

Stand Firm In The Truth

John O. Reid (1930-2016)

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I have been in the church for forty five years. I look back over many memories. At that time we were not preparing the bride; we were trying to warn the world of what was going to come. Everyone in Worldwide was preparing for the return of Jesus Christ. Mr. Armstrong often spoke of prophesy and I think back then that most of us figured we understood all that was going to happen.

Overcoming for some was just not important because prophesy was so important. One example I used over the years and I will use it again today comes to mind. It was a man that came to me with ten pages of prophetic understanding and I read the pages, I said, "Well, time will tell us if this is correct."

I knew the man's background and I said, "Why not stop choking your mother to bring her into subjection, and beating your wife to make her obey you?" Needless to say he never spoke to me again because his heart was set on understanding prophesy; it was so important to him.

I have seen verbal fights over prophesy and arguing over who are the Two Witnesses; we have had so many Two Witnesses that it was unbelievable. I have seen some people leave the church over prophetic arguments.

The reason I am speaking on this is that once again, on the internet and in articles we are being exposed to, various ideas of this appears to taking place again. Am I saying that these are all wrong? No, I am not. As John Ritenbaugh stated, we are being warned on the internet that the end is coming. We have got to really understand this; so many are just ignoring it. What I am saying is that they can be titillating and take our mind off where it needs to be.

Before we look into this (all that Jesus had to say about the events Satan will throw at us), I would like to read two scriptures and do not forget them.

Matthew 24:36 But of that day and hour no one knows, no not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

Mark 13:32 But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

The reason I am telling you this is because there are some that state they do know the time of Christ's return. We had one man recently that picked two days that Christ was going to return. We will talk about him in a moment.

I mentioned this again, as I said, because there are people that do know the time, even though the Bible says they do not. When asked to tell us when these things shall be and what the sign of your coming will be at the end of the age, as we read in Matthew 24, the very first thing He said is, "Watch out that you are not deceived."

Matthew 24:4-5 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ, and will deceive many.'"

Many will come in my name saying "I am the Christ," that is just the way it is going to be. *Barnes' Notes* made the comment that some will be led into the desert. We had a man up in Oregon...when he left Worldwide Church of God, he went up there, started a congregation and led them in the desert waiting for Christ. When Christ did not come the congregation left him, and he started on a new group. This is happening, and it will happen again—some will claim to be Christ.

Matthew 24:11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

This is another warning; we will read verses 23, 24, and 26.

Matthew 24:23-26 Then if any one says to you, look, here is the Christ, or there, do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. Therefore if they say to you, "Look, He is in the desert," do not go out, or "Look, He is in the inner rooms," do not believe it.

This is Jesus Christ telling us what is coming on the horizon here. Many in this world long for Jesus to return, and because of that they are vulnerable to these people who promise these things. Many pretend to be prophets or prophesying of future dates and events; these will seemingly have prophesy all worked out.

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Ron Weinland was one of them (not picking on him because we do not know what is in his heart)...but he was fooled, and he is in deep trouble because of it. Do not follow this type of thing. Those claiming to be a prophet shall show great signs and wonders; they will resemble so closely true prophets in the performing of seemingly authentic miracles, that it will be difficult to detect the truth in the matter.

If it were possible, they would deceive the very elect, or chosen ones, indicating that their logic in the way they present themselves and the miracles they perform will seem so real, so true, so sound, that it will seem foolish not to follow them. Those that are deceived have ceased to have love for the truth; they got caught up in what was being presented.

When I first went to Korea in the big war, the men on the ground told us if we lived two weeks we probably would make it for the simple reason that, if we did not know where to put our feet, or learn the sounds to watch out for, it could kill us. This was truly an important warning.

I remember when I heard my first big artillery round come in from the North Koreans. I thought it was a jet airplane. I stood up to look at the airplane and a round went off. I knew that was not an airplane.

The reason I mention this is because, years back I was dealing with a man, a friend, who was having problems with some of the new truth floating around the church. He was complaining that the leadership was not listening to him when it was obvious that changes needed to be made. What was wrong then?

My response to him was (perhaps a little lack and little light)...but I told him that in this end time with all the confusion, was a time to get down into one's fox hole or bunker and pull his helmet over his head and wait until the barrage lifted.

The answer was not what he wanted obviously. He wrote to me and said, "I was not being a light, a proper light." And he further added, "Any one that did this can lose his savor as salt lost its flavor." His complaint was that I was not being a light to the new thinking he was considering.

I responded by telling him that what I meant by my comment was that indeed we should be a light for the truth, but if at all possible, we need to hide or shield ourselves from any wrong teaching and the confusion that is everywhere among the churches today. People are letting down right and left and we should not be a part of it. It is really important.

The ministry suggests that someone not to become involved with strange material... you do not see much of that today at all—material floating around the airways or outside of the church. I have seen the following attitudes spring up: Who does the ministry think he is? They have their source of things.

I was told by the same acquaintance that the ministry uses outside material, commentaries, dictionaries, materials that are background for their messages. But in this area, do we as individuals have a responsibility to measure and compare what is being offered to us with what we have been taught by God's apostle? Do we have the responsibility to check what is being thrown at us by what we were taught by God's apostle? Yes we do; we better compare it and find out if it measures up.

I John 2:24-26 Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us, eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you [or lead you into catastrophe].

The unspoken emphasis here is: if one neglects that what he has heard from the beginning, he will lose the Son.

Ephesians 6:10-18 [Who are we fighting? Who is coming against us?] Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, [something we should really consider] but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

The helmet is part of the armor that is designed to protect the head in the thinking

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process; it is a helmet of the hope of salvation. The idea behind this is that properly found hope of salvation will preserve us in the day of spiritual conflict. It will guard us from the many blows and attacks from the enemy.

This is prophesied—that physical attacks will come upon us in the future for what we believe. Indeed, that hope of salvation will be of the up most importance at that time.

Today we live in the Laodicean era, and we are attacked not just by Laodicean attitudes and characteristics, but by changes in doctrine that those who have let down are coming up with.

I do not know how many remember when the Worldwide Church of God broke up, but we were asked to make forty one changes; they were dandy changes. Passover was not to be done like it was; it was on the wrong date, and we should be following the Jews, the international date line.

Tithing was interesting; you did not have to tithe until your house was paid for. There was a reason behind that. Israel was given the land; of course they had to go in and fight for it, put their life on the line, but because they got their land for nothing, we did not have to tithe until our home was paid for. Ridiculous.

Then there was the tithing thing where you give first tithe one year, second tithe next year, third tithe the next year, but never all three together. People got up in arms; they lost their thinking. Manasseh was Ephraim, Ephraim was Manasseh...that change was there, international date lines, and on and on it went.

John Ritenbaugh spent four or five weeks going through all this to check the foundation we have been given. People did not like what they saw. I had no idea. I was fairly new at this. I figured everyone thinks like I do, but they did not. They had their own ideas; people could not wait to get rid of clean meat laws; it stunned me.

When we give serious consideration to the new truth that is contrary to all that we have been taught by God's apostle, we begin to take away from the foundation that has been given us.

That foundation is extremely important.

How far back does this type of thing go?

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of

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dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, let us go after other gods which you have not known, and let us serve them, you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you [This is what we want to think about today when we hear all the new doctrine and new teachings that are coming to pass; we are being tested; we all are.] to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt [or who called you in this age] and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the Lord your God shall put away evil from your midst.

God is serious about this—so serious! Please turn to Jude 3 and 4—another warning for us.

Jude 3-4 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend [fight, resist] earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed who long ago were marked out, for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

These men were put here. We have to resist these people; they are around and they will get to you. They do not do this directly. What they teach and what they do subtly are changing doctrines. Conservative verses progressive. One minister in a big split that just recently happened went up to a man and said, “I know what the problem is. I am progressive and you are conservative and that is where the split came from.”

Jesus tells us today that because of this, we must earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. It is not going to be a small thing.

II Thessalonians 2:1-12 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from

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us, as though the day of Christ had come. [In other words, there will be false things coming out to them to—way back then] Let no one deceive you by any means, for that day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusions, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Many of us, even with the world around us, just do not see the danger. We see Israel about to perhaps attack Iran, but times are good here. We have jobs, our cars, homes, and things like this; we do not see the danger that is on the horizon.

What evidence can we see of the great falling away? What is the sign that we are in danger and must take our calling as protection of our minds seriously? We have had the greatest calling you have ever seen over twenty years ago when there was an organization with roughly one hundred forty thousand people.

What do we see today? In 1986 there were nearly ninety to one hundred thousand people left. They have failed to hold the course; they left. Why? Perhaps they were not called or did not have God's spirit. Some died. Some of the ministry were maybe tough on some, but the bottom line is, they lost their faith and did not hold on to the truth of Jesus Christ.

By allowing events and teachings critical of the truth, they had to have hardened their hearts, and that is the danger we all face. We cannot let what happens around us change us from the truth of God.

We do have great encouragement, from Jesus Christ.

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John 10:25-30 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. [If you are part of God's family you are secure in this.] My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one.'"

Jesus Christ gives eternal life, and therefore we will never be destroyed.

Matthew 18:14 Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

This is expressed with great strength and power. God, the Father who is supreme and who controls everything, will not allow (Satan included) anything or any situation to take us from Him. We belong to them, and we are part of them; we are family with them.

Face the question, "How can I be certain that I am one of God's sheep?" We can all understand what we read in God's word, but it is the way we respond to Him that gives evidence that we belong to Him. It is by obedience, faithfulness to the doctrine once given to us through God's apostle and faithful ministry, that we can be certain and with faithfulness comes assurance. Faithfulness to God's word and teachings brings assurance.

Seeing the seriousness of the times, what should our posture be? The ministry cannot live anyone's life for them, and dictating what one can and cannot do, listen to, or watch. Each of us are held accountable on an individual basis before God.

We have been told that we are self-governed, and that was a real shocker. I can remember when that first hit the Church of the Great God (probably the only one of all the groups out there). People came to me and said they want the hall rearranged this way. They said that the ministry should not be standing up at the lectern. I want to have them at the same level with us. They did not understand "self-governed" because they had been governed so strongly, but the ball is on our court, individually.

The ministry should teach the truth to the best of their ability, and of course the ministry is held accountable as well for what they teach.

What is the correct principle that should be taught in this era of false information?

Proverbs 4:23-27 Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, [Think about where you are going and what you are listening to, what you are putting into your mind and hearts.] and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or to the left, remove your foot from evil.

This is what we should be doing at this time...very serious times; it truly is.

I John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Proverbs 22:3 A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, But simple pass on and are punished.

God expects us to be prudent. This, for us as individuals, means to be conscience of danger, false doctrines, Satan's traps. I know I cannot see all of Satan's traps; the older I get I become more tired; things are going on so fast all around us. It is hard.

Make decisions with right comparisons and soundness of mind—take the appropriate actions to guard and protect ourselves. Stick to the truth of God, in what we have been taught.

II Thessalonians 2:13-17 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the spirit and belief in the truth [We are being reminded that we have been chosen. We read this in Ephesians 1. Perhaps before the foundation of the earth, you have been chosen; you are special.], to which He called you for the attaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the tradition in which you were taught whether by word or by our epistle [or letter]. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, our God and our Father who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation, comfort your hearts and

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establish you at every good work and word.

There is a time to hunker down and maybe get in your fox hole with your helmet down over your ears and allow the enemy barrage to pass itself. It is going to pass, but it is going to be heavy for a while.

The barrage will lift and because you have protected yourself and have not lost your savor, you will be a proper light to the truth of God, and you will stand with supreme joy with Jesus Christ at the end of the age.