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CHURCH OF THE  
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*"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." – Matthew 24:14*

January 10, 2003

Dear Brethren and Co-Workers in God's Service,

The Church of the Eternal God has now completed 18 months of operations since our inception on July 2, 2001. God has continued to lead and direct us and we have been able to help a number of brethren in staying focused, as the scattering of God's Church has continued.

We recently received from an individual an inquiry I'd like to share with you – He wrote:

"Who, or more to the point WHY, are you?? In today's hawking climate of 'Church of God Buffet, Get Your Itching Ears Scratched Here!' I suppose that question sounds stupid to you. If you choose to try to answer it, and you fail to first acknowledge that God in His word soundly and unambiguously condemns division among His people, then don't waste your time. You'll have lost all credibility. My assumption is that you are yet one more crumb that doesn't want to be a part of the loaf – ala Ezekiel 34."

We, of course, do agree that God hates division. But what does God mean when He says He hates division? He speaks to us through Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, in 1 Corinthians 1:10, stating, "...that you all speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." But, in 1 Corinthians 11:19, Paul notes, "...there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you." There were disagreements among these Corinthians because some upheld the truth, while others did not. This led to division. God hates division that is caused by those who oppose truth.

When there is a lack of unity in doctrine and in purpose, there is no way for two to walk together. Amos saw this in dealing with God's people of his day (Amos 3:3). How *can* two walk together unless they are agreed? The implication in this scripture in the book of Amos is that they cannot. They could not do it in Amos' day. The principle still applies – therefore – they cannot do it today!

Once Mr. Armstrong saw, in dealing with the people of Sardis, that they were unwilling to grow in truth, which God was revealing to him, he realized he had to separate from them. As God introduced truth to each of us, we came to the realization that we had to make a choice as to what we would do – obey God or no! And, more recently, when we saw the apostasy of this age begin to affect the direction of the Church, we had to make a move from the errors being proclaimed.

In Jeremiah 23:1-4, we see that God is angry with the shepherds of His people. Notice what He has to say about this: "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed my people: 'You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,' says the Lord. 'But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor shall they be lacking,' says the Lord." Yes, God has allowed the scattering that has taken place amongst His people in recent years. And God will, in His time, bring them together again.

Ezekiel 34 describes God's frustration with the shepherds to an even greater extent. But is God telling us in these scriptures that we must now all come back together into one group at this time, even as certain

shepherds continue to teach their own private interpretations of scripture? No, brethren, that is not what we are being told to do in this situation.

As Paul stated in his admonition to the Hebrews (Heb. 3:5-6), "...Moses, indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end." Both Moses and Christ remained faithful to the hope that was set before them. Will we remain faithful, brethren, to the teachings we have received and the hope that is before us?

In 2 Timothy 2:14-19, Paul admonishes us to rightly divide the word of truth. And in verse 20 he notes that, "in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor." The directive to us is to cleanse ourselves from the latter so that we become "sanctified and useful for the master, prepared for every good work."

In writing to Timothy, Paul states (2 Timothy 4:3-4), "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned to fables." If we have itching ears, if we seek for ourselves teachers willing to turn us from the truth we have learned, and if we accept such an association, then God will not be pleased with us.

We know that God's Church is not a corporate body, but is a spiritual body, comprised of all who have God's Spirit. We do not see God at this time gathering together all of His people into one corporate group. What we do see is God testing His people to determine who will follow Him. We in the Church of the Eternal God are willing to cooperate with any who are faithful to the teachings we have all learned. Indeed, we pray that God's Spirit will continually direct the course of all His people.

We in the ministry of the Church of the Eternal God ask that God will give us strength to remain diligent to continue in the true doctrines revealed from God and given to His Church (compare Revelation 3:11), and to continue to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). We welcome any who have been taught God's truth to test the fruit of our ministry.

It is easy enough to check us out and see what we teach. All of our publications and audiotapes are posted to our Web page. We have published 5 newsletters, 75 weekly updates, 15 member letters, and 10 booklets, with an additional booklet almost ready for the printers. We have posted to our Website 130 sermons and bible studies, available to any who desire to hear God's truth. We have hard copies of our booklets available to those who ask, as well as tapes of sermons available to those not having access to the Web.

Our purpose is to continue to serve God's people wherever they are as God directs us, using those resources God provides to accomplish this task, and we do look forward to that time when all of God's people are together, having come to "the unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:13).

We will be having a ministerial conference here in San Diego the last week of February and will be planning our focus for the coming year. We ask for the prayers of all of you, dear brethren, that God will lead and direct the outcome of these meetings and our course as the year 2003 begins.

Your brother in Christ,



J. Edwin Pope