

## Revelation 10 and the Laodicean Church

### Prophecy, Seven Thunders, and Laodicea

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Jesus made it very clear in both Matthew 24 and 25 that no man would ever be able to precisely *date* His return. However I think that the apostles had a keen interest as to when He would return. I think that it is only natural to look toward this because the return of Jesus Christ means so much to this earth, especially to those of us who are awaiting the resurrection of the dead.

One of the reasons prophecy is given is so that we'll have sufficient knowledge to be aware of the times. You might recall that Jesus said to the Jews of His day that they were aware of the signs of the weather—the signs of the sky—but they were really not aware of times that they were living in, the time of the first coming of their savior, Jesus Christ. He expects us to be watching, and thinking about what is going on.

Therefore, I believe that it is good that we speculate from time to time as to where we are. This is good if we all understand that we are speculating, and that we are not setting any specific date. Even Jesus Christ didn't know when He was going to return. So if He didn't know, we surely must be looking through a very cloudy glass.

It's obvious that God does not want us to know. He wants us to live our lives by faith. If we knew the exact time of the return of Jesus Christ, it would impinge on our faith and, I'm certain that it would cause a trailing off of the spiritual growth that He wants us to have. And so, God has left this cloudy.

Today, we're going to go through an overview of the book of Revelation, and eventually we're going to concentrate on Revelation 10 and 11.

I have to admit to every one of you, that prophecy has never been my strong suit. I am interested in other people's speculations, but when it comes to speculating myself, my mind often seems to go blank. And, I wonder, "Why did I ever get into this?" It seems as though I'm on a treadmill.

Now, chapters ten and eleven are intriguing for different reasons. Chapter 10 is intriguing because hardly anybody pays any attention to it. That's because chapter 11 overshadows it. There is heady stuff in chapter 11. It starts off with John being told he must speak again, and that he is going to measure the Temple, and he's supposed to begin at the altar. Then, we go on into the Two Witnesses, and the power and authority that these two witnesses have excite us. We find out that they are going to be killed, that their bodies will lie in the street, then suddenly they are resurrected, and then—BOOM—the 7<sup>th</sup> Trumpet blows in verse 15.

This is pretty dramatic stuff!

In the meantime, chapter 10 occurred, and I'll bet that there is hardly anyone here who knows

what is in chapter 10. Now—no fair peeking! (Everyone one here in southern California looked down at their Bible and started looking at what's in chapter 10.)

Do the events of chapter 10 really follow on the heels of chapter 9? I wonder if you know what is in chapter 9? What's in chapter 8? We'll get to those things. Do the things in chapter 10 actually precede those things in chapter 11? Is chapter 11 an inset chapter? Is it possible that chapter 10 is an inset chapter also? Is it possible that men have broken the chapters in the wrong place? Maybe these things have misled us. If we had not been misled because the chapters are broken in the wrong place, maybe, just maybe, we would have understood a little bit better what's going on in our life at this time! Maybe!

I'll tell you what's in chapter 10. It is the seven thunders. What are the seven thunders? Who are the seven thunders of chapter 10?

We're going to be going back to the beginning to the book of Revelation, and we're going to be taking a run-through—I don't necessarily say that it will be slow, but it will be a little bit faster than that period of time we'll spend on chapters 10 and 11.

It's good to understand the overall organization of the entire book of Revelation before we get back to details in chapters 10 and 11, because then I think we will understand 10 and 11 a great deal better.

Now, Revelation is a revelation! It is a revealing. However, we're going to see in chapter 5 that when God the Father handed this revelation to Jesus Christ, it was sealed. And, only the Lamb was worthy to break the seals, and therefore, begin to reveal what was inside of this revelation. But, to you and me now (because we have Jesus Christ revealing what was in that book), we can understand the things that are in the book of Revelation. Therefore, the book of Revelation is revealing! It is not hidden to those of us who have the Spirit of God, and are a part of the church of God.

The symbolism in it tends to hinder us somewhat. It makes it a bit more difficult to understand; and so does the book of Revelation's organization. But, once these keys—the symbolism, and the organization—are revealed, then understanding what is in the book becomes a great deal easier for us.

Revelation 1:1-3 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

Jesus Christ is the revealer. He wants us informed so that we might be motivated to keep His Word. That's the bottom line on why prophecy is given. It is to motivate us to keep His Word. It is not intended by God just to be an intriguing set of information or knowledge that we might glory in, but do nothing about. And when I say, "*do His Word*," I mean that we might overcome and grow in character, in wisdom, in understanding, and in our effectiveness of revealing God in our lives.

Now John recorded the information:

Revelation 1:9 I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

In other words, he was exiled there. It was part of his punishment from the state. And while he was there, he was given this revelation.

Revelation 1:10-11 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

So John, on the isle of Patmos, somewhere the scholars estimate around 95 AD, was projected forward in time to the Day of the Lord—that is, the day of God's wrath against mankind upon this earth.

And so, he was projected forward in vision into our day, and he was given something akin to a three-dimensional movie. But, it was unique even to those of us who are familiar with that kind of technology—it was unique because John was able to participate in it.

The characters he saw before him were not mere figments of his imagination (such as we see on the silver screen), but actually were able to communicate to him, and he to them! Maybe it was more akin to a stage play, with a backdrop of three-dimensional figures. But at any rate, it was extremely realistic, and John actually felt as though he was on the scene.

Then in the remainder of chapter 1, the Revealer is introduced more graphically so that there would be no doubt (to any of us reading this material) who the Revealer is. It is not John; it is Jesus Christ—the Revealer who stands in the midst of the churches.

We will spend a little bit of time in chapters 2 and 3 because it is necessary to lay a foundation for things that are going to come a little bit later. But let's look especially at a series of verses here—they all basically say the same thing, and you are undoubtedly familiar with them.

Revelation 2:7 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

I want to draw your attention especially to the plural *churches*. Each message is to the churches.

Revelation 2:17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes...."

Revelation 3:5-6 "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit

says to the churches."

And again in verse 13 to the Philadelphia church.

Revelation 3:13 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Revelation 3:22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

What the Revealer says to the Ephesian church is also intended to be instruction, knowledge, information, and motivation to all the other churches as well. What is said to Ephesus is also intended for Smyrna, is also intended for Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. What is said to Laodicea is also intended for Ephesus, Smyrna, Thyatira, Pergamos, and so on. Therefore, those messages are for each church as well.

Now there are some who say, "There are not seven eras here, but only seven attitudes that were in these seven specific congregations, and that these attitudes will be present in God's church whenever, and wherever it is." I am here to tell you that there are indications of time progression throughout the entirety of the book of Revelation, as well as in the separate chapters.

First of all, let's consider this: Does not the entire book move chronologically from the time that the prophecy was given—roughly 95 AD—through the Tribulation, on through the Day of the Lord, on to Christ's return, and then on to the new heavens and the new earth? Can we all agree that the book of Revelation—the material that is given in it—is moving chronologically from about 95 AD (well actually it is before that, but I'll just say it this way this time, 95 AD) till sometime in the near future just ahead? Then moving on out to the Great White Throne Judgment period, the New Jerusalem coming out of heaven and down to the earth? It is moving in time isn't it? Yes it is!

In these two chapters, notice beginning with the message to Thyatira, He begins to mention His return.

Revelation 2:25 "But hold fast what you have till I come."

Ah ha! This is kind of interesting!

Doesn't that indicate to you that there are going to be some of the Thyatira church on earth somewhere in this [end time] "till I come"? This was 95 AD!

Let's look a little bit further.

Revelation 3:3 "Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch,..."

I want you to notice the language here because it is end-time language!

Revelation 3:3 "...if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you

will not know what hour I will come upon you."

That's end-time language! Let's go a little bit further still.

Revelation 3:10-11 "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown."

Ahh! Are there going to be some of the Philadelphia church around at His return? If that is not true, then why would He say about the hour of temptation or trial that would come upon the whole earth—not some little piddley tribulation that is taking place in some little corner of Asia Minor, but something—an event—that takes place all over the world. That hasn't happened yet. But the indication in the message to Philadelphia is that there are going to be elements of the Philadelphia church around when that hour of temptation is going on.

I want you to compare that example with the message to Pergamos where a certain individual is named Antipas. Is that a name you would associate with the end-time? That's not a name you'd associate with the end-time. That is a Greek name from the time at which this was written (95AD). Antipas had probably just died [shortly before] this was written.

It is little things like that, which indicates that there is a movement of time right within the chapters that we're looking at right now—chapters 2 and 3. We will look at one more example to Laodicea.

Revelation 3:20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

The language is undoubtedly figurative. It can be taken in two different ways. We might say to the door of one's heart—one's mind. "Let me into your life!" On the other hand, we can also say that He is saying, "I am just about ready to come! And, we can have a fellowship together if you would just repent!" It can be taken either way.

If you would look at the four groups of people—Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea—Christ gives very strong indications (in three of the cases) that these groups are going to be around at His return.

He omits statements like that to Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos all together. Again, suggesting very strongly the movement—the progression—of time from the time the prophecy is uttered, until He is standing at the door knocking. He is just that close! A period that we now understand to be at least 1900 years long from then until now.

Are we talking about eras here, or are we talking about seven small congregations in western Asia Minor who just happened to have these attitudes? I submit to you that by the time we finish this sermon today, you are going to be convinced that what we have here are eras progressing from the first century right up until the time of Jesus Christ. We are going to see evidence piled upon evidence that we are talking about eras. And that Christ is showing—He is revealing to His church—that these are going to be—Yes! —the major attitudes that are going

to be present in His church at any given time, but also we are looking at what will be the dominant attitude as the church moves through these periods of time.

And when we finally get to Laodicea, the dominant attitude will be one of self-satisfied, fence-sitting, compromise; utter worldliness that has crept into the church. I shouldn't say crept. It has flooded into the church!

So there will always be people at any time who have lost their first love. There will always be people who are dead as the Sardis group is. The application is dual, but there are both attitudes and eras here at one and the same time.

Keep looking, as we go through, for time progressions. I don't think you will have a hard time seeing them because I'm going to make sure that you see them. You're going to see that these things will all begin to dovetail together. And that can be the only answer there is. There is a time progression in chapters 2 and 3.

You might remember, before we leave this chapter, hearing Mr. Armstrong say that he always considered the Sardis group—which the Bible describes as being alive, yet dead—a very weak group of people.

By contrast, in 1974, Time Magazine printed an article at a time of trouble within the church of God, and they—using their own words—described Mr. Armstrong as "*Thundering a Message to all the World!*" That was their words—"Thundering a Message."

Now their use of words was figurative. But it implies, does it not, that a work was done with a great deal of vigor? Thunder is enough to rattle a building, and make everything shake in it.

On the other hand, Laodicea is described as being materialistic, self-satisfied, no longer interested in doing God's work whether it is in their personal lives, or as a public proclamation. And so what we have here is a very strong rebuke. There is no stronger rebuke in the Bible! When Christ says He's going to vomit them out of His mouth, it shows such distaste—His own people, not enthusiastic or zealous about doing a work.

Their estimation of themselves strongly implies spiritual, self-satisfaction. And they evaluated themselves on the basis of their material wealth. But when God looked, He evaluated them on the basis of their spirituality, and He found very much that was lacking. They were worth nothing and had to be spit out.

So bad is it that the Savior is on the outside looking in! He has to knock on the door, as it were, to be let into services, or into their lives. It is no wonder that He says that He's going to vomit them out! So pay careful attention to this because by the time we get to chapter 10 the Laodiceans are going to be deeply involved in this.

He says, "If any man hear my voice..." If anyone is willing to repent, he will come in. He's appealing to anybody who is in that condition to change his or her attitude.

Chapters 4 and 5 we will take together. John is given a spectacular and stunning vision of God's throne, and the activities that are taking place in God's presence at the time that concerns the book of Revelation. That's very clear from the beginning of chapter 5, because he saw the one who was sitting on the throne holding a scroll in His hand. And that scroll is in turn handed

closed, we find later, to Jesus Christ.

This scroll is unique in that it is sealed with seven seals. They didn't write many books in those days. Most long correspondence was written on a scroll. And a scroll was a long sheet of parchment that was rolled up like paper towels.

As one read the message, the document had to be unrolled. This document was sealed with a heavy, sticky wax that was heated to a liquid, and then dropped on the end of the document, thus sealing it. And nobody then could go into the document until that seal was broken. The seal also was usually impressed with some kind of identifying sign or mark in order to confirm who it was who had written the document—to identify the sender.

This particular scroll had seven seals binding it; that is, the document was completely written, and then it began to be rolled. As it began to be rolled, one seal was put on. The wax solidified, then it was rolled some more, and a second seal was put on it. It was rolled some more, then the third seal. This was kept up until there were seven seals on it.

There was a question in chapter 5 as to who was going to be able to open up and read what was in there. John, of course, was heartbroken until he found out that the Lamb was worthy to open it. And then we begin to find that the seals could be broken, and the revelation could begin.

Now the last seal put on had to be the first seal to be broken in order to read the document. Again, brethren, we're going to begin to see progression of time. And again, it has to be this way, because it takes time to break the seal, and have revealed to us (what the seal is all about). Then, of course, in history it means that the seal was broken, and then the seal's revelation begins to be fulfilled. Another seal is broken—and that thing begins to unfold in history. And then, a third one, and it begins to unfold. So time moves along. It begins with the first one, and then the second is joined to it. And then the third one is joined to them.

As we understand it, when the first one is opened, it continues until all the seals are broken. The intensity is increased by adding the next seal to it. We have two fulfillments beginning to go. Then the third one is opened, and now we have three beginning to go. And then the fourth one is opened, and now we have four.

You can see that as we approach a specific point in time, the intensity of the unfolding of the seals' event begins to get greater and greater. By the time we get to the end, the intensity is so great that the people on earth are barely going to be able to stand it. And so we read corroborating things like that one I gave you last week—"disaster upon disaster"—occurring, in this case, specifically, to the people of Israel.

Revelation 6:1 Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see."

Let's pause here for a moment, because I want to go to Job.

Job 37:4-5 After it a voice roars; He thunders with His majestic voice, and He does not restrain them when His voice is heard. God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend.

I'm going to show a series of verses in which the voice of God is connected to, or described as thundering. That's a good start.

Psalm 18:13 The LORD thundered from heaven, And the Most High uttered His voice,...

Again, another association with the voice of God and thundering.

Psalm 29:2-4 Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders; the LORD is over many waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

Revelation 14:2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder.

Revelation 19:6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

Back to Revelation and the apostle John.

Now, John was unable to read the scroll. That's in chapter 5. But, I feel we can read that scroll. It is in our hands. It is the book of Revelation.

I want to remind you again before we leave chapter 6, that there is indeed a show of a progression of time toward specific events. And so we see things unfolded, not simultaneously, but consecutively—sequentially—one right after the other.

In chapter 8, (we will skip over chapter 7 for a moment; I want to press home this progression of time) I want to just touch on that 7<sup>th</sup> seal being opened, and the seven trumpet plagues beginning. Again it shows that they occur progressively, consecutively, sequentially, showing the passage of time.

We can jump ahead in our thoughts to chapter 16 and the seven bowls of God's wrath when they are poured out, again sequentially. Time is moving toward a completion.

There are inset chapters. I want to define this. An inset chapter is a chapter that *does not follow* the time sequence that is established by the book of Revelation. It does not follow in sequence either what appeared directly before it, or necessarily appears directly after it.

What an inset chapter does is it explains in more detail events that are necessary to understand more fully what is happening within the time sequence. So the insets are historical digressions that give greater clarity to the Revelation.

In chapter 6 and in verse 12 we find the 6<sup>th</sup> seal is opened. But the 7<sup>th</sup> seal is not opened until chapter 8 and verse 1. That is a whole chapter and a half later. But between these occurrences—between 6:12 and 8:1—is an event described that is a necessary digression so that we will understand what is happening to a group of people during some of the events that

have already been prophetically described.

In the case of chapter 7, the digression is very close to being within the sequence of events. But it is still a digression, and it is still an inset chapter

Revelation 7:1 After these things...

That is kind of interesting too. Even those words indicate a progression—"after these things." See? They're going right along, one after the other.

Revelation 7:1 I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.

God is postponing the events that He has described from continuing any further. If He had not done that, the events described in chapter 7 would have had no opportunity to take place. See? Now you know what is in chapter 7—the 144,000 and the innumerable multitude.

What God is telling us in this historical digression of chapter 7 is that He is going to create an environment, even within the Tribulation (which is the 5<sup>th</sup> seal), the heavenly signs, (which is the 6<sup>th</sup> seal), and the blowing of the trumpets, (which is the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal) that will make possible the conversion of a great innumerable multitude of people.

The digression shows something *clarified*. Wouldn't you want to know what is going to happen to all those people during the Tribulation? What's going to happen to them during the day of the Lord? Now you know. Even though all this trouble is going on, God is going to provide a way and means for people to be converted.

So the digression shows something clarified. That's what an inset chapter does. It clarifies a question that you would undoubtedly have in your mind if He did not take that digression and explain it.

It would be good to interject here that we find in chapter 7 and verse 9 that these people are pictured as standing before the throne of God. That couldn't have happened. See? It is figuratively expressed so that we would understand that these people are converted. Do you see the time sequence that is in chapter 7? It is out of sequence with the material before, and after. They won't actually stand before the throne until the resurrection. OK, that's what happens in an inset. Something is projected in a little different direction so that we will understand what is going on within the flow of time in the book of Revelation.

Chapter 8 begins to deal with the Day of the Lord. And events begin to occur so rapidly that by the end of chapter 9 six trumpets have already sounded.

We have always assumed that the events of chapter 10 follow in direct sequence the events of chapter 9. But again, we have to ask the question, "Do they?" And we have always assumed that chapter 11 is an inset chapter, as is 12, 13, 14, 17, and 18. All of those chapters are insets. But do the insets really begin with chapter 11?

Revelation 10:1-2 I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and

his feet like pillars of fire. He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land,

We've been reading of (if we looked at it in more detail): angels around God's throne (chapter 4), angels holding back the four winds (chapter 7), and the angels blowing the trumpets (chapter 8), so it seems natural to assume that when we get to chapter 10, and we are introduced to an angel, it appears as though the events follow on the heels of chapters 8 and 9.

If you have a King James Version, you will find that chapter 10 begins with "And." 'And' is a conjunction, isn't it? It appears to be tying things together. Alright, let's go on to chapter 11. We will get back to chapter 10. Just a little tidbit there to help you to think as we continue on our way here.

Chapter 11 definitely is inset material. When could the Two Witnesses possibly testify? Well, we're going to see that the book is going to show (I don't know if we're going to get into that much detail) that there's only one period of time that they could possibly testify and that is in the three and a half years that precedes the return of Jesus Christ—the Tribulation, and the Day of the Lord.

When you check the events of chapter 6—during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> seals—plus the trumpet plagues of chapters 8 and 9—when the Two Witnesses would be prophesying—what this means is that when you dove-tail this with the information that is given in chapter 11 about the Two Witnesses, chapter 11 is definitely out of time sequence, is it not?. We are actually reading of the Two Witnesses *after* most of the period of time [is already] covered by chapters 6, 8, and 9! And, we're only *introduced* to the Two Witnesses. Again, you see, it is clarifying (in chapter 11) something that has already chronologically occurred. Now we begin to understand why it is possible that people can be converted during the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. They are hearing a message thundered to them.

You see how the pieces are beginning to go together? The Tribulation and the Day of the Lord come along and we wonder what's going to happen? Is nobody going to be converted? Yes! Chapter 7 assures us that people are going to be converted during the Tribulation. How's that going to be possible if they can't even hear the Word? Chapter 11 comes along, and tells you they are going to hear it from the mouth of the Two Witnesses.

That ought to begin to stir the things in your mind, because haven't you always considered that people would be converted during the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord because they heard the Word of God previous to this time? Maybe they did, and maybe they didn't! If you will think back on the ministry of Herbert W. Armstrong, he did not get very far in reaching the common people anywhere except the United States, Great Britain, Australia, Canada, and Union of South Africa—all Israelitish countries. But what about Germany? Russia? Almost 300 million people there! What about China? A billion people there! A 120, or 130 million people in Japan; a 120 million people in the East Indies. What about all those people?

Chapter 7 says that there will be an innumerable multitude converted during the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. Do you see how God is answering the questions that might arise? Yes, people are going to be converted then, and the means is going to be the Two Witnesses. But

the information is put in there by means of a digression. One in chapter 7, and one in chapter 11. Thus the inset chapters give clarity to what is happening within the time sequence.

The story has always been (those of you who are older in the church will remember this) that the Philadelphia church would do their witness. Then they would be done, the Tribulation would begin, and then the Laodicean church would start preaching during the Tribulation, and the Day of the Lord, while the Philadelphians were off in a place of safety somewhere.

Well, I think we need to question that. Will the Laodicean church actually be preaching during the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord? Is it possible that chapter 10 and the seven thunders tell us a definite answer to this question? And if it gives an answer that is no, then what does it mean in terms of what the majority of us have been experiencing within the church for the past 20 years or so? Think about that as we go through this.

Revelation 12:1 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

John sees another wondrous vision occur. And here we have a very clear picture of what a true inset chapter looks like. If there is any chapter you could say is the model, then this is it, chapter 12. Now you also find that it begins very similar to chapter 10.

Do the events of chapter 12 follow immediately on the heels of chapter 11? Chapter 11 ends with the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet blowing and the return of Jesus Christ announced. Chapter 12 suddenly introduces us to a brand new vision. No, the events of 12 do not follow on the heels of chapter 11 at all. What we have here is a highly condensed history of the true church.

God, in His Revelation, takes the history of the true church all the way back to the time of Jacob. You will recall the vision that was given to Joseph where he saw the sun and the moon and the stars all bowing to him? What this is doing is borrowing on that vision to help us understand that the true church has its roots in Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. That it is first of all an Israelitish church, but their real roots are in heaven. You see, that's where the sun and moon, and stars are. God is figuratively, symbolically, pointing in the direction of the origins of the true church.

And then chapter 12 unfolds a highly condensed history of that church. It takes us through the rebellion of Satan the Devil (I should say Lucifer, which would be more correct); and we then find Jesus Christ being born of the woman. We find the Dragon attempting and succeeding in killing the child, but the child is of course Jesus Christ and is resurrected to heaven where He is rescued so there can't be any really serious damage done to the child that is born of the woman—the true church. And then we find in verse 6, the woman—the church—fled into a wilderness. This takes us in time sequence up through the Middle Ages—up through the 1200s, 1300s, 1400s, 1500s—through the Inquisitions, and the tribulations of the times where the church went out into the mountains and hills and valleys of central Europe, and Britain. Then we find a little digression here (even within this chapter) showing us something yet to occur: A war in heaven between Satan and Michael and the angels.

Then at the tail end of the chapter, we find the church again going through another far more intensive tribulation that is going to be, not only intense, but much encapsulated in time (when

we connect this to other prophecies—we're talking here now about the 5<sup>th</sup> seal of Revelation 6—the tribulation, and the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> seals—the Day of the Lord); and we find that part of the church is going to be protected, and another part of it is going to undergo a great deal of persecution. That is a very clear indication of inset material and time progression within the inset itself.

Please get this: There is a consistency from the beginning of the book to the end. Always there is progression of time that is projected. And even if a chapter does not directly say it, there are usually implications within the chapter itself that will help you to understand time is proceeding on. Thus, you feed that information with what is given in chapters 2 and 3, and there has to be a progression there. From Ephesus, the first century church, to Laodicea, the last group that is going to be existing and preaching before the return of Jesus Christ as a church group.

You see, there are seven eras in chapters 2 and 3. That fits right in with all the other things that are going on. Chapters 2 and 3 tell us what is happening in the church while the events of chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and right on out to the end, until chapter 19, and Christ returns. They (2 and 3), too, are an inset that occurs before the time progression is even begun in the book. I hope I'm making that clear to you.

Chapter 13: Again, it begins and we find a very colorful almost overpowering vision that is given, and what we're shown here is an overview of the political system that Satan works through.

There is just enough given here in order to enable us to connect this with the book of Daniel—Daniel 2 and 7. So we can see, then, what arises here in chapter 13 actually in time has its beginnings way back there before Jesus Christ. In fact, all the way back to Nimrod. Is there time progression? Yes, there is.

This is the system at the end-time that rears its head, but it is given in such a way so that we will understand that this is the system that Satan has always been working through. Again, time is moving.

Chapter 14: Again, another spectacular vision is given. And, another inset is beginning to move toward getting back into the progression of the prophecy within the overall aspects of the book. And in this chapter it shows the relationship of the true church to Christ while at the same time it is preparing to get back into the chronology.

Chapter 15 is not an inset. It lays the foundation for chapter 16. Chapter 16 is the seven bowls of God's wrath. And they are all poured out in one chapter.

Chapter 17 is an inset. It is revealing the relationship of the false church with Satan's political system—the system that he has always used. And it has the same source as the political system. We also find the additional fact there, that the relationship between them is a love/hate relationship. But we find the woman—the false church—riding the Beast, the political system. Until at the very end, we find that the Beast throws off the woman, and kills her. Doesn't need her anymore.

In chapter 18: We find the economic system that Satan has always used. And then in chapter 19: The final judgment of that system. In chapter 20: We have the return of Christ, the

imprisonment of Satan, and the resurrection. And then, of course, chapters 21 and 22 deal with things that are far in the future.

The insets, I hope you noticed, seemed to be very significantly introduced. Each one is introduced by an angel coming down from heaven, or some spectacular and unusual vision of someone or something, like the sun, moon, and stars, and the woman who is clothed with them. Or, the Beast rising up out of the ocean. These kinds of things.

It is interesting that chapter 11 does not begin that way. Remember, we have always looked upon chapter 11 as an inset chapter, but chapter 11 does not begin like a normal inset does. What's wrong here?

I will give you the answer. This is not the beginning of the inset. The beginning of the inset is in chapter 10 and verse 1. That's where the spectacular vision occurs. In the past I think that we have been partly misled because of the way men have divided the chapters in Revelation.

So the inset begins in chapter 10, not 11. Chapter 10 does not follow in time sequence the material in chapter 9, anymore than the material in chapter 11 follows chapter 9. Chapter 11 merely continues the vision that was in chapter 10.

Revelation 10:1 I saw still another mighty angel...

This was not one of the previous angels. The 7<sup>th</sup> angel sounds in Revelation 11:15. The 6<sup>th</sup> (trumpet) angel has already sounded. This is a separate and distinct angel, and he is introducing something that will occur before we get to Revelation 11:15. Remember I have told you that there is a principle here—even when we have an inset—that insets show a time progression within it's own context. And the context of chapters 10 and 11 begin with chapter 10:1, not 11:1.

This changes something very dramatically, and it opens up the way to understand what the seven thunders are. The inset material in chapters 10 and 11 ends with the sounding of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet in chapter 11, verse 15.

The constraints of this series of verses—whatever happens between 10:1 and 11:15—are going to occur before the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet sounds. We know that because the Two Witnesses are going to preach during that period of time.

Back to chapter 10. This angel had this little book open in his hand, and set his right foot in the sea, and his left foot on the land. That little book, I believe, is the book of Revelation. It could also be the Bible—one or the other. But it is one of the two. But, since he says it is a little book, I think it is more likely that it is probably the book of Revelation rather than the entirety of the Bible. If it is the whole Bible, fine! I stand corrected. I think either way is fine.

Now, man is to live by that book, and a little bit later, we're going to see that John is shown eating it, which is, of course, symbolic of what we're to do. We're to eat God's Word. Man is to live by every Word of God, again, symbolically. So John is shown eating it. And we're to do that as well.

It says that he hears the thunders utter their voice, but it says in verse 4, "seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them." Why? He was supposed to write

other things—he was supposed to write what he saw, and what he heard. But, here he was told *not* to write what the seven thunders said.

Revelation 10:6 ...and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer,...

I think that the King James says, "there should be no more time," or time no longer. What the two mean, what my New King James says, and what the old King James says is that once the 7<sup>th</sup> angel sounds, events will move without interruption till their conclusion.

That is important to this chapter. Remember that the things were held back in chapter 7. But once that 7<sup>th</sup> trump sounds, then things are going to unfold without any interruption.

What are the seven thunders, then, that are definitely heard before the seventh angel sounds? Even within the sequence of this chapter (this inset), we find that they're going to occur before chapter 11, verse 15. The Two Witnesses don't begin preaching until chapter 11. The seven thunders are heard before the Two Witnesses even begin to preach. Are you with me? Do you agree? That's the way it is here.

Now, what are these seven thunders that are definitely heard before the 7<sup>th</sup> angel sounds, and before the Two Witnesses preach, and are they all heard after the 6<sup>th</sup> seal?

(Now I can guarantee you that you will have to get this tape out and listen to it time and time again, until you nail it down. I really wrestled with this sermon putting it together, believe me.)

The answer to that question is *no*. This is an inset which hasn't yet come to the Two Witnesses, time-wise, and the Two Witnesses begin speaking long before the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet even sounds. Isn't that right? In fact, they speak long before the 5<sup>th</sup> trumpet, the 4<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and the first! When do the Two Witnesses begin to speak? They speak sometime at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> seal, which is chronologically long before this. The seven thunders are heard before even this!

What that means then is that the events of chapters 10 and 11 must absolutely occur before the sounding of the 7<sup>th</sup> trump, and as I have just shown you, they even begin and end before the 5<sup>th</sup> seal, which is well before the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet, which is the last part of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal. This helps us understand what the seven thunders are. And this will unlock a very significant puzzle.

Revelation 10:8-10 Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth." So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth." Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.

I believe that this little book, of course, was the Word of God, and when we first hear it—when we first eat it—it is marvelous to us, it is exciting to us, and we try to devour even more of it, but if we begin to make it a part of our lives—begin to assimilate it—follow the processes of digestion, then we begin to see that putting it into practice is not always very easy.

Jesus said it was "the strait way, the difficult way, and few there be that find it." And in addition to that, we also find that this Word of God contains things within it that are very bitter indeed in terms of what it says in the book of Revelation—terrifying, painful, oppressive, horrible things described in symbolic language—agonizing deaths of many, many people. God is not at all pleased about it.

And of course, it can bring upon us a great deal of sadness as well. And so it may be good going in, but once it gets in there, we find it may be very bitter in application to our lives.

Revelation 10:11 And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."

Prophesy again? In the context of this chapter, when did John ever prophesy? You don't know the answer to that, do you? Well, within the context of the chapter, he did prophesy. I mean, within *the time limits of the context* of the chapter he did prophesy. But on the surface it appears that he did not prophesy. But what about those seven thunders? Prophesying here does not mean the foretelling of events, but it means inspired speaking. Speaking under the inspiration of God. Preaching!

Revelation 11:1 Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there."

It is very plain, is it not, that the beginning of chapter 11 falls right in sequence with the end of chapter 10. And what is in the whole of chapter 11, follows right in sequence with the whole of chapter 10. And so, the inset does not begin in 11:1, the inset begins with the mighty angel coming down at the beginning of chapter 10. Chapters 10 and 11 are telling about the same material. The seven thunders have something to do with John who is receiving the Revelation. The seven thunders have something to do with the Two Witnesses. The seven thunders are going to sound, and they are going to be all finished with their sounding before the Two Witnesses, before the 7<sup>th</sup> Trumpet.

When is John going to preach again? The Two Witnesses we know are going to preach after this time—chapter 10:11.

Now John himself was not going to preach. Do you understand that? How old was John? He was almost a hundred years old by this time. He was about ready to die. The ones who were going to preach again were the Two Witnesses. They would preach at a much later time—remember John, 95 AD. They are going to preach at a much later time as a type of John. And they were going to say again what had previously been prophesied before.

Who did the prophesying? The seven thunders did the prophesying! They did the things John was not allowed write. Now remember, *what* was the nickname that Jesus gave to John and his brother James? They were "the Sons of Thunder!" What did James and John do? What did they preach? They preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God! John is to prophesy again, but he was not *literally* going to—any more than John the Baptist was *literally* Elijah! John the Baptist was in the spirit and power of Elijah, he was a *type* of Elijah. The Two Witnesses are going to be

a *type* of John and James—"the sons of Thunder!"

We still haven't answered yet who or what are the seven thunders. Chapter 11 begins before the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. And if chapter 10 is part of the same context—and it is—then the seven thunders are concluded before John, the type of the Two Witnesses, must prophesy again.

Again, I draw your attention to the Time Magazine article on Mr. Armstrong in 1974, which said he was "Thundering a Message." What we see at the beginning of chapter 10 is God's message—the gospel of the Kingdom of God—being given to mankind in seven sequential events!

If the thunders had pealed all at once, then John would not been able to count them. Just boom! But he distinctly heard seven of them. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven of them. Now we're beginning to see the events of chapter 10 blending right into chapters 2 and 3! The seven thunders are the messages of the seven churches.

And John was told not to write them, not because it was secretive, but because it was already written! It is written in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, etc., etc., etc. It would have been redundant because the messages were already there. And they must be finished before John must prophesy again—that is, the Two Witnesses who are going to preach during the Tribulation, and the Day of the Lord.

That reconstructs the entire last 20 years or so of the history of the Worldwide Church of God because it shows that before the Tribulation begins, Laodicea's preaching will also be finished. That seventh thunder, too, must sound, and be finished before the Tribulation even begins. The Two Witnesses—God is showing us here—are a separate work all to themselves, and they could come, either one or both, out of Philadelphia or Laodicea.

And so what it means in practical fact is that the work of Philadelphia will be followed by a separate work, which in turn will be concluded before the Tribulation begins.

Those of you who have been around for quite a period of time, might reflect back to the year 1971. During the Feast of Tabernacles in October 1971, Mr. Armstrong was going through a period of personal crisis because of the things that were occurring in his son's life (Garner Ted). And in October 1971, during the Feast of Tabernacles, Mr. Armstrong stopped the World Tomorrow broadcast! It did not restart until sometime in early January, 1972, when it was determined that Ted Armstrong had repented, so Mr. Armstrong restarted the program.

If you want something that is really interesting, it was not discovered until later, that the day that Mr. Armstrong stopped the broadcast, was October 9, 1971, exactly 38 years to the day—two 19 year time cycles—from the date he gave the very first broadcast over KORE October 9, 1933.

If this is correct, and I have to admit to you that this is just one man's opinion, the Philadelphia era of the church ended in October 1971, or, maybe January 1972, and the Laodicean era began then.

If that is correct, we are over 20 years into the Laodicean era of the church! Brethren, that is

sobering to us personally. It also helps us to understand what in the world is happening. The life has gone out of the church. It has gone out of the church because it has been becoming Laodicean! It has lost its vigor! It's lost its zeal, its drive; it's lost its energy!

It is beginning to spin off little groups, all over the place—people who don't want to become infected with what is going on in the main body. They can no longer agree with what is going on in the main body. They don't agree with the attitude, with the leaders, or the doctrinal changes, or whatever.

The last thunder is being heard, and it is like a distant, and rolling thunder that is losing all of its intensity as it goes along, fading off into the distance. And very shortly down the road, there will be nothing left of it.

This has very grave ramifications for you, personally! Because we came through 20-30 years of gradually diminishing spirituality, and I wonder how many of us are deeply infected with the same attitude? It is very difficult to be in it, and not be affected by it. And I can tell you personally, it is why my wife and I left it. It may sound self-righteous, but it was among the major reasons we left, because we felt that if we stayed there, we would become exactly like it was becoming. And we did not want to do that.

The influence from the world is pouring into the church. And there were times when the church was able to rise to the occasion, as in 1979. But I dare say, if the same thing happened today, the church would probably break up, because it doesn't have the spirituality to hang together.

What we see in the church today, is that it is largely populated by people who agree that this is the true church, but their lives are a wreck, and they are doing nothing about it. They are satisfied to leave things as they are.

They can change doctrines that don't add up. You can't find proof in God's Word that will agree perfectly with what they say. People just sit there and take it! Well, they're going to have to answer for that.

We can be concerned about it, but we have to be more concerned at this time as to how this has affected us. And we have to be willing to make brutally honest evaluations of our lives in reference to having lived possibly the last 20-30 years gradually becoming infected by that attitude that is coming in from the world.

I can't answer for you. I can only use my office to try to protect you from it, and try to do this by pointing it out to you, and preaching sermons—maybe zealously enough that somehow you will be stirred to make the changes in your own life.

Brethren, one of the things we have to do is get rid of this thing I call, "welfare mentality." This is where we're always waiting for somebody else to do it—to solve our problems. Usually we're waiting for God to do it, or we're waiting for the church to do it, or we're waiting for a minister to do it. But, the Laodicean just sits there and does little or nothing himself to develop his relationship with God. That's what counts.

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? Don't two people who want to develop a relationship spend a lot of time together talking things out, and trying to smooth out the

differences between them? That's what God expects us to do in this time in the church. The Laodicean is not doing this. He's just sitting there waiting on God.

So don't be like that. *Stir yourself up.*

I think the lesson here is very clear. I think we need to do some very deep and honest evaluation of our lives. So, go to it! Let's see what kind of response you can give to God in the light of what I've just given you today!