

## **CGG Anniversary: Summary And Thank You**

**Eleven Years of Feeding the Flock**

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As we begin, I would like you to turn with me to Matthew 10, verses 34-39. This is in that section in which Jesus is giving instructions to His disciples as He sent them out, I guess to practice before they received a commission that was far more serious, but He said,

**Matthew 10:34-39** "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

The world has been sold a bill of goods on many things regarding Jesus Christ and the church of God, and the statement at the beginning of this paragraph is one of them. Jesus and Christianity do not remove us from the conflicts of life and all of their pressures. Peace does not suddenly break out in overflowing abundance when one accepts the blood of Jesus Christ.

Rather, conversion gives us a different perspective so that we might be able to make the right choices to be in alignment with God and His purpose. In fact, conflict may even increase once one becomes a Christian. Now indeed there is an assurance that one is on the right track and that there is a much greater understanding of why things are the way that they are. But even that assurance and understanding is challenged by many, many unexpected twists and turns.

And I sometimes wonder, “Has anything worked out exactly the way that I thought it would?”

And so we have to keep an open mind about many things, all the while knowing that God is sovereign; despite the way things look, things really are under control.

When the Church of the Great God began on January 11th, 1992 with 17 people in Laguna Hills, California, we were not the Church of the Great God. We had no idea that 11 years later, we would still exist as a church; that Christ still would not have come; the Two Witnesses have not appeared; in fact, even the beast has not reared its horrible head in Europe.

I think it is clearer now. Though we are definitely progressing toward a very dangerous worldwide crisis, prophecy is not unfolding in exactly the same way as we were taught, or as fast as we certainly expected that it would occur. Some things seem to be in place as we were taught, but very much is not there yet. And so, we, like Moses way back when, when he wrote what is now Psalm 90, asked, “Return, O Lord! How long?” But we keep looking at what we do see being fulfilled; patiently plugging along in hope; enduring the conflicts and the pressures of living in this time. And that much is good.

Now Jesus complimented the Philadelphia church for following His command that they were faithfully persevering in spite of the discouragements. And He promises to protect them from the hour of trial which will test the whole world as He calls it.

Many have fallen away from the Worldwide Church of God and disappeared as if swallowed in quicksand. You have been faithful to what you believe and that is something to be thankful for and take the right kind of satisfaction in. It is a substantial spiritual achievement, especially considering these confusing times that we are living in.

Positive things have been accomplished that are enabling us, the Church of the Great God, to do what we set out to do. I did not perceive myself in

January 1992, nor do I perceive myself in January 2003 as being sent to preach the gospel to the world in the manner of Herbert W. Armstrong. And neither do I see anybody on the horizon that is called to do that.

Now there are a number of Herbert Armstrong wannabes out there, but none of them, as far as I know, are having any kind of success like he had. And I do not believe it is because they are any less talented than he. But rather, I believe it is because God is not in that aspect of what they perceive to be their work. I do not believe that it is God's time yet for that to be done.

But His work nonetheless is still on track. His purpose is still being worked out. But to me His focus for the church is for us to be focused on the church for now.

Times have changed very extensively since Herbert Armstrong began his preaching in August of 1933 and did what he did for the next 52 or 53 years, building the church, and making somewhat of a witness to the world besides.

Though I was ordained under Herbert Armstrong to pastor those who were called and baptized into the church through Herbert Armstrong, when we left the Worldwide Church of God and what became the Church of the Great God formed, I felt obligated to continue the purpose of my ordination, because I knew that the church would absolutely continue. But I also knew absolutely that the preaching of the gospel to the world by the church has a very clear history of being spotty, more or less on again off again.

Herbert Armstrong said many times that the gospel had not been preached to the world for 1,900 years. Now that is not a totally accurate statement if it is taken literally. But it is true in the sense that he meant it. He meant it as it has not been preached in this consistent power and manner since the apostles.

Though this is true, and we are now in one of those periods of time when it is not being proclaimed publicly except on a very tiny basis in this wilderness of religious confusion, the church nonetheless goes on, because Jesus said that the grave shall not prevail against it.

So the purpose of my ordination goes on without interruption. And God, in His good time, according to His schedule, will raise someone up even as He

raised up the apostles in the first century, and others through the centuries, leading up to Herbert Armstrong in the last century. And He did this to keep the church going, and at the same time, to make the measure of witness that He wanted to occur.

So my job is to preach to the choir. And that means to those who are remaining faithful. And in the meanwhile, the Church of the Great God with its websites, is becoming a vast reservoir of material that can be used to give some small help to those scattered following Herbert Armstrong's death.

I have never been overly concerned about numbers. And I said to God at the beginning of the Church of the Great God, when I realized this thing had been thrown into my lap, I guess you might say, I wanted to learn to live by faith, and be content with whatever He supplied in terms of money to operate on, and people to help and to work with.

At any rate, I think that what He gave to us to do is coming to pass. And I want to thank all of you for your faithfulness to God.

In the past five years or so (I guess it has been, I do not remember exactly how long back now), it has become fairly popular in our culture to use a cliché that goes like this, “If you build it, they will come.” That came out of the movie, “Field of Dreams.” I see a number of you chuckle, so I take it that you have seen that movie. As it was originally used in the movie, the first couple of times, it was, if you build it, “he” will come. And the “he” referred to Shoeless Joe Jackson, who was a very famous baseball player back in the 1910s and 20s.

But as the movie progressed, it became, “If you build it, *they* will come.” And it shifted to meaning a vast number of people, that if they built this baseball stadium, they would make their way there to see the game.

That cliché refers to a certainty that if one thing is done it is just as certain that an effect will absolutely occur. And I see something like that happening with this work. And that is, that if we keep on teaching and doing the truths that we were taught, that we will be successful and effective in what we were commissioned to do regardless of how big we are. It will happen.

I am not anticipating that the Church of the Great God will ever become great in numbers. But at the same time, through the websites, and the tapes, and the publications, far more people than we might realize are being enabled to not merely endure but also grow through this difficult time of testing and purging of the church.

Turn with me to Hebrews 10:35. A word of advice:

**Hebrews 10:35-36** Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: "For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry."

I do not know how long yet before He returns. I only know that we are much, much closer than when this was written, and that events indicate that it is not all that far away. But our marching orders are quite clear given in these three verses. Regardless of what happens, we are to live by faith. Hold on to what we have, and at the same time, keep on keeping on.