

February 16, 2016

Dear Members and Friends,

2016 will be a most remarkable year. It won't be a peaceful or pleasant year—just the opposite. But it will be a year when we will experience and witness the continuing fulfillment of prophesied events, signaling the soon-coming return of Jesus Christ. At the same time, it will be a sobering year as we know that just prior to Christ's Second Coming, terrible events of unparalleled severity will occur first (Matthew 24:21).

It is the duty, responsibility and commission of God's end-time Church to WARN the nations of impending terrible disaster and, at the same time, to witness to the world the awesome truth of the gospel (Matthew 24:14), which includes the good news or glad tidings of the message that Christ will soon rule on this earth—as the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

God's Church must not be side-tracked from fulfilling this all-important mission. *In comparison*, doing "good works" in Third World countries is of no lasting significance—knowing full well that the only hope for this world is the return of Christ... and the sooner God's Church completes its commission of proclaiming this fact, the sooner Christ *can* return (2 Peter 3:12). This world is not helped by pouring a drop of cold water on an erupting volcano. It is only helped by working towards stopping the eruption... and only Jesus Christ can and will do so (Matthew 24:22).

From this it follows that God's Church must proclaim God's gospel message and His eternal doctrines forcefully and boldly, without holding back and watering down His Truth. But God's Church will not do so, if it focuses on and engages in less important tasks or if it entertains thoughts of "re-evaluating" established Church doctrine and practices. When God's Church loses clear sight of its commission and its role as the pillar of God's truth (1 Timothy 3:15), then compromise is the inevitable consequence.

It always starts very small, but it grows bigger if it is not stopped right away. To give an example, the *Church of the Eternal God* and its international affiliates have adopted from their inception the biblical policy of not producing religious articles written by a woman, as this would not be in accordance with Scripture (1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-12). Permitting this would lead to further wrong compromise, such as having women give "public" prayers in Church services or at other Church functions; read Scriptures "in church"; and ultimately, give "testimonials," sermonettes and sermons.

To give additional examples, when one begins to water down the Sabbath and the Holy Days, by skipping attendance (Hebrews 10:25) or engaging in activities which are not appropriate during God's holy time; when one is willing to change basic doctrines about the nature of God, "born again," the prohibition against voting in governmental elections, participating in jury duty services and joining the military; then one becomes a less than faithful servant in God's Work of standing up boldly for His truth (Matthew 24:45-47).

We recently received the following message from Australia in response to our most recent *Standing-Watch* program, "Trump Shocks Europe":

"My wife and I want to encourage you to continue with your program. It is refreshing that you are willing to say things as they are. All of the other churches of God appear to be more concerned about money and have a softer message, rather than sounding like a trumpet. We have both been members of the Church of God for over forty years and remember the strong teaching of Herbert W Armstrong during these previous years. It is a little disappointing that so few view your telecast because the information you present is so important."

Whether few or many... we must strive to do our job and thereby qualify to enter the Kingdom of God, without becoming slack in our Christian duties. The time will come when people will listen—but sadly, it will be TOO late by then for many to be spared from the terrible "Great Tribulation."

It is true that you will hear us VERY SELDOM ask for money. On those rare occasions when we might do this, it would be because of a *true* emergency. We are in a solid financial position and will most certainly not "cry wolf" and become like those who try to place a psychological guilt-trip on their members and attempt to "coerce" them through just about every letter to give more... and more... and still more. God knows what we need, and He owns everything in the first place (Haggai 2:8). He promises us individually—and His Church collectively—that He will take care of all of our physical and financial NEEDS (Philippians 4:19) when we seek first the Kingdom of God and His

righteousness (Matthew 6:32-33). We also know that God's true disciples are very diligent in supporting His Work financially—going many times far above and beyond what they are “commanded” to do (Luke 17:10).

We must preach the Word in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2), and our task will not be in vain (Isaiah 55:10-11; Mark 4:26-29). Our works will follow us (Revelation 14:13). We are receiving numerous memos from listeners and readers from all over Europe, because it appears that they have a better grasp of the signs of the times than many do in the USA.

Sadly, the false philosophy of the “American way of life” prevents many US citizens from facing reality and from turning to the true God, by OBEYING His commands. Instead, wrong thinking lulls them into a false sense of security, based on a deceitful and illusionary conviction that Americans can do and achieve everything when they put their minds to it; that no disaster will come upon them; and that they will be able to make America great again.

Of course, America was blessed in the past—not because of ANYTHING Americans did, but ONLY because of God's unconditional promise to faithful Abraham (the grandfather of Israel) to bless his descendants for a while. Today's Americans belong to the modern descendants of the ancient House of Israel, and so their country was blessed. But God's blessings are gone now, as He had also proclaimed that if Americans would continue sinning, after having received the promised blessings, then He would remove the blessings.

To be clear, even though we have focused on America in the last two paragraphs, the same warning applies to the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other English-speaking nations. They are all descendants of the ancient House of Israel (many times referred to in the Bible as “Ephraim,” a grandson of Israel). The warning is also directed to the modern House of Judah—the Jewish people (Judah was one of the twelve sons of Israel). It is to all of the modern Israelite nations and peoples that God thunders: “The pride of Israel testifies to his face; Therefore Israel (the USA) and Ephraim (the UK and other English-speaking nations) stumble in their iniquity; Judah also stumbles with them” (Hosea 5:5).

In addition, God wants ALL (including non-Israelite) nations to hear His truth as well. Even though nations such as the USA, the UK and Canada will be punished FIRST, the other (“Gentile”) nations will ALSO be punished, prior to Christ's return, as they are in no way living righteously in the eyes of God either.

Can we see how IMPORTANT it is to WARN this world of impending disaster and to PROCLAIM the GOOD NEWS of the Kingdom of God? WHY is it that MANY in different Church of God organizations have lost sight of this all-important truth and become engaged in things and activities which do not profit (Isaiah 57:12)? Let us not forget that the unprofitable servant who knew his Master's will and did not do it, will be beaten with many stripes when Christ returns (Luke 12:47).

Thank YOU, dear brethren and friends, for YOUR loyalty and dedication to the Work of God. Your faithfulness will NOT be forgotten (Malachi 3:16-18).

In Christ's name and with brotherly love,



Norbert Link