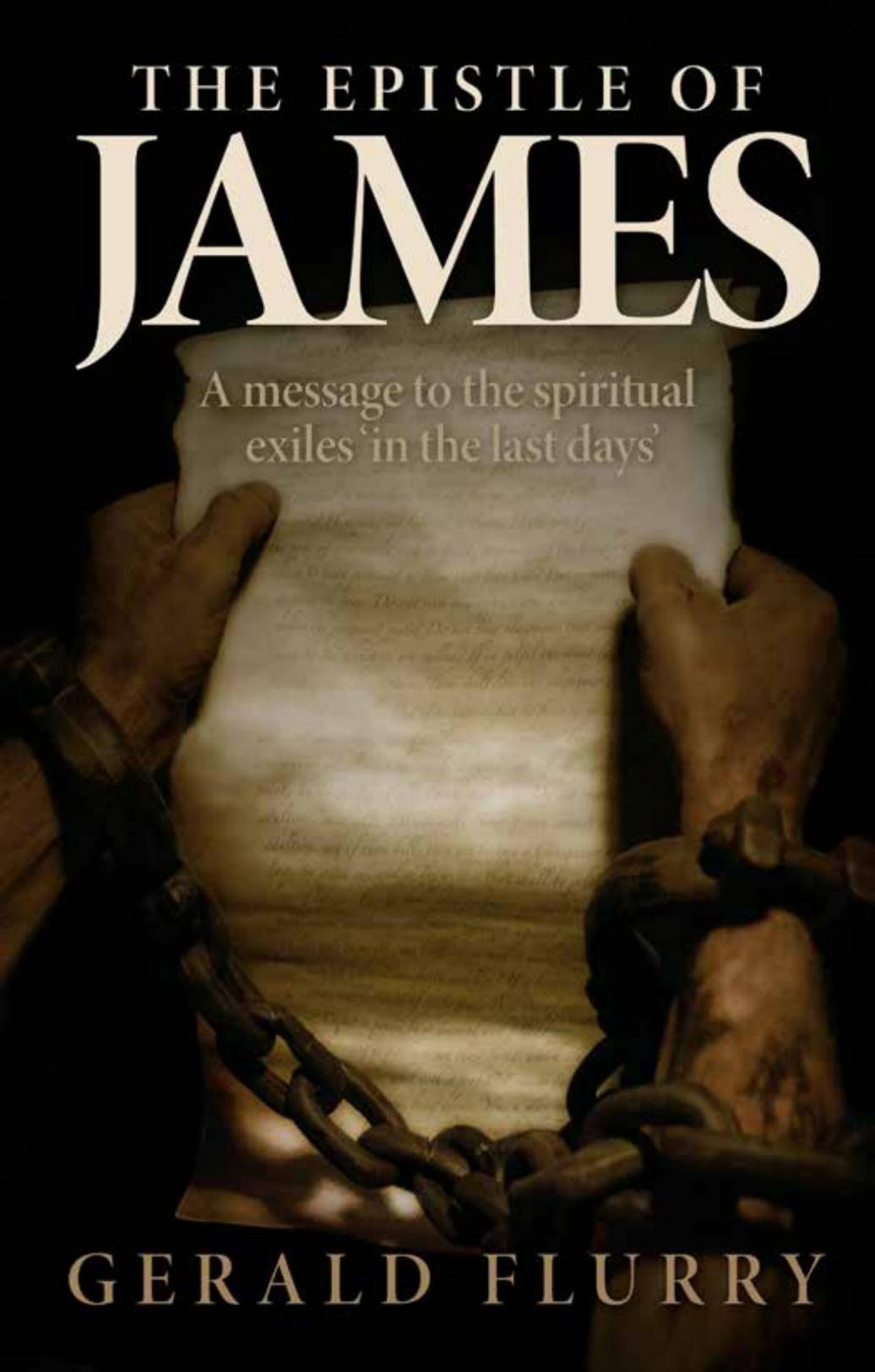


THE EPISTLE OF JAMES



A message to the spiritual
exiles 'in the last days'

GERALD FLURRY

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'in the last days.'

BY GERALD FLURRY

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When James wrote his epistle, he was convinced he was living in the end time. God inspired his message to teach us about the greatest tragedy on Earth at this time—what caused it—and what the solution is!

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Chapter 1

A Message to the Exiles

OF THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES, PAUL WROTE ALL BUT SEVEN. Those seven are called “general epistles.” They are the epistle of James, John’s three, Peter’s two, and Jude’s.

All seven of these epistles have been revealed in the last hour.

It started with the revelation from 1 John about the last hour. That revelation was delivered to the Church on May 5, 2001.

Since that time, the Philadelphia Church of God (PCG) has been following all of the prophetic events that have occurred in the last hour. It is stunning how these events have accelerated in such a short span of time.

But of these prophetic events, the most dramatic of all has been God revealing those epistles!

These seven epistles are the most urgent books in the Bible that God has revealed to the PCG so far. These biblical books are anything but “general.” They are actually the most *specific, particular* epistles you will ever read!

INTRODUCTION TO JAMES

The Apostle James was converted after his Brother had died and been resurrected. He was the brother of Jesus Christ, so surely he had a lot to say that should be of interest to us. He makes many statements that sound like they come right from the Sermon on the Mount.

James was the leader of the Church headquarters congregation in Jerusalem. He was martyred around A.D. 62. Tradition says he was thrown off the temple and killed. This was roughly during the beginning of the revolt in the Jerusalem area that resulted in its siege and eventual destruction in A.D. 70.

The *International Critical Commentary* says this: “That James the brother of the Lord did, in fact, hold an important place in the Jerusalem church of the first decades of the messianic movement is confirmed by the account of his death in the Jewish historian Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews* 20:200). . . . Josephus is describing events that took place in the interregnum between the procurators Festus and Albinus. The ‘rash and daring’ (20:199) high priest Ananus took advantage of the absence of Roman oversight to convene ‘the council of judges’ and bring before it ‘a man named James, the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ, along with certain others.’”

Josephus lived at the time these events unfolded, so his writings are an authoritative source from the world.

Why don't people have more faith in Christ and the works of His warrior apostles? Even secular sources prove their existence and works.

That black period is a type of the tribulation coming upon us in this end time. Just as the siege of Jerusalem was imminent when this epistle was written, soon the nations of Israel will be besieged in our day.

When James wrote this book, many of God's people were falling away; many were preaching another gospel (Galatians 1:6). James thought it was the end time—the time in which we live!

THIS EPISTLE IS AN END-TIME BOOK.

Just like today, God's people stopped preaching the gospel around the world. Only a small remnant remained loyal. They were delivered to a place of safety in Pella (located in Jordan today).

This world is hopelessly confused about the epistle of James. Confusion has even prevailed within God's own Church. One minister in the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) said James was the most secular book in the Bible. In truth, it is the *opposite* of that! It isn't for secular people at all—it is

intended for those of God's people who can bring the greatest depth to it!

This epistle has been impugned by many men. Martin Luther called it an "epistle of straw." As we study it, you will see why he said that: It's because James speaks very highly about God's law, which this world hates.

In this message, we will expose the errors that permeate the commentaries and will come to gain an extremely unique and far deeper insight into the book of James! THE TIME HAS COME FOR GOD TO REVEAL A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THIS OUTSTANDING EPISTLE FOR US. God is raining revelation into His loyal remnant today (James 5:7). Any place else you look, there is only spiritual drought.

James's end-time orientation is evident throughout his epistle. James 5:3 issues a strong warning "for the last days"—which should actually be translated "*in the last days*"—the time in which we live. James 5:7 instructs, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. . . ." That's talking specifically to those of us today waiting for His imminent return to Earth! The next verse says, "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for *the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*." Yes—the Second Coming is very near!

You will see that this book is communicating to God's people in the Laodicean era. It contains a strong message for God's lukewarm Laodiceans as well as a dramatic message for us in the Philadelphian remnant of this era.

James discusses the deepest truth in the Bible. This epistle is not easy to understand! You will have to study hard and drive yourself for God to bless you with the understanding of this profound message.

EXILES FROM GOD

One commentary says that James's introduction is unique among the epistles—and it is.

A tremendous amount of truth is contained within just the first verse.

"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting" (James 1:1). "Greeting" could be translated "joy." This epistle

is about joy—but it's also about the worst possible end-time crisis!

After that one word, *greeting*, James immediately begins talking about massive trials (“temptations,” verse 2). But they are not trials in general: James is describing a specific crisis in God's own Church that you and I are living through right now!

Notice: After calling himself a servant of God the Father and of Christ, James begins addressing “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.” We have to look at this *spiritually*: It is talking about the Church, or Family, of God being scattered all over the place! This is a monumental tragedy.

James is making an earnest appeal to these people of God—“my brethren”! After all, they are still part of the Family! (verse 2).

The *Companion Bible* and Revised Standard Version translate “scattered abroad” as “in the Dispersion,” which refers to the *Diaspora*, when the people of Israel had become scattered abroad among the Gentiles. That expression often means EXILE. That is exactly what has happened spiritually in our day: The vast majority of God's people have been exiled from the inner court! Revelation 11:1-2 show who exiled them, or cast them out: God.

Laodicean ministers led the people astray. IN EZEKIEL 34, GOD SPECIFICALLY CONDEMNS “THE SHEPHERDS OF ISRAEL” FOR SCATTERING HIS FLOCK. Ezekiel, whose book is for the end time, says of the shepherds: “neither have you brought again that which was driven away” (verse 4). The sheep “were scattered” (verse 5) because they had no shepherds to unify them around God, who would have protected them physically and spiritually. These poor sheep have been devoured by “the beasts of the field”—by Satan and his demons. “My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them” (verse 6). The sheep have been *scattered* spiritually, away from God. Their shepherds only “feed themselves” (verse 2).

God says that He is “*against* the shepherds.” Woe to those sinning ministers!

James instructs us on how these shepherds, or masters (teachers), receive greater condemnation (James 3:1).

BEWARE LAODICEAN MINISTERS!

James and Ezekiel 34 are discussing the same problem. Ezekiel dwells more on the sinning ministers.

James tells us in chapter 1 *how* and *why* the Church was scattered. He also tells us how we can unify around our loving Father.

Malachi's Message was written and delivered when God's Church was falling away—a definite period of time that has now passed.

James's message is also intended for a specific time period: *after* the Church has already split apart in this end time. The Laodiceans are now firmly established in their rebellion.

James didn't refer to himself as an apostle as the biblical writers often did. Why? Because these rebels he addresses know about God's government and have rejected it. God was trying to get them to remember the Family gospel, which they had forgotten. Without that vision in their minds, the Laodiceans today will never submit to God's government.

However, government is implied in the vision. The Father is the ruling Head of His Family, and Christ is the absolute Head of the Church. So there is a subtle warning in this vision.

James was the servant of the Father and the Son. That means that James was doing the God Family work. The Laodiceans should be reminded that this is where they failed.

Barnes' commentary says of James 1:1, "The phrase 'the 12 tribes' became also a sort of technical expression to denote the people of God—the church." Even worldly commentaries can see that.

This is the tragedy James is addressing prophetically: **GOD'S PEOPLE BEING EXILED FROM GOD.**

How could such a thing happen? Why are God's people so hopelessly scattered in this end time?

In introducing the book with this trial, James shows us **WHY** the Church is scattered. He also provides the **SOLUTION** to the problem!

James also introduces this book with the Family of God—the Father, Son and "my brethren"—in the first two verses. That is the *gospel*—the extremely good news about the coming Family of God, which administers the government of God.

The Laodiceans must see this Family vision to endure what lies ahead. They can endure anything with this vision etched in their minds.

It's all about the God Family—family, family, family!

This introduction is so important. Perhaps no one in the Bible cuts straight to the core like James does.

A SLAVE OF THE GOD FAMILY

Notice again the first words of this epistle: “James, a servant of God [the Father] and of the Lord Jesus Christ . . .” James brings the two members of the God Family into the picture right away and identifies himself as their *servant*.

James mentions the Father first. God the Father is the Head of the Family. There is government in that Family, with the Father at the top, and then the Son. Jesus Himself repeatedly said as much (e.g. John 14:28). The Father is the one who begat us—not Christ (John 6:44).

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church—the Husband of the Bride.

The understanding of the God Family is at the heart of our doctrines. If you know God the Father and Jesus Christ and if you understand the difference between the two—and if you understand the government of God that they embody—then, you really know God's Family.

Deserting that foundational Family doctrine is the very reason the Laodiceans were scattered!

James gets very specific in the first verse: The Laodiceans do not understand the Family of God, and they must gain that understanding in order to solve their problems. Malachi 1:6 says they don't honor their Father. In fact, they have gotten so far away from Him that they don't even *know* God the Father!

The whole world is *deceived* about the Bible (Revelation 12:9)—and that includes the Laodiceans! They don't know the Father and the Son!

There can be *no greater catastrophe* than to be EXILED from the Father and the Son. To be cast out from that Family is to lose everything! The Laodiceans no longer have a Father or a Husband; they have no spiritual Family; no spiritual country.

Most of God's people have rejected their Head, and, at the same time, their understanding of the Father.

This is one of the strongest warnings in the Bible. When you get exiled from the inner court, you are in serious, serious trouble! A monumental catastrophe has occurred—95 percent of God's people have lost their Head. It's a terrible trial—but for 50 percent of the Laodiceans, God will turn it around. He will wake them up by using the worst crisis in human history, and begin to teach them again the depth of God. The Great Tribulation is the golden trial that saves them from the lake of fire!

The Hebrew word translated “servant” means *slave*. “I am a SLAVE to the Father and the Son,” James wrote. That must mean he knew both the Father and Son deeply! How could you be a willing *slave* to someone and not know Him? James was a slave not just to *one*, but to BOTH MEMBERS of the God Family. His grasp of the Family vision was deep. We must have that understanding!

The Father and Son are ONE (John 10:30; 17:21-22). God's people should be one like that. Though the Philadelphia Church of God is scattered physically, we are unified spiritually. But outside this Church, God's people are a squabbling, fractured picture of division!

The Greek word for “servant” is *doulos*, which means literal bondage to the authority of another.

This is where the Laodiceans and the world are deceived. They don't know the Father, the Son or the God Family because they won't submit to God's government.

If you deeply understand verse 1, you will know where the God Family is. At this point in time, this verse is a *mystery* to the whole world and the Laodiceans.

We must deeply comprehend this truth before we will ever be in God's eternal Family. This is the deepest truth in the Bible. This is the foundational message that God is going to teach the world.

James and his followers were slaves to the Father and Son. So there must be a *James-type* group in this end time who also are slaves to the Father and Son.

James is addressing two groups primarily. One group—the majority—has taken over the Church and turned it away from

God. But there is a tiny group that came out of that super-disaster and is doing God's Work. THAT IS THE BEST NEWS IN THIS END TIME!

James jumps directly into his message with extreme urgency. *I want to talk to you about a vision that caused you to be scattered*, he is saying to the people of God. *I am a SLAVE to the Father and the Son—but you're scattered all over the place, because you don't even know them anymore! You have totally lost the God Family vision!*

Right from the beginning of his epistle, James points to the Laodiceans' biggest flaw: They do not honor their Father. In a sense, James is a New Testament counterpart to the book of Malachi. I believe James and Malachi are two books that will be passed around a lot during the Great Tribulation. As we will see, both of these biblical books direct people back to the end-time Elijah. People will want to get their hands on that instruction in the Tribulation because it is their only hope! God will provide them that hope when they most desperately need it. Of course, we hope many of them will study this message now, submit to God and be protected from the Tribulation.

God's very elect are a small little remnant of people who know a lot about the Father and Christ, and who want to be a SLAVE to both of them. This is a bondage of love. We LOVE being in bondage to God.

THE UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE GOD FAMILY IS THE DEEPEST KNOWLEDGE THERE IS IN THE BIBLE—the most profound part of it! If you're wise enough to understand this, then you know exactly where God's very elect is. Astoundingly, this truth is shrouded in mystery even to most of God's own people—"my beloved brethren"!

How much do we really understand about the Father and the Son? Don't think you know everything—we all have a lot to learn about the Father and the Son. God is *revealing* this truth from James not only to teach the Laodiceans, but to teach the remnant of Philadelphians as well.

The devil hates this truth intensely. How do you explain 95 percent of God's people turning away from Him so quickly and radically, unless there is a devil? God never said, *This day you are my son*, to Lucifer. He only says that to men! What does that mean to you and me?

God's people are here to teach the world, and this is what we're going to teach it: the incredible God Family truth contained right here in James 1:1! We're going to teach all men and women about the gospel—the Family of God—the Father and Son, and what they need to know about both, and how to enter into that Family.

How can we possibly teach them if we don't know ourselves? Teaching this truth is a big job—and the time to do so is almost here!

God's family government is the greatest mystery both in the world and in the Laodicean Church. The only way any of us will understand it is by becoming slaves to the Father and Son.

We should ask ourselves, *Do people view me as being a slave to the Father and Christ? Is that how those closest to me—and God—see me?* Are you really a slave to God and Christ?

James is essentially talking about two groups: one small James group; and the other—the majority of God's people—"the 12 tribes"—spiritual Israel. James says explicitly, *You either get this, or you have no future—you will die forever!*

The Laodiceans are committing a monstrous crime against God. They think they have wealth, but they are poor! (Revelation 3:17). They talk about Jesus and nothing else—and they don't know God and the God Family! They don't know the Father and Christ! God makes it painfully clear where they are headed because of that disaster.

First we must honor the Father, then the Son. Then we must also love our brethren and do all we can to get this message to them!

James mentions Christ here in verse 1, and again in chapter 2—only two times in the whole epistle. The Father is mentioned considerably more than that. James was commissioned to declare the Father—as his brother Christ did! (John 1:18). This is where the Laodiceans faltered.

One commentary called the introduction to James "unique." The commentary was referring mainly to the first two verses.

The epistles of John are about this same time period. John discusses "that antichrist" (singular) and "antichrists" (plural) who fall away from God's own Church and then fight ferociously against Christ. Members have always fallen away from God's Church. But have they ever become antichrists and

actually fought against Christ? Certainly not with this ferocity and in such large numbers. Satan has been cast down in this end time. He is using these antichrists as never before. They are filled with Satan's worst wrath (Revelation 12:12).

The Bible doesn't discuss God's own Church members becoming antichrists any place else in the Bible—*only* in John's epistles.

It appears that Satan has never been able to turn saints into antichrists as he has done in this *last hour*.

James and John were both discussing the same problem of extremely rebellious saints.

James begins his book by showing how God's Family has been almost totally destroyed—95 percent of God's people have fallen away.

He writes about the 12 tribes *in* the dispersion. That is most of God's people—there are *only* 12 tribes of Israel!

Only a small remnant is left to deliver James's condemning message.

We, like James, are slaves to the Father and Christ. We get out the God Family vision. Of all God's people, only we have not become an adulterous bride. Only we declare the Father. Only we have kept the Family gospel.

Christ has a critical role as the Husband and Head of the Church. But the Father is the Head of the God Family.

A MESSAGE TO DELIVER

Lange's Commentary says that James 1:1 is "indicative of a reconstruction of the Church." This commentator can see that there is SOMETHING WRONG HERE—SOMETHING THAT NEEDS TO BE RECONSTRUCTED! James was a part of that reconstructing, and so are God's very elect today. God has commissioned us to raise up the ruins (Amos 9:11)—to build God's Work the way it was done in the past.

We also have the great honor of taking this message of James to the Laodiceans—which is also a part of the reconstruction effort.

This verse is directed "to the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad." It is addressed to them. This message must be delivered *to* the Laodiceans in the Laodicean era.

Who delivers this message? God proclaims the message through a small remnant, the Philadelphians. These members held fast to the instructions revealed to Herbert W. Armstrong. (For more information, request our free book *Malachi's Message*.)

James watched the Ephesus era, of the first century, collapse and stop preaching the gospel around the known world. He saw the A.D. 70 holocaust coming and thought it was the end of man's rule on this Earth. But it was only a *type* of that end—our time today.

In this age of mankind, God doesn't deliver His message primarily through angels. He delivers it through men. That means that those men and women who deeply love God's message teach it to the Laodiceans and the world.

The Laodiceans don't honor their Father (Malachi 1:6). So God uses the small remnant of people who do honor Him to deliver this message.

This remnant must also understand about the 12 tribes of physical Israel. So you would expect them to have a book like *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* in this end time.

God led Israel anciently. God leads spiritual Israel, or the Church, today. The very elect must have a profound understanding of the 12 tribes—physically and spiritually.

We are doing a job that *only* God's loyal sons could do. Let's not overlook the role of God's most honored sons on Earth in James's message.

Does God love His very elect? His Son is about to return—the most spectacular event ever to occur in the universe! And God has chosen His most loyal little flock to introduce Christ to the world—and reintroduce Him to the Laodiceans.

Nothing is so wonderful as loving and being loved by God. That is the ultimate relationship on Earth by far.

Anybody can prove where God's very elect are.

An article on the WCG website quoted Joseph Tkach saying this about the name "Worldwide Church of God": "Our current name does not properly represent us for several reasons. Numerous older sources continue to address the former doctrinal errors of the WCG under that name, even though we have long since been delivered from such errors.

"In many ways, the name Worldwide Church of God is in effect 'poisoned,' similar to the way the German word *führer*

(leader), though innocuous in itself, is no longer usable in any normal sense because of its associations with a negative history. The negative associations with Armstrongism that are connected with the name Worldwide Church of God tend to hamper our effectiveness in proclaiming the gospel. A name change could give us a greater opportunity to tell the story of our transition” (October 2005).

IT IS THE WCG THAT HAS BEEN “POISONED” SPIRITUALLY. THEIR USE OF THE WORD *FÜHRER*, WITH ITS DEPRAVED IMPLICATIONS ABOUT MR. ARMSTRONG, SHOWS US THE DEPTH OF THEIR SATANIC EVIL.

IS THERE ANY HOPE FOR THE REPROBATE MINDS WHO IMPLEMENTED THESE CHANGES? The book of James *must* be delivered to all of the Laodiceans. James has one of the strongest warnings in the Bible. This is by far the worst crisis on Earth. Eternal lives are at stake.

Isn't it interesting that as they totally rejected the name Armstrong and almost everything associated with it, we changed the name of our educational institution to Herbert W. Armstrong College? The omnipotent God is combating their evil schemes!

God wants to speak to the Laodiceans—but they are “exiled brethren,” terribly scattered. Spiritually, they are in a chaotic state of disunity. That fact alone shows that there is a big job to do. Who is going to take this message to them? A message cannot deliver itself. It won't mysteriously appear in their lives. It must be DELIVERED!

No one on Earth will deliver God's message in this end time except God's very elect! This is a commission in and of itself.

“My brethren,” James says. The only ones God can entrust with this commission are the closest Family members! They must be the saints who love God and His Family most of all, and whom God loves most of all. You could never expect those in the outer court to deliver the message—God doesn't even dwell among them! CHRIST RESIDES IN THE *INNER COURT*—THAT IS WHERE HE IS SPEAKING TO HIS PEOPLE TODAY!

Many signs prove where the remnant is that is going to the Laodiceans and to the world. God's very elect receive revelation from the third heaven. They hold fast to the truth about the 12 tribes of Israel—whereas most of the Laodiceans don't even want *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*, the book that Herbert W. Armstrong wrote explaining that doctrine.

The mention in James 1:1 of “the twelve tribes” links this prophecy to Mr. Armstrong, who distributed 5 million copies of the book that explains their identity and opens up a third and more of the Bible that is prophecy.

God led Israel anciently, and He leads spiritual Israel today. We are the most honored kings and priests on Earth! What dignity God has given us. When James talks about the law we administer, he calls it the “royal law,” because it comes from the royal God! Our responsibility to complete God’s Work is truly the greatest honor on this planet! We have the privilege to go out to the world and speak for God!

Nobody else in the world can do that because the most inspiring part of James’s message is hidden from them.

Does God really love you? If you are doing His Work, He has given you the most important job there is! He has charged you with introducing Him to the world! He has graced you with the opportunity to take His secrets to this world!

How special are you if God reveals His truth to you? Who are you that the great God would reveal His secrets to you? That is mind-staggering! God doesn’t do that to people He doesn’t love supremely!

The Bible is a coded book—and today, James is being decoded!

STEADFASTNESS

“Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness” (James 1:2-3, Revised Standard Version).

Here James makes it intensely personal—“you know” and “your faith.” God is giving *you* these trials to perfect *your* faith! This applies to every individual in God’s Church. God is building character in each one of us to get us into His Family forever. So we should greet these trials with pure joy.

James has a different idea about how we achieve happiness. As we rejoice in our trials, God rains down all kinds of new revelation.

God does *try our faith!* He does that for a beautiful purpose. James says we can trust God that the trials we face are necessary and for our ultimate good.

The word *patience* in the King James Version should be translated *staying power*—or *steadfastness*, as the Revised Standard says. Trials make us *steadfast*! When we conquer our weaknesses, we become more closely connected to the great God—to the point where nothing can break us away from Him! This is a righteous trait God can build within us by trying our faith.

When Mr. Armstrong died, the Church fell apart. The people didn't handle that test well. But God didn't die, and the Laodiceans should have stayed with Him. They must build more staying power to ever make it into God's Kingdom.

Patient endurance proves that we have quality faith and love.

Even in the midst of terrible trials in the Church, the “sons of Zadok” have real *staying power* (Ezekiel 44:15; 48:11; read our free book *Ezekiel—The End-Time Prophet* for more information). The more God tries us, the more we should trust Him!

“But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:4). At this time, we are incomplete. *Perfect* is mentioned twice in this single verse. God truly wants to *complete us*! Even our trials can be counted as joy if we have this understanding.

James tells us at the beginning of this book that *joy and suffering really go together*. Even our suffering should bring joy. We should rejoice in our trials, because they are more precious than gold. *If we don't receive joy from our trials, then we will actually end up in the lake of fire*. We MUST endure the refining process of difficult trials before we can enter God's eternal Family.

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (verse 5). Mr. Armstrong said at one time that wisdom was the number-one need in the Church. A lack of wisdom can cause us to make many serious mistakes. There is much more to wisdom than we normally think about, and we all need more of it.

Proverbs 9:10 tells us that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. This we could call “cosmic wisdom”—wisdom that originates from the cosmos. That is the type of wisdom we need in order to govern within the God Family. Can you

imagine a king ruling the Earth without wisdom? God's people are being prepared for kingly rule! We don't have much time left to prepare for those positions, so there is real *urgency* in James's appeal to overcome our lack of wisdom!

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (James 1:6-7). Wavering faith won't get a response from God. That is a strong statement! It requires real faith to weather the storms in life, but weather them we must.

Consider the storms that tossed the Church away from God! People were driven and tossed away—and God just let them go! Does it make any sense for people to leave the truth so quickly after dedicating their lives to it? Many of them had clung to that truth their whole lives, and then let it be swept away from them so quickly! That is spiritual madness. God is very strong in His response: *I will have none of that!* He says. *You are going to have to do better than that if you expect to receive anything from me! I refuse to allow you to teach the world!* How could God be much stronger than that?

"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (verse 8). This is precisely the trap so many of the Church leaders fell into: trying to please the world and God at the same time. They are double minded, and God condemns them for their instability. *Lange's* calls this man "a seditious disturber of peace"—which is a very accurate description of the men who destroyed God's Church. They have become unstable in all their ways.

Lange's has a good translation. These people were not just weak—they were active in hating God's Work and disturbing God's peace. They were dangerous rebels who seriously hurt God's people who failed to flee a rebellious Church.

"Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways" (verses 9-11). This is the first mention of a theme James develops throughout his epistle: condemning the "rich man."

God certainly isn't against rich men—like Abraham and King David—who use their blessings to serve God more abundantly. But He has strong words for those who put their riches before Him! That is exactly what the Laodiceans did. They became “rich, and increased with goods” (Revelation 3:17) as they betrayed God. So God had to start a new group with people who were *rich in faith!*

We must always keep our priorities straight. Never allow the physical things to supersede the spiritual! Life is ephemeral—nothing but a fading flower. We don't even have real life: We are simply heading toward death. That is all this physical existence was ever intended to be, and nothing more. The greatest things it has to offer mean NOTHING if our life is not lived in service to our Creator! Eternal life is at stake!

**THE FADING FLOWER
VERSUS THE CROWN OF LIFE**

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James 1:12). What a promise God has given us! *The crown of life!*

James is contrasting this ETERNAL REWARD with the fading flower of human life. What a powerful contrast! God wants you to carefully compare the fading flower with eternal glory! If you get wrapped up in this life, you are like the flower in the field. The crown of life, however, is given to the one who wins the victory! This is a promise from God—He will CROWN YOU FOREVER! You don't have to worry about growing old or any other trial associated with this fading flower of a life because God the Father is going to crown you a king and a priest!

Would you prefer the life of a fading flower? Why give up a future of eternal splendor for money or anything else this world has to offer? God promises the crown of life to those who love Him! He wants to give that to you! If you love God—and that means you love His law and the government that teaches it—then God says *I made that promise to you and NOBODY can break it!*

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any

man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (verses 13-15). Sin brings forth eternal death. God says that 50 percent of His people are going to die forever! Do we realize how horrendous sin is?

In these verses, James paints a picture of an individual seized with lust. On the spiritual level, we have seen the Laodicean woman (which the Bible uses as a symbol of a church) lusting for another husband—a husband other than Jesus Christ! They have been seduced by the devil and drawn away from their true Husband.

Some Laodiceans have used the excuse that, because they have remained loyal to “God’s Church,” it’s not their fault if it goes astray. That kind of reasoning will bring forth *death—eternal death!* God isn’t interested in us being in a certain church. He wants us to be a SLAVE to God the Father and Jesus Christ! It isn’t about men—it’s about the Father and Son, and the Family they are inviting us to be a part of.

Lust brings forth sin, and sin brings forth death. The Laodiceans are dying! And half of them will die eternally in the lake of fire. Christ died because of sin, and He will not pay the price for someone who keeps sinning!

“Do not err, my beloved brethren” (verse 16). Don’t err about this, James tells us! Don’t make a mistake about eternal life and death. Don’t be deceived about dying eternally!

James *loved* the people who turned away from God. He called them “my beloved brethren.” And we must love the Laodiceans—show them our love by getting this message to them. James put his life on the line—and they threw him off the temple because he was trying to turn people back to God. Are we willing to go all the way, as James did—to serve God to the death, if necessary?

A STARK CHOICE LIES BEFORE US: THE FADING FLOWER VERSUS THE CROWN OF LIFE. The stakes couldn’t be of a greater magnitude. There is no other crown—this is THE CROWN OF LIFE!

Don’t give up that crown for anything! Remain steadfast! Cling to your calling and your crown! “[L]et patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (verse 4). ENDURE TO THE END, AND YOU WILL END UP

WITH A SEAT NEXT TO JESUS CHRIST AS HIS BRIDE!

That is a marvelous truth. But it is at this point in the epistle that James discusses something that will truly stagger your imagination. We will examine that in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

The Father of Lights

AFTER INTRODUCING HIS EPISTLE, JAMES QUICKLY GETS INTO THE heart of his message—conveying a vision that greatly exalts God the Father and illuminates His profound love for His begotten sons.

If you could count all the stars just in our galaxy alone at the rate of 125 stars every minute, it would take over 4,500 years to count them. But as far as scientists can tell, there are a few trillion galaxies, each with hundreds of billions of stars—some with as many as a trillion stars. And we have only begun to explore outer space with our modern telescopes.

The best that astronomers can figure is that the “known” universe contains 70 sextillion stars. That’s a 70 with 21 zeroes after it—probably more than the number of grains of sand on Earth. That figure is impossible to comprehend. Only God knows the size of the universe.

The Bible tells us that God has an individual name for each one of those stars (Isaiah 40:26).

We live on one planet revolving around one star among those countless stars. How many other planets are out there, waiting to be populated? God created all that real estate out there for a purpose! “For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else” (Isaiah 45:18).

Notice what James says about this inspiring subject.

THE FATHER OF LIGHTS

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from *the Father of lights*, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

The “lights” to which James refers are those of the universe. God is the Father of that vast material creation. He created all those lights through Jesus Christ. Take some time to look at the latest pictures from the Hubble telescope, and they will dazzle you with all their brilliance!

Highly educated human beings are staring up at that marvelous creation, studying it, measuring it, trying to comprehend it—and they still arrive at the ludicrous conclusion that it all evolved out of nothing! They are missing the transcendental vision wrapped up in that creation.

All of those heavenly lights inspire God. They represent incredible promise and potential, just waiting to be realized!

Every good and perfect gift comes from that illustrious God. Look at what He created! Clearly, He has all kinds of gifts to give!

When you look at the material creation, you see a lot of shadows. For example, the planets cast shadows. But *God* is not that way—James says that with Him is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” He is brighter than the sun at high noon—100 percent light! This is the total opposite of darkness. There isn’t a trace of evil in Him. The ancient Israelites were led by a fiery pillar cloud. Wherever it went, they followed. If it moved at 3 in the morning, they moved with it. They continually looked to that light to lead them, and so should we.

The expression “with whom” should read “*in whom* is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” This is referring to our Father’s perfect character—God is 100 percent agape love. His goal is for us to become perfect as He is perfect (Matthew 5:48).

God cannot sin. There isn’t even one speck of a shadow of evil in His nature. His love toward us is perfect and absolute—100 percent light. He would never do anything to harm us spiritually.

God is recreating His love in us. He is building His love on Earth through His firstfruits today. To do that, we must know

His character and totally trust Him—even in our most fiery trial!

SPIRITUAL LIGHT SHOULD DAZZLE US A ZILLION TIMES MORE THAN THE LIGHT FROM THE UNIVERSE. THE BIG ISSUE IS NOT CREATING THE UNIVERSE. THE BIG ISSUE IS CREATING THE CHARACTER OF GOD IN US TO RULE THE UNIVERSE!

We must cooperate with God or that can never happen. We must desire and choose to build His character in us, or it can't be done.

Nothing but good gifts come from the Father.

This is an inspiring verse, which follows quite an inspiring passage at the beginning of the first chapter of James's epistle. BUT WE CAN'T GET DISTRACTED BY THAT MASSIVE UNIVERSE BECAUSE JAMES JUST USES IT AS AN INTRODUCTION TO SET UP WHAT HE IS REALLY GETTING AT! NO MATTER HOW MAGNIFICENT THE UNIVERSE MAY BE, IT IS AS NOTHING COMPARED TO WHAT JAMES IS ABOUT TO DISCUSS. So let's not be distracted by the universe.

FIRSTFRUITS OF HIS CREATURES

Notice the very next verse: "Of his own will *begat* he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of *firstfruits* of his creatures" (James 1:18). *Here* is where James—the brother of Christ—puts the emphasis! If you really work to comprehend what he is saying here, God will reward you by filling to capacity all that you can bring to this verse.

The limitless stars are impressive to anyone—but all that is *trivial* compared to GOD BEGETTING YOU! You have the potential to become God—God's son—with the capacity to even create a universe and animals, perhaps even create more sons of God! Remember, God wants to recreate Himself in you!

That is what we must emphasize! That is where the real excitement is: YOUR LIFE!

WE WERE BEGOTTEN BY THE FATHER!

If He isn't calling you or hasn't begotten you with His Holy Spirit, you cannot truly understand this. If you do understand it, then you have received that unparalleled spiritual begettal from the Father of lights!

What is it worth to be begotten by that Father who created all those lights? That magnificent Creator God made you a

firstfruit—the highest, most wonderful calling you could ever have! That calling is a zillion times more important than anything the Hubble telescope can show us.

BE IN AWE OF THE UNIVERSE, BUT BE A ZILLION TIMES MORE IN AWE OF YOUR POTENTIAL!

Consider it: What would all the universe out there be worth without GOD BEINGS to rule over it? What if, as a worst-case scenario, God had the universe, but no sons? What would that be worth to Him? *I don't think God would put much value on it.*

God wanted to give the universe to the angels, and that plan didn't work—so He decided to SACRIFICE HIS SON in order to make Plan B work! That proves beyond doubt where God's priorities lie. Sure the universe is magnificent and luminous—but it is just material *stuff*. It means nothing compared to a SON OF GOD! It's not even worthy of comparison!

The universe becomes much more impressive to behold when you realize that God put it there in order for His sons to rule over it—if the angels failed when they were placed on this Earth.

God begat us as *His sons*. Not even the angels were ever offered such glory. But we are not only God's begotten sons—we are *firstfruits*. We have been called in this evil world—"out of season." We will receive the most distinct honor ever given to God's sons for all eternity. The Father has chosen us to marry His only eternal Son! We will be the Bride of Christ.

The *firstfruits* will be the most honored sons in God's Family forever. That is the transcendent calling of the firstfruits. We will serve as Christ's helpmeet and teach the world about the Family of God—and then on to the universe. What a future! That is the awesome potential of this Church.

God's supreme creation isn't the universe—but His masterpiece of recreating Himself in man. The firstfruits are in the Family of God *already!* At this point we are begotten, preparing to be born into that Family. We are God's Family in embryo. Does that truth still dazzle and excite you? Do you still hunger and thirst for it?

Herbert W. Armstrong taught us all about our incredible human potential. His whole work revolved around the instruction about the God Family! Like Elijah (2 Kings 2:12), and the Apostle Paul in the first century (1 Corinthians 4:14-15), Mr.

Armstrong was a *father* to us. He taught us all about what it means to be begotten of the Father and born into the Family of God.

God isn't just a liberal benefactor—He is THE FATHER! If you think He doesn't know you, then *you don't know Him*. What father doesn't know his child? If you think God the Father doesn't have the most special thoughts toward you, you just don't get it! That's not the kind of Father God is. He has perfect love! WHEN YOU ARE BEGOTTEN, YOU ARE KNOWN BY YOUR FATHER. How profoundly you are known!

Here is where the Laodiceans have failed. They *fail to honor their Father* (Malachi 1:6). They have lost sight of this transcendental Family plan!

They are dying spiritually because of their rebellion. They are all in danger of being aborted.

Only mankind has the honor of being born into the Family of God—even fiery, brilliant angels were never offered that potential!

WHAT IS THIS BIRTHRIGHT WORTH TO YOU? Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of soup; James would not sell his for any price.

“OF HIS OWN WILL” *God begat us*. God watched us, scrutinized our lives and *sanctified* us; He instructed Jesus Christ to *preserve* us—and finally, after that intensive process, He INVITED US INTO HIS FAMILY: *I want that individual as a kind of firstfruits*. Why? Because it was GOD'S OWN WILL TO BUILD HIS FAMILY! (See Jude 1, and request a free copy of our booklet on Jude for a thorough explanation of this inspiring scripture.)

Please concentrate on this breathtaking statement: “*Of his own will begat he us*.” Building a family, physical or spiritual, requires no small commitment. The Father isn't going to start a Family and then desert it, as men and women often do.

THIS GREEK EXPRESSION MEANS THAT GOD HAS A TOTAL, COMPLETE COMMITMENT; NOT ONLY TO START AND NURTURE A FAMILY, BUT TO COMPLETE IT. That means He is also committed to finishing not just the firstfruit harvest, but the entire harvest. God has only just gotten started, with us. The greatest work lies yet ahead.

God never gives up on even one person as long as there is any hope.

When you beget children, there is a heavy responsibility if you are loving parents. If you reject your responsibility, the children are left with many unnecessary trials. Their lives often become disasters. God is not such a parent. His love and commitment last until the job is finished.

That is what this Greek expression means. When the Father finishes His job, there is nothing left to do!

God “begat” us, but that is only the beginning. The Father is committed to us until we are born—and then He provides for His Family forever!

God is eternally committed to His Family. The fact that He risked losing His Son, Christ, forever should prove that to us.

God, through His Spirit, “begat ... us with the word of truth.” The foundational part of that truth came through Herbert W. Armstrong. God continues to reveal His truth to the PCG and beget more sons.

This all points back to the “Father of lights.” Our primary project must be to learn about our Father. James put the emphasis where it belongs. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights”—and *this is the greatest gift He has to give*. This is the pinnacle of the Father’s creation!

THERE IS NOTHING GREATER THAN WHAT GOD IS OFFERING TO HIS BELOVED FIRSTFRUITS.

We have been called to be part of a “better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35). We will be above the rest of the Family forever. That is not gloating—it is just acknowledging reality.

The commentaries don’t understand these verses at all. About the best they can see is that it is about being “born again” on this Earth. That is disgracefully wrong!

Satan works hard to destroy this Family truth. He languishes in bitterness, moaning about never being offered the opportunity to be a son. *Why should these clods be given that amazing future?* he thinks. *What did they do to deserve that?* The answer is, we didn’t do anything to deserve it! It wasn’t until God called us and began working in us that we started to produce the fruit and spiritual growth our Father expects from His Family.

This is the most inspiring truth in the Bible. And it is difficult to truly grasp. The Laodiceans treated it casually and simply let it go! What a tragedy—THROWING THAT FUTURE AWAY

IN ORDER TO LIVE THE LIFE OF A FADING FLOWER! (James 1:10-11).

THE MORE I THINK ABOUT THIS, THE MORE MY MIND REELS. THIS IS EVERYTHING!

And the Laodiceans have shamefully tossed it away!

We must warn them that, unless they repent, they are about to be destroyed—to be as if they had never been born! Considering what they are giving up, that is the most obscene tragedy there is!

James says we must take this message and reach out to our beloved brethren. That proves how much God loves His Family. Humanly, we may have given up on them long ago—but not the Father! HE WILL NOT GIVE UP ON THEM UNTIL HE ABSOLUTELY HAS TO.

GOD IS SENDING THE LAODICEANS ONE FINAL MESSAGE.

THE GREATEST HONOR WE COULD HAVE ON EARTH TODAY IS TO DELIVER THIS MESSAGE FROM THE FATHER OF LIGHTS TO HIS LAODICEAN SONS.

God is going to give us exalted offices forever for delivering this urgent warning. Soon those who do will shine like the stars forever and ever (Daniel 12:3).

Revelation 22:5 shows that, ultimately, there will be no need for light or sun in new Jerusalem: The brilliance of God is all the light we will need, and we are going to look like Him (1John 3:2). How could we ever throw that away?

BE SWIFT TO HEAR

After talking about that greatest of all truths—and all in the context of some of God's people being exiled from God—James gives about the best advice he could give: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19).

The Laodiceans are “my beloved brethren”—your beloved brethren. If we love them, we'll get this message to them.

The Laodiceans have a horrible self-righteousness problem. James tells us all, *Don't think you know it all! Be swift to hear!*

That word *swift* indicates an entire readiness. To be swift, we must not resist hearing any of God's words.

Why is James so urgent? Why is it so important to be “swift” to correct this problem? Because *we don't have much*

time! This is “last hour” doctrine! *Be swift to hear!* This message is passing right on by, and God says He will not pass by His people anymore (Amos 7:8; 8:2). They must hear it while they can.

God’s people must ALWAYS strive to be swift to hear our Father—wide open to receive His instruction.

This world displays the reverse of that: People are swift to speak and slow to hear—if they hear at all!

James also tells us to be *slow to wrath*. We must not let our emotions get in the way. Are you going to let anger turn you from your Father, or will you be swift to hear Him? We also must be *slow to speak*. The Proverbs talk about this a lot. “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise” (Proverbs 10:19). “He who guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin” (Proverbs 13:3, rsv). “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Proverbs 16:32). God loves people who can rule their spirit. The implication of that proverb is, if you can rule your spirit, God will give you rule over a city—and a lot more!

“For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (James 1:20). The word *not* is emphatic. The Greek word means *a full and direct negative*. The wrath of man contains none of God’s righteousness. So that means we must always let God’s righteousness direct our anger, or we will make many mistakes.

We absolutely must rule our emotions.

THE IMPLANTED WORD

The King James Version of James 1:21 is truly a terrible translation. It tells us to “lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness.” *Naughtiness* doesn’t even sound serious.

The Revised Standard Version is much better: “Therefore put away all filthiness and rank growth of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” Is that important to you? It saves your eternal life! In other words, *get rid of the things that choke and pollute the Word of God in your life*. Have a meek attitude so God can IMPLANT His Word in you.

GOD IMPLANTS HIS WORD IN US FOR THE PURPOSE OF GROWTH! AS WE NURTURE IT, DEEP ROOTS FORM AND IT GROWS EVEN FASTER. That is what God wants. He wants growth—change—conversion! He wants us to be different today than we were yesterday. We won't necessarily have explosive growth, but we should be growing every day! We must not remain static in our lives.

Good Bible study brings God into it! And the divine nature grows.

We need to grow so we can teach this world how to grow. One day God will implant His truth in others' lives, and we will help *them* to grow.

You could study the Bible intellectually for 10 billion years and never understand it. The only way God can implant His Word in our lives is if we receive it “with meekness”—if we have soft, fertile soil—a childlike, teachable mind. We must approach our Bible study with a meek attitude. God the Father ought to be able to teach His sons! If He can't, there is no implanting of His Word, and there will be no growth.

Do you have soil in which God is able to plant His Word?

God wants to make us “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). HE ENABLES EVIL HUMAN BEINGS TO ACTUALLY PUT ON THE NATURE OF GOD! We can become like our Father! If we “receive with meekness the implanted word,” then it will grow to the point where we come to think and act like our Father—*become perfect* (Matthew 5:48). We regenerate our whole life!

That is what James means when he says the implanted Word “is able to save your souls.” We must grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God (2 Peter 3:18). Maybe you have one deep problem that chokes your spiritual growth. FACE THAT, SO YOU CAN GROW. We are all sinners, but if you let those sins stick around, they will choke your growth—your eternal life! ONE BIG SIN CAN DESTROY THE POWER OF GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT.

God will not give faith until we repent. His Holy Spirit will not empower us.

DOERS OF THE WORD

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. . . . But whoso looketh into the perfect law of

liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (James 1:22, 25).

God wants us to be **DOERS** of the Word. We must take His instruction and **DO IT**. That is the only way we will be ready to teach the world. That is the only way we will be able to show the people of the world about the Father and the Son—the God Family!

James uses *word* and *law* interchangeably in this passage. God’s **LAW** is the foundation of His Word. James was actually condemning an apostasy in the Church of God! We have witnessed the same problem in this end time.

If we just *hear* and don’t **DO**, we are deceiving our own selves! Once you do that, you begin to let lies and deceit cause serious problems in your family, your marriage, your child rearing. You are just deceiving yourself! That is what most of God’s people have done in this end time.

James has the solution to this problem: **BE A DOER!** “For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was” (verses 23-24). In order to solve that problem, look into “the perfect law of liberty” (verse 25). **FREE YOURSELF** from lies and deceit and anything illicit in your life. Learn to take this wonderful truth and be a doer!

The expression “looketh into” means that you are stooping down, seriously examining God’s law. *Vincent’s Word Studies* says that it denotes penetrating, examining or looking into “the very essence of the law.” It teaches you how to make every aspect of your life work—child rearing, marriage, service in the Church, and so on. It truly is a **PERFECT** law of liberty!

Mirror is a metaphor for the law. If you look into that mirror, see some dirt on your face, then forget all about it, you are a forgetful hearer.

This example refers to a *permanent* failure to use the mirror! The real emphasis on this mirror is being a *doer* of the law, or Word of God. (Request our free book *The Ten Commandments*.)

God is perfect, and He is creating a *perfect* man. Sin is the transgression of His *perfect* law, which is the king of all laws.

It is a KING'S LAW. With the King of kings, we will use that law to teach people *how to be royalty*.

Vincent's says that for the "forgetful hearer" in verse 25, forgetting is a way of life! That is how the Laodiceans are. They will keep forgetting until God jolts them with 10,000 shocks! At that point, there will be no more arguing about the perfect law of liberty and the government of God.

How can we ever administer the perfect law of liberty if we don't enslave ourselves to the Father and the Son? That is the God Family gospel. If we don't know the Father and Son, then we don't know their law of liberty.

One commentary says this passage in James is ambiguous: "Precisely how the Christian writer would define the *law* cannot be determined." Oh really? It isn't ambiguous to me! That man needs to be humbled and taught! He will never be qualified to teach people until he stops talking like that!

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (verse 26). Many of God's people are seriously into their religion, but God says it is *vain*. They are "grinding at the mill" (Matthew 24:41), but it is a waste of time. The Laodiceans have not bridled their tongue. HERE LAWLESSNESS MANIFESTS ITSELF IN THE TONGUE. The Laodiceans are swift to speak, talking back to God (Malachi 3:13-14). And they aren't just slow to hear God's law and government that implements that law—they don't *hear* AT ALL! They reason around God's law.

We must bridle our tongue and allow ourselves to be bridled and led by the great God. Somehow God is going to have to guide us!

THE FATHERLESS AND WIDOWS

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). This verse means what we have always understood: that we should look after those without physical fathers and husbands in the Church of God. But it means a great deal more.

Look at this spiritually, in the context of the Laodicean era. In the first verse of his epistle, James discusses the Father and

the Husband. Here he is talking about orphans and widows.

The Laodiceans have chosen to distance themselves from their Father and from their Husband. In doing so, they have lost the Head of the Family and the Head of the Church. James provides a stark assessment of their status today: *They are spiritual orphans and widows!* They voluntarily turned from God, and now THEY HAVE NO FATHER AND NO HUSBAND.

They HAD a Father and a Husband—that is why James is talking to them about it! *I am a slave to the Father and the Son—look at my life! And contrast that with your own—you have abandoned the Father and the Son and are left with nothing.*

James says we must visit the fatherless and widows. On a spiritual level, that means WE MUST GET THIS MESSAGE OF JAMES TO THE LAODICEANS!

We can't do this job by proxy, asking someone to visit them for us. God wants YOU—every single member of His faithful remnant—to visit them BY SUPPORTING THIS MESSAGE AND THIS WORK!

God commands that you be personally involved.

IF YOU WANT TO BE LIKE YOUR FATHER AND HUSBAND, YOU WILL EMBRACE THAT RESPONSIBILITY!

We show that we are members of the God Family by being *doers*—getting the message of James to the beloved Laodiceans.

SPIRITUALLY, WE MUST HAVE MERCY ON ORPHANS AND WIDOWS WHO ARE IN DANGER OF DYING FOREVER! We must learn to think the way God thinks about them. The Laodiceans have no future without a Father and Husband!

Look at the contrast with James 1:1: “James, a SERVANT OF GOD AND OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST . . .” James is a slave to both of them. That is more than knowing them—James was a BOND-SLAVE to them! He had the deepest kind of understanding about them and had made a total commitment to the Father and Son!

What a contrast to the SPIRITUAL ORPHANS AND WIDOWS OF James 1:27. These individuals may seem to be religious, but the way the Father views it, they are not. He forcefully condemns their religion!

Where do you fall on that scale—between being God's bonds slave and being an “orphaned widow”? How deep is your

commitment to the Father and the Son?

God would never reveal this truth from the book of James if He didn't think we would deliver it. God's faithful people want to be a slave to the Father and Son and deliver this message to their beloved brethren. They *ACHE* and *YEARN* for their spiritually dying Family members, who have no future and no one to look after them! They accept God's calling to perform this job to their utmost.

How could we possibly say, *I really served the Father and the Son*, and not get this message to our beloved brethren? IF WE DON'T DELIVER THIS MESSAGE, WE ARE LAODICEAN OURSELVES! We *MUST* share this wonderful message. God expects it of us, because He dearly loves His precious Laodicean sons—our brethren, who were begotten by the will of the Father! Their lives have gone dangerously wrong, and our efforts could save some of them now—and *will* save *MANY OF THEM* in the Great Tribulation, where half of them will repent.

THIS IS HOW WE KEEP OURSELVES “UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD,” as James says: by *THROWING OUR ENERGIES AND OUR VERY LIVES BEHIND THIS MOST HONORABLE, LIFE-SAVING WORK OF GOD!*

Translators inserted a chapter break at this point in James's epistle, but it should not be there. The thought continues, uninterrupted. Now we will learn what would have happened if God's people had been swift to hear Him and to heed His warning.

Chapter 3

Brethren, Show No Partiality

IN CHAPTERS 2 AND 3, JAMES EXPANDS ON THE FAMILY VISION—both warning the Laodiceans and commanding the Philadelphians to prove their love with deeds.

James 2:1 begins again with the words “My brethren.” Who is James addressing? God’s people—His Family.

“My brethren, show no partiality as you *hold* the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory” (James 2:1, RSV).

Sadly, this world is *based on* persons respecting persons. That partiality is the curse of mankind! It causes endless problems. People discriminate on the basis of wealth, privilege, sex, race, education, culture, talent—any number of things. *I’m a good-looking person, and they’re ugly. I’ve got class, and they have none. I don’t like that person’s race.*

Those problems are a direct result of a failure to understand God’s Family. God says the problems of the world will never be solved until we learn about FAMILY!

The Laodiceans are scattered, or exiled, from the God Family. James 2:1 flows from James 1:27—there should be no chapter break. The Laodiceans are spiritual orphans and widows. That part of God’s Family is confused and has fallen apart!

UNDERSTANDING THE FAMILY OF GOD CLARIFIES EVERYTHING!

If we become partial to certain Church members, that is a breakdown in God’s loving Family.

We must set an *example* for this hate-filled, divided world. In understanding God, we should show people how to unify

the whole world as one man, with the mind of Christ!

WE MUST NOT FORGET OUR GOAL TO BRING THE WHOLE WORLD INTO GOD'S FAMILY!

That is the only way this world will ever be unified.

The Laodiceans have done the opposite. They have joined the hopeless world that cannot solve its problems.

How can you be *a slave to the Father and Son* (James 1:1) and discriminate against one of God's potential sons in the world? HOW COULD YOU DISCRIMINATE AGAINST ONE OF THE FIRST-FRUITS WHO IS EVEN NOW A SON OF THE FATHER AND A BROTHER OF CHRIST, THE LORD OF GLORY?

You won't do that if you view God's Family, or those who have that potential, as God does.

God's Church must be different from the world. We must treat every person with the highest respect, not shutting anyone out of the Family of God. We even have to be careful to avoid favoring one minister over another.

Look at this spiritually—this is God's Family! And those in the world are potential God Family members. Understanding the God Family clarifies it all. All humanity has that potential.

God's people must be an example to the world of showing no partiality, and treating each member of Christ's Body with honor. That way of life must begin within the Church, because God wants it to reach every corner of the world! "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto *all men, especially* unto them who are of *the household of faith*" (Galatians 6:10). Hold to the Head, Jesus Christ, and then reach out to *all* those within God's Church, and then *everyone in the world*, as we have the opportunity.

Why are the Laodiceans considered "exiled brethren"? (James 1:1). Because they have lost the God Family understanding. They have abandoned God their Father and Christ their Husband and become spiritual orphans and widows (James 1:27).

Countless problems infected the Church because the Laodiceans did not internalize the Family lesson! The people started to become partial: *I like this person, I don't like that person*. God thunders to them, *Don't you realize you're BREAKING THE LAW OF LOVE?* God's people above all should be cultivating and demonstrating God's family love! A PERSON SIMPLY CANNOT

BE PARTIAL TOWARD GOD'S FAMILY MEMBERS AND STILL HAVE THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST! (James 2:1).

James admonishes us to “*hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” We must live by the same faith that Christ had and HOLD ON to it!

Christ died for all mankind. You and I must build that faith in our lives. That is quite a challenge. But it also shows us what power resides in God's saints. Look at what we can do with Christ's faith *in us*! We have the very faith *of* the Son of God (Galatians 2:20).

All the money in this world could not buy one iota of that faith. Consider the *mighty power* given to the very elect!

What happens if a minister focuses too much on one Church member and neglects the others? Those who are neglected spiritually can begin to hate the one receiving all the attention! Consider, for example, the damage done to Jacob's family because he favored Joseph so much. His brothers became bitter and contemptuous. The same principle applies in any family. Partiality creates family breakdown.

God wants His Church to “ *dwell together in unity*” (Psalm 133)—to be of “*one spirit*” and “*one mind,*” “*likeminded,* having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Philippians 1:27; 2:2)—to “ *speak the same thing,*” with “*no divisions,*” “*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (1 Corinthians 1:10). He wants His people to be “*as one man*” (Ezra 3:1). That is truly deep Family unity!

James really emphasizes this truth. He is showing the Laodiceans how much they have lost, and how much they are going to have to recapture in order to make it into the eternal Family of God! They must get back to the Family understanding.

Probably within a decade, God's people are going to be teaching the world about the Family of God! This world desperately needs that Family education. That is what God wants to give it most of all.

THE RICH OPPRESS

As James develops this theme, he returns to another major concept of his epistle (James 1:9-11)—one that applies directly to the Laodicean leaders.

“For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” (James 2:2-5).

God calls the poor of this world—the lowly of the lowly. God chooses the humble, or poor in spirit, to do His Work. Are there any other people who will SERVE GOD?

The Almighty God is not impressed by the mighty of this world. Until they bring God into their lives, they amount to nothing. Their talents and riches are chaff. Should God’s servants be impressed with and awed by very talented people? If we don’t evaluate with God’s mind and with the depth of His thinking, it is easy to become too impressed with things that truly do not matter.

God wants people who are rich in faith.

“[M]y beloved brethren,” James wrote in verse 5. Is he talking to the world? No! He is addressing the beloved, Spirit-begotten people in the Church of God.

Realize how up-to-date James really is. “But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you, is it not they who drag you into court?” (verse 6, rsv). Here God begins to condemn “the rich.” We must look at these verses spiritually. David and Abraham were rich and totally served God. Here God is speaking to those people who put riches ahead of God. Then they become spiritual orphans and widows. They are no longer rich in faith. He is talking about the Laodicean leaders who are enriched with the physical goods of the Church of God as it was built under the guidance of Herbert W. Armstrong.

Who are these leaders who are dragging God’s firstfruits into court?

Why would God inspire this verse about the Laodiceans *dragging* His very elect into court—especially in the last hour?

It is also interesting that *Elijah* is mentioned in this book (James 5:17).

Thayer's Lexicon refers to the word *court* in James 2:6 as “the place where judgment is given; the tribunal of a judge.” The *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible* defines *court* this way: “judicial contest or controversy, a lawsuit, . . . court of justice.”

I believe our six-year court battle with the WCG was the single most condemning event against the Laodiceans in this end time. Verse 6 is discussing a court tribunal just like our battle in the courts. The verb *elkein* (“drag” in RSV) means *violence*, whether physical or legal. It was certainly a violent legal struggle.

We were fighting for the revealed truth given to an end-time Elijah whom Christ sent to restore *all things*—that means *all* the foundational truth given to God's Church in these latter days. That is what we were fighting for in court. We couldn't even proclaim God's warning to the world without it!

This was a master stroke by the devil himself to stop God's Work, and virtually every Laodicean on Earth was cheering for Satan to win! Not one of those Laodicean churches offered to help us. They wanted us to lose.

But the same Christ who sent and worked through Elijah gave us the victory. The Laodiceans who fought against us or wanted to see us lose were fighting against Christ—hoping He would lose!

God is judging them today (1 Peter 4:17). Whether they realize it or not, they are being judged harshly by a much higher court!

These people are dying spiritually (2 Thessalonians 2:10). The court case was a living monument of their death throes! It will help 50 percent of them to repent in the Tribulation.

The court case was *at the heart* of what we were called to do. Otherwise, God would convert us with the rest of the world after Christ returns. But we are here now to proclaim God's message to a dying world. If we finish this work, God will reward us by letting us help Him rule the world. If we fail to do God's Work, we have no future with Him. So our court case deserves special attention in the book of James, written primarily for the time we are living in now.

1 Corinthians 6:1 asks, do you *dare* take one of your brothers in the Family of God before a court in this world? Well, the Laodiceans dared. That also shows their lack of understanding about the God Family. They committed

violence against their brethren, and they dishonored their Father (Malachi 1:6). THEY DISHONOR THEIR FATHER BY DISHONORING THOSE WHO HONOR THE FATHER IN DOING HIS WORK!

The Laodiceans say they are “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Revelation 3:17). But their attitude toward the spiritual wealth given to us through Mr. Armstrong shows that *they don't know what true riches are!* Any member of God's Church who was thinking correctly would have helped us fight for the right to print that priceless material.

Many of the Laodiceans thought that if only we lost that court case, it would mean the end of the PCG. THEY ACTED AS THOUGH THE SUPREME COURT OF HEAVEN DOESN'T EXIST. For that spiritual blindness, God condemns them!

“Do not they *blaspheme* that worthy name by the which ye are called?” (James 2:7).

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit puts a person “in danger of eternal damnation” (Mark 3:28-29). Mr. Armstrong's writings, which we fought for, were created by the Holy Spirit.

Mark and James use the same Greek word for *blaspheme*. James says these people “blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called.” These rebels need to think deeply about this verse. In the court case, they were fighting against God the Father, who is the one and only God to ever call sons into His Family! IN COURT, THEY WERE FIGHTING THEIR OWN FATHER WHO GAVE THIS MAJESTIC CALLING TO THEM—the most supreme honor in this life by far.

Nobody knows these people like their Father does. And they blaspheme His worthy name.

It is no accident that this verse follows the one discussing a fight in *court*. The Laodiceans need to ponder deeply what happened in that court case. Some people are in danger of losing their eternal lives!

Nothing is more important than that.

People who fight against Christ and His Work are antichrists. They are fighting against the very revelation God gave them.

THE ROYAL LAW

“If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well” (James 2:8). That is

talking about the Ten Commandments. Because it is the law of the majestic Father and Son, it is indeed a ROYAL LAW!

This verse has a lot of depth. Most of the commentaries are dishonest when commenting on this verse—they can't be sure which law James refers to, so they say this verse clearly refers to the last six of God's Ten Commandments.

Christ described the Ten Commandments as, first, love toward God (the first four commandments) and, second, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself"—which James quotes from His brother Christ (Matthew 22:36-40).

When this quote is used by other New Testament writers, they often spell out some or all of the last six commandments (see Matthew 19:16-19). It is clearly stated that you must keep these commandments to enter into eternal life!

Why is this so foundational and terribly important? The gospel is the good news of the coming Kingdom of God, which administers the law of God.

When Christ returns, our job will be to help Him administer the royal law—the Ten Commandments—during the Millennium. This law is from the royal Father and Son, and we are to become the royal Bride of the Son.

Only God's royal kings and priests understand just how royal and profound this law is. It is the royal law of God and His kings and priests—today and in the World Tomorrow.

People who produce the commentaries are supposed to be biblical experts. So when most of them say they don't know which law is *the royal law*, that is abysmal ignorance! But it is really more than that. They just refuse to keep God's law, and that is why we have all the problems in this world.

That royal law makes things work! It works for God and Christ—it works for people old and young—everybody!

Take the example of child rearing. This world doesn't know how to handle children. People experiment and try things out, *hoping* to find something that will work—but it never does.

Why are the children in the PCG happy and well-behaved? Because we keep the royal law! That one fact alone should be enough to convict people who are diligently searching for the truth: They could look at our children, recognize that something was right there, and be led right back to the ROYAL LAW.

And to where would that lead them? From whom does that right instruction come? God the Father!

“But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law” (James 2:9-11). If you break one law, you are a transgressor of the law and guilty of all. You are a law breaker.

James is still discussing how evil it is to be a respecter of persons. If you don't commit adultery, but you do kill, you still are a transgressor of the law.

However, if we look at these verses spiritually, we see that the Laodicean is guilty of both these sins when he is a respecter of persons.

You hate your brother when you are a respecter of persons, and that makes you guilty of murder (Matthew 5:21-24).

The Laodicean lusts for another husband, other than Christ, when he is a respecter of persons—so he is guilty of adultery. This sin has become a way of life. They have broken their marriage vow to Christ.

Most so-called Christians say that Christ did away with the law. (Many of the Laodiceans have the same belief today.) But Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it—fill it to the full! (Matthew 5:17). The law becomes far more binding in the New Testament teaching.

These two problems of adultery and murder grow, causing the Laodiceans to sin on a massive scale.

God inspired Ezekiel to write a book for this end time. Ezekiel said if we didn't proclaim God's message, we would be guilty of Israel's blood—guilty for their deaths (Ezekiel 33).

Now the Laodiceans have more respect for the world than they do for God and His very elect. They refuse to do God's Work and thereby sin against people by the millions.

They *must* get back to God's royal law of love. They *must* get back to delivering God's revealed truth to Israel and the Gentiles.

Remember, 50 percent of those people are going to lose their eternal lives. The other 50 percent will finally repent in the Great Tribulation.

James is detailing what it will take for the Laodiceans to return to God. They *must* repent to be in God's Kingdom.

Many of them will undoubtedly be reading and discussing our booklet on James while they are in the worst suffering ever on this planet.

We must get this message to our beloved Laodicean brethren!

Christ, the Head of God's Church, died for this world (John 3:16). The Laodiceans must also be willing to make the same sacrifice (Luke 14:26-27).

God's very elect must also remember those scriptures.

God's law is a law of liberty (James 2:12). When we keep it, it *frees us* from contention and strife. It *frees us* from having disorderly children and broken families. It is a law of love (1John 5:3).

That law must dominate our thinking. Keeping it is our Family responsibility!

NAKED BRETHREN

Next God gets very specific about His expectations of us if we are to keep that royal law of family love.

“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:14-17). In verse 15, God describes “a brother or sister . . . naked, and destitute of daily food.” Who does this apply to specifically?

To the Laodiceans, God says, “[T]hou . . . knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17). They are naked and destitute of daily food—after all, they rejected the revelation Mr. Armstrong delivered, and completely lack the spiritual food God has given since his death.

Almost every person who comes into the PCG from a Laodicean church, says, “I was spiritually *starving* over there!” God simply does not feed His people unless they are in the

inner court, where God dwells. He earnestly desires to feed them! If only they would respond to Christ's knock, then He would come and sup with them (verse 20). Instead, they are destitute of daily food.

God expects His very elect to *remember those brethren* and to *look after them!* We must have food and clothing to give them. Of course, if we offer it and they reject it, that is their choice. But God warns us that if we forget or reject the Laodiceans, we are simply not thinking like God! This is His FAMILY!

James is talking about the worst disaster God's Church could face. These are *brothers and sisters who became naked*. They are part of God's Family. They were clothed, but then they became naked. This catastrophe happened to the 12 tribes of Israel spiritually—virtually God's whole Church.

This book is addressed to the Laodiceans. However, *the book of James has some of the strongest meat in the Bible for God's very elect!*

Can we forget God's Family? What happens if we don't get James's message to them? Then we have *faith without works* (James 2:14). Our *faith* is dead!

Our works are doing what we can to proclaim God's message and finish this Work!

If we neglect the Laodiceans, then we don't know God the Father and Jesus Christ. If we are their slaves, then we must love our Family the way the Father and Christ do!

We must reach out to the God Family—or we too have lost the Family vision. God is very specific about what we must do. We must do all we can to feed and clothe our brethren, or we only have dead faith—faith without works. If we have dead faith, then we too are Laodicean and in danger of eternal judgment.

Only we have been given the spiritual food and clothing they need. *Only we* can deliver it to them. If we have faith with works, we will do it!

This message becomes more urgent when we consider the *time factor*. James is undoubtedly the last major message to the Laodiceans in this *last hour*, and James is *last hour* revelation.

All of God's *last hour* revelation has been directed to all of God's people. But James is addressed specifically to the

Laodiceans. That means it is a strong warning for them, and God will probably have some major correction just for them if they don't heed James's message. I would imagine it would be even more corrective than the court case. God is going to do all He can to draw their attention to His revelation from James.

We could be aware or unaware of how God corrects them. These are people whom God loves. He will do all He can to save them from the Great Tribulation and the lake of fire. God will even continue working with them *in* the Tribulation. (*Malachi's Message* and James's message will undoubtedly play a key role in their repentance in that horrendous trial.)

I am convinced that a sizeable number of Laodiceans will respond before the Tribulation and help us get this message out. We urgently need laborers to help us. Because of their knowledge, they should be easier to change into laborers for God.

HERE IS A MAJOR REASON WHY JAMES CAN REACH MANY MORE OF THE LAODICEANS THAN *MALACHI'S MESSAGE* CAN: WE CAN OFFER IT TO THEM ON OUR TELEVISION PROGRAM.

We offer *Malachi's Message* in much of what we write and on our website. However, this book is not offered on television. It would confuse much of our audience if they read it before reading *Mystery of the Ages*.

That is not the case with James. We have structured it so that we can offer it on television. That is one big reason why I believe James may be so effective with the Laodiceans.

Malachi's Message was about the *first hour* of this work. James is about the *last hour*. *Malachi's Message* INTRODUCED the Laodiceans to God's Work. James shows them the conclusion to God's Work, before the very elect are protected from the Great Tribulation.

James really brings this message home to us. God inspired James to write, if "one of *you* [individuals] say unto *them* [the Laodiceans], Depart ... [and] give *them* not those things which are needful," then our faith is dead!

This is piercing correction for all of God's people—especially the PCG.

Many of us have relatives and friends in the Laodicean churches—even mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. Surely we have agonized over their spiritual condition.

We, of all people, should step out in living faith and the deepest love to feed and clothe our “beloved brethren.”

God is getting to the heart of what *God Family* means!

James asks, “where is the profit” if we don’t feed and clothe them spiritually? And the answer is, there is no profit spiritually!

Where does that leave you and me? God is judging us by how dedicated we are to this Work!

Do we have faith with works? Or is our faith dead? This is specifically to the very elect, and our eternal lives and an awesome reward are at stake!

We must show God faith with works.

Consider the URGENCY in this warning: We are living in the LAST HOUR! The Laodiceans are receiving their *last major warning!* And if you are a member of God’s Family, you must do your part to deliver it. WE NEED LABORERS IN THIS WORK.

THE FRIEND OF GOD

“Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (James 2:18). We show our faith by our works. Faith is a lot more than just believing *in* God. Faith with works means we *believe God* and do what He commands.

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?” (verses 19-21). The demons believe *in* God and tremble. But they don’t believe God and they still refuse to do faithful works. They rejected God’s government and refused to administer it on Earth.

Now they face the blackest future you can imagine. This is dangerous knowledge. God holds us accountable for what we know.

We know that God didn’t require Abraham to actually kill his son—but in his mind it was as good as done.

Abraham waited 25 years for this promised son. He was an old man when Isaac was born. And it is easy for an old man to almost worship a young son.

Abraham was ready to sacrifice him for God. What a shocking test for any person. This was not a mere act of obedience. It may have been an unparalleled act of faith by a created man! This is an example of Abraham's works—the kind of works that bring faith alive!

After this act of faith, God knew that Abraham would withhold nothing from Him.

What an example! Abraham is the father of the faithful (Romans 4:11). God wants us to look to his example, and realize how far he was willing to go in obeying God. Look at how richly God blessed him for his faith. The message is, if we build that level of faith-filled obedience in our lives, God will bless us accordingly.

“Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, *Abraham believed God*, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God” (James 2:22-23).

Abraham didn't just believe in the existence of God, His sacrifice or His saving work—he “*believed God*.” This is where the whole “Christian” world is deceived. Abraham believed every word of God. He believed all of God's many promises. He did precisely what God said to do.

This *living* faith was imputed to him as righteousness. Only this living faith makes us God's friends.

The Laodiceans would rather be the friends of this world. They have a dead faith.

Here is a second strong example of living faith: “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?” (verses 24-25). Rahab risked her life to save these messengers of Israel. At this point, she had repented of her sins and believed what the God of Israel said. Rahab's works showed her living faith. She backed and supported the work of Israel.

Today we are doing the Work of spiritual Israel. We show our faith by our works—in declaring the message of James to the Laodiceans. We also show our faith by proclaiming God's message to the world.

Does God still view Rahab as a harlot? He only gives her that label within this context in order to teach a lesson! In His mind, she is right up there with Abraham—a friend of God! What a marvelous example.

This Gentile harlot repented of her sins and became God's friend!

Some say they can't deal with certain individuals in the Church because of past sins. That is nothing but self-righteousness.

In the Kingdom of God, when Rahab is exalted to the heights, no one will be whispering about her being a harlot! We all make mistakes. When we do so, it is our responsibility to bury them and grow in character—and to become the friends of God!

The Laodiceans have become adulterous (James 4:4). Spiritually speaking, they are the worst kind of *harlots*! But God is still trying to woo them back to Himself. If they repent, they, too, will be GOD'S FRIENDS.

How God wants us to be His friends! That is a truly special honor and distinction. Imagine such wicked sinners being allowed to become God's friends!

We cannot write anyone off whom God has begotten and called to be part of that Family relationship. He loves us all EQUALLY! We need that same level of love toward each other.

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26).

Abraham and Rahab believed God and proved it by their works. They showed their faith by their works. They acted on their faith by doing exactly what God said. God's Work became their work. This is how we bring our faith alive!

THE TONGUE

The very elect are God's ambassadors on Earth. Our citizenship is in heaven, and we represent and speak on behalf of the brilliant, magnificent God of Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 1! So God wants to teach us to speak like Him.

“Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that he who teaches shall be judged with greater [condemnation]” (James 3:1, rsv). Don't try to jockey to become a

minister today. We will all receive that office in the Kingdom of God anyway.

In Hebrews 5:12, Paul shows that we are all training today for positions as teachers. God's true Church is a teachers' college. We are going to teach the whole world. Members must know how to rule the tongue.

The Laodiceans who don't repent until the Tribulation will not have headquarters positions in the Kingdom of God because they are not prepared to teach on that level! They haven't taken advantage of the opportunity to get themselves ready for that office.

"For we all make many mistakes, and if any one makes no mistakes in what he says he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also" (James 3:2, RSV). We all make mistakes, but mistakes should not be our way of life.

If each one of us is able to bridle the whole body, then Christ can rule over the entire spiritual body.

"Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth" (verses 3-4). A whole ship can be guided through waves and storms with a little rudder. Our tongue expresses what is in our mind—and if we can just control our tongues, we actually guide our whole being and demonstrate a great deal of character.

A metal bit is put in a horse's mouth to guide it. Each one of us must have a spiritual "bit" in our mouth.

"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (verses 5-6). *Hell* comes from the Greek word *gehenna*, and refers to the lake of fire!

Who is James talking to when speaking of *gehenna* fire? He is talking about begotten sons of God, the firstfruits whom God has called in this age—whose eternal lives are at stake!

The expression "whole body," in addition to speaking of our whole being, also applies to the whole Church of

God—specifically what has happened in the Laodicean Church.

Where is the tongue, and all the wrong teaching it is expressing, leading the Laodiceans? “COURSE OF NATURE” WOULD BE BETTER TRANSLATED “COURSE OF CREATION”—SPEAKING OF THE SPIRITUAL CREATION GOING ON WITHIN GOD’S SONS. THE LAODICEANS HAVE SET THAT ON FIRE! Their actions will end in gehenna fire for every one of them who doesn’t repent.

You won’t find a stronger warning in all the Bible. This is such dangerous knowledge.

Just by the use of our tongue, we can talk ourselves right into gehenna fire! Half of the Laodiceans are prophesied to do just that. This could not be more serious, more sobering, or more sad.

The Laodicean tongue has *changed the course of God’s whole spiritual creation today!* Their tongues set the Body of Christ on fire! Over 95 percent of the spiritual Body was defiled—it became a world of iniquity. That is why God had to start all over and raise up the ruins (Amos 9:11).

When Lucifer rebelled against God, he set the universe on fire! He thought he had a better plan than God, and lost everything—as did all the angels who followed him. That is quite a fire! Satan is now the father of liars, doomed to an eternal nightmare.

Why is it so important that we learn to tame our tongues? Because we are preparing to teach every person who has ever lived. We need the mind of Christ to direct everything we say. Jesus Christ continually spoke uplifting words while He was here on Earth. With His mind in us, we can do the same!

We must control our tongue, because we are destined to control the universe.

Each of us must learn to exercise wisdom in this area. We must learn to say things that will encourage people and lift them up. When we fail to do that, we can easily beat people down.

A parent can change the nature of creation in his own family, or alter the whole direction of his child’s life, just by the words he speaks to that child. Once your communication begins turning negative, that cycle becomes destructive very quickly. We must repent, and watch our tongue! Christ holds each one of us accountable for *every word* we utter!

Because man doesn't control his tongue, he has turned this world into *tohu* and *bohu*. It is ruled by deceitful and desperately wicked human hearts (Jeremiah 17:9).

James teaches us about the tongue as no book in the Bible does. The tongue should express the thoughts of Christ's mind (Philippians 2:5). But good or bad, the tongue expresses what is on the mind.

“For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But *the tongue can no man tame*; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:7-8). Our tongue is *full* of lethal poison, and no man can tame it! Only God can.

In Revelation 3:9, God condemns those in the “synagogue of Satan” because they *lie*. We heard the Laodicean leaders spew their poisonous lies, using their tongues with deft deceit. For years they denied even making changes—as they calculatingly defiled the doctrines of God! They set the Church on fire as they talked, and talked, and talked—committing a world of evil!

These verses apply to God's Philadelphians even more. Notice: “Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God” (James 3:9).

James emphasizes the fact that we are made in the likeness of God. That is a towering truth! THE ANIMALS DON'T LOOK LIKE GOD. YOU LOOK LIKE GOD! AND YOU WERE ALSO CREATED WITH A MIND THAT THE ANIMALS DON'T HAVE—IN ORDER TO DEVELOP THE MIND, OR IMAGE, OF GOD! You have a much higher potential than any animal which can't be given the love or wisdom of God!

But to achieve that potential, you must learn to control your tongue. That takes the character and mind of Christ. The more you get that mind in you, the greater the wonders you can achieve in working with people. As you overcome your human nature, you can be a force for the good!

“Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (verse 10). The Laodiceans bless God, but don't talk like Him! They love to praise God and “love Jesus”—but at the same time, they commit cruel and hateful acts, and do violence to God's truth! That is like bitter and sweet water coming from the same fountain, and God will have none of that!

We are ambassadors for Christ. We speak for Him.

Do you talk like God? Do you talk like the Bible? Is your speech grounded in God's Word?

"Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh" (verses 11-12). God demands that we speak the truth. How incongruous would it be to receive bitter and sweet water from the same fountain.

Water is a type of God's Holy Spirit. We must let God's Holy Spirit produce pure thoughts in our minds—not contradictory thoughts of confusion.

This is the world's only hope. We are God's ambassadors who must speak for God.

A fig tree doesn't produce olive berries. The human mind was created to produce godly fruits. This world is about to be filled with tongues that speak like God. Any other language will be destroyed with the people who speak it.

WISDOM FROM ABOVE

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom" (verse 13). As we already covered in James 1:5, wisdom is a great need in God's Church.

"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish" (James 3:14-15). The whole Laodicean apostasy lies against the truth. Each of the Laodiceans could prove that is true.

Where do they get that "wisdom"? They get it from this Earth. Devilish wisdom comes from the devil.

True wisdom is a gift from God.

It takes wisdom to know what to do when God denies you something you earnestly desire, or how to navigate our fiery trials, for example.

Many people fail to counsel before making heavy decisions. In my ministry, I have seen many people make huge, terrible decisions that have hurt them badly—because of a lack of wisdom. I have seen Church members lose good jobs

that they needed. I've seen people make a bad decision about who to marry, which affects them the rest of their life. I have seen members make the wrong statement to a school teacher, or commit mistakes in home schooling. I have seen members mishandle themselves in dealing with medical authorities. All because of a lack of wisdom!

James has the best definition of wisdom in the Bible! He lists *seven items* here that are outgrowths of godly wisdom: "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (verses 17-18).

God's wisdom is first *pure*, which means it is free from earthly, sensual, diabolical thoughts or motives. Nathanael, for example, was a man "in whom is no guile" (John 1:47); he had no evil motives running through his mind. *Vincent's Word Studies* says the word *pure* in James 3:17 is "[f]irst—not numerically, but sequentially. The others are outgrowths of this primary quality." First of all, we must have a PURE MOTIVE. When we are being led by God's Spirit, we are not calculating—trying to take advantage of the other person or to get something from them. We must be *pure*, and simply give as our heavenly Father gives! How could a marriage ever fail if both the husband and the wife wanted to give 100 percent? *That is wisdom!*

If we speak words of wisdom, we bring joy and encouragement. Our tongue produces spiritual honey.

God's wisdom is also *peaceable*, which means that it makes peace with others, especially within the family. It is *gentle*, meaning forbearing—not demanding, and not looking down on others. It is "easy to be entreated" or persuaded. It is happy to give in if the other person is right. It is "full of mercy and good fruits" toward the misery of others—desiring to relieve them.

God's wisdom is also *without partiality*. It is not swayed by self-interest, worldly honor or the fear of man. If Jacob, who favored Joseph over his other sons, had had this quality, the tragic problems wouldn't have existed between Joseph and his brothers, and it would have changed the course of Israel's history!

The wisdom from above is also “without hypocrisy”—what you see is what you get. It doesn’t pretend to be something it is not. It requires wisdom to present yourself as someone who is trying to grow and improve, yet who never tries to come across as someone you are not.

“And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace” (verse 18). The fruit of this righteousness will produce peace wherever we go.

If any of you lack wisdom, go to God, and He will give it to you!

Study this passage and really learn what God’s wisdom will do in your life. If you understand it, you will be praying for more of that wisdom every day! As times get more difficult and we begin to face more persecution, we of all people need a continually replenished supply of “the wisdom that is from above.”

Chapter 4

War Among Teachers

THE FOURTH CHAPTER OF JAMES'S EPISTLE MAKES THE PROPHETIC substance of this message crystal clear. Through this inspired message, God is speaking directly to His end-time Church!

Luciano Pavarotti has been called the greatest tenor in the world. He was one of Mr. Armstrong's favorite performing artists, and he sang at the Ambassador Auditorium several times.

I had an opportunity to hear Mr. Pavarotti perform on his farewell tour in 2005. It was one of the finest performances I have ever heard. His voice is extremely powerful and very beautiful at the same time.

The concert I attended was held on the Oral Roberts University (ORU) campus in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Before building his university, Mr. Roberts visited the Ambassador College campus in Pasadena. You could certainly discern some influence there, looking at the ORU buildings.

Going to Pavarotti's concert made me pray more about building a house for God on the Herbert W. Armstrong College campus. His concert brought back many rich memories of what Mr. Armstrong did in Pasadena.

James discussed the rich Laodiceans (James 1:10; 2:6). They were rich because they had a lot of expensive property, including the Ambassador Auditorium, God's house. When they sold that, they received many millions of dollars.

The Philadelphia Church of God has a lot invested in our property. We are *raising up the ruins*. Having an auditorium and hosting concerts with great performers—featuring the best that the human spirit can achieve—is impressive to the world. Of course, what is far more important is the *spiritual* message coming out of those facilities, and what God is giving us through His Holy Spirit.

We want to show the world that our beautiful message comes from God's magnificent house. The best of the human spirit combined with the best of the Holy Spirit—this gives us and the world a prophetic insight into what is coming in the World Tomorrow. God's house would become a symbol of the world's greatest and only hope!

God's majestic glory is about to fill this Earth.

WAR AMONG TEACHERS

“My brethren, be not many masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (James 3:1). All ministers should be aware of this: We are going to receive the greater condemnation.

Teachers will be condemned more than anyone if they claim to speak God's truth, yet don't know what they are talking about. God judges them very harshly!

JAMES IS TELLING US THAT SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAS HAPPENED TO GOD'S TEACHERS IN THIS END TIME. Keep that in mind as we go through the fourth chapter of this epistle.

“From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” (James 4:1).

James isn't talking about wars in this world between countries. He is talking about spiritual wars *among the teachers of God!* He is also talking about wars between them and their followers. Wars always have casualties. Rather than being unified as they should be, they are warring with each other. When James says “among you,” he is talking about *you disciples*. He specifically mentions “war in your members”—and “*member* denotes a limb or member *of the body*; but it is used in the New Testament to denote the members of the body collectively” (*Barnes' Notes*).

James is discussing the Body of Christ. God's Church is in a state of warfare. The wars are caused by "lusts." But those lusts have often dragged God's faithful remnant into these wars. Our court case with the WCG is a good example. We had every right to print Mr. Armstrong's writings. But because of their *lusts*, the Laodiceans believed it was their "Christian duty" to keep Mr. Armstrong's "errors" out of print.

The *International Critical Commentary* says, "Some have taken the James 4:1 difficulties to be between teachers." They certainly are just that! That is exactly what God is talking about here. *Lange's Commentary* says that this verse could be referring to "dissension among Christians." That is right: This exposes a spiritual problem of the worst kind in God's Church! The commentaries can see that.

What a tragedy this is! Even with all the calamities coming on the land of Israel, THE GREATEST CALAMITY EVER IS OCCURRING AMONG THE TEACHERS OF GOD!

What has gone wrong? Satan the devil is causing all kinds of division in God's Church!

The Apostle John discusses the same problem, and he uses the term ANTICHRIST! Among the teachers of God, there are people fighting against Christ!

In Hebrews 5:12, the Apostle Paul says that some ought to be teachers for God, but they haven't even learned the basics of what God wants us to learn! We are here to *teach the world*—not to split and break up.

Ask yourself: Where are all the teachers who are supposed to be here when Christ returns? THEY ARE IN A WAR OVER DOCTRINES!

James is giving us essential material on how to become a teacher—a king and priest forever!

All of God's people should have rallied around us when we fought for the right to publish *Mystery of the Ages*. Mr. Armstrong called it the second-most powerful book on Earth because it opens our understanding to the Bible; that book changes lives and turns them around! Instead, the Laodiceans either did nothing, or hoped we would lose—and many of them aggressively fought against our cause!

Again, this is the brother of Jesus Christ giving us urgent prophecy for the end time. We have witnessed its fulfillment within the Church of God.

Church members should be getting out the most important message in the universe, not warring against each other!

LUSTING FOR THINGS

“Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:2). This scripture is talking about *prayer*.

James says these individuals are prioritizing *objects* ahead of GOD—AND IT IS KILLING THEM SPIRITUALLY. The expression “desire to have” means *covet*. They are lusting and simply trying to *take* whatever they want.

“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (verse 3). If you are not getting answers to your prayers, you need to examine your prayers! That is just as true for Philadelphians as it is for Laodiceans. God says people are asking “amiss,” or asking *EVILLY*. It is talking about selfish, wrongly focused prayer.

ADULTERESSES

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (verse 4). Again—this isn’t about physical war: It is about “friendship of the world”—that is, the people of God becoming too close with the ways of this world!

If you look at the original Greek words of this verse, you will see that the word *adulterers* shouldn’t even be there. The *Companion Bible* and other sources verify that. Why is that word included? Clarke’s commentary explains that some scribes were surprised James spoke only to “adulteresses” and thought the verse was incomplete somehow. So they just added it! That is quite audacious.

God isn’t just talking about *physical* adultery here. If He were, He surely would have included both genders in the verse.

Who are these “adulteresses”?

The Bible always uses a *woman* as a symbol for a church. This verse is talking about the churches of God in the end

time. James is directing this severe condemnation to churches that are SPIRITUAL ADULTERESSES!

We live in a period of monstrous apostasy. The people of God are turning from Him and splitting into various groups. They have demonstrated enmity, or hatred, toward God and become His enemy. In doing so, they have willfully rejected their marriage vows and trampled on their marriage covenant with God!

When James uses terminology like “royal law” (James 2:8), he is trying to show us how *royal* those people are who keep that law. No one on Earth is more royal than Christ’s Bride. There isn’t even a close second, in Christ’s eyes! But most of God’s people don’t even consider that calling worthy of thinking about! They have rejected God’s royal law and become spiritual adulteresses.

GOD’S WORD SPEAKS NOT IN VAIN

James continues to talk about human nature and how it has hurt God’s people. “Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?” (James 4:5).

Commentaries admit that this subject is confusing to them.

James is saying, *Do you think the Scripture says in vain that we have human nature that gets us to lust?* Look at what has happened to most of God’s people: They lust after this world. They want God and the world both! God thunders to them, *Don’t you realize that lust will destroy you spiritually? Have you forgotten that your heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked?* Do you think God inspired those words in vain? Does God say such things lightly or casually?

Look at God’s people! Many are going to LOSE THEIR ETERNAL LIVES because they do not take God’s Word seriously! WE MUST TAKE IT SERIOUSLY! There is no stronger warning in the Bible!

James is speaking directly to the disciples of Jesus Christ: Do YOU—put your name there—*think this is in vain?* Do YOU REALLY SEE HUMAN NATURE? THIS WORLD DOESN’T! Do YOU realize that your lusts will *destroy you* ETERNALLY?

Never take a single word of God casually!

A CALL TO REPENTANCE

“But he giveth more grace. . . .” (verse 6). This expression provides yet more evidence that this isn’t talking about wars transpiring in the world. God is speaking about those to whom He gives *grace*.

James continues, “Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (verses 6-7). If you submit to God, Satan will flee—because he knows the power of God! But he also knows the weakness of humans. With his cunning, he has taken most of God’s own people captive!

BUT YOU HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE THE DEVIL FLEE. In order to drive this powerful and evil being away, we need only submit to God. The Laodiceans have failed to do that. So Satan has gotten to them—and he knows how to use them for his purposes.

If we don’t use the power of God, Satan will get us.

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded” (verse 8). You can’t have both the world and God. You can *appear* to be righteous, but in truth **YOU EITHER HATE THE WORLD OR YOU HATE GOD.**

Tragically, most of God’s own people hate God!

Vincent’s Word Studies says this verse’s use of the word *purify* is one of the few instances that is not talking about ceremonial purification. God is speaking *spiritually*.

“Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness” (verse 9). God is making a stern appeal here. He is looking for grief that is manifested and visible: Laughter that has been transformed into mourning—joy that has been changed into heaviness. God wants His people to **GET SERIOUS ABOUT REPENTANCE!** The casual love of the world must end. The Almighty God wants to visibly see repentance and conversion. He wants to see continual and substantial changes in us. He wants His people to begin to think like Him! **THAT IS NO SMALL CHALLENGE.**

“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (verse 10). This is an iron-clad promise. When we

humble ourselves in repentance before God, He will always lift us up. Look how God has lifted up this Church! As the world goes down and troubles intensify, our power rises to the point where everyone can see it! God orchestrates and synchronizes these events for a great purpose.

But as God's faithful remnant Church grows in power, the teachers in the Laodicean churches are in turmoil, and war with each other. They are shamefully unaware of what God is accomplishing. Their contentiousness and small-mindedness cannot be justified or excused. God flatly condemns it.

SPEAKING EVIL OF FAMILY

“Speak not evil one of another, brethren” (James 4:11). This instruction applies to everyone in all of the churches of God. We should never speak evilly of any of God's people. Of course, God instructs His Philadelphians to warn them—to knock on their door (Revelation 3:19-20). But that effort must be motivated out of genuine *love*, and we must not speak evil of our Family.

Here James calls the adulteresses “brethren.”

Most of the Laodiceans say it's all right to visit other Laodicean churches. But they warn each other not to have anything to do with the PCG.

Why is that? It is because they hate God and His law! Only the PCG teaches God's law and government. We are the only Church of God that implements God's law.

So they speak evil of their brethren—the PCG—which the law forbids. We warn them because we love them God's way. However, we do not love them perfectly. Verse 11 is profound. We must not speak evil against the Laodiceans and the Philadelphia brethren. If we do, we are breaking God's law.

James keeps getting back to God's law and government of love. He often uses the law and God's Word interchangeably. We *must* look to the Bible and let God judge how we should speak toward our brethren. Too many people talk about the Bible to feel religious, but they don't *live by every word* as Christ commanded!

We are God's Family, and we are called now so we can help God bring everyone who has ever lived into that Family. We

must teach all of them not to speak evil against each other or they can't enter into God's Kingdom.

Look how this world is filled with hatred. We have a towering job ahead of us.

God just took the way He thinks and made it into a law for us. WE MUST ALL LEARN TO THINK LIKE GOD!

James is getting very specific about human nature! In order to follow this command, we must conquer our human nature and allow the love of God to flow from us. God rebukes and chastens—He corrects. But He always does that out of love.

James 4:11 continues, "He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law . . ." God's law says WE ARE TO LOVE! "[B]ut if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge." Again James returns to the theme of controlling our tongues. This epistle says more about this subject than any book in the Bible. *Watch what you say*, James says, *because what you say is what you are!* If we are not careful, we can flagrantly break God's law just by our words!

GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO OBEY HIS LAW IN SPIRIT AND IN DETAIL.

If you love people, that shows that you love God's law. If you speak evil of God's Family, you are speaking evil of God's law. Yes, God's Church must deliver God's message—including His prophecies about the Laodicean Church and His words of warning—but we ought never speak against people in an evil way.

WE DO NOT CONDEMN THE LAODICEANS.

"There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" (verse 12). The Lawgiver is God. We ought never condemn anyone, particularly those whom God has begotten. WATCH GOSSIP! That was a major part of what drew the Laodiceans away from God—what they were saying and continue to say about God's Spirit-begotten people! Anyone who condemns God's people is going to stir His anger. You may say harsh things about other people, but it's you whom God will judge harshly for it!

Think about these extremely sobering words. There is *one* Lawgiver, who is able to save and destroy. If we speak in a condemning way, we are acting like the Lawgiver. *Only* He can

save us spiritually or cast us into the lake of fire.

We must become humble and realize that God is perfect. Arrogance will cause us to make serious mistakes.

Who are we to condemn another person?

THE THEME OF JAMES

“Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (verses 13-14).

We don’t know what tomorrow will bring—only God does. We are totally helpless.

Your life is like a vapor, here a little while and then gone. Look at movies made in the early days of Hollywood. Most of the actors are dead. That was only a few years ago.

It is hard to reproduce these words from Greek to English: You are like “a passing mist” or “steam from a pot . . . appearing and disappearing” (*International Critical Commentary*). We are like the smoke from a fire apart from God. There is nothing to this life. So we *must* view our lives as God does.

Allow God to take that *mist*, or *vapor*, and turn it into eternal life!

God’s perspective changes everything. We *must* exchange our human view for His eternal perspective.

“For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that” (verse 15). We all need a certain humility about the plans we make, recognizing the fragility of our lives. Everything depends on God’s will.

“But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (verses 16-17). One translation reads how you “boast in your illusions and haughtiness.” We must surrender to God through inspired Bible study and prayer. Then God will remove the illusions and haughtiness.

Verse 17 should be locked in our memories. It is aimed both at Laodiceans and Philadelphians! If you know to not do something, you must not do it. THE TRANSGRESSORS ARE GOING TO DIE! The Laodiceans KNOW what is right—they know what

Mr. Armstrong taught! They *seem* to be religious—but they are twisting the truth, and they know better! And God rebukes them harshly for it!

We could view this as the theme of the whole epistle of James:
WE CAN'T ESCAPE WHAT WE KNOW—AND WE KNOW A LOT!

That verse leads into the final chapter of James, which contains God's most direct and thunderous words of rebuke—as well as some wonderfully inspiring prophecy!

Chapter 5

God Condemns the ‘Rich Men’

THE CONCLUDING CHAPTER OF JAMES IS A BLISTERING WARNING from God for our day.

Verse 3 shows that it is describing events “*in the last days*” (the word *for* comes from a Greek word that should be translated “in”).

This is an urgent message to be understood when “the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (verse 8)—and when “the judge standeth before the door”! (verse 9).

Who is the message directed to? The people of God. Even *Lange’s Commentary* says that James 5 is about an apostasy of God’s people.

Our work started with a major warning to the Laodiceans with *Malachi’s Message*. We see now that we are to close this work with one last, major warning to the Laodiceans.

All of the general epistles, or “last-hour epistles,” speak to the Laodiceans. James sort of sums these epistles up and addresses his book specifically to God’s lukewarm people.

James is a New Testament counterpart to Malachi of the Old Testament.

You urgently need to understand this burning message.

RICH MEN

“Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you” (James 5:1).

Here James is in the role of a prophet. This is a prophecy for this end time, but primarily for “the last days.” James says “your miseries . . . *shall* come upon you” in the future. That means somebody would prophesy about the book of James today.

Terrible suffering is coming upon these rich men. *Lange's Commentary* states that this chapter is about an apostasy, or a great falling away. *Only* God's true Church can fall away. And many prophecies explain this greatest of tragedies.

Who are these rich men? James is talking to the rich Laodiceans who sold God's property for millions! They are the only ones with the money to fight us in court.

God also is addressing all of the Laodiceans. All of them are “rich and increased with goods.” They put material things ahead of God. They wanted us to lose in court.

GOD THUNDERS THAT IT IS TIME FOR THOSE SAINTS TO WEEP AND HOWL!

The Laodicean leaders have bowed to riches, putting physical wealth before God. They must pay a penalty for that monstrous sin. They are about to be consumed by miseries!

We are entering the time of weeping and howling, the time of howls of mourning. Israel has already started to experience horrifying punishments, and the tribulations will only intensify. The Laodiceans will be caught in the middle of them.

Where did those men get that wealth? How did they become rich? They don't know how to run a church—they only know destruction! They made their money by greedily selling the Ambassador Auditorium and other treasures that were built by the tithes and offerings of God's precious people! They turned over the magnificent house of God to the devil! That is one of the great catastrophes in God's end-time Church. How could anyone dare sell the house of God to this world? You can be sure God will not permit that sin to go unpunished.

God's faithful elect must deliver this warning—one final time. The Great Tribulation is almost here—it is weep-and-howl time!

“Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are [have become] moth-eaten” (verse 2). Some translations say their *gold* has been *corrupted*.

Of course, it is not a sin to be rich IF YOU PUT GOD FIRST. The Bible has many positive examples of men who simply gave more to God when they became wealthy.

But the carnal mind can be corrupted by riches. Why did the state of California take over the headquarters of the Worldwide Church of God in 1979 (under Mr. Armstrong)? It was totally unnecessary, because even without that severe action it had access to plenty of evidence—60,000 documents as a matter of routine—that would have proven whether the Church was involved in any misdeeds. The fact is, those officials just wanted the money! Politicians and men at the top thought they could take the church for a lot of money! They lusted for property and goods, just like the Laodiceans do. That is human nature.

If true Christians put wealth before God, it will amount to nothing. It is corrupt! Put God first—that is the only way to truly prosper!

In biblical analogy, *garments* refer to character; for example, fine linen is called the righteousness of saints (Revelation 19:8). The garments of these rich men *have become* MOTHEATEN; they weren't always that way. These men had it all and then LOST IT ALL—or close to it. Now it is time for them to weep and howl!

“Your gold and silver is cankered [rusted]; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together [in] the last days” (James 5:3). When? In the last days!

Gold and silver don't contract rust or become oxidized, and they will not become corroded (or cankered) like iron and steel. God isn't talking about physical gold, but spiritual. “How is the gold become dim!” the Prophet Jeremiah wrote. “The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers...” (Lamentations 4:1-2). God is discussing spiritual gold. The Laodiceans were *rich* with fine spiritual gold, but it has become corrupted—rusted and ruined! They have no real work. The Laodiceans receive absolutely no revelation for the Church and world today.

The Laodicean leaders gathered piles of money from selling God's property, and have become rich and increased with goods. They think that if they get enough wealth, they can

look after themselves. But what a miscalculation! God says, *No—every one of you will weep and howl!* They are going to weep and howl for the massive sin they have committed before God!

They believe their wealth will protect them. God says that wealth will eat their flesh like *fire!* First, NUCLEAR FIRE, then GEHENNA FIRE—THE LAKE OF FIRE! That will be a time of weeping and howling for all those who thought they could push God aside and be okay!

And again, this will happen “*in [not for] the last days*” (James 5:3)—many references support that translation. The Greek word translated *for* is *en*, and it denotes *being within* or *remaining within*. This massive problem occurs *IN THE LAST DAYS!*

As the Apostle Paul wrote, “This know also, that *in the last days PERILOUS TIMES SHALL COME*” (2 Timothy 3:1). PERILOUS TIMES INDEED! Where are these rich men in the last days? It doesn't take much understanding to know!

This is occurring just as world events are falling into place prophetically, and this world needs God's warning message more urgently than ever before. Yet these men are not serving God—they are not laying up treasure in heaven. Instead they are spurning God and laying up *physical treasure* for THEMSELVES!

“*Prophecy not,*” they say. Toward the end of his life, Herbert W. Armstrong said he was frustrated that he couldn't get the Worldwide Church of God ministers to speak more about the Bible's prophecies. So there was already a resistance to God's prophetic message even while Mr. Armstrong was alive. Then that message was quickly stopped after he died.

Those ministers *really* ought to speak about prophecy today, which is being fulfilled more quickly than ever before—but the Laodicean churches are almost SILENT on the subject!

DEFRAUDING THE LABORERS

James 5:4 talks about “the labourers who have reaped down [harvested] your fields.” Who are these *laborers*? That is talking about the many tens of thousands of members in the Worldwide Church of God who faithfully contributed tithes,

offerings, prayers and support over the years for that work. God really does recognize our efforts.

For example, I was in the WCG from 1961 through 1989—28 years. All that time, I gave my tithes and offerings to that church. There are thousands of examples similar to mine, and some of those members even volunteered free physical labor to help construct many of the buildings.

Most of our PCG members helped build that mighty work.

The PCG is doing that labor today—building God's Work as quickly as we can. As in the days of the WCG, we are always looking for more laborers to help us finish the Work (Matthew 9:37-38). God always lauds those who labor in His Work!

But notice what has happened to those WCG "laborers" at the hands of the Laodicean leaders: "Behold, the hire of the labourers who have [harvested] your fields, which is of you kept back BY FRAUD, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth" (James 5:4).

What a dramatic picture. Laborers helped build up that work and contributed a great deal of wealth—but THE LEADERS HAVE KEPT FOR THEMSELVES EVERY BIT OF THAT WEALTH BY FRAUD!

THE SUPREME COURT OF HEAVEN FINDS THOSE MEN GUILTY OF FRAUD! The U.S. courts wouldn't even give us the books and booklets that the WCG leaders hated. And God will hold them accountable for that injustice.

They didn't make that money! They calculated their way into their offices and positions of power. Those who contributed to the Church for decades didn't receive any of that money back. The leaders took it all, sold the property and everything else they could, and KEPT THE MILLIONS. They fraudulently took it from people who had committed themselves to God's Work over numerous years.

Many of God's people have surely thought, *Doesn't God see what happened?* Oh, DOES HE EVER! He blazes with indignation: *You have DEFRAUDED my people!*

In His love, God is giving those leaders time to repent. He commands His faithful remnant to teach them specifically what to repent of and how—and to warn them that if they fail to do so, they will lose it all!

We must not overlook the fact that *God's remnant Church* is being judged by God as well.

The *laborers* cry out—but where this verse says “crieth,” it is speaking not only about the workers, but also the *wages*—the *money*. Even the wages cry out! It is like the blood of Abel—which God said “crieth unto me from the ground” (Genesis 4:10). God hears those cries and is going to take vengeance! All that money should be used to get the message of God to this world—but it has been stolen!

Where did the leaders get those riches? From the Work that was built under the faithful stewardship of an end-time Elijah. Yet they wouldn't even give us the *books* that they WANTED ONLY TO DESTROY! That shows how firm Satan's grip on them truly is! We had to invest six years of our effort and spend a lot of money to get Mr. Armstrong's writings.

According to the *Anchor Bible*, *fraud* is another legal term. The WCG leaders suing us in court was a massive example of their fraud!

GOD HAS WITNESSED ALL OF THIS. The cries of the victims have gone up and “are entered” into God's ears. This is *present tense*. It has already happened. God is going to bring justice to this matter in the Church. Every fraudulent deed provides testimony against those men. They have already been convicted as guilty of fraud against the people of God! Those men are accountable to a Higher Court!

Why does James use the term “Lord of sabaoth”? It actually should be translated “Lord of hosts,” which means LORD OF THE ARMIES OF ISRAEL! It refers to those who maintain God's cause in war. All the fraud and the stealing of millions has entered the ears of THE LORD OF THE ARMIES OF SPIRITUAL ISRAEL! God is absolutely capable of vindicating His people! His armies are saddled up, ready for warfare—so expect some devastating things to occur. Those men are going to weep and howl!

Cries are going to ascend when God takes vengeance for what they have done to God's people and God's Church.

Our God is the Lord of tremendous angelic armies! Those armies are out there, watching over us—so we need not fear anything. God is completely aware of what is going on—He prophesied it all in advance! He supplies us with the revelation of these matters in order to build our faith as problems intensify. Protecting us is practically the *easiest part* of what He must do in the time ahead!

But the picture gets even more dramatic.

There could be no worse time in man's history to be defrauding God's people.

THE DAY OF SLAUGHTER

"Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter" (James 5:5). The Laodicean leaders have *fattened themselves up for "THE day of slaughter"* (a better translation). It is "*the day of slaughter*"—a time of suffering many times worse than any suffering ever before on Earth! The Laodiceans have "fattened" themselves up for this.

Notice this parallel prophecy in the book of Jeremiah: "And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground. Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock: for *the days of your slaughter* and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel" (Jeremiah 25:33-34).

Here is THE DAY OF SLAUGHTER: the Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord! THE MOST COMMON SIGHT ON EARTH WILL BE DEAD BODIES LYING AROUND AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE! There are so many of them that no one will be lamenting them or gathering them to bury. These corpses will become like dung upon the ground.

Could it be the GOD OF LOVE prophesying this? Does anyone truly believe the all-powerful God of the Bible?

THIS IS THE BLEAK FUTURE OF HUMANITY! No matter what they do to the messenger who tries to warn them, it is still going to happen!

Where have all the trumpet-blowers gone? The Laodiceans don't want to hear this message, so they say *prophesy not*. But THE DAY OF SLAUGHTER IS ALMOST UPON US! And it is going to start with Israel!

God's very elect MUST deliver this warning to physical and spiritual Israel.

Jeremiah 12:3 also prophesies that God must "prepare them for *the day of slaughter*." God's trumpet-blowing Work plays a big part in how God *prepares* them. And notice what else

appears in that context: "I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I HAVE GIVEN THE DEARLY BELOVED OF MY SOUL INTO THE HAND OF HER ENEMIES. . . . Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness" (verses 7, 10). The teachers whom God prepared to teach actually DESTROYED THE CHURCH! They ruined His vineyard. God will never be able to use them at headquarters in the World Tomorrow.

We must prepare to be teachers whom God can really use! When we teach, we must teach what God says. When God tells us to do something—we should DO IT WITH GUSTO! ABOVE ALL, GOD WANTS TEACHERS WHO WILL TELL THE TRUTH.

To tell the Laodicean leaders that they are fattening themselves up for the day of slaughter is a strong message! But if ever it appears as though delivering God's truth will get us in trouble, we need to simply trust God's armies to back up every word.

Jeremiah 4 shows the urgent need for us to warn about the coming day of slaughter: "Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defenced cities. Set up the standard toward Zion [that is, God's righteous people]: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction" (verses 5-6). The "evil from the north" is a massive attack by Germany. God tells us to "stay not," or flee to a place of safety, just before the worst suffering ever on Earth breaks out. The only safe place is Zion, where the armies of God are!

"The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and THY CITIES SHALL BE LAID WASTE, WITHOUT AN INHABITANT" (verse 7). How bad will it get? After Einstein saw the devastation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he lamented his part in making the bomb. "Bullets kill individuals—H-bombs destroy cities," he said.

"I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was *without form, and void*; and the heavens, and they had no light" (verse 23). These are the same words used in Genesis 1:2, which shows how Lucifer's rebellion created waste and emptiness; God had to renew the Earth to make it livable for man. Today, Satan is the

god of this world, and Earth has regressed to a state of *tohu* and *bohu* again!

Everywhere Satan rules, destruction ensues. Everywhere God and Christ rule, beautiful precious fruits are abundant. How long will it take us to learn that?

The nations of Israel are awash in sin. God is striking with intensifying catastrophes to jolt people into repenting.

More and more you hear people asking questions on television and radio about whether there is a biblical connection with hurricanes and other catastrophes. Those questions are bound to increase as times get worse. But, of course, many religious leaders are there to assure people that there is no connection, and that anyone who says otherwise is just a fool. **GOD'S WORD SAYS THE OPPOSITE! THOSE PEOPLE DON'T GET THEIR RELIGION FROM THE BIBLE!** There are over a hundred biblical prophecies of how God punishes us for our sins—to the point of destroying nations. Christ Himself made many of those prophecies. God's Word heaps greater condemnation (James 3:1) upon anyone who would presume to speak for God and make such idiotic statements!

The supreme court in Oregon ruled in 2005 that live sex acts in public places are constitutional. The *Oregonian*, Oregon's number-one newspaper, agreed with the decision.

That means people can go down to their local bar and see people commit any lewd act you can imagine! And what's more, it is constitutional, according to the state's supreme court.

People originally came to America to establish God's rule. The Constitution, in many ways, was established on biblical principles. But these judges twist and interpret that document to suit their own evil purposes.

They know that the Founding Fathers never intended such rulings. Remember, James tells us that God holds teachers and leaders more accountable for their sins.

Oregon is the state where God's Work began in these latter days. Herbert W. Armstrong thundered God's message for 57 years. So these judges and our people have been warned. And we continue to warn them today.

Why is our warning even going out to them? Because they are about to incur God's wrath! We can provide an abundance of material to prove that to anybody.

Weapons of mass destruction are proliferating, and Satan is stirring hatreds as never before! World leaders acknowledge that they can't control nuclear power. Where does that leave us? With "GREAT TRIBULATION, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should NO FLESH BE SAVED"! (Matthew 24:21-22).

Those are Jesus Christ's own words! Why don't this world's churches tell it like it is from the Bible? Because they don't know God! And neither do the Laodiceans.

WE LIVE IN AN EXCEEDINGLY EVIL AGE. WE ARE GETTING VERY CLOSE TO THE TIME WHEN DEAD BODIES WILL LINE THE EARTH FROM ONE END TO THE OTHER.

IT IS TIME TO SPEAK OUT!

Humanly, we would rather not. But we must not fail as the Laodiceans have. James 5:5 says they have been "wanton," which means lewdly lustful or lascivious. *Lange's* translates it "worldly and effeminate"! That is God's judgment: The Laodiceans don't have the courage or the character to do their job. THEY ARE NOT ENOUGH LIKE JESUS CHRIST.

WHERE ARE ALL THOSE TEACHERS GOD TRAINED TO TELL THE WORLD WHAT IS COMING IN ORDER TO SAVE THEM FROM THAT MADNESS?

BEHOLD!

James chapter 5 contains four instances of the word *behold*, which means to *look* or *perceive*.

"BEHOLD, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth..." (verse 4). This verse calls attention to something we can SEE! A criminal fraud was committed that EVERYONE CAN BEHOLD! Anybody can perceive what happened! Even the weakest judges should have been able to see it: THESE LEADERS CHANGED ALL THE DOCTRINES AND KICKED EVERYONE OUT WHO WAS COMMITTED TO DOING THAT WORK! Behold! See what they did!

God doesn't take that lightly. He knows about that scandalous fraud! Lo! Behold! Take a good look at that!

The second *behold* is found in verse 7, which refers to "the early and latter rain"—a subject we will cover shortly.

Here is the third *behold*: “Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: BEHOLD, THE JUDGE STANDETH BEFORE THE DOOR” (verse 9).

The word *door* here means something through which a *rush* is made. The Judge is Jesus Christ. He is *standing*—meaning to stand ready or prepared. He is PREPARED TO RUSH IN. You can see by world events that CHRIST IS AT THE DOOR!

You can also see by what is happening inside God’s Church.

Grudge means to murmur, groan or sigh. It denotes a descent from a higher plane—like people of God not thinking like God anymore. It is used as an utterance of various kinds of pain. James tells us to be careful. One translation reads, “Do not blame one another for the distress of the present, soon-to-be-ended present age.” There is going to be a lot of stress in this end time—but don’t let that bother you. DON’T MURMUR, GROAN OR GRUMBLE—BECAUSE CHRIST STANDS RIGHT AT THE DOOR, READY TO BREAK IT DOWN AND RETURN WITH POWER AND GLORY! We are almost finished! Don’t fail right on the threshold of God’s Kingdom!

Christ Himself made a similar pronouncement: “Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors” (Matthew 24:32-33). One translation of the word “doors” is *door*. This has the same meaning as James 5:9, but James takes it further. Christ said the *signs* are at the door; James says CHRIST HIMSELF IS AT THE DOOR! When the book of James is revealed in this end time, CHRIST IS ABOUT TO RETURN. BEHOLD! Look at what is happening! You will know the judge is at the door by what is happening in this world.

RIGHT NOW AS YOU READ THIS, GOD IS MAKING PREPARATIONS FOR HOW HE IS GOING TO HANDLE THINGS IN THE TRIBULATION AND DAY OF THE LORD.

The final *behold* comes in verse 11: “BEHOLD, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”

When God uses that word, He is saying, *Look! See! Lo!* You can SEE the Laodicean fraud—BEHOLD! You can SEE the former and latter rain—LOOK AROUND—BEHOLD! Christ is standing AT THE DOOR, ready to return to this filthy world—you can SEE

it from events around us—BEHOLD! And finally, look at what happened to the Worldwide Church of God—and yet there are some few who endured to the end like Job. BEHOLD! Learn their lesson and make it into the Family of God!

If we don't endure, we receive nothing. We simply *must* endure to the end. BEHOLD! THOSE WHO ENDURE TO THE END!

YOU HAVE KILLED THE JUST ONE

God's criticisms continue: "Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you" (verse 6). That is shocking!

Who is "the just"? The Revised Standard Version translates this verse, "You have condemned, you have killed *the righteous man* [singular]; he [that righteous man] does not resist you." The *Anchor Bible* says, "You have murdered the righteous *one*." What righteous one has been hated so much?

This is talking about Mr. Armstrong. Did the Laodicean leaders actually *kill* Mr. Armstrong? This verse is speaking spiritually. As Christ explained, according to the spirit of God's law, *hating* your brother is *murder* (Matthew 5:21-22). James is talking about *hate* most of all. This verse is God's judgment against those men: *You hated him and are guilty of murder!*

That hatred leads to physical killing as well, because God says that if they fail to deliver His warning message, blood will be on their hands and they will end up dying physically (Ezekiel 3:17-18; 33:7-8).

Toward the end of his life, Mr. Armstrong was surrounded by people of hate. The "synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 3:9) was already in place before he died! But he didn't resist them. Of course, he was old and frail and didn't have the strength to resist much of what they were doing. But he also wasn't hateful in return. As we will see in the next chapter, however, he did pray that God would cut them off spiritually!

What greatness Mr. Armstrong had in order to withstand all that resistance. Imagine being surrounded by such traitors. Shortly before he died, he said that some men were like "vultures waiting for me to die." GOD AGREES! Mr. Armstrong was surrounded by vultures! But he never gave in to them. THOSE LEADERS STAND CONDEMNED BY THE GREAT HEAVENLY JUDGE. This passage in James exposes them for their greedy desire to take

over all the church's wealth. Mr. Armstrong didn't think God would let that happen, but He did.

We were shocked at some of what we learned during the court case about what those men did even before Mr. Armstrong died! They had gained quite a degree of control and did a lot of damage. Much of this is revealed in my son's book, *Raising the Ruins: The Fight to Revive the Legacy of Herbert W. Armstrong*.

Those teachers dismally failed God. They didn't realize it then, but God was examining them very thoroughly—and He is about to judge them harshly for what they did to His end-time Elijah! And, He is going to expose them for their sins.

Thayer's gives additional information about this "righteous one": "In the New Testament those are called righteous who have conditioned their lives by the standard which is not theirs, but God's. A righteous person is one justified by faith and showing forth his faith by his works." Mr. Armstrong certainly did that!

If we produce no works, we have no faith. Mr. Armstrong's life was full of beautiful works! The men who succeeded him have produced no works—all they have is *physical wealth*. They also inherited a lot of spiritual wealth—God's truth—but they cast that to the ground instead of teaching it to the world.

Those men also "condemned" Mr. Armstrong. *Thayer's* says that word means to judge, or pronounce sentence or judgment against someone. It is a sentence condemning someone for a crime. The *Anchor Bible* says that word evokes the image of a courtroom. The Laodiceans *condemned* Mr. Armstrong even in their lawsuit! As they testified in court and during depositions, they tried to make God's end-time Elijah look like a fool and a sham before this world's unjust judges. It was embarrassing to see what they were telling the world!

What is more shocking, the appellate judges ruled in their favor. However, the WCG still caved in and gave up the victory. God showed who the supreme Judge really is!

After winning in court, why did they give us even more than we dared ask for? They still faced a jury trial to assess the damages—what we would have to pay them. Perhaps they feared more exposure.

Who knows what all they did in their hatred of Mr. Armstrong. He was almost helpless near the end of his life—as James says, “he does not resist you.”

Does God know what is happening in His Church? Does He ever!

LET'S NOT EVER BE AFRAID TO FACE THE TRUTH.

As God says in 1 Corinthians 6, *You DARE go before the judges of this world with a God Family issue?* Those men dared! That is a gigantic witness against them. And other Laodiceans applauded their efforts—not one of those groups helped us! They passionately wanted the WCG to win!

Throughout that process, God discovered the depth of the evil in their hearts. Surely He had a general idea of what they would do, but by giving them free reign to behave however they desired, they exposed themselves as never before! Who would have imagined they would have so zealously supported THE PROHIBITION AND WHOLESAL DESTRUCTION OF GOD'S TRUTH? WHAT CRIME COULD BE WORSE?

WE ARE NEARING THE TIME WHEN GOD WILL TAKE VENGEANCE! God is not passive about this crime. Soon they will weep and howl. The window of opportunity for repentance before the Great Tribulation is fast closing. Once that ends, it won't take long for God to tear this land apart! That nightmarish process is already under way!

EARLY AND LATTER RAIN

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain” (James 5:7). The farmer must be patient in waiting for the harvest.

What is the “early and latter rain”? In Deuteronomy 32:1-2, God's word is spoken of as dropping like water from heaven: “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.” Amos 7:14-16 use the same analogy. Rain is a clear type of God's revelation. God's new revelation drops as rain—from heaven.

Joel 2:23 speaks of “former rain” and “latter rain,” and is

explained in our free booklet about the Prophet Joel. James uses virtually the same terminology. “The early and latter rain” refers to the new revelation God gave during the Philadelphia era of His Church to Mr. Armstrong and that which He has given in the Laodicean era, through me.

The Philadelphia Church of God produces over 50 books and booklets aside from those of Mr. Armstrong’s that we publish. Almost all of them contain new biblical revelation from the great God!

SURELY, 90 PERCENT OF THE “LATTER RAIN” HAS ALREADY COME.

God tells us to be patient until the early and latter rain. The Laodiceans lacked the patience to wait for the latter rain. We must have “long patience.” It sounds easy, but it isn’t.

Christ is almost ready to harvest, and He wants to make sure He takes in a good crop! So He is showering us with spiritual rain. It will continue until He comes.

Just as rain comes from the heavens, revelation comes from God! The revelation that we had to fight for (because the Laodiceans hated it) was given by the omnipotent God!

Christ is raising a magnificent spiritual crop *in spite* of what the Laodiceans have done.

James tells us to be patient for the “coming” of Jesus Christ. The word *coming* means *presence*. Christ is about to be PRESENT ON THIS EARTH. He is ALMOST HERE! Prepare your mind for His presence. What a precious firstfruit crop will be harvested then! Christ is ready to be present here and to rule Earth from Jerusalem. Yes, there are terrible troubles. But never forget where all those troubles are LEADING! They are introducing the return of Christ to Earth! Lift up your head, because your redemption is here!

SWEAR NOT

“Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:8). Over and over, James emphasizes the imminence of the Second Coming. In this chapter alone, he mentions it four times in seven verses! Christ’s return is so very near! In the Greek, the last few words of that verse literally mean, “it has already drawn near and it’s coming near.”

James is telling us to *establish our hearts*, or build a strong spiritual life, *while there is time!*

“Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door” (verse 9). We are admonished to keep a good attitude; don’t grumble, complain and hold grudges. Why? Because OUR JUDGE IS AT THE DOOR, READY TO BURST THROUGH!

Verses 7 through 9 speak of how close the Second Coming is—three straight verses. Then we are strongly urged to build the enduring character of God to face the difficult trials ahead. “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience” (verse 10). We have biblical examples of prophets “suffering affliction, and of patience.” The word *affliction* means *evil treatment*. They received plenty of that, but it didn’t deter them from their vision.

Job had to endure some painful trials (verse 11). He remained steadfast and it gave rise to the modern expression “the patience of Job.” God, through His *tender mercy*, brought Job to a deep conversion. Soon he will be resurrected to rule with Christ.

“But *above all* things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation” (verse 12). This almost sounds like it’s talking about another court situation. Amos 7 suggests that we may well get wrapped up again in something like that in the near future.

Commentaries think the “above all” expression is exaggerated. The whole world is deceived (Revelation 12:9). They don’t know God and they don’t know the devil, nor do they understand his power. Satan is a master at getting us to rely on self or others. Then he destroys our faith and begins to influence us.

Above all, don’t look to self for anything. Christ said, “I can of mine own self do nothing.” His total trust was in the Father. We must have implicit faith in God, whether we are in court or any place else.

Whatever happens, we need not fear. Don’t swear, as Christ Himself said (Matthew 5:34-37), and never, ever look to men—including yourself! If we trust in God, everything will work

out perfectly. “*Above all*,” James says, don’t be afraid of judges, or any other people who might be able to damage God’s Work. God can take care of that with no difficulty at all. The Lord of the armies of Israel is on our side!

“*Above all*,” keep your focus on God and His Word.

Chapter 6

Elijah's Prayer

THE BOOK OF JAMES CONCLUDES WITH AN ELECTRIFYING prophecy. God has at last revealed its true meaning. It tells us much about an end-time Elijah and some vital history of God's Church.

"Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (James 5:17).

The epistle of James is for the end time. If you look at 1 Kings 17, you will see that the original Elijah *prophesied* about rain and drought—he didn't *pray* for it. James is speaking about the end-time Elijah, who *PRAYED* about *spiritual* rain and drought. James is talking about a man who faced a different set of problems than did the original Elijah. In this verse, Herbert W. Armstrong prayed that it *not* rain—that there would be no revelation from God.

"And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5:18).

This prophecy has been fulfilled during the Laodicean era of the Church of God.

Consider what this verse is really saying.

Mr. Armstrong fervently prayed that the spiritual rain—the revelation of God—would stop coming into God's Church, and that it would begin again after 3½ years. In order to pray that, he must have recognized the rebellion in the Church—probably far more than we have realized. Why else would he pray

that God would cut off His revelation and guidance until He raised up a new work?

Events prove that this prayer was answered. After Mr. Armstrong died, the Church suffered through precisely 3½ years of spiritual drought, and then we received rain.

THE END OF THE DROUGHT

Daniel 8:10-12 prophesy of a false leader in God's Church being used by Satan in destroying God's Work. The "daily"—the Work of God—was cast to the ground, and the truth was stopped because of transgressors in the Church. These rebels were causing difficulties for Mr. Armstrong before he died (they are described in Revelation 3:9 as "the synagogue of Satan").

Verse 13 of Daniel 8 shows that the sanctuary (the Church) and the host (the angels supporting the loyal people of God) were both trodden underfoot! The work in God's Church was replaced by a "mystery of iniquity," or lawlessness. The very elect were crying out to God, *How long before you cleanse the sanctuary?* And in verse 14, God answers that it would be after 2,300 sacrifices—or 1,150 days. All of this is explained in our free booklet *Daniel—Unsealed at Last!*

This was the most traumatic time in God's Church for God's loyal remnant.

Mr. Armstrong died on January 16, 1986. After 1,150 days, or around March 11, 1989 (probably that exact day), God began revealing to me the truths contained in the book *Malachi's Message*. In God's eyes, it was at that point that the sanctuary was cleansed.

But look again at the prophecy in James 5:17-18.

Though the sanctuary was cleansed through God's prophet, spiritual rain was not watering the Church immediately.

God reveals His truth to apostles and prophets (Ephesians 3:5), but that truth doesn't rain into the Church until His man speaks to the Church.

You can see the same pattern in Revelation 11:1. When God measures His temple, first He measures the altar—*then* He measures "them that worship therein." To get His message to the people, first it must go to the altar, or the ministry, when

God reveals it to His man. It takes time, then, for that truth to get beyond the altar and to reach the Church.

As God was revealing *Malachi's Message*, my children were at Ambassador College in Pasadena, California—my daughter, Laura, in her senior year; my son, Stephen, in his freshman year. That was where I felt they could get the best education on this Earth. But I became increasingly uneasy as I detected the wrong direction the leaders were taking God's Church. Both of them were alerted to problems in the Church. I convinced Stephen to continue his education at the Ambassador campus at Big Sandy, Texas, closer to where I was in Oklahoma.

That summer, on his way to Big Sandy, my son visited us in Oklahoma. I picked him up at the airport and took him immediately to our July 14 weekend church campout at Robber's Cave, Okla. (My son was keeping a diary at the time, and recorded these events.) It was a tense weekend, because I had a rough draft of *Malachi's Message* with me that I had decided to share with my son. When I gave it to him on that Sabbath, he was the first to see it, and I was very concerned about how he would respond.

Some others in the Church were already suspicious about what I was doing. Stephen was also slightly unsure of where I was spiritually and didn't read my manuscript immediately (on July 15)—he didn't want to be accused of blindly following his dad.

We need to remember that Mr. Armstrong had provided strong leadership in the Church for 57 years. We were usually suspicious of anybody who spoke against Church headquarters—that includes me! Anybody who left the Church in that period was considered to be rebelling against God. Also, Stephen's teachers at Ambassador College had been teaching against "heretics."

So I waited in vain, and rather tensely, on that Sabbath day for my son to read *Malachi's Message*.

Finally, MY SON READ THE ROUGH DRAFT OF *MALACHI'S MESSAGE* ON SUNDAY, JULY 16, 1989—EXACTLY 3½ YEARS AFTER MR. ARMSTRONG DIED! My son was positive in what he said, but he didn't say much. I could tell he had been sobered by what he read. The sanctuary had already been cleansed, but it took a few months before that rain began to reach beyond the altar, or ministry.

In God's eyes, that is when the "latter rain" began (James 5:7)—with my son. At that point, the drought ended. With great relief and joy, we thanked God that He was once again revealing truth to His very elect!

Within six months, we were mailing *Malachi's Message* to a large number of the Laodiceans. Revelation was again raining into God's Church. Many of God's people realized they had been starving and thirsting to death because of a lack of spiritual nourishment! This eternal, life-saving rain brought God's people to the PCG.

THAT REFRESHING SPIRITUAL RAIN HAD STARTED ON JULY 16, 1989, WITH ONE YOUNG, UNBAPTIZED MAN READING A ROUGH DRAFT OF GOD'S REVELATION.

GOD'S CHALLENGE TO YOUNG PEOPLE

For me to give *Malachi's Message* to my son placed a heavy responsibility on him. I knew this was going to be a test for my son. When something like that happens, we have to make the right decision! Clearly, the way God viewed it, that was a far more significant moment than it would have appeared.

Young people, realize: My son really wrestled with that choice—as probably any unbaptized person would have. He loved college, yet here was his dad doing something that many members dismissed as rank rebellion! God made him CHOOSE—just as He makes each of us choose. It would have been so easy to turn away from God at that point and to miss all the blessings. But if we make the right choice, God can accomplish tremendous things in our lives! We must always strive to get ourselves out of the way and let God lead us.

Look what one person can achieve by choosing correctly and going wherever God leads him!

God began the latter spiritual rain with an unbaptized person! Is there any doubt that God can powerfully use our young people?

Clearly, such choices aren't easy—sometimes they are the most difficult of our lives. But don't choose wrong and then make the excuse, *I did it because I'm unbaptized*. That's no excuse—that is a cop-out!

It's easy to choose the wrong way. But the young people in

God's Church have an opportunity to choose correctly with noble and eternal consequences! What marvelous results your life will produce if you choose right!

In the summer of 1992, three years after my son made that choice, I received the understanding that *Malachi's Message* was actually the "little book" spoken of in the 10th chapter of Revelation. (This truth is explained in our free booklet *The Little Book*.) I first delivered this revelation at our Philadelphia Youth Camp that summer. THAT IS THE ONLY TIME I HAVE GIVEN NEW REVELATION TO A GROUP OF UNBAPTIZED YOUNG PEOPLE. I didn't make that choice, God did!

Is there a connection between what happened in Robber's Cave with my son and what happened with the new revelation about the little book?

God is certainly challenging you young people to follow Him and to let Him bless your life!

OUR YOUTH HAVE A STRONG CONNECTION TO MALACHI'S MESSAGE—THE LITTLE BOOK. *And God wants them to fully understand that!*

Then look how closely this is all tied to God's revelation of James. How much could we have understood James 5:17-18, without knowing when my son would read *Malachi's Message* for the first time? Those verses would not have had the explosive impact they now have.

Mr. Armstrong is involved in our Work today in a way we had not understood before. And God is involved in the PCG much more deeply than we often think!

This is just one more reminder about who is in charge of this Church. Christ keeps showing us how our Work is tied to the end-time Elijah.

"Where is the God of Elijah?" He is extremely active in the PCG today!

THE LITTLE BOOK

Malachi's Message is the seminal book of the Philadelphia Church of God. WHEN WE CAME TO UNDERSTAND THAT IT WAS ACTUALLY PROPHESED RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GREATEST BOOK OF PROPHECY IN THE BIBLE, THAT SIGNIFICANTLY ELEVATED MALACHI'S MESSAGE IN IMPORTANCE!

If you want to identify the people of God, just find the little book of Revelation 10. It must be special to us. If it isn't, we need to repent of that.

This is a gentle reminder of who is the Source of revelation—and who is in charge of this Church. A few people leave this Church over trivial things. They don't understand the depth of what God is doing, or they would never walk away!

What sets the PCG apart from other churches? The revelation of God! It is raining into this Church all the time! The Laodicean churches have none of it—because of the way they treated God's servant the Elijah! They will have to repent to escape the lake of fire.

Both of these events—the rain beginning on July 16, 1989, and the 1992 revelation about *Malachi's Message*—revolved around the little book of Revelation, and God disclosing where He is working today.

Both events give us a strong idea of just what God is talking about in the prophecy of James 5:17-18.

How specific James's prophecy is! It tells us of Mr. Armstrong's fervent, faith-filled prayer that God would cut off revelation from His Church and then start it again 3½ years later. God answered that prayer mightily, and honored his end-time Elijah in a truly special way.

There is no question that the epistle of James is for this end time!

Read Revelation 10. It describes a very impressive angel delivering the little book, which contains a thunderous, lion-roaring message (verses 1-3). Remarkably, the Apostle John was told *not* to write the message down (verse 4). The label "little book" is also A PROPHECY THAT IT WOULD LATER BE WRITTEN IN BOOK FORM. Then verse 6 reveals that the little book initiates a time of "no more delay" (RSV)—and VERSE 7 PROPHECIES OF THE PHILADELPHIA CHURCH OF GOD WINNING THE COPYRIGHTS TO *MYSTERY OF THE AGES* AND DELIVERING THAT BOOK TO THE WORLD BEFORE CHRIST'S SECOND COMING. (This sequence of events is all explained in our free booklet *The Royal Book of Revelation*.)

The book of Revelation puts all prophecy into a time frame, or time sequence. Then, in Revelation 10 and 11, what develops around the little book is put into an extremely specific and detailed time frame.

God's end-time Elijah died January 16, 1986. Just 1,150 days later, God revealed the heart of *Malachi's Message* to me. The sanctuary was cleansed.

Then, 3½ years after Mr. Armstrong died, God began to rain new revelation (*Malachi's Message*) into His Church beginning with my son—that continued the Elijah Work.

God reveals through James how Mr. Armstrong was beseeching God to stop new revelation from entering His sinning Church—and then continue to provide it 3½ years later. *That* is when God started raining the little book into God's faithful remnant. We now see his prayers were fulfilled in a specific time sequence, which makes our spirits soar!

All of these events revolved around *Mystery of the Ages*—Mr. Armstrong's most important book and a synopsis of the Bible. The message of the Bible was condensed into a smaller book—*Mystery of the Ages*. Why is this so vital? It clearly shows that THE GOD OF ELIJAH IS POWERFULLY ALIVE IN THE PCG! The Elijah Work continues.

God makes it clear to our young and older people that we are all—each one of us—critical to the success of this Church. We are all an essential part of God's miraculous Elijah Work. *Malachi's Message* identifies us as the continuing Elijah Work. The *latter rains* indicate that we are the Elijah Work in the Laodicean era.

Look how God honored His end-time Elijah—before and after he died. The Laodiceans and this world must learn to honor him as God did and always will!

Verses 8-10 again bring the little book into the picture. "And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter" (verse 10). It is a bitter message because it reveals the eternal destruction that awaits so many of God's people—but it is also sweet to know where God is and how He will bless His faithful people with understanding and revelation—and with an eternal future!

Remember, John was told not to write the message of the seven thunders. How COULD IT BE A "LITTLE BOOK" IF IT WASN'T WRITTEN DOWN? Clearly this passage is describing an *end-time fulfillment*, when the little book *would* be written down. It had to be revealed to a man in this end time and written in book

form so we could prophesy again! (verse 11).

God didn't want that message revealed until the time was right, and John knew it.

Looking at James's prophecy, *I wonder how much God revealed to Mr. Armstrong just before his death that He also didn't want written down at that time.* We may be stunned when we find out how much Mr. Armstrong really knew!

The whole of Revelation 10 revolves around the PCG, *Mystery of the Ages* and *Malachi's Message*. That leads right into Revelation 11, which also discusses the work of the PCG. Verse 2 shows how this work culminates in the Tribulation and Day of the Lord.

Notice, then, what else God ties right into the story flow here.

TWO WITNESSES

"And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth" (Revelation 11:3-4). Very soon, two witnesses will come from this Church with a powerful message that will shock all humanity.

We are getting *awfully close* to the time of these two individuals!

Clearly the two witnesses would have to come from this Church, God's faithful Philadelphia remnant. IT IS STRIKING HOW DIRECTLY GOD TIES THEIR WORK INTO THE WORK OF THE PCG AND THE LITTLE BOOK.

I don't know who they are, nor do you. We don't need to speculate about it. But I believe that God put the thought in my mind that we do need to tie their work in with the little book. It certainly is interesting the way it is linked here.

We need to carefully ponder these statements.

Consider the amazing events God is orchestrating for His Church.

On March 11, 1989, the sanctuary was cleansed, and God began to do a work again. But what good would it have been if God had given that revelation to me, and it never reached the people of God? That is who the message is for!

On July 16, 1989, that little book was delivered to my son, and from there that spiritual rain began to fall in the Church—"them that worship therein." The drought ended.

Rain doesn't come from a man! Rain descends from above! Spiritual rain comes from God!

Whoever the two witnesses are, Christ in them will be doing that work. How could men—apart from God—possibly fulfill a job like that?

All of these prophecies are being fulfilled in spectacular detail! WE ARE LIVING IN THE MOST WONDERFUL, EXCITING TIMES EVER ON EARTH! Christ is making preparations to return very soon!

God is revealing the book of James now to show that He *still* has not given up on the Laodiceans. He wants His very elect to deliver *one last warning* to them, to persuade as many of them as possible to turn back to God so they can be in His Family! My son has written a book about the fall of the WCG, including our court battle with that church, which exposes in detail where the Laodiceans went wrong and turned away from God.

I believe that book will have a strong impact on the Laodiceans and the world. It will also help the PCG finish the Work.

God is giving us the tools we need to reach more Laodiceans, because GOD LOVES HIS FAMILY! How special God's people are to Him. Virtually *all* of the WCG ministers, and 95 percent of the brethren, deserted God. How easy it would have been for God to say, *I've had it with them! I'm finished with them!* But He persisted and patiently waited, *knowing* there would be a small elect that would rise up and be measured—people who would prepare for the future—who would be ready to rule the Earth with Christ when He returned.

SPIRITUAL HEALING

Notice what the Elijah section in James 5:17-18 is connected to: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (verses 14-15).

God heals the sick! In 1978, Mr. Armstrong died—stopped breathing for a short while—and was resurrected physically. God heals! Of course, none of us will live forever. If God chooses not to heal you now, He will resurrect you later.

James says that God will “raise him up” because healing is actually a type of the resurrection, when that person will be raised up out of the grave and receive a spirit body!

James is not speaking primarily about physical healing—but *spiritual healing!*

This is ultimately about eternal life—or eternal death!

James is talking about *saving lives*, both now and in the future. GOD HEALS! HE ALWAYS HEALS! He raises us up out of the sick bed, or out of the grave. This is about *life—life—life!* Eternal death only comes if we turn away from God.

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (verse 16). We must be praying for those among us who are sick.

Here James advocates *energetic* prayer. This is effectual prayer—it gets results!

Do you realize that the right kind of prayer energizes you? If you are out of energy, ask God for it, and He will energize you!

“Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit” (verses 17-18). These verses don’t refer to the original Elijah, who prophesied, not prayed. This prayer for drought and for rain again was uttered *only* by the END-TIME ELIJAH.

And God ties *healing* right into that context.

After Mr. Armstrong died, the wCG leadership changed the commission of the Church almost immediately. wCG leaders said it wasn’t a doctrinal change—but it was.

The first *official* doctrinal change—made in the spring of 1987—regarded HEALING. The Church began to claim that the stripes of Christ do not apply to healing or anointing; the leaders removed those references from their Passover service. They also claimed that it is *not always* God’s will to heal. In

Joseph Tkach's book called *The Plain Truth About Healing*, he wrote, "Some commonly cited verses about healing, at first glance, can certainly give the impression that healing is an *absolute* promise of God.

"For example, James 5:14-15 direct a sick person to call for the elders of the Church and to be anointed, with the promise that 'the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.' Such a statement certainly sounds like an absolute promise! After all, it says, 'The Lord SHALL raise him up.'

"Psalms 103:3 also sounds like an absolute promise to heal every person every time, saying God is one 'who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases.' Since we all know that God forgives *every* iniquity, it appears only logical that God also heals *every* disease. That seems to be what the verse says." I would certainly agree with that! But he went on:

"But, *experience* proves that not *every* Christian is divinely healed of *every* disease *every* time." That statement blatantly pushes aside the fact that God heals when He resurrects! "Experience proves"? Well—have you ever seen someone resurrected from the dead? That is a promise from God! Where is his living faith?

Mr. Tkach continued, "And this is true even though he has been properly anointed, and even though he has been baptized and had all his sins forgiven (as Psalm 103 says). . . .

"Certainly God has not promised to heal everybody every time. . . .

"Still, we must ask whether God has bound Himself to heal *every* person who has the faith and obeys Him. The answer is *no*, God has *not* bound Himself to heal everyone who has faith and obeys."

Those are antichrist statements!

Compare that with what Mr. Armstrong wrote in the ORIGINAL VERSION of *The Plain Truth About Healing*: "NOWHERE IN THE BIBLE DOES GOD SAY, 'IF it be God's will!' This very verse, along with many others I have given you, EXPRESSES God's will! Notice that sly, subtle *IF*. That is satanic!"

After being criticized over the new healing doctrine, Mr. Tkach wrote in his "Personal" in the *Worldwide News*, March 14, 1988, "But as the end of his life drew near, Mr. Armstrong made it clear to me that he now questioned his

understanding on the use of the medical profession. But as he was in no condition to do further study, and although he had a few years earlier written in the *strongest* terms against any change in the healing doctrine, it was left to me to correct the misunderstanding.”

That was the same reasoning those men used to dismiss *Mystery of the Ages*. They didn’t provide a shred of proof! They simply expected God’s people to believe the profane assertion that, on his deathbed, Mr. Armstrong wanted to sweep aside what he had taught for most of his life! That is why God calls the Laodiceans *liars* (Revelation 3:9).

Surely *all of us* have some kind of physical affliction that we will still have until the resurrection. At that point, we will be transformed into incorruptible spirit! (1 Corinthians 15:51-54). Is that not a healing?

Physical healing isn’t really the issue here—God is trying to save people **SPIRITUALLY!**

Joseph Tkach died in 1995 of brain cancer. God is a God of symbolism, as you can see throughout the Bible. Was there symbolism in Mr. Tkach’s death?

The Laodiceans are sick—deathly ill! It’s like they have spiritual brain cancer. They are in desperate need of being healed spiritually. If someone doesn’t help them get back into the Family of God—even if it has to be in the Tribulation—then they will die forever!

Cancer of the brain is trivial compared to what James is trying to get across to us! He is talking about **SPIRITUAL HEALING**—and **SPIRITUAL DEATH**. That is God’s primary concern!

There is a reason why God includes the specific doctrine of healing here. This is where the Laodiceans officially turned away from God. To repent, they must get back to the beginning of their rebellion. Otherwise, God cannot heal them.

We don’t have much time left to learn these lessons. **MOST OF GOD’S PEOPLE WILL HAVE TO GO INTO A NUCLEAR TRIBULATION BEFORE THEY UNDERSTAND THAT THEY WERE DYING SPIRITUALLY.** When the bombs are falling, they will have to stop fighting and arguing with God! If they don’t, it will be over for them.

Oftentimes, I direct the message on *The Key of David* to the Laodiceans. I realize that to most of them, what I say is mere words. They are proving to God that He cannot reach them

with words alone. So God is going to intensify the physical curses in order to give impact to those words!

I believe that the fact that God has now revealed James portends even more serious trials specifically for the Laodiceans. Some horrifying prophecies are going to give an electrifying impact to God's message.

Apparently, the Laodiceans need something like a Katrina—or perhaps the Great Tribulation—to shake them and make them see that they're dying!

THANK GOD for the Tribulation! Without it, it appears 95 percent of the Laodiceans would die forever! What a loving God we have!

The nations of Israel are also proving that it is going to take much more than just words to influence their minds. For over 70 years, God's Church has been warning them about the "Holy" Roman Empire and about their prophesied demise. Our main warning has been to Israel, not the Gentiles. Those warnings have not persuaded them, so God is increasing the pressure—and quickly! Look at what has happened in Israel and the world just since the beginning of the last hour in 2001! It is stunning!

WHAT MR. ARMSTRONG MUST HAVE KNOWN

Mr. Armstrong was a man like we are—he was physical and had strong emotions. At one point, he prayed that God would let him die if He didn't have more for him to do. In 1978, Mr. Armstrong did briefly die—and GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD. God brought him back to life and gave him seven more years. Mr. Armstrong accomplished more in those last seven years than in his whole life! That is absolute evidence that GOD is doing this work through us—and we must do it, or it won't get done.

Mr. Armstrong was aware of the prophecy in Zechariah 3 about Joshua, who had filthy garments and a problem with a "mitre" or turban—a government problem. He thought that passage applied to his son, and in principle he was right.

But as Mr. Armstrong became more frail in his final months, he grew increasingly aware of just how deep the corruption in the Church leadership was. In the June 24, 1985,

Worldwide News, he described some as being “like vultures, waiting for me to die.” He was specifically referring to his son and others outside the Church. But as it turns out, there were vultures inside as well! And Mr. Armstrong began to recognize these vultures shortly before he died!

Considering the people Mr. Armstrong was surrounded by, is it hard to imagine him praying for the revelation to cease? God’s Work was his life! What could he do but beseech God in the face of their evil deeds? He specifically prayed that God’s revelation would stop until a group of people came along that would be loyal to God and distribute His message to this world.

Do you think God wouldn’t pay attention to that prayer? He did—and even directed Mr. Armstrong in the prayer.

Mr. Armstrong knew so much! But in his frailty, he really didn’t have the strength to do any more about it. All he could do, for quite some time, was sit there and pray fervently to God. And those prayers were prophesied and answered!

Perhaps he prayed, *God, obviously I have been betrayed. You need to set this right. Vengeance is yours.*

Consider what Mr. Armstrong must have known in order to ask God to STOP THE RAIN OF REVELATION in the WCG! He knew he was about to die. He must have known that his successor would betray him. He must have realized that the Philadelphia era was ending, and that the Church would become Laodicean. He must have realized that the Joshua of Zechariah 3 would gain control—and that this is how God wanted it. He had to have understood quite a bit about Malachi! In the resurrection, we may not have too much to explain to him, considering how much he knew about the rebelling Laodiceans.

Now—what must Mr. Armstrong have known to ask God to END THE DROUGHT after 3½ years? *That God’s Work wasn’t finished!*

He MUST have seen that there would be a Philadelphia Church of God—a remnant of people who would remain loyal to God and would *pray* for that revelation. He must have recognized that there was more revelation coming. He had to have known that he didn’t fully understand about the Laodicean era—and that God would have to reveal that to another group. He also knew that two witnesses would come on the scene right before Christ’s return.

If you meditate on and believe this prophecy in James 5:17-18, you see something truly remarkable: HOW MUCH GOD SHOWED TO HIS END-TIME ELIJAH IN THE FRAILTY OF HIS FINAL DAYS!

But in all of that revelation, God actually sought to soothe and calm him. I'm sure God was impressing on Mr. Armstrong's mind, *Don't worry—I'm working it out this way—it is according to my plan. All you need to do is be praying about it.* So Mr. Armstrong did.

God is much more interested in His people than we typically realize. What seems so casual or unimportant might be *extremely important* to God! He is *deeply* involved in our lives!

Why is God so concerned about this little group of people? Because He is intensively concerned about who is going to prophesy again! He would like to have many more people preparing to teach the world, but sadly, most have turned away. There isn't anyone else! This Church is pathetically small compared to what it should be! We have dedicated people who really want to do the job, but we should have many more people to help.

And yet, what an honor to be doing the Elijah Work in this end time. God is explaining so much to us because of the strong tie we have with His Elijah.

MOUNT NEBO

James 5:6 says, "Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you." Mr. Armstrong didn't resist them. He was probably so feeble that he *couldn't* resist. But he went to the great God of Elijah and prayed fervently! There he was, lying on his death bed, and THE WORK OF GOD WAS CONTINUING IN A SPECTACULAR, MAGNIFICENT WAY! Look at the saving faith Mr. Armstrong exercised!

This example shows that no matter where you are or what your physical state, if you just keep this in your mind, GOD WILL DO AMAZING THINGS IN YOUR LIFE. Even if you are dying. You are never out!

I saw that truth play out even in my wife. The stroke she suffered about nine months before she died incapacitated her terribly. But even in that condition, I could see evidence of

God working with her, and her accepting that. I told her what a wonderful attitude she had.

Never take your eyes off God. He is famous for last-minute heroics.

It seems there may be somewhat of a parallel with what happened to Moses just before he died. God didn't allow Moses to enter the Promised Land, but He did take him right to the top of Mount Nebo and allowed him to see the land from there (Deuteronomy 34:1-5). Mount Nebo offers quite a panoramic view. That was a nice gesture on God's part. If you know you're going to die, it's only natural to want to see all you can first.

I wonder if God let Mr. Armstrong do the same. Perhaps God gave him a stronger vision of what would happen in the Church, what would happen during the Tribulation and Day of the Lord—even what would happen on into the World Tomorrow.

When I read James's prophecy, it seems that the final weeks of Mr. Armstrong's life were very inspiring! That is a very different picture from what I thought in the past.

The evil men who surrounded Mr. Armstrong thought they had outfoxed God's apostle. But almost every move they made was prophesied by the great God! He put them on the stage, and their evil deeds are there for all to see—many of them known thousands of years in advance!

How magnificent and transcendent is our God!

Think about the picture of this frail old man on his death bed, having such powerful, clear, moving communication with the omnipotent God!

HOW MUCH MORE CAN YOU AND I HAVE THIS FERVENT AND EFFEC-TUAL, FAITH-FILLED, LIFE-SAVING PRAYER LIFE?

How much of this life-saving faith is in your prayer? I don't advocate getting "pentecostal"—but really getting through to God and getting results!

Mr. Armstrong did that all his converted life. But he probably reached God more than ever in those last few months.

SAVING SOULS FROM DEATH

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from

the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20). Who has erred from the truth today?

God personalizes these verses by discussing "the sinner" or "a sinner" (RSV). Many of us know individuals who have turned away from God. God is reminding us that there are real individuals out there in the gravest kind of spiritual danger. We must express our deepest love for them through this work.

God wants us to know that the apostasy within His Church places a great deal of responsibility on our shoulders! We must try to save the Laodiceans from death!

We need to take this new revelation to the Laodiceans. *This is God's beloved Family!* If you contribute to this work, and contribute to bringing someone back to God, that is going to cover a multitude of their sins—and there are many terrible sins that need to be covered.

Lange's Commentary says that *multitude* refers to the fullness of an entire mass, or the entirety taken as one unit. Virtually God's *whole Church* has fallen away! Like many other verses in James, this dates the prophecy: It is for now, during this Laodicean age.

God puts His faithful people right in the middle of the picture.

IF WE DELIVER JAMES'S MESSAGE, IT WILL BE ONE OF THE GREATEST ACTS OF LOVE WE HAVE EVER COMMITTED!

Christ talked specifically about *the sinner*, and *a soul*. GOD IS CONCERNED ABOUT EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE! *He wants to save as many Spirit-begotten individuals as He possibly can.*

I am quite sure THIS WILL BE THE FINAL MAJOR WARNING TO GOD'S CHURCH. There will not be another before Jesus Christ returns and God's Kingdom is here!

It is interesting that there is no conclusion to James's epistle. There is no *amen*, no wrap-up. It isn't concluded because THE STORY CONTINUES—THE WORK GOES ON!

The fact that there is no conclusion also dates this prophecy.

WHO ELSE COULD WRITE THE CONCLUSION TO THIS EXCEPT THIS CHURCH?

3John is similarly unfinished. Why? Because we are the ones fulfilling it! We must write the conclusion! And what a

conclusion it will have, if we do our job. The latter rain is still falling.

We have a towering work to do! We are working to “save souls”—physical lives, AND ETERNAL LIVES!

THIS BOOK IS A LIVING BOOK!

God is pouring out upon us the latter rain! He is speaking to His Church. We have not understood the depth of what James is about before. I know now what James means—because GOD REVEALED IT! That’s what He does when we obey and submit! God speaks and reveals to His people!

Why is God revealing this message now? Because of the very elect—God’s people! God reveals to the faithful people who reside in His inner court. What greater honor is there than that?

How profoundly God loves His Church. He speaks powerfully when He gives new revelation. That shows how much God loves you!

Now, God says to us, *I want you to love me back—and get this message out!*

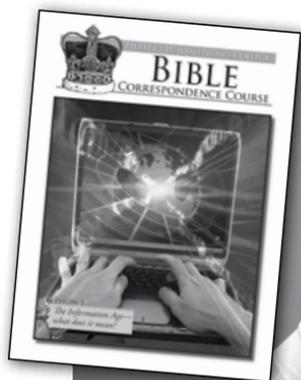
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