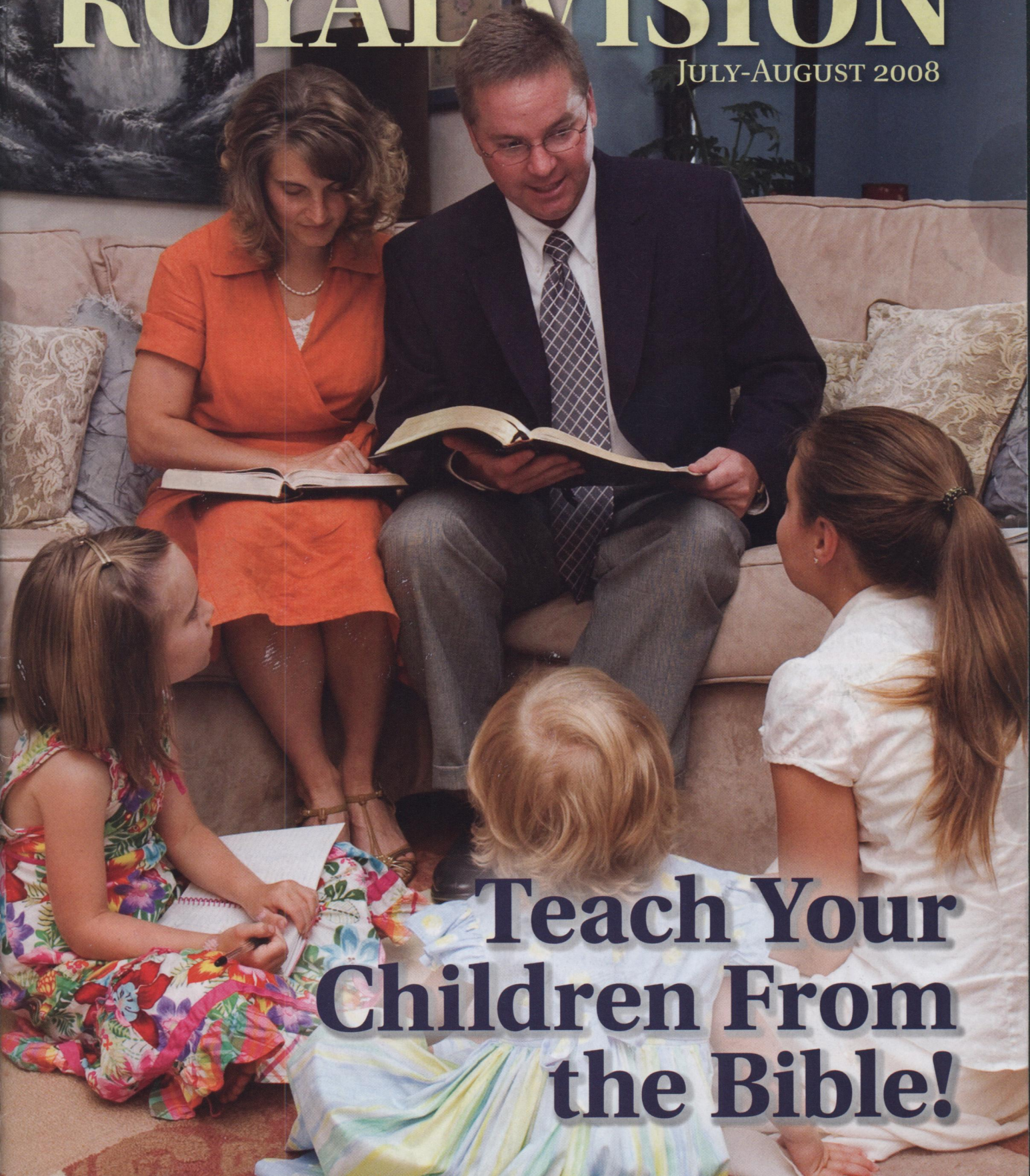


RUSH FOR SPIRITUAL GOLD

ROYAL VISION

JULY-AUGUST 2008



**Teach Your
Children From
the Bible!**



ROYAL VISION

JULY-AUGUST 2008

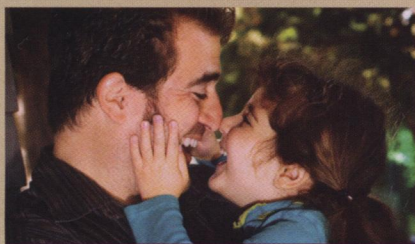
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ABOUT OUR COVER Teaching God's way to our families is an activity not only commanded by God, but something that reaps rich rewards. (RV)

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Building a Foundation of Hope

The Book of Lamentations, Part Four

GOD REVEALED THROUGH HERBERT W. Armstrong that the United States and the British peoples are prophetically known as the nations of Israel in the Bible. He also revealed that the modern-day Israelis are prophetically known as Judah in the Bible. These are God's own nations, called to set an example for the world. Our nations have failed miserably to live up to God's standards. Our crime rates are some of the highest in the world—and our *morals* are the **LOWEST** in the world!

And now even God's own Church, God's *spiritual* nation, has fallen away from God's truth. Chapters 3 and 4 of Lamentations describe in vivid detail how God is going to punish His nations and Church for their many sins. They contain very bad news for our nations and the Laodicean Church.

The author of Lamentations felt this pain **PERSONALLY!** He speaks for God's nations and Church.

ISRAEL—MAULED BY A WILD ANIMAL

Lamentations 3 begins, "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones" (verses 1-4).

It is apparent from these scriptures that this prophet **EXPERIENCED SOME OF THE HORRORS** described in these verses. Perhaps God's Philadelphians will also. In verse 1, the verb "seen" in the Hebrew is *raah*, which implies personal experience. In other words, the author saw some of these events firsthand. He felt the agony that God's nations and Church will feel when God completely turns against His Laodicean people.

Verse 2 shows God is going to totally abandon His people. The word "led" is the Hebrew word *nahag*

and means "driven." This doesn't describe God leading His Church by His Spirit—it shows that God is **DRIVING** His Church and nations completely away from His blessings and protection into the worst curses ever.

Verses 3 and 4 reveal that God's people will be put through exceptional suffering. They will experience intense mental agony, knowing that God is doing this to them. **THEY HAVE BECOME VICTIMS OF THE VERY PROPHECIES THEY ONCE BELIEVED!** God will wear them out, making them look like old people even though they may be very young. Their pain will be so great, it will be as if every bone in their bodies had been broken.

Verses 5 through 9 show that none will escape. God has caused His people to be taken captive. They are *locked*, like a captive in chains, into the Great Tribulation—"that I cannot get out." Though God's people make many prayers, God will not deliver them. There is nowhere for them to turn. Verse 9 describes God's people as if they are caught in a maze and don't know which way to turn.

The author recognized that even if God's people *could* find a path out of the maze, God is still waiting to destroy them. "He was unto me **AS A BEAR LYING IN WAIT, AND AS A LION IN SECRET PLACES**. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate" (verses 10-11). God is going to punish His nations and Church so severely that **THEY WILL APPEAR AS IF A BEAR OR LION MAULED THEM!** What a horrible sight! Can you imagine the horror? A severed hand here, a severed leg there! This is God's doing. Clearly, it is better to face God's warning message today.

"He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins" (verses 12-13). Like a skilled archer, God is waiting to destroy His people with



God is going to punish His nations and Church so severely that they will appear as if a bear or lion had mauled them! Can you imagine the horror? Clearly, it is better to face God's warning message today.

many arrows. For what reason?

Jeremiah spent many years of his life warning the people of their coming doom if they did not repent. But they rejected his messages. "I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day" (verse 14). This eyewitness was the laughingstock of all the people—as Mr. Armstrong has been since his death. People simply don't like to be told how to correct their problems! The man they hate most is the man delivering God's message.

Anciently, the people rejected the warning—and their punishment descended on them quickly. They were starved, taken captive and brutalized! Why is God going to punish His Laodicean Church? Because they have rejected Mr. Armstrong and the messages God has given the Church through him. They have also rejected the prophecies of Jeremiah.

God is going to punish His nations, the Church and eventually the entire world until they admit

that what Mr. Armstrong taught was truth revealed from God. It should not have been changed—BUT BELIEVED!

GOD'S PEOPLE REPENT IN TRIBULATION

Even in the midst of all the tragedy of the Tribulation, many of God's people will repent and turn back to Him. "Let us search and try our ways, and *turn again* to the LORD. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens. We have transgressed and have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned" (Lamentations 3:40-42). God's people begin to "search and try" their ways. They will have to return to the truth as taught by God's end-time Elijah (Malachi 3:18). In the Tribulation, God's repentant Laodiceans will proclaim that what Mr. Armstrong taught, and what the Philadelphia Church of God held fast to, WAS THE TRUTH!

"He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD" (Lamentations 3:15-18). The Laodiceans had strength and hope in God, but lost it. There is always hope in God. The greatest tragedy is losing that hope. However, 50 percent of God's own people will be able to repent and re-establish that hope—this time forever!

Can we see why God had to punish them in the

worst suffering ever on this Earth? It was the *only* way to save them, so they could be born into God's Family.

If there is any way God can get us into His eternal Family, He will do it.

The Laodiceans still remembered God's truth. "My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope" (verses 20-21). As they remembered and repented, the hope in God returned.

GOD HAD TO PLUNGE THEM INTO THE GREAT TRIBULATION TO RESURRECT THEIR HOPE! There was finally a breakthrough. They were saved from being FOREVER DEAD!

WHAT A MARVELOUS HOPE THERE IS IN OUR FIERY TRIALS.

"It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him" (verses 22-24). The God of hope is our portion. We are never without hope, if we walk with God.

The very elect kept their hope in God—set the example and continued declaring the hope that finally brought the Laodiceans back to God.

God gives us eternal hope. When we are born into His Family, our eternal lives will be filled with hope.

God is a God of hope forever!

"The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him" (verse 25). Can we *wait* for God in hope—without grumbling and giving up? If we wait for God, even in death, we still have a magnificent hope.

Sometimes God has to put us in the fiery furnace to remove the dross from the spiritual gold. There is glorious hope in the fiery furnace.

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD" (verse 26). We must "*hope and quietly wait* for salvation"—without moaning or groaning! That is a real battle.

"He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled with reproach" (verses 29-30). Sometimes we must find hope by putting our mouth in the dust—in the worst suffering ever. God *always* smites for our own good—always!

Jeremiah suffered through all of the 19-year siege before Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah. We must follow his example of suffering.

"For the Lord will not cast off for ever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not

God's people will recognize that even though they must die, they will make it to the first resurrection and will be born into the Family of God. In all the tragedy, God's people still find great hope.

afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men" (verses 31-33). God does not afflict willingly—He always corrects His sons in "the multitude of His mercies."

That is often the way He restores or builds hope.

The leaders in God's Church who were very quick to speak—to publicly preach wrong doctrine—will be silent in the Tribulation. Finally, they will have learned the lesson that it is better just to put their mouths "in the dust." But it will take great pain to bring them to this point. God's Laodicean people will be willing to give their lives over to their captors—"giveth his cheek to him that

smiteth"—because they realize the depth of their sin. They recognize that even though they must die, they will make it to the first resurrection and will be born into the Family of God. In all the tragedy, God's people still find great hope.

GOLD BECOMES TARNISHED

Chapter 4 of Lamentations supplements the lessons of chapter 2 by bringing into sharper focus the main cause for the Church being led into the Tribulation. The author shows that the main problem lies with the ministry.

"How the gold has grown dim, how the pure gold is changed! The holy stones lie scattered at the head of every street" (Lamentations 4:1; Revised Standard Version). These verses prophesied long ago that the majority of God's end-time ministry would become Laodicean. They compare the end-time Laodicean ministry to GOLD THAT HAS BECOME TARNISHED AND TO "STONES OF THE SANCTUARY" (KJV) These ministry had God's precious truth and then corrupted themselves.

The *gold* that has grown dim undoubtedly refers to the 50 percent of the Laodiceans who are lukewarm and will repent in the Great Tribulation. The gold has become tarnished, but it is still gold. The *stones* that have been thrown into the streets surely refers to the 50 percent of the Laodiceans who refuse to repent and are cast into the lake of fire. They are no longer spiritual gold and have no value to God.

But verse 2 shows that God's very elect are doing a work at the same time. "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!" The very elect have remained humble, so God could shape and mold them.

Look at how God talks about those precious sons of Zion! You can see in the Revised Standard Version

that this is the most powerful kind of poetry: "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!"

How does God look upon His people? *Precious! Fine gold!* God wants to make us understand how He loves us! The saints of God are like pure gold! Do we see how precious that character is that we're building? The ministers spoken of *here* are referred to as "fine gold," a term similar to that of the "JEWELS" found in Malachi 3:17. *God esteems this group very highly, for they are rare.* These ministers have remained close to God and are upholding His truths.

Verses 1 and 2 of Lamentations 4 are more proof that a Church split was prophesied to occur. Verse 1 refers to a group of ministers as GOLD THAT BECAME DIM—or Laodicean. They were ministers of God who became tarnished! Verse 2 refers to the PRECIOUS SONS OF ZION, who are compared to FINE GOLD! They have surrendered to God and have been refined spiritually by Him.

That is how God viewed *all* of His people—but as you can see in verse 1, many of them have grown dim, and that pure gold has changed. What happened to those precious sons of Zion? They were deeply *precious* to God—noble, golden, pure gold—and then that gold degenerated.

IT IS TOTALLY CONTRARY TO THE NATURE OF GOLD TO CHANGE LIKE THAT! It should also be contrary to us. Woe be unto us if we allow golden character to tarnish or become like common stones.

Is our nature golden like God's? Oh, how God loves the golden character that is preparing us to marry His Son!

LAODICEAN MINISTRY CRUEL

The next verse gives another example of how the ministers have degenerated. "Even the jackals give the breast and suckle their young, but the daughter of my people has become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness" (Lamentations 4:3, RSV). The Laodicean ministers are cruel like ostriches. Compare this scripture with Job 39:13-18. Ostriches are very careless about their eggs, and if there's any danger they'll just run off and leave their young. An ostrich becomes "hardened" against her own young, treating them as if they were not hers. Even the ugly old *jackal* will suckle its young and fight for its young.

THIS IS A VERY TRUE PICTURE OF WHAT HAPPENED WITHIN THE LAODICEAN CHURCHES! The Laodiceans

How does God look upon His people? Precious! Fine gold! God wants to make us understand how He loves us! The saints of God are like pure gold! Do we see how precious that character is that we're building?

let their love wax cold (Matthew 24:12). The Laodicean ministers did not take care of their members as they should have. They passively allowed God's people to be fed false doctrine. The Church is to be the "mother" of us all—a place where people can grow up in God's precious truth. Who can grow under the tutelage of confusion? Many of the PCG members were dealt with very harshly for questioning the many changes.

The Laodiceans have lost their love of God—and their love *for* God, and their love for man. They won't reach out to mankind with God's wonderful message. They are doing a great disservice to our nations. They

no longer thunder out a warning message about the coming punishment for sin. PROPHECY WAS INTENTIONALLY PUSHED ASIDE! Our nations should be warned that great trouble is on the horizon because of our corruption.

Lamentations 4:4-6 show that our nations' children will starve to death. Even though the United States, the British peoples, and modern-day Israel have enjoyed the greatest wealth, our people will soon embrace "dunghills"—they will pick through garbage to survive—unless they repent.

Our people will be punished more than Sodom. Why? Sodom was not destroyed by *men*; it was destroyed by fire from heaven (Genesis 19:24). In this end time, calamities linger—famine, pestilence, starvation, pestilence, race wars, lamentations, mourning and woe! It's all about to spring upon us. We must be ready. Sodom was destroyed in a moment. But those who survive the nuclear attack must suffer for years in the Tribulation or until they die.

It will be the worst time of suffering ever to come upon the Earth! Most people don't even like to *read* of such horror. But it is better to *read* about it and repent than to EXPERIENCE it!

Verses 7 and 8 of Lamentations 4 show that the Levites, or ministry, must shoulder the blame for this trouble. They were "purer than snow." They were *spiritually* very beautiful, like red rubies and highly polished sapphires. But they became good for nothing. THEY STOPPED DOING THEIR JOB OF WARNING THE WORLD—NOW THEY TOO MUST SHARE IN ITS BLOOD-CURDLING PUNISHMENT! Verse 8 reveals that the ministers' skin becomes black with famine. They are no longer seen out in the streets with God's people. They become so thin, they look like sticks.

"Happier were the victims of the sword than the victims of hunger, who pined away, stricken by want

of the fruits of the field" (verse 9, RSV). YES—THERE IS COMING A TIME WHEN TO BE KILLED RIGHT AWAY IS A FAR PREFERABLE FATE.

"The hands of compassionate women have BOILED THEIR OWN CHILDREN; they BECAME THEIR FOOD in the destruction of the daughter of my people" (verse 10, RSV). This will happen in the Tribulation—and these are not the cruel women, these are the *compassionate* women! This is how even the *compassionate* ones act!

This is terrible news—but we cannot turn away from it. We must face it, because God wants His people to reach out and help the Laodiceans and try to *shake them* one last time!

The *Anchor Bible* notes that it is striking that the word *Elohim* doesn't appear at all in the book of Lamentations. *Elohim* is the word we associate most closely with the Family of God. That this word is completely absent from this book indicates how far the Laodiceans have gotten from the God Family. They have lost the Family gospel. *Elohim* is no longer in their lives.

ZION—FOUNDATIONS ARE BURNED

"The LORD gave full vent to his wrath, he poured out his hot anger; and he kindled a fire in Zion, which consumed its foundations" (Lamentations 4:11, RSV). Here is another depiction of Zion's total destruction. When a building is burned, usually the foundation is left standing. But with Zion, GOD INTENDS TO BURN EVEN THE FOUNDATION! You cannot build on sin, you cannot build on evil, and you cannot repent 90 percent of the way. God says it will all be the pure character of God, or He's going to destroy it—including the foundation. That is the only way to create the perfection of beauty.

God's Church has never been punished more severely! Verse 12 shows that EVEN THE KINGS OF THE EARTH ARE AMAZED AT THE DESTRUCTION! The world can't even imagine the kind of destruction that's coming on the Laodiceans and the nations of Israel.

Why did the Church have to endure such punishment? "This was for the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed in the midst of her the blood of the righteous" (verse 13, RSV). It is primarily because of the sins of the *ministers*! The ministers loved to speak smooth things, and the people loved to hear it, and look what happened.

Rather than warning people of the coming punishment for sin, the ministry *led the people into sin!*

God is going to put the blood of

His people on the heads of the Laodicean ministry (Ezekiel 33:8). God likens the Laodicean ministers to murderers. As God views it, they "shed the blood" of the Church members and the nations of Israel (Lamentations 4:13).

"They wandered, blind, through the streets, so defiled with blood that none could touch their garments. 'Away! Unclean!' men cried at them; 'Away! Away! Touch not!' So they became fugitives and wanderers; men said among the nations, 'They shall stay with us no longer'" (verses 14-15, RSV). God's Laodicean Church will become like despised lepers.

And the next verse shows who is behind all this tragedy. It is God. "The anger of the LORD hath divided them; he will no more regard them: they respected not the persons of the priests, they favoured not the elders" (verse 16). Jesus Christ has officially divided the ministry and the Church. The final separation of the Philadelphian and Laodicean ministry and members was begun on December 7, 1989, when the Philadelphia Church of God began as a separate entity from the Worldwide Church of God.

There is still time to repent before the Tribulation. But time is growing shorter each day. Verse 22 shows that the punishment for falling into Laodiceanism will come. It will be fulfilled to the precise letter. Why allow yourself to go through such torture—and far worse, lose your reward in God's headquarters throughout eternity?

Verse 22 also ends with splendid hope: The people will never be exiled again.

LEARN THE LESSON OF HISTORY

Lamentations 5 is a poem of 22 verses. It has the same number of verses as letters in the Hebrew alphabet. It is a precisely structured book recounting the history and prophecy of the destruction of God's people.

Mr. Armstrong taught that one third of the Bible was prophecy and that 90 percent of those prophecies were written for our day. Anciently, God's people were severely punished for rejecting God and

His revealed truth. The punishment of the Laodicean Church and our nations is in the immediate future.

We all need to learn the lesson of history. We need to take warning that history is also prophetic—it's about to repeat itself.

"Remember, O LORD, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens. We are orphans and fatherless, our

continued on page 11 ►

*Why would
God want us to
understand more
deeply the book of
Lamentations today?
Because the time
is so close! Look at
world conditions!*

The Plain Truth About Child Rearing by Garner Ted Armstrong, published by the Worldwide Church of God, offers invaluable advice on this subject. Seek counsel from one of God's true ministers. God has provided us with all the knowledge we need to do it right! But do we diligently seek after God's knowledge, fully intent on applying it? Or, like so many in this world, are we *experimenting* with our children, hoping to find some method that will finally work?

We all have our strengths and weaknesses in child rearing. In addition, there may be other contributors to children misbehaving, like allergies or poor health. But other factors and personal weaknesses must not become excuses for our failures in properly rearing our children. As Herbert W. Armstrong said, there is CAUSE AND EFFECT. There is a reason why children become rebellious.

What about silliness in our children? Obviously, we want our children to laugh and have a good time, but it should not get out of hand. When this begins to happen, the parent who is in tune with his child will say, "I want you to settle down." The child should respond immediately. "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Proverbs 29:15). This scripture mentions mother, but it also brings shame on the family name, which is the father's heritage. Children left to run wild can also bring shame upon the Church, the mother of us all.

Righteous character is the goal we are shooting for. We want to rear our children so they will embrace God's way of life when they are older. To build holy, righteous character in a child takes diligent effort on the part of both parents. It takes time. "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul" (Proverbs 29:17).

It is a difficult, lifelong process. We will make mistakes from time to time. But remember to punish for a wrong *attitude*—a rebellious spirit. If a child's attitude is one of anger, pouting, moodiness, disrespect—then deal with it immediately. In 1 Samuel 15:23 we read that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. Rebellion comes from Satan (John 8:44).

To have happy, well-adjusted children with a right attitude, remember to love them, teach by example, and to discipline in love. It boils down to 85 percent love, 10 percent teaching by example, and 5 percent correction in love. None of us will ever do it perfectly 100 percent of the time, but it certainly is a goal that God wants each of us to attain.

We are God's children. He is our Father. God is a Family. Let us strive to administer God's loving family government in our own homes so that we—husband, wife and children—will acquire God's own image and character. ■

Lamentations from page 5

mothers are as widows. We have drunken our water for money; our wood is sold unto us. Our necks are under persecution: we labour, and have no rest" (verses 1-5). Conditions are about to become terribly bad—our wealth will be enjoyed by others; our families will be destroyed by famine and war. People will have to buy water and their own wood will be sold back to them. Once the Tribulation starts, these conditions will not end until God's fury is spent. There will be no rest.

Verse 6 shows that our people will be enslaved by the Assyrians and the Egyptians. We know that the Assyrians prophetically are modern Germany. Our nations will soon be subject to them. Anciently, the Assyrians were well known for their cruel torturous practices. Verse 11 shows that THEY WILL EVEN BE PERMITTED TO RAPE THE WOMEN OF THE LAODICEAN CHURCH! The leaders of our nations and the Laodicean Church—the "princes" of verse 12—will be tortured. All the people, young and old, will be subjected to hard labor.

Not many will survive! Please read the entire chapter. Is this type of persecution really necessary?

This chapter ends with a description of Zion being inhabited by wild animals (verse 18). This is a picture of what the Laodicean churches look like to God today: a desolate city filled with nothing but wild jackals running around and scavenging for food or shelter.

Although this is a terribly tragic scene, there is still hope. God's people will have been brought to repentance. God's people and nations will have finally learned that sin brings destruction (verse 16). They will turn back to God and realize that He will again give them a future place of prominence in the World Tomorrow and in His Kingdom. He will restore the former glory to our nations. God's people will realize that God will not forsake them forever (verse 20).

Why would God want us to understand more deeply the book of Lamentations today? Because the time is so close! Look at world conditions! Can *anybody* who is willing to *face* reality see events working out properly? Does anything good await us in the future, under the rule of mankind? There is only blackness and ugliness before us, as long as men are in power!

Let us be sure that we do our part to prevent this tragic fate from happening to ourselves, our families and our loved ones. Those of us who have come into the PCG will continue to warn the Laodiceans and the world of the coming Tribulation.

We must tell the world what is about to occur! It is time for all of us to stand up for God's precious truth! ■