

Royal Vision

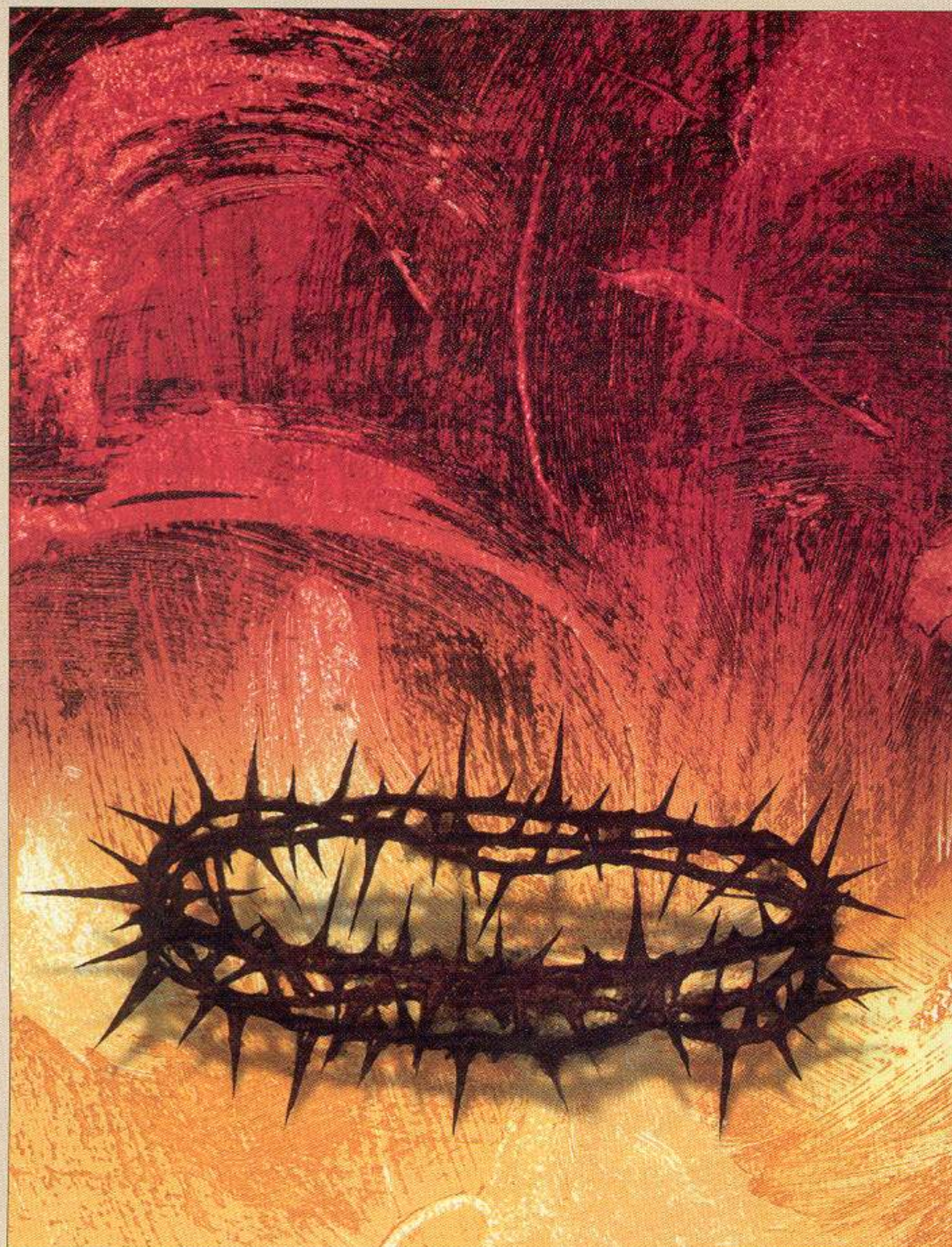
March-April 2004

CHRIST'S DEATH Revealing the Mysteries



ROYAL VISION

MARCH-APRIL 2004 • VOLUME 7, NUMBER 2



About the cover Christ's suffering has remained an enigma to most of mankind. This issue of *Royal Vision* will uncover many of the mysteries surrounding His suffering, death and resurrection. (Cover illustration by Joel Hilliker)

Editor in chief Gerald Flurry

Senior editors Stephen Flurry, Dennis Leap

Managing editor Wik Heerma

Associate editors Joel Hilliker, Ryan Malone

Contributing editors Eric Anderson, Mark Jenkins

Contributors Fred Dattolo, Ron Fraser, Andrew Locher, Wilbur Malone, Mark Nash, Gary Rethford

Proofreaders Frank Borg, Donna Grieves, Jason Hensley

Prepress production manager Ryan Malone

Circulation manager Jason Hensley

Royal Vision (ISSN10979808) is published bimonthly by the Philadelphia Church of God, 1019 Waterwood Parkway, Suite F, Edmond, OK 73034. Periodicals postage paid at Edmond, OK, and additional mailing offices. © 2004 Philadelphia Church of God. All rights reserved.

Subscriptions: Subscriptions are sent free to all members and co-workers of the Philadelphia Church of God. Address all communications to the Philadelphia Church of God, P.O. Box 3700, Edmond, Oklahoma, 73083.

Notice: *Royal Vision* cannot be responsible for the return of unsolicited articles and photographs.

U.S. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Royal Vision*, P.O. Box 3700, Edmond, OK 73083.

ARTICLES

2 Zechariah's Blood Covenant

by Gerald Flurry

7 How Did Christ Die?

by Wilbur Malone

8 From Good Friday to Easter Sunday Is That Three Days?

by Stephen Flurry

12 The Empty Tomb

by Gary Rethford

15 God's Get Real Challenge

by Joel Hilliker

20 Between Sin and Paradise

by Don Duchene

22 Days of Repentance

by Ryan Malone

24 The Unpardonable Sin

by Russell Williams

Child Rearing

26 Our Sacred Children

by Dennis Leap

DEPARTMENTS

1 Greetings, Brethren and Co-Workers!

29 From Our Readers

ZECHARIAH and the BLOOD COVENANT

It is easy to be casual about the New Covenant. So Zechariah emphasizes the covenant of blood.

Christ, who was God in the flesh, gave His own blood to make the New Covenant possible.

Without that precious blood, there would be no hope for mankind.

BY GERALD FLURRY

Z ECHARIAH WAS ONE OF THE temple prophets, according to Ezra (Ezra 6:14). The main subject of the book of Zechariah is God's temple, which in prophetic terms is God's Church (Eph. 2:19-21; 1 Cor. 3:16; Heb. 3:6). We can understand Zechariah much more easily if we realize it is a prophecy about God's Church today.

The theme of Zechariah is focused on the end time. Zechariah 14 discusses the grand-smash climax at Christ's return.

I have written before about the "flying roll," or scroll, Zechariah saw in a vision (Zech. 5). That scroll had the same dimensions as the cherubim in the holy of holies, whose wings stretched out over the ark of the covenant. In that ark were the Ten Commandments (God's law), Aaron's rod (a symbol of God's government), and manna (spiritual food today).

This vision applies directly to God's Church. We are in a covenant with God, and if we have His law and government, He will feed us spiritual manna, or revelation. (Of course, being under the New Covenant, this requires the Holy Spirit as well.) It should be clear to all of us in the Church that God is sending us that

manna. We also have been given a great deal of precious new truth from God.

Zechariah also talks about God's covenant with His Church. Chapters 9 through 11 of Zechariah discuss a special covenant—a "blood" covenant.

"The Blood of Thy Covenant"

"As for thee also, by the *blood of thy covenant* I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" (Zech. 9:11). If you check the Hebrew, God (through Zechariah) is talking about what could be termed a *blood covenant*.

We need to understand our spiritual condition apart from God. We are *prisoners* of Satan in a dark *pit* without any *water!* (a type of God's Spirit). This is the normal condition of man without God's Holy Spirit.

It takes the power of God's Spirit to bring us out of the spiritual pit. That Spirit keeps us focused on the *bloody* price paid so we could enter into the New Covenant. We must view Christ's sacrifice as God does. Only God's Spirit makes that possible. Then God's spiritual food, including new revelation, flows into God's true Church.

It took Christ's blood and the Spirit of God to get us out of a stifling prison. It can happen only if we enter into the New Covenant with God.

If we are doing our part, God says He will bring us out of the pit where there is no water. Because He has made this blood covenant with us, we don't have to be where there is no water, no food, no revelation.

We made a covenant with God. And the reason we are able to understand God's truth is because Christ died. He suffered a savage butchery to make it possible for us to be able to keep all the conditions of the New Covenant, and to enter into it at His Second Coming. That's the price of that covenant. God will never break His part of the covenant. He has already spent the blood of His Son to show His total commitment. Jesus Christ spilled His blood to let mankind know the depth of God's indescribable love for each one of us.

What does it take to give us the opportunity to enter that covenant? Would the blood of bulls and goats make it possible? Absolutely not—it took the blood of God in the flesh. We must never forget that: The ULTIMATE PRICE was paid so we could enter this covenant!

Why can't we enter the New Covenant until Christ returns? Because men can fail. God made the Old Covenant with Israel, and they didn't keep their part of it. So now God says, *I'm going to make you do what I command* FIRST, and THEN *you'll enter the covenant*. He wants to see how much we love it first. So we are keeping the conditions of that covenant, even though we haven't yet entered into it.

But we must never forget about the blood of that covenant. Always remem-

"prisoners of hope"! This is a *living* covenant, and as far as God is concerned, it is absolute and sure. What hope that gives us! We never have to worry about God wanting to rewrite the covenant.

The word *turn* in the Hebrew is actually RETURN. God is primarily talking to the Laodiceans—those saints who had His Spirit and still turned away. God is warning them to RETURN to the stronghold. He wants to give them a double reward, along with all the rest of the firstfruits. But to

tribulation." In this covenant of *blood*, we must have some fiery trials to qualify for such exalted offices.

Zechariah 10:1 also talks about all the abundance and prosperity, the growth of good crops, that God will give His people—physically and spiritually. God does bless those who obey Him. Today people don't believe that, and behave as though God is anemic and can't, or won't, do anything like that for them.

"Mine anger was kindled against the

We should thank God daily for that intensely brutal and bloody sacrifice for our sins—without it there would be no covenant.

ber the ultimate price God paid to even make that covenant possible! His blood was given to pay for our sins. *Only* God, who is greater than His creation, could pay the penalty for our sins. Sin always exacts a penalty. This was the *only* way that we could be born into God's family and receive eternal life.

Zechariah is emphasizing the *blood* so we don't forget. This covenant is the crowning glory of mankind. And how could God have given more to make it possible?

We should enter into this covenant with the utmost gratitude. Angels were never offered such a priceless opportunity. *Only* men and women can become sons of God.

What a glorious gift! And what a dangerous risk God took to make it all possible. One sin and Christ would have been lost forever—and so would we!

Thankfully, His blood was from a perfect sacrifice. Now we have the unparalleled opportunity to be born into God's family. We should thank God daily for that intensely brutal and bloody sacrifice for our sins—without it there would be no covenant.

When we were baptized, we covenanted with God that we would be willing to give up our own life—our blood—if it was required (Luke 14:25-26). This is also a small part of the reason it is a covenant of blood. We too must have a *total commitment* to this majestic covenant with God—even to the point of shedding our blood.

Victory Through Warfare

"Turn you to the strong hold, ye *prisoners of hope*: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee" (Zech. 9:12). That's what God's people are, when He makes this new covenant with them—

receive that, they must meet the conditions of the covenant. Essentially Christ is saying, *I spilled my blood for this covenant—now what are YOU going to do for it?*

Verse 13 is all about a military war—spiritually. Being a Christian is warfare—the most difficult warfare you could ever fight. The only way we will ever attain victory is through a lot of conflict. This isn't an easy covenant to be a part of. That is why we lose people from time to time. War always results in casualties.

But victory in this war comes with stupendous rewards. Coming into God's true Church today, when only the little flock of God's firstfruits is called, will bring a *double reward* (v. 12)—the greatest honor we could ever receive. "And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the *stones of a crown*, lifted up as an *ensign* upon his land" (v. 16). This is our future: We will be like glittering stones in God's crown. He will lift us up so the whole world can see us! We will be an ensign, or sign—we will be the standard bearers. And God will tell everyone to hear our teaching about how to keep the conditions of and enter into the New Covenant. What an honor that will be!

"Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field" (Zech. 10:1). Again we are reminded of the rain, or water—a type of God's Spirit. If we are going to prosper spiritually, we must use God's Spirit. We must continually look to God for spiritual power to conquer Satan, this world and our own human nature. Otherwise we become prisoners in a waterless pit. We descend into human reasoning. Then we have trouble understanding why we must experience "much

shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the Lord of hosts hath visited *his flock the house of Judah*, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle" (v. 3). Two groups are talked about in this verse. First are the shepherds who are actually hard-headed goats—speaking of the Laodicean ministry in God's own Church. Second are the spiritual Jews whom God has made a goodly horse in battle, or a majestic warhorse. We really are in a war, and God has empowered his covenant people by His Holy Spirit to be a majestic warhorse.

Spiritual Jews

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a [spiritual] Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. 8:23).

What a beautiful picture this is for God's very elect. Remember, we are spiritual Jews (Rev. 3:9). Think of the awesome demand for *teachers* there will be in a very few years. People will have had enough suffering and misery in this world. They will be hanging on these teachers, asking to be taught about the New Covenant, and about the blood of the covenant. Ten men—10 heads of household—10 families will be greatly impacted by coming up to one spiritual Jew.

Can you imagine the colossal crisis there would be if God had not prepared teachers for those people? It would be like erecting gigantic school buildings for thousands of students and then having no teachers for them!

We must never forget *why* we are called now. God is offering us the most lofty offices for all eternity!



STATELY CEDARS such as these on the former Ambassador College campus in Bricket Wood, England, symbolize God's view of His saints.

Consider what this means for us today. When Ezra and Nehemiah built the temple, *they built the altar first*. That symbolizes the fact that God builds His ministry before calling the people into the temple. The firstfruits will be God's king-priests—His altar for all eternity. So today God is building His altar, before He builds His temple in the World Tomorrow. We need to be getting ready, because many will emerge from the worst suffering this world has ever known, and they will need to be taught. After experiencing nuclear, chemical and biological warfare, they will realize their need for true education. There will need to be spiritual Jews right there to teach them.

This is what Mr. Armstrong at the end of His life was trying to get the Church to understand: that we are here to be **TEACHERS**. That is the **ONLY REASON** we are called today—and 95 percent of God's people don't understand their calling!

True, our calling is not easy. Considering how much God is going to give us, could it be otherwise? Was it easy for Christ to offer His bloody sacrifice in order to make it possible to bring mankind into His family? He endured the hardest thing He ever had to do and probably will ever have to do. And the Father suffered even more, as He put His Son through that. They went **ALL OUT**—and the blood of God in the flesh was spilled on this

Earth. After all they have done, can we endure some hardship to fulfill the job God is offering us?

"I Will Sow Them"

"And I will sow them among the people; and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again" (Zech. 10:9). God will sow the Laodiceans in far countries during the Tribulation. Half of them will "turn again" to God—realizing what they almost lost.

But what makes this verse so inspiring is the fact that God is in control of the situation. He says, "I will sow them." Why does a farmer sow seed? So he can have a harvest! God sows the Laodiceans.

They will quickly realize what they have done and will begin to turn to God and tell everyone about the blood of His covenant! They will say to themselves and others *Christ died—and if I have to die, I'm ready to die too*. And that is what they will have to do—spill their blood in a far country—because they wouldn't listen to the message of the covenant today.

How much better to repent now! How much better to repent in America and Britain and the other countries of Israel, rather than in Iran and Germany and Egypt during the Tribulation!

God will actually sow them in foreign countries so they can teach the Gentiles.

Even as the Gentiles threaten to kill them, they will say, *Go ahead—but I'm telling you what's coming!* God's message will be taught all over the world by the Laodiceans! Isn't that amazing? God sows them so He can reap a harvest.

And notice—verse 9 says they will live "with their children." God extends a special blessing and protection to their children. They are going to need this inspiring vision in the midst of that captivity. Of course, the tragedy is that they led their children into the Tribulation because they wouldn't listen to God's message today.

"I will bring them **AGAIN** also out of the land of Egypt ..." (v. 10). Coming out of Egypt is a type of coming out of this world. Sadly, God must bring the Laodiceans out of Egypt a second time.

"Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the **FIRE MAY DEVOUR THY CEDARS**. Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen ..." (Zech. 11:1-2).

Soncino's Commentary says that Solomon's temple and Zerubbabel's temple were both constructed largely from cedars of Lebanon, the biblical king of trees. So this verse is also talking about God's temple. In the temple today are some lofty and stately people whom God elevated to the very top—but who have since **FALLEN**. God is trying to give them a picture: They are like these magnificent, but fallen, cedars. God's kings and priests in embryo have fallen.

Mr. Armstrong had several cedars of Lebanon on the Bricketwood and Pasadena campuses of Ambassador College. We have some smaller weeping cedars on our campus. Perhaps God has a message to send us through these trees about who we are and how He views us—as stately cedars! We are kings and priests of the Earth! And how intensely tragic when a godly leader—a king-priest—falls!

The "fire" *devours these cedars*. They are going into the fiery Tribulation. Only repenting now can change that outcome.

Three Shepherds

"And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands [or binders]; and I fed the flock" (Zech. 11:7).

The commentaries and many Bible scholars are extremely confused about this verse! What is the “flock of slaughter”? The Laodiceans are destined to be slaughtered physically, and 50 percent of them will be lost forever. We’re giving them a message from God today, and they REFUSE TO HEAR IT! It’s not that they *cannot* understand—they simply *WILL NOT*! Our number-two commission, after warning the world, is to help Christ save the Laodiceans today.

They are going to have to shed their blood for God as He did for them. They failed to conquer Satan *before* the Tribulation. But after the Tribulation, 50 percent of them will overcome “him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 12:11).

Finally they will understand Christ was the sacrificial Lamb, who had to experience a bloody slaughter so they could be in God’s family forever. God commands them to get their minds off themselves and material things (Rev. 3:14-17), and on the blood of the New Covenant. Then they will allow Christ to live in them (Phil. 2:5)—again.

God makes the Laodiceans shed their blood because they took Christ’s blood sacrifice casually. In the Tribulation, many of them will repent and thank God for the precious price that was paid for their sins. Then they will take sin much more seriously.

The Scriptures indicate that all of the Laodiceans must give their blood to prove that they really understand the covenant of blood this time.

We must continually remind ourselves that the blood of God in the flesh was required to pay for our sins! It is a deadly sin to forget that awesome truth.

God warns all of His people to warn Israel or be guilty of their blood (Ezek. 33:6-7). The Laodiceans failed and are guilty. They have to pay with their own blood. That is God’s justice.

That verse also refers to “two staves”—one of beauty, speaking of God’s favor and protection—the other of “bands,” speaking of the unity, or union, we ought to have in God’s family. We are all a part of that blood covenant, and we should be unified. Like the people in Ezra’s time, we should be “as one man” (Ezra 3:1). That is the kind of unity God’s family *MUST* have!

Think about it: In God’s Kingdom, as people are seeking to be taught by the spiritual Jews, they are not going to have different leaders giving them different versions of God’s truth. God’s leaders are going to be “as one man”! They will all be keeping the conditions of that New Covenant. That covenant *BINDS* us to God, with the Ten

Commandments, the government of God, and the spiritual manna.

“Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me” (Zech. 11:8). These are people who knew God and then were cut off! What a strong, mutual feeling between God and these sinners! Of course, God hates sin and not sinners—but if they don’t repent, these men become the *EMBODIMENT* of sin!

Who are these shepherds? The com-



What happens when God gives revelation? Either you follow it, or you are cut off.

mentaries don’t know. I believe this must be the same “three shepherds”—a mother church and two larger breakaway Laodicean churches—that I wrote about in the Hosea booklet (request your free copy). Hosea dealt with a whorish mother and two illegitimate children (read Hos. 1:1-9; only the first of the three children was Hosea’s; the other two were illegitimate). God says in Zechariah that He will simply cut these three off in a month.

It is interesting that about “one month” passed between my getting fired from the WCG and our sending out the first copies of *Malachi’s Message*. There were a number of ministers discussing what to do about the changes in the Church at that time; two other major groups were about to form. God says that when His revelation got out to the Church, He cut them off! They knew about *Malachi’s Message*—they were there. But they scorned it, and God cut them off. Revelation 11:1-2 says that He “cast out” those who would not be measured—those three shepherds and their followers. And they will be cast into the Tribulation.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GOD GIVES REVELATION? EITHER YOU FOLLOW IT, OR YOU ARE CUT OFF. Look at the Laodiceans! They are not being fed, as they were when Mr. Armstrong was on the scene. They have been cut off!

“Then said I, I WILL NOT FEED YOU: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another” (Zech. 11:9). The Laodiceans aren’t being fed. Some of them are going to be *CUT OFF*—and some of them are going to *DIE FOREVER*. There isn’t any reason why people should leave God and break the conditions of the New Covenant, unless they’re in a rebellious mode of thinking.

God can’t feed someone who is violating the terms of that covenant!

Breaking the Covenant

“And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people” (v. 10). God *BROKE THE COVENANT*, because the people rebelled!

The *Anchor Bible* renders the last word in verse 10 “peoples,” calling it “the unex-

pected plural.” Commentaries can’t see why God uses the plural there. The reason is, God has peoples all over the Earth in the true Church today—many ethnic and racial variations who are spiritual Jews. Race or ethnicity make no difference to God—only that we all become spiritual Jews! Jesus Christ died for the world (John 3:16). He is no respecter of persons.

Remember, the flying scroll in Zechariah 5 points us back to the cherubim in the holy of holies. Their wings were outstretched over the ark of the covenant, as if to say they are protecting and guarding the covenant people—those who keep the Ten Commandments and submit to God’s government and are fed spiritual manna. We are truly taken care of, as long as we uphold our end of the covenant.

“And it [the covenant] was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord” (Zech. 11:11). This verse is talking about the faithful Philadelphian remnant—the poor, humble people who wait on God. Many people scorn them as nobodies, almost as if they had leprosy! But they are the only ones keeping the conditions of the covenant! *AT THIS POINT THEY ARE THE ONLY ONES WILLING TO SHED THEIR BLOOD FOR THE COVENANT. THEY WAIT ON GOD, NO MATTER WHAT THE COST.*

Can we wait on God? Can we humble ourselves enough to realize that we are nobody, and just wait on God? He is giving us everything!

Thirty Pieces of Silver

Notice carefully this next passage.

“And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, for-

bear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver" (v. 12). That is the same amount Judas Iscariot was paid for betraying Christ (Matt. 26:15; 27:3).

"And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them" (Zech. 11:13). Notice what is happening here! Christ is taking this personally. He was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver!

"... And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in

Half of Jerusalem

One final note on this passage. Look again at Zechariah 11:14, about breaking the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. Of course, that is spiritual, in the context of the Church. But I believe it may also apply on a physical level to America and the nation called Israel, or biblical Judah today.

A survey taken in the Arab world said that the number-one reason they hate America is because it supports Israel. Our

THAT THE DAY OF THE LORD IS ALMOST HERE! We must wake up! Men must heed God's warning before it is too late!

Any peace talks over Jerusalem make headlines around the world. But here is the greatest "scoop" of all, and the news media totally ignore it!

If the brotherhood between superpower America and the Jewish state is broken, that is probably when half of Jerusalem would be taken. The Arabs would realize the Jews have no one supporting them, and then Judah really will see their wound (Hos. 5:13)—they will realize that all their peace treaties with the Arabs were *worthless*. The peace treaties only wounded Israel—making them more vulnerable. They never produce peace. And they'll go right into the arms of Germany, one of their greatest enemies, to try to solve their problems.

The peace process leads to their destruction. They should have looked to God for peace.

The peace talks will lead directly to the fall of East Jerusalem. This battle will trigger events that lead to a nuclear World War III! This will be the crowning result of man's best efforts to bring the world peace!

Christ's Return

God has a message for this world—for Jerusalem and Judah, America and all nations. And that message must come from God's covenant people.

And here is how it will all end: "Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south" (Zech. 14:3-4).

Prophecies like this in Zechariah clearly show us that this is an end-time book.

Thankfully, Jesus Christ will intervene just before all life has been exterminated (Matt. 24:21-22). He will stand on the Mount of Olives, take over the rulership of this world, and usher in 1,000 years of peace. That is the only solution to this world's problems!

This is what we must tell the world. We are the *prisoners* of that hope! We have a hope-filled message that we must give the world. Soon they will see that there is no other hope but the hope of God's covenant people. ♦

Acting religious will earn us nothing but damnation if we are betraying Christ at the same time.

the house of the Lord. Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands [binders], that I might break the brotherhood between Judah [the spiritual Jews] and Israel [the Laodiceans—spiritual Israel]. And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces" (vv. 13-16).

Who could these verses be about? Who is the "foolish shepherd"? This is talking about one man, and the damage he caused God's Church in this end time—and the DESTRUCTION awaiting him for that! He sold out for 30 pieces of silver like Judas, and then he ripped apart and shredded God's own Church. Does this remind you of 11 Thessalonians 2, where a second "son of perdition" is mentioned? (v. 3)—a man who is DESTROYING God's Church? He is the son of destruction! Like Judas, the first son of perdition, he betrayed Christ! He is not a shepherd who neglected the flock—he is a shepherd who DESTROYED the flock and suppressed God's truth. (That evil spirit was demonstrated in our court battle with the Worldwide Church of God.) Still, the Laodicean groups don't understand this evil work, because they are *blind*.

They betrayed Christ for *money* and *things*. They betrayed Christ, who GAVE HIS BLOOD SO WE COULD ENTER THIS NEW COVENANT! Like Judas, they act very religious! Judas had the GALL to actually KISS CHRIST! Acting religious will earn us nothing but damnation if we are BETRAYING CHRIST at the same time.

will is deteriorating rapidly. Is it possible that America will begin to think, *Why are we making ourselves such a target over that little country?* This could be a prophecy of a rift between these two countries—one that would leave Judah very alone, just before half of Jerusalem is taken over by the Arabs.

Notice that prophecy: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and *half of the city shall go forth into captivity*, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city" (Zech. 14:1-2). Someone is going to take over half of Jerusalem. That is a prophecy *only* for this end time. Today the Arabs live in roughly one half of Jerusalem. But they don't control it—yet.

Notice this. The first half of verse 2 is talking about a great climactic battle that will occur at Christ's return. Of course, at the time of this final battle, the *whole* of Jerusalem will have been captured—by the king of the north (Dan. 11:40-41). So why does the last half of the verse talk about only *half* the city being taken?

Consider it: The Day of the Lord and the dispute over one half of Jerusalem are presented in the same context. That is because when half of Jerusalem goes into captivity, that crisis triggers a series of events that leads directly to the return of Jesus Christ! One half of Jerusalem being taken captive is like the first domino to fall, leading to Christ's return and battle against all nations in Jerusalem! It all begins and ends in Jerusalem.

In other words, THE CURRENT DISPUTE OVER EAST JERUSALEM IS A STRONG SIGN