

ALSOM

THE 142 - ASSEMBLIES OF GOD HISTORY, MISSIONS, and GOVERNANCE INSTRUCTOR'S NOTES - **Module 6 - Serious Challenges Present and Future**

CONTINUING CHALLENGES FACING THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

The AG faces many challenges now and in the future. None are greater than those listed below. They all flow from the biblical illiteracy among modern AG ministers and people, and the lack of proper education for our ministers. They also contribute to biblical illiteracy and decrease our ability to do balanced biblical ministry in worship, evangelism, discipleship, and compassion.

Serious challenges and dangers facing the Movement include ...

- Continually Seeking the “Last Days Revival”
- The Hyper-Faith Movement
- The Apostles and Prophets Movement (Latter Rain)
- Continual end-time speculation by false teachers
- The danger of leaving evangelicalism and orthodoxy by embracing some of the previously mentioned heresies just because they are thought to be “pentecostal”
- The decline in expository preaching and Bible teaching
- Other challenges – Biblical illiteracy and poor discipleship (the root challenges), cultural compromise

THE DANGERS OF CONTINUALLY SEEKING the “LAST DAYS REVIVAL”

“Many times people are wanting a revival of 1960 or 1920. But what we should want is a renewal and a revival of spiritual life and effectiveness. Instead of seeking for demonstrations, we should seek first of all for the reality of spiritual life in Jesus Christ and a new love and new dimension of spiritual effectiveness.”

— Charles Crabtree, Assistant General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God

The Pentecostal Movement and the Assemblies of God have always been plagued by a longing for “a new outpouring” that borders on “lusting for emotional experience” or “asking for a sign” (supernatural phenomenon).

The Belief in “End-Time” Revival

Leaders who understand Scripture and history have always recognized the dangers of longing for emotional experience and spectacular signs. This has periodically plagued the Pentecostal movement.

The 1990’s spiritual renewal led the GP to issue this wise counsel:

“We reaffirm our desire not to hinder any move of the Spirit. If it is of God, we cannot and do not wish to stop it. If it is of man, it will in time fail, but we are advised by Scripture to discern with the help of the Holy Spirit who seeks to bless the church with lasting spiritual growth.”

— General Presbytery of the Assemblies of God

Some of the cultural and theological emphases that shaped the AG also produced this continual focus on “revival” ...

1. Influence of Eschatological Expectancy on the P/c movement ... Facts to Remember ...

- a. Beware the “Last Days” emphasis of Dispensationalism – When are the last days? Scripture teaches that the “Last Days” began in the life and ministry of Jesus including the Spirit’s outpouring at Pentecost, and continues until Christ comes again. *The Christian Church has always believed and taught this.*
- b. There are far more warnings in Scripture about FALLING AWAY in the “last days” than encouragement to expect “revival”
- c. *Biblically, the “latter rain” that God promised was the coming of the Spirit beginning at Pentecost and continuing until the Second Coming*
- d. The “end-time revival” belief removed focus from Christ’s command to make disciples ... There was no time to do anything but pray for “revival” and do evangelism. *This is disobedient to Christ.*
- e. God has periodically given His People seasons of spiritual renewal and outpouring throughout church history, but *constant ongoing Day of Pentecost / Azusa Street Revival is never promised or experienced in Scripture or in church history.*

2. Influence of Revivalism on the P/c movement ... Fascination With “New Measures” ...

- a. New doctrines – “Believe these new revelations and the Spirit will come!” (Oneness, Word of Faith, New Apostolic Reformation, etc.)
- b. New techniques – “Do these new methods and the Spirit will come!” (New Music, SHOFAR, prayer, cell groups, fasting)
- c. Revivalism believes that we can basically force God to send revival or we can “earn” revival through our works or holiness or intense prayer and fasting.

3. IN REALITY, there are many factors in the coming of a great renewal or harvest of souls ...

- a. Sociological factors – times of drastic social, economic upheaval often bring seasons of revival ...
 - i. The Civil War - Before the war, evangelicalism was stronger in the North. As the Southern armies began losing, a revival and mass conversions began in the Army of Northern Virginia which the soldiers took with them when they returned home to a defeated, impoverished South. The revival continued, churches grew for decades and the South became the Bible Belt.
 - ii. This scenario is often repeated: The Great Depression, the Falkland Islands War (the great Argentine revival began after Britain defeated Argentina in 1982).
- b. The sovereignty of God – God’s omniscience, wisdom, and plan. God is sovereign: He sends renewal, revival, and harvest according to His plan. There is no known radical church activity (prayer, fasting, etc.) that preceded the Jesus People Movement (1967-1973). It was a sovereign move of God that saw hundreds of thousands of people, beginning with unchurched hippies and youth, swept into the Church.
- c. A NEW AZUSA – The Lesson of the Azusa Street Revival - *since Azusa, millions of people have prayed more, fasted more, consecrated themselves more, confessed more, and believed more for a NEW AZUSA, than ever did BEFORE the first Azusa St Revival ... but there has never been a new Azusa in North America.*

God “must” do NOTHING. God moves in his sovereign wisdom and in his time.

We can never force God to send revival, and we can never earn revival through works of prayer and fasting. Our prayer, fasting, and consecration must be a result of God’s Spirit calling his church to special prayer, fasting, and consecration.

God Has Given Periodic Seasons of Renewal / Revival to the Church and to the P/c Movement ...

The Church throughout history has experienced periodic outpourings of the Holy Spirit in seasons of renewal, at various times and places, with various emphases and results. The Pentecostal / charismatic movement itself is one of those renewals.

Within the P/c Movement, there have been periodic renewals ...

1. The Salvation-Healing Movement
2. The Jesus People Movement
3. The Charismatic Movement
4. The Vineyard Movement
5. The 1990's Renewal (Toronto, Brownsville, ...)

Churches that were open to the Spirit's genuine moving in these seasons, and pastored them wisely, were greatly blessed.

Churches that assumed - and began to teach - that seasons of outpouring / revival / renewal were supposed to be the continual norm for the life of the church and of the individual believer have always suffered disappointment or disillusionment when the renewal season waned and God returned to his normal way of blessing and dealing with his people.

Even in the NT, and throughout church history, the places and seasons of great spiritual outpouring were always temporary. Some lasted longer and spread farther than others, but all were temporary.

Within the P/c Movement, there have been periodic renewals (which radically affected the AG) ...

1. **The Salvation-Healing Movement** – late 1940's - late 1950's - tent evangelists, Jack Coe, Oral Roberts, William Branham, Gordon Lindsay, Gayle Lewis, and many others travelled the nation.
 - Voice of Healing, Healing Waters - Magazines founded to promote the renewal and to verify the truthfulness of reports of miracles .
2. **The Jesus People Movement** – 1967-1973, hundreds of thousands of young people / hippies were saved.
 - A Sovereign move of God, largely Spirit-filled, greatest true harvest of pagan souls in modern American history.
 - Jack Hayford, Chuck Smith, Lonnie Frisbee were prominent names. Contemporary Christian music born ... early leaders included Keith Green, Chuck Girard, Love Song, Barry McGuire, and many others.
 - This renewal had a transformational and lasting impact - Music, worship style, teaching style, Calvary Chapel movement, Vineyard Movement. Through following decades all branches of evangelicalism were affected to some degree, some permanently and transformationally.
3. **The Charismatic Movement** – 1960's through the present day - an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the mainline churches ... Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, etc.
 - Many participants eventually flowed into existing Pente churches (AG, FSQ).
 - Many flowed out into new independent churches, sadly often Word of Faith churches.
 - Most remained in their mother churches, creating renewal movements there: RCC, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, and others.
 - NOTE: When you see totals for the worldwide P/c movement, MOST of those are Charismatics who remained in their mother churches, mostly Catholic.
4. **The Vineyard Movement** - flowed out of the Calvary Chapel movement after John Wimber and others experienced an outpouring of the Spirit in the mid-1980's. *Excellent new worship music burst forth.*
5. **The 1990's Renewal** (London (Holy Trinity Brompton Anglican Church), Toronto Airport Vineyard, Brownsville AG, etc.) - led by Vineyard participants, this renewal touched and included many Anglicans, Pentecostals, Charismatics, *especially in the Assemblies of God*.

Churches that were open to the Spirit's genuine moving in these seasons, and pastored them wisely, were greatly blessed.

As often happens in renewal seasons, those ministers and churches who sought to earn, manufacture, force, or artificially sustain renewal suffered disappointment, division, and decline.

(Continually Seeking the “Last Days Revival” ...)

THE HYPER-FAITH MOVEMENT

- Also called the Prosperity Gospel, the Word of Faith (WOF) Movement, etc.
- A penetration of metaphysical cult beliefs into the Pentecostal / charismatic movement.
- Can be traced back through Ken Hagin, Sr. to E. W. Kenyon in the early 1940’s. Hagin plagiarized Kenyon.
- The movement takes biblical words, empties them of their original meaning, and fills them with meanings from the mind-science cults (Mary Baker Eddy, Christian Science, Unity School, etc.)
- **Hyper-faith heresies include** (among many other false doctrines) ...
 - Faith can be generated in the mind, faith is a spiritual force,
 - positive thinking and speaking create spiritual force and physical reality,
 - lack of such faith - and/or negative confession - causes sickness,
 - Jesus became a sinner on the cross, went to hell as a sinful man, defeated Satan by faith, etc.
 - It is always God’s will for us to be immediately healed, healthy, prosperous, “winners”, etc.
 - Only our sin, lack of faith, or bad confession, prevents immediate healing/prosperity/victory.
 - Well-known cliches associated with this heresy ...
 - “The power of life and death is in the tongue,”
 - “Call things that are not as though they were,”
 - “Declare” and “Decree” (hyper-faith prayer terms now infiltrating that AG, **terms not found in Scripture as a biblical way to pray**; stems from the mind-science cults & Word of Faith).

NOTE: When you see any of the Word-of-Faith doctrines and practices mentioned above you know that it is NOT classical Pentecostal doctrine, and that the AG has condemned this teaching.

THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD HAS OFFICIALLY CONDEMNED The HYPER-FAITH TEACHING.

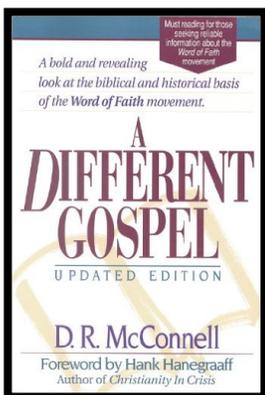
WORD of FAITH TEACHING HAS BROUGHT TREMENDOUS PAIN AND DEVASTATION TO MILLIONS, AND GREAT REPROACH ON THE PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT.

No AG, Pentecostal, or any other kind of Christian scholar has ever believed these Hyper-Faith / Prosperity Gospel doctrines in the history of the Christian Church.

The historical, factual, paper trail of these teachings making their way from the new age metaphysical cults into the preaching and teaching of P/c preachers has been documented.

This information is not a matter of opinion, but is historically verifiable fact.

The Best Resource on the Word of Faith Movement ...



Dan McConnell, PhD
 Oral Roberts University
 Free University of Amsterdam
 Missionary Church-planter
 Charismatic

*This book is a classic. Accurate in every way.
 It traces the source, origins, development, heresies, and damage of the Hyper-Faith Movement.*

(Continually Seeking the “Last Days Revival”, The Hyper-Faith Movement, ...)

THE APOSTLES and PROPHETS MOVEMENT - The New Apostolic Reformation (NAR)

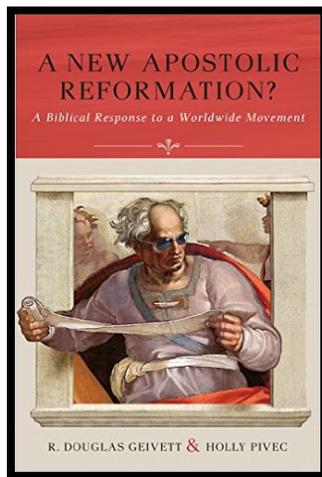
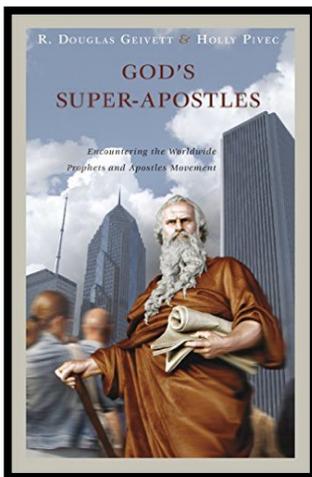
This movement is a resurgence or resurfacing of the Latter-Rain Movement that originated in Canada in the 1940's. A revival began practicing various techniques and teaching various doctrines.

It was formally and officially condemned and rejected by the U.S. AG in 1949.

Heretical beliefs and teachings include ...

- Known for giving Personal, directive prophecies, and “impartation” of spiritual gifts at will
- “Prophetic” worship opens spiritual heavens and brings God’s special presence in a unique way
- Believes in Guidance by prophetic words, apostles’ orders, visions, spectacular supernatural phenomenon as being normal and to be expected for daily living and decisions
- All people, pastors, and churches must submit to an apostle
- All other movements, ministers, people are inferior, unenlightened
- The apostles and prophets will bring in God’s Kingdom
- The anointed apostles and prophets and their followers do the spiritual warfare that breaks the power of the enemy and enables all other kinds of believers to have whatever kind of success they have.
- Dominionism and the Seven-Mountain Mandate - believers are supposed to rise to control the “seven mountains” or spheres of influence in human societies, take dominion, and speed the return of Christ.
- **Manifest Sons of God / Elijah Generation – super-spiritual end-time leaders who have greater revelation and power than in the NT (This originally taught that generation of leaders would not die ... but they’re all dead now. So, the false teaching continues without the “immortal” part.)**
 - **NOTE: Neither the Bible nor the Church has ever taught anything like the elite end-time generation teaching. It has absolutely no biblical, historical, or theological support.**
- They teach that the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) will someday control the entire true Church.
- Well-known participants include Paul Cain, Bob Jones, C. Peter Wagner, Todd Bentley, Mike Bickel and IHOP, Morningstar, Todd White, etc. ...

Best Resources on the NAR ...



Fair, balanced, objective, and accurate.

Authors are continuationists: they believe in the continuing supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit.

These books are focused on Scripture, church history, facts, and the fruit / results of this teaching and these teachers.

When you see any of the NAR doctrines and practices mentioned above you know that it is NOT classical Pentecostal doctrine, and that the AG has condemned this teaching.

(Continually Seeking the “Last Days Revival”, The Hyper-Faith Movement, The Apostles & Prophets, ...)

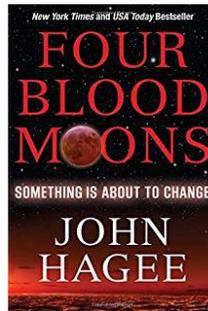
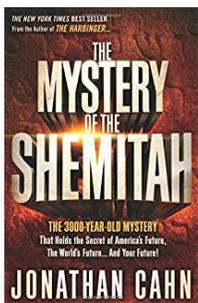
END-TIMES SPECULATIONS - The Bad Fruit of Dispensationalism

The school of interpretation called Dispensationalism generates more wild speculation and repeated predictions of Christ’s return than all other forms of eschatology combined. By far.

Characteristics and results of End-times Speculations ...

- Comes from the shrinking number of preachers who hold to Dispensationalism
- They produce constant speculations, new revelations from the Spirit regarding world events, never before seen secrets from Scripture, etc.
- They are unwilling to receive correction or teaching from qualified scholars, or from other schools of interpretation
- End-times speculations creates conspiracy theory / paranoid mindsets in God’s people
- Distracts God’s people from systematic Bible study of important topics, from the discipleship process, and from long-term planning
- False teachers on prophecy phrase their date setting or their warnings in barely ambiguous language, giving them a way out when it does not come to pass
- ***The continual failure of their warnings and predictions bring great reproach on the gospel of Jesus Christ.***

Some heretical books by prophecy speculators (that proved as always to be completely off-base) ...



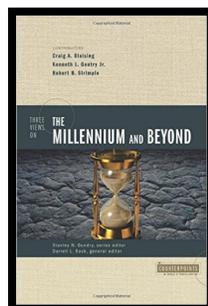
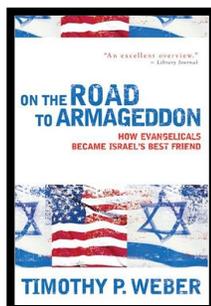
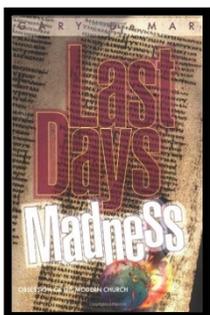
The books above have proven as spectacularly inaccurate as they were spectacularly popular.

They are all historically inaccurate and exegetically impossible. They twist the Scriptures.

All AG Bible and theology scholars I spoke with had never even heard of them.

In other words, they are considered worthless by genuine biblical scholars.

Here are good resources explaining where End-Times Speculations and bad eschatology originated ...



(Continually Seeking the “Last Days Revival”, The Hyper-Faith Movement, The Apostles & Prophets, ... End-Times Speculations, ...)

THE DECLINE IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING and BIBLICAL TEACHING

Expository Preaching - carefully interpreting a biblical passage using good hermeneutical principles to determine its real meaning, and then carefully “expositing” or explaining and applying that message in a well-organized sermon. This is done in series, preaching through a book of the Bible or a particular topic in the Bible.

Biblical Teaching - systematically teaching through books of the Bible or doctrines of the Bible, using good hermeneutical principles to correctly interpret the meaning of every passage, and then carefully expositing / explaining / applying that passage to life. This is supposed to be done continually in the life of a church, for all ages (Christian education).

The long decline of expository preaching and biblical teaching (elimination of Sunday School, moving away from Bible-centered small groups to “felt need” or “free market” small groups) has created a tremendous amount of IGNORANCE about the Bible, about how to correctly interpret the Bible, and about how to read, how to study, how to apply the Bible to all of life.

For over four decades this trend has been accelerating in the AG, creating increasing vulnerability to heresies, bad teaching, bad practices, and compromised, self-centered lifestyles that resemble American culture more than they resemble our Pentecostal / evangelical ancestors.

This challenge and problem - the decline in expository preaching and biblical teaching - is at the root of all of the other challenges facing the Assemblies of God. It is a primary cause of most other challenges.

MANY CHALLENGES FACE THE PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT and the ASSEMBLIES OF GOD ...

- Many of the formative influences on Pentecostalism and the Assemblies of God have been negative to greater or lesser degrees ...
 - Restorationism, Romanticism, Revivalism, Fundamentalism, Dispensationalism, Holiness movement, ...
- These influences flowed from good intentions, but several of these influences were based on misinterpretations and misunderstandings of Scripture and history
- **They often push us toward eccentric sectarianism, with all its dangers ...**
 - Legalism – in lifestyle, doctrine, works righteousness, earning favor
 - Exclusivism / Elitism – “we have the truth, we are superior”
 - Gnosticism – “we have a deep revelation of truth, we are more spiritual”
 - Our formative influences push us away from the correction of history, scholarship, and the greater, older Church
 - ***Our formative influences sometimes result in continual Discernment failures – many AG ministers and parishioner cannot perceive false teaching***
 - They contribute to our vulnerability to heresies ... Latter Rain (NAR / Apostles & Prophets), Word of Faith, End-times speculation, Greed, ...
 - Biblical illiteracy – Inadequate Christian education, doctrine, discipleship have failed us.
 - Historical ignorance – means that we are ahistorical, rootless, abandoning orthodox Tradition, embracing the fringe Spirit-movements & heresies, gradually moving away from orthodoxy.

- The influence of anti-education / anti-intellectualism cause us to tolerate diverging trajectories in ministerial education – many still receive ministry training through AG universities, BUT many receive it through local church “Bible schools”, DSOMs, and Berean, creating increasing susceptibility to fads, heresy.
- Penetration of cultural priorities, values, morals into the church in turn cause further problems:
 - Emotionalism – lights & music as cathartic release, chasing “revival”
 - Simplism – minimalism; dumbing-down everything to lowest level: dumbing down preaching and teaching in CONTENT and in STYLE.
 - Post-modernism – subjectivity, individualism, consumerism, practical
 - Preaching is often simplistic, self-centered, topical, about “practical” or “felt-need” topics the people want to hear, full of cliches and platitudes, cheerleading, life-coaching advice.
 - Morality – Divorce, immorality, pornography, homosexuality
 - Marriage and Family – fragmentation, lost authority
 - Loss of local church commitment – a close-knit community of covenant- keeping love
- Fundamentalist division – sectarian reaction to change and to the problems list above results in strife, persecution of opposing perspectives, and a loss of pluralism

THE DANGER OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION in DOCTRINE and PRACTICE

Whenever a renewal movement has begun to listen only to those within its own ranks who refuse to change and grow, and that movement simultaneously rejects the wise counsel and correction of the greater Church, that movement becomes increasingly sectarian, rigid, and in danger of drifting away from orthodoxy.

The Pentecostal Movement and the Assemblies of God must remain humble and open to the warnings of its own scholars and to the warnings of the larger Body of Christ - the Evangelical movement (evangelical Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, etc.).

The church of Jesus Christ was alive and well for almost 2,000 years before the Pentecostal Movement came into existence.

If we tolerate the voices of bad doctrine, bad practice, and even if we listen only to the echo chamber of our own denominational voices, we will produce increasingly bad doctrine and practice.

CONCLUSION

We must not reject historic, orthodox, and evangelical doctrine, practice, and scholarship.

To reject the insights, critique, and correction that historic Christianity can provide to our young Movement would be catastrophic for us in the long run. Every previous Spirit-revival ended up in cardinal heresy or eventually dissipated because the leaders rejected historic Christian influence and correction.

The Holy Spirit “blows where he wills” and that includes within the non-Pentecostal Body of Christ. We must believe and receive this.

WE MUST RESTORE THE BALANCE BETWEEN EXPERIENTIAL ENCOUNTER and the PROCESS OF DISCIPLESHIP.

WE MUST BEGIN TO IDENTIFY and REJECT FALSE TEACHING and FALSE TEACHERS.

WE MUST TAKE A LONG TERM VIEW.

- Everything good flows from Discipleship – the prayerful, submitted, lifelong study and application of God’s Word.
- The Assemblies of God must make Discipleship our top priority and take a long term view.

- According the Scripture, we are to prioritize, plan, and work as if we will pass this ministry, this mission, and this church on to the generation that we are discipling, and to the generation that follows them.
- JESUS CHRIST, and his apostle, PAUL, had this long term process of discipleship at the center of their minds when they spoke their final commands.
- **JESUS CHRIST - The Great Commission is a discipleship commission:**
- Matthew 28:18-20 – there is a participle and three verbs ...
 - “Go (as you are going) – a participle
 - **“make disciples” – the controlling verb of the whole passage**
 - “baptizing them” - another verb;
 - “teaching them” – another verb; “to obey everything I have commanded”
- As He was leaving the disciples to return to the Father’s right hand and the throne promised to David’s Son, Jesus had one command ... **“MAKE DISCIPLES!”**
- Christians are born (regenerated) but Disciples are MADE: It is a lifelong process of learning and obedience.
- A Disciple is a Student ... a Learner. A continual, life-long learner of Scripture and Kingdom principles.
- *Christ’s Church is to be totally focused on making disciples from every nation until Jesus comes again.*
- **PAUL - Everything good flows from Discipleship!**
- **2 Timothy 2:2** – At the end of his life, Paul has one thing on his mind for those like Timothy who he will leave behind ...
 - “What you have received from me, pass on to faithful men who will in turn be able to teach others.”
- At the end of his life, Paul’s final words to Timothy are a recommission to make disciples ... Teaching them the faith Paul taught Timothy.
- He recommissions Timothy to the long-term process of making disciples.
- Paul was planning three generations out into the future ...
 - Paul – Timothy – Timothy’s disciples – Their disciples after them

WE MUST RESTORE THE BALANCE BETWEEN EXPERIENTIAL ENCOUNTER and PROCESS OF DISCIPLESHIP.
WE MUST TAKE A LONG TERM VIEW.

WE MUST RECOMMIT TO EXPOSITORY PREACHING and BIBLICAL TEACHING.

WILL WE PASS ON THIS FAITH AND THIS CHURCH IN SUCH A POWERFUL, HEALTHY, LIVING MANNER THAT THREE GENERATIONS FROM NOW IT WILL BE JUST AS TRUE AND ALIVE AS IT WAS AT THE BEGINNING?

WE CAN INDEED DO THIS IF WE WILL OBEY GOD’S WORD,
LEARN FROM OUR PAST, and
PLAN WITH FUTURE GENERATIONS IN VIEW.