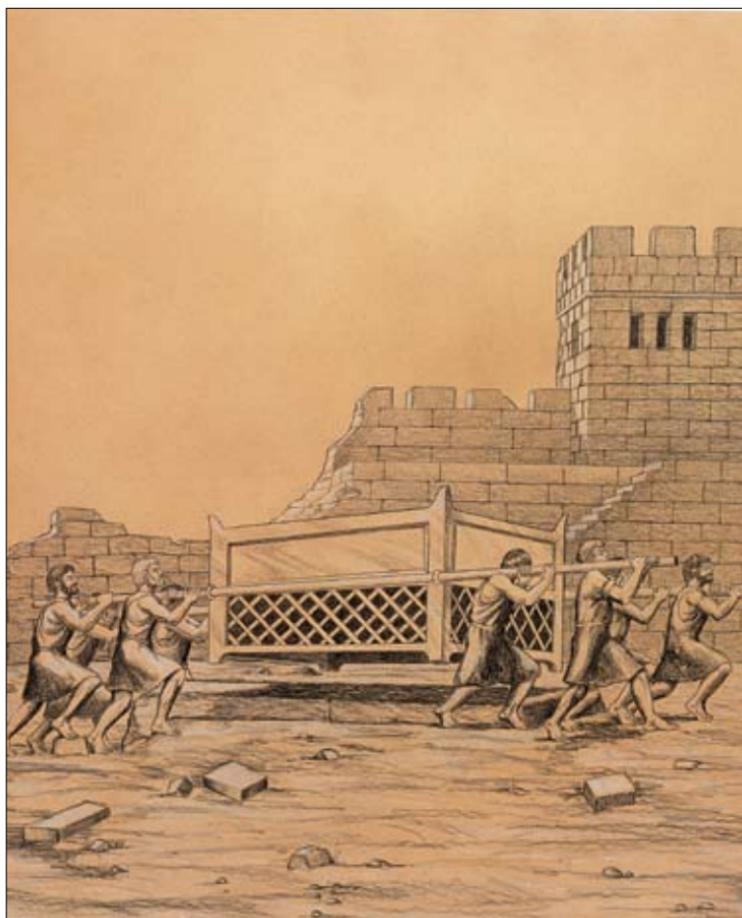


EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

BUILDING GOD'S TEMPLE



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Building God's Temple

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One of the most interesting aspects of Judah's ancient history is the events and people who were involved with the building of the second temple. Ezra and Nehemiah discuss these events in great detail. But few people realize that these ancient events are actually prophecies for our time. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah make that clear in their prophecies concerning the temple. This booklet reveals the heavy prophetic flavor contained within the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

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1

Proper Temple Building

ANCIENTLY, IN ISRAEL, GOD'S CHIEF CONCERN WAS WITH the events happening inside the nation and temple. At that time, the temple was the only place on Earth where God's work could be found. History shows, as things went in the temple, *so went things with the nation*. Study Judah's annals. Its kings either led the people to God and His temple or astray into paganism. God holds the same concern for His temple, or Church, today. God's primary concern is always His temple. Why? God's work is always done from His temple.

HEZEKIAH IS TESTED

There are many lessons we must learn from Israel's history. Hezekiah was considered one of Judah's greatest kings. At one point in Hezekiah's reign, Assyria was about to destroy the nation. Hezekiah appealed to God through Isaiah and God miraculously saved the nation. He turned another nation against Assyria. God solved this major problem for Hezekiah and the nation of Judah. You can study more about this incident in Isaiah 37.

Hezekiah then had to face another big problem. "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus

saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live” (Isaiah 38:1). Isaiah came to Hezekiah and told him that he would die as a result of his sickness. This came as quite a shock to Hezekiah. At this point in his life, he handled the situation correctly.

“Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, And said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore” (verses 2-3). Hezekiah turned to God and prayed. At this point in his life, Hezekiah was close to God. Look at how God responded to Hezekiah’s prayer. “Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years” (verses 4-5). God saw that Hezekiah was walking by faith. He saw Hezekiah’s tears. Isn’t it impressive that God took note of his tears? God added 15 years to Hezekiah’s life.

Then God performed another great miracle for Hezekiah. “And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. And this shall be a sign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken; Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down” (verses 6-8). God reversed the rotation of the Earth to prove to Hezekiah that He would fulfill His promises to him. Although God performed some mighty miracles in his life, the end of the story about Hezekiah is not a happy one.

HEZEKIAH’S FATAL MISTAKE

Not long after his healing, Hezekiah had to face another difficult problem. The king of Babylon sent communication to Judah’s king that he was very concerned about his illness. But was he really concerned about his illness?

“At that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had

heard that he had been sick, and was recovered. And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not” (Isaiah 39:1-2). This time Hezekiah fell into a serious trap. He became all puffed up knowing that the king of Babylon was so concerned about him. In his vanity, he showed the king’s messengers all of his treasures—a fatal mistake.

Isaiah was more suspicious and wise about the king of Babylon’s message. Isaiah came to Hezekiah and asked him some hard questions. But Hezekiah did not respond to all of Isaiah’s questions. “Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon. Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them” (verses 3-4). Notice here that Hezekiah does not answer Isaiah’s first question—he completely ignores it! He does answer Isaiah’s second question. Why did Hezekiah not answer the first question? Could it be that at this point he was beginning to turn away from God?

Remember, God did add 15 years to his life. This proved to be tragic for this great king. Hezekiah fell away from God during these additional years allotted to him. By the end of the story, it looks as though Hezekiah had lost it all spiritually. Could it be that Hezekiah did not answer the first question because he was cozying up to Babylon? The fruits of Hezekiah’s life prove this to be so!

TOO CLOSE TO BABYLON

Hezekiah’s vanity got to him. Notice that he answered Isaiah’s question in a boastful manner. A king from a *far* country was interested in him. He told Isaiah that they were come “unto *me*.” Hezekiah showed them all of *his* treasures. In his vanity, he allowed potential enemies to see all that God had blessed

him with. Never did it dawn on Hezekiah that these men could possibly want to destroy him and carry off his treasures.

Isaiah was concerned about Hezekiah’s actions because he could see far better than Hezekiah could—spiritually speaking. Isaiah did not trust the king of Babylon. He recognized that Hezekiah was getting too close to Babylon. He prophesied about the end result of Hezekiah’s relationship with the king of Babylon. Isaiah showed that this relationship would prove to be fatal, not only for Hezekiah’s descendants, but for the nation of Judah as well. “Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord of hosts: Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon” (verses 5-7). What a tragic end for Hezekiah. These actions by Hezekiah were the beginning of the undoing of his family’s lives and the undoing of the nation of Judah. The king of Babylon destroyed God’s temple and carried the nation of Judah away captive.

FACING HARD QUESTIONS

There is a very clear lesson here for all of us. What was Hezekiah’s main problem? He evaded some hard questions from God’s prophet. He did not want to tell Isaiah what the messengers from Babylon said. At times it is so easy for us to evade hard questions. Carnally, we want to let the hard questions slide. Facing, or *not* facing, hard questions generally marks a turning point in our lives. Being willing to face hard questions can turn our lives around spiritually. Evading hard questions can take us away from God.

Hezekiah evaded a hard question from Isaiah. But Isaiah pinned him down (verse 4). Isaiah wanted to show him that he was beginning to rely on his own treasure or strength, instead of God. Isaiah wanted Hezekiah to recognize that he was beginning to rely on Babylon. Unfortunately, Hezekiah was not moved by his discussion with Isaiah. The **WHOLE NATION** was conquered by Babylon. **WHAT A TERRIFYING PUNISHMENT!**

What about us? Sometimes God, through His ministers, has to ask us some very hard questions. Do we evade the questions or do we face them? What is the main problem with the Laodiceans today? They do not want to face the really hard questions like—why all of these doctrinal changes? They don't want to face the really hard question—was Herbert W. Armstrong God's end-time Elijah? Why? Because they want to be a part of Babylon. They want to rely on their own treasure and Babylon. God's Laodicean Church isn't much different than the people of the United States and Great Britain. They are all trusting in Babylon. And they are all going to be enslaved by Babylon—modern Germany and the European Union.

REBUILDING GOD'S TEMPLE

As God's people, we must learn that we cannot cozy up to Babylon and *also* be close to God. We cannot hold back or compromise with God and His way of life. If we do, we will receive a free trip to Babylon like the ancient Jews did. This will be a terrifying punishment.

Today, the Laodiceans are making alliances with Babylon and destroying God's temple in the process. They have forgotten that God is measuring His temple now (Revelation 11:1). God's Church is His temple on Earth today. God is not going to allow the Laodiceans to destroy what He built through Mr. Armstrong without punishment. The history surrounding Hezekiah teaches us this lesson.

Seventy years after Solomon's temple was destroyed and the nation of Judah enslaved by Babylon, God stirred up the mind of a carnal leader to allow the building of the second temple. A group of Jews returned to Jerusalem to begin this construction project. The history of this phase of Judah's past shifts from Isaiah and Jeremiah to several books of the Bible known by the scholars of this world as the minor prophets.

Most religious scholars and even Laodicean ministers teach that the minor prophets primarily contain *history*. They believe that the minor prophets have no great value for us today. This is radically different from what Herbert Armstrong taught. Mr. Armstrong knew—and taught—that the minor prophets contained vital prophecies for today.

The minor prophets are end-time books. “In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts” (Haggai 2:23). This verse shows that Haggai is an end-time book. Remember, the phrase “in that day” always refers to the end time.

AN END-TIME TEMPLE

The events discussed in the book of Haggai have great meaning and significance for our time now. This book in particular shows the special relationship between the second temple and Zerubbabel. It shows that there was to be an end-time Zerubbabel commissioned by God to build a glorious temple. Mr. Armstrong knew *and taught* the Church that he fulfilled this role in the end time. Any Laodicean minister or member who knew Mr. Armstrong and willfully denies this fact is not only deceived, but has become very corrupt—spiritually.

God used Mr. Armstrong very powerfully to raise up the Philadelphian era of God’s Church. What the ancient Zerubbabel accomplished physically, Mr. Armstrong accomplished *spiritually*. We must all come to see the great spiritual significance of the work Mr. Armstrong established. This is one of the major keys to understanding end-time prophecy. “And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts” (verse 7). This verse alone connects the building of the second temple with the end time. The second temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. Christ did not shake all nations then. But Christ is about to shake all nations very soon. He is going to have an end-time temple that is full of glory—SPIRITUAL GLORY!

Mr. Armstrong always connected books like Haggai and Zechariah with the end time. Here is some of what he wrote in a coworker letter: “During the conference, God revealed something IMPORTANT to me, which came sharp and clear like a bolt of lightning. One night—or early morning before going to the conference, I don’t remember which, I was reviewing once again the book of Haggai and the 4th chapter of Zechariah.

“A certain number of the house of Judah had returned to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. The high priest among

them was Joshua. The governor was Zerubbabel. God spoke to Zerubbabel through the Prophet Haggai.

“Fourteen years before, the foundation of the temple had been laid, and some progress made on the building itself. But the building had been interrupted. And now the Jews were saying, ‘The time is not come, the time that the ETERNAL’S HOUSE should be built.’

“Jeremiah had prophesied the rebuilding of the temple after 70 years. These returned Jews had misfigured dates. They thought the 70 years had not yet come—but it had. Then God said to them, through the Prophet Haggai: ‘Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?’

“They were building ELEGANT HOUSES FOR THEMSELVES to live in, but they were neglecting to build the HOUSE for GOD to dwell in.

“So, ‘Thus saith the Lord of hosts; consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, AND BUILD THE HOUSE; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Eternal.’

“Then Zerubbabel and all the people OBEYED the voice of God. Zerubbabel was the leader in the construction. Then God said to the people: ‘I am with you, saith the Eternal.’ ...

“Zerubbabel was chosen by GOD to BUILD GOD’S HOUSE—that is, to be the human leader in it. Now this whole two-chapter book of Haggai is a PROPHECY. It applies to US, today” (January 20, 1964).

EZRA ESTABLISHED THE LAW

Haggai and Zechariah were the two leading prophets used in rebuilding the second temple. More importantly, these two prophets focus mainly on the end time. Two of the leading builders on the second temple were Zerubbabel and Joshua. But more importantly, they are two key figures in the building of God’s end-time, spiritual temple.

We shall see that Haggai, Zechariah, Zerubbabel and Joshua are all key players in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. That means Ezra and Nehemiah can give us important spiritual insights into end-time prophecy.

Since the beginning of the Philadelphia Church of God (PCG), we have come to know that in addition to Haggai and

Zechariah, there was also Malachi. In a sense, Malachi closed, or turned out the lights, on this whole period. But was there anyone else involved in the rebuilding of the temple?

Ezra and Nehemiah were also very much a part of this period in Judah’s history. We must also connect the books of Ezra and Nehemiah with this second phase of Judah’s history. In that sense then, Ezra and Nehemiah also contain information necessary for this end time. If we are going to be God’s true end-time temple, then we must understand the message of these two books. In actuality, the two books were written as one book. The two books should be read as one book. They contain a strong message for proper temple building—spiritually!

There is some question as to when Ezra entered the picture of the rebuilding of the second temple. But it is evident that Ezra was on the scene while the second temple was being built. It is clear from the Bible that Ezra’s main job was to re-establish the law. Nehemiah’s job focused on building a wall around Jerusalem. But both men understood the importance of law.

REMEMBER THE LAW

Human nature always degenerates toward catastrophe or disaster. The solution to this problem is always to get back to the law of God. Nehemiah understood this very well. “And said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments” (Nehemiah 1:5). God is a great God of mercy to those that love Him and keep His commandments. He always keeps His part of a covenant. But He can be a God of terrible punishment to those who disobey Him.

“Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father’s house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. Remember, I beseech

thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations” (verses 6-8). God always gives very clear instructions or warnings about punishment. Nehemiah recounts here that God warned the ancient Israelites that He would scatter them throughout the nations if they disobeyed Him. The people dealt corruptly against God. He did punish them.

God has also made a covenant with His end-time spiritual nation—the Church. God expects us to wholeheartedly obey His commandments, statutes and judgments. God’s end-time Laodiceans have become lukewarm in their law-keeping. Terrible punishment is coming. God is using the PCG to warn them. One of the main thrusts of our commission is to have God’s people remember the law. “Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments” (Malachi 4:4). God always warns—remember the law of Moses! Let’s now look more closely at these fascinating books of the Bible!

PURIFY THE MINISTRY FIRST

God announced the rebuilding of the second temple through a carnal, human leader. “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing . . .” (Ezra 1:1). In Ezra, we learn that the word of the ETERNAL about the rebuilding of the temple came by the mouth of Jeremiah. But God also used a carnal king to get the project started. We must realize that God can use carnal men in high places to help His work. If we need friends in high places, God will provide them for us.

We also see in Ezra that the true success of the temple construction project depended upon the purification of the ministry. God’s ministers, or priests, are the temple guardians. “And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month. For the priests and the Levites were *purified together*, all of them were pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. And the children of

Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel, did eat, And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel” (Ezra 6:19-22). A corrupt king and priesthood led to the destruction of Solomon’s temple. A purified priesthood was necessary for the temple to be rebuilt.

ANY SUCCESSFUL TEMPLE BUILDING MUST BEGIN WITH A PURE MINISTRY! All the priests and Levites were “purified together.” Notice that the priests were cleansed first and then the people (verse 20). God expects the ministers to keep themselves pure of heathen filthiness. And He also expects the people to keep themselves pure. When God’s people corrupt themselves, God begins their cleansing by purifying the ministry first.

When God’s ministry purifies itself, then we can be sure that we have all the power of God behind us. Anciently, when the priests and people purified themselves, God performed great miracles for them. Verse 22 shows that God even turned the heart of the king of Assyria to help them. This was a great miracle!

GOD’S WORK ALWAYS STARTS SMALL

When the PCG began, it started very humbly and small in numbers. It began with two full-time ministers. God began working first with Gerald Flurry and John Amos. God began the work of the Philadelphia Church with two ministers who would not submit to heathen filthiness. Then God added 10 other people. The same was true anciently. In comparison to the former nation of Judah, only a few returned to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem.

The Jews who returned to Jerusalem were made up of Levites, priests and laymen. “Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which

is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:2-5). Ezra 2:64 shows that the total number of people who went back to Jerusalem was 42,360. Comparing this number with the 2 or 3 million people who were taken into captivity, it is a very small number. Also notice that the people were primarily from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi. Some scholars want to say that the people from the house of Israel also returned to Jerusalem at this time. This is just not true. The people who returned to Jerusalem were “children of Israel,” but they were not from the tribes of the “house of Israel.”

God always raises up a people to do His work. But He always starts small. And the job God requires is generally a very BIG one. When a small group of people accomplishes an enormous, *miraculous* task, it shows that God is behind that work. However, all of the credit must be given to God. But it still takes effort and sacrifice on the part of the people.

Not many people accepted the challenge to return to Jerusalem. But the people in Babylon gave generously to support God’s work. “And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered. Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives, Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity that

were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:6-11). It is amazing to recognize the wealth of the captives in Babylon. This could be the reason that so many did not want to return to Jerusalem. Remember, Jerusalem was totally destroyed and had become a desolate wasteland. Many captives probably reasoned that it was far better to live in Babylon than to return to a destroyed Jerusalem.

The wealth of the captives also shows the great depth of God’s mercy. Even in captivity, God richly blessed these people. We must recognize that God can control anyone’s fate if they repent. God can protect anyone—even in captivity. However, it is still best to repent *before* the captivity begins.

This is a message that must be delivered to the Laodicean Church. Because of the great spiritual wealth God gave the Laodiceans, their coming captivity will end in the loss of their physical lives—for ONE HALF of them, their *spiritual lives* will be lost as well! There is still time to repent—but the window of opportunity is closing rapidly!

2

Rally Around God

BUILDING THE SECOND TEMPLE REQUIRED THAT THE people be intensely unified. “And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem” (Ezra 3:1). The people came together as “one man.” This does not mean that they followed one man to Jerusalem. It means that they were unified in mind and purpose. How did they accomplish this feat? **THEY ALL RALLIED AROUND GOD, NOT A MAN.** Those of us in God’s Philadelphia Church must learn and apply this lesson. God’s Philadelphia work cannot be truly successful unless there is unity—unity among the ministers—unity among the brethren—all unified together! The way we attain this level of unity is by rallying around God.

How much evil is there in division? How much rebellion is there in division? Disunity and division are harmful to all individuals involved and negatively affect the entire work. Certainly, authority is the glue of unity, but the Apostle Peter showed that lasting unity is built by being in subjection “one to another” (1 Peter 5:5). Being in subjection to each other requires true humility. Each member should strive to be in subjection to God’s faithful ministers. And God’s Philadelphia ministers must tirelessly serve the needs of God’s Philadelphia Church above their own. That is being in subjection one to another!

There is nothing more beautiful and pleasant than true unity. Psalm 133 tells us this fact. Do we know the way to unity? The Apostle Paul reveals the key to attaining unity. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). As a church, we can only be unified through the Holy Spirit filling our minds with the mind of Christ. Jesus Christ and God the Father have always shared perfect unity and harmony. They want us to share in their experience. As the people of God, we must have more perfect unity than ancient Israel. If each individual member uses God’s Spirit properly, wonderful unity will result. The tough tasks ahead will then be much easier to accomplish. We all must rally around God and then the PCG will become as “one man.”

REBUILD THE ALTAR FIRST

When the Jews returned to Jerusalem to begin reconstructing the temple, they began the project by restoring the altar *first*. “Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God” (Ezra 3:2). Solomon’s temple was a total ruin, but Joshua and Zerubbabel rebuilt the altar first. This fact may appear to be somewhat strange to us at first look. But remember, God’s ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8). There is great SPIRITUAL significance to building the altar first.

Prophetically, the altar symbolizes the ministry and the work of the ministry (Exodus 20:24; Leviticus 1:8; Ezekiel 40:46; Malachi 1:7-8; Revelation 11:1). Proper temple building requires that the altar, or ministry, be built or established first. In Chapter One, we showed that the ministry was purified first before the people could properly take the Passover. Building the altar first shows the IMPORTANCE OF GOD’S MINISTRY.

There is no need for a temple if there isn’t an altar, or *ministry*. How well we build the temple today depends upon the kind of ministry we have. What good is a temple if there isn’t a faithful ministry? Consider for a moment what has happened in the Laodicean era. It is the ministry which corrupted the Church. Look at the tragic results.

Many people have come to the PCG distraught, depressed and very discouraged because of what God's ministers have done to them. God's ministers have ridiculed and maligned many people for holding fast to the doctrines which Christ established in the Church through Herbert W. Armstrong. THAT IS NO WAY TO BUILD GOD'S TEMPLE!

MR. ARMSTRONG—A MAN OF GOD

The Philadelphia Church of God ministry is committed to fully support all of the doctrines established in the Church by Mr. Armstrong. This does not mean we will not come to understand new truth. A thorough study of our literature reveals that the PCG is growing significantly in its understanding of prophecies concerning the Laodicean era.

Verse 2 shows that when the second temple altar was rebuilt, the people were taught to remember Moses, "the man of God," and the law established through him. That is one of the primary jobs of the PCG ministry and the PCG as a whole. We must remember and teach that Mr. Armstrong was a man of God and that God restored much truth to the Church through him. He fulfilled the prophesied role of God's end-time Elijah (Matthew 17:11). He restored the knowledge of the Family of God (Malachi 4:5-6). He also revealed vital knowledge concerning the law and the government of God.

"And they set the altar *upon his bases*; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt offerings morning and evening" (Ezra 3:3). Notice that when they reset the altar they put it *upon his bases*. This verse holds great significance for the PCG. The *Soncino Commentary* states, "they set the new altar on the same place as was occupied by the old." Here is the lesson for us: We must build the PCG ministry and God's Church on a foundation that was previously laid. We must reset the altar upon its bases. Where do we find the correct foundation? This foundation was laid by Herbert Armstrong!

LAW AND GOVERNMENT

Two of the most important doctrines Christ used Mr. Armstrong

to restore in the Church were the truths concerning God’s government and His law. Satan’s rebellion had removed God’s government from this Earth. Adam and Eve failed to restore it. But it has been restored within God’s Church! God’s government is a family government based on God’s law of love. (Please write for a free copy of our booklet *God’s Family Government*.) It is a government from the top down that expresses itself in outflowing concern for the good and welfare of others (Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Corinthians 11:3). This truth was placed first on Mr. Armstrong’s list of “18 restored truths.” God’s true ministers must properly administer God’s law and government as revealed through Mr. Armstrong. This is all part of ensuring that the altar, or the work of the PCG ministry, is established on the right foundation.

When Zerubbabel and Joshua restored the altar, they immediately began the work of the ministry. Ezra 3:2-3 show they began to offer sacrifices to God according to what was “written in the law of Moses the man of God.” They began to sacrifice according to the LAW! This was a change in direction from what had happened in Judah prior to the captivity. Judah was not offering according to God’s law. The people had to pay a tragic price for their disobedience. The Laodiceans today are not offering according to God’s law. God is growing increasingly fed up with their religion (Malachi 2:1-3). Unless they repent, they are going to suffer Judah’s fate. The Laodicean ministry is causing God’s people to “stumble at the law” (Malachi 2:8).

Since Mr. Armstrong’s death, all of the Laodicean groups have rejected the restored knowledge about the government of God. They no longer believe in government from the top down. They no longer accept the fact that God leads through one man at a time. They have set up *their own* forms of a “committee” type of government. They no longer have God’s government.

Mr. Armstrong said at a ministerial conference in May 1976: “GOVERNMENT OF GOD IS THE WHOLE THING—AND IT HAD BETTER BE IN OUR LIVES!”

The success of a nation or church depends upon how well God’s law is administered. Every minister and member must develop a very healthy respect for God’s law. Obeying

God's law ensures that we stay in step with Him and with each other. The Laodicean groups cannot get together or stay unified because they do not keep God's law the way they should. God's ministry must be firmly established on a solid foundation. That foundation must include God's law of love and government!

ONE-MAN LEADERSHIP

Essentially, God's spiritual temple in this end time has been destroyed by the Laodicean ministry. This has come about as a result of rejecting God's law and government. All of the Laodicean groups have rejected Mr. Armstrong as God's end-time Elijah. And THEY ALL HAVE REJECTED THE TRUTH THAT GOD WORKS THROUGH ONE MAN AT A TIME. REJECTING THIS TRUTH IS REBELLION AGAINST GOVERNMENT!

Jesus Christ gave authority to Peter as the chief apostle. This fact cannot be denied if you truly study your Bible. "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That THOU ART PETER, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto *thee* [Peter] the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever *thou* shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever *thou* shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:13-19).

Notice here that God the Father gave Peter special revelation concerning who Christ was (verse 17). This revelation was not given to any of the other disciples. Christ further revealed to Peter and the others that He would build His Church on the foundation of Himself. Christ also revealed that Peter was to have a unique role within the Church. Christ said to Peter: "And I will give unto thee [singular] the keys of

the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (verse 19). Jesus Christ made this statement only to Peter. The other apostles were sent around the world—only Peter had the authority to bind and loose!

If we believe these scriptures, they give us great insight as to how the government of God works within God’s Church. Understanding how government works is a great miracle—it requires revelation from God! Jesus Christ is the spiritual Head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18). Presently, He is in heaven until His Second Coming. Here on the Earth are the various ranks of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11). At the time of Christ, He established Peter as the chief apostle, even though there were other apostles. Only one man had the authority to bind and loose. Mr. Armstrong showed us that the same holds true for our day.

Now all of the Laodicean groups have rejected these scriptures. God sent Mr. Armstrong to restore all things (Matthew 17:11). God sent Mr. Armstrong to restore His government in the Church. The Worldwide Church of God (wCG), the Global Church of God, and the United Church of God have all turned away from this revealed form of government—but they act like they still have God’s government! They now believe that there are different branches of God’s Church or work. But no one is going to make it into God’s Kingdom believing that they are *a branch* of God’s Church. You are either in God’s one true Church OR YOU ARE NOT. You are either doing Christ’s work as one unified body or you are NOT DOING CHRIST’S WORK! Paul taught this very principle to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:13).

No minister on Earth today has the authority Mr. Armstrong had. No one else has accomplished what God has done through him. He did preach the gospel around the world (Matthew 24:14). He restored the great truth about the Family of God (Malachi 4:5-6). He did build God’s spiritual temple in this end time (Zechariah 4:9-10). So we must pay close attention to what he wrote about law and government. If we do not, then we are committing a serious sin and will face harsh judgment for rejecting the law and government of God.

LAYING THE TEMPLE FOUNDATION

After re-establishing the altar, Zerubbabel began to lay the foundation of the temple. “From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid. They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia” (Ezra 3:6-7). This scripture carries a fundamental lesson for us: After the ministry, or priesthood, is established, the temple’s foundation can be laid. This foundation must also be as solid as the altar’s. A temple cannot stand unless it has a solid foundation. God’s ministry must ensure that a strong temple is built.

It is each individual minister’s job to build God’s temple properly. We must recognize that we can only build properly through the law—God’s spiritual law. We cannot build through our own human reasonings. We must construct God’s way. Herbert Armstrong set us a great example in this area. How many times did we hear him repeat the verse: “... Not by might, nor by power, **BUT BY MY SPIRIT**, saith the Lord of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6)? We must learn how to let God’s Spirit guide us! Learning to be led by God’s Holy Spirit does require time, effort and patience. God will guide us, but we must not become overconfident that God is guiding all of our thoughts and actions. God is never delinquent in His desire to guide us—**BUT WE CAN FAIL TO FOLLOW GOD’S LEAD!**

Peter taught that God’s people are like the stones of the temple. “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). God’s people must be built into a temple carefully and with a lot of hard work. If you have ever had the opportunity to watch a building’s foundation being set, you can then recognize that putting down a solid foundation is some of the hardest kind of work! It is the most important phase for the completion of a high-quality temple.

Notice that Zerubbabel used skilled laborers to build the

temple (Ezra 3:7). He used *masons* and *carpenters*. As ministers, we must be continually learning how to become more skilled at our calling. The only way we can do this is through prayer, Bible study, fasting and meditation. We must carefully counsel and teach the men, women and children what God has entrusted to our care. Counseling and speaking are our first lines of contact with God’s people. These are the two main tools we have to build with. A solid temple is built through Bible-based counseling and basic sermons. Counseling and sermon preparation are the toughest parts of our jobs.

As God’s Philadelphian ministers, we cannot allow ourselves to slip into a casual, know-it-all attitude about our calling. The first and most important key to our success in building God’s temple is recognizing HOW MUCH WE DO NOT KNOW. We must face a certain reality with regard to our Philadelphia ministry. The Laodicean ministry’s government problem has created a void of trained ministers for the PCG. Few of us have had Ambassador College training. We should not be intimidated by this fact, but highly motivated to gain the wisdom and understanding we need to effectively complete the job God has given us to do. Many of God’s men had to receive on-the-job training. As human beings we are going to make mistakes. We need to pray hard that we don’t make serious mistakes. The greatest tragedy in making a mistake is *not learning from it*. We need to study, work, learn and then continue to learn, study and work more effectively!

All of us should be studying Mr. Armstrong’s *Autobiography*. It is the best “how to” book for ministers. We should also be studying the lives of other great men, such as Winston Churchill. Many believe that he was naturally a great orator. But just the opposite is true. Here is what Mr. Churchill’s secretary wrote about his speech preparation: “The way he created a speech was a wonderful bit of creativity. It was exactly like a director of a great orchestra. I always enjoyed it. He would walk up and down using his cigars as a baton—trying out different words for their rhythm—discarding some, whispering to himself when he finally got the rhythm, he would go on with his speech [preparing]. It was like seeing a great piece of music. People suppose he was naturally an orator. But he really wasn’t, it came of the hardest work I have ever seen.”

CEDARS FROM LEBANON

Zerubbabel brought cedar trees from Lebanon to be hewn into beams for the temple (Ezra 3:7). This was no easy task. But the cedar trees provided the best material for a strong and beautiful temple. The quality of our PCG congregations is a direct reflection of our ministers' skilled labor and our members' cooperation. Building a Spirit-filled congregation is a team effort. You as a PCG member must strive to be the best member you can be, just as each of our ministers must strive to be the best minister he can be. Your approach to your spiritual life determines whether you are a cedar tree or a pine. A craftsman is only as good as the quality of the material he works with. Inferior building materials produce weak structures. PCG members must dedicate themselves to becoming the very best spiritual material. The way we ensure that we are of the highest quality spiritual material is through obedience to God's law and government.

You, as a member of God's Philadelphia Church, must develop deep respect and love for the PCG ministry. The PCG ministry is made up of faithful, dedicated men. There are not many of us. But this was also true at the time of the building of the second temple. "And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and there abode we in tents three days; and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi" (Ezra 8:15). It appears that not many of the well-trained, older Levites returned to help build the second temple. This could have been viewed as a negative situation for Zerubbabel. But as we shall see, IT WAS NOT!

Those of us in the PCG could look negatively at the fact that the majority of full-time ministers have remained with the Laodicean Church. All this means is that we need to let God develop more ministers from our Church. That is exactly what they did at the time of the building of the second temple. "Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward,

to set forward the work of the house of the Lord” (Ezra 3:8). Younger men were called into office. Study Numbers 4:3 and 8:24. You will see that a Levite did not go to work in the temple until around age 25. Zerubbabel and Joshua began taking men at the younger age of 20.

GREAT JOY IN BUILDING GOD’S TEMPLE

“And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid” (Ezra 3:10-11). These are two of the most inspiring verses in the book of Ezra. After the foundation of the second temple was laid, the priests were gathered together for a great celebration. All the people shouted praises to God for His great mercy and faithfulness toward the people. The PCG ministers and members should also do this. God has restored His temple through the PCG. God has shown us great mercy and remained faithful to us. We do have a place where we can obey God and worship Him properly. Let’s all thank God and praise Him for the PCG.

3

Beware of Enemies

WHY DOES GOD HAVE A TEMPLE AND A WORK? GOD had a second temple built primarily to bring joy and inspiration to the people. God does everything for the benefit of mankind.

At the end of Chapter Two, we quoted Ezra 3:10-11. Notice that the priests sang after the “ordinance of David king of Israel.” It was King David who institutionalized praise for God. Throughout his long life, David had grown to love God very deeply. He knew of God’s great love for mankind. He knew that men should praise God because of all of His “wonderful works” (Psalm 107).

One of the main jobs of God’s ministry is to build a temple of praise, joy, happiness and love. The Church is God’s temple. We are God’s Family. God is full of happiness, joy and love. Do our congregations have these attributes? A temple such as this can only be built by true, effective leadership. True leadership is setting an example in obeying God’s law. True leadership involves administering God’s government in love. Effective leadership is loving and serving God’s *people*. Jesus Christ said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Jesus Christ dedicated His life to the needs of others—so must all of God’s ministers. As God’s ministers, we must ensure that

we create a climate of praise, joy, happiness and love in our local areas.

God’s ministers must be on guard against bringing sadness into our congregations. Sadness in our people could be the result of the misuse of government. When a minister begins to go sour, GOD’S PEOPLE begin to suffer.

Just look at the results of the Laodicean ministers. They have brought deep sadness, misery and tragedy into the lives of many of God’s people through the abuse of government. As Malachi prophesied, they are not only sinning, they are also causing God’s people to “stumble at the law” (Malachi 2:8). Breaking God’s laws and abusing His government can never bring happiness! Christ gave ministers ample warning about hurting God’s “little ones.” He said, “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6). All ministers must learn to use government properly.

ADVERSARIES OF THE WORK

God’s ministers must also learn to detect enemies of the work. “Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel; Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither” (Ezra 4:1-2). Notice here that at the time of the second temple project, some people were claiming to be seeking God. Some were claiming a desire to be a part of the work. They seemed very sincere. They had “love.” They wanted to get together with the Jews and be spiritual. In reality, they were enemies to the work of God.

The true but sad history of God’s Church has always been that some people in our midst are actually enemies, feigning a cloak of fellowship, with the sole intent of destroying the work. As builders of God’s temple, we must grasp this reality. It should never be our goal to prevent people from fellowshiping with God’s Church. However, we must be ever watchful

of “adversaries.” God does not expect us to seek fellowship with all people that profess to be “seeking God.” The WCG is pursuing fellowship with *all* who say they are seeking God. They have compromised Church doctrine to do so. Far worse, they have destroyed God’s temple in the process.

WEAKENED THE HANDS

Let’s look at how Zerubbabel dealt with some deceitful people who wanted to “fellowship” with the Jews. Zerubbabel and the chief men of Israel could detect their deceit. Zerubbabel knew how to handle such adversaries. “But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, YE HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH US TO BUILD AN HOUSE UNTO OUR GOD; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building” (verses 3-4). Zerubbabel was quite blunt with these people. He told them very directly that they had no part with the work of God.

From time to time, God’s ministers must also deal with adversaries who do not want to really follow God. God definitely opens the door of His temple to people willing to follow His ways. But He restricts those who fight against His purpose. Although this fact is often misunderstood by many, it is a biblical principle to prevent our adversaries from hurting the work. For some, fellowship should be restricted!

God uses men to do His work on this Earth. So does Satan the devil. He will plant people within our congregations to disrupt, harm and destroy the work of God. It generally does not take long to determine who should fellowship with us and who should not. Eventually, some people’s true motives come to light.

Follow the story closely here. Verse 4 shows that the people who said they sought the same God—the people who so much wanted to be a part of the temple project—the people who were so sincere—began stopping the rebuilding project. Verse 4 states that they “weakened the hands of the people of Judah.” The word *weakened* in Hebrew means “to relax” or “to lose courage” (see *Gesenius’ Lexicon*, number 7503). That is exactly

what Satan wants all of God’s people to do—RELAX! Look at what Satan has done to the Laodiceans. They are doing a great job of relaxing. They have also lost courage in guarding true doctrine. It takes a lot of courage to build and maintain God’s temple in this world. God’s true, spiritual temple is founded on doctrine (1 Timothy 3:15). God’s ministers must make sure that all members of the local congregations are striving to live by Church doctrine and obey God’s laws. God’s true Church has always had its enemies. History shows that our adversaries have always tried to work from within our own ranks. We must maintain a careful, SPIRITUAL WATCH over our flocks.

Mr. Armstrong set us an example to follow in this area. The WCG refuses to follow his example and look at the shambles that Church has become. The PCG will continue to strive to follow Mr. Armstrong’s high standards. Mr. Armstrong was well known for his kindness and graciousness to all people. But he was also tough like Zerubbabel. He knew how to deal with adversaries.

THE BUILDING PROJECT STOPPED

Notice what those people did when Zerubbabel did get tough with them. They “hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem” (Ezra 4:5-6). They went to war against the Jews. Study verses 7-10. They used the legal systems of their day to stop the work of God. It is obvious that they exerted pressure at the highest levels of government.

Zerubbabel had to deal with enemies in his day. The PCG is also going to have to deal with enemies today. We must face the reality that there are crises coming for *this* Church. The *Milwaukee Journal* published the following ad for a powerful religious organization in its *Parade* magazine on April 17, 1994: “It’s fairly easy to dismiss with a smile the eccentric characters who dress strangely and carry signs about repentance and the end of the world. But what of those other apostles who do not dress strangely, yet come to us in a deadly serious way AND

QUOTE SCRIPTURE TO SUPPORT THEIR MOST FRIGHTENING PREDICTIONS?

“Well, maybe we need a little frightening. On the other hand, they may be making Scripture say things it was never meant to say. Consciously or unconsciously, they may even be getting in God’s way as He tries to reach us. They may be proving to be no help at all.

“You might like to read something about Bible interpretation. Write for our free pamphlet *Some Bible Beliefs Have to be Wrong*” (emphasis mine).

This ad is a sign of things to come. It probably shows that our message is being heard by these people. Could the officials of this religious organization be watching our *Key of David* broadcast closely? If they are, they’re very unhappy with our message.

A FALSE REPORT

We do not dress strangely. We *are* deadly serious about our commission. We do quote scripture. But we are not just giving some private, useless interpretation, as this ad indicates. We are clearly delivering God’s prophecies about what is coming upon our sin-sick world. Understanding a huge church’s power and influence, it is not hard to imagine that they will make present-day cult watchers look like kindergarten kids at play in the very near future! We must prepare our minds for some rough road ahead. Our enemies are going to work very hard to discredit us. That is what happened in Zerubbabel’s time. It will happen again. We must be willing to endure persecution and opposition while we WORK!

A letter of false report was sent to the king concerning what was happening in Jerusalem. “This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time. Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations. Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage

the revenue of the kings. Now because we have maintenance from the king’s palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king’s dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king; That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed. We certify the king that, if this city be builded again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river” (verses 11-16).

This letter was written to make the king believe the Jews were betraying him. But the letter was full of lies. Study to the end of the chapter. The adversaries of the Jews were successful in stopping the temple reconstruction. Verse 24 shows that the building project was stopped for nearly 15 years!

FOCUS BACK ON TRACK

Mr. Armstrong taught that it was this work stoppage that caused the book of Haggai to be written. Haggai 1 shows that the people lost their focus on the work because of all the difficulties they were having with their enemies. They began to focus on their own houses and personal lives. They said, “The time is not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built” (verse 2). God did not bless them for this (verses 5-6). They were wrong—seriously wrong! God expected His house to be built first (verses 7-15). Mr. Armstrong showed that those scriptures applied to our time as well. He had to continually fight to keep the Church focused on God’s work.

Anciently, God stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel to get the work of rebuilding the temple back on track. Even though the project had been stopped, Zerubbabel got back to the job. “Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them. Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them” (Ezra 5:1-2). THIS TOOK GREAT FAITH AND COURAGE

ON ZERUBBABEL'S PART. Why? He didn't have the secular permission to restart the project!

The local people tried to stop the project a second time. "At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall? Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building?" (verses 3-4). THE PEOPLE TRIED TO INTIMIDATE ZERUBBABEL by asking who authorized them to build. They asked for their names in order to report them to the authorities. This did not affect the building project this time. Zerubbabel would not stop construction. Why?

"But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this matter" (verse 5). Zerubbabel recognized that he had the backing of a far greater authority. He knew God's eye was upon them. In other words, he got his focus back on track. He put his focus on God. And the people supporting Zerubbabel began to get their focus back on God. We must keep our focus on God!

SERVANTS OF THE GOD OF HEAVEN

We must always recognize who we are, who is backing us and where we get our authority. Who are we? "Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls? We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them. And thus they returned us answer, saying, WE ARE THE SERVANTS OF THE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up" (verses 9-11). Zerubbabel answers the question for us. WE ARE SERVANTS OF THE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH! We may not be the high and mighty of this world. We may not be the well-known of the WCG. We may not be evangelists—BUT WE DO HAVE CREDENTIALS. We are God's servants. We have God's backing. WE GET OUR AUTHORITY FROM ALMIGHTY

God! And when we fully realize that God’s eye is upon us, there is no limit to what we can accomplish.

When Zerubbabel was asked where he got his authority to build the temple, he reminded his questioners of the original decree to rebuild God’s house. “But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon the same king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God” (verse 13). God had stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-2). Zerubbabel showed that there were signed civil documents authorizing God’s house to be rebuilt!

Today, people often ask, “Where does Mr. Flurry get his authority? Where does Mr. Flurry and the PCG get the authority to rebuild a temple?” Zerubbabel’s experience typifies the PCG today. In a similar vein, we get our authority from some original, signed documents. Ours are not civil, legal documents. The documents authorizing the PCG and our work are the writings of Herbert W. Armstrong. The PCG is the *only* church that holds onto ALL of what Christ established in the Church through Mr. Armstrong. No other church associating itself with the name of Herbert Armstrong can truthfully make that claim!

If you have not yet read *Malachi’s Message*, please write for your free copy TODAY! This powerful book explains why the Philadelphia Church came into being. It explains that Gerald Flurry and John Amos were fired because they fully supported what Herbert Armstrong taught and wrote. One of the main contentions of their final meeting at the WCG headquarters in Pasadena was over the removal of *Mystery of the Ages* from print!

The facts surrounding the beginning of the Philadelphia Church of God are not only exciting, they are unique to modern-day, true Church history. No minister had ever been fired, prior to December 7, 1989, for FULLY SUPPORTING MR. ARMSTRONG!

Zerubbabel and the people resumed the temple construction with great zeal. They were not intimidated. Their enemies reported, “Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work GOETH FAST ON, and prospereth in their hands”

(Ezra 5:8). It was very apparent that Zerubbabel and his fellow laborers were not going to be swayed again from doing their work! They were working hard, very fast and were achieving great success.

When the PCG made its humble entrance on the scene in 1989, many said we would not last five months. We were not intimidated! After completing our first year, someone said we were a peanut shell on a big ocean going nowhere. We continued working for God! Now, with more than 15 years in operation—now, after broadcasting on over 80 television stations—now, after growing to over 300,000 in our *Philadelphia Trumpet* subscription—we don't hear many comments like those listed above.

God is greatly prospering the Philadelphia Church. We *know* who we are. We *know* God is behind us. And we *know* that we must get our job done quickly.

4

Purified Together

WITH THE SECOND TEMPLE COMPLETED, GOD GAVE the people a new start. They responded to God with great obedience. Not long after the temple dedication, they kept the Passover. “And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month. For THE PRIESTS AND THE LEVITES WERE PURIFIED TOGETHER, ALL OF THEM WERE PURE, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves” (Ezra 6:19-20). What a time of great emotion this must have been!

Notice verse 20 states that the priests and Levites were “purified together.” If you look up these two words in *Strong’s Concordance*, you will discover that they mean “UNADULTERATEDLY PURE AS ONE.” The priests and Levites were strongly unified. Verse 20 states, “all of them were pure.” The people were also unified with the priests. They all kept God’s Passover together. The only way that this kind of purity and unity can be achieved is through government. True unity can only come with God’s government. At this point in Judah’s history, the priests and Levites were truly united.

How much impurity and evil is there in division? Division reveals many sins. The very recent history of the God’s Laodicean church shows us the corruption caused by division. The Laodicean

ministers are not unified. Many ministers seriously disagree with the many doctrinal changes. The WCG has split and resplit into several different groups. The *members* of these Laodicean groups are suffering the most from division. Families have been split apart. Spiritual confusion runs rampant within the membership. PEOPLE NO LONGER HAVE A CLEAR PICTURE OF WHAT THE CHURCH TEACHES OR BELIEVES.

UNITY IN GOVERNMENT

Jesus Christ said, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20-21). GOD AND JESUS CHRIST HAVE SHARED PERFECT UNITY FOR ALL ETERNITY. Jesus Christ recognized and taught that only God the Father can properly lead the entire Family. When God’s plan for man is complete, Jesus Christ is going to present the whole Family to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24).

Jesus Christ wants His Church to be deeply unified with the Father and Himself. How can the Philadelphia Church of God attain such unity? The ministry must first become unified. Ephesians 4:11-12 show that God’s government is structured from the top down. Since true unity can only come through government, each minister must be sure that he is submitting to God, His law and government. All ministers must remember that there is great strength and beautiful teamwork when the top, middle and bottom are all unified as one. Paul showed the ministers and deacons in Philippi that unity comes directly through the mind of Christ (Philippians 1:1; 2:1-5). We must strive to have more of the mind of Jesus Christ if we are going to achieve a pure unity among the ministry. The people of God must also unify themselves with the ministry. *Example* is always the best teacher. Members more readily follow government when they see their ministers willingly following authority.

FOCUS ON HEADQUARTERS

In addition, if you study your Bible carefully, it is clear that the

seat of God’s government is always at some headquarters location. Anciently there was the tabernacle at Shiloh. Then there were the temples at Jerusalem. Even in early New Testament times, Jerusalem was seen as headquarters (Acts 15:1-34). This means that each minister and member must also develop a strong headquarters focus. Division begins once the focus is taken off headquarters.

Unity is made sure through humility and loyalty. Humility and loyalty can only come about through deep conversion. The ministry must also set an example in humility and loyalty. Each minister and member must come to recognize that it will take a lot of humility and loyalty to produce the family unity that God and Christ desire for the PCG. Let’s all realize that division destroys nations and churches.

God was obviously pleased with the Jews because of their unity and their joy over His temple and holy days. Ezra 6:22 shows that He even turned the heart of the king of Assyria to support their efforts. The king strengthened “their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.” When the people of God do their part, God will even use carnal people to advance His work. Let’s all work together to build strong family unity in God’s Philadelphia Church.

EZRA—SKILLED IN THE LAW

After Darius’s death, Artaxerxes also greatly blessed Ezra and the Jews. Why? “This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him” (Ezra 7:6). This verse says that Ezra was a “ready scribe in the law of Moses.” The Revised Standard Version translates *ready* as *skilled*. Ezra was highly skilled in the law. This is the reason the king granted Ezra “all his request.” GOD OPENED GREAT DOORS FOR EZRA BECAUSE HE WAS SO SKILLED IN THE LAW. What an incredible example for us to follow.

Where are those who are skilled in the law today? This is THE BIG issue for God’s people in this end time. Who is skilled in the law? Is the Worldwide Church? Is the Global Church? The United Church? No! The PCG has the only people of God

who are truly skilled in the law! The Laodiceans are no longer skilled in the law. In fact, they are teaching us a very grave lesson—if a converted person is not skilled in the law, then he is deceived! The PCG is not deceived because we keep the law. But we cannot allow ourselves to become self-righteous. We must become even more skilled in the law.

How refined is our understanding of the law? God’s law is a law of love. Paul wrote to the Romans, “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10). Mr. Armstrong defined love as an outflowing concern for others. Do we deeply love our brethren? Do we mistreat, criticize or gossip about our brothers and sisters in Christ? This is not love. God’s law requires that we actively love each other. For example, God’s law of love requires that ministers pray for their flocks. In fact, the Prophet Samuel stated that it would be a sin for one of God’s leaders to not pray for God’s people (1 Samuel 12:23).

EZRA ESTABLISHED LAW

Ezra came to Jerusalem to establish God’s law. Solomon’s temple was destroyed because the people continually broke God’s law. The success of the second temple work depended upon how well the people kept God’s law. God sent Ezra to Jerusalem to make sure that the people recognized the importance of law.

In a similar sense, God used Herbert W. Armstrong to also establish His law in this end time. He headed God’s government as Ezra did anciently. Mr. Armstrong worked very hard all of his life to keep God’s law and government alive in the Church. We must fight to keep that *same* government in God’s Church today. Mr. Armstrong wrote, “The very fact of law presupposes GOVERNMENT. Government is the administration and enforcement of law by one in authority. This necessitates authoritative leadership—one in command” (*Mystery of the Ages*). What good is law if no one will enforce it? Are the Laodiceans enforcing law? No they are not. Look at what the WCG teaches about the law. It no longer believes that Sabbath-keeping is necessary for salvation. Yet Jesus Christ said, “... if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17). The Global Church

maintains its own brand of government called *brotherly government*. This is not the form of church government outlined in the Bible! And it’s not the kind of government God taught through Mr. Armstrong. Study Ephesians 4:8-12. There is no mention of *brotherly government*! Again, what good is law if no one will enforce it?

Jesus Christ and God the Father are not on the Earth at this time. They do expect their chosen ministry to enforce law (Matthew 16:18-19). The Philadelphia Church has God’s law and we will administer God’s law. Why? God requires us to do so! All of the Laodicean groups are seriously in error relative to the law and government. Remember what Mr. Armstrong taught—the fact that there is law requires someone to enforce it!

EZRA LOVED GOD’S LAW

God highly favored Ezra because of his attitude toward the law. “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:10). He loved God’s law. He “prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord.” The rsv translates the word “prepared” as *set*. Ezra set his heart, or mind, to seek God’s law. Ezra loved God’s law just like King David, who said, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Psalms 119:97). We also must learn to love God’s law in this manner. Have we set our hearts to love God’s law?

Ezra not only set his mind to seek the law, but he personally planned “to do it” and to teach it to all of Israel. What commitment! All Philadelphians should have a similar dedication. We all must set our hearts to do and teach God’s law. Not only for today, but for the future as well. We must remember that God’s Church is in training now to teach God’s law during the Millennium.

We should all set personal goals to be more like Ezra. We all must continually set our minds to grasp LAW—*God’s law* and government. This does require much study and a lot of hard work. We must know the law so well that we can teach statutes and judgments.

We should also study and understand the judgments made by Mr. Armstrong, God’s end-time Elijah. Do we fully under-

stand the Bible principles behind the judgments made by Mr. Armstrong? The Laodiceans do not or they would never have rejected them. Because the Laodiceans have virtually rewritten doctrine, the Philadelphia Church has now become God's college. We are a college of LAW! And ALL OF THE INDIVIDUALS IN GOD'S CHURCH, WHETHER LAY MEMBER OR MINISTER, ARE BEING JUDGED ON HOW WELL THEY KNOW, FOLLOW AND TEACH THE LAW! Ezra came to show the Jews that a temple can only be truly built with God's law. We must understand this same lesson. God's Church can only be built upon law. Let's be sure we *obey* and *teach* the law. Only then will we be qualified to teach it in the World Tomorrow.

SCRIBE OF THE GOD OF HEAVEN

Ezra was well known for his skill with God's law not only in Judah, but in Babylon as well. "Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of his statutes to Israel. Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time" (Ezra 7:11-12). Artaxerxes deeply respected Ezra. This great king recognized Ezra's true title. Ezra was the "scribe of the law of the God of heaven." Several commentaries show that this was Ezra's official title! Isn't it amazing that a carnal king could come to such understanding? He fully recognized that Ezra represented the great God of the entire universe. Artaxerxes knew who Ezra was—he knew that he came with exalted credentials!

Many question the authority and credentials of the Philadelphia ministry. Some ask, "Where does Mr. Flurry get his authority to do the work?" Do you realize that the PCG ministers share Ezra's title? The PCG ministers are scribes "of the law of the God of heaven." The great God of the universe gives us credentials. Why? WE ARE THE ONLY MINISTERS WILLING TO SET OUR MINDS TO DO AND TEACH GOD'S LAW! The Laodicean ministers HAVE BECOME ASHAMED OF GOD'S LAW. In essence, they teach that it is "contemptible" (Malachi 1:7). Yet God's law is a law of love, compassion and kindness. It represents a way of life that will always produce good results.

It is the only thing that will bring this world true peace and wonderful abundance.

COMMON NAMES—UNCOMMON JOB

You should realize that God’s people are now in training to share Ezra’s title in the World Tomorrow. We will be priests of the law of the God of heaven. What a job we will have! Our focus must be that the law we keep and teach has come from the God of the universe. As a Philadelphian member, you also represent this great God! We must never forget who we are and whom we represent. You also have credentials of the highest order.

It is interesting to study into the names of the people who returned to Jerusalem with Ezra. The family names of those who committed to “the work” are outlined for us in Ezra 8. The *Interpreter’s Bible Commentary* shows that these are names of the COMMON PEOPLE. These people DID NOT HAVE IMPRESSIVE GENEALOGIES! In other words, people from the well-known, outstanding families remained in Babylon. They did not return to Jerusalem. This is so similar to the PCG today. The well-known ministers are not with us! The outstanding, well-known families are not with us. But just as in Ezra’s time, GOD IS USING PEOPLE WITH COMMON NAMES TO DO AN UNCOMMON JOB! We all share the best of genealogies—*God’s!*

There is a key lesson that God wants all human beings to learn with regard to doing His work. God is not interested in just talent and ability. God wants people who will work according to His law. Remember, Satan was the epitome of talent. He had the ability to produce great good on this Earth and throughout the universe. But all of his great talent went to his head. He fell victim to his own vanity. He developed one great, catastrophic flaw—he rebelled against God’s law and government. All of his talent is now being directed toward rebellion and destruction. This tragic history is recorded for us in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28.

Talent and ability have their place in God’s work. But we must acknowledge that talent and ability take a back seat to being close to God. Can the Laodiceans really do God’s

work? No. Even though they talk much about *God, love* and *spirituality*, they are far away from God. In Revelation 11:2, God says they are in the outer court. The Gentile political powers are going to trample them for 3½ years because they have rejected God and His laws.

The PCG is in God's inner court. We may not have the greatest talent and ability. But we are willing to do things as God pleases. In reality, it takes much humility to do God's work. "For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isaiah 66:2). In fact, God will only work through humble people. Our humility and willingness to please God makes it easier for Him to work through us. God is doing this PCG work!

WORKING SPEEDILY

Some may accuse us of vanity when we say that the PCG is God's inner court. This is not a vain statement. It is the truth. It is a great honor to be in God's inner court. This fact should not make us spiritually smug. It should inspire us to see this work through to the end. We must never lose sight of who we are. Zerubbabel, Ezra and the Jews knew who they were. Even Artaxerxes knew who Ezra was. This knowledge motivated all of them to do the work more quickly! However, there were many people who did not know.

"And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king's treasure house. And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily" (Ezra 7:20-21). These verses give us a vital lesson. As soon as the people of God recognize who they are—as soon as God's people recognize that God is behind them—they become highly motivated to do the work. Even Artaxerxes wanted to support Ezra as quickly as he could. Because of the time in which we live, the PCG ministry and members are going to have to work more speedily.

The prophecies show that the PCG is moving into more difficult times. The times are going to require that we all have a more refined sense of government and authority. We must not forget that we are in a war with Satan and wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12). The time coming is going to require that orders be completed speedily. When an army is in the heat of battle—under intense fire—THERE IS NOT A LOT OF TIME FOR NEGOTIATING AND DEBATE! Soldiers who want to debate and negotiate while in a fight BECOME CASUALTIES.

God requires that we prove all things (1 Thessalonians 5:21). But He also forbids us to get involved in fruitless strife and debate (1 Timothy 6:20-21; 2 Timothy 2:16-18). At times, some few members want to engage the ministry in senseless debate. Our work demands that we work quickly and efficiently. There is not much time left for us to complete our job. Jesus said, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). This fact does produce a certain amount of pressure on the ministry. WE CANNOT WASTE TIME! Dealing with strife and debate can be a waste of time. We all must be careful that we are not wasting time with unimportant Bible questions, debates or controversies.

Let’s all devote our study and thinking time on the main issues facing the PCG in this end of the end time. Let’s sharpen our focus in our prayer and studies. How do we know where to place our focus? We must let the *Trumpet*, the *Key of David* broadcast and all of the PCG literature guide our focus. You should diligently prove that our message is based on God’s Word. When we all get the proper focus, God will do great things for us.

Ezra and the Jews gained a sharp focus on the work. This pleased God very much. God richly blessed them by even inspiring Artaxerxes to help beautify the temple. “Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king’s heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem: And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king’s mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me” (Ezra 7:27-28). Mr. Armstrong always

taught that when our ways please God, He blesses our efforts. Verse 27 and 28 prove this to be so.

Notice in verse 28 that Ezra was greatly strengthened by Artaxerxes' support. Why? Was the gold important to Ezra? No. He gained strength because he knew the king's giving was inspired by God. We must see that all of the great beauty in the PCG, our literature and television program, has been inspired by God. This beauty should greatly strengthen us to finish the work.

DANGERS IN THE WAY

The people who returned to Jerusalem with Ezra had great courage. Although they had the backing of the king, they still had to face grave dangers. Chapter 8 reveals that the Jews returned to Jerusalem with a great offering of gold and silver. They knew they would have to face enemies along the way. It is deeply inspiring to see how Ezra handled this life-threatening situation.

“Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us” (Ezra 8:21-23). Along the way, Ezra stopped and led the people in a fast. What great leadership! He and his fellow workers petitioned God to REVEAL a “right way” for all of the adults, their little ones, and substance. Oh, how we all need to learn to do this more.

Ezra was truly a man of God. He recognized that only God could lead them and protect them. Verse 22 shows that he would have been “ashamed” to ask for help from the king of Babylon. He recognized that he was doing God’s work and God would see to their protection. He very wisely took the time to fast to get God’s attention. What an incredible example of faith!

Where is this kind of faith today? The Laodiceans do not have such faith. Their great spiritual flaw is that they rely on riches and their own selves (Revelation 3:17). They will pay a heavy price for slipping into this degenerate condition. They and all of their “little ones” are being led into wrong ways. They and all of their little children are going to have to suffer the great horror of the Tribulation. Most of the Laodiceans no longer believe in a place of protection (Revelation 12:14). Because of their lack of belief and faith they will find none. God does promise His faithful people a place of safety.

We must learn to follow Ezra’s example in faith. Because of Ezra’s faith, God did give him and the Jews His full attention.

Ezra 8 does not record attacks of any consequence on this small band of ex-captives. Ezra *could have* gotten a bodyguard from the king. He did not. He chose to COMPLETELY RELY ON GOD. He and the people faced their enemies with God’s help. They made it through with flying colors. Verse 32 shows that the people made it safely to Jerusalem and completed the work.

In the coming months and years, the PCG is going to face enemies along the way. We are going to need God’s protection. We are going to be tested in our faith. But when we fast and petition God, we will get His attention. God will fully protect us—and we will complete our marvelous commission!

5

Protecting God's Treasure

THE VALUE OF THE TEMPLE OFFERING EZRA BROUGHT to Jerusalem, in today's figures, would be nearly \$2 million. From Ezra 8:24-30, we know that Ezra divided this wealth among 12 priests and 12 Levites. These 24 ministers were to protect God's temple wealth. They had a very weighty responsibility. There were not very many of them to protect so much wealth!

It is also interesting to note that it took 12 days to prepare (including the fast) for this journey (compare Ezra 7:9 with 8:31). We have learned over the years that the number 12 means "new beginnings." God was certainly giving Ezra and the Jews a **NEW BEGINNING**.

In a very real sense, God has also given the PCG a new beginning. The PCG began with only 12 people. Also recognize that the temple which God built through Mr. Armstrong has been—for all intents and purposes—**DESTROYED!** The corrupt Laodicean leadership has caused the Worldwide Church of God to fall into irreparable ruin. But God has not left His people without a *temple*. Where is God's temple today? It is the PCG! Where is God's temple treasure today? It is within the PCG! One of the main tasks of the PCG is to help God's people locate God's true temple after the Laodicean destruction.

God's Philadelphia ministers also have the grave responsibil-

ity to protect God’s special treasure. What is God’s treasure? *His very elect*. Why? They are filled with and loyal to God’s truth. “And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him” (Malachi 3:17). In this end of the end time, God is very concerned about His people. Jesus Christ referred to His Church as a “little flock” (Luke 12:32). God’s true people are like rare jewels of great value when compared to the billions of people on this planet. The Laodicean ministry is dealing treacherously with God’s people by deceiving them about God’s truth. The WCG doctrinal changes represent a grievous betrayal of God by His people.

As it was in Ezra’s day, there are very few PCG ministers to protect such great wealth. The PCG ministry must work very hard to preserve God’s revealed truths. We must remain deeply loyal to God and His doctrine. That is how we protect God’s invaluable treasure. When God’s ministry becomes disloyal to God’s truth, the temple treasure becomes corrupted, stolen, or lost. **THE LAODICEAN CONTROL OF GOD’S CHURCH IS THE SINGLE GREATEST TRAGEDY TO STRIKE GOD’S CHURCH IN NEARLY 2,000 YEARS! GOD’S SPECIAL TREASURE HAS BEEN CORRUPTED AND STOLEN FROM HIM.** Many members—50 percent—are going to be lost spiritually. The PCG ministers, although few in number, must now carry the great load of protecting God’s treasure.

Ezra’s life is proof that we don’t need many ministers to have an effective work. A few deeply converted men who know how to submit to God are more than enough to do the work. In Ezra’s day, God even inspired people outside of the nation to help them. “And they delivered the king’s commissions unto the king’s lieutenants, and to the governors on this side the river: and they furthered the people, and the house of God” (Ezra 8:36). Ezra did his part and looked to God for the help and support he needed. God generously supplied that need. Notice here, even the carnal people around Jerusalem *furthered* the people and the work. When God’s true ministers and people live by faith, great miracles happen. God’s Philadelphia Church has experienced many miracles. We are going to need many more to accomplish the job God has given us. Imitating Ezra’s faith will ensure that God gives us the miracles.

TREMBLING AT THE WORD OF GOD

The successful temple work eventually led to the rebirth of the nation of Judah. Ezra proved himself very capable of dealing with some serious national problems that developed while the nation was growing. “Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished” (Ezra 9:1-3). Some of the nation’s princes reported to Ezra that the people were racially intermarrying with the nations around them. Moses had recorded that God forbade interracial marriage (Deuteronomy 7:1-3). Ezra was devastated that this sin was being committed in Judah. He immediately began a fast because this sin threatened to destroy the fledgling nation. But what depressed Ezra the most about this sin was that some priests, Levites and princes were *leading the people* into this catastrophic rebellion. God’s own ministers were the chief sinners.

Ezra was not alone in being upset about this sin. “Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice” (Ezra 9:4). All those people who “TREMBLED AT THE WORDS OF THE GOD OF ISRAEL” *assembled with Ezra*. This is probably one of the most significant verses in all of Ezra. It speaks so clearly to our day.

The Laodicean ministry has been chief in trespasses against God’s established doctrine. They have led God’s people into serious rebellion. As an Ezra-type work, God’s Philadelphia Church has been warning the Laodiceans of their serious rebellion since December 7, 1989. And **ONLY THOSE WHO TRULY TREMBLE AT GOD’S WORD ARE ASSEMBLING WITH US!**

FAMILY REPENTANCE

When serious problems develop in God’s Church, the *spiritual* nation of Israel, what do we do? Ezra showed us how to handle crises. He fasted and prayed. Study this prayer. “And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments” (verses 6-10). Ezra prayed a deeply moving prayer of repentance for the nation. Ezra blushed and was greatly ashamed. The nation was all one family. Ezra set us an example in family repentance.

Mr. Armstrong taught us that the Church of God is the Family of God in embryo. Do we realize that when we sin, we affect the entire Family? Achan’s sin recorded in Joshua 7 is just one illustration of this Bible principle. Achan’s covetousness affected the whole nation at that time. God’s PCG ministry and members must learn to stay on top of serious problems and not let them develop. But when they do happen, we need to take them to God.

A NAIL IN HIS HOLY PLACE

Ezra was one of the few men in Judah who had vision. Verse 8 is not only very poetic, it’s *profound*. Ezra fully understood that God had given his rag-tag band of ex-captives a new beginning. If they remained loyal to God, they had “a nail in

his holy place.” Ezra knew that this little band of people was given great spiritual understanding. Their eyes were spiritually enlightened. They were given great opportunity to revive the great work of God. And some of the priests and people were just about ready to ruin it all.

Do we realize that the PCG is our “nail in his holy place” in this end time? We are a *nail* for the end-time people of God. We are reviving God’s only work. No other group on this planet is doing God’s work. All of us must work together to make sure our *nail* remains firm.

Let’s continue with Ezra’s prayer. Notice the fine detail of his prayer. “Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: THAT YE MAY BE STRONG, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this” (verses 11-15). Ezra recounted Israel’s sad history of disobedience to the law. He did not want to repeat the mistakes of the past. Israel’s great national sins had brought about the first temple’s destruction and the horrible captivity. Ezra knew God had a right to punish the returning captives for the same problems. He had to make some serious decisions very quickly.

A COURAGEOUS DECISION

Ezra immediately went to work to remove this sin from Judah. “Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weep-

ing and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore. And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it” (Ezra 10:1-4). Many men, women and children recognized this great national crisis. Verse 1 shows that they “wept very sore” along with Ezra. The people recognized that some serious correction was necessary. They encouraged Ezra to do what needed to be done. He received great support from the people who were loyal to God. Ezra made a very courageous decision to solve the problem.

He began correcting the nation by dealing with the priests *first*. “Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they sware” (verse 5). Ezra knew of the great importance of HAVING LOYAL PRIESTS AND LEVITES. He made sure that the ministers of his day were going to be loyal to God’s revealed way of life. He made them *sware* their obedience to God’s law. Ezra understood that he had to correct the ministry and leadership *first* or the nation would not properly respond to correction! God is doing the same thing with the Laodicean ministers today. He is using the PCG to correct them. The Laodicean Church can never get back on track unless the ministry is on track.

After correcting the priests, Ezra then dealt with the nation. “Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away. And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; And that

whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away” (verses 6-8). Ezra required that all inhabitants come to Jerusalem to hear admonition concerning their grave sin. Ezra took a very tough stance on this problem. If anyone failed to show up within three days, they would lose their personal belongings and citizenship. Ezra headed a strong but righteous government.

ASSEMBLED IN THE RAIN

The men of Judah and Benjamin did respond to Ezra's proclamation and assembled before the temple in Jerusalem. “Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain. And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel” (verses 9-10). The men trembled before the temple because of their sin. But they also trembled because of a great rain that God was causing to fall upon them (see also verses 13-14). God began to plague the people because of their sin. He used some very inclement weather to get the people's attention. He also used the great rain to show His backing of Ezra. In this end time, God is going to use some very violent weather to get this world's attention.

Ezra stood up before the people and corrected them publicly. He personally told them, “Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel.” He did not pull one punch. Why? He was trying to save the nation. Verses 18-44 list the men that had taken strange wives. There were 109 total. Of this total, 17 were priests and 10 were Levites. Ezra listed their names for all to see. Although this may have been very embarrassing at the time, the nation was spared great punishment. It is a lesson in leadership—God's way!

The PCG stands for upholding God's law. Mr. Armstrong made specific judgments on many issues. The PCG ministry

is going to stand by those judgments. Why? THE SURVIVAL OF THE CHURCH IS AT STAKE! The PCG ministry must uphold all of God’s law to keep God’s Church alive and well.

Ezra introduced a new era of law-keeping for God’s people. His dedication to God’s law was the foundation of the nation that experienced Jesus Christ’s first coming. The PCG typifies Ezra’s work in this end time. All members of the PCG must develop a renewed vigor for keeping God’s law. Our greatest honor for doing this will be to introduce Jesus Christ to the world at His Second Coming.

6

Nehemiah— A Man of Zeal

THE BOOKS OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH WERE WRITTEN as one book. Read together, THESE BOOKS REVEAL ESSENTIAL INFORMATION ON BUILDING GOD'S TEMPLE TODAY—SPIRITUALLY! The name *Nehemiah* means “the Lord has comforted.” The temple reconstruction was being thwarted by Gentile guerrilla attacks on the people. God comforted His people by calling Nehemiah to restore the walls around the city of Jerusalem. Nehemiah was violently opposed by the Gentile nations surrounding Jerusalem. He was successful in enlisting the help of the entire population to rebuild the broken fortresses. Jerusalem's walls were rebuilt in 52 days. Studying into Nehemiah's life is very inspiring. No one today may be able to match Nehemiah's zeal. He worked *very hard* and *extremely fast*.

Nehemiah was a very emotional man. He had deep feelings for the reconstruction work going on in Jerusalem. “The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great

affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven” (Nehemiah 1:1-4). Learning of the serious difficulty that was happening in Jerusalem made Nehemiah greatly upset. He was deeply moved by the afflictions of his people. He wept for the remnant in Jerusalem. He mourned, fasted and prayed to God for them.

NEHEMIAH—A MAN OF REPENTANCE

Like Ezra, Nehemiah was a deeply repentant man. Study Nehemiah’s prayer in verses 5 through 11. It is very similar to Ezra’s prayer which is recorded for us in Ezra 9. In order to gain God’s attention, Nehemiah prayed for God to forgive the sins of the entire nation (verse 6). In his deeply moving prayer, he recounted Israel’s corrupt past (verse 7). He reminded God of His great commandments, promises and redemption (verses 8-9). Nehemiah remembered God’s law. He recognized that the nation had been scattered because of the people’s law breaking. That is our same warning to the Laodicean brethren (Malachi 4:4). All of God’s people must remember the law given through Moses or we will be scattered through the nations.

Nehemiah also prayed that God would use him to help with the efforts in Jerusalem. “O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king’s cupbearer” (Nehemiah 1:11). Nehemiah greatly feared God’s name. He prayed for all the servants of God that desired to fear His name. The people who desired to fear God’s name were suffering great opposition. Nehemiah knew that only God could prosper them.

To be able to go and assist in Jerusalem, Nehemiah was going to need the blessing of King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah held a very responsible position within the king’s court. He was the king’s cupbearer. The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* shows that the cupbearer was an officer in the

king's court. His main job was to protect the king from assassination. Nehemiah held a position of considerable rank and importance. He would have had frequent access to the king's presence.

Nehemiah earnestly prayed that God would give him favor with this very powerful man. He prayed for favor so he could do the work. What an example! Nehemiah's heartfelt prayer was not for himself, but for the work of God.

IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

God quickly responded to this kind of prayer. "And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven" (Nehemiah 2:1-4). God worked it out so that Artaxerxes noticed Nehemiah's deep sadness over the troubles in Jerusalem. The king spoke to Nehemiah about his very visible sorrow. Nehemiah became afraid when the king took notice of his melancholy. A cupbearer had to remain alert and keep a sharp focus in order to protect the king's life. Artaxerxes was an extremely powerful man and could have had him executed for even small mistakes.

But the king was only concerned for Nehemiah. Artaxerxes wanted to know if he could help Nehemiah in any way. What was Nehemiah's response? Before asking favor of the king, He *prayed* again—immediately—on the spot!

Nehemiah's request to return to Jerusalem could have meant life or death for him. He instantly took the situation to God. This shows us the extreme importance of prayer. How often do we pray? How detailed are our prayers? Do we pray immediately when the need arises? When we face major trials and tests in our lives, do we take them to God

before we act? Or do we *act* and *then* take the consequences to God? The Apostle Paul admonished the Romans to be “instant in prayer” (Romans 12:12). *Instant*, faithful prayers get immediate results!

THE GOOD HAND OF GOD

Nehemiah courageously asked to be relieved of his cupbearer duties, temporarily, to be able to help in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:5). What was the answer? “And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time” (Nehemiah 2:6). The king and queen responded favorably to his request. Nehemiah also asked for letters of recommendation from the king to the governors of the territories that he would pass through on the way to Jerusalem. Nehemiah needed not only Artaxerxes’ favor, he also needed the support of the governors submissive to the king.

Nehemiah also requested a special letter written to the “keeper of the king’s forest.” He intended to secure Jerusalem by building an impenetrable wall. “And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the GOOD HAND OF MY GOD upon me” (verse 8). The walls around Jerusalem needed to be very strong. Only top-quality timbers would do the job.

The king (and queen) granted all of Nehemiah’s requests. Why did they do so? Nehemiah recognized that it was God who had given him great favor. Even though the king and queen physically supported him, their support was directly inspired by God. Nehemiah stated, “the good hand of my God [was] upon me.” Again and again God greatly blessed His work at that time through this carnal king. It is truly miraculous how often God used this king to help both Ezra and Nehemiah. We must always look to God for the help we need today. God will always come to our aid—even through people outside of God’s Church. We see a lot of this kind of help today with regard to our television program. There are many

talented people, not part of this Church, who are giving the PCG very loyal support. This is from the good hand of God! As we persist in looking to God, the miracles will continue to come for this little flock.

FACING BITTER ENEMIES

“When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel” (verse 10). Nehemiah had to face opposition as soon as he arrived in Jerusalem. But he handled the situation with the stealth of a great warrior. Verses 11-16 show that he assessed the condition of the walls clandestinely. He wisely hid his true purpose for coming to Jerusalem from everyone, Jew and Gentile alike (verses 12, 16).

In order to protect God’s work, we must always be on guard for enemies. Jesus Christ warned us, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore *wise* as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16). Nehemiah was wise as a serpent. So must we be. God’s ministry must also be on guard for the sheep. We are in a serious spiritual war. We must work as men at war.

Nehemiah found that the destruction of Jerusalem’s walls was extensive. He couldn’t even pass through the fountain gate (Nehemiah 2:14). Much work had to be done. Repairing the walls of Jerusalem was vital to the continued efforts of the work in Judah. Nehemiah realized that he was going to need the help of all the people to reconstruct the walls. He made a very impassioned petition to the people (verse 17). He showed them that they could help alleviate the great distress in Jerusalem if they would rebuild the walls.

The people responded to Nehemiah with full support. “Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king’s words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work” (verse 18). Nehemiah won their support by telling them how God had already blessed him. He encouraged the people that God would bless their efforts as well. Nehemiah *always* GAVE THE CREDIT TO GOD!

WORKING AMONG SCOFFERS

Moved to act, the people began the reconstruction of the walls. The surrounding Gentile governors despised their work. They laughed them to scorn (verse 19). Sanballat, one of the chief Gentile leaders, even accused the Jews of rebellion. But Nehemiah answered these men fearlessly. “Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem” (verse 20). He very bluntly told these Gentile men that since God was behind the Jews, nothing would stop them. Nehemiah let these men know that they had no part in what God was doing in Jerusalem. Their laughing and scoffing would never stop the work of Almighty God.

People today have also despised the work of the PCG. Many top Laodicean leaders have laughed us to scorn. That has not affected or stopped this work! We know God’s hand is with us. And we say to those who despise us, “Laugh on!” Because God is behind us, we are going to accomplish God’s work—MARVELOUSLY!

Chapter 3 gives the history of the repairs made to the gates and walls of the city. The people made great progress quickly. Please study this chapter on your own.

Sanballat and his henchmen became incensed that the job was getting done and getting done *quickly*. “But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall” (Nehemiah 4:1-3). They mocked the Jews even more. Tobiah was very critical of the Jews. He vainly stated that even a little fox could destroy what had been built. But the Jews could not be stopped.

THE MIND TO WORK

When the mocking became great, all of the people prayed to

God. “Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity: And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders. So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people HAD A MIND TO WORK” (verses 4-6). The people asked God to give the Gentiles a taste of their own mockery. The Jews recognized that Sanballat, Tobiah and the others were mocking God and not them. THEY WERE DESERVING OF PUNISHMENT.

Notice that the Jews kept on working. They had “a mind to work.” They could not be moved from their purpose to rebuild the walls. God was on their side. They did not need to fear any man. The lesson for the PCG is the same. We are getting the job done because it is God’s work. Jealous people are going to criticize us. They are going to say all kinds of horrible lies about the ministry. People are always going to slander our reputations. We must recognize that when members of the PCG or the ministry are mocked, IT IS ACTUALLY GOD WHO IS BEING MOCKED. Though we may be made a laughing stock, we should never stop working. Whom should we fear? Not any man. We must develop a mind to work no matter what men say about us (Romans 8:31).

Realizing that poking fun at the Jews did nothing to stop them, Sanballat organized a full-scale battle against them (Nehemiah 4:7-8). Doing the work of God was going to break out into a war. Nehemiah records in verse 9 that the people knew about the coming conflict so they prayed about it and just continued working. Nehemiah set a watch day and night to protect the people. These people had great courage.

SPADES AND SWORDS

BUT THE PRESSURE TO QUICKLY BUILD THE WALLS AND FACE A WAR BECAME OPPRESSIVE FOR SOME OF THE PEOPLE. “And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall” (verse 10). Rebuilding the walls was extremely hard work. The people were beginning to lose their strength. The Hebrew word for “decayed” literally means *stumbled*. The picture

painted by this word is of a person tottering while carrying a heavy burden. Who has truly *stumbled* under God’s work in this end time? God’s Laodicean ministry (Malachi 2:8).

At times, the work of God can be very difficult. Sometimes we could feel like we are tottering under the weight of the job God has given us. We must avoid grumbling and complaining. God has given the PCG—both ministers and members—an awesome task. In Nehemiah’s time, some of the people began to feel that there were just too few people to clear the heavy rubbish and also fight a war. The task of reconstruction now seemed too overwhelming. Even though our work may be difficult, we must see it through to the end. When the work seems impossible, FAITH MUST TAKE OVER FOR HUMAN WEAKNESS. Each PCG member must walk by faith.

Nehemiah was violently opposed by many enemies, but he was a *fast* worker. He *finished* the wall in 52 days. Think on his example, and you realize that you may not work as hard as you think you do. Nehemiah was somewhat of a workaholic.

Nehemiah 4 talks about how the people HAD A MIND TO WORK and about the enemies they faced. Here is what these enemies did: “And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come IN THE MIDST AMONG THEM, and slay them, and *cause the work to cease*” (Nehemiah 4:11). There are always adversaries who want to destroy the work. Here it says they will sneak into the midst of us. It should not shock us that Satan would try to get to sneak inside this Church.

We don’t want to be foolish about this. Expect attacks. Expect *me* to be attacked in every way. Expect this Church to be *attacked* with all kinds of lies—mixed with truth—including slander and everything you can imagine. The accuser of the brethren is *cast down*, and he is going to accuse us as long and as vigorously as he can.

The Jews’ enemies planned to destroy them while they worked. They wanted to enter among them secretly, then pounce on them. The enemies also planned to kill them even if they tried to escape. They were planning to come after the Jews from every direction. Their plans were thwarted. The Jews living near these Gentiles uncovered their secret and informed Nehemiah (verse 12). He took swift action against the enemies’ war plan.

He went to the *nobles*, the *rulers* and “the rest of the people.” He made a very stirring speech. “Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses” (verse 14). He warned the people not to fear the enemy. He reminded them that the “great and terrible” God would fight this battle for them!

Nehemiah organized all of the people in and around Jerusalem to help fight off the enemy. Nehemiah divided the people into two groups. Half of the people continued to do the work. The other half focused on protecting the workers. But even those who did the work carried their weapons in hand **WHILE THEY WORKED!** It was a time for *spades* AND *swords!* (verse 17).

WORK AND FIGHT BY FAITH

Our work is nearing completion, yet there is much left to do. Satan will devise any plan to destroy the **ONLY** work of God on the Earth at this time.

Nehemiah’s speech should greatly move us to fight for the Family of God. One of Satan’s most evil plans is to place enemies among us, just as he did in Nehemiah’s time. Do we have a desire to protect God’s little flock?

Some people do come among us with the sole purpose of destroying the brethren. These kinds of enemies are easy to detect. But other brethren may let down spiritually or become bitter. Bitter people often become one of Satan’s most effective weapons of destruction within the Church. As time draws closer to the end, we must understand that the full force of Satan’s wrath will come against us as a Church and as individuals. Satan wants to destroy **YOU!** We all must stay spiritually strong. We must fight off bitterness. Paul warned the Hebrews, “[Look] diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness [spring] up [and] trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (Hebrews 12:15). Paul said many true Christians become defiled with bitterness. Spiritual bitterness is like heroin. Once you get hooked, it is a hard habit to break. Satan will destroy individuals with bitterness.

The PCG is entering into fearful times. As we succeed in

the work of God, our angry enemies from outside the Church are going to wage all-out war against us. Our adversaries will come after us from every direction. We are going to have to work and fight at the same time! *Our time* is the time for spades and swords.

We must look to God, do the work and hold our spiritual swords high. Even with all of this, we must realize that only God can win our battles for us.

We must work and fight by faith. Some people could ask the question, *Is this work too much for us?* That is the wrong question. Here is the right question: *Is this work too much for God?* The answer is a resounding *no!* A *THOUSAND TIMES NO!*

NEHEMIAH—A MAN OF FAITH

Nehemiah was an exceptional leader. He anticipated attacks and opposition. He was an effective organizer of the people. He assessed the weakness of the Jews’ situation and made it their strength. “And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us” (Nehemiah 4:19-20). Nehemiah was able to inspire the people to work as a team. He led a small group of people to accomplish a very large task.

Nehemiah knew how to work hard. He inspired the people to do the same. “So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day. So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing” (verses 21-23). Nehemiah and the people worked from dawn until dark. He inspired the people to heroic dedication.

Nehemiah wasn’t naive about his enemies. Verse 23 is not properly translated in the King James Version. The Bible margin gives the correct rendering for the last part of this verse.

It should read, “every one went with his weapon for water.” Nehemiah had the people take their swords *with them*, EVEN WHEN THEY WENT FOR WATER! Protecting God’s people and God’s work was all-important to him.

But Nehemiah should be remembered most as a *man of faith*. He repeatedly drew the people’s attention to God. When a difficult task had to be done—when the enemy was upon them—he showed the people that only God could get them through. He made sure the people knew God was their comfort. We must be as Nehemiah—men and women of faith. God has given us His work to do. We are going to face difficulties, tests and bitter enemies. God is our comfort. He will get the job done. God will protect us as we work. Let’s all work—BOTH HARD AND FAST!

7

Good Soldiers

NEHEMIAH WAS A MAN OF GREAT FAITH AND STRONG emotion. God called him to repair the walls in Jerusalem. He was violently opposed in this phase of the work. Through faith, he was able to do the work and fight a war to protect that work at the same time. Nehemiah was a competent leader. He motivated the people to complete the walls in just 52 days!

The history from Nehemiah is essential for us today. Throughout man's dismal history, God's work has always been violently attacked. This should not surprise us. Satan the devil has always wanted to destroy God's people and the work. The daily reality that the PCG must live with is that we are in a war until Jesus Christ returns (2 Timothy 2:3).

Every "good" soldier must keep a sharp focus while in a battle. Some battles we must enter are going to be difficult. We are going to face enemies, at times, *many* enemies. Some of the people in Nehemiah's time grew weary of working and fighting. They looked at their enemies and became dismayed. They looked at the difficulties with constructing the walls and became negative. They wanted to give up. Nehemiah turned these people to God. He moved them to see that God was behind their work. God was their strength. He would fight their battles for them.

God expects us to apply the lessons from Nehemiah to our time. We must not allow ourselves to become negative about the work God has given us to do. We cannot fear our enemies. If we focus on our enemies, we could also lose faith. God expects us to be like Nehemiah. We need to turn to God for the strength to do the work. We must let God win our battles for us.

JEW DISLOYAL TO JEW

Like Ezra, Nehemiah also effectively judged the Jews of his time. When Nehemiah came on the scene, the nation was struggling for its very existence. Not all of the problems Nehemiah faced came from outside of the nation. He had to deal with some serious internal crises as well. There came a time when Jew was being disloyal to Jew.

“And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king’s tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards” (Nehemiah 5:1-5). The poorer people of the land made a great outcry to Nehemiah. They were suffering under deplorable conditions.

Realize that nearly all of the people that had returned from Babylon were living in Jerusalem while the walls were being rebuilt. Remember that Nehemiah organized the people so that some were workers and others were defenders. At this same time, there were also great rains which were causing a famine in the land (Ezra 10:9).

With the enemy attacks, in essence, the people were under siege. Food was scarce. To make matters even worse, the poorer people were being seriously abused by the wealthier Jews. The rich Jews were using them and their sons and daughters to

harvest what little corn existed for themselves. The poor had a difficult enough time finding food for their own families. The less fortunate Jews also had to borrow money from the wealthier Jews to pay taxes imposed on them by the pagan king. Things became so bad that some people even mortgaged their lands and sold their children into slavery so that they could make ends meet. The rich were sinning greatly against their own people. They were also taking unfair advantage of the people through usury.

SELLING BRETHREN INTO SLAVERY

Nehemiah became very angry at this turmoil within the nation. “And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer” (Nehemiah 5:6-8). Nehemiah severely corrected the Jewish nobles, rulers and wealthy people.

Nehemiah was working extremely hard to build the walls to protect the people from vicious enemies. Yet the people had become treacherous to each other. Indications are that Nehemiah and other wealthy Jews had bought some of the people out of slavery in Babylon (verse 8). He could hardly fathom that some of the people were committing a great evil by selling their own brethren back into slavery. He rebuked them sharply for this grave sin. When Nehemiah reprimanded the people, no one answered. They were convicted of their terrible sin against their own people.

How does this apply to the PCG today? Are we very careful not to abuse our own brethren? There are times that we are not as careful as we should be. We should always avoid taking advantage of each other financially. All of us should be cautious in loaning or borrowing money. The ministry must help protect the flock from these kinds of problems.

Another sin that we need to be constantly on guard against is gossip. Because we are so scattered, people do spend a lot

of time in fellowship on the telephone. If these conversations drift into a discussion of other people and their problems, we should learn to stop that immediately. What right do any of us have to discuss the problems of other people?

God condemns gossip throughout the Bible. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:16). This verse shows that reputation-damaging gossip is as wicked as murder. Study in detail the following proverbs: Proverbs 11:13; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20, 22. They vividly describe the evils associated with gossip. In a similar vein, we must also be on guard against being condemning and critical of each other. Do we have the right to judge, criticize or put down another one of God's people? Let's all work hard to stop this abuse of the brethren.

FEARING GOD STOPS EXPLOITS

Why did the Jews exploit their own brethren? Why did they exact unfair usury? Why do we sometimes fall into gossip? Because we don't fear God enough. Nehemiah taught this fact to the people. "Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?" (Nehemiah 5:9). If we truly fear God, we will work hard not to sin against our brothers. Verses 10-13 show that Nehemiah commanded the people to stop exacting usury. It appears that some of Nehemiah's own relatives were involved in those crimes. He made the nobles and priests promise to restore the lands, vineyards, oliveyards, money and corn to the people. Nehemiah stated in verse 13 that anyone who would not comply with the oath would be cursed.

As a ruler, Nehemiah set a perfect example in not taking advantage of the people. He refused to exploit them. "Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare

rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God” (verses 14-15). Nehemiah could have lawfully accepted provisions and money due him as governor. He did not even take this from the people. He showed all of the other nobles that he was willing to make a sacrifice for the work.

Nehemiah provided for his needs out of his own resources. As cupbearer, God had richly blessed him. He did not need a salary, so he did not take one. Nehemiah also made sure that his servants or assistants did not take advantage of the people. He did this out of fear of God. Nehemiah focused all of his attention on the work, not on providing for his own need or wants.

RICH ATTITUDE OF SERVICE

The other nobles and priests who had come to Jerusalem became more focused on gaining material wealth and property than on the work. “Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work. Moreover there were at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us. Now that which was prepared for me daily was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people. Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people” (verses 16-19). Nehemiah had a rich attitude of service. He was not interested in personal gain. In fact, he continually fed 150 Jewish rulers at his own table. He shared all of his provisions with the people. He set a sterling example of giving.

Nehemiah saw the oppressive conditions that the people were living under. He could not in good conscience take food or money that the people needed for themselves. Verse 19 shows that Nehemiah totally relied upon God to look after his own needs.

We need to recognize that people coming into the PCG from the Laodicean groups are spiritually impoverished. We must serve their great spiritual need. The Laodicean doctrinal changes have greatly diminished their well-spring of the Holy Spirit. We have a grave responsibility to be patient with them. When members come to us out of the Laodicean groups, we

should patiently give them some time to reorient their standards. We could be guilty of abusing new PCG members if we self-righteously criticize their spiritual problems. We must remember that God gives repentance (Romans 2:4). God's Holy Spirit will lead our new members to recapture high standards in everything. We all need to work at fearing God more. Let's make sure we follow Nehemiah's example of being focused on the work. Let's not exploit each other.

THE FIGHT AGAINST RUMORS

Nehemiah always used great shrewdness when dealing with enemies. Judah's adversaries never got the upper hand when Nehemiah was their governor. "Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief" (Nehemiah 6:1-2). The Jews' enemies never gave up trying to destroy them. Sanballat and Tobiah were their chief enemies. They were always scheming against Nehemiah. He never trusted them. Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem the Arabian could not believe that Nehemiah was getting the job done. They wanted to stop the reconstruction of the walls before the doors were set in the city gates. Sanballat and the others devised a plan to deceive Nehemiah into believing that they wanted to be at PEACE with him. They tried to draw him to a meeting in some far away village. The Jews in the State of Israel today need to heed their own biblical history!

Nehemiah never allowed these men to distract him from his job. "And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner. Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou

buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart” (verses 3-8). Sanballat, Tobiah and others continually hassled Nehemiah.

Nehemiah said, *why should I leave a great work and come talk to you?* Now, he’s talking about priorities, isn’t he? He was saying, *Look, I have a work of God to do, and I’m not going to waste my time.* Wasting time is always a temptation. I have to watch myself, even on the phone, or I can waste a lot of time. I don’t want to be unsociable or curt, but I don’t want to waste time, either. There are so many temptations to get us away from God’s work. Are we into what we should be doing? Are we really doing what’s important?

These verses show that Nehemiah was sent letters at least five times (verse 5). They worked hard to intimidate him. Nehemiah was not easily scared. He told them that he had a “great work” to do. He did not have time for their foolishness.

We have such a short amount of time to do the work—perhaps more than Nehemiah’s 52 days, but we don’t have much time to get the job done. The lion has roared! We need great urgency in this work! People need to see that urgency in the lives of our ministers and wives, so they can be stirred up more to get ready for what is ahead.

The adversaries would not give up. They started rumors that Nehemiah and the Jews were planning to rebel against Babylon. They were spreading the vicious lie that Nehemiah wanted to be king and rule in Jerusalem. They let Nehemiah know that they were going to take this information all the way to the top—to the king in Babylon! Nehemiah fought a great fight against these rumors. He let these men know there was no substance to these claims. These rumors were only true in their wicked imaginations.

AVOID THE RUMOR CONNECTION

How much time do we invest in listening to rumors? The

Worldwide Church of God doctrinal disaster and corrupt leadership have fed upon the rumor mill. We all must be careful not to get caught up in the rumor information connection. If we do, we could waste a lot of time and money on telephone calls.

From time to time, rumors are even spread about our Philadelphia Church of God headquarters. Some enjoy spreading lies about imagined internal struggles or politics here in Edmond. Please remember that the headquarters staff functions as a team. Although we all are imperfect human beings, we do strive to work well together. All of us recognize that we are here to support God the Father and Jesus Christ in *their work*. Sometimes it is very funny to hear from the field about what is going on at headquarters! Don't let rumors eat up your time and money.

Nehemiah understood that Sanballat and Tobiah's only plan was to stop the building of the walls. They wanted to weaken the work. "For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands" (verse 9). Nehemiah did not allow these men to draw him into a fight over personalities. These men were enemies of the work. As always, Nehemiah looked to God for help. He prayed for God to strengthen his hands. Nehemiah let God fight this battle.

WE SHOULD NOT FLEE ENEMIES

Not all of Nehemiah's associates looked to God for protection. Some did become afraid of the enemies' threats. "Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee" (verse 10). On the surface, Shemaiah appeared to be in a panic. He displayed great fear for his life and for Nehemiah's. He wanted Nehemiah to hide in the temple with him. Nehemiah's response is most inspiring. "And I said, SHOULD SUCH A MAN AS I FLEE? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in" (verse 11). "SHOULD SUCH A MAN AS I FLEE?" This was the response of a true and faithful leader. God had

commissioned Nehemiah to do a job. God had blessed him and furthered his efforts continually. Nehemiah also knew God would fight this new battle for him. To flee would show a great lack of faith in God’s almighty power! Nehemiah knew God would not allow his life to be taken unless it was His will. Nehemiah concentrated on the job at hand and allowed God to protect him. Oh, how we all need to do the same!

The Bible is clear on the fact that the PCG is going to be surrounded by enemies. We need to set our hearts now to *not* be afraid or flee from the fights ahead of us. Should such people as we flee? We are God’s special treasure (Malachi 3:17). We have a great job to do for God. Whom should we fear?

THE ENEMIES WITHIN

As it turns out, Shemaiah and others were traitors. They only pretended to be afraid. “And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear. So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God” (Nehemiah 6:12-16). Tobiah and Sanballat had actually hired Shemaiah to make Nehemiah afraid. Verses 17-19 show that even many of the nobles were in league with Tobiah and Sanballat. There were treacherous enemies within this struggling nation.

God used Nehemiah to defeat all of their plans. The wicked men could not stop the completion of the walls. This incredible project was completed in an unbelievable 52 days. When the walls were completed, all the enemies of the nation were completely downcast. Finally, Sanballat and his henchmen recognized that Nehemiah was doing the work of Almighty God. What encouragement for us! Who can ever fight God and win?

THE RETURN TO SHUSHAN

Study chapter 7 for yourself. Nehemiah had to return to the Shushan palace as he promised (Nehemiah 2:6). He placed his brother, Hanani, and Hananiah, one of his marshals in the palace, in charge in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 7:1-2). These men were given the rule of Jerusalem because they were faithful men. These two men feared God above people (verse 2). These are the kind of men who need to be in God's leadership and ministry. Above all else, we need to be faithful to God's truth and courageous around enemies. Fearing God will give us great courage. In this chapter, God also inspired Nehemiah to record the genealogies of the people who returned to Jerusalem from captivity (verses 6-73).

Chapter 8 gives the fantastic story of Ezra reading the law to the people on the Feast of Trumpets. At that time, the people were very eager to hear God's law taught to them. "And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground" (Nehemiah 8:5-6). The people showed deep respect for God and His law. When Ezra opened the book of the law, they stood up. With one voice they praised God. In unison they lifted up their hands and bowed their heads. The people humbled themselves before God's supreme majesty. They all recognized that they were a people richly blessed because of God's great law.

This attitude would save the nations of Israel! If only our people would heed God's law.

GOD'S JOY—YOUR STRENGTH

Verses 7 through 9 show that Ezra and other priests taught the people well. "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" (verse 8). They gave the people the true meaning of what had been written. The people were so moved by their preaching that they wept, not out of joy, but mourning. Ezra and the Levites encouraged the people to be joyful. They proclaimed, "This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep" (verse 9).

Ezra persuaded the people to be happy on this high holy day. He exclaimed, “Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (verse 10).

Those of us who have come together as the PCG should also have a very deep respect and worship for God. We have been richly blessed with a deep understanding of His law. Being a Philadelphian means that we are always striving to keep God’s law more perfectly. No Laodicean group has a full understanding of God’s law anymore. And, as time passes, they are losing even more of the understanding they still have. Do we have a greater appreciation for God’s law? We all should be eager to have more understanding of God’s law!

We need to have a stand-up attitude when it comes to *Malachi’s Message*, the *Philadelphia Trumpet* magazine and the many booklets published by the PCG. We have been given exalted revelation. All of us should be lifting up our hands, bowing our heads and saying, “Amen, Amen.”

We must also come to realize that the “joy of the Lord” is our strength. As we have stated so many times in this booklet, there are difficulties ahead, but if we maintain God’s joy in our lives, we will be very strong. God’s joy is our strength.

How do we keep the “joy of the Lord” in our lives? “And they found written in the law which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month: And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written” (verses 14-15). The people were quick to obey God. They heard what was written in the law—then they did it! Obedience preserves God’s joy in us.

Study verses 14 and 15 carefully. There is deep meaning behind them. Notice that the people were to gather olive branches. An olive tree is a biblical symbol for God’s Holy Spirit. The joy of the Lord comes into our lives through God’s Spirit. God promises to give us more of His Spirit if we obey Him (Acts 5:32). We will always have the “joy of the Lord” in our lives if we are obeying God’s law.

DEEP REPENTANCE

Study Nehemiah 9 through 12 on your own. These chapters describe how Ezra and Nehemiah organized the temple worship and the people geographically. Remember that Ezra had corrected the people for interracial marriage (Ezra 10). It appears that not everyone immediately complied. Nehemiah 9 includes the account of others who later also repented of this national sin. This chapter records the very moving, repentant prayer of the people. The people did deeply repent of some serious sins. If only our people could learn from their own history! The nations of Israel could be saved from a disastrous end if they repented of their sins like these people did anciently.

Chapter 10 is a list of princes, priests and Levites who entered into a national covenant with God to stop their backsliding into interracial marriage and other sins. Verses 33-39 show how the priests kept the people focused on the work by having them bring their tithes and a continual wood offering to the temple. God's altar fires were kept burning through these wood offerings.

All Philadelphians have a place in the work. Not every one of us can be in the ministry. But everyone can bring a type of wood offering to keep God's altar fires burning. Tithes and offerings are important, but there are other sacrifices that can be made as well. Every member can give the sacrifice of fasting and prayer.

Chapter 11 describes the lottery used to decide which people would live in Jerusalem and chapter 12 is a listing of priests that came to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel.

RESTORING FAITHFUL MEN

Nehemiah had been governor over Jerusalem for 12 years. As we stated above, he did return to the Shushan palace as he promised. It is not known exactly how long Nehemiah remained in Shushan. The Bible does not tell us how, but he was then able to regain the governorship over Jerusalem. When he returned, he had to do some serious housecleaning.

Eliashib, a priest in charge of the temple chambers, had formed an alliance with Tobiah (Nehemiah 13:4). He actually

allowed Tobiah to live within the temple. “And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests. But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king: And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense” (Nehemiah 13:5-9). The alliance between Eliashib and Tobiah infuriated Nehemiah. The Levites who were performing the temple service were being short-changed. Their provisions were going to Tobiah. Nehemiah was *grieved sore* over this situation. He immediately went to work and kicked Tobiah and his possessions out of the temple. He commanded that the temple chambers also be cleansed. He replenished the temple treasuries and restored the Levites to their proper positions in the temple (verses 10-14). Nehemiah restored faithful men to their offices.

Isn’t this exactly what God has done with the PCG? When Mr. Armstrong died, the temple, or Church, began to be abused by some unfaithful men. But God has now restored the temple responsibilities to some FAITHFUL MEN. The ministry serving the Philadelphia Church of God is made up of men that are faithful to God’s doctrines.

At the end of this book, Nehemiah prayed to God, “Remember me, O my God, for good” (verses 31). If you read and study this entire booklet, there should be no doubt in your mind that both Ezra and Nehemiah accomplished much good for God. Do we realize that the good they established did not die with them? If we do our part to use the lessons from these books, their good will live on in us. If we remain truly Philadelphian, when our work is finished, we can also honestly pray, “Remember us, oh our God, for good”!

ADDITIONAL READING

The Philadelphia Church of God produces many informative and interesting publications that you may want to request.

Here are a few you might consider:

Haggai—Proof of God’s Work Today

The Philadelphia Church of God has been commissioned to warn God’s Laodicean Church about its dangerous rebellion against God, His truth and work. The Laodiceans still claim to be doing God’s work. In reality, they are doing their own work. Haggai shows us where God is working.

Malachi’s Message

This is the gripping story of God’s Church gone off track in this end time, and what God did to correct the tragedy. It documents what happened to the Worldwide Church of God after its founder, Herbert W. Armstrong, died in 1986. The Bible prophesied in detail that the Church would depart from what Mr. Armstrong taught, and that God would begin His work anew with a faithful remnant. *Malachi’s Message* was the seminal volume for the Philadelphia Church of God, and remains the centerpiece of our literature.

The Prophecy of Habakkuk

We now own the copyrights to 19 books and booklets written by Mr. Armstrong. That is the magnificent court victory we have just won. God’s work has been *revived*—as prophesied! Even if we had obtained a total victory in the courts, we still would have only had “fair use” of Mr. Armstrong’s works—not ownership. It is the most miraculous event since the Philadelphia Church began. Habakkuk prophesied that it would be a double-wonder miracle. God’s message to the world could not have been delivered, if we had lost. The court-case battle tested the faith of God’s people. Most of them have failed that test. Conversely, the miraculous victory revealed who believes God enough to fight for and deliver His end-time message!

You can write for your own *free* copies of any of the literature listed above. It’s all provided free of charge as an educational service in the public interest. Locate the address of the office nearest you, listed on the next page, and write for your free copies today!

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