear God's answer to Eli and the Laodiceans of the end time: "And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever" (I Sam. 2:35). Commentaries agree that this is referring to Zadok the priest—the one who was utterly loyal to the throne of David from beginning to end.

In I Kings 2:26-27, we see how Abiathar the priest failed, making Zadok the sole priest. Zadok was actually the high priest, and this was 100 years after Eli died. And Abiathar fell victim to that Eli curse (vv. 25-35). But Zadok was loyal to David's throne—which Samuel helped set up.

That faithful priest was Zadok, and in the end time, God says there are spiritual sons of Zadok. "And the chamber whose prospect is toward the north is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these are the SONS OF ZADOK among the sons of Levi, *which come near to the Lord* to minister unto him" (Ezek. 40:46). Today they come near to God. They go into the holy of holies in the World Tomorrow and work right next to Christ at headquarters.

"So he measured the court, an hundred cubits long, and an hundred cubits broad, foursquare; and the altar that was before the house" (v. 47). And today we measure the temple (Rev. 11:1-2). Ezekiel 44:7 states, "In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, *and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations.*" Just as the sons of Eli did.

"And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things: but YE HAVE SET keepers of my charge in my sanctuary FOR YOURSELVES. And the Levites [the Laodicean leaders today] that are gone away far from me that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which WENT ASTRAY away from me after their idols; they shall even *bear their iniquity*" (vv. 8, 10). They are going to pay for those sins. The Laodicean churches are scattering all over the place. SOMETHING IS TERRIBLY ROTTEN IN GOD'S CHURCH TODAY. What is wrong?

Verse 12: "Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and CAUSED THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL TO FALL INTO INIQUITY; therefore have I lifted up mine hand against them, saith the Lord God, and they shall bear their iniquity." There is a *cause* for every effect, and they *caused* God's people to turn away from God. They were also ministers who rebelled and are therefore doubly guilty.

"And they shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place: but they shall BEAR THEIR SHAME, and their abominations which they have committed" (v. 13). God does not take this lightly. They won't even come near to the holy of holies in headquarters; they won't have headquarters' offices in the future. They have lost a great part of their reward.

Verse 14: "But I will make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein." This is their reward *after* they repent in the Tribulation.

"But the priests the Levites, the SONS OF ZADOK, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, *they shall come near to me* to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God" (v. 15). We were loyal as all of Israel was turning away from God. This little remnant remained loyal just

as Zadok and his family did. Therefore God promises us a great reward. We are going to have a special opportunity with our Husband.

We are the only people on the Earth today who really want *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* by Herbert W. Armstrong—the book which explains the throne of David. Is that not consistent with these prophecies? Is that not why we have the noble label “sons of Zadok”?

We see God behind all this, as Hannah saw God. We dedicate *everything* to God, because we are not looking to men. We do not look to men who sin and have weaknesses like David. We look to the Being behind David. Where is the God of David? Where is the God of Elijah—who taught about *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*? The sons of Zadok know!

If you are a son of Zadok, you will come close to God. These lessons in I Samuel about Eli and Samuel teach us how to be a priest—how to teach people spiritually. These verses in Ezekiel show the value of being a faithful priest to God. Read also verses 16-24.

God prophesied in I Samuel 2:35 that He would raise up a faithful priest—and that applies to the *spiritual* sons of Zadok in the end time. God has done it, just as He said. They will be faithful to that vision, “in that day,” about the throne of David, “in that day.” All the way through, they stay with the throne of David because they see God behind it, behind Elijah, behind this message.

Jesus Christ wants us to keep in mind that great God-family vision. We are to be kings and priests, and we will teach the whole world these spiritual lessons. Today God has restored all things in the Church, but He will soon use us to restore all things in the world under His direction. *That’s why the first-fruits are here.* That’s why it’s so important that we remain loyal.

When God talks about Zadok in I Samuel 2:35, He uses the word “forever.” If you will remain a faithful priest, you will be *FOREVER* in the headquarters of God’s great work in the soon-coming World Tomorrow, when God’s family will be introduced to the world to restore all things and teach them about the *God-family vision*.

A Breaking-Through Vision

I Samuel 3:1 states, “And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord

IMAGINE WHAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE IF THERE HAD been no *Malachi’s Message*—no little book to *break through* that confusing morass.

was *precious* [should read *rare*] in those days; *there was no open vision.*” The Hebrew reads that there was “no breaking-through vision.”

Everything in Israel revolved around the tabernacle, which is a *type* of God’s Church today. All of our work revolves around headquarters.

The nation of Israel became discouraged because Eli’s sons were sinning. Many of the people wouldn’t even come up to Shiloh where the tabernacle was.

This is essentially what happened when the Laodicean leaders rebelled against God in this end time. Our people saw the very bad examples of the leaders. God’s work began to falter and soon failed.

How can we overemphasize the importance of God’s loyal leaders?

When Mr. Armstrong died, the Laodicean leaders began to change all of the major doctrines. The revelation God gave through Mr. Armstrong was being suppressed, and our members saw no new revelation. Over 95 percent of God’s people eventually turned away.

Imagine what it would have been like if there had been no *Malachi’s Message*—no little book to *break through* that confusing morass. What would we have done? How would we have known where God was revealing His truth? We wouldn’t!

The Laodiceans are terribly divided now, and it is because they don’t have any *breaking-through vision*. We are blessed to see what we see because GOD gave us a breaking-through vision.

In the midst of these problems in ancient Israel, where was God? Why was He not doing anything? Well, He was doing *something*—just not the way people expected. While the priesthood was in chaos, God had been working with Samuel the entire time. Likewise, God had been revealing the little book to me for many months before anyone else knew about it. God was doing something. He was working things out. The revelation was *breaking through*, though no one knew about it.

Malachi’s Message is still breaking through. There are several counterfeits of this book, because Satan wants to destroy the *link* between the Elijah and God’s work today. If he can do that, he

can destroy God’s *break-through vision* and condemn the people to *BLINDNESS*.

When the headquarters leadership began changing what Mr. Armstrong taught, there was a span of time, however short, when there was *NO VISION BREAKING THROUGH*. God’s people were wondering, *What is wrong? Where is the God of Elijah and revelation? Why don’t you do something, God?*

When God was revealing *Malachi’s Message* to me, I didn’t know where it was leading. But I decided to have weekly Bible studies with my congregation in 1987 and 1988, as headquarters did. (Most field congregations had them bi-weekly.) I especially felt I needed it, because that was the time when God was revealing a lot from the book of Amos to me as well. Those Bible studies on Amos were not going over very well with the congregation, though they did shake a few people. So there was a time when I was preparing weekly Bible studies and sermons. Apart from occasional messages from my assistant John Amos, I was doing most of the speaking myself. God was preparing me to get more deeply into the Scriptures. That is where we all need to be when spiritual crises hit. We need to know what God says to do, because you cannot get through a crisis like this when you lack closeness to God. He was preparing me.

If you are close to Him, He will prepare you and work quietly behind the scenes to ensure you are ready for the crises that you must face.

The Lamp of God

“And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; And ere the *lamp of God* went out in the temple of the Lord, where the *ark of God* was...” (I Sam. 3:2-3). There is an abundance of symbolism here that we must grasp. In these end-time prophecies, we must keep the focus on the God family.

The lamp was about to go out in God’s end-time temple, or Church. We must keep the lamp, God’s work, going with our prayers and our offerings. This is about the lamp and the ark of ELOHIM—of the *God family*. Our job, as

WE WERE BORN TO BECOME MEMBERS OF THE GOD family. We were created to be God!

God's family, is to shine the *God-family lamp*—our message—into the world as brightly as we can. It is the *only* light calling people out of this world.

Why "lamp of God," or *Elohim*? It's a noun, plural in form, like family, church or group. *Elohim* is the most common word for God in the Old Testament.

God taught Israel that they were His family—referring to the nation as a "son" (Deut. 8:5) and Himself as a Father (Mal. 1:6; Jer. 31:9).

We are also taught about Father and Son in the New Testament (Luke 1:30-33; John 1).

We are to be born into the God family. Now we can better see why it is the "lamp of *Elohim*"! THIS GOD FAMILY IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD! WE WERE BORN TO BECOME MEMBERS OF THE GOD FAMILY. WE WERE CREATED TO BE GOD! (Gen. 1:26).

None can come to God unless the Spirit of the Father draws him (John 6:44). This family light begins with being begotten by the Father. Not even Christ can fulfill that role. Everybody has a specific job in God's family.

We have no light in us unless we have this God-family vision. That is why the Laodiceans are blind and in darkness (Rev. 3:14-19). They have lost this vision (v. 21).

We are also taught about "the ark of *Elohim*." The ark is a symbol of God's throne. The family (or kingdom) of God is going to administer God's law. That is the gospel message!

The *ark of God* depicts the *God-family rule*: On top of the ark was a replica of God's throne between the two cherubim; inside was the manna, the law and the rod of Aaron (depicting God's government). God spoke from the ark to ancient Israel, and He speaks to us today through revelation!

God wants to deepen our conversion. *Knowledge* is not conversion. It must be used, however, to produce conversion—to make us a part of the God-family government.

Knowing God Intimately

"And it came to pass at that time, when...Samuel was laid down to sleep; That the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. Now Samuel did not yet *know* the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him" (1 Sam. 3:2-5, 7). The word *know* means to know in an intimate

way; it is used to denote sexual relations in the Hebrew. So Samuel would get to *know* God very intimately. He would know God through revelation, and would then take that revelation to Israel as a warning.

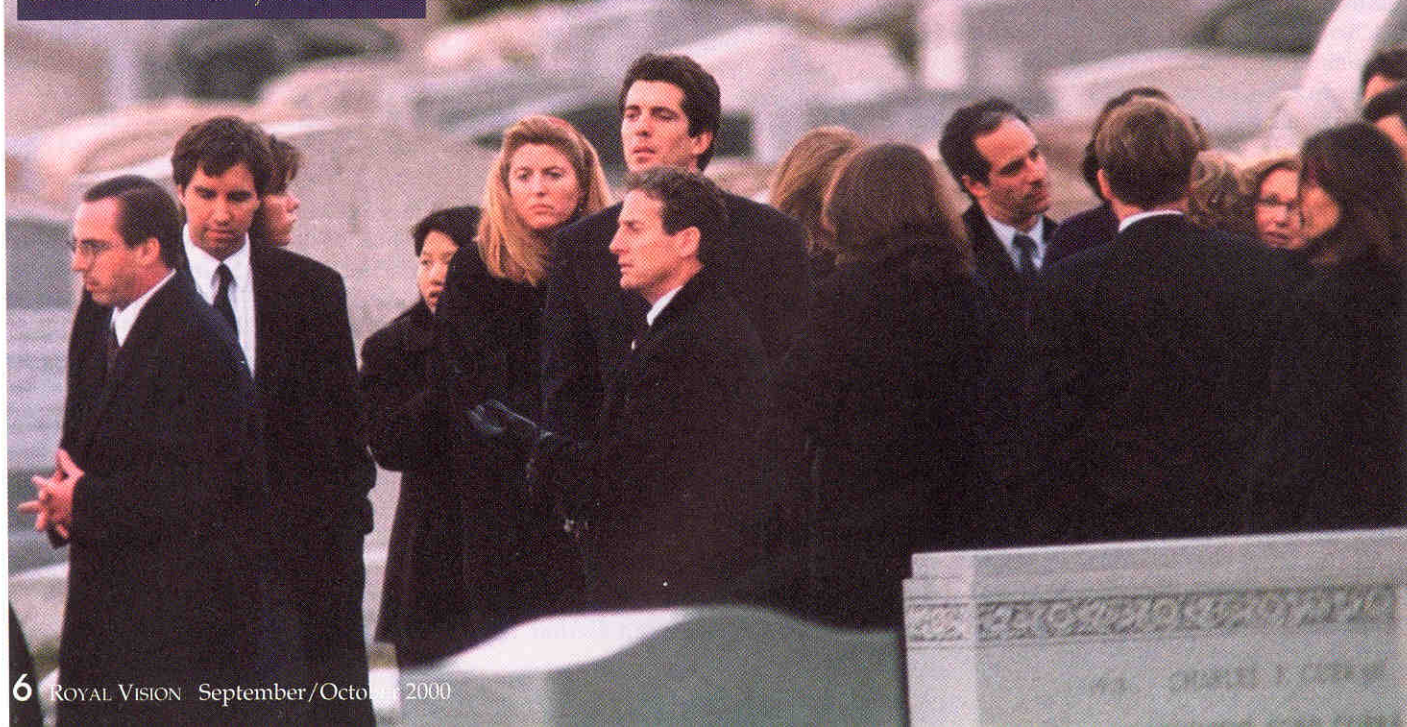
Mr. Armstrong had an intimate relationship with God too—in a way we do not have. Presently, I am intimate with God in a way no one else is directly; you are, however, indirectly. This has to do with the man to whom God is giving the *revelation*. God gives the revelation to a man and has the Church look to that man. Then God holds that man very accountable. Because it is *through* him and the revelation God gives him that we get to know God intimately.

How well do you know God? How well do you *want* to know God?

God gave Samuel revelation concerning what He would do to Eli and his sons. "And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. IN THAT DAY I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end" (vv. 11-12).

IN THAT DAY, which refers to the end time, God will perform these things. It will make the ears of all Israel *tingle*! This is a prophecy against a *physical family* in Israel—the *physical* descendants of Eli. What is happening to this physical family in Israel will make even carnal people's ears tingle!

FAMILY CURSE *The Kennedys in 1997 at Michael's funeral*



Eli's family was the "first family" of Israel. If God was going to use his physical descendants to make our ears tingle, wouldn't God use a well-known family in Israel? And this family would probably be high in the ranks of Israel's government, as Eli's family was. God doesn't just bring disaster upon this one family to wake them up. He does it to make *all the ears* tingle in Israel. He wants to awaken all Israel!

After the tragic death of John Kennedy Jr. in 1999, one survey showed that 26.4 percent of people thought the Kennedy family was under a curse. Could the Kennedy family be under a curse because they are Eli's descendants? I don't know. But such a curse is prophesied to afflict a family of Israel in this end time!

What other family has received so many curses? I know of none.

The July 26, 1999, *Newsweek* featured the Kennedy death with this cover headline: "Again!" That issue's lead article, titled "Charmed, Yet Cursed," listed all the tragedies to strike the Kennedy family. Here are a few of the examples:

1944: Joseph Kennedy killed on a secret World War II flight-bombing mission over England.

1948: Kathleen Kennedy-Hardington is killed in a French air crash.

1963: President John F. Kennedy assassinated.

1964: On his way to the Massachusetts Democratic State Convention, Ted Kennedy is severely injured in a private plane crash.

1968: Robert F. Kennedy is assassinated in Los Angeles after winning California primary.

1969: Ted's car crashes on Chappaquiddick Island, killing Mary Jo Kopechne and threatening Kennedy's presidential aspirations. HE SAID LATER THAT HIS FAMILY SEEMED TO BE UNDER SOME KIND OF A CURSE.

1973: Teddy Jr. has his cancerous right leg amputated when he is 12.

1973: Joe Jr. has a Jeep accident, paralyzing Pamela Kelly, a friend, from the waist down.

1984: David, 28, dies of a drug overdose in a Palm Beach hotel room.

1997: While playing ski football on an Aspen mountain, Michael, 39, hits a tree and dies.

1999: John F. Kennedy Jr., Caroline Besset-Kennedy and her sister, Lauren, crash their single-engine

ISRAEL IS ABOUT TO COME TO AN END! PEOPLE CAN scoff, but God will bring them down as He did Eli and his sons.

plane near Martha's Vineyard. All three are killed.

God wants to make Israel's ears tingle, because He wants to save them. He uses this family curse to awaken all Israel to the national curses about to strike them.

The Destruction of Israel

The word *tingle* is used only two other places in the Old Testament: II Kings 21:12 and Jeremiah 19:3. Both of these prophetic books refer to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. That destruction is only a *type* of what is coming upon all Israel in these latter days. The family of Israel is about to be destroyed; that is more than just one family. That is the greatest crisis ever to occur in Israel!

That is the message we must deliver to them. God begins it "in that day," but He also says He will "make an end," or He will stop it.

This cursed family could stop the curse if they turned to God, deeply repentant.

In Jeremiah, God prophesies that all Israel will be destroyed. In Jeremiah 31:15, Rachel, the mother of the nations of Israel, is crying for her family and refuses to be comforted. God wants us to warn Israel about this terrible catastrophe while there is still time!

I believe the Kennedy-family curse is a warning from God of what is about to afflict all Israel. It makes our ears tingle. It should also cause us to repent.

It is even a stronger warning to God's own ministers today—those men who serve in the tradition of Eli. It is time all men heeded God's message. Are we so steeped in deception and lust that we can't be reached with God's warning message?

ISRAEL IS ABOUT TO COME TO AN END! People can scoff, but God will bring them down as He did Eli and his sons. God told Eli and his family that He would slay them, and He did. That is what He has told all Israel too. If they don't repent, He will do it!

God warned the nations of Israel for many years while Mr. Armstrong was alive. Now, through us, He is giving them one final warning before He sends the horrendous Tribulation. We

cannot take this message lightly. We must have the power of God working in our lives so we can deliver this message to Israel.

"For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (I Sam. 3:13). Eli KNEW. That is the same word used previously—to *know intimately*. Eli knew about *Elohim's* revelation, yet he would not restrain his sons. For that reason, God said He would bring a curse on Eli's family *forever*. That applies physically and spiritually. The Laodiceans KNEW what we know. They have a memory that the world lacks—the memory of what Mr. Armstrong taught them. Yet they wander back into the world, after *knowing* the great God. What a tragedy! And it could easily happen to us.

Lessons From Shiloh

"And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.... And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground" (I Sam. 3:10, 19). We must follow Samuel's example and never let God's words fall to the ground in our personal lives or in this work.

"And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. And the Lord *appeared again* in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord" (vv. 20-21). God appeared to Samuel in some form or another in verse 10—perhaps just a sliver of Him. Here, God appeared to him for a second time. These verses make more vivid the reality that we are getting closer and closer to seeing God.

This second time, God appeared in Shiloh. God uses Shiloh to teach us something in the end time. In those days, the whole nation was focused on Shiloh, just as God's people were spiritually focused on Pasadena while Herbert Armstrong was alive. The word *Shiloh* means "rest." That is what Pasadena was when Mr. Armstrong

SHILOH WAS NOT LEFT "WITHOUT AN INHABITANT" anciently. This is prophecy for the near future!

was there. That was where the ark was. That is where the house of God was.

Today, though that house is still standing, there is no spiritual truth pouring out of Pasadena as there used to be. What a heinous sin those ministers committed. Is God harsh when He deals with them? If God puts them out of their misery for all eternity, is that bad? God wants to bring us into eternal glory, and He gives us every opportunity to achieve that. But He will not have rebels sitting at headquarters with Him.

In ancient Israel, when the ark left Shiloh, it never returned to that city again. Jeremiah 26 mentions Shiloh in an end-time prophecy. This is also about God's Church in the latter days: "Thus saith the Lord; Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word.... If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you, To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, but ye have not hearkened; Then will I make this house [the Laodicean house] like Shiloh, and will make this city [Jerusalem, a type of all Israel] a curse to all the nations of the earth" (Jer. 26:2-6).

If you visit Shiloh today, you notice there are massive boulders strewn everywhere. You can see there was glory there at one time—God appeared to Samuel twice in Shiloh—but now it lies in total destruction. Why? Because GOD destroyed it. And He promises that He will make the Laodicean Church just like Shiloh! They are already that way *spiritually*! God's law was set before them by Herbert W. Armstrong. They had God's government, but rejected it. Now they have no man to implement God's law. They are no longer fed spiritually.

This prophecy applies physically as well—to the Laodiceans AND TO ALL ISRAEL. Right now, the nations of Israel are impressive in many ways to the world. But soon they will be in ruins!

"Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house

shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate WITHOUT AN INHABITANT? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord" (v. 9). Understand: This is not ancient history; this has NEVER happened! SHILOH WAS NOT LEFT "WITHOUT AN INHABITANT" anciently. This is prophecy for the near future!

David wrote about the tragic fall of Shiloh: "For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men; And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand. He gave his people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance. The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage. Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation" (Ps. 78:58-64). God abandoned Shiloh. There were no more weddings or rejoicing of any type. The people were so deeply discouraged, they could cry no more!

We cannot be casual about these prophecies. We need to be more urgent than ever. Israel will be destroyed very soon! We know what Shiloh looks like; we made four television programs there on two separate visits. Therefore we know what Israel shall look like—without inhabitant! When we hear this message, we must become MORE URGENT PEOPLE.

Satan's Urgent Wrath

"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" (Rev. 12:12). Satan has been cast down and is charged to the brim with foaming wrath! He is in a fit of rage; he has nothing to lose. He has so little time left.

We must make the most of this "short time" by doing God's work more urgently. This verse is about a time PRIOR TO the Great Tribulation. If we do not let God's Spirit stir us, then we will be

doing what the Laodiceans are doing: Their love is waxing cold, because so much iniquity abounds (Matt. 24:12). All Israel is bathing in iniquity, shaking their fists at God, and the Laodiceans are following right along.

Meanwhile, the beast power is rising quickly, and it will do to Israel what has never been done to any nation. Who will warn Israel?

We need this God-family vision to help us deliver this frightening message. God is preparing His family. We have a difficult job to do.

"And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child" (v. 13). When Satan was cast down, he tore God's Church apart. He persecuted God's Church so severely that 95 percent of them rebelled against God. God allowed these attacks because He wanted to see what kind of character His people had built and how much they really learned from His apostle.

Satan's number-one target is the FAMILY OF GOD! He will do anything He can to set traps for us and tear us apart. The bad news in this story is *not* that those who rebelled will have to suffer through the Tribulation; it's that some of them will not be in God's FAMILY!

But God will protect us, if we stay loyal to Him, as the sons of Zadok did: "And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent" (v. 14).

Eli's End

In I Samuel 4:1-2, Israel lost 4,000 men in a battle with the Philistines. The defeat crushed their morale. "And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to day before the Philistines?... " (v. 3). They could not understand why this was happening in Israel—why everything was falling apart.

They were asking the right question. If we keep losing battles in our personal lives, we must truthfully ask ourselves why. There must be a reason. Yes, we all have our trials, but we shouldn't be losing battles against our enemy.

Notice the Israelites' response in verse 3: "...Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies."

God spoke to Samuel from the ark. It was the most sacred object in Israel. THE ARK WAS NOT THERE JUST AS A PHYSICAL SYMBOL. GOD SPOKE FROM THERE!

THE PHILADELPHIA CHURCH OF GOD IS NOT HERE JUST AS A SYMBOL TODAY—GOD SPEAKS FROM HERE! We are the inner court, where God dwells.

The spiritual ark is here today. God gives His revealed prophecy through me and this Church.

God speaks from the ark of the *covenant*—from that throne between the cherubim—to His Church. He speaks to His COVENANT people—those who have been loyal to this covenant based on the government of God. We have made a COVENANT with the Lord of hosts (v. 4)—the God of all the angels, the God of all the universe. He is our military leader in the many battles we face. We are in the most intense warfare ever with Satan and his demons. They are trying with all their might to destroy us. Most of God's people have been conquered because they didn't keep the covenant. God wants us to win those battles, but we must keep our part of the covenant if we are to do so (Luke 14:26-27).

After Israel's defeat at the hand of the Philistines, Hophni and Phinehas went to fetch the ark. THEY WERE STANDING BESIDE IT WHEN THEY DIED. They thought they were righteous, standing there by the ark, being God's leaders. But they died by the ark because of their sins.

The ark included two stone tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them. Also there was Aaron's rod (a type of God's government through a man). The last item was the golden pot of manna. The mercy seat was on top of the ark, symbolizing God's throne.

Where do you find the Ten Commandments and God's government today? Who is fed spiritual manna, or revelation? Only God's Philadelphia Church.

The covenant was based on what was in the ark—God's law and government. This is how God rules from the mercy seat. Those who submit are fed spiritual manna (John 6).

The Laodiceans can self-righteously act as if they are obeying God, but it's *easy* to disprove them! That's why I'm sure many of them will repent so quickly in the Tribulation.

We have a choice today. God does not force this on us. That reveals His love. We are in a marriage covenant. Christ wants to marry us. But He won't force His bride to obey. We must return His love.

CAN WE UNDERSTAND HOW DEEPLY GOD YEARNs FOR a family? Can we not overcome discouragement?

Notice verse 10 of I Samuel 4: "And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, AND THEY FLED EVERY MAN INTO HIS TENT: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen." The Israelites fled the battle. They didn't even fight any more.

Joseph Tkach Jr. has said that 40,000 of the Worldwide Church of God's members have dropped out, and they are not doing anything. They've been beaten. They've lost the battles, and they're tired of fighting. If you have this problem, you'd better deal with it or you will be conquered by the devil.

There was a time when humanity became so bad that God was sorry He created man (Gen. 6). So God flooded the Earth and destroyed all mankind, save eight people. Then God saw the way man became in Sodom and Gomorrah and He destroyed those cities (Gen. 19). God used both of these events as types of the end time (Luke 17:26, 28). MAN BECAME WORSE THAN EVEN GOD EXPECTED! Look at how shocked we have been by what the Laodiceans are doing today. Once you get away from God, there is no telling what human nature will do.

The God-Family Plan

Consider what a sacrifice God and the Word made that we can have our sins wiped out and actually be reconciled to God, that we may have the opportunity to enter the God family. For the sake of the God-family plan, Christ came down to this Earth and experienced every brutality imaginable to a human being—and all the while He had to be perfect or He would have lost it all, and then God would have had NO family whatsoever.

GOD SERIOUSLY WANTS A FAMILY! He sent Jesus Christ here to prove that. The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. And even when He was facing weakness, wanting to give up, Christ said to His Father, *Not My will, but Your will be done*. He wanted to do the Father's will. He really set us an example. This family vision got Him through everything.

If the Father and Christ can do all that, can't we do our part? This is a

family endeavor. Look what God has done for us. Look what Jesus Christ went through. God was determined to have either a created family or a born family, that is with the angels or by recreating Himself through mankind. Two thirds of the angels have remained loyal, but they won't be in God's family. If we choose to turn away from this incredible potential, then we can die forever, and we don't have to suffer any more.

CAN WE UNDERSTAND HOW DEEPLY GOD YEARNs FOR A FAMILY?

Can we not overcome discouragement? People who are conquered by negative thinking are being beaten down by Satan, and they are not using the power of God. There is no way we can ever make it beyond this life without the POWER OF GOD.

Understand what God has put on the line *for you!* Does God love you? He not only *says* so, His actions prove it. He sent His only begotten *Son* to suffer and *suffer* and then *die* for you.

Doesn't He have a right to ask us to endure our trials?

Eventually, Israel got the ark back (I Sam. 7). After 40 years, Samuel led Israel back to Ebenezer, right where they lost it, and he used the power of God to conquer the Philistines and get the ark back. And then he set up a huge stone and labeled it *The Stone of Help*.

We have a Stone of Help. Israel should *never* have lost the ark. Samuel got Israel back on track to where they had the ark and many other things again. Samuel brought them back into that covenant with God, and God gave them HIS POWER.

Let us remember the covenant we have made with God—our Stone. Let's get our minds on His work and off ourselves. Let's love God and His family today—and also His *potential family*, those billions and billions of people who will be resurrected on the Last Great Day. Let's give our lives to the God family and yearn for a family as God does. If we can really grasp that and think like God, there won't be anything that can stop us. We will be there to help bring all of those people into the glorious wonderful and majestic family of God. ❖