

Is Obedience to God's LAW Required for Salvation?

The fat has really hit the fan -- Joe Tkach, leader of the Worldwide Church of God, has thrown down the gauntlet to all current members and ministers: He has declared that the New Covenant effectively does away with much of the Law, it is now all right to work on the Sabbath, and "tithing" is voluntary. At the same time, he says he is not claiming the law is 'abolished' -- but parts of it are abolished. Now it is all right to work on the Sabbath day if think you should. Now it is all right to eat "unclean meats" -- including shrimp, oysters, crabs, pork, *everything!* The sins of the spiritual "Amorites" have come to the full. Apostasy has now reached its peak. The "apostasy roller coaster" has reached its summit -- it's all "down-hill" from here on!

But is Joseph Tkach right? Was Herbert Armstrong, founder of the Worldwide Church of God, and its leader for over 50 years, so utterly and tremendously wrong? Is tithing, Sabbath observance, and obedience to God's Law necessary for salvation? Just what is meant by the "New Covenant"? Let's take a new look at this question -- and answer it, once and for all! Your SALVATION could well lie in the balance! If you follow Joseph Tkach, and he is *wrong*, you will perish in the flames of Gehenna Fire! The stakes are enormous. Let's make our salvation and our calling and election sure (II Pet.1:10)!!!

William F. Dankenbring

In the December 21, 1994 *Pastor General's Report*, Joseph Tkach wrote to the ministers of the Worldwide Church of God, asking, "Are we an old covenant Church, or a new covenant Church?" He then quoted Herbert Armstrong who wrote in a 1978 article that "The old covenant is ended." However, he then went on to say, "We have overlooked the implications of this new covenant," and went on to disagree with the fundamental and most essential teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong concerning the Laws of God, the Sabbath day, tithing, and a whole raft of "laws" which Joseph Tkach insisted belong to the "Old Covenant" and not to the "New Covenant." He spoke on this subject in Atlanta, Georgia, Big Sandy, Texas, Pasadena, California, and then, on January 7, 1995, he announced that this also means that the "dietary laws" of the Old Testament are included in the laws which have been abolished and done away by the New Covenant! So

now, for the first time, members of the Worldwide Church of God are encouraged to eat "unclean meats" -- such as shrimp, pork, lobsters, clams, oysters, and so forth!

Word has it that the people actually applauded when they heard these relaxations of the former identifying characteristics of the Worldwide Church of God. And no doubt, Church watchers in the Protestant world, such as "Watchman Expositor," are delighted, and jumping with glee, at the complete roll-over and about-face of the Worldwide Church of God in its doctrinal teachings and 180 degree changes in direction and observance.

In this article, I want to carefully examine some of the statements and claims that JWT made in his article, and compare his conclusions with Scripture. You be the judge. However, to preface my remarks, let me remind everybody that the apostle Paul warned that in the "last days perilous times shall come" (II Tim.3:1), and that during these times men shall be "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (verse 7), and that "men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" would "arise" (v.8), and that in these last days "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (v.13).

Also, speaking of the "last days" (II Thess.2:1-2), Paul warned that there shall "come a falling away (apostasy from the truth) first" (v.3), and then the "man of sin," the "son of perdition" would be revealed. Paul also warned that the "mystery of iniquity" or lawlessness was already at work, even in his day, and would become very powerful a pull in the last days (v.7-8). He warned that this would be a period of great instability, and deception, "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (II Thess.2:10).

The Covenant with Abraham

Concerning the covenant with Abraham, which Tkach discusses first, he says, "The first thing we notice about the covenant with Abraham is that it was *unconditional*" (p.2, PGR). To back up this statement, he quotes Genesis 15:6 where we read -- "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

Tkach claims that means the covenant God made with Abraham was "unconditional." But is that true? Is that what this verse really says? Not at all. God's Word does not contradict itself (John 10:35). All Scripture is truth (John 17:17). The truth is, there were MANY conditions to the covenant God made with Abraham. Let's notice the proof!

In Genesis 12:1 God provides the first condition. He said to Abram: "*Get thee out of thy country . . . unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee . . .*" (Gen.12:1-2). We read, "So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him" (v.4). Notice! He *obeyed God's command!* This was most definitely a conditional promise. If Abraham had not left the land of Babylon, he would have disqualified and not received the promise! There can be NO QUESTION but that there were clear cut conditions to God's promise!

But notice. Further conditions are spelled out in Genesis 17. God says to Abraham, "I am the Almighty God: Walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant with thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly . . . This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised" (Gen.17:1-10).

Notice again -- there are plain and clear conditions to this covenant, contrary to Joseph Tkach's bold faced "lie." Number one -- Abraham is to walk before God, that is, in His presence, conscious of His presence; and number two -- he is to become "perfect." How do we become "perfect" in God's sight? The Hebrew word is *tamiym*, and means "entire," or "without blemish, complete, full, perfect, sound, without spot, undefiled, upright, whole" (Strong's Concordance, #8549). I ask you sincerely -- does this sound as if there were "no conditions" to God's covenant with Abraham? Such a statement as Joseph Tkach makes is utter nonsense! The Word of God disproves it totally!

Furthermore, one of the conditions God made to Abraham was that the male children of him and his descendants were to be circumcised. That is another "condition." But there is much more "proof." In Genesis 22, God commanded Abraham to take his son Isaac and sacrifice him for a burnt offering on Mount Moriah (Gen.22:1-2). We find that Abraham got up early to obey God's command, and traveled to the appointed spot (vs.3-10), and proceeded to obey God, when God interrupted him and told him it was not necessary, but that this was a "test" of obedience (verses 11-12). He said, "For now I know that you fear God" (v.12). God then said, "For *because thou hast done this thing*, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That is blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thee . . ." (vs.15-18). Notice -- God confirmed His promise, originally made in Genesis 12, and even added to it, *because of Abraham's actions, his works, which demonstrated his faith!*

God later confirmed this promise to Abraham's son Isaac, saying that He would bless and multiply his children, and make them a blessing throughout the world, and that the Messiah would come through his progeny (Gen.26:1-4) -- why? "*Because that Abraham OBEYED MY VOICE, and kept my charge, my COMMANDMENTS, my STATUTES, and MY LAWS*" (Gen.26:5).

Read that again! How clear! God's promises were definitely CONDITIONAL. He blessed Abraham "BECAUSE" -- literally for the reason that -- Abraham obeyed Him, kept his charge, as well as His commandments, and statutes, and laws! Does this sound like Abraham was justified by "faith" alone?

Faith alone was not enough. Abraham's faith was the kind of faith that led him to OBEY GOD and keep His Word faithfully. It was a "faithful faith." It was a faith evidenced by complete and total and enduring OBEDIENCE to God in every way!

The apostle James points out this principle in the second chapter of his epistle. He wrote, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is DEAD, being ALONE. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without works, and I will shew thee my faith BY my

works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou not know, O vain man, that *faith without works is dead*? Was not Abraham our father justified by WORKS, and by works was faith made perfect [whole, complete]? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness" (James 2:17-23). So James concluded, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, *and not by faith only*" (verse 24).

James, then, answers the question what kind of faith Abraham had, that God counted it for "righteousness" -- it was FAITH ACCOMPANIED BY WORKS OF OBEDIENCE!

Do you see how deceitful and manipulative Joseph Tkach's article is? How seductive and clever and disingenuous and specious his reasoning is? He goes on to say, "God made some dramatic promises to Abraham, and they were *unconditional* promises" (page 2, near bottom). This is simply the BIG LIE technique. Tell a lie big and bold and brass enough, and people will assume it is true! It is very clever. Such lies have deceived the whole world including the vast, overwhelming majority of Christendom (Rev.12:9). Jesus Christ warned that the end-time deception would be so powerful that "if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt.24:24).

Are you deceived? Are you "taken in" and captured by clever manipulation of words and the "big lie" technique?

The Covenant at Mount Sinai and the New Covenant

In the next section of his article, Tkach discusses the covenant God made with Israel at Mount Sinai. He writes, "The Ten Commandments form the *core* of the Sinaitic, or old covenant, but the covenant also included all of Exodus 20-24" (p.5). Of course, this covenant was reaffirmed and expanded in the book of Deuteronomy, and included the laws concerning the Sanctuary, the Levitical priesthood, and the whole "Torah" or five books of Moses.

Next, Tkach contrasts the Old Covenant, made at Sinai, with the New Covenant we have through Jesus Christ our Lord. He quotes Hebrews 8:5-6. Paul here declares that the priests of the Levites "serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. But now hath he [Christ] obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a BETTER COVENANT, which was established upon better promises."

There is no problem here. We agree completely. But now let's read the next few verses.

"For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For *finding fault with them [that is, the PEOPLE, who continually broke the covenant!]*, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a NEW COVENANT with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; *because they continued not in my covenant*, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will *put my LAWS into their mind, and write them in their hearts . . .*" (Heb. 8:7-10, KJV).

So far so good. Where then does Tkach begin to deviate from the truth? At this very point! Notice! God says in the New Covenant He will write His LAWS -- that is, the LAWS and COMMANDMENTS which were in the Old Covenant, the very same laws -- in the minds and hearts of His people! This would be done through the indwelling Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32; Rom.8:1-2). The Old Covenant could not work because the people rebelled -- they were carnal minded. And, as Paul wrote, "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the LAW of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom.8:7). Therefore, in order for our minds to be made "subject" or "submissive" to the Laws of God, so we can and will obey God and keep His laws, God gives those who truly repent of their sins HIS HOLY SPIRIT -- THE VERY POWER OF GOD -- God has given us the Spirit of "power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Tim.1:6-7). The Spirit in us enables us to obey God and keep His commandments (Rom.8:9-14).

However, Tkach twists this vital fact. The New Covenant involves "better promises," *not "better laws"!* The Holy Spirit is one of those "better promises" which Jesus Christ promised (John 14:16-17; 16:7,13; 7:37-39). It is called "the Spirit of promise" (Acts 2:33,39; Gal.3:2; Eph.1:13). The promise of eternal life in the kingdom of God, as opposed to physical and national blessings in this present age, is also one of the "better promises" (John 3:16; Titus 1:2; I Tim.6:17-19; II Tim.1:1,10).

But Tkach then begins to alter the truth -- to pervert the understanding of the New Covenant. He writes that the New Covenant revolves around Christ, which is certainly true. He then says, "He [Christ] *is* the new covenant" (p.7). This is a perversion of the truth! The New Covenant is that God will put His Laws in our hearts and minds (Heb.8:8). Not just some "new laws" later given by Christ, but GOD'S LAWS -- the very Ten Commandments, statutes, and all the moral, ethical, spiritual, and civil laws which God gave to Israel! Although the old covenant is "ready to vanish away," and will be replaced by the New Covenant, the basis of the New Covenant is the same spiritual LAWS which were the foundation of the Old Covenant! Any changes which Christ made to those laws in the old covenant are spelled out specifically in the New Testament, particularly in the sermon on the Mount (Matt.5-7).

Tkach states that the New Covenant IS Christ. That is not true. The New Covenant is Christ-centered, yes; but it involves our receiving the Holy Spirit so God can write His LAWS within our very hearts and minds, making His LAWS become an internal, integral PART of the very core of our being! It involves the full personality and character of Christ being FORMED WITHIN us (Gal.4:19; Rom.12:1-2; 13:14).

Tkach then goes on to suggest that all we have to do is "believe" God's promises, and like Abraham, our mere "belief" will be counted as righteousness. But he does not point out, as James the apostle does, that our "faith" must be the same kind as that of Abraham and be evidenced by and proven and demonstrated by OUR OBEDIENCE to God's charge, His commandments, His statutes, and His LAWS (Gen.26:5; James 2:8-12, 14-26).

Doing Away with God's Law

Tkach then writes:

"The new covenant is not simply a restatement of the old laws. We have already seen in Hebrews 8 that the old covenant is obsolete. Some of its laws have been discarded. Some of its laws have been changed. Some have been continued, and others have been added. The new covenant . . . removes some of the laws of the old" (p.8).

Here is the crux of the problem! Is this statement entirely true? Or is it a part of Satan the devil's "big lie" technique? Is it a clever twisting of the truth?

Jesus Christ declared, in no uncertain terms: "Think NOT that I am come to destroy the law . . . I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, *one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law*, till all be fulfilled" (Matt.5:17-18).

Isn't that plain? He added, "For I say unto you, That unless your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (v.20). Now the scribes and Pharisees were famous for their punctilious observance of the Law -- even technical matters of tithing (Matt.23:23). But Jesus said we must be more righteous than they were! He also said, "Be [or become] ye therefore PERFECT [whole, complete, mature, upright, just as God commanded Abraham to become in Genesis 17:1!], even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Matt.5:48). Does this sound like mere empty "faith" is enough for us to receive salvation? Nonsense! Does this sound like some of God's laws have been "discarded"? Nonsense! Nothing has been discarded -- *not even a jot or a tittle!*

Whom will you believe? Joe Tkach? or Jesus Christ?

The New Covenant "removes" none of the Laws of God! We find that the weekly Sabbaths will be observed in the Kingdom of God (Isa.66:23). We find the holy days of God -- specifically the Feast of Tabernacles -- will also be a commanded observance during the Kingdom of God (Zech.14:14-16)! We find that *even the Levitical priesthood* has a function to perform on this earth (Heb.8:4-5), and will be fully operational during the reign of Jesus Christ, in the kingdom of God! (see for proof Ezekiel 40, especially verse 46; chapter 41; 42:13-14; all of chapter 43; 44:5-24; chapters 45-48). Zechariah says, "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the *Lord's house* shall be like the bowls before the *altar*" (Zech.14:20-21).

What law of God, then, pray tell, has been "removed" or "discarded"? James plainly said that ALL GOD'S LAW stands or falls together. He wrote, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is GUILTY OF ALL. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a TRANSGRESSOR OF THE LAW. So speak ye, and so DO, as they that shall be JUDGED by the Law of liberty [i.e., God's Law which insures true liberty]" (James 2:10-12).

Joe Tkach says the old covenant was set aside -- and declares,

"This 'setting aside' is not just talking about Levitical and sacrificial laws that were added to the old covenant -- it is talking about the old covenant itself. The WHOLE PACKAGE was SET ASIDE AND REPLACED by Christ" (p.8).

Did you get that? Tkach therefore says the ENTIRE CONTENTS of the Old Covenant were set aside and replaced! Once again, this is Satan the devil's "big lie" technique at work -- smothering and confusing the minds of millions, part of Satan's great deception!

This "setting aside" therefore would include the Ten Commandments, statues, judgments, holy days, Passover, Sabbath day, clean and unclean meats, civil laws, laws against gossip, false witness, idolatry, and EVERYTHING ELSE which was covered in the Old Covenant

This is the *DIAMETRIC OPPOSITE* to what Jesus Christ taught!

The Levitical sacrifices and laws were not set aside, but today they are not being offered for the simple reason that there is no Temple in which to offer them! The apostle Paul himself, in about 60 A.D., 30 years after the crucifixion of Christ, went up to Jerusalem, and *offered sacrifice at the Temple of God* (Acts 22:18-24, 26-27; compare Numbers 6:1-2, 13-21).

If there were a Temple of God in Jerusalem today, it would not be wrong for a Christian to offer a sacrifice, as Paul himself did. The sacrificial system God gave Israel was patterned after the heavenly altar and Temple (compare Rev.11:19; Heb.8:1-5). It constitutes a teaching system, a "school," to teach us about the heavenly truths of God, the heavenly tabernacle, altar, Temple, and system. The sacrifices by and large picture Jesus Christ, the lamb of God, our supreme heavenly sacrifice (I Cor.5:7-8; Heb.9:1-14). So long as there is no Temple, however, it is obvious that the laws relative to the Temple worship are temporarily "set aside" or suspended.

Purpose of the Law of Moses

It is not surprising that even intellectual ghost-writers for Joseph Tkach (for everybody should know that Joe Tkach cannot write the articles that appear under his by-line) can get mixed up concerning the Law of God. The whole Western "Christian" world is mixed up on these matters! The author, pseudo-Tkach, goes on quote Galatians 3:17, where we read:

"And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect" (KJV).

Tkach, or pseudo-Tkach, then states based on this verse:

"Christians have a relationship with God based on faith, not on law. . . His [Paul's] point here is that the law of Moses -- the old covenant -- was temporary. It was added only till Christ came" (p.10).

But is this what Paul was talking about? This is very misleading, as he states that the

whole system of law, given at Sinai, was temporary. But the truth is, much of the Sinai Law was really merely a repetition of God's Law from the time of Adam and Eve. Remember, Cain and Abel also offered sacrifices, and Abraham kept God's "statutes, commandments and laws." The apostle John tells us that "sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4), and Paul informs us that "sin is not imputed where there is no law" (Rom.5:13), yet he says, "all have sinned" (Rom.5:12). Therefore, the LAW of God was in effect from the very days of Adam and Eve! Death is the penalty of sin (Rom.6:23), and "death reigned from Adam to Moses" (Rom.5:14). Therefore, SIN existed from Adam to Moses -- and for SIN to exist, the LAW of GOD had to exist!

At Mount Sinai, Paul tells us in Galatians, concerning the law, "It was ADDED because of TRANSGRESSIONS [i.e., breaking of the laws of God], till the seed should come to whom the promise was made [Christ]" (Gal.3:19). This Law which was "added" was NOT the "Old Covenant"! Let's not be confused. The Covenant and the Law are two different things! The Covenant was an AGREEMENT between Israel and God. The Laws were part of that agreement; they were, in effect, the TERMS of that Covenant. All of those spiritual, moral, ethical, and civil LAWS did not begin with Moses at Mount Sinai, but went back to CREATION! The Sabbath law, for example, goes back to Creation (Gen.2:1-3). God reminded Israel of which day was the Sabbath weeks before Israel ever got to Mount Sinai (Exodus 16). God gave them the Passover commandments (Exodus 12:14-16) fifty days before the Sinai covenant!

What, then, was really "new" -- or "added" -- to the system of Laws which God had already put in force, prior to Mount Sinai? Why, the answer should be obvious. At Mount Sinai the physical tabernacle, Levitical priesthood, prescribed sacrifices and rituals, were added -- what we generally call the RITUALISTIC LAW, or the law related to the Levitical Priesthood! These were the "meats [meal offerings] and drinks [drink offerings], and divers washings, and carnal ordinances [marginal reference, "rites, or ceremonies"], imposed on them until the time of reformation" (Heb.9:10). The Greek word for "ordinances" here is *dikaioma* which means "what has been established and ordained by law, an ordinance," "a judicial sentence," "a righteous act or deed," and in this verse clearly refers to those things related to the Levitical priesthood.

This was a whole body of legislation which was ADDED at Mount Sinai! These rituals pointed to Christ, and to heavenly objects, of which they were a type or shadow. These things are not obligatory for Christians today!

Ferrar Fenton, in his translation, translates these passages in Galatians 3:17-19 as follows:

"And I assert this -- the RITUALS, beginning four hundred and thirty years after, could not cancel a Settlement previously established by God, so as to abolish the promise. For if the inheritance comes from a RITUAL, it is no more from a promise; yet God granted it to Abraham through a promise. Why, then, the law [of rituals]? It was established BECAUSE OF SINS, until the Heir should come in Whom were the promises."

We must carefully distinguish what was truly "added" at Sinai and what existed before, in terms of God's Laws. Clearly, the rituals were added at Mount Sinai. But from the very time of

Adam, it was a sin to worship false gods or idols (Gen.31:19-35), to take God's name in vain (Gen.4:26), to desecrate the Sabbath (Gen.2:1-3), to dishonor one's parents (Gen.9:17-25), to kill (Gen.4:7-10), to commit adultery (Gen.39:7-12), to steal (Gen.30:33), to bear false witness (Gen.3:1-3, 14), and to lust or covet (Gen.3:1-7). Thus all ten of the Ten Commandments were in force from the time of Adam!

The only "laws" therefore which were altered, changed, or "set aside" for any length of time, by the coming of Christ, were those specific laws which He Himself declared to be changed -- and most of those were not weakened or diminished in any way, but made more strong and strict and binding! (Matt.5-7). For example, Jesus said it was even a sin to "lust" after a woman with your eyes, to commit adultery in your heart (Matt.5:28)! He also forbade swearing, saying to let our yes be "yes" and our no, "no" (Matt.5:33-37). He commanded us to even love our "enemies" (Matt.5:43-47).

Therefore, when Joseph Tkach implies that ALL God's "Laws" were "added" at Mount Sinai, and Abraham's relationship with God was only based on "faith," he is a LIAR, and a false witness -- a pervaricator and perverter of the Word of God! When he says the whole "package of laws became obsolete when Christ died" (page 11 of his article), he is confusing the old covenant itself, which is obsolete, with the LAWS which were the core and basis of the old covenant, which are NOT obsolete -- how can they be? They are based on eternal verities -- they are ETERNAL! As David himself wrote: "The LAW of the Lord is PERFECT, converting the soul . . . The statutes of the Lord are RIGHT, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is PURE, enlightening the eyes . . . the judgments of the Lord are TRUE and RIGHTEOUS ALTOGETHER. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant WARNED: and in KEEPING OF THEM *THERE IS GREAT REWARD*" (Psalm 19:7-11).

Now notice how Tkach perverts the clear meaning of another scripture. He quotes Hebrew 10:1 and claims therefore that the Law of God itself is "only a shadow." Notice it!

"The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming -- not the realities themselves."

Now, my Bible has this verse differently! Let us notice several translations:

"For the law HAVING A SHADOW of good things to come, and not the very image of the things . . ." (KJV).

"For as the Law HAS a mere shadow of the bliss that is to be, instead of representing the reality of that bliss" (Moffatt).

"For the Torah has in it a shadow of the good things to come, but not the actual manifestation of the originals" (Jewish NT).

The original Greek of the New Testament is that the Law "has" or "possesses" a shadow of things -- not that the Law itself IS a "shadow." Tkach quotes the NIV version here, where it is an interpretation and not a true translation of the original Greek language!

Tithing Law Abolished?

Tkach claims that tithing is "voluntary" under the New Covenant, but was commanded in the Law of Moses. He says it was "voluntary" in the day of Abraham (p.14). But does the New Covenant abolish tithing? We know Abraham paid tithes on all his increase (Gen.14:20). Jacob also made this same vow (Gen.28:22). Later God gave the tithe to the Levites (Lev.27:30-33; Page 9

Num.18:21, 24). However, Paul points out that the Levites "who receiveth tithes, PAYED tithes in Abraham. For he [Levi] was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him" (Heb.7:9-10).

Paul then states, "For the priesthood being changed [from Levi to Melchisedek, or Christ], there is made of necessity a CHANGE ALSO OF THE LAW" (Heb.7:12). What kind of change? Obviously, a change in the tithing law! Changed how? Changed in TO WHOM tithes are to be paid! Paul did not say the tithing law was done away with. He merely said that since the priesthood was changed, from Levi to Christ, therefore the tithes now should go or be paid to CHRIST and His representatives -- His ministry and Church!

Verse 8 actually makes this clear. Paul wrote, "And here men that die receive tithes [that is, the Levites]; but there *he [Christ] receives them [present tense], of whom it is witnessed that HE LIVETH*" -- that is, Christ is ALIVE today, and He is to receive TITHES today, instead of the Levitical priesthood -- the tithes of all those people who accept Him as Messiah and Saviour and who follow and serve and obey Him!

Jesus Himself acknowledged that tithing is a law today, when He said not a "jot" or a "tittle" would pass from the Law till heaven and earth passed away (Matt.5:17-19). He also clearly acknowledged it when He said of the Pharisees, "Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, *and NOT to leave the other [tithing] undone*" (Matt.23:23).

And, lest we forget it, Jesus taught tithing from the simple premise that He declared that the scribes and Pharisees "sit in Moses' seat." He commanded, therefore, "ALL therefore WHATSOEVER they bid you observe, that observe and DO" (Matt.23:1-3). Did the Pharisees command tithing? Of course they did! Although they went about trying to establish legalistic righteousness, apart from Christ and the Holy Spirit, through their own efforts (Rom.10:3), they were the custodians of the oracles of God (Rom.3:1-3). *They commanded, in interpreting the Law, that tithes were to be paid!* Jesus said, therefore, we must DO AS THEY COMMANDED -- that is, PAY TITHES! But our tithes are to go to Christ and His ministry -- that is the only "change" in the tithing law (Heb.7:12)!

The Sabbath Observance

What about the Sabbath day? Tkach claims it is "an old covenant law," because it was part of the Ten Commandments given at Mount Sinai (page 15 of PGR). He then asks,

"But, is the Sabbath required in the new covenant? Or, as another possibility, is it

transformed, to be kept in a different way? . . . Is it possible that Jesus Christ changed the way we ought to observe the Sabbath?" (p.15).

Do you see how insidious this is? By asking this type of question, he raises a whole series of questions and creates doubt! Tkach then adds, "The new covenant is based on faith, not on law" (*ibid.*). So now he colorizes the picture, and tries to get you to forget that Abraham was justified by "faith AND works" of obedience to God's laws (James 2:21-24; Gen.26:5). The truth is, the New Covenant is based on FAITH AND LAW TOGETHER! It is faith in God and His Spirit that enables us to keep and observe God's Law! Faith without the "works" of law keeping, and obedience, is DEAD, James plainly said -- twice, in fact (James 2:17 and 2:26). Faith without works is like a flat tire. Useless. Faith without works is like a body without oxygen or air to breathe -- dead, dead, dead!

The truth is, the Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments, goes back to Creation, and was given to Israel to remind them which day was the Sabbath PRIOR to the Sinai covenant (Gen.2:1-3; Exodus 16). In fact, in the very Ten Commandments, God said, "REMEMBER the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exo.20:8). This was not a NEW law, but something He was REMINDING them to observe and keep!

But did Jesus come to CHANGE the way we should observe the Sabbath? Did He say it is all right, now, to work on the Sabbath at a normal, routine job? Did He say it is all right to seek our own pleasure, play golf, go to Disneyland, on the Sabbath?

Absolutely not! Jesus came to teach us to observe all God's commandments as God originally intended us to do! He came to rebuke the legalizing Pharisees who were ADDING "man-made traditions" to the laws of God, making them a burden instead of a delight! He said to the Pharisees, "Why do ye transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" (see Matt.15:1-9). He warned them, "Howbeit in VAIN do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the TRADITION OF MEN . . ." (Mark 7:7-8).

The Sabbath was an example of how the Pharisees had added their own traditions to God's commandment, and made it a yoke of bondage. Jesus permitted His disciples to pluck ears of wheat to eat as they walked through a field on the Sabbath. This outraged the Pharisees, who accused them of "harvesting grain" on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-24). But Jesus rebuked them, saying, "The Sabbath was made FOR man, and not man for the Sabbath" (verse 27). In other words, God never intended men to bog down in self-important ritual and go hungry on the Sabbath, because of human "additions" to the simple laws of God. God never intended men to avoid picking an apple to eat on the Sabbath, or a few cherries, or strawberries, or an ear of fresh ripe corn, or a few radishes from their garden, while walking outside and enjoying the fresh air of nature. The Pharisees had added many such stringent additions to God's wonderful laws, turning them into an onerous and impossible yoke of heavy bondage.

Jesus plainly showed, as the Worldwide Church of God has historically taught, that any emergency should be taken care of on the Sabbath, that it is all right to do good on the Sabbath, to visit the sick, to see a doctor if you need to, or to care for the sick and afflicted.

Joe Tkach attempts to diminish the importance of the Sabbath, by saying it was the sign of the old covenant with Israel, but not the sign of the New Covenant. This is utter nonsense! The Sabbath is God's LAW -- a sign between Him and His people FOR EVER (see Exodus 31:13-17). It is A PERPETUAL COVENANT (verse 16). It is the sign of God's true people. And so are the annual holy days of God, which also were ordained FOREVER (Exo.12:14-16; Lev.23).

Tkach says,

"The Lord of the Sabbath has come, and the reality has replaced the shadow (Col.3:17). The New Testament Sabbath, the Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God (Hebrews 4) *is the new life in Christ*, the life of faith in Him . . ." (p.17).

What folderol and balderdash! The Sabbath is not, was not, and was never intended to be a temporary "shadow" -- it is a weekly 24-hour period of time which God declares is HOLY TIME! To desecrate it or work on it or "break" it is tantamount to blaspheming God. It is an ABOMINATION to whitewash and water down the Sabbath commandment, and call it a mere "shadow." Rather, the Sabbath of course is a TYPE of the millennial rest, the 1000 year reign of Christ which comes at the end of 6,000 years of man's rule on planet earth (Rev.20:4). Therefore, it is a "shadow" of the 1,000 year millennial "Sabbath." All of God's Holy Days are shadows in the sense that they "foreshadow" something in the Plan of God. But that fact does not lessen their importance -- it should strengthen their significance and increase their importance, in our eyes!

Joseph Tkach tends to minimize the Sabbath and all the commandments of God. But Isaiah foretold of the Messiah, "The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will MAGNIFY THE LAW, *and make it honorable*" (Isaiah 42:21). Joe Tkach is looking at the Law of God through the wrong end of a telescope! He shrinks the importance of the Sabbath -- he is the incredible "shrinking man"! But God says Christ came to MAGNIFY the Law -- as a telescope magnifies the image of stars and planets in outer space! The Hebrew word for "magnify" is *gadal* and means "to twist," and in translated "to make large, advance, honor, bring up, boast, exceed, increase, lift up, magnify, be much set by, nourish, promote, tower" (Strong's #1431). Says *Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*, "to twist together, to bind together, to twine a cord," whence "to wrestle, to contend," "to be or become great, to grow," "to be greatly valued," "to be celebrated with praises," "to cause or take care that anything shall grow and become great," "to make much of, to value highly," "to make high, to lift up."

In his article, Joseph Tkach encourages people to violate the Sabbath by working on it if they feel or believe they should to support their family. To him, the Sabbath is no longer the "test commandment" to see whether a person will obey God or not. Admittedly, emergency work or work that serves God may be done on the Sabbath. Even in Old Testament times, the Levites offered animal sacrifices -- hard work -- on the Sabbath, and every day of the year.

But Joseph Tkach calls the Sabbath "Old Covenant," says it is not a sign of the true Christian, and diminishes its importance in every way. He then says it is all right to work on the Sabbath if you believe you ought to -- it is your own decision to make. Notice his own words:

"If the choice is between working on the Sabbath and providing food for the family, it is not a sin to work on the Sabbath. . . . Some people might call it a lack of faith, but other people might call it appropriate. One person sees it as an ox in the ditch . . . Another person sees it differently, but I hope that one person doesn't judge the other.

"Therefore we will not disfellowship a person who WORKS to feed his family" (p.19).

There you have it. Since obviously everybody who works say they work to feed their family (unless they are already rich!), this means that according to Joseph Tkach and the new, revised Worldwide Church of God, it is now all right to work on the Sabbath day -- to trample on, desecrate, and do your own work on God's Holy day!

Does God's Word agree with this assessment? Isaiah the prophet wrote plainly, by God's direct inspiration:

"IF THOU TURN AWAY THY FOOT FROM THE SABBATH, from doing thy pleasure on MY HOLY DAY; and call the sabbath a delight, the HOLY of the LORD, honourable; and shalt HONOUR HIM, not doing THINE OWN WAYS, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou DELIGHT thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it" (Isaiah 48:13-14).

Joseph Tkach adds, "Being Sabbath-keepers does not make us more righteous than other Christians." Presumably, he means Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, Episcopalians -- he now believes they ALL are "Christian." He goes on,

"If some, even most, Christians don't keep the Sabbath, then that's their loss. It's true that keeping the Sabbath is not commanded as part of the new covenant in the way it was under the old covenant. Not keeping it doesn't make them ANY LESS CHRISTIAN, as I've tried to make plain" (p.20).

Whereas Jesus Christ came to magnify the Law, and expand its forcefulness and power, and exalt its beauty and glory, Joseph Tkach has come to diminish and shrink the Law, and the Sabbath commandment, to nullify and destroy it, when you look at his teachings in the final analysis. For when you excuse and justify "working" on the Sabbath, the very thing God forbid, aren't you in effect DESTROYING the LAW? You are certainly not "fulfilling" it, or "filling it full" and up to the brim!

God says, in the basic Sabbath commandment:

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do ALL thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: IN IT THOU SHALT NOT DO ANY WORK, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exo. 20:8-11).

The Sabbath was given to mankind as a BLESSING. God hallowed it and sanctified it at Creation. It is a wonderful day of rest. To work on it, at our normal, routine occupation, is to

desecrate it, to dishonour our heavenly Father, and to despise His commandments, statutes, and judgments. To trample on God's sacred, holy day is an abomination before God. Those who knowingly violate the Sabbath will have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone -- Gehenna Fire!

Many Protestants and Catholics believe that Christ came to do away with the Sabbath command, and all the Laws of God. What difference is there, really, in Joseph Tkach's new view, which permits working on the Sabbath, and says we must not judge one another in these things, and the viewpoint of the world's churches? Very little. When you make the Sabbath no longer a commandment, you vitiate it -- you "gut" it -- you destroy it, for all practical purposes.

Adulterating the LAW of God

Rather than stressing OBEDIENCE to God's Law, Joseph Tkach is now WATERING DOWN the Law of God, and claims to be stressing "Christ." But this is not the Christ of the Bible, who observed the Sabbath faithfully (Luke 4:16), setting us an example, that we should follow His steps! (I Pet.2:21; I John 2:6). This is not the same Jesus who said to the young rich man who asked Him how he could have eternal life! Jesus said to him, "IF thou wilt enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS" (Matt.19:17).

Christ is the Law of God -- the Logos, the Word, the Torah -- made into human flesh (John 1:1-3, 14). As such, He observed God's Law perfectly -- as it was intended to be observed. In His changes, interpretations and additions to the Law, He showed us its true purpose, how to keep it properly, in Spirit, and its real meaning. It is nothing less than the perfect character of God, showing us how God desires each one of us to become!

What about you? Are you going to be led about by modern-day false prophets who are "partial in the law" (Mal.2:9)? Are you going to go along with those who are "forsaking" God's Law (Psalm 119:53)? Are you going to follow those false prophets who are busily making "void" the Law (Psalm 119:126)?

David said, "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold" (v.127). He declared, "Thy law is the truth" (Psa.119:142). But Jesus also said HE is the "truth" (John 14:6). He also said, "Thy WORD is truth" (John 17:17) -- and He is the "Word" (John 1:1-3). Therefore the Word of God, the Truth of God, and the Law of God are all equal to the same thing -- they are equal, or equivalent, to each other -- they are all IDENTICAL!

Christ IS the "Law" of God in living form and shape. To say the Law is done away or abolished is to say CHRIST is abolished, done away! To diminish or shrink the importance of the Law is to shrink or diminish the importance of the Law-Giver -- the Logos of God, Christ Himself!

One might say that Christ is the "end" of the Law (Rom.10:4), but that does not mean the Law is done away. In James 5:11 we read, "Ye have . . . seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." Obviously, this does not mean the Lord is "done away." So the fact that Christ is the END of the Law does not mean He abolished it! It means that He is

the end-result or fulfillment of the Law. Actually, He is the Beginning, the Middle, AND the End of the Law -- He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, and the SUM TOTAL of the Law! He taught complete obedience to the Law of God, which is to say perfect obedience to Himself, as He is the Perfect Expression of the Law of God, and we are to become like Him -- "for we shall be LIKE HIM, for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2).

The true New Covenant is that we are to be writing God's Laws in our hearts and minds daily, by His Holy Spirit -- including the Tithing Law, and the Sabbath Law, and the Holy Days - - ALL of God's Perfect Law!

Are you allowing God to write His Law within your heart and mind? May God help His people to begin to wake up, and shake themselves out of their lethargy, and to REDEEM THE TIME in getting back to the faith once delivered to the saints!

It is possible that Joseph Tkach is sincere, of course. I can't judge his heart or sincerity. But you can be sincere and TOTALLY WRONG! Solomon wrote: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of DEATH" (Proverbs 14:12).

Paul also wrote, "Wherefore let him that standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Cor.10:12). Are you taking heed? Paul declared as well, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?*" (Heb.2:1-3).

As Paul also wrote, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, REDEEMING THE TIME, *because the days are evil*" (Eph.5:15-16). The apostle Peter also wrote: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (II Pet.1:10).

May God help us to take these serious admonitions to heart. Your salvation is at stake!

Staggering New Crisis Rocks Worldwide Church of God!

What is the world is going on in the Worldwide Church of God? Incredible doctrinal changes have led to a 30-50

percent drop in income, resulting in massive cutbacks in salaries, Plain Truth circulation, hundreds of employees getting the "ax," and a rebellion among the ministry! But were these awesome events prophesied? Does a strange, mysterious prophecy in the book of Zechariah foretell and predict what is happening? What does the future hold for the Worldwide Church of God? Let's take a look!

William F. Dankenbring

For eight years, I have been warning people in the Worldwide Church of God that Joseph W. Tkach was spiritual "bad news." For years I have raised my voice like a trumpet and declared with emphasis that Joseph Tkach was an apostate leader -- a modern day hypocritical "Pharisee" -- a blind leader of the blind -- and a deceiver of the brethren!

For eight long years, I have used the sword of the pen, and written powerful articles in and apart from *Prophecy Flash*, exposing and denouncing this insidious champion of Satan the devil. In 1987-88 I wrote a series of articles on "Where Is the Laodicean Church?", "Escape from Laodicea," "Crisis in the Worldwide Church of God," "Has the Church Become a Cult?", "Where the Worldwide Church of God Went Wrong," "Totalitarianism -- the Plain Truth about Church Authority," and more recently, articles on "The Pancake Apostle," flipping doctrines like flapjacks, and "Who Is the Son of Perdition?" in which I showed that Joseph W. Tkach is certainly a modern-day fulfillment of a *type* of the end-time "son of perdition" and "man of sin."

But for years, very few people would listen. I was like a prophet denouncing evil, but very few would pay attention, take warning, or listen! Very few would take the time to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good" (I Thess.5:21). I showed in article after article, how Joseph Tkach has polluted doctrines, virtually abolishing the healing doctrine, corrupting the "born again" doctrine, perverting the "kingdom of God" doctrine, blasphemously changing the "nature of God" doctrine, and was belittling the commandments of God, minimalizing the Ten Commandments, saying the Worldwide Church of God was not (i.e., no longer) an "Old Testament Church," and abolishing the whole field of Bible prophecy, and the identity of the modern nations of Israel.

And now he has come full circle -- he has committed the final atrocity -- he has for all practical purposes said we are saved by grace alone, the law of God is no longer necessary to be kept, the Sabbath itself -- the "test commandment," as Herbert W. Armstrong used to call it -- is no longer necessary to be observed, but Church members may work on it after all!

On the one hand Tkach insists he is not doing away with the Sabbath, or the Law of God, but on the other hand he says it is all right to work on the Sabbath, a direct violation of the commandment -- and he says it is all right to eat unclean meats which God forbids (Lev.11; Deut.14). The fact is, for all practical purposes, he really does say the LAW is done away -- while insisting that is not what he is saying! Is this "double-speak," or what?

Brethren, you who are still in the Worldwide Church of God, I ask of you -- ISN'T THIS

APOSTASY???

If this isn't apostasy, my brethren, pray tell, *what is?*

When Joseph Tkach took over the Worldwide Church of God, and preached at the funeral of Herbert W. Armstrong, he professed undying devotion and affection. And he said, "No man is able to fill the shoes of Herbert Armstrong, God's servant, nor can I. However, I will *walk in his footsteps.*"

Well, today we know what Joseph Tkach meant by that "promise." He is walking in Herbert Armstrong's footsteps, all right -- but he is walking *BACKWARDS!*

The Pastor General's Report

On December 31, 1994, Joseph Tkach spoke for 3 hours in Pasadena, reading a 21 page article in the latest *Pastor General's Report*, doing away with the LAW of God, in effect -- saying that tithing is abolished (now just voluntary), and the weekly SABBATH may be worked upon if anybody feels they need to -- effectively abolishing the Sabbath Commandment!!! The apostasy has reached its peak. What more can they do, except "fine tune" it? They have abolished the LAW of God, and its "teeth," and made it a "voluntary" matter. They are essentially no more than regurgitated "Protestants" with a few "voluntary" things which are encouraged, but since they are "voluntary" they are therefore no longer "required." Said Tkach, nobody will any longer be "disfellowshipped" for "breaking the Sabbath."

What is occurring in the Worldwide Church of God, today, is nothing short of phenomenal -- a colossal break with the truth, and an avalanche of apostasy, as a Satanic whirlwind of destruction moves throughout the Church, doctrinally. The leaders don't seem to care. Tkach Junior asked one minister in the midwest what he thought of the changes; he replied, "They are B.S." I am sure that Tkach Junior took note of that and put his name on his "black list" of those who will be terminated in the future as "disloyal."

The truth is, the present leaders of Worldwide are doggedly determined to rejoin the ranks of out-and-out mainstream Protestantism. They are fully intent on pursuing their present course, no matter what happens to the Church. The gloves are off. The mask is off. I heard also, that all retirement "checks" contain the phrase that such checks will only be paid out "so long as the Church is able to do so" -- i.e., there is no promise they will continue. What does this mean?

Sadly, tragically, those people who are trusting in the Worldwide Church of God, for their paycheck, and for their salvation, are headed for a tremendous "letdown" and massive betrayal in the NEAR future, I am afraid. They had better wake up quick. Only those who sacrifice eternal life and the truth of God, and who whole-heartedly support the apostasy will continue on the "gravy train" -- while it lasts -- until the judgment of God takes over.

God commands us all, "Test the spirits, whether they be of God" (I John 4:1). Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruits" (Matt.7:16).

There is an old saying: "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't force him to drink." How true! I wonder, with all the recent changes in Worldwide's teachings and doctrine, how many people will finally -- at this late date -- wake up, and smell the stink of corruption and ferment?

Are you a member of Worldwide Church of God, who is faced with the decision of what you are going to do about the massive changes in the Church? Is this "final change" not too much for you to take? Are you finally willing to look into the matter, and take "affirmative action" and leave Worldwide and its apostasy while you still can?

A DOUBLE CURSE on Worldwide

Paul warned the Galatians, "I marvel [i.e., I am amazed, incredulous!] that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto ANOTHER GOSPEL: Which is not another, but there be some that PERVERT the gospel of Christ [i.e., the gospel He preached - the gospel of the Kingdom of God, see Matt.9:35, Mark 1:14-15]. But though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, *let him be accursed*. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, LET HIM BE ACCURSED" (Gal.1:6-9).

Joseph Tkach and his penumbra of ministers are now under a divine *DOUBLE-CURSE*. And all those who follow him are likewise under this severe divine admonition and stricture. As Jeremiah wrote, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart *departeth* from the LORD" (Jer.17:5). David lamented, and cried out, "Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that *forsake thy law*" (Psalm 119:53). He added, "It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made *void thy law*" (Psa.119:126).

Malachi the prophet was inspired to write: "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the LAW at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. 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. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been *partial in the law*" (Mal.2:7-9).

The past eight years of growing apostasy in the Worldwide Church of God is causing the anger of God and His wrath to grow exponentially. What is God going to do to those who remain mired in the mud of apostasy, and refuse to come out of error and who continue to backslide into sin and wickedness?

The Curses Begin to Strike

In the latest issue of *The Watchman Expositor*, volume 12, no.1, 1995, the "Worldwide Church of God" is profiled. Says Phillip Arnn, writer:

"The WCG under Tkach is continuing to refine its doctrinal positions. The official

acceptance of a 'form of the Trinity' and the recent statements leading away from performance salvation are exciting developments. The downside is that the majority of Regional and local ministers have not accepted the changes and are not teaching them to their congregations. According to numerous widespread reports received by Watchman Fellowship, authoritarian abuses of members on a local level are still epidemic and present a serious challenge to Tkach and his administration" (p.18).

In the following article, Arnn goes further, detailing the massive changes and overhaul in doctrine going on in Worldwide. He asserts, in the article "*Worldwide Church of God Update: Tkach Clarifies 'Sabbath' and 'True Church' Doctrines,*" that Joseph Tkach has indeed changed the whole basis of Worldwide Church of God doctrine. He writes:

"The Worldwide Church of God has been under the leadership of Joseph W. Tkach since the 1986 death of its founder, Herbert W. Armstrong. In the last nine years, Tkach has *overturned every major unbiblical (sic) doctrine held by that organization.*

"One of those changes was a bombshell dropped in July of 1993 with the adoption of 'a form of the Trinity' as the official statement on the nature of God" (p.19).

Arnn quotes Worldwide minister Earl Williams of Atlanta, Georgia, that the Worldwide Church of God now teaches that "The Christian identity is not found in any organizational or denominational affiliation, but it is in Jesus Christ" (*Worldwide News*, June 14, 1994, p.4). In the November 1994 PGR, pastor general Tach included the Seventh Day Adventist Church as part of the body of Christ. The Williams article, says Phillip Arnn, "was inclusive of all professing believers, regardless of whether they kept the Sabbath."

Visiting Earl Williams and the Atlanta Church on December 17, 1994, Tkach went even further, announcing, "Yes, there are Christians in the Catholic Church. There are Christians in the Methodist Church. There are Christians in the Baptist Church. There are Christians all around this world . . . The Jews have the Sabbath and the Holy Days as their sign. Are they Christians? Not by God's standards they are not. . . So what good is the sign of the Sabbath going to do them in ter salvation?" (Sermon, 17 December, 1994, quoted in *The Watchman Expositor*).

But this was only the beginning. Tkach went on to give a new teaching to the church on the New Covenant versus the Old Covenant, in which he claimed Sabbath keeping, holy days, and tig are all essentially abolished or "changed in Christ" and no longer necessary to be observed as the "law of God." He followed this up with a similar sermon in Big Sandy, Texas, and then read the same message from the *Pastor General's Report* in Pasadena, the following week. According to Tkach, this means it is all right to work on the weekly Sabbath, playing golf is all right on the Sabbath, and eating all "unclean meats" is perfectly fine. Such things are all regarded by the Church now as "Old Covenant" and therefore no longer binding. A video was made of the message all Worldwide ministers were required to show the video to their congregations.

Phillip Arnn says, "Watchman Fellowship has already heard of strong resistance in Texas, long a bastion of conservative Armstrongism, to Tkach's message. Many are unwilling to give up the 'Truth' they received from Armstrong. Watchman has received numerous reports

from members and ministers who are saying that they can not understand the New Covenant being preached by Tkach” (p.21).

The changes have indeed led to a series of repercussions for the Church in Pasadena. Morale among employees is at an all-time low. The first blow to strike was the news that the Ambassador Concert Hall series was to close in May. Ambassador Auditorium, one of the most acclaimed concert halls in Southern California, if not the entire world, for more than 20 years, a center for fine classical music, cancelled its 1995-96 season because of financial woes. In February 9, 1995, the *Los Angeles Times* reported: “Financial Crisis Grips Worldwide Church of God.” Said the article, “Leaders plan cutbacks in the wake of a 30% plunge in revenues. Changes in doctrine have rocked the congregation.” The writers went on:

“Rocked by members’ reaction to major reversals of its most fundamental doctrines -- including a new declaration that tithing is no longer mandatory -- the Worldwide Church of God is facing the most severe financial crisis in its history.

“Leaders of the Pasadena-based church were meeting behind closed doors Wednesday, undertaking a top-to-bottom review of all church operations and personnel in the face of a decline in church revenues of at least 30% since the beginning of the year. Outside sources said the drop could be as high as 55%” (February 9, 1995).

According to the writers, “The latest turn of events has been precipitated by a startling recanting by church leaders of long-held church teachings set down by its founder, who died in 1986.” As a result of meetings, editorial and television staffs have been chopped, with scores of employees being fired. According to the *Pasadena Star-News*, church officials admit that membership dropped 10 percent to 92,000, but others say it’s down to 60,000 as more splinter groups keep breaking off.

Says the Times article, in explaining the changes in Worldwide:

“The theological conflict began coming to a head in December when the church’s leader and Armstrong successor -- Pastor General Joseph Tkach Sr. -- announced in Atlanta that tithing was no longer mandatory.

“At the same time, he also declared that it was no longer mandatory to observe the Sabbath on Saturday.

“A year earlier, the church moved closer to traditional Christian teaching about the Trinity as three distinct personalities -- God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in one godhead. Previously, the church did not see the Holy Spirit as a distinct personality.

“The changes in the church’s teachings have been seen as bringing the church closer into the mainstream of Christianity. But longtime members and church watchers say there is little doubt that Armstrong -- who founded the church in 1934 as Radio Church of God in Eugene, Ore. -- would have considered the revisions heretical. . .

“The changes have been so dramatic that some observers said a common joke around church headquarters these days is that the January, 1994, Northridge earthquake was actually Armstrong turning over in his grave” (February 9, 1995).

Many church observers believe that the financial “hits” upon the Worldwide Church of God, like the comet fragments striking the planet Jupiter in the summer of 1994, are merely the beginning, and that worse financial explosions lie ahead. Many question whether the church will be able to avoid financial bankruptcy.

Said a headline article in the Sunday, February 12, *Star News*, “A Church in Crisis,” “Followers and funds swiftly eroding as the Worldwide Church of God shifts from rigid biblical teachings to mainstream Christianity.”

But what do all these things mean? Why are they happening? What is Joseph Tkach doing, and why? Is he leading a tremendous end-time apostasy away from the truth of God?

What Scripture Foretells

Jesus Christ declared some 1900 years ago, speaking of these last days in which we live, just before His second coming, “Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many” (Matt.24:11). The apostle Paul also foretold, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (II Tim.4:3-4). Paul warned Timothy about the latter days, as well. He wrote, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some shall DEPART FROM THE FAITH, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron” (I Tim.4:1-2).

Paul also warned the Thessalonians of that day of apostasy. He wrote, “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the FALLING AWAY comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition [loss, destruction]” (II Thess.2:3).

It has begun to happen -- right before our very eyes! The apostasy now is far advanced, and rapidly proceeding to its ultimate conclusion. The “end” is rapidly approaching!

Notice what the prophets of the Old Testament had to say about these events.

Spiritual Apostasy Predicted Long Ago

In the 30th chapter of Isaiah we read:

“Now go, write it before them on a tablet, and note it on a scroll, that for time to come, forever and ever: That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of the LORD; who say to the seers, ‘Do not see,’ and to the prophets, ‘Do not prophesy to us right things; speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits. Get out of the way, turn aside from the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us” (Isaiah 30:8-11).

God knew that it would happen. And it has come to pass, just like He said it would! But now notice what Jeremiah foretold, along the same lines. We read in the 23rd chapter:

"WOE unto the PASTORS that destroy and SCATTER the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the PASTORS that feed my people; Ye have *scattered my flock, and driven them away*, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD" (Jer.23:1-2).

Again, in Ezekiel we read in a similar vein:

"Son of man, prophesy against the SHEPHERDS of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; WOE be unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with *force and with cruelty have ye ruled them*. And they were SCATTERED, because there is no [central or main] shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts [spiritual wolves] of the field, when they were scattered" (Ezek.34:1-4).

Ezekiel continues, "My sheep *wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill*: yea, my flock was SCATTERED upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them" (verse 6).

Clearly, bad times are in store for the end-time Church of God. They have been largely betrayed by their shepherds, their pastors. God is furious with the ministers -- the shepherds and pastors over His flock. But because of doctrinal apostasy, and stubborn, hard-headed and wrong-headed leadership, the sheep WILL BE SCATTERED! There will be *no great, unified, organized "Work of God" in the very End Time!* Rather, the power of the holy people will be "scattered" (Daniel 12:7; see also Dan.7:25; 8:24; Matt.9:36).

But there is another strange prophecy in the book of Zechariah which deals with the problematic future of the Worldwide Church of God, and its major and minor off-shoots. Notice!

Zechariah's Prophecy

Zechariah foretold:

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones" (Zech. 13:7).

Could this be a reference to the death of Herbert W. Armstrong, God's apostle, in 1986? He was certainly God's major end-time shepherd while he was alive, used to bring many truths and lost knowledge to the forefront during these last days. After being used by God to build up the Worldwide Church of God from 1934 until 1986, he died in Pasadena, California, an old and worn out man in his nineties. Truly, the shepherd was smitten.

Since that time, over the past eight years, the Church has been undergoing massive fundamental doctrinal shifts, and reportedly over 36,000 have left the Church during the past three or four years. More doctrinal changes bring more defections -- yet the changes continue. At this point, the new leadership of Worldwide has jettisoned virtually every major doctrine that Herbert Armstrong was inspired by God to discover and to preach to the world!

Several churches have arisen from the ashes of the fire burning in Worldwide, but many people who left haven't joined any church -- they have become disgusted completely, and turned "off" to religion.

The prophecy of Zechariah seems to be right on the nose! It perfectly describes what has been happening in the Worldwide Church of God since the death of its founder. The sheep, or membership, have largely been scattered to the four winds. But what about those thousands who remain? What will happen? The prophecy continues:

"And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die [two thirds of the Church shall perish?]; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined [great heat, tribulation!], and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God" (Zech.13:7-9).

Does this mean two thirds of the members of Worldwide Church of God are going to remain in an apostate Church, and therefore be destroyed, "be cut off and die," during the coming time of massive tribulation and persecution, invasion and national calamity?

The prophet goes on, "the third shall be left therein." This final one third of the people know enough to leave an apostate Church, but they are still confused, mixed up, battered and beaten down, and will be "brought through the fire" -- they still need to go through great tribulation in order to be purged, purified and made righteous, in God's sight!

These are also mentioned in Daniel. We read: "And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them WHITE, even to the time of the end: because the end is yet for a time appointed" (Dan.11:32-35).

The Laodicean Church

Now let's compare what God says to the Laodicean Church in Revelation, chapter 3. Notice!

"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. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me GOLD TRIED IN THE FIRE, that thou mayest be rich; and WHITE raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with EYE SALVE, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be ZEALOUS therefore, and REPENT" (Rev.3:15-19).

Notice! If we compare this Scripture with Daniel 11 and Zechariah 13, the implication is that the two thirds of the people who DIE are complete apostates, punished for their apostasy. The one third which is tried in the fire, like gold and silver, is comparable to the LAODICEAN CHURCH mentioned in Revelation 3, and the ones in Daniel 11 who "shall fall, to try [test, examine] them, and to purge, and to make them WHITE" (v.35).

None of these are worthy to go to a place of safety, to be protected from the fires of the great tribulation! Yet, Jesus did say that we should pray that we could be counted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of man (Luke 21:36). Jesus also said of the small, tiny "Philadelphia" remnant, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will KEEP THEE FROM THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION, which shall come upon all the world, to TRY them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev.3:10).

Some, God says, are going to be taken to a place of safety or refuge. John records, "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 (Rev.12:14). These brethren are protected from the wrath of Satan. But he will turn back and go after her other children -- "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (v.17).

Isaiah speaks of the small remnant who are counted worthy to escape. He foretold, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: HIDE thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain" (Isa.26:20-21).

The prophet Ezekiel also mentions a time similar to that described in Zechariah 13. He declared:

"And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair. Thou shalt BURN WITH FIRE *a third part* in the midst of the city . . . and thou shalt take a *third part*, and SMITE about it with a knife: and a *third part* thou shalt SCATTER

in the wind; and I will draw out a sword [tribulation] after them" (Ezek.5:1-2).

Notice! As in Zechariah, two thirds die -- and one third is scattered, to suffer great persecution, tribulation, affliction, and will be chased with the "sword." This certainly can apply to the Laodicean Church, as well as the physical nations of Israel left alive. But now notice further:

"Thou shalt take thereof [of the scattered ones] A FEW IN NUMBER, and bind them in thy skirts. Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; for thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel" (v.3-4).

Here are those "bound up" in Ezekiel's skirts -- hidden and protected. They are but "a few in number," comparatively. But then even some of them -- a few -- will still be later cast into the mist of the fire, and suffer the great tribulation.

A Look at This Ministry

The fact is, Triumph Prophetic Ministries (Church of God), which is a vital part of God's end-time church, doing a very special end-time "Work," is very small, at the present time. Although I believe it will grow, and grow strongly, in the days ahead, it will always remain small in numbers (Luke 12:36; Rev.3:7-8).

Personally, I would like to see many more people come to the truth, and hope that we will be able to develop strong local leadership in many areas -- yet maintaining complete and honest "unity." As Paul wrote: "For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted; Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are ONE: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (I Cor.3:4-8).

Paul and Apollos were separate ministers -- yet united, as "ONE." So long as men are faithful to the Word, and are UNITED in spirit, and doctrine, we can pull together to accomplish the end-time Work of God of preaching the TRUTH about repentance, the real meaning of "sin," and the coming of the Messiah and the Messianic Kingdom of Christ our Lord! I also feel, since we are an End-Time Work, and have the benefits of global communication, and the printed page, and mails, that we should be as united and in communication AS POSSIBLE. We should keep our fences "mended." Therefore, I encourage all of you to get in touch with us, or our representatives nearest to your area. We have a work to do, brethren, and we need to be about our Father's business (Luke 2:49).

Now that Worldwide Church of God has completely forsaken the truth of God, and collapsed spiritually -- the "Titanic" has now sunk -- where do its members go from here?

According to the principles of the prophecies in Zechariah and Ezekiel, two thirds of

them will ride the ship down to Neptune's locker -- they will remain on board and DIE. One third will wake up, and come out of "Babylon," and go through a purging and purifying process, of "trial by fire," to qualify to make it into God's Kingdom. But many of them may be picked off by various and sundry false churches, "offshoots" of Worldwide, and brought into their deceptive orbit.

How many will truly "test the spirits," as God commands (I John 4:1)? How many will examine the waters, before they leap in?

I was put out of Worldwide for conscience' sake eight years ago. I saw, by God's grace, the way they were headed, even then, after having met with Joseph Tkach, Ellis LaRavia, and others in private meetings over the previous years. Exactly one year after Herbert Armstrong died, Joseph Tkach decided to have me suspended from Church, disfellowshipped, and "marked," all within the space of three weeks. They never gave me a chance to defend myself (Matt.18). I received no hearing, but was judged in absentia -- by a kangaroo court. Since then, I've been striving to warn people of the spiritual jeopardy they are in -- and gradually, little by little, we have reached a number of people with the TRUTH of God.

Personally, I don't want to compromise doctrine or the truth of God. I will not compromise!

We need to reach out to people -- but we must "draw the line" when it comes to other churches or ministers who teach contrary doctrines. We take our responsibilities very seriously, and are very concerned for the true, sincere, dedicated, devoted people of God -- His little "lambs" as it were. There are many wild beasts of the field, "wolves in sheep's clothing," out there, in the world, waiting to devour and ambush unwary Church members. We must not allow God's people any more than necessary to be "exposed" to Satan's wiles, seductions, and inoculations of error! They could come down with a terrible spiritual disease from such exposure -- like spiritual AIDS! In fact, many probably already have the disease and don't even realize it!

I encourage all God's people to remain confident, faithful, and do not allow themselves to become discouraged, depressed, or negative, because of the comments, accusations, and false insinuations people will make of you, if you stand up for the truth -- as they have of me. People are quick to judge, and slow to study. It is easier to condemn at first glance, than to take the time to search things out, as the Bereans did (Acts 17:11; I Thess.5:21).

I have been called "false prophet" more times than I could probably count, by ministers in Worldwide, Church of God International, Global Church of God (sic), and Flurry's Philadelphia Church of God. But who are the real "false prophets"?

Who Are the Real False Prophets?

Doesn't it seem strange that all of these groups together accuse me of being a "false prophet"? Satan is not divided against himself, Jesus said (Matt.12:25-26). His false prophets *in unison* condemn me! This, their condemnation, inspired by Satan, whom they serve in actuality,

is a proof that I am a true servant of God -- for Satan does not condemn his own!

Notice that in the days of Ahab and Jehoshaphat, Ahab wanted to go to war with Syria, and all his false prophets said he would be victorious. But when Jehoshaphat insisted on hearing from a prophet of the Lord, Ahab finally sent for Micaiah. He pointed out that God had allowed a lying spirit to speak through all the false prophets. He was the only one who told the truth about Ahab's coming defeat and death (compare II Chron.18:6-24).

Believe it or not, God's Work is alive and well, during this dark day. Many of you simply have not recognized it, because you have been deceived by erring shepherds and false leaders. May God help you to see, may He open your eyes and give you a special anointing, so that you can see clearly, and understand! (see Rev.3:17-18; Isa.28:7-11).

We are living in a time of urgent apostasy, and tremendous spiritual need. The "famine" of the words of God has already begun (Amos 8:11-12). But this is also a tremendous time of spiritual opportunity (Gal.6:6, 9-10). It is time we as God's servants and people begin to exploit opportunities, and not people (II Cor.11:1-4, 19-20).

Lamentations for the Church

In the book of Lamentations, God describes the fate of His end-time Church, along with end-time Israel. Speaking of the "daughter of Zion," which in type represents the Church of God (Lamentations 2:1), God says, "How hath the LORD covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of [spiritual] Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger! . . . The LORD was an enemy: he hath swallowed up [spiritual and physical] Israel . . . And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle [the "House for God" which was once upon a time, during Herbert Armstrong's day, built for Him!], as if it were of a garden: he hath destroyed his places of the assembly: the LORD hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be *forgotten in Zion* . . . The LORD hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary . . . The LORD hath purposed to destroy the wall [protection] of the daughter of Zion [the Church!]: he hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying: therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together. Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes [apostle Tkach and the chief ministers, in type] are among the Gentiles: *the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the LORD*" (Lamen.2:1-9).

Read this whole book. It is an amazing type of what is happening to modern "Israel," both physical and spiritual! It is a prediction of the downfall of the United States, Britain, and Judah, and along with them the end-time remnant Church of God which has forsaken His statutes, judgments, and commandments -- including the Sabbaths!

But what about you? Are you going to go along with the apostasy, as prophecy indicates two thirds of the people will?

Or will you stand up for TRUTH, and fight the good fight? (Eph.6:10-18; II Tim.4:7-8; I Tim.6:12).

"Come Out of Her, My People"

God says, "CEASE, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge" (Prov.19:27). God commands His people, "'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness [obedience to God's Law] and unrighteousness [disobedience]? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial [Satan]? . . . Wherefore COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM, *and be ye SEPARATE*, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (II Cor.6:14-17).

God thunders in warning, "COME OUT OF HER, my people, *that ye be not partakers of her sins*, and that ye receive not of her *plagues*. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities" (Rev.18:4-5). God says of the great false church system, which *now includes Worldwide Church of God*, "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly BURNED WITH FIRE: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her" (Rev.18:8).

If you are ready to come out of Worldwide, and have an open mind to prove the truth, and are looking for the truth, then get in touch with us, here at Triumph Prophetic Ministries (Church of God). It is our sincere and earnest desire to help you through these harrowing times, this spiritual crisis which has come upon thousands of God's people. We know that you need help, understanding, compassion, and wisdom, to sort out the truth from error, and to find the true ways of God amidst all the per-versions and pre-tensions out there.

Remember Daniel's prophecy of the last days -- OUR day:

"And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he [JWT and JT,Jr., in type] corrupt [Heb., "cause to dissemble"] by flatteries: *but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and shall do EXPLOITS*" (Dan.11:32).

May God inspire and help His true people to fulfill this prophecy -- to the full!