

Why Did God Put YOU in His Church?

God had a most important PURPOSE in calling you NOW, instead of later. Are you really mindful of His PURPOSE -- are you really fulfilling it?

by Herbert W. Armstrong

REALIZE THIS! There are more than 3,600,050,000 human beings (three billion, six hundred million, fifty thousand) on earth today. But of that vast sea of humanity, God has in our time up to now called and put into His Church ONLY some 50,000 baptized members. The other 3,600,000,000 will all be called later -- most not even in this age. They could not come to Christ and be put into the Church NOW, even if they tried!

Then why were YOU called now, before the time?

Jesus said plainly: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). And, comparatively speaking, God has been drawing almost NONE in this age!

Very FEW Called NOW!

How many of us have become unmindful of the MEANING of the Feast of Firstfruits -- Pentecost? How many of us have become unmindful of THE PURPOSE for which the Father did draw us and put us in His Church NOW -- ahead of time -- before the other three billion, six hundred million will be called?

The Day of Pentecost is called in God's Word the Feast of Firstfruits. We are merely the first little preliminary harvest of God's children. Unless we fulfill God's SPECIAL PURPOSE for our calling now, we might never go into His Kingdom. THIS FACT MUST NOT BE TAKEN CARELESSLY!

How many of us become unmindful of God's purpose and assume we were called and put into God's Church only to GET our personal salvation -- and to ENJOY the fellowship and social life of our local church? WHY does God deny the other 3,600,000,000 people that blessing NOW? For, except the Father draw them, none could come to Christ! He said so!

Most people in the "Christian world" suppose Christ came to "save the world," to start a "soul-winning" crusade. They assume the apostles and their successors started the program of trying to convert the whole world. They believe this is the "day of salvation" -- and the ONLY time or age in which humanity may be "saved."

They misconstrue the following: "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of

salvation" (II Cor. 6:2). Many insist it says now "is THE day of salvation" -- and they construe it to mean the ONLY time when God is trying to convert and "save" the world.

But that verse is quoted from Isaiah 49:8, where it says "A DAY" -- not "the day."

Most Are Blinded

The eleventh chapter of Romans makes the truth plain. Some had been saying God had cast away His people Israel. The Apostle Paul denies this. He reminds them of how Elijah had thought he alone remained faithful to God and all others had been cast away. God had reminded Elijah that He had reserved seven thousand that had not knelt before Baal. Even so, says Paul, there was in the mid-first century a comparatively small remnant that had received God's grace -- a very small minority compared to many MILLIONS. And all the rest (verse 7) were blinded! God blinded them so that they could not see or comprehend God's truth.

Then Paul compares Israel to the olive tree. The people of Israel are the branches of the tree -- broken off because of disbelief. That is, they did not believe what God had revealed to them, but instead they disobeyed -- and sinned. The Gentiles who had received God's grace were pictured as branches of wild olive trees, now grafted into the natural olive tree -- ISRAEL. And the Israelites, broken off, upon repentance, belief, and conversion, were grafted back in again.

Thus the Apostle was inspired to write that the CHURCH, in this time, is composed of those who are spiritually converted. The Church is this natural olive tree -- ISRAEL. The CHURCH, then, is composed of Spirit-begotten people only -- it is Spirit- begotten Israel!

Now remember, the peoples of western Europe and the English- speaking peoples are the descendants of the so-called "Lost Ten Tribes" of Israel. Most are spiritually "blinded" so that they cannot see the way to salvation. Paul was writing to only those converted and in the Church at Corinth in the mid-first century. We know, however, that after the first century not many Gentiles received real conversion and the Spirit of God. A false "Christianity" -- deceived by Satan -- rose up which kept almost all the Western world blinded and deceived.

This passage continues to show that those blinded to saving truth were to remain blinded UNTIL there should come "the DELIVERER" -- Christ at His Second Coming to RULE the whole earth. Then, "all Israel shall be saved." WHEN? At and after Christ's coming in all POWER AND GLORY!

WHEN Salvation Offered to Whole World

Now notice what will happen WHEN "the Deliverer" -- Christ -- comes to "turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Matthew 25, beginning verse 31, shows Christ coming as King of kings to RULE the world and to offer salvation and eternal life to all the world:

"WHEN the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:31-32).

This is not referring to separating those of us already converted now from the rest of the world then. We have already been separated from the world by conversion, and we shall have been separated by already having received eternal life prior to Christ's setting foot on earth. For "... the dead in Christ shall rise first; Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air ... (I Thess. 4:16-17). Thus we, converted now BEFORE the time, shall have been changed from mortal to immortal, meeting Christ in the air as He descends -- BEFORE His feet stand on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:11-12; Zech. 14:4) -- and BEFORE He sits on David's throne which then becomes CHRIST'S throne in Jerusalem.

Now, continuing in Matthew 25:33: "And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:33-34).

So it is after Christ's return to earth, and in the thousand- year reign with Him, that He will set His hand to SAVE THE WORLD!

Notice next Isaiah 11. Verses 1 through 5 show Christ as the righteous Ruler and Judge. Verses 6 through 9 show the wild animals tamed, and the earth as full of Christ's KNOWLEDGE as the ocean beds are full of water. Verse 10 shows the Gentile nations seeking CHRIST and salvation. Verses 11 through 16 show Christ setting His hand to save Israel and the whole world -- during the Millennium.

Meaning of Annual Festivals

The annual Festivals of God picture GOD'S PLAN for working out His PURPOSE here below.

The Passover pictures the crucifixion of Christ. The wavesheaf on the morrow after the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread pictures the RISEN Christ being accepted (His sacrifice for our sins and His resurrection) of God. The Days of Unleavened Bread picture putting away sin. The Feast of Firstfruits (Pentecost), the first small preliminary spiritual harvest. The Feast of Trumpets, Christ's Second Coming. The Day of Atonement, Satan being put away. The Feast of Tabernacles, the GREAT SPIRITUAL HARVEST -- Christ setting His hand to offer salvation to the WHOLE WORLD. The final Holy Day pictures the Great White Throne Judgment -- the resurrection of all to whom salvation had not been offered, and their time of salvation or rejection of it.

The Bible teaches that this now is SATAN'S world -- that Satan has DECEIVED all nations; that he has deceived them into accepting him as their GOD -- being blinded as to the true Christ and His GOSPEL.

Not Just Another Church

Brethren, do we not find ourselves taking for granted that the churches in what is called "Christianity" are also God's churches -- that WE are just another of the many denominations, the only difference being that we hold to some different doctrines?

THAT IS SIMPLY NOT TRUE! We in GOD'S Church are not just one of all these churches. They are of this world. They do not have, or know, or proclaim Christ's Gospel -- the message God sent to the world BY CHRIST, as the MESSENGER. Of course, Satan counterfeits the Gospel and God's Truth. He lets his churches have a little truth. But they are DECEIVED and OF this world. But, YOU, brethren, "are a chosen generation" -- yes, SPECIFICALLY chosen for a very SPECIAL commission -- "a ROYAL priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people ..." (I Peter 2:9).

The world as a whole -- with its churches which call them- selves "Christian" -- are DECEIVED. God has allowed it. God has not called them. They do not know THE WAY to real salvation. They do not know even WHAT real salvation is! THIS IS NOT GOD'S TIME FOR SAVING THE WORLD!

What Actually Happened

To fully understand WHY most have been deceived -- and WHY God has put YOU in His Church now, in this very END TIME just before the coming of Christ in POWER and GLORY, we need to realize what actually happened to the Gospel after the first century.

Malachi prophesied Jesus would come as a MESSENGER, with a MESSAGE from God, which He was to announce (Mal. 3:1). He was to come as "the Messenger of the COVENANT." Jesus came as the Messenger of the NEW Covenant.

The "Old Covenant" was made at Mt. Sinai between God and ancient Israel. It was a MARRIAGE covenant, and it made Israel God's wife. It also established Israel as a KINGDOM -- one of earth's nations.

Likewise, the NEW Covenant, with Christ as Mediator (as Moses was of the Old), will be a MARRIAGE covenant, establishing Spirit-begotten Israel as Christ's Spirit-BORN wife. And it also will establish the "WIFE" as the KINGDOM OF GOD upon earth. That MARRIAGE will produce Spirit-born children. That is WHEN, and by what process, God will set out to SAVE the whole world. Satan will be GONE! Christ, WITH THE CHURCH, then will compose the KINGDOM OF GOD and will be ruling all nations! And SAVING THEM! (See Matthew 25:31-34.)

They HATED the Gospel

The MESSAGE God sent by Christ was the GOSPEL -- and that Gospel was the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. It was the Message of the Covenant, which Covenant, as I said, shall establish the KINGDOM OF GOD on earth. The KINGDOM OF GOD is the GOVERNMENT of God which shall rule all nations. But also it is the FAMILY OF GOD into which we may be BORN -- the DIVINE FAMILY which becomes a SPIRIT-NATION, ruling all nations on earth -- a WORLD-RULING GOVERNMENT!

Jesus was sent to ANNOUNCE that message -- not to force men to accept it, believe it, and act on it. NEVER DID JESUS PLEAD WITH A SINGLE ONE TO BE CONVERTED. He merely announced the GOOD NEWS of the Kingdom of God, and He left it to people to decide whether to believe it and whether to act on it. He did not come THEN to CONVERT the world! He did not start a "soul-saving" crusade -- the Protestants did! He came to ANNOUNCE the GOSPEL -- the GOOD NEWS of His coming KINGDOM!

But people hated His message. Many BELIEVED on Him -- realized and BELIEVED He was the Messiah. But they did not believe His message -- His Gospel!

Notice, in the eighth chapter of John:

Jesus was speaking in the Temple at Jerusalem. "As he spake these words, many believed on Him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in my word [IF you believe my message and act on it -- live by it], then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:30-32).

This angered those "who BELIEVED ON Him." They hotly denied they were not free. They were Abraham's descendants!

"I know," answered Jesus, "that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word [the Gospel] hath no place in you" (verse 37).

It was that message -- that GOSPEL -- which caused those to whom Jesus came to cry out for His crucifixion. His apostles went out proclaiming the same MESSAGE; they, too, were put to death for it -- with the possible exception of John.

Persecution Sets In

In two years (A.D.33) the persecution started (Acts 8:1). Philip, a deacon, went to Samaria announcing the Kingdom of God (Acts 8:12) and performing many astounding miracles -- healing the sick and casting out demons. The people were greatly moved. They believed and were baptized. Among them was Simon the sorcerer who had deceived the people with his sorcery. He was their "spiritual leader" -- the "Peter" (Pater, father) in the Babylonian Mystery religion.

Seven hundred years before Christ, when the people of the northern Kingdom of Israel had been moved to Assyria, Gentiles from Babylon had been moved into the land of Samaria, north of Jerusalem (II Kings 17:18,23,24). These were the Gentiles which the Jews of Christ's day called "dogs."

This Simon, known in history as Simon Magus, saw his people starting to leave his Babylonian Mystery religion, which he had kept alive. Philip's miracles were REAL, and by hundreds people were believing and being baptized. Simon offered Peter and John money, trying to bribe them to confer on him the power to cause people to receive God's Holy Spirit by laying on his hands.

Peter told him sharply that he was "in the bond of iniquity." That is, bound by the grip of lawlessness -- hostile to God's Law.

Simon had managed to have himself baptized along with the scores and hundreds. He knew that all pagan religions were controlled by kings or heads of state. Their religions were used to hold a grip over the people and to keep the rulers in power. Whoever controlled the religion in a country also controlled the government.

Simon saw in Christ an opportunity to head up a UNIVERSAL religion -- he saw visions of ruling the world, if only he could lead out in a UNIVERSAL religion that would sweep into all countries. He had to do something, or see his followers all turn Christian.

So Simon claimed to be an apostle in the Christian religion in order to hold his followers. He appropriated the name of Christ. He changed the NAME of his Babylonian religion to "Christianity." He offered free GRACE -- forgiveness of sins -- which no religion had ever offered. But he turned grace into license (Jude 4); he did away with God's Law.

Before the end of the first century, his new UNIVERSAL (Catholic) religion had gained great strides. He gave great opposition to the true Church of God. This opposition is mentioned in Paul's epistles, in John's epistles, in Peter and in James and in Revelation.

The "Lost Century"

By the end of the first century, we come to a gap in the history of the Church. It's like a curtain had been rung down on that stage of history. When that curtain lifts, a hundred years later, we see a "Christian church" professing Christ, administering grace, but otherwise almost the very antithesis of the Church of Christ's apostles a hundred years before.

The Kingdom of God had been changed to become the church. The pagan day of the sun had displaced God's Sabbath. The Sabbath was called "Jewish," and persecution against things "Jewish" was a weapon used to supplant most of Christ's teachings with the Babylonian Mystery religion, now called "Christianity."

In the twelfth chapter of Revelation, we find a description of the true Church of God -- persecuted, small. It is persecuted by Satan the devil, who is the "god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4) and of the new false "Christianity." In the seventeenth chapter of Revelation, we find this Babylonian Mystery church described.

When the curtain lifts on that "LOST CENTURY" of Church history, the Gospel of the Kingdom of God was no longer preached to the world. Jesus and His apostles had carried on a dual ministry -- proclaiming the Kingdom of God and healing the sick. But after that "Lost Century" neither the Gospel of God's Kingdom nor healing was going out to the world.

The true Church of God carried on through every generation, but its teaching had to be secret -- under cover -- for fear of martyrdom. The Gospel of God sent to mankind through Christ was NO LONGER PREACHED TO THE WORLD!

Where WE Come In

In the pivotal chapter of the entire New Testament, Matthew 24, it is recorded that Jesus had been telling His disciples that the temple at Jerusalem would be torn down. Also He had told them of His coming in power and glory to rule. Then, on the Mount of Olives, His disciples asked privately, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world [age]?" (Verse 3.)

Jesus did not give them the sign of His coming and the END of this present world right away. First He warned them, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying that I am the Christ; and shall deceive many."

That happened. They claimed to be the ministers of Jesus Christ. They said Jesus was the Christ. They preached CHRIST (the Messenger) to the world, but NOT His message -- His Gospel -- the Kingdom of God. And they indeed have deceived the MANY -- the MILLIONS and hundreds of millions!

Finally, in verse 14, He gave them the sign by which we were to know the time of the end of this age and Christ's imminent coming to establish the KINGDOM OF GOD is near. "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." Notice -- not to convert all nations. Just for a witness to all nations.

Gospel NOT Proclaimed 18 1/2 Centuries

Unless Jesus knew that a different gospel would go out -- a gospel about His PERSON (and teaching a DIFFERENT JESUS at that!) -- the end time proclaiming of the true Gospel of the Kingdom could not be a sign by which you may know His coming is near!

Jesus plainly said here that the true GOSPEL would not be preached to the world UNTIL NOW!

Notice briefly Galatians 1:6-9. This false gospel was already, when Paul wrote to the Galatians, being preached: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel... but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." Then he pronounced a double curse on any who dared to proclaim a different gospel.

A Different Gospel

Consider with that scripture another from II Corinthians 11:2-4, 13-15. Paul wrote the Corinthians, who were already listening to this FALSE gospel: "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy... But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted For if he that cometh [Simon the sorcerer's followers] preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or ANOTHER GOSPEL, which ye have not [as yet] accepted"

Who were these false preachers with "ANOTHER GOSPEL"?

Verses 13-15: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into [claiming to be] the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers [Satan's ministers posing as Christ's] also be transformed as [pretending to be] the ministers of righteousness."

WHY The First-Century Church

Now notice carefully!

Jesus taught His disciples the message (Gospel) of the Kingdom of God. They were with Him three-and-a-half years. After His resurrection they were with Him forty days (Acts 1:3) to become EYEWITNESSES of the fact of His RESURRECTION. As they announced the Kingdom of God, they also put great emphasis on being EYEWITNESSES that Christ ROSE from the dead.

In order for them -- TWELVE men -- a complete JURY to unanimously CONFIRM the resurrection -- to perform this mission, God specially called and raised up His CHURCH of that period of time to BACK THEM -- support them financially -- support them by fervent PRAYERS. But they were an infinitesimal tiny fraction of all humanity! At first the Church mushroomed in growth (Acts 5:14; 6:1, etc.). But in Acts 7 we find the persecution starting. In Acts 8 it is recorded that the persecution intensified, scattered the members of the Church, and records the facts about Simon the sorcerer.

Before the end of the first century, the persecution had reduced the true Church. Many members had gone out of the true Church by the nineties A.D. (I John 2:19). John was warning the brethren against

the false ministers (I John 2:4; II John 7,10, etc.). Soon the false counterfeit church greatly out-numbered them.

Then came the "Lost Century" in Church history. The first-century commission had been carried out. The great false "Christianity" grew great and strong physically and politically -- but not spiritually -- until it became the largest religion, in number of adherents, in the world.

Through this 18 1/2 centuries, God's true Church existed, much of the time very SMALL, impotent, teaching and even meeting secretly, and unable to proclaim the GOSPEL of the Kingdom of God to the world.

One purpose for the Church -- one reason God did draw some to Christ -- was to beget a certain number by the Holy Spirit that they might GROW spiritually in grace and the KNOWLEDGE of Christ; that they may be resurrected into God's KINGDOM at the coming of Christ -- trained spiritually and developed in spiritual character and knowledge to RULE THE WORLD under Christ when He comes.

But now, in the past FORTY YEARS there has come a SPECIAL PURPOSE -- a SPECIAL TREMENDOUS COMMISSION to be carried out -- which today is the PRINCIPLE REASON WHY GOD HAS GREATLY INCREASED THE NUMBER CALLED over that of the immediate preceding years.

Notice carefully! It is important that you UNDERSTAND!

God's Church Today

Now we come down to ourselves in God's Church today.

In the autumn of 1926 God called me. For sixteen years I had been specially prepared for it. I was challenged into intensive study and research into the Bible. I was astonished -- shocked -- to see that the "Christianity" I had been brought up in was almost the antithesis of the Christianity of Christ and His Apostles. Against my will, as it had been at the time, I had to acknowledge I had been wrong about God's Sabbath.

That was the beginning of learning God's TRUTH. It was like a sudden awakening to a whole NEW WORLD. I was impelled to keep on studying. My complete surrender to God, His Law, His Word, His Will changed my whole life. I was baptized and received God's Holy Spirit. It was a total NEW AWAKENING -- A NEW LIFE. Now for the first time God opened my mind to understand the Bible.

The intensive study became my life. My conversion was in the spring of 1927. In 1931 I was ordained by the Oregon Conference of the Church of God. After many tests lasting seven years from my conversion, God chose me as His instrument to raise up the present era of His Church, to

proclaim His GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD to the world and to feed the flock which He was to put in His Church.

The END TIME Was Here!

This proved to be the start of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Matthew 24:14.

But the Gospel was not to go to all the world right away. First, radio opened in the smallest way at the start. The first week in January, 1934, the true Gospel -- the KINGDOM OF GOD -- went out to reach perhaps a few thousand people in the northwest corner of the United States -- in Lane County, Oregon. The PLAIN TRUTH started February 1, 1934 with the VERY SMALLEST circulation -- just a few hundred copies. By late 1942, we were reaching a scattered national group of listeners and readers. Not important national leaders -- all just the "grass-roots" common people.

Gradually Jesus Christ, the living HEAD of this Work, called more and more of you brethren as Co-Workers with Him and with me in proclaiming this GOOD NEWS of Christ's GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM. The Work, on radio and by the printing press, grew. It spread to reach many MILLIONS over the United States, Canada, and Australia. Still God called only a comparative very small minority to conversion -- at this time!

But when it came to getting God's LAST MESSAGE out to ALL THE WORLD as a witness, we were blocked. I could not buy time on radio in Britain, nor in France, Germany, Scandinavia, nor in Russia, India, China, Japan, Indonesia, nor other countries around the world.

We Were Blocked

Governments in those nations -- in nearly all nations CONTROL radio, television, and the means of reaching their people! They try to CONTROL the minds and thinking and teaching of their peoples!

I tried buying radio time in a few little countries adjoining France, Germany, Belgium, India, Russia, and China. But results were ALMOST NIL -- almost NO RESPONSE. We simply could not reach the MILLIONS in these big nations that way.

Stupendous Doors Open

Now, at last, after 40 years of building toward it, the living Christ has opened STUPENDOUS NEW DOORS for getting HIS MESSAGE into the nations whose doors, those 40 years, were closed!

In all these HUGE POPULATION NATIONS -- China, India, Russia, Indonesia, Japan, Brazil, Bangladesh, the nations of western Europe, Asia, Africa, South and Central America -- God is opening doors AT THE VERY TOP!

He has already given me almost unbelievable FAVOR and CREDIBILITY in the eyes of those at the very TOP of many nations. And the number of nations conferring this unusual grace and favor upon me personally continues to GROW and EXPAND into more and more nations month by month!

There has been NOTHING LIKE IT BEFORE, so far as I know!

THINK OF IT! The chosen servant of the Great God being given great favor and high HONOR by numerous heads of state -- who actually want to hear my message -- who want their people at the top of their governments to hear it -- who want THEIR PEOPLE to hear it!

I know of nothing like it ever before in history -- unless it was in the days of the prophet Elijah.

Elijah Went to Kings

God had hid Elijah from King Ahab of Israel -- first by the brook Cherith, fed by the ravens, then in the house of the widow in Zarephath. Finally, God told Elijah in the third year to go to King Ahab. In the way Elijah met Obadiah, governor of the king's palace, who greatly feared God. Elijah told Obadiah to go tell King Ahab Elijah had come.

But Obadiah feared for his life! He said, "As the Eternal thy God liveth, there is NO NATION OR KINGDOM whither my lord [King Ahab] hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not" (I Kings 18:10).

Ahab's servants did not inquire or take an oath of the sheep- herders, farmers, or common people. Obviously, Ahab's men went directly to the KING of each nation, indicating that Elijah was known to the kings of the earth in his day.

Today, after 40 years, the DOORS TO THESE NATIONS ARE OPENING one after another, faster than I can get to them! THIS IS DEFINITELY OF GOD!

And now, PUBLIC APPEARANCE CAMPAIGNS are planned already in THREE nations, sponsored by officials high in the governments of these nations. Already I have gotten the MESSAGE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD to audiences of 55 to 100 of each nation's LEADERS in banquets or dinners in India, Japan, Thailand, South Vietnam, Ethiopia, and the Philippines.

This is positively miraculous! It is GOD'S DOING!

God had a SPECIAL MISSION for His first-century apostles -- giving personal eyewitness proof of the RESURRECTION of Christ, as well as proclaiming the Good News of the KINGDOM OF GOD.

From then until 1934, the Church existed, comparatively small in number, persecuted, unable to proclaim the KINGDOM OF GOD to the world.

WHY You Are Called NOW

But now, once again, there is a dynamic, super-important SPECIAL COMMISSION -- to proclaim the GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM in all the world as a witness to ALL NATIONS, just before the END OF THIS AGE -- and also to prepare the way for Christ's Second Coming!

And, just as God caused His Church in the first century to GROW RAPIDLY, even to MULTIPLY in numbers (until the persecution set in) -- to BACK THE APOSTLES, support them financially, support them by fervent prayers -- EVEN SO God caused His Church of our day to GROW at the phenomenal rate of 30% a year, multiplying itself in numbers eight times in eight years -- 64 times in 16 years, 4,096 times in 32 years -- and maintain that rate of growth over a 35-year span in OUR TIME.

WHY? -- to make possible and to support this very SPECIAL DYNAMIC COMMISSION FOR OUR DAY (Matthew 24:14)!!

And THAT, brethren, is the REASON God has called you and me TODAY -- ahead of time -- before He calls the other 3,600,000,000 people to salvation.

We are called, NOW, for a VERY, VERY special commission!

BUT WHY YOU?

Prophecy for Second Coming

Let's look a little further into Malachi's prophecy about God sending Christ with this MESSAGE. It's in Malachi 3, beginning in verse 1: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Eternal of hosts."

In Mark 1:2, in Luke 1:17, in Matthew 11:10 and elsewhere, this first messenger preparing the way for Christ is referred to as John the Baptist. But in a greater sense it refers to a Work to be done preparing the way for the Second Coming of Christ NOW, in our time!

Read the next verse -- Malachi 3:2:

"But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap." The Moffatt translation makes the meaning a little sharper: "for

he is like the fire of smelters and the acid used by fullers."

Continuing: "And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not, saith the Eternal of hosts" (through verse 5).

This is NOT speaking of Christ's first coming, more than 1900 years ago! It is NOT speaking primarily of John the Baptist, who was only as one preparing the way before Jesus' first coming over 1900 years ago.

Primarily it is speaking of one to prepare the way before Christ's SECOND COMING, now, today, IN OUR TIME! It is speaking of things Christ will do when He comes in all POWER and AUTHORITY to RULE ALL NATIONS!

Does the full significance of that sink into your consciousness?

Now notice Luke 1:17. It is speaking, again, of John the Baptist -- but only TYPICALLY of one preparing the way for the SECOND COMING, NOW, at the END of this age.

Notice it! "And he shall go before Him [Christ] in the power and spirit of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

God's way of Preparing Us

And God has set before us HIS WAY of preparing us -- by GROWING in spiritual character, in grace and the knowledge of Christ, ready for our part in the Kingdom, reigning under Christ! And THAT WAY is OUR PART in fulfilling the special end-time WORK of Matthew 24:14: "This Gospel OF THE KINGDOM shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the END come"!

It would have been utterly IMPOSSIBLE for me to carry out this great commission alone. THAT is why God has called YOU now, instead of later, in the Millennium! And this great WORK OF GOD is THE WAY God has set before us for each to GROW and develop SPIRITUALLY. God's WAY -- that of HIS LAW -- is the way of GIVING, not getting. Those who try to simply GET their salvation are in danger of losing it!

God's WORK is a work of GIVING -- GIVING the GOSPEL of the KINGDOM OF GOD. In 40 years I have observed that ONLY those whose hearts are in this great Work are themselves growing spiritually.

I have mentioned how the early Church GREW and MULTIPLIED in those God added to the Church. But soon the persecution came. Soon the false preachers came, with the different gospel -- a different spirit. They came fomenting a spirit of criticism -- of DOUBT! They came saying Jesus' true apostles were preaching WRONG DOCTRINES.

They said to people: "Peter, and Paul, and those apostles won't admit they are teaching erroneous doctrines. Look how many are FALLING AWAY from them. Their credibility is at an all-time low. Don't follow them -- forsake them and the Gospel they are proclaiming, and COME OVER WITH US."

Yes, brethren, and THOUSANDS DID -- TO THEIR OWN ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION IN THE LAKE OF FIRE!

Look at the Fruits

But LOOK AT THE FRUITS! The work of the original apostles BORE THE TRUE FRUITS!

The Worldwide Church of God has always produced the GOOD fruits -- ABUNDANT fruits. It is the ONLY Work in 1850 years that has proclaimed the true Gospel of Christ -- the Gospel OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD to the world -- now GOING TO THE ENTIRE WORLD!

Prophecy says the END will not come until, also, there is a "falling away" first!

Jesus' parable (Luke 19:11-24) is for OUR TIME, now! It pertains to Christ going to heaven to receive the Kingdom officially and then returning. The "pounds" (English money) represent the SPIRITUAL GOODS Christ has entrusted to each of us now, while He is in heaven. When He returns, He will demand of each of us to show how we have used the GIFT of His Holy Spirit -- how much we have CONTRIBUTED to His Work -- the PURPOSE for which He put us in His Church NOW! He will demand of each of us to show how much we have grown spiritually in the way of GOD'S LAW -- the way of CONTRIBUTING AND GIVING. Those who prove disloyal or drop out of the Work -- THE ONLY PURPOSE FOR WHICH YOU WERE CALLED NOW -- will find themselves in the position of the one described in verses 20 and 24. They will lose the very salvation they were trying to GET!

You are each admonished to "make your calling and election SURE!"

Today, as in the time of the first apostles, MANY DECEIVERS are gone out into the world. They will ACCUSE God's Church and His Work. It is Satan the devil who is the accuser of the true brethren (Rev. 12:10).

Christ's Warning

As it was in the first century -- the days of the original apostles, when the Church was MULTIPLYING itself in membership (Acts 6:1) -- so is it destined to be NOW!

Before Jesus answered His disciples as to WHEN the END of the age and His return would come, He warned them against FALSE MINISTERS, deceiving the many. If possible, He said, they would deceive the VERY ELECT -- YOU in God's Church.

As the Apostle Paul warned the elders at Ephesus, "For I know this, that ... grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also OF YOUR OWN SELVES [the ministers in God's Church] shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore WATCH"! (Acts 20:29-31.)

Brethren, could this BE God's true Church, and such things not happen to us? This sort of thing DID HAPPEN to God's TRUE CHURCH in the very first century. They only PROVE this is GOD'S Church which He is USING and blessing! But SATAN IS ANGRY. Satan deceives even some from within us. They will falsely accuse. They will MISLEAD with false doctrines which they will palm off as TRUTH!

As in the days of the Apostle John, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (I John 2:19).

Among the false teachers accusing and trying to mislead the Church as Satan's ministers, described in the eleventh chapter of II Corinthians, were "FALSE BROTHERS."

Dear brethren, this could not BE God's true Church, through which HE is carrying on HIS TRUE WORK, unless Satan managed to inject some such in God's Church TODAY.

MUCH of the New Testament is WARNING God's people of these snares of Satan to hinder -- to attempt to DESTROY the very Work of GOD -- the very Work which is THE REASON God has called you NOW -- before He undertakes to SAVE THE WHOLE WORLD!

The Fruits Prove It

Remember, Jesus taught us to LOOK TO THE FRUITS BORNE!

Are they who falsely accuse -- who seek to draw a following away from God's Church for selfish purpose -- PROCLAIMING THE KINGDOM OF GOD TO THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD? Are they fulfilling the PURPOSE for which God has called us NOW? NONE but THIS VERY WORK of the LIVING GOD is fulfilling that PURPOSE -- bearing the FRUITS.

Finally, brethren, do you realize how THANKFUL, GRATEFUL, HAPPY and JOYFUL you and I should be that the Mighty God looked down from heaven and selected YOU and me to be called

to salvation NOW, before the time, that He might USE US as His human instruments in GETTING HIS MESSAGE TO THIS ENTIRE WORLD -- preparing THE WAY for the coming of HIS KINGDOM on earth to END the nightmarish evils, agonies, sufferings, violence, wars and injustices on earth?

When I go before kings, presidents, emperors, prime ministers, and the LEADERS of many nations, I go and am received as AN AMBASSADOR FOR WORLD PEACE. I go before them not only as GOD'S representative, but also as YOURS.

I go in Satan's great disfavor -- in Satan's eyes and those he has deceived into being used AGAINST the Work of the living God, with no credibility. But in GOD'S EYES, and in the eyes of the nations' leaders, I go with great FAVOR, THE HIGHEST CREDIBILITY, and in high HONOR!

WHY were YOU called NOW -- instead of later when God sets out to save the world? That you might have the glory and honor of YOUR PART with me UNDER THE LIVING CHRIST in HIS WORK -- in getting HIS MESSAGE of the Kingdom of God into all the world as a witness to all nations -- just before THE END of this age!

THAT'S the reason for THIS WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD -- FOR THIS WORK OF GOD -- the most SERIOUS -- the MOST IMPORTANT MISSION ON EARTH IN 1900 YEARS!

Let's put our hearts and fervent PRAYERS into God's Work as NEVER BEFORE!