

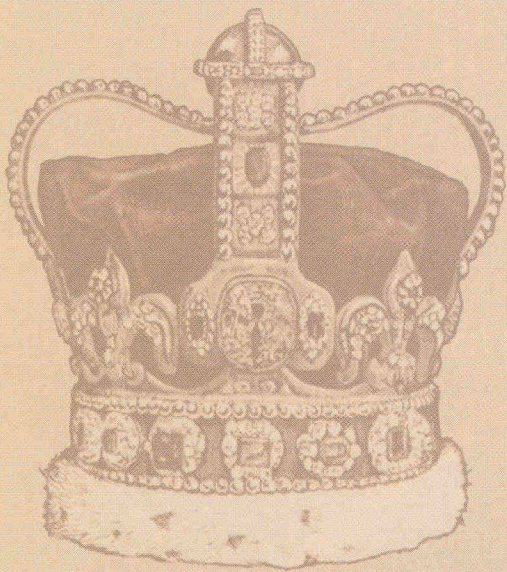
10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

ROYAL VISION

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2008



**A Decade of
Stunning Growth**



ROYAL VISION

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2008

IN THIS ISSUE

FEATURES

1 Lamentations: Josiah's Role in the End Time

8 Grow Like a Cedar in Lebanon

Bringing Back Ancient Israel's History: Part Four

10 Abraham: Tried by Fire

News of the Work

14 Ten Years in Review

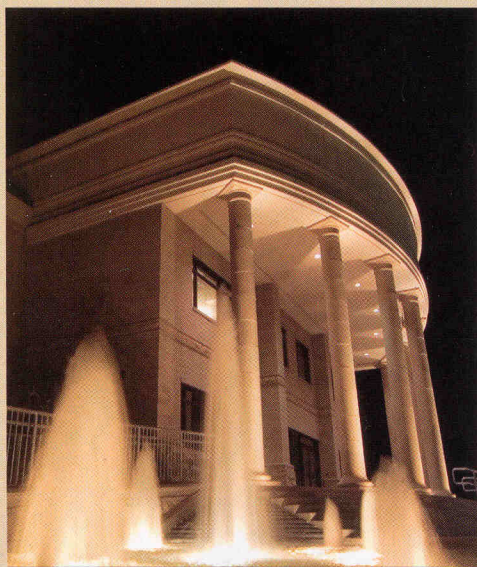
18 Think Before You Speak

21 Q&A

Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong
Chapters 13-14

22 Business Disintegrates

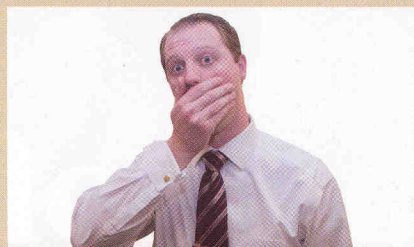
24 College Competition and "Oregon or Bust"



COVER STORY | Page 14



Page 8



Page 18

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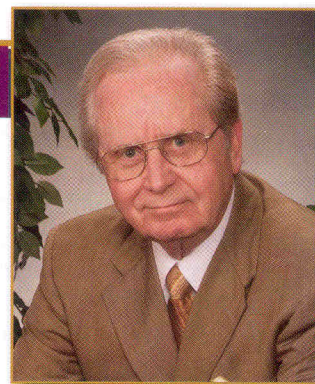
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Lamentations:

Josiah's Role in the End Time



Part Two

HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG TRAVELED A GREAT deal in the 1970s. He was delivering a message to kings and leaders all over the world. At the same time, his son was leading God's Church astray from Pasadena.

At the end of the 1970s, Mr. Armstrong got the Church back on track.

One of our regional directors told me his experience in the 1970s rebellion. He would hear the sermons but still go home depressed and uninspired. The ministers would preach from the Bible, but say little or nothing about what Mr. Armstrong was doing and planning for God's Work. These rebellious ministers started leading God's Church members astray, not by what they said, but by what they did *not* say!

They got their focus off Christ and what His physical leader was doing. This is how many members were led astray in the 1970s.

That was similar to what happened after Mr. Armstrong died. We heard little about what God did through him in the past. Mr. Armstrong's successor was leading people astray often by what he did *not* say. He failed to point to the greatest example of any of God's leaders in this end time. The work God did through Mr. Armstrong was destroyed as his successor acted like he was following in his footsteps.

Much of the deception came because of what he did *not* say. The people were lulled to sleep by a dull, uninspired message.

This is often how rebellious ministers lead God's people astray today. They get people's minds off the leader and what God is saying and doing through him.

Why is this such a critical issue? Because our jobs in the World Tomorrow will be to get people's minds on Christ and His headquarters in Jerusalem.

Today, we must learn to focus on Christ and His earthly leader to do this Work. If we fail, the true Church will not be prepared to rule with Christ when He returns.

When righteous Josiah died, Judah quickly turned away from the godly reforms he implemented.

Judah rejected what Josiah taught and the work he did. In a few short years, Judah was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar. Shortly after Mr. Armstrong died, Satan conquered God's own Church.

To avoid such a disastrous history, we need to learn some critical lessons from the history of Josiah. He too was shocked by what the previous leaders of Judah had *not* told the people.

We must learn to detect the error in what is *not* said as well as the error in what is said.

There is a direct connection between the book of Lamentations and King Josiah of ancient Israel. The book was written as a response to Josiah's death. "And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, THEY ARE WRITTEN IN THE LAMENTATIONS" (2 Chronicles 35:25). Almost all the commentaries will tell you this does not apply to the book of Lamentations. I'm certain it *does*, because otherwise that would be very confusing. This is clearly talking about Lamentations that are written down *somewhere* that people can see. Jewish tradition says Jeremiah wrote the book of Lamentations upon the death of Josiah. Josephus wrote, "Jeremiah composed a dirge for Josiah's funeral which remains unto this day" (*Antiquities* 10, Section 5). Josephus was apparently referring to Lamentations. Again, Jeremiah *might* have had Baruch do most of the writing of Lamentations; but it certainly appears Jeremiah had a strong hand in that.

There is a serious reason Jeremiah and the people of Judah were so intense in their mourning. God had given them some terrifying prophecies about what would happen to the nation after Josiah died. The people had not only lost a righteous king, but they also knew they were about to enter a chamber of nightmares. Lamentations is a prophecy about the tribulation about to descend upon the nations of Israel. It was originally written as a conclusion to Judah's history. But that was only a *type* of the conclusion to physical Israel's history today.

This book also contains another dimension. Only secondarily is it addressed to national Israel. It is primarily aimed at *spiritual Israel*, the Laodicean Church of God. When Herbert Armstrong died in 1986, dramatic and terrible changes began in the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) and in the whole world. Matthew 24:14 says, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Christ said the end would come when the gospel was preached. Mr. Armstrong told us in *Mystery of the Ages*, pages 157 and 158, that he had preached the gospel to the world. Then why is the end not here? Actually, it is. The violent end discussed in Matthew 24 is now upon us. Mr. Armstrong introduced it. For example, after the gospel was preached, a dramatic falling away and split within God's own Church was in the making.

I believe the death of Josiah and Mr. Armstrong sent strong warnings to Judah *anciently* and to modern Israel *today* (most of the English-speaking nations). There are interesting parallels in both of their lives. If you study the work of Josiah and Mr. Armstrong, you will see that they are very similar. Josiah's work could even be said to be a *type* of Mr. Armstrong's work. Also, Josiah died just before Judah fell. Mr. Armstrong died just before Israel collapses.

There is a very direct link between the work of Josiah and the work of God's end-time Elijah. The book of Lamentations really revolves around Mr. Armstrong's work.

ONE OF THE BIBLE'S MOST REMARKABLE PROPHECIES

Josiah's reign was prophesied in 1 Kings 13:1-3—not only some of his actions but even his name. So his was a very significant reign in ancient Judah.

The prophecy was delivered by an unnamed prophet. "And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O ALTAR, ALTAR ..." (1 Kings 13:1-2). This prophet *cried against the altar*. "[T]hus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee" (verse 2).

This is a *dire prophecy*. This prophet told Jeroboam, *This whole system of yours is going to be destroyed by a righteous king!* And miraculously, 360 years later, Josiah came on the scene.

This is surely one of the most remarkable prophecies in all the Bible! What a religion we are part of!

Adam Clarke's *Commentary* calls this prophecy "a fact which was attested by the two nations"—that is,

"Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee" (1 Kings 13:2).

both Israel and Judah. "The Jews, in whose behalf this prophecy was delivered, would guard it most sacredly; and it was the interest of the Israelites, against whom it was leveled, to impugn its authenticity and expose its falsehood, *had this been possible*." Of course, Jeroboam was not leading the 10 tribes of Israel to be righteous. Clarke says, "This prediction not only showed the knowledge of God, but His power." It certainly did show God's power—to prophesy and then *360 years later* raise up a man by the name of Josiah to *rip apart* the pagan idolatry of the nation!

Adam Clarke continued with this rather poetic perspective: "He [God] gave, as it were, this warning to idolatry, that it might be on its guard, and defend itself against this Josiah whenever a person of that name should be found sitting on the throne of David; and no doubt it was on the alert, and took all prudent measures for its own defense; but ALL IN VAIN, for Josiah, in the 18th year of his reign, literally accomplished this prophecy ..." (emphasis mine). How powerful is God! He had put the forces of evil on notice: When a king named Josiah came on the scene, they had better look out!

If you read 2 Kings 23:15-20, you can see that this unnamed prophet ended up buried in a sepulcher in Bethel, and it served as a reminder to Israel and Judah of this prophecy about Josiah for *generations*. When Josiah fulfilled the prophecy 360 years later, the people *still knew exactly what he had prophesied*. This was ABSOLUTE PROOF NOBODY COULD DENY that Josiah was doing the work of the Almighty God!

This is STILL PROOF TODAY! This is absolutely ASTONISHING PROOF of the omnipotence of the great God! The only other prophecy even close was the prophecy God issued about King Cyrus 177 years before he was born; this one is 360 years. What a *miraculous book* this Bible is! But most people don't think too much of the Bible.

JEROBOAM'S REBELLION

The prophecy from that unnamed prophet had included this: "And he gave a sign *the same day*, saying, This is the sign which the LORD hath spoken;

Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out" (1 Kings 13:3). This was a sign God gave *that very day* in order to prove it was a true prophecy.

Jeroboam was there in the temple, bullying himself around, acting like the high priest, which he was not. He heard this unnamed prophet issue this prophecy against the altar, and he was so *incensed* that he stretched his hand out and ordered his men to lay hold of the prophet. At that instant, his hand *dried up* and *would not move!* (verse 4). Then THE ALTAR SPLIT IN TWO, JUST AS THIS PROPHET HAD SAID (verse 5).

At that moment, Jeroboam began to realize God was behind this man. "And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Intreat now the face of the LORD thy God"—he said *YOUR God* to the prophet—"and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God besought the LORD, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as *it was before*" (verse 6). What an amazing event!

You would think that this would have been a life-altering experience for Jeroboam. But as with so many people, it didn't change anything—he still refused to obey. Miracles from God just don't have much effect on most people. They happen all the time, and yet people remain adamant in their rebellion.

JOSIAH'S HISTORY

Josiah began to reign when he was 8 years old after his father had been assassinated (2 Chronicles 33:25; 34:1). He behaved righteously, zealously following God's ways as he knew how (2 Chronicles 34:2).

In the 12th year of his reign, when he was 20 years old, he began to fulfill that prophecy from 360 years before. He set about ripping the idolatry right out of the nation. He broke down the pagan altars and idols, ground them to powder and sprinkled it on the graves of the idolaters. Then he *burned the bones of the priests on the altars*, just as the unnamed prophet had said (verses 3-5).

The same story is told in 2 Kings 23. "Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove. And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and

sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words. Then he said, What title is that that I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God [that unnamed prophet], which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Bethel" (verses 15-17). Even Josiah knew that he had fulfilled that prophecy.

Josiah killed all the pagan priests and burned their bones on the altars! (verses 19-20). He was truly zealous for God!

Mr. Armstrong did something very similar in the end time in restoring all things.

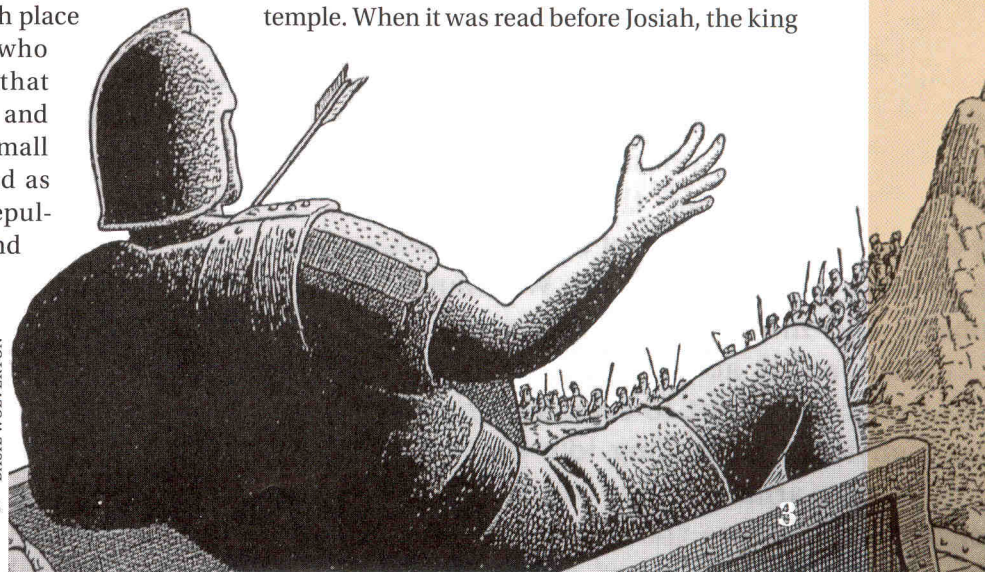
During Josiah's reign, Solomon's temple still stood, but the people had allowed it to deteriorate; it was dilapidated and looked awful. Josiah, in the 18th year of his reign, when he was 26, began to repair the temple—a type of God's Church today (2 Chronicles 34:8). Mr. Armstrong also found God's temple, the Church, in terrible disrepair. The Sardis era of God's Church was dead when he came on the scene (Revelation 3:1).

"And when they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites that kept the doors had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin; and they returned to Jerusalem. And they put it in the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the LORD, and they gave it to the workmen that wrought in the house of the LORD, TO REPAIR AND AMEND THE HOUSE: Even to the artificers and builders gave they it, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to floor the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed" (2 Chronicles 34:9-11). In the Sardis era, the Church was in such terrible shape that God had to use Mr. Armstrong to restore *all things* (Matthew 17:10-11). Mr. Armstrong repaired God's temple spiritually.

The book of God's law was discovered in the temple. When it was read before Josiah, the king

UNTIMELY *Josiah's premature death, caused by an unwise military strategy, rocked the nation as it portended the immediacy of Judah's destruction.*

BASIL WOLVERTON



saw that Israel was failing horribly to keep it. He rent his clothes, humbled himself and began to turn himself and some people in Israel to God (2 Chronicles 34:14-21). He realized that they were under curses they didn't even understand, and he warned all Israel. Though not everyone repented, the nation made a remarkable turnaround under his leadership.

The previous leaders had *not* been discussing the condition of God's temple. Nor had they been promoting God's law. They had *not* been discussing David's attitude toward the temple and God's law. We must learn enough about God and His Work to know what must be said and accomplished. Then we will usually know what is *not* being said and done that should be said and done.

Mr. Armstrong came on the scene and saw how the Sardis era was not keeping God's law or preaching it to the nations. He was alarmed and established God's law; he warned the world about the dreadful Day of the Lord (Malachi 4:4-6). Josiah warned Judah of a coming captivity. Mr. Armstrong saw that the people of Israel would be punished for their sins by going into captivity; so he began to preach the gospel around the world and to warn Israel (Matthew 24:14). He, like Josiah, hoped God's people would repent. Both men were disappointed in that respect.

JOSIAH'S DEATH

Jeremiah had also come on the scene near the end of Josiah's reign with some *terrifying prophecies from God*. Josiah provided great leadership (2 Kings 23:3). Still, the Prophetess Huldah told Josiah and Judah that these frightening prophecies would still be inflicted upon Judah because most of them failed to repent. Huldah spoke on behalf of God: "Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched" (2 Chronicles 34:25). This was a very sobering prophecy.

But notice: Because Josiah had humbled himself and had shown such zeal, God decided to delay the fulfillment of the prophecies *until* after Josiah died (verses 27-28).

This prophecy caused Judah to feel somewhat secure; Josiah was still a young man at the time. It proved to be a very false security.

When Egypt decided to march to Assyria to make war with the Assyrians, Pharaohnechoh wanted to go through Judah to save time. He didn't want to fight Josiah. He told Josiah he just wanted to pass through, and he didn't want any trouble.

But Josiah was upset. He led his army out to fight the pharaoh. This proved to be a foolish mistake.

"In his days Pharaohnechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him [Josiah] at Megiddo, when he had seen him. And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulchre. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead" (2 Kings 23:29-30). Josiah was killed.

This news struck terror in the people of Judah, because they knew of the prophecy that PEACE WOULD CONTINUE ONLY AS LONG AS JOSIAH LIVED! They knew that Judah was going down.

Josiah's death marked a very sad day for the people of Judah. They were entering into the time of Lamentations. Destruction of their nation was near. This filled the people with fear and anger.

But then something interesting happened—something with strong parallels to our time today.

TWENTY-FOUR YEARS

Most theologians would disagree that Josiah was a type of Mr. Armstrong. But the more I study into this subject, the more I believe it. I think where the scholars make some of their mistakes is, they feel everything should have fallen apart immediately after Josiah died. That didn't happen.

In this end time, many of God's people also thought this way. Mr. Armstrong focused us on God's commission in Matthew 24:14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." For many people, Mr. Armstrong's death shattered their faith in God's prophecy! That "end" simply means the end of an era—not the end of mankind's rule. But many of God's people said, "Well, it didn't happen immediately, so I don't believe that is really true."

Consider this point closely. Josiah's life spanned from 640 to 609 B.C. Some would say 608 B.C.; this is not a precise science. The destruction of Jerusalem began in 585 B.C. If Josiah died in 609, that means there was a *24-year gap* between his death and Judah's fall.

If the same thing were to happen in this end time, 24 years after Mr. Armstrong's death in 1986 brings you to 2010. I think that is a sobering fact to consider. You can see why it may be important to understand if Josiah is a type of Mr. Armstrong: This time frame could make us more urgent to do God's Work, and bring the Bible much more alive.

I DON'T KNOW if those 24 years are exact for both men; I don't know whether the time line anciently is precisely in synch with the time line before the

Examples like Josiah and Mr. Armstrong are pure gold. How powerful and wonderful to have men of that stature to look to and learn how to become pure gold spiritually! Look at the revelation God gave through Mr. Armstrong! All that wonderful truth is pure gold.

Great Tribulation. However, *I don't know that this ISN'T the case, either.* God can get extremely precise at times, and there certainly is a strong connection between what Josiah did and what Mr. Armstrong did, and what ensued after they died. I think God is giving us guidelines.

Jeremiah warned the people that they would have lamentations after Josiah died. The same is true in this era. Satan was *cast out of heaven* after Mr. Armstrong died (Revelation 12:9), and God says *woe* to the inhabitants of the Earth when that happens! (verse 12). There has been a lot of *lamentation* since that time—and it is only going to get worse until Christ puts a stop to it!

This world is suffering from MORE AND MORE CURSES—in our families, in our schools, in our cities, in our military, in our weather, among our nations! Perversion and violence are everywhere in our Sodom and Gomorrah society. God says the *whole head is sick!* Our educators and leaders are poisoning us with lawlessness. How much longer can we go on? How much longer before Israel falls? We don't know, but 2010 must be pretty close! America is ready to collapse! It is worse than Rome in its last days!

The book of Lamentations tells us where we are headed.

THE YEARS AFTER JOSIAH'S DEATH

Although 24 years passed after Josiah's death before Nebuchadnezzar invaded, don't think they were 24 years of peace and prosperity. God was cursing Judah horribly even then.

The king who succeeded Josiah was his son Jehoahaz (also called Shallum; see 2 Kings 23:30-31; 1 Chronicles 3:15; 2 Chronicles 36:1-2). His reign was a curse: "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done" (2 Kings 23:32). Jeremiah prophesied exactly what would happen to him: He would be taken captive and die in captivity (Jeremiah 22:10-12). Within just a few



months, that is exactly what happened. The pharaoh whose army had killed Josiah saw Judah as a vassal nation of Egypt. He invaded and took Jehoahaz captive back to Egypt, where he died (2 Kings 23:33-34).

In Jehoahaz's place, the pharaoh demanded that Josiah's older son Eliakim, who regarded pharaoh as his master, be made king, and he changed his name to Jehoiakim (verse 34). Just the fact that the *king of Egypt* made him king tells you something. Under pharaoh's command, Jehoiakim taxed the people grievously and sent the money to Egypt (verse 35), while keeping a generous cut for himself at the people's expense (see Jeremiah 22:13-17). He too was a very wicked king who led the people of Judah back into idolatry and other evils (2 Kings 23:36-37; 2 Chronicles 36:5). He rebelliously ignored the warnings of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 36), and ended up dying according to one of Jeremiah's prophecies (Jeremiah 22:18-19)—at the hands of the Babylonians.

Jehoiakim was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin, who was also an evil king (2 Kings 24:6-9; 2 Chronicles 36:8-9). By this time, the Babylonians had taken over as the masters of Judah. Jehoiachin was only on the throne for a short time when Nebuchadnezzar removed him and placed his uncle, whom they renamed Zedekiah, on the throne (2 Chronicles 36:10).

Under these terrible leaders, the more time that passed after Josiah died, the worse conditions in Judah grew! *The curses had begun!* Even though the captivity didn't come for some time, the people still suffered horrible curses!

ZEDEKIAH

The rebellious leaders in Judah after Josiah's death could certainly be considered a type of those who succeeded Mr. Armstrong.

Lamentations 4 describes the decay within the Church leadership after Mr. Armstrong died. "How the gold has grown dim, how the pure gold is changed! The holy stones lie scattered at the head of

every street. The precious sons of Zion, worth their weight in fine gold, how they are reckoned as earthen pots, the work of a potter's hands!" (Lamentations 4:1-2, Revised Standard Version). This is talking about the ministers, who have turned into cheap pottery.

Examples like Josiah and Mr. Armstrong are pure gold. How powerful and wonderful to have men of that stature to look to and learn how to become pure gold spiritually! Look at the revelation God gave through Mr. Armstrong! All that wonderful truth is pure gold.

But Satan turned the people of God away from that! They rebelled against that golden example.

"Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven: they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness. The breath of our nostrils, THE ANOINTED OF THE LORD, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen" (verses 19-20).

What does that mean? Who is "the anointed of the Eternal"? That is an extremely positive description of *some king*. Most commentators will say it refers to Zedekiah, but that couldn't be true.

In fact, *Soncino Commentary* says about this verse, "This apparently favorable judgment, contrasted with the unfavorable judgments on Zedekiah in Jeremiah and Kings, has given much trouble to commentators." I would think so! The reason it gives them such trouble is that it isn't true.

Zedekiah was a terribly evil king. Nebuchadnezzar actually had him installed as Judah's king after taking King Jehoiachin captive, because it was thought he would be subservient to Babylon. Jeremiah warned him to continue paying tribute to the Babylonians, but Zedekiah ignored that godly counsel. "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and *humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD*. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God; but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel. Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem" (2 Chronicles 36:12-14). Those mistakes set the nation of Judah up for being besieged by Babylon!

This man certainly wasn't "the breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Eternal" in Lamentations 4:20.

This verse is actually referring to King Josiah—and also, especially, to Mr. Armstrong.

Before we prove that, notice in 2 Chronicles 36 this inspiring verse: "And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; *because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place*" (verse 15). God sends

When Josiah died, a terrifying end came upon Judah. I believe that was only a type of what is happening to Israel and the Laodicean Church since Mr. Armstrong died.

His message *because He has compassion!* That's why He sends this message today! He has *compassion* on the people of Israel and the people in His Church.

Sadly, the response we get today is all too often the same as the response the ancient prophets received: "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy" (verse 16).

THE ANOINTED OF THE LORD

There is a great deal of meaning packed into Lamentations 4:20.

It describes "the breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Eternal," mentioning *the breath* of that anointed one. Josiah, when he lived, really was God's anointed and was doing the Work of God. When his breathing stopped, trouble intensified. Likewise, when Mr. Armstrong was breathing on this Earth, he taught all these wonderful truths. When he stopped breathing, the Church fell into ruin.

That anointed of God was teaching the message of God! No message is more important than that! If we receive a message from the anointed of God, we have everything!

The word *anointed* appears 40 times in the Old Testament. The *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* calls it "one of the most important words in the Hebrew Bible." It usually refers to the anointing of kings and priests! That is what God is doing today: anointing His people as kings and priests to rule with Christ!

Do you deeply realize that the people of God have been ANOINTED BY THE GOD WHO CREATED EVERYTHING? God anointed the Laodiceans before they became Laodicean. The Laodicean ministers were *anointed of God!* They were called by the Father to become a member of the Family of God!

We are anointed to do a job—to proclaim this message to the world and build character in the process. If we don't do God's Work today, we're not being true to that anointing.

This verse says that the Lord's anointed "was taken in their pits." What does that mean? *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon* says the word *pits* means *destruction*. Destruction! Somebody came along and

destroyed what the anointed of the Eternal taught. The Bible calls him the son of *perdition*, or *destruction*.

Soncino Commentary wrote, "The biblical book of Lamentations contains no explicit reference to Josiah, but Jewish tradition applies Lamentations 4, verses 1 and 20 to the fallen king." I believe that is absolutely right. It doesn't apply to Zedekiah—it applies to a *righteous* king whose work was *destroyed*. "Targum and Rashi interpret this as a reference to King Josiah. ... 'And Jeremiah lamented over Josiah'"—that is quoting 2 Chronicles 35:25. "Perhaps he [Rashi] bases this on the end of the verse, where Jeremiah's lamentations over Josiah are mentioned as being written in the book of Lamentations." That is right. Most every other commentator has this wrong.

Notice that Lamentations 4:20 says, "Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen." What does that mean? Well, when the events came to pass that Jeremiah had warned them would happen after Josiah's death, *they lived under the shadow of Josiah*. They realized those prophecies were true, and what a shadow that was!

When the Laodiceans go into the Tribulation, there will be a heavy shadow hovering over them! You can be sure they will say, *Oh, if only we had listened to God's Elijah!* Throughout the Tribulation, that shadow will hang over their heads. What an example Mr. Armstrong was! Don't you think that when God's people are in that holocaust and 60-megaton H-bombs are exploding, the shadow of Mr. Armstrong will loom over them?

That is the only hope they have of making it into the Kingdom of God. Half of them will finally wake up, and his words will come alive to them once again.

SPIRITUAL ISRAEL FIRST

God begins His destruction of Israel with spiritual Israel, His own rebellious Church. "And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and BEGIN AT MY SANCTUARY. Then they began at the ancient men [elders, or ministers] which were before the house" (Ezekiel 9:5-6). There is a reason God, as He begins to correct all Israel, corrects His own people first.

Like Judah anciently, God's end-time Laodicean Church is guilty of a great sin. Judah was the only tribe of Israel left to direct the world to the true God. God's true Church has that responsibility today. The Laodiceans have failed God. That is why God raised up the Philadelphia Church: We are doing what the Laodicean Church *should have done*.

The Prophet Jeremiah wrote, "The LORD said also

unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot" (Jeremiah 3:6). You can read in Jeremiah chapters 2-6 how the people of Judah continued to sin even as Josiah tried to turn them to God. Then, when Josiah died, there was an "almost immediate reversion to idolatry" (*New Bible Dictionary*).

That was a *type* of what happened in God's own Church in this end time. Mr. Armstrong did a wonderful job leading God's Church during the Philadelphia era (Revelation 3:7-8). But there still remained a "synagogue of Satan" in the midst of that era (verse 9). When Mr. Armstrong died, that synagogue became the end-time Laodicean era of God's own Church (2 Thessalonians 2:7; Revelation 3:14-19). To understand these prophecies much better, request a free copy of *Malachi's Message*.

Mr. Armstrong had to be removed (2 Thessalonians 2:7) before the Laodiceans could truly reveal themselves as they really are. God gave them control of the powerful work that was built through Mr. Armstrong. Satan now has them yielding to his power (verse 9).

"And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed: her princes are become like harts that find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer" (Lamentations 1:6). Zion is God's Church today. "From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made me desolate and faint all the day" (verse 13). THIS IS THE DAY OF GOD'S FIERCE ANGER AGAINST PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL ISRAEL. This is not ordinary anger. And it is directed to all Israel—but first it falls on God's own Laodicean Church.

When Josiah died, a terrifying end came upon Judah. I believe that was only a type of what is happening to Israel and the Laodicean Church since Mr. Armstrong died.

WHEN WE UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOSIAH AND MR. ARMSTRONG, WE CAN TRULY SEE THE URGENCY OF THIS MESSAGE!

When Lamentations was published in Judah, the nation had reached the point of no return. Israel has just about reached that point now. Soon it will be too late to repent, if it is not already. The **ONLY HOPE** for the people of Israel is our message. May God help them to heed before it's too late. ■

CORRECTION In part one of this series, the Adam Clarke Commentary was incorrectly quoted as saying "The third chapter contains 64 verses." Lamentations 3 actually contains 66 verses.

Ten Years in Review

TEN YEARS AGO THIS MONTH, THE MAGAZINE YOU hold in your hands began going to about 7,000 households around the world.

Through the past 60 issues, the *Royal Vision* has not only sought to provide rich spiritual instruction concerning the Christian journey, it has also striven to keep members and co-workers of the Philadelphia Church of God abreast of developments in God's Work.

Throughout these 10 years, many of the anniversary issues devoted several pages to a special "News of the Work" column called "The Year in Review." Looking over the past year of each department really put some perspective on the energy behind and the growth surrounding this great Work.

So it seems appropriate for this 10th anniversary issue to highlight the "News of the Work" in a distinctive format: "Ten Years in Review." In this article, we will consider the growth of the headquarters work, stationed in Edmond, Oklahoma, over the past decade.

The work of the Philadelphia Church of God 10 years ago looked similar and yet vastly different to the Work today.

The most significant difference was the absence

of a college that has since significantly increased the power and impact of this Work.

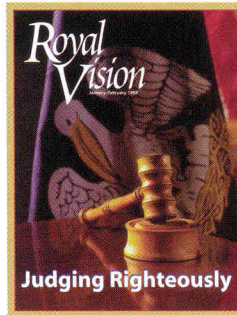
At the beginning of 1998, the headquarters operation in Edmond, consisted of about two dozen full-time and part-time employees. Today, twice as many students of Herbert W. Armstrong College fill part-time positions all over the 170-acre campus—in addition to about 65 other employees at the nerve center of the PCG.

Thanks to the college, new departments have emerged: college administration, obviously, and library services.

Other departments required a significant increase in staff because of the college: landscaping, custodial and kitchen.

Back in 1998, landscaping fell under buildings and grounds department head Wayne Turgeon (as it still does today), but it consisted of just two part-time employees. Custodial employed a couple teenage girls once a week or so to clean the four suites of the office unit. The "kitchen" was operated by one employee—serving lunch to the staff each day on site.

Now the buildings and grounds department, under Mr. Turgeon, consists of six full-time employees and 11 students in a division that covers landscaping, maintenance and a burgeoning agriculture program.



OPENER *The first issue of Royal Vision.*

GAINING GROUND *The PCG's first executive office building in downtown Edmond (below) was replaced in 2006 by the Hall of Administration (center), which rests on 170 acres the Church purchased in 2000 (far right) and has since developed as its college campus.*



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January/February 2008 | ROYAL VISION

Custodial is manned by a full-time employee and six students. Food Services—which feeds the entire operation each weekday lunch and the entire student body every meal of nearly every day of the year—is operated with the help of its own department head, another full-time employee and eight students (in addition to occasional volunteers).

Other departments that didn't exist a decade ago were the call center and marketing department. Though a full-time staffer took care of any public relations issues, it wasn't until 2005 that the Church hired a full-timer to handle advertising, press releases and other active marketing campaigns to bring God's message to the world.

The call center replaced the 800-number service the Church had been using to field calls from the *Key of David* television program and other literature. On any given Sunday morning, when the television program airs on most of its stations and when call volume is the highest, the Mail Processing Center (a warehouse/office building that houses Mail Operations and Television as well as the call center) accommodates 15 operators (consisting of students and employees). Additionally, another 45 to 55 volunteer operators take calls at their residence, as part of the in-home WATS (Wide Area Telephone Services) program. Combined, these operators take 800 to 2,000 calls on an average Sunday. In 1998, the service that handled the program's toll-free calls averaged 725 per week for the Church's request line.

Speaking of the television program, this was no new thing to the operation back in 1998. *The Key of David* had been on the air for five years at this point. About

a half dozen employees recorded and edited the telecast and sent it to approximately 80 stations. The staff also worked on archiving satellite news footage, and special musical productions for the PCG's annual observance of the Feast of Tabernacles as well as coordinating the satellite transmissions at the Feast of Tabernacles so Pastor General Gerald Flurry's messages could be transmitted live across the world to nearly the entire Church membership.

Today, after 10 years of staff changes, station prunings and a new state-of-the-art television studio, the department has grown in its output—this despite the fact that the production team consists of a department head/director, two full-time employees and a student. New technology has allowed for the staff to be reduced with the output being increased. The MPC warehouse has an upper level devoted just to the television department, where Mr. Flurry can tape his programs under a smart lighting setup and in front of an elegantly carved studio backdrop.

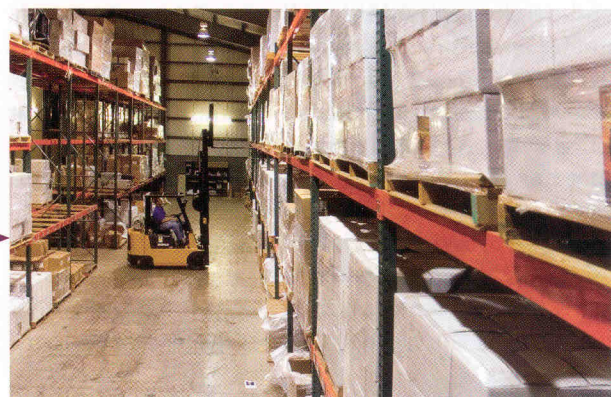
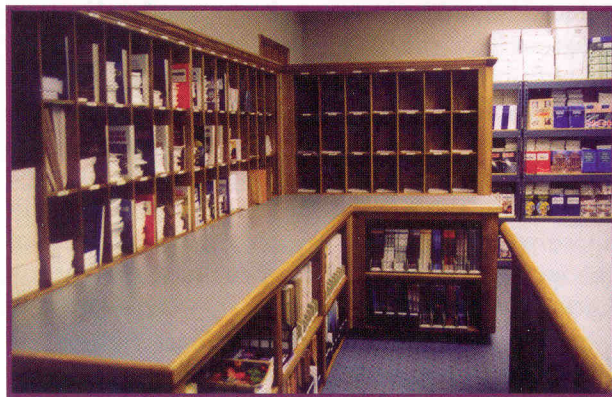
The department now produces weekly *Key of David* productions to go out to 220-plus stations worldwide. It also posts them on the Internet and on iTunes—two media not utilized by *The Key of David* a decade ago. The Internet also currently offers the program in Spanish and with Portuguese subtitles. In addition to similar projects of 10 years ago, the department now also handles special productions like infomercials, other musical productions, short documentaries for marketing purposes and prophetic film shoots like the four horsemen of the apocalypse, which has provided the main feature of the telecast's introduction for the past six seasons (including the current one).

The editorial department—responsible for the production of this magazine and our flagship publication, the *Philadelphia Trumpet*—also has changed dramatically. In 1998, three full-time employees produced 10 *Trumpets*, six *Royal Visions*, six issues of the *Philadelphia News*, as well as several booklets. The



ROYAL VISION | January-February 2008





DISTRIBUTION Thanks to the MPC, the call center, TV studio and mail storage (from top to bottom) vastly increased in volume relative to their previous home.

Church had been printing and distributing Herbert W. Armstrong's life achievement, *Mystery of the Ages*, for about a year and was embroiled in a legal battle that was just heating up over the copyright with the Worldwide Church of God.

Skip ahead a decade, and the department is still printing *Mystery of the Ages*, except now the PCG legally owns the copyright to that book along with 18 other works of Herbert W. Armstrong. This is a story in itself, which is why the department has also published its first book intended for distribution to all major Internet and bookstore chains: *Raising the Ruins*.

So 10 years later, we see the Church publishing all of those 18 works in some fashion—one of the larg-

est projects being a 36-lesson *Herbert W. Armstrong College Bible Correspondence Course*, the final of which will be completed in early 2008.

Also in the past decade, the department has also added a magazine for PCG teenagers, *True Education*. Other publications have grown significantly: The *Philadelphia News* goes to PCG members 10 times a year, instead of six; the *Royal Vision* enjoys full color throughout the magazine; and the *Trumpet* has not only increased from 32 to 40 pages, it has dramatically overhauled its online presence with daily news reports, weekly analysis, a weekly summary of all material, and an online version of the monthly print edition.

This online presence has transformed the department. In 1998, the *Trumpet's* website launched as an online version of the print magazine, featuring full text to only the personal from the editor in chief and the cover story. Then, the print version supplied limited,

monthly material for the website. Now—with current news items posted multiple times a day, a column posted each weekday from the main staff writers of the magazine, and the *Trumpet Weekly* publication—Editorial's main job is producing online content that more than fuels the print magazine.

The department also now encompasses the News Bureau, which 10 years ago operated independently as a two-member department that provided detailed news and analysis for the Church's publications. Now, two full-time employees and three students in this division of the Work report to *Trumpet* executive editor Stephen Flurry, who is also department head of Editorial which has eight full-time employees and four students.

The editorial department also produces the foreign-language publications. Ten years ago, the only language managed from headquarters was Spanish. Today, however, an employee is on staff to manage all other foreign language literature—with the help of an army of volunteers around the world.

In the past decade, 36 booklets have been published in Spanish, and all of Mr. Armstrong's principal literature is available in Portuguese as well. The Spanish *Trompeta* can be found in waiting rooms throughout select Latino countries as well as on newsstands throughout the United States. The correspondence course—not even printed in English 10 years ago—now goes out in Spanish.

Another indicator of the growth of the publications in the past decade has been the circulation figures. This magazine's 7,000 circulation in 1998 jumped to 17,500 for our November-December 2007 issue. For the *Trumpet*, only 68,400 copies were printed of the January 1998 edition, while today nearly 460,000 copies are being circulated worldwide through annual subscriptions and the newsstand program.

Dramatic growth has also come to the mail department, which, in 1998, consisted of a front desk receptionist and two employees working out of about a 200-square-foot mail room. A decade later and Mail Operations is housed in the Mail Processing Center, employing a circulation manager, a warehouse manager and five college students in 17,400 square feet.

Mail output has more than matched that manpower increase. In 1998, the PCG shipped out 75,000 pieces of mail from its Edmond office. In 2007, the MPC distributed more than 500,000 pieces.

Much of the growth of God's Work would not have been possible without the advent of many technological advancements. With the growing technology, a staff is required to handle its many applications.

In 1998, there was only one employee considered

"IT"—Information Technology. His main tasks were upgrading the network to an NT server, switching Coax wiring to Ethernet cable throughout the office suite, and launching the PCG's official website: www.pcog.org.

So when the Church purchased 40 acres, then another 120, then another 10, Information Technology's duties exponentially increased. Its growing staff (to date standing at five full-time employees) had to lay miles of fiber optic cable to tie a college campus together—with fiber optic still being laid as long as new buildings go up.

This also impacted network requirements. In 1998, the primary PCG server had about 256 megabytes of RAM and a relatively small hard drive compared to the 12 gigabytes of RAM it has now with storage capabilities that exceed several *terabytes*. The Church's operations went from what tech lingo refers to as 25 to 30 "user nodes" to well over 100.

The Business Office—which manages the Feast of Tabernacles sites as well as all the accounting needs of the Work—10 years later has grown from three full-time employees serving under a department head to four full-timers and two students. A decade ago, this department was managing a total annual income of \$7.8 million. In 2007, that figure is expected to exceed \$15.5 million.

Ten years on, what the Work is spending its money on has not changed in some ways, but there are many new projects thanks to the college's presence: The college bookstore and the college library (purchasing, through auctions, many of its books from the former Big Sandy campus of Ambassador College), a volunteer program helping with excavations in Jerusalem. In addition special projects like Philadelphia Youth Camp and the Armstrong International Cultural Foundation's local concert series (which started humbly in late 1998) have undergone huge face-lifts thanks to a campus on which these events can be held.

And perhaps most remarkable about all this growth—the staff, the circulations, the number of projects, the annual income—is that PCG membership has not really increased in 10 years; estimated attendance hovers around the same number it did in 1998.

Truth is, 10 years of dramatic growth does not come at the hand of any *man's* efforts. This is the great commission that God Almighty has given His Church. He is the supreme Being who "openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" (Revelation 3:7). And though we have "little strength" (verse 8), we walk in the faith that God will continue to bless each department of His Work with the open doors necessary to trumpet His message of hope and salvation to the entire world! ■