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# GOD'S CHURCH TODAY AND TOMORROW

About three years ago I wrote an article in which I examined the biblical expressions "the last days" and "the time of the end". I showed that the expression "the last days" is a more general and non-specific expression, which can refer to any time from Jesus Christ's first coming about 2000 years ago, right up to a time during the millennium. It is always the context that indicates the specific timing for the events attributed to "the last days", rather than the expression "the last days" itself being an indication for the precise timing.

By contrast, the expression "**the time of the end**" is used only five times in the Bible, all five places being in the Book of Daniel. And this expression "the time of the end" is used to refer to the three and one-half year countdown period leading up to Jesus Christ's second coming, and to **no other period of time**. This expression is never used to refer to any events outside of that very specific and limited period of time before the return of Jesus Christ.

Now the prophecies in Daniel chapters 11-12 also contain references to the Church of God. When those references to God's Church are linked to the expression "the time of the end", then we should know that those Scriptures refer to God's Church during that three and one-half year period immediately preceding Jesus Christ's second coming.

While I have no idea at all as to when the final countdown period to Christ's return will start, we can take a closer look at the events and conditions that are described in Daniel's prophecies. They don't tell us when things will happen; but they do tell us **what** will happen. And that is also something we should understand.

So let's see what we can learn about God's Church from these prophecies about "the time of the end". Let's start by looking at some of those "time of the end" statements in the Book of Daniel.

## THE TIME OF THE END

Let's start with Daniel 11:35.

And ***some* of them of understanding** shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make *them* white, *even* **to the time of the end**: because *it is* yet for a time appointed. (Daniel 11:35)

The expression "some of them of understanding" refers to **spiritual leaders** within the Church of God context, whether they are ordained ministers, or whether they have set themselves up as spiritual leaders.

Outside of God's Church there aren't any people who have real understanding, because real understanding is only possible for someone who has God's spirit. And people outside of God's Church can't possibly "fall" or "stumble". To fall or to stumble can only apply to people **who have God's truth to start with, but then they lose it**. Next, this "falling" by "some" of the spiritual leaders in the Church of God context continues right up to when that final three and one-half year period starts.

The start of "the time of the end" coincides with the start of the ministry of the two witnesses. Their ministry covers the entire period of "the time of the end". As Revelation 11:3 tells us:

And I will give *power* unto **my two witnesses**, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days (i.e. 3 years and 6 months), clothed in sackcloth. (Revelation 11:3)

The two witnesses are then killed exactly three days and a half before the second coming of Jesus Christ takes place (see Revelation 11:7-13). So **some spiritual leaders** amongst the people of God will continue to fall right up to the day when the two witnesses start their ministry.

Daniel 11:35 tells us that in the time leading up to the start of the ministry of the two witnesses even some of those leaders amongst God's people who are looked up to as "men of understanding" shall stumble and fall. Why do they fall? What purpose will that serve?

When these "men of understanding" fall then that will become a test for those of God's people who rely on the teachings of these "men of understanding"! It will result in "**a purging**" of the people attending God's Church. "To purge" means "**to remove certain people from any contact with God's Church**".

God used the same Hebrew verb "barar" in Ezekiel 20:38, where God says "**I will purge out** from among you the rebels and them that transgress against Me". God will remove those rebels at the time spoken about in Ezekiel 20:38.

So back to Daniel 11:35. Why do we need to be "purged"?

That should be easier to see today than, say, while Mr. Armstrong was alive. Today we have any number of groups and organizations who claim to be the true Church of God ... or, at least, to be a part of the true Church of God. And they want to be recognized as such.

But amongst those numerous different groups there are **numerous doctrinal differences**, when it comes to what they believe and teach. It seems that almost every group has its own set of teachings that set it apart from other groups. Now here is the point:

**Any teachings that are wrong before God are evidence that the leaders responsible for those wrong teachings have stumbled and fallen!**

The considerable doctrinal differences amongst different Church of God groups today are evidence that this process of some of the men of understanding "falling" is well under way! We are right now in a time of testing and purging. That process of **purging out** those who teach wrong doctrines must take place and conclude **before** the two witnesses start their ministry. That is what Daniel 11:35 is telling us.

So before the time of the end starts, God will forcefully remove certain people, together with all the "people of understanding who have fallen", from any contact with God's Church. That will amount to a purging of the Church.

God wants to know if we follow the truth unconditionally, or if we follow our leaders **even when those leaders fall** in ways that will become obvious to us. And how do they fall? These leaders "fall" when **they reject certain truths** they had not previously understood, but which have now come to their attention. They are unwilling to change beliefs that are wrong. Or they fall when they change some of their teachings away from the truths they used to understand, like rejecting the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days, etc.

Leaders who "fall" end up in some way misleading God's people; that should be obvious. And we

should **never** continue to follow leaders who clearly have fallen. If we do follow leaders who have fallen, then we risk that we too will have to be "purged" out of the body of Christ.

Now the word "some" in Daniel 11:35 is not a part of the text, as also indicated by the italic print used in the KJV. So we have no indication at all as to **how many** of the men of understanding will end up falling. It could be a minority, or it could even be a majority. Whenever men of understanding fall, then they invariably introduce heresies amongst some of the people of God.

They and the heresies they have introduced have to be purged out of God's Church by God before the two witnesses appear on the scene.

Once the two witnesses appear, God demands the "purged" body of believers to be united in their beliefs. God will be working with those two witnesses in an unmistakable way, and those who at that point in time don't recognize the hand of God on those two witnesses need to be purged out. During their ministry the body of believers must be united in their beliefs and in their expectations. The five wise virgins are together, i.e. they are united. It will be a time of preparation for Jesus Christ to return to **one body of believers**, who all follow the same one set of leaders, those leaders being the two witnesses.

So Daniel 11:35 tells us some things about the Church of God during the time leading up to "the time of the end", leading up to when the two witnesses will start their ministry.

The next reference to "the time of the end" (Daniel 11:40) speaks about warfare during that end-time period, and it does not mention the Church. So it need not concern us right now. That brings us down to Daniel chapter 12.

## DANIEL CHAPTER 12

**And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which stands for the children of your people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [even] to that same time: and at that time your people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. (Daniel 12:1)**

As a point of interest, this time of trouble will be the worst "since there was a nation", meaning that it will be the worst time **since after the flood**. It is not saying that it will be the worst time ever in human history. The expression "since there was a nation" is a reference to the time when God divided humanity into different nations by creating different languages at the tower of Babel. **Before the flood humanity was not divided into different nations**. The time before the flood and the flood itself are simply not referenced in this verse. The focus of this statement is on humanity after the flood.

Now there is quite a lot here for us to consider. For a start, the words "and at that time" clearly refer to what had just been said in the previous verse. Notice:

And he shall plant (or shall have planted) the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; **yet he shall come to his end**, and none shall help him. (Daniel 11:45)

This is speaking about the leader of the military alliance we commonly refer to as "the beast power". Thus the timing of Dan. 12:1 is **the time when the "beast power"**, and specifically the leader of that group of nations, **comes to an end**. It is the time when Christ returns to this Earth to set up the Kingdom of God over mortal human beings. It is the time when the millennium will start. And "the people found written in the book" is a reference to the 144,000 whose names will be in the book of life (see Philippians

4:3, etc.).

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall **awake**, some **to everlasting life**, and some to shame [and] everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:2)

Here two different resurrections are referred to in one sentence, but these two resurrections will be about 1100 years apart. The first resurrection (i.e. "to everlasting life") will take place at Christ's return.

And **they that be wise** shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness (shall shine) as the stars for ever and ever. (Daniel 12:3)

This is a reference to the first resurrection, which is a resurrection to glory, and all 144,000 in that resurrection will "shine" with brilliance and with power. Let's look at this verse more closely:

- "**they that be wise**" is the Hebrew verb "sakal" which is here used with the hiphil stem. This stem refers to causative action. This phrase thus means: "they that give insight", "they that **cause** people to consider", "they that teach", etc.

- "**shall shine**" is the Hebrew verb "zahar", here also used with the hiphil stem. This verb is used 22 times in the O.T. and 18 times it is translated as "warn". Here it means: "they shall **warn**" or "they shall admonish", **in addition to** "they shall shine". What shines is the warning they have given!

- "**they that turn many to righteousness**" means "they that have taught many people the laws of God".

This verse, Daniel 12:3, in effect tells us that those who give people an insight into the truth of God and in the process warn people about the consequences of disobedience to God, are going to be in the first resurrection, shining like stars.

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, [even] **to the time of the end**: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. (Daniel 12:4)

This verse tells us that these things would not be understood until "the time of the end". Furthermore, the time leading up to "the time of the end" would be characterized, amongst other things, by **a knowledge-explosion** (e.g. our internet age, where all information is only a mouse click away).

Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. (Daniel 12:5)

In this vision Daniel then saw two more individuals.

And [one] said to the man clothed in linen, which [was] upon the waters of the river, **how long [shall it be to] the end of these wonders**? (Daniel 12:6)

This verse is important! It is a question about **timing**. The question was obviously phrased for Daniel's and for our benefit, not for the benefit of the spirit beings involved in the vision.

The question is about the time period **leading up to** Christ's return. The question is: how long **until** Christ's second coming and the first resurrection take place?

And I heard the man clothed in linen, which [was] upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that lives for ever that [it shall be] for **a time**, **times**, **and an half**; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all

these [things] shall be finished. (Daniel 12:7)

Firstly, the angel "swearing" by God is a reference that this revelation is certain, and that it is directly from God! Next, the time period mentioned is three and one half "times", which refers to three and one half years.

As a matter of interest, the Hebrew word here translated as "time" is "mow'ed", a word that is commonly used for "appointed times", like the annual Holy Days. Here this word is used to refer to a year. So the text here reads "... it shall be for a mow'ed, (two) mow'eds, and a half ...". It is a reference to a three and one half year period.

This period finishes at Christ's return.

That was the question in the previous verse. So **something significant must take place three and one half years before Christ's return**, though we may only grasp that significance in hindsight.

Let's now examine the last part of Daniel 12:7.

One Hebrew verb is used twice in this verse, something that is not immediately apparent in our English text. The Hebrew verb "kalah" is first translated as "**when he shall have accomplished**", and the next time it is translated as "**shall be finished**". It is the same Hebrew verb in both these expressions.

Now this Hebrew verb "kalah" is used 206 times in the O.T., and it is most commonly translated as "**consume**". In the first use in this verse it is used with the piel stem, which expresses **intensive action**. Below are a few examples of where this verb "kalah" is used elsewhere with this intensive action piel stem. Here is how it is translated in each case.

- Isaiah 1:28 = they that forsake God shall be **consumed**

- Isaiah 10:18 = shall **consume** the glory of his forest

- Isaiah 15:6 = the grass **fails** (i.e. it is consumed)

- Isaiah 27:10 = and **consume** the branches thereof

- Isaiah 49:4 = I have **spent** my strength for nothing

- Jeremiah 9:16 = till I have **consumed** them

- Ezekiel 20:13 = to **consume** them (the house of Israel)

These examples show that here in Daniel 12:7 it could also be translated as "consume".

Next, the Hebrew verb translated "to scatter" (i.e. "naphats") means: to **break in pieces**, to **shatter**, to **disperse**, etc. Here this verb is also used with the piel stem (i.e. intensive action).

Lastly, the Hebrew noun translated as "the power" means "the hand".

So let's put the last part of Daniel 12:7 together. Here is what we have:

"... when he shall have completed breaking in pieces (note this!) and shattering completely the power (or the hand) of **the holy people**, then all these things shall be **consumed**." (Daniel 12:7, last part)

"The holy people" refers to "the separated people", those who have been set apart from the rest of humanity by the Creator God. This expression refers to **the Church of God** in that end-time context.

There is someone who will work at shattering and breaking into pieces the power that the Church of God had achieved. That "someone" is Satan. And when Satan has accomplished breaking the power of God's people into pieces, **then the "consuming" of the end time will start**.

"All these things shall be consumed" is **not** a reference to the Church but to **the consuming in the world**. It is a reference to "the time of trouble" mentioned in verse 1. This "consuming" will take three and one half years and will culminate in the return of Jesus Christ. So the "something significant" that takes place three and one half years before Christ's return is that by then **the power of the Church of God will have been completely broken in pieces**. This breaking in pieces may also be as a consequence to other significant events at that time, and it may be spread out over a period of time.

Daniel 12:8 makes clear that **the description** for these end-time events **has been completed**. Daniel now presents his own comments.

And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what [shall be] the end of these [things]? (Daniel 12:8)

In plain English, Daniel asked: **how is it all going to turn out?** That's what we too would like to know, right?

And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words [are] closed up and sealed **till the time of the end**. (Daniel 12:9)

This is basically a repetition of what was said in verse 4.

These prophecies in the Book of Daniel were not to be understood until the two witnesses will start their ministry at the end of this age. There was no need for anyone in a previous age to understand these things, because these things didn't apply in any previous age. It is only now, in our age, that the time of the end seems to be approaching, though at present there are still no specific indicators to show when exactly that time will start.

Notice the next statement:

Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and **none of the wicked shall understand**; but the wise shall understand. (Daniel 12:10)

The Hebrew verb translated as "many shall be purified" is used with the hithpael stem, which is the reflexive form. Thus here it actually means: "many shall purify **themselves**", and this is correctly brought out in Young's Literal Translation and also in the ASV.

Next, the Hebrew for "and made white" is also used with the hithpael stem and so this means: "yes, make **themselves** white". The Hebrew for "and tried" means: "and be refined". The emphasis here is on the active involvement and participation of the individuals themselves ... it is not just something that is done for them. It is something that they themselves are actively working at. Here is Young's Translation for this verse.

**Purify themselves, yea, make themselves white, yea, refined are many: and the wicked have done wickedly, and none of the wicked understand, and those acting wisely do understand (Daniel 12:10 Young's Literal Translation)**

And here is how the ASV translates this verse.

Many shall purify **themselves**, and make **themselves** white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but they that are wise shall understand. (Daniel 12:10 ASV)

The point is that we ourselves have to do the purifying and the cleansing. We ourselves have to clean up our own minds, away from that spontaneous enmity against God (see Romans 8:7) and towards embracing an unconditional submission to God and His will, and seeking to please God (see 1 John 3:22). **Cleansing our minds** is not something God will ever do for us. We ourselves have to do that.

What Daniel 12:10 points out is that only those who actively engage in "purifying themselves" and in "making themselves white" will come to understand the information presented in these prophecies recorded in the Book of Daniel. **Those who do not purify themselves will not understand.**

Daniel 12:10 contrasts two different attitudes that will be extant amongst the people who will be attending the Church of God at the time just before the two witnesses start their ministry. But both attitudes accept the Sabbath and the annual observances, and tithing and both reject eating unclean meats. The distinction between these two attitudes goes above and beyond Sabbath and Holy Day observance.

1) One group are those who are wise (the Hebrew here means: those who consider, ponder, give attention to God's truth), and they shall discern and perceive what is taking place, and they will take action to clean **themselves** up to "be ready" for Christ's intervention. They are the five wise virgins of Matthew 25:2. And they clean up their own minds.

2) There will be another group who **will cause** to do wickedly (the hiphil stem is used here referring to causative action), and they simply will not understand, and they will **continue** to do wickedly. And they make no effort whatsoever to clean up their own minds.

Can we understand what this verse is talking about?

There will be **two different attitudes in God's Church** at the end time.

**It is by the wicked continuing to do wickedly that the power of the Church is broken into little pieces. Because the wicked simply continue in their wicked ways, therefore those who make an effort to purify themselves and who make the effort to make themselves white, though it is ultimately God who has to make us "white", feel pressured to scatter. This scattering is a defense against compromising their commitment and integrity before God. And the wicked are oblivious to what it is that God expects from them.**

So are you someone who is purifying himself or herself? How do you do that? Or is that something you did a long time ago? I mean, you've been keeping the Sabbath and the annual observances, etc. for several decades already, right? So does that mean that you "purified yourself" several decades ago, and that you've just maintained that status since then? Or are you **still** actively purifying yourself today? How?

The people who don't engage in the process of purifying themselves also have the Sabbath and the annual Holy Days, etc. But they are not purifying themselves, and they are the ones who don't understand. Having accepted the Sabbath, the Feasts and annual Holy Days, tithing and not eating unclean meats, **they stopped changing**. How about you? How are you different from such people who don't understand?

Greater understanding is the result of purifying ourselves. The more we purify ourselves, the more understanding God will give us. That's how God responds to the efforts we put out to purify our minds and our thinking. A good understanding have all those who strive to actively clean up their minds, in addition to outwardly keeping all of God's laws, to freely amplify Psalm 111:10. Both groups keep God's laws outwardly (i.e. both groups have "the lamps" of Matthew 25:3-4), but only one group is engaged in actively cleaning up their minds and their thinking (i.e. they also have "oil").

So when people, after decades in the Church of God, still only have a very shallow understanding, then that indicates that they haven't really made much progress in purifying themselves. And there are many people in the churches of God who still only have a shallow understanding after decades of Sabbath keeping. It is a matter of cause and effect.

**We have to be self-starters in purifying ourselves. If the only changing we ever do is what our minister tells us to do, then we're not making much progress at purifying ourselves. We have to get to the point** where we ourselves, **of our own initiative**, determine to examine our own lives, to examine what we do and how we think. It is our thought-processes that we need to examine, where we ask ourselves: should I be thinking this way? Should I be feeling this way? Would Jesus Christ be thinking this way and feeling this way? Or should I be changing my thinking and my attitude on this or that issue?

To move on, the last three verses of the Book of Daniel (Daniel 12:11-13) talk about a timing for certain events leading up to Christ's return. I personally am not sure at this time exactly how this applies. And I also believe that there is no need to speculate about those periods of time. They are a part of "the words that are closed up and sealed" (verse 10 again), and they will only be understood correctly when God chooses to unseal them.

Now when the power of the Church of God is broken, then it will be very difficult to find anyone who can help other people who want to understand the truth of God. It will be a time of spiritual famine.

## THE FAMINE OF THE WORD

Every piece of revelation that is given in the Bible, is given for a purpose. There is no such thing as God inspiring something to be recorded, which God did not want to be understood. However, God did not necessarily want everything He inspired to be understood at the time that He inspired it to be written. This is clear from the verse we have just looked at, where God said: "go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed and sealed up **till** the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9).

So we should understand that **everything** that God has inspired in the Bible, God intends for some people to understand **at some point in time**. This is also made clear in Amos 3:7:

Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but He reveals His secret unto His servants the prophets. (Amos 3:7)

The closer we come to the time when Christ will return to this Earth, **the more understanding God is going to give** to those who are faithfully trying to serve Him.

Let's face it! Over the past 30+ years there has been a great deal of pressure on us to "**let go**" many of the things we understood during Mr. Armstrong's time. That is why God instructs us as follows:

Behold, I come quickly: **hold that fast which you have**, that no man take your crown. (Revelation 3:11)

God instructs us to hold fast to the truth we have. And those who hold fast are the ones to whom God will give **more** understanding as the time of Christ's intervention draws closer. Psalm 111:10 has always been true.

The fear of the LORD [is] the beginning of wisdom: **a good understanding** have all they that do [his commandments]: his praise endures for ever. (Psalm 111:10)

That "good understanding" also depends on us "seeking God". It takes effort to seek God.

God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were [any] that did understand, **that did seek God**. (Psalm 53:2)

[When You said], Seek you my face; my heart said unto You, **Your face**, **LORD**, **will I seek**. (Psalm 27:8)

**Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: (Isaiah 55:6)**

Today we are faced with the situation that many of the truths that were understood during Mr. Armstrong's time have been **lost** by many people who are a part of God's Church. Many true teachings are not being preached amongst certain groups. Many people have very quickly and very readily accepted some false teachings that were introduced into the Church soon after Mr. Armstrong's death. Such people are neither holding fast nor are they seeking to understand the mind of God.

And so over the past three decades we have been witnessing the destruction of the Church of God. As God said through the prophet Hosea:

**My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you, that you shall be no priest to Me: seeing you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children. (Hosea 4:6)**

It is not just the physical nations of Israel that have rejected knowledge. This verse also applies to many people who used to be a part of God's Church. Notice the statement "that you shall be no priest to Me". It is those in the first resurrection who are destined to become "priests" before God. And if we in God's Church "reject knowledge", then that destiny will be taken away from us, meaning that we will not be in the first resurrection.

There is no question that many people in the Church of God today have actively **rejected** much of the true knowledge of God, and have instead chosen to believe the things they **want to** believe.

**For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away [their] ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)**

The great number of "teachers" around today, each with different doctrinal ideas, is a direct consequence to many people not being willing to "endure sound doctrine". Many people today simply don't want to hear some of the truths that God introduced to His Church through Mr. Armstrong. They don't care that we can prove those teachings to be correct. **On certain subjects some people will simply shut their ears.**

This description in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 fits the scattered Church of God today, in 2019, very well. We need to recognize that many people simply **don't want** "sound doctrine". Unless we face up to this reality, we will end up very frustrated and very discouraged, trying to get certain people to see the foolishness of the

false teachings they have accepted. Those people just don't want to see the errors with the false teachings. We need to recognize this!

And so, as many people over the past 30+ years have accepted various false ideas and false teachings, we are entering a time when the truth of God is not going to be readily available. It is already today hard for some people who are searching to find the truth of God. There is already to some degree "a famine" for those who are earnestly seeking for the truth of God.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send **a famine** in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but **of hearing the words of the LORD**: (Amos 8:11)

God said that He is the One who would cause such a "famine" to come about. God is involved!

Further, let's face the facts: for **the world at large** there has thus far always been "a famine of the word". The vast majority of the people in this world have never heard the truth of God explained, let alone understood it.

Oh yes, they may have Bibles in their homes; they may even go to some church or other; but they have never understood the truth. **They have always been starved**, as far as taking in the truth of God is concerned. To send "a famine of the word" makes very little difference to the people of this world.

But a famine "of hearing the words of the LORD" makes an enormous difference to the people of God's Church!

Understand that Amos 8:11 applies to the people of God's Church!

God said that the time would come when those who really want to hear the words of God would be faced with a famine in this regard. The word "famine" refers to: a scarcity in the supply of something specific. It is only by the people of God that a scarcity in the supply of understanding the words of God would be perceived as "a famine". And it is only the people of God who would actually make a great effort to overcome that famine, to once again achieve a regular and an abundant access to the truth of God. As the next verse says:

And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and **shall not find** [**it**]. (Amos 8:12)

This verse is speaking about the scattered people of God. They are the only ones who would go to such lengths to hear the truth of God once again.

Amos 8:11-12 is speaking about the true believers in the Church of God in the time leading up to "the time of the end", a time when others would be turning away from the truth towards believing "fables", meaning heresies!

In Daniel 12:3 we saw the reference to those who will give God's people an insight into the truth of God and warn people about the consequences of disobedience to God. This point is also referred to in the previous chapter of the Book of Daniel.

So now let's go back and look at Daniel chapter 11.

**DANIEL CHAPTER 11**

In Daniel chapter 11 God has given us a secular historical rundown from Daniel's own time to the second coming of Christ. As we have already seen, within that context God has included a clear reference to the Church of God in verses 32 to 35. Let's now, from a slightly different perspective, look again at those verses.

As we've already seen, verse 35 shows that this is a reference to things pertaining to "**the time of the end**". These verses tell us something about God's Church at the time just prior to Christ's return. Here is the context:

And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily [sacrifice], **and they shall place the abomination that makes desolate**. (Daniel 11:31)

It is in this context of the abomination of desolation that the reference to the Church of God is introduced!

Now Daniel chapter 11 is basically a discussion of **secular** leaders down to the time of Christ's return. It is a discussion about **kingdoms**. It is not really a discussion about the Church of God. But it is after a reference to the abomination of desolation that **this brief section about God's Church** is inserted into the general story flow. Now **why** is it at this precise point that a reference to the Church of God is introduced?

The "abomination that makes desolate" is a reference to **something that is initiated by secular rulers**. Now notice again the next verse which introduces the Church of God into this discussion:

And **such as do wickedly against the covenant** shall he corrupt by flatteries: **but the people that do know their God** shall be strong, and do [exploits]. (Daniel 11:32)

For a start, notice two things here: "the people that do know their God" is a clear reference to true Christians! That should be obvious. Nobody else knows the true God! Nobody else! Secondly, what exactly does it mean "to do wickedly against the covenant"? **What is it that they are doing against the covenant?** Think about this verse.

To understand what is meant by "the covenant" in this verse, we should look at **every other place in the Book of Daniel** where this word "covenant" is used. The word "covenant" (Hebrew is "beriyth") appears exactly 7 times in the book of Daniel, spread over two chapters: Daniel 9:4, 27 and Daniel 11:22, 28, 30 (2x), 32. Here are these references to "the covenant".

In **Daniel 9:4** Daniel himself in his prayer refers to the covenant God has made with "them that love Him".

In **Daniel 9:27** the angel Gabriel said that Jesus Christ would "confirm the covenant" with many for one week.

In **Daniel 11:22** a leader referred to as "a vile person" would overcome "**the Prince** of the covenant". Historically this very likely was fulfilled in the past by Antiochus Epiphanes dealing with the Jewish High Priest at that time. Additional subsequent fulfillments may also apply?

In **Daniel 11:28**, still dealing with Antiochus Epiphanes, we have a reference to the fact that "**his heart** shall be against the holy covenant". This is speaking about someone who has **a hostile attitude** towards the holy covenant that God has made, historically with Israel and today with the people who make up the Church of God.

Daniel 11:28 is very important to understand. We are dealing with a historical personage, Antiochus

Epiphanes; but what God has highlighted for us is **the man's hostile attitude** towards the covenant God has made!

In **Daniel 11:30** this is again highlighted. Here we are told that **in defeat** this individual has "**indignation against the holy covenant**".

In the Hebrew "have indignation" is the verb "za'am" and it is used with the qal stem in the perfect tense. The perfect tense in Hebrew expresses a completed action. With the qal stem this verb means: to denounce, to be defiant, to be abhorrent.

So in this verse God tells us about **an individual who denounces God's covenant** and who is defiant towards it.

In the second part of **Daniel 11:30** this individual with this hostile attitude communicates with those that "forsake the holy covenant". That refers to **people who have been or who will be "purged out" of the Church**. They are the ones who turn their backs on the covenant which they had made with God when they came into God's Church. They are the ones who "forsake" the commitment they had made to God.

We have now examined all six references to "the covenant" that precede the one we saw in Daniel 11:32.

So what is it talking about in verse 32, when suddenly the Church of God at the end-time is introduced? We are talking about **an individual who has a hostile attitude towards the covenant God has made** (which covenant Jesus Christ will confirm!), who denounces and abhors the covenant, and who is **seeking out those who are willing to forsake this covenant**.

The reason God introduces the Church of God in this particular context is because there are **clear parallels** between what happened at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and what has happened and continues to happen in the Church of God in our age.

After Mr. Armstrong had died, we had a leader take control of the Church of God, who was **openly hostile** towards the covenant of God, calling the old covenant "a **terrible** taskmaster", etc. He denounced the covenant of God, and **he looked for allies** amongst those who were willing to forsake the covenant. And he found many allies. And God's Church started to scatter and to divide. And **then that hostile leader died**.

Let's look again at Daniel 11:32.

And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do [exploits].

Those who really do know the true God and what He expects from us are going to be **strong**! Does that include you? Are you "strong" in your opposition to the heresies that have been introduced in the past few decades?

In this verse the Hebrew verb for "shall he corrupt" is used with the hiphil stem (i.e. causative action) and the imperfect tense. This literally means that "he **causes** them to be defiled or godless or polluted or corrupted". And he achieves this "**by flatteries**", the same way as he had done back in verse 21. So those who succumb to the flatteries end up acting "wickedly against the covenant" of God!

This description sounds very much like the time we have been living through since Mr. Armstrong died.

Now notice the next verse.

And they that understand among the people **shall instruct many**: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, [many] days. (Daniel 11:33)

Is that what is happening today? Are those of us who understand what is happening "instructing many"? How is that going? Are more people correctly understanding some things that were not correctly understood 30 and 40 years ago? Have we grown in knowledge and in understanding, and is that growth being passed on the people in the Church? **Or are we "stuck in the 60's"?**

We can't be "instructing many" if all we can tell them is the things they too have known since the 60's, 70's and 80's. **We can't instruct people with things they already know.** To instruct people requires us to explain things to them that they don't yet know and understand. We only grow when we learn things we didn't know before, in addition to "earnestly contending for the faith which was once delivered unto us" (see Jude 1:3).

I am confident that at this present time God has reserved to Himself far more than "7000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal" (see 1 Kings 19:18). But all of those "reserved people" need instruction and encouragement and guidance "to hold fast" in the face of great pressure "to let go". **There is an urgent need for "men of understanding" to teach God's truth before that famine of the word becomes absolute.** We need to "instruct many" as long as we possibly can.

Let's look at the next verse.

Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. (Daniel 11:34)

The reference in verses 33 and 34 to "**they** shall fall" refers to both: those that understand, as well as those that are being instructed. The point in this verse is that God does provide help to make it possible for people to be instructed. **God will see to it that such instruction is available**, at least for a period of time.

The expression "many shall cleave to them with flatteries" has been true throughout the history of the Church. It was true while Mr. Armstrong was alive, and it is true today. There have always been **some people who have used "flatteries" as a means of advancing themselves**. That is why God included this statement as a warning as long as 2500 years ago.

There were those who flattered Mr. Armstrong, trying to create the impression of absolute loyalty, when they really didn't agree with Mr. Armstrong and, in some cases, didn't even like Mr. Armstrong. Their motive was to advance the self. **Flattery is always a trap!** We are tested before God by our responses to flattery. And yes, Mr. Armstrong was indeed at times deceived by flattery.

Now notice again the next verse. This is where we see that this section refers to our time.

And [some] of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make [them] white, [even] **to the time of the end**: because [it is] yet for a time appointed. (Daniel 11:35)

Remember that in verse 33 those with understanding were instructing people. Now in verse 35 we see that even of these who have understanding some shall fall. Who is this speaking about?

One application of verse 33 is to ministers in the Church of God, specifically at the time-period of the "Worldwide Church of God", who at that time understood the truth of God, and who made this plain to

the people in the Church of God. Their teachings **at that time** were sound and their explanations made sense. Back then it was easy to follow their logic. Their reasoning was sound.

But after Mr. Armstrong had died **quite a number of those teachers turned away from the truth they once taught God's people**. They "**let go**" of the truth they had previously understood and taught. And they turned their ears to fables and to the ideas of men. They had succumbed to flatteries.

Now God allowed this deception to proceed for a specific purpose. There were a considerable number of people who attended the Church of God and who totally abrogated all responsibility for what they believe. They reasoned more or less as follows:

"This is God's Church and Jesus Christ is the Head of it. Thus God will not permit heresies to be taught in His Church. Therefore **I should believe whatever HQ tells me to believe**, even if it is in the form of flattery. However, if it turns out that any teaching really is wrong before God, then **it is up to Jesus Christ** to make the people at the top correct this error."

That line of reasoning is **very seriously flawed**. And people who reason that way set themselves up for having to be purged out of God's Church.

God does not want unthinking "yes-men" in His eternal Family! God requires us to use our minds. It is the mind that God tests! God wants to know if we will willingly submit to Him **with our minds**!

There are two main ways God tests us to find this out.

Firstly, God wants to know if we will submit to His laws and instructions, whether we gladly accept His way of life. Secondly, God wants to know whether we will resolutely and forcefully resist the temptation to accept any other way of life, no matter how attractive and plausible it may appear.

So do we believe God, or do we believe what people tell us God supposedly says and means? God wants to know that we will do what He tells us to do, and that we resist doing what we should not do, and resist believing what we should not believe. **We must use our minds**.

Remember Romans 3:4:

God forbid: yea, **let God be true, but every man a liar**; as it is written, That you might be justified in your sayings, and might overcome when you are judged. (Romans 3:4)

To allow someone, anyone, to tell us that any verse in the Bible doesn't really mean what it on the surface "seems" to mean, is a way of disbelieving God. And that line of reasoning (i.e. "it doesn't really mean what it seems to say", when we are dealing with **a correct translation**) has been used many times in recent decades.

Yes, there are places in our English language Bibles where the translation does not accurately reflect what the Hebrew or Greek text actually says. And in such cases we should be open to what the original text means. But it should never be the case of needing to "explain away" correctly translated clear statements.

Now once again back to Daniel 11:35.

The purpose for some of the men of "understanding" falling away from the truth is so that the

membership of the Church will be tested. God wants to "purge out" those who don't really believe Him, those who are only clinging to the Church "with flatteries", those who will readily let someone talk them out of believing the inspired words of God, and talk them into accepting "fables" instead.

The result of this testing is that **the weak and undecided ones are purged out** and **the rest "make themselves white"** before God.

Will people go along with **fallen** "men of understanding" because these men have "a reputation" for understanding and for being "great teachers", or will they **resist** the ideas of those who have fallen and erred? This is what God wants to find out about all of us.

It is through the influence of those of understanding who have fallen that the power of the holy people is scattered. Daniel 11:35 is speaking about the same time which is addressed in Daniel 12:7.

Now let's examine who is held accountable by God for the conditions in the Church of God today.

## GOD HOLDS THE MINISTRY RESPONSIBLE

In the Hebrew O.T. there are several different terms used for religious leaders. The four main English words we need to understand in this regard are: shepherds, pastors, prophets and priests.

The Hebrew word for "**prophets**" is used for God's true prophets as well as for false prophets, like prophets of Baal, etc. It is a masculine noun which also has a feminine form (i.e. prophetess).

The Hebrew word for "**priest**" is "kohen" or "cohen", which is used 750 times in the Old Testament. It is also used both, for God's true priests as well as for pagan priests.

The English words "**shepherd**" and "**pastor**" are a translation of the one Hebrew active participle "ro'eh" of the verb "ra'ah". This active participle of this verb "ra'ah" is commonly used as a noun meaning both "pastor" and "shepherd". In the O.T. KJV the word "shepherd/s" is used 65 times and 63 times it is a translation of the active participle "ro'eh". (In the other two places it is "ro'iy", which is also derived from "ra'ah".) The word "pastor/s" appears 8 times in the O.T. KJV and it is always a translation of the same active participle of this verb "ra'ah".

So the first thing we need to recognize is that in the O.T. there is absolutely no difference between the terms "pastors" and "shepherds". Both these words are a translation of one Hebrew verb. Next, this verb "ra'ah" means: **to feed**, **to pasture, to tend**. The English noun "pasture" literally means: a feeding place for sheep and cattle.

Shepherds and pastors are the same thing. The words simply emphasize slightly different aspects. The word "shepherd" focuses on looking after sheep and taking care of the sheep. The word "pastor" focuses on providing food for the sheep, which directly ties in with the meaning of the Hebrew word "ra'ah". These two English words shepherds and pastors have a slightly different focus, but they refer to the same individuals. And in Hebrew there is only one word.

Now here is the point to understand: **the Hebrew verb meaning "to feed" is never used for ministers or religious leaders of false churches**.

Religious leaders of false churches (e.g. of Baal, etc.) are never referred to as "feeding people", i.e. as "pastors" or as "shepherds". They are only referred to either as "prophets" or as "priests". There are no

"pastors" in any false church or religion, because the false churches don't understand spiritual truth, and therefore they are incapable of spiritually feeding anyone.

When this verb "ra'ah" (i.e. shepherds or pastors) is used in a critical and corrective context, **it is referring to ministers in God's Church** and not to ministers in any of the world's false churches.

This is an important key that we need to understand!

Critical and corrective comments addressed to shepherds (or pastors) are a reference to ministers in the churches of God who are not doing the job they should be doing. The places where the words "pastors" or "shepherds" are used in the O.T. have nothing to do with ministers in false churches.

I mention this because sometimes we would like to look at God's indictment of the "shepherds" and "pastors" of Israel and apply these Scriptures to the ministers of the world's churches.

**But that is not who these Scriptures are talking about!**

Scriptures that are addressed to pastors or shepherds are never speaking about leaders in any of the false churches! They are always speaking about ministers in God's Church who are not doing what God wants them to do!

Think about this carefully.

Can we understand that God's focus in the Scriptures is not on condemning ministers in false churches? God is not focused on condemning "ministers of Baal". God is not involved with the false churches, or with their ministers. And where God does want to focus on the religious leaders of false churches, He has used the words "prophets" or "priests", and never the word "pastors".

Furthermore, how could a verb that means "to feed" possibly be applied to ministers of false churches? It is impossible for them to "feed" anyone spiritually, just as surely as it was impossible for the priests of Baal, even the nicest one amongst them, to really "feed" people spiritually.

So now let's look at a few passages in God's Word.

My people have been lost sheep: **their shepherds have caused them to go astray**, they have turned them away [on] the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place. (Jeremiah 50:6)

This is talking about **ministers in God's Church causing members of God's Church to go astray**! The people in the world's churches were astray to start with, even without having any ministers. This verse is speaking about people who at one stage were on the right track! But **their ministers caused them to go astray**!

Yea, [they are] greedy dogs [which] can never have enough, and **they [are] shepherds [that] cannot understand**: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. (Isaiah 56:11)

When some of those of understanding fall, then they can no longer understand the truth of God. "Greedy dogs" is pretty strong language to apply to "shepherds" who only care about their own well-being. God says that these ministers are selfishly motivated.

We might like to use this verse for the ministers in false churches, but that is not what God is talking about! The whole context of this chapter is God's Church. Verse 3 tells us that there will be

non-Israelites in God’s kingdom and verse 7 tells us that there will be no racial separation regarding access to God’s Church.

Isaiah 56:11 is a reference to **ministers in God’s Church who act from a very selfish motivation**. This is not my idea! This is what God tells us! And it is really no different from what Paul told the Philippians about the majority of ministers in Paul’s own time.

For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. **For all seek their own**, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s. (Philippians 2:20-21)

Paul was here speaking about the ministers who served under his leadership. It is like what Paul told the ministers from Ephesus in Acts 20.

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. **Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things**, to draw away disciples after them. (Acts 20:29-30)

The ministers from Ephesus to whom Paul was speaking were not really any different from ministers in God’s Church today. If he was still alive, **Paul could say the same thing today**! And most of the members of God’s Church in this age have heard some ministers over the past 30 years speak some "perverse things"! The question is: were those "perverse things" said in ignorance, or were they said knowing better?

In Jeremiah chapter 23 a whole section is devoted to a discussion of the bad ministers within God’s Church! Notice briefly:

**Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:1)**

These are the people who cause "the scattering of the power of the holy people". And God is "against" these pastors (verse 2).

In Ezekiel 34 we have another whole chapter addressed to the ministers in God’s Church.

Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; **Woe [be] to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves**! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? (Ezekiel 34:2)

My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, **My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth**, and none did search or seek [after them]. (Ezekiel 34:6)

[As] I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because [there was] no shepherd, neither did **my shepherds** search for my flock, **but the shepherds fed themselves**, and fed not my flock; (Ezekiel 34:8)

[Seems it] a small thing unto you **to have eaten up the good pasture**, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? (Ezekiel 34:18)

And [as for] my flock, **they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet**; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet. (Ezekiel 34:19)

This is a description of **the ministry in our age**. This is what happened after Mr. Armstrong had died.

In fact, this is a recurring theme in the Bible, that ministers are selfishly motivated. Today in 2019 God's Church has been scattered by our own ministers! It has happened time and again, with one minister here and another group of ministers over there starting their own churches. **And the sheep are driven away** by the introduction of false teachings, and by the rejection of true teachings.

Let's notice in this last verse (Ezekiel 34:19) that the membership of God's Church takes in and is sustained by (i.e. they "eat") **things for which the ministers have shown contempt** (i.e. they have "fouled with their feet"). This is a reference to the true teachings which the sheep still accept and live by, but which a portion of the ministry (i.e. those who teach heresies) ridicules and shows contempt for.

So understand this: while God predicted that His people at the time of the end would be scattered, He also showed that **the ministry is responsible** for this scattering. And for that God will surely punish the ministry!

But God also shows what He will do for His sheep who have been scattered. It is right here in Ezekiel 34:

As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep [that are] scattered; **so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places** where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. (Ezekiel 34:12)

God will seek out His sheep! God will not overlook any who are His true sheep. God will find His true sheep wherever they may have been scattered. What is important is that you and I are real "sheep".

When "the sheep" were scattered, they looked for shelter wherever they could find it. And in that way some of God's sheep have ended up in a whole range of different CoG groups. If all the true sheep had gravitated towards one of the new groups, then the Church would no longer be "scattered", because all the true members would be in one specific group. But that is not the case.

**The greatest danger for the scattered people of God is that they become attached to a group that is led by "men of understanding who have fallen". In that situation they are likely to become exposed to heretical ideas that will flatter their intellect. And that is a serious danger.**

A principle we should keep in mind is:

Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman wakes [but] in vain. (Psalm 127:1)

People should be looking for evidence that God is indeed involved in the group they have fled to, when they fled from the heresies that WCG introduced.

God makes clear that He "**sends**" men to do specific jobs. In many cases such men didn't even want the job God had selected for them. You know the examples of Moses and of Jeremiah. Other statements in this regard include:

To hearken to the words of My servants the prophets, **whom I sent unto you**, both rising up early, and sending [them], but you have not hearkened; (Jeremiah 26:5)

Because they have not hearkened to my words, says the LORD, **which I sent unto them** by My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending [them]; but you would not hear, says the LORD. (Jeremiah 29:19)

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, [you] that kills the prophets, and stones **them which are sent unto you**, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under [her] wings, and you would not! (Matthew 23:37)

But equally clearly there have also always been **those who were not sent by God**.

**I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. (Jeremiah 23:21)**

**For I have not sent them, says the LORD, yet they prophesy a lie in My name; that I might drive you out, and that you might perish, you, and the prophets that prophesy unto you. (Jeremiah 27:15)**

For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: **I have not sent them**, says the LORD. (Jeremiah 29:9)

These warnings are real, and they apply to the people of God. When men of understanding fall, and many have fallen in our age, then they no longer represent God. And then they are no longer "sent by God". So when we consider various leaders in the Church of God, then each one of us has to individually evaluate whether those men have been sent by God or not.

But we should also never lose sight of the big picture.

## THE BIG PICTURE

In this article we have looked at the references to "the time of the end" in the Book of Daniel. We have examined specific statements that apply to the Church of God in that context. We have also looked at Daniel 12:7 regarding "the power of the holy people" being scattered.

There is no question that since Mr. Armstrong's death in 1986 many "men of understanding have fallen", and their falling led to the people of God being scattered. That is a matter of cause and effect. And it is also clear beyond question that all of the Church of God groups today taken together only have a fraction of "the power" that the Church had while Mr. Armstrong was still alive. So in that sense the Church today, a third of a century after Mr. Armstrong's death, has already had its "power" broken to some degree.

Now the only power the Church had while Mr. Armstrong was alive was due to the fact that God had set "**an open door**" before the Church at that time (see Revelation 3:8). Without that "open door" the Church back then also only had "a little strength". But that "open door" greatly compounded the Church's "little strength".

That's not the case today, 33 years later. So today we are greatly divided and scattered, with numerous false teachings amongst us, introduced by "men of understanding" who have fallen. And we today have very little power.

As a result of the false teachings that were introduced by men of understanding who had fallen, quite a large number of people in the Church started to "**reject the knowledge** God had given His Church" (see again Hosea 4:6). And now many people who used to be a part of God's Church have disappeared; they haven't become a part of any Church of God group. And mostly they no longer observe God's laws as they used to.

That’s the state of affairs now in 2019.

Now the way the Church’s power was scattered was as follows:

It took about 9-10 years after Mr. Armstrong’s death before the process of God’s people being scattered really got under way. Now during those 9-10 years most of us still stayed with WCG, convinced that God would intervene and straighten things out.

But the leadership in WCG used that 9-10 year period to introduce about 200 changes, mostly doctrinal technicalities and new explanations for a host of Scriptures. Those new explanations were all the products of the minds of men of understanding who had fallen. And most of those changes, when viewed in isolation, seemed to be on minor issues, hardly worth fighting about.

That perception was a huge problem!

Before church members were pressured to accept heretical explanations on major doctrines (e.g. the Sabbath, Holy Day observance, tithing, de-leavening for Unleavened Bread, etc.), **they were first of all inundated with scores of seemingly "minor issues"**. And those people who didn’t want to be accused of "majoring in the minors" just accepted these "minor" new teachings. The changes came **at such a fast rate** that few people had time to examine them carefully. And so many of those changes were just accepted as supposedly correct ... because they weren’t seen as all that important. They were just "new explanations".

Then after 9 years or so, when the major teachings of the Church started to be attacked and changed openly, then many people said: enough is enough; I’m outta here. And a large exodus from WCG took place.

Yes, it was good that people left WCG when the Sabbath and other major teachings were openly discredited. But here was the problem:

While the people who left WCG at that time mostly took all the correct major teachings with them, **very many also took many of the 200+ "minor technical changes" with them**, you know, those things that supposedly don’t really change anything.

And then as the numerous different groups and organizations of former WCG members sprang up, many of those 200+ minor changes were accepted and **embedded in the new groups**. Those changes were accepted as "new truth" that we had (supposedly) come to understand during the Tkach-era. They were accepted without (supposedly) needing to be proved to be correct.

And those 200+ minor changes ensured a degree of disagreement, on "minor issues" of course, between all the new groups that sprang up. **Those 200+ minor changes ensured that the Church membership would remain scattered**, with some groups accepting some of those changes while rejecting others, and other groups disagreeing over which of these minor changes to accept, and which changes to reject.

People had forgotten something that Mr. Armstrong had stated many times. He would say:

"God will never compromise with His law, not even one millionth of an inch!"

The reality today is that many people have compromised on many issues much more than "one millionth of an inch". And so we are now very seriously divided.

**So** where are we today?

We are scattered and divided. And many men of understanding who have fallen have started their own organizations. Within all these scores of different groups many false beliefs have become firmly embedded. There seems to be no possibility of God’s people again becoming united before the time of the end starts, i.e. before the two witnesses appear on the scene.

**And what lies ahead for us?**

**Ahead of us lies a purging out of all those of understanding who have fallen away from the understanding they used to have. Only then will the start of the ministry of the two witnesses signal the start of "the time of the end". When all false teachings have been purged out, then God’s people will again be united under the leadership of the two witnesses. And as a united body of believers we will then look forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ.**

Frank W Nelte