

## HLH- 800531- Moses\_ Seat

I would like to explain a new approach to the history of the government of God in the congregation of Israel and the Church of God as established from the days of Moses till now.

I think we have overlooked much of what is in the Old Testament and have never really seen the story from a certain perspective. We have cited the cases of Samuel and Saul.

We have cited the cases of Moses, but I doubt that we have really seen what was happening in the Church. That is, if we were to write a history of the congregation of Israel, which was the congregation of God, for that time, what would we say was the nature of the government? And what does that have to tell us with how Christ operates or what he allows or permits and contrast or parallel it with the experiences in the Church of God through time in our recent one? If I may make two particular statements and set you to thinking, I will address this first statement last and the second statement first by way of time order. In the New Testament Church of God, there have not always, nor has there been any consistent evidence in the government of God that there were apostles in every generation. It is, in fact, a unique situation when there are apostles in the New Testament Church. Secondly, the scribes and Pharisees were seated on Moses' seat, said Jesus in Matthew 23.2. And since Moses gave his name to that seat of authority, we must perceive something of what it means to be on Moses' seat. There was therefore some continuity, which we have never perceived clearly, between Moses and the time of the scribes and Pharisees with respect to the name of authority. Now, one might have used different names, but Moses had authority as the Church began. He was made a judge over the children of Israel, some of whom did not appreciate it. And in Jesus' day, he recognized Jesus did that the Sadducees were not seated on Moses' seat. He didn't say the priesthood was seated on Moses' seat. He didn't say that he was seated on Moses' seat. He said the scribes and Pharisees have seated themselves on Moses' seat. Whatever they order you to do, that do, but don't copy their example, because they say and do not in their own private lives. Let us take a look at this office we call Moses' seat, or take a look at the nature of the government that has been in the Church.

When Mr. Armstrong tells us that for years he used to be confused in this matter, he is saying what we simply never thought to say directly, and that is the government of God has never always had the same pattern, nor was it clear even to those who were essentially leaders or responsible in the Church through all time. Let us go back to the time of Moses briefly and take a look at our picture. The Old Testament says a lot more than most of us ever read out of it.

Moses had a certain authority. God set this authority because when organizing a group of people collectively at the foot of Sinai, there were two basic needs. One was to deal with the needs of the Church as a spiritual concept that is an organization of people regulated by laws that essentially are spiritual in nature, though there may have been some physical ones also included.

Unclean meats pertain to physical things. To lust after them pertains to the tenth commandment. To eat what you do not know is not a violation of the tenth commandment. To eat what is forbidden that you do know is a violation of the tenth commandment. So God's laws covered physical as well as spiritual things. I do not have to go further there. But besides being a Church or a congregation asked to have a God as their God, this God being the Creator, they were also promised to inherit the land of a particular group of people or the land of Canaan.

And in so doing, in this region of the eastern Mediterranean, by nature they would be what we would call a nation as well as a church or a state as well as a church. Our word in English state has both the sense of a nation state as well as a state within a nation. That's just one of those problem terms in English, but you know what we mean or should do so. With this in mind, when we look at the story, we recognize that Moses was given responsibility to govern, to make decisions, and to judge in certain areas, one of which was to regulate civil matters, the other of which was to regulate spiritual matters. And that means that when God spoke to Moses and said, I would like you to tell the children of Israel this or I order you to tell them that, explain this to them and explain that. Moses revealed to the children of Israel basic things pertaining to army, pertaining to money, the tithe, pertaining to corporal punishment in the state and in the family, also pertaining to aspects of religious service. And he was also asked to do something very special, which might have been pleasing to him and yet also a little embarrassing.

He was told to make his brother a high priest. Now Moses was not asked to function either as a high priest or a priest because all of the priests in Israel were to function if they were sons of Aaron. They may serve the priesthood as Moses might. If they belong to the family of Levi, Aaron descended from Levi. So within Israel, there was a special priesthood established, and I will not dwell at length on this, but just to point something up of importance. Within Israel, there was a priesthood established. Its primary function was to represent God in certain areas pertaining to the temporary building in which he dwelt, which was a tabernacle later on a temple. And when people made certain contributions to God, we call them offerings in general, involving animals or vegetables or money or cloth or whatever, the priesthood was to handle it and to in a sense intercede between the community as a whole and God. For the nation, you see, was not promised the Holy Spirit. God wanted certain things attended to in the building in which he dwelt in the presence of the children of Israel. Yahweh dwelt in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. He did not dwell in the community as a whole, that is within the people. When God established the covenant at Sinai, he established his presence in a building which he asked to be made. It was a temporary one, a tabernacle. He said, I will be among the children of Israel. And when the children of Israel want to approach me, they're not to do it directly, they're to do it through the priesthood. And the priesthood essentially stood between the people as a whole and God. And only the high priest, in fact, could enter into the very presence of God. And that he was allowed to do only once a year on the day of atonement. Now this priesthood was subject to the role of Moses. When God wanted Aaron appointed, God did not say to Aaron, look, I want to choose you. And by the way, when you see Moses next, tell him that I've chosen you. This is not the way God did it. God said to Moses, I want your brother to be the high priest. You tell him. And then later on, once he was high priest, God says to Moses, you tell Aaron to do so and so. And after Aaron was functioning, God later says to Moses and Aaron together. Now you tell the children of Israel. So Aaron had his role as high priest.

But you note that in establishing this important role and its descendants, God chose to use Moses seat. This congregation, this church of the descendants of Israel, was a nation state, was a church. Church and state were united, not as in the United States of America. And in the roles, Moses and Aaron shared responsibility. But Moses had the precedence without any question. Moses seat determined the policies as God revealed it to Moses. Now the reason Moses was chosen, of course, is that he was also a reliable person. He did not decide for himself what the laws should be. He was faithful in all his house, says Paul, in the book of Hebrews, that is addressing the Jews later, that Moses was loyal. He was reliable. He was faithful.

Whatever God asked him to do for the children of Israel, he communicated to them. And Aaron, of course, was within the priesthood directly responsible both to Moses and to Yahweh himself, the one

we call Lord, spelled in the King James with capital letters and most other modern versions also. Moses seat was the highest office there was in this nation state. Now that is important to realize. It was the highest office in the nation state because Moses determined many of the things that the priesthood was to do. This is important to realize as history develops. You have a priesthood, but you also have a center of authority that was directly accountable to God, in this case, to Yahweh, the one who appeared on a special occasion to Moses, the one who out of the cloud spoke to Moses as a man would speak face to face. But God was in the cloud, and Moses talked with him back and forth. But he talked to him as a person would, as you and I would, let's say, before or after service. Now, this picture is very important to have in mind. The ruler of the nation, the one who was over the whole was Yahweh. He had appointed Moses as judge. The seat of Moses or the seat of government that Moses exercised was superior to that of the priesthood. But Moses could not function as a priest. It was not the function of Moses' seat to be a priest. But the function of Moses' seat was to determine those things which God would ask the priesthood to do.

Joshua followed Moses, and we'll move down through time. And God communicated, Yahweh did, through Joshua. Joshua directed the nation. The high priest is not pictured as directing the nation. I want you to note that the high priest is not pictured as directing the nation.

But Joshua does in the conquest and the settlement of the country. We learned that when Joshua was dead, and also all the elders of that generation, the children of Israel didn't do what pleased God, and there was an invasion. Then we read that there was a judge whom God raised up at the close of the eighth year of this invasion, and the children of Israel obeyed in that period of time. And after he was dead, and I won't go through the book of Judges at this point, but just to look at the principle, we have as the next step, the judge dying, and the people immediately are turning to sin, and another invasion occurs, from the death of Joshua to the time of Samuel. You will not discover at all times that there was someone seated on Moses' seat. Now that's a very important thing to note, because I think it will help us understand the whole history of the New Testament church. Moses didn't know whom to appoint. God said, well the man I've chosen is Joshua, and you give your authority and power to him. Joshua was not told who was to succeed him. And when no one sat on Moses' seat, the highest next office in the land was clearly that of the high priest. Now I will ask you briefly, even though you have had a study on the book of Judges, I would ask you to take note, if you would, of the last portion of the book of Judges. The story of the Judges, from beginning after the death of Joshua to Samson, is made very clear through chapter 16. The story of the death of Samson, how long he judged, is finished with chapter 16. Now if you did not know, you might have overlooked the fact that chapter 17 and 18 and 19 and 20 and finally, 21, all of this material, it pertains to the Benjamites, that pertains to the Levites in the concubine, the story of Micah and the Danites, all of that is an appendix. It is added, as any appendix is, to the end of the book, but it did not occur after the death of Samson. All the material that we have from chapter 17 through 21 inclusive occurred early in the story. It, in fact, is the story of what happened in Israel after the death of Joshua, and it tells us of the state of affairs in the country.

You look very carefully and you will discover in this that in terms of the story of the Danites, it was Moses' own grandson who was involved in the story. You will have very clearly the picture of the events in those early days after Moses. And if you also note carefully during this period, you will find that it was Aaron's own grandson who functioned, who would long since have been dead.

If we were to come down in time through the experience of Samson. When there was no judge, the primary function in terms of the authority passed to the priesthood. But the priesthood functioned as a priesthood. The high priest in this case carried out his office and they appealed to him. God had not raised a judge at all times to sit on Moses' seat. If you will note here, I will just take one verse in

chapter 20, verse 27. And the people of Israel inquired of the Lord for the Ark of the Covenant of God was there in those days and Phineas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, ministered before it in those days saying, shall we yet again go out to battle against our brethren, the Benjamites? This is a story, you remember, where the Benjamites supported that community of theirs where a concubine had been abused. We won't go into the story, but it is interesting to note that the priesthood was appealed to whenever someone was not seated on Moses' seat. There was always some center of authority, but that is what descended from Aaron by generation. Normally, unless it was a cripple, someone who was physically defective, the high priest was always the first born son down the line. It was not always because of those exceptions.

You did not have to be elected, you didn't run for office, you didn't have to be competing in any way. There was a sequence of father to son when it came to the high priest.

There was no such sequence in these days when it came to Moses' seat. The picture should be clear.

God always was able to reveal himself through the high priest whenever there was a need, and the people sought God, and when there sometimes was not a judge. God does not always appoint someone as a successor at the level of Moses or at the level of Joshua.

Let us note what the history says. You don't have to go outside of the book of Judges to see that you have a sequence of events in which Israel sinned, then a judge was raised up.

When the judge died, the children of Israel sinned again, and it goes on and on and on this way.

Very likely, one may deduce from the story that when a judge died, if the children of Israel had been of the proper spiritual state of mind, God would have raised up another judge immediately, and they would not have gone into captivity in their own land, that is some other invading their countryside. But it is because their spiritual state declined that God simply didn't choose a successor, and the responsibility then rested with the high priest as the ultimate inherited office to communicate with the Creator.

We come down to the days of Samuel. Samuel was functioning as a judge in Moses' seat. He also, interestingly, was more than this, he was of the family of Levi. He was a priest as well.

Now, sometimes you will discover that God chooses to sit on Moses' seat, someone who was also of the family of Aaron that did not exclude it, you note. Even though Moses would have been excluded from Aaron's role, a priest was not excluded from Moses' role. That depends on whom God chooses, and he certainly chose to work through Samuel. Now, all this time, God was in charge. God didn't seem to be in charge at all times because he let things happen, and the people blamed God for what happened instead of seeing that their role is what caused God to withdraw his blessing and his protection. Now, Samuel was in a period of time in which the children of Israel had mixed blessings as well as serious problems with the Philistines, and God used Samuel to deliver the nation. But even after they were delivered, they were not really pleased with the situation when Samuel's sons did not live up to his character and abused their opportunities as young men who were given responsibility to begin to judge matters. Samuel had appointed them for responsibility in the community, and they were not handling themselves properly, and the people said, we would like a king to succeed you, Samuel. Now, most of us have never really understood why God said later, they thought maybe, or maybe we thought that God was offended at the children of Israel's request, because God said when Samuel mentioned this remarkable thing, God said, well, now Samuel, don't take it so hard. They really have rejected me from being king, that I should rule over them. They really are not rejecting you, because indeed, the children of Israel liked Samuel. Now, when God said

they are rejecting me from being king, that I should rule over them, we learned something that has been missing all the time from Moses to judges in a clear direct statement, though it should have been apparent all along. The role of king from the time the children of Israel were in Sinai at the foot of this mount, all the way to the days of Samuel, which were approximately four centuries. This entire period of time, the children of Israel had a king, and in many cases apparently didn't even know it.

They didn't perceive it. Now, a king is one essentially who has absolute authority, that is the general conception of kings in times past, of course, depending on the soldiers they could get and the population background and their economy, some were stronger than others.

Whether we saw it or not, when God said, if the children of Israel accept my covenant, I will be their God, and they shall be my people, and I will rule over them, I will be like a husband, and they will be like the wife, he was also telling them that he would be their king, and that they would be the nation that he should found in this land, which would be Canaan. What we discovered, therefore, is that all along, when Moses was judge, God was king. That's why Moses didn't act as king. He sought the laws that the king should reveal.

In the days of Joshua, the laws essentially had been laid out, but the manner of the conquest of the land was a question of what God should reveal. At one point, Joshua erred and made an arrangement with one of the cities of the Canaanites that had deluded him and the other elders of Israel.

God allowed that to stand. God, in a sense, let them be reprimanded. But the interesting thing is there, Joshua appeals to God for an answer, and God communicates to him when things didn't go well at another time earlier at the city of Ai. Joshua is in communication with God. The one who makes the final decision is God. God was king, although the children of Israel simply didn't perceive it clearly that way. Now, it is very clear when you realize later the term is used, king of kings and lord of lords. That has reference to the sense that God, when he sets up a nation that is also a state in a church, has those who are religious leaders, hence the term lord, and those who are secular in the secular area, those who are kings, lord of lords and king of kings. Now, these areas tend to blend. Within Israel, there was the priesthood, and there was also the need of handling the secular matters of state. Moses and Joshua and each of the judges, from Othniel, Ehud, and you name them, down to Samson and Samuel, were under the king who was Yahweh, whom we call the Lord from the King James Version. That is a translation. Yahweh doesn't itself mean Lord, but that is the only simple word that one, in a sense, can use in our language as we have developed it. The prophet, of course, calls him the eternal, which is more a translation, but doesn't necessarily define the role as well. When the children of Israel asked Saul for a king, sorry, asked Samuel for a king, God said, well, you tell them that if this is what they want, this is what they get, and you tell them what they're going to get. And Samuel did explain what the king will do, the standing army, the taxation, the various obligations of state. That is the point at which you have a king. You will also have, interestingly enough, a growing bureaucracy.

And the more you want the king to do, the more bureaucratic you will have, the more bureaucratic your government will be. Now, Samuel was a priest. He was also functioning on Moses' seat, because God communicated to him in affairs of state, in affairs of the military.

When the children of Israel went to war, here was a priest who was also functioning very clearly in the seat of Moses, because he determined what the army should do. The children of Israel wanted a king instead, and they wanted somebody whom they could look up to in the old age of Samuel, and

God gave them Saul. Now, Saul was therefore playing the role of a king, and he was seated on Moses' seat. Hereafter, instead of those on Moses' seat being judges, they were now called kings. That was an interesting permission that God allowed. God, of course, addressed the question in Deuteronomy 17 verses 14 and 15, a reference also early in the days of Moses in Deuteronomy 28-36 about a king, because he knew the children of Israel would sooner or later not see God, Yahweh as king, but would want some mortal man. The seat of Moses passed therefore from those whom God would directly appoint as judges to an office that had the title of king which appropriately had heretofore belonged only to God properly. But they wanted to be like other nations, and wanted to have a man, a kind of supreme authority they could look up to, because God seemed so unable, so distant, so far away, so forgetful of their needs. That was their attitude.

Saul could have passed it to his children. God said, look, if Saul had obeyed, I would have given it to his own sons, but he chose not to do so. He chose now to choose someone of the tribe, or he chose to call and ordain someone of the tribe of Judah. Saul was a Benjamin, and when David was found to be obedient, having been tested well over a decade before he came to the throne, because he was anointed as a young boy, probably entering his teen age at most, he had to wait till he was 30 years old before he came to the throne. So we have a situation in which God chooses now to confirm David in this role, and because of what David did, he should have sons who should continue. The seat of Moses was now in the hands of people who were kings. In the days of David, David was a king, David judged, that's also clear, that's one of the functions, but David, like Moses and like Joshua and other judges and like Samuel, sought the will of God and looked upon God as his king. He looked upon Yahweh as his king, and in fact he had a knowledge and an understanding both of the one whom we know as the father as well as the son, because in one of the Psalms he said, Yahweh, referring in this case to that eternal member of the God family whom we know as the father, as distinct from Yahweh, the person of the son, he said Yahweh, referring to the father said unto Adonai or my lord or master, he said sit on my right hand till I make your enemies your footstool. Now that of course is a prophecy that the father has appointed the son, Jesus Christ, to be at his right hand, and David said that it was communicated to him that this is exactly what the one person in the God family said to the other, and there the other one who became Jesus Christ is called in the Hebrew Adonai and means lord or master. David therefore even recognized that the one whom he normally would address as Yahweh, in this case he calls lord or master. David therefore did not see his role as someone making the ultimate decision, but someone who was subject to two individuals above him, one who was his master, his lord, and the other who was even superior in ultimate authority. So David saw the role of Moses' seat in proper perspective as Moses had seen it. Solomon seems originally to have perceived it, but you know what happened toward the end of his reign. He overtaxed the people, there was a revolt, and then we come to the story, interestingly enough. In the days of Rehoboam, when the children of Israel revolted and set up their own king and the church or the nation was split into two, and one had kings of their own choice whom God, after Jeroboam, simply did not put on the throne directly, he allowed circumstances to develop. Once in a while he anointed somebody like Jehu, but that was unusual and not regular. But we'll focus in not on that large portion of the church or state that broke away, but that portion which remained loyal. And here we have kings from time to time as noble, as Jehoshaphat, as noble as Hezekiah or Josiah, and others in the same lineage who were not noble in character at all. You will notice the distinction where the kings who did what God wished naturally would have recognized him as in supreme authority. But God allowed at this time the office of Moses to pass from father to son in the house of Judah, from the days of David all the way to the days of Jehoiachin, the nephew of Zedekiah. It went essentially from father to son. Right at the end it passed, of course, to an uncle briefly in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. Moses' seat was therefore in interesting contrast in terms of how it was carried out

in the days of the kings versus in the days of the judges. It got so bad, of course, that God sent the king, Jehoiachin, into captivity. And he was the one, in a sense, who was temporarily displaced by Zedekiah. But when Zedekiah was dethroned, blinded, and sent into Babylon, the end of whom we know nothing of, the king who survived was his nephew, Jehoiachin. And here was a person on the throne of David, so to speak, but in prison. There was no one functioning at this time in this period of captivity with the freedom that they had in the days of the judges or in the days of the king.

When the children of Israel, in part, that is the Jewish community with the fragment of Benjamin and certainly more of Levi, returned to the land of Canaan, the leaders of the community tended to be the priestly family, of course. But from time to time, there were governors who were sent. The Persians tended to rule these various areas by governors. Zarababel was the governor of the lineage of David. Nehemiah was another governor, later of whom we have a great deal of knowledge.

There were also priests. Some priests were scribes who were very important in copying the law, Ezra, being one. Now, all along, I have not mentioned a particular office that didn't have a direct governmental role, and I will just pass over it by saying, in the days of the judges, there were seers on occasion, S-W-E-R-S, people who could foresee the future because God revealed it in part. In the days of Samuel, there were also seers who now came to be known as prophets, because they not only were given visions of the future, but they often had to speak out to the priests or to the kings. Now, the prophets didn't have an office because they were prophets.

A king like David was a prophet. A priest like Jeremiah was a prophet. But because you may have been a prophet, didn't make you a priest or a king. The prophet had no governmental office because he was a prophet. He had a governmental office if he had that first, or was so appointed. God often spoke through these men because under this period of time, especially in the days of the kings, though you inherited an office and sat in Moses' seat, God didn't always choose to address you directly. He would address, let's say, the king through a prophet whom he could directly work with and communicate with. The king, from time to time, was obedient and cooperated and responded, David being one, in the case of Nathan the prophet. Isaiah was a prophet in the days of Hezekiah. Now, the prophets didn't make the ultimate decisions of state. The kings did.

But the prophet revealed what they needed to know. In the days after the captivity, when the sins of Judah had in part been expiated, shall we say, by captivity, they came back. Their rulers included priests, some of whom were scribes, and seated on Moses' seat, which means the supreme authority over the nation state were now governors who were generally appointed by the Persians.

Some governors would have done the will of the Persians without concern of God, and others like Zerubbabel and Nehemiah sought to please the Persians and to respect the fact that God had put them in authority. But on the other hand, also serve God and put him first. That's very clear.

You cannot serve God and mammon. You can't serve equally too. So in this sense, there were men whom we have no record of who may well have just served the Persians, although every record that we have would seem to indicate until the end of the Persian realm that the governors were those to whom God could communicate his will, either through prophets or directly. Now this is a change, because at this time there was no possibility for any other but appointees of the throne of Persia being responsible. God allowed them to choose individuals. This is interesting to note. Now there was a time when Nehemiah was not governor, and he became appointed in this office when there was a special need, and he made a request of the king. You know, he was the cup bearer and advisor of the king on one of the occasions when the king was discussing matters of state and drinking, and enjoying the occasion. He was surprised that Nehemiah was downcast, and Nehemiah was surprised

the king noted it because he didn't intend to appear that way, and Nehemiah took advantage of the situation. He prayed immediately, and then he proposed to the king that he is concerned about his own people, and you know the story. That would indicate that there was a time there wasn't even a governor over the territory. The one who was in charge up to this point in time was a priest described by the name of Ezra, and he was handling the religious office and functioning. In this case, in the seat of Moses, only in so far as the nation was looking to the person who was a priest, as the chief spokesman. Now, when you come down to the story of Nehemiah, you discover that he had a role clearly superior, because he was in charge of the state, so to speak, under the king. God allowed this arrangement because the nation had not done its duty. When there were no longer governors and only those in the priesthood, the next highest office functioning, who made the decisions as Moses would have, and Joshua would have, and when there were no judges on Moses' seat directly, the priest, you know, from time to time after Joshua made decisions, they went to him.

We come to the Greek period, and the remarkable story of Jadaiah, this is recorded in Nehemiah 12, when the last one of the priestly lineage, Jadaiah, who was recorded in the Old Testament, Nehemiah 12, and let's just turn to it briefly so you'll know, he was a man who met Alexander the Great.

Let's see if I can find it in my Bible here quickly. In verse 11, it mentions the father of Jadaiah, that's where you picked the story up. Jadaiah here, in verse 11, Nehemiah 12, was the last one of the priestly family, and he had the significant authority, and he went and met Alexander, and he spoke for the state. There was no Persian governor at this time. In fact, Alexander was going to punish the Jews, because the Jews had previously sent a message that they would not revolt from Persia and join the Greeks, but would remain loyal so long as there was a Persian king. And so Alexander marched to the city, and he was going to punish the Jews. And Jadaiah came out in his priestly robes with the other priests, and met Alexander, who bowed down in his presence, which was quite a change of mind. And Alexander said to Jadaiah the High Priest, that he had seen him in a dream, that it was Jadaiah himself who had spoken in this dream to Alexander, that Alexander would subdue the Persian Empire. And of course, the priest was smart enough in the interim to bring a copy of the Hebrew Bible, and he read in Hebrew, and undoubtedly would have translated into Greek, or had someone to do so, the fact that there would be a king of Greece who should subdue the king of Persia, which is of course in the book of Daniel chapter eight. And this pleased Alexander no end, except that Jadaiah didn't read the rest of the story, that he would be broken off, and there would be four who would divide his realm. He kept that to himself. But Jadaiah was a remarkable man, the last one in this period through whom God worked. And it is important to realize that this part of Nehemiah was added after the death of Nehemiah over a century later than Nehemiah came up. And that must mean that God was communicating to the priesthood. And in fact, what we have here, the last communication recorded in all the Old Testament in Nehemiah 12:11 is the story of the lineage of the priest down to Jadaiah. So we have situations where a priest might function in terms of Moses' seat. He managed matters of state, not merely the office of the priest at the Tabernacle or Temple. And we had seen this before in the days of Phineas, Eleazar, and Aaron, you remember that lineage we noted in the Book of Judges. When it came to the army, when it came to going to war, God simply had not chosen another judge of the secular lineage, but someone here during the lifetime of the elders that outlived Joshua. And after Joshua died, it apparently clearly passed to the family of Aaron to be responsible for matters of state. But after they, that man also died, it seems to have fallen into disarray, and God didn't use anybody in that office. Now, after Jadaiah's time, there is spiritual decay in the state. The high priests are the only ones of whom we have any significant reference, and they fell into a terrible state of decay in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes. And you know some of the story. We tend to read this at the time in December at the Festival of Purim, or Dedication. And we'll go over it undoubtedly in either a sermon or a Bible study this next December.

too. To let you see the story in around 167 to 164 BC, and what just immediately preceded that period of time, all this being recorded in the books of 1st and 2nd Maccabees. During this time, the primary office of government under the Maccabees that overthrew Antiochus Epiphanes and his Greek supporters, although they were subject in a sense for political reasons to the Seleucid Empire, they did have internal autonomy.

The priests were the dominant ones. There were no others appointed. They made the decisions of state and church. The Levites of the family of Matathias, who was the father of John, who was the father of Judas Maccabees, and the father of Simon. And the lineage came down till we come to Aristobulus, who took the title for the first time of King of the Jews. He was not of the House of Judah, but of the House of Levi, the family of Aaron. His son, Janius, died and left a widow, Alexandra, in charge. Janius was a Sadducee. He was also functioning as a king. And when Alexandra was the widow, left making decisions of state. We have the interesting thing that seated on Moses' seat after the death of her husband, Janius, was a woman, Alexandra, who to gain, let's say, a certain power and prestige in the community and to hold that office, selected the Pharisees, among whom there were many scribes, to handle the matters of state.

These were normally of the House of Judah. They would be rabbis or teachers. And for the first time, we have the strange phenomena of a priesthood going on. The priest kings now having left, let's say, one of the Levitical families running matters of state, while another brother ran matters of church. This widow was in charge and appoints Pharisees to handle the matters of state. Most of the Pharisees were not priests. Most of the priests were Sadducees. Handling matters of state were these. Men who took advantage of the opportunity, and as Matthew should correctly be translated in 23.2, seated themselves on Moses' seat. And having seated themselves on Moses' seat, Jesus said, do what they say to do. Because that's where they were. They had this authority, it had been appointed of them, and God had allowed it. That's an interesting state of affairs.

They were handling the secular aspects of the state for the Jewish community.

They would make arrangements with the Gentiles of the Seleucids, and later on when Herod came on the throne, he was of the House of Edom, E-D-O-M, he saw. He had been circumcised, so he was in that sense, an Edomite convert, and the Romans had appointed him. Now you have the interesting state of affairs. You have the priestly family, most of whom were Sadducees. Following in the line of Aaron, on Moses' seat were now seated the scribes and Pharisees. The Pharisees basically handling matters of synagogue and judgment that were non-priestly, and dictating to the priests because they knew Moses' seat was higher than the seat of Aaron. And they ordered the Sadduceic priests to conduct themselves properly, and not as the priesthood had done before Antiochus Epiphanes, to be careless and let their function fall into disarray. But they were, in fact, when it came to political matters, not really in charge of other than their own community. The person really in charge of the nation was the Herodian family, and Herod was subject to Caesar, and Caesar was subject to the devil. And so Jesus said of the Pharisees who tried to please Herod in order to retain their role in the synagogue and in the church and to handle matters of internal polity, of state, Jesus said of them that they were of their father the devil. The congregation of Israel had descended to the point that those who were in Moses' seat, brethren, were spiritually of their father the devil, something that had not even been said, though it may well have been true, of some of the house of David, like Ahas or Manasseh for a while. But here you have the state of affairs, a church that from generation to generation had built up its sins and sank beneath them, so that instead of having Moses under God, or Joshua under God, or a judge under God, or then a man who had the title of king under God, or a king who wasn't under God, you have here heaped up not merely, as we had before, the devil who gives his seat and authority to the Persian kings.

You not only have that, but you even have between these emperors of Rome, you have the lesser king, like Herod, between the Caesars of Rome and these other men who, unlike Nehemiah, unlike Zerubbabel and unlike Ezra, were not seeking to please God first, but to hold their office, were seeking to please Herod and his successors. They didn't want that office taken from them.

Now this is the first time also in which instead of a single judge, instead of a single king, a single governor, or a priest functioning as a governor, you had a group of men. I want you to notice how unusual this is. The whole school of Pharisees and scribes together function in this capacity. It was a school of thought. It was not democratic in the western modern sense. It was not a single individual. They were even divided the Pharisees between the philosophy and ideas of Shammai and Hillel, and the scribes copied the law. The scribes copied it correctly, of course.

God wouldn't have allowed them to do it if they hadn't, but these people simply were imbued, not with the spirit of God. They were imbued with the spirit of the devil, and they thought of themselves as a part of the world that then was and wanted to retain their office, and that's why they didn't like Jesus. Because if he were going to set up the kingdom in that time, they knew in their own hearts that if he could overthrow Caesar, if, and he would overthrow the Herodian family, they knew he wouldn't keep them in office, making decisions for the nation, making decisions for the priests. Knowing that, they simply didn't want Jesus to establish his kingdom, because then they knew they were not really internally qualified for the job, even though they were seated on Moses' seat, having invigged themselves into this position around 78 BC when Alexandra, you see, had to make some decision to secure herself as a widow on the throne. It's an interesting way how it developed, and most of us have never really seen it because we haven't read the story that may be found, and let's say Joseph is certainly one of the best or any of the Jewish historians for this period. So ended the interesting phases of the Old Testament, symbolized, of course, by that seven-branched candlestick in the tabernacle, and we come to the New Testament experience where Jesus does not have kings because the church is not a secular state, where there are no judges because we're not a secular state handling judicial matters, where there are instead apostles and or prophets, depending on the period of time, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and other functions in the church. The church essentially is a spiritual entity composed of those who have the Spirit of God made up also collectively in our body here today of friends or children or unconverted husbands and wives who may be, let's say, loyal and supportive, but simply haven't yet reached the age of maturity or haven't understood spiritual things. We have the, as Mr. Armstrong described it, the human fellowship of the church and those that are actually imbued with the Spirit of God, which is the church of God. God raised up to function in this church apostles to begin with and others whom they appointed, and he started out with apostles. They had experience that one might think of as local elders to start with, though they were ordained as apostles, they had experience as evangelists, and finally they had experience as apostles because they really started out with simple learning trips and grew to the task that they were appointed, and when they were finally on the day of Pentecost in AD 31, imbued with the Spirit of God, they for the first time functioned spiritually in the office to which they had been ordained nearly three years before.

Now, merely because there were twelve apostles does not mean, as some people not of this fellowship have said, that there were always to be twelve, no more, no less. There were others who became apostles without any doubt. Church history would seem to have named Philip. The Bible in the book of Acts certainly names Paul and Barnabas, and James, the brother of Jesus, and in the role it would seem that we could hardly have excluded others who succeeded, Judas and Simeon, Jesus' other brothers, those were half brothers of course, but the remarkable thing to note is that when we trace the story of the people of God in Asia Minor, we have after the death of John and or any who

succeeded, we have only the indication in government in the church of people who were called elders or bishops. That is, presbyters, elders or bishops are various terms used in Hebrew or Greek to refer to an office over the local congregations. Polycarp, a disciple of John whose account is given of course of the controversy over Passover and the Sunday observance between the bishop at Rome and himself. He was certainly the leader of the church at that time, and he was never named as other than an elder or a bishop. He was not ordained to our knowledge, nor did anyone call him an apostle that I am aware of. And Polycrates spoke later in the days of Victor of Rome on this matter and spoke to him much as the prophets might have spoken to kings in times past. But the church of God often had in terms of authority in the church. And if we want to say that the name of the supreme office of authority is that of Moses' seat, God placed after the scribes and Pharisees in his day, he placed apostles in Moses' seat. Sometimes there were none other than bishops exercising the direct responsibility over the church. We don't use the word bishop. We have adopted the name elder. We don't even use the name presbyter. The reason we don't, brethren, today is that presbyters have been construed in a particular way by the Presbyterian church, bishops by the Anglican and Catholic church. And we simply have adopted the term, which is also equivalent in office, that is elder, because there is no church called the elder church. There's the Presbyterian church, there, you know, that's why we've adopted it. So there won't be misunderstanding. And when we lay hands on someone, he doesn't immediately discover himself to be a great metropolitan bishop.

That's why we simply have avoided the term, though we read and explain it in the Bible.

We have men who most certainly functioned as apostles in Moses' seat, that is that office directly under God in the Middle Ages and in the earlier Dark Ages, Constantine of Mennon Alley's in Asia Minor, Peter of Brewy, Waldo. When we come to England, we have no reference in the days of Queen Elizabeth I of anybody other than a local elder or a pastor in the church.

When members of the church address the king on the question of the Sabbath, and I have a copy of one of the books published by the churches of God in the 17th century addressed to the king, it was addressed and written by a man who was no other than an elder. Such books may be found in the British Museum. I chance to obtain a copy, which is as far as I know, apart from anything from the Waldens's, the only record we have till relatively modern times of what the churches of God then were publishing. When Stephen Mumford in 1664 came to Rhode Island, he was only an elder of the leading church in England. He was not an apostle. When we come to the story of the middle of the last century, we have certainly the leader at the very beginning, who was a pastor, Niles, and they were called Nileites, like we've been called Armstrongites, or Nilesites, I think that's the word that was used against them. These men were no other than elders. There was no higher office functioning in the church, and the state of the church reflected it. A dozen here, three or four there. As the church grew, they began the brethren in this century called the churches of God 7th day to wonder what to do. And spiritually, as confused as they were, some thought there should be 12 apostles, the seven deacons, and 70 elders, as if the number were important, and you could simply make a man an elder or a deacon or an apostle, merely to fill out the numbers. But it was the church of God, and there were 12 apostles finally chosen on November 4, 1933. Now, they used the word apostle earlier in their ordination, but they had not, in fact, come to the point where they had chosen exactly 12. Before that time, the word apostle was used in the ordination of any minister. It was a part of the annual ordination certificate. He was called an apostle of Jesus Christ. They didn't understand its role or meaning. When Mr. Armstrong was ordained in 1931, he was called that. But when in 1933 and November 4, after this work had already begun out of the church at Eugene, Oregon, and he was on radio, you remember, by invitation on another kind of program that he was one of other ministers who would speak, and normally he was the only one because the others didn't get up early enough

to do it Sunday morning. At that time, on the 4th of November in West Virginia in Salem, they chose 12 apostles and the seven deacons, and the leader of the deacons was the leader of the church, A. N. Duggar, and they chose 70 elders of which Herbert W. Armstrong was one. Interestingly, he was number 40. He was the 40th elder chosen, and God used him in the capacity to which he was ordained by giving him experience as an elder, giving him experience in evangelizing the Northwest, and giving him experience until he was able to handle as an apostle the worldwide work. Now it is remarkable to note that the spiritual state of the church, when there are no judges on Moses' seat, the spiritual state of the New Testament church, when there is nobody more significant than an elder or a bishop, is highly variable. This is a unique period in the history of the Church of God. It is unique in the sense of what the church has returned to in its comprehension. It's unique in the problems of those who also have wanted Mr. Armstrong's office. It is unique in its accomplishments, and I think that we need to perceive ourselves as a church in a new light, in terms of what God has chosen to do in this generation that he has not always chosen to do in each preceding one. It is not true that there has been apostolic succession, one apostle ordaining another. It is true that there has always been someone whom God directly uses when the church grows, and there have been tragic periods as in the captivity, when perhaps we have no one. This is the story in the days of Daniel, when there were no others than prophets, no high priest could function, there was no tabernacle, there was no king, there was no judge. I've skipped over that period, but that's unique in the history.

I hope that you will read, as you have time this summer, the Old Testament story, and take note of the state of affairs in the church, as God formed it in those days and as today.

The office of the seat of Moses may be defined as essentially that office of leadership, but different people of different levels have been used depending on the spiritual state of the church and what God has proposed to do at any time. And just the history of the last 100 to 120 years between, let's say, 1860 and 1980 is most remarkable in the spiritual state, where we have such names as Brinkerhoff and Duggar in the last century, in the earlier part of this century, and then Mr. Armstrong's role. Duggar was the leader of the Church of God's seventh day.

In reality, Mr. Armstrong said he functioned as if he were an apostle. He was, in a sense, in the churches of God's seventh day for years on Moses' seat in terms of making decisions for the church, but he was the leader of the seven deacons. And the spiritual state of the church reflected that image. I think we should be very grateful of the state of the church today and the spiritual role that God has called Mr. Armstrong to and all of us to accomplish a work before the return of Jesus Christ.