

# Living Church News

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## We Must Be Forgiven!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

The Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread will soon be upon us. As we think about this and *examine ourselves*, we should try to truly become—even more—those people in whom Christ dwells. We, my dear brethren, should have a profound awareness that we have been **forgiven** of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. We should **never** be ashamed of His blood or His sacrifice—nor in *any way* attempt to minimize Christ's involvement with our salvation, and with His being a *primary* part of the true Gospel and the **only** way through which we can enter God's Kingdom. As the Apostle Peter was inspired to state, regarding Christ, "there is *no other name* under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). And Jesus Christ Himself forcefully declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

Brethren, as I have stated in the past, we truly are "the Church of the **forgiven**." It is extremely helpful for us to realize this constantly, and to focus on *how grateful* we should be that our sins can be fully forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We should also remind ourselves that He must live within us daily, continually. When we take the emblems of the broken bread and the red wine, let us truly and thoughtfully meditate upon the *suffering* Jesus went through in allowing His body to be broken for our **healing**, and remind ourselves of the tremendous anguish He went through in *shedding His blood* for us, on the cross, to pay the *death penalty* for our sins.

Daily, we should *cry out* to God to send Jesus to live within us so that we can reflect Jesus Christ more and more and more as each month of our life passes!

The inspired Apostle Paul prayed that "with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:20–21). This is one of my favorite passages in the Bible. How much is Christ "magnified" in *your life*—or in *mine*? We continually need to ask ourselves that question. And we need to **study** God's word fervently and "feed" on Christ (John 6:57). We need to *pray fervently* that Christ will live within us (Galatians 2:20). We need to **meditate** on God's word, carefully *think through* all the lessons we need to learn, and consider all the ways we can "do better" in the remaining years of our lives. We also need to exercise the wonderful tool of **fasting**, so we may more fully humble ourselves and draw closer to God in every way.

If we do these things, we can become *much closer* to the Father and to Christ so that He may be able to use us far more powerfully to complete His

Work! As Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; *for without Me you can do nothing*" (John 15:5). A few verses later, we find even Jesus' emphasis on the **importance** of doing God's Work and bearing "much fruit." For He stated, "By this My Father is glorified, *that you bear much fruit*; so you will be My disciples" (v. 8). We can *only* bear "much fruit" through an extremely close relationship with Christ—crying out and zealously yielding ourselves to Him so it is actually **Christ** doing the Work through us as simply "tools" in His hands!

As prophetic events speed up, and the horrifying Great Tribulation comes ever closer, we *must* do all we can to be truly **powerful** tools Christ can use to reach our peoples with the full Truth *while there is time!* Another of my favorite passages in the Bible is from the book of Proverbs. Please *meditate carefully* on the full meaning of these powerful words: "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Surely we did not know this,' does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?" (Proverbs 24:10-12).

Truly, we are among the *extremely few* people on this earth who sincerely "cry out" for the opportunity and privilege to **warn** our fellow human beings of what is coming! So we need to do *everything* we can to fashion ourselves—through Christ in us—as more fit instruments in His hands.

In that regard, I recall that the 55th anniversary of my ordination as an Evangelist was not long ago. As most of you probably know, I was ordained an Evangelist by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong on December 20, 1952—along with Herman Hoeh, Raymond Cole, Richard David Armstrong, and my uncle, Dr. C. Paul Meredith. In this group of five, I was fittingly ordained last and least—for I was the youngest physically and the "newest" in learning the full Truth of God. Yet, sadly, I am now the *only one* left alive of those original five Evangelists.

Naturally, I become a little sentimental as I think back on those "early days" in the Work when several of us worked so very closely with Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong in getting the college underway, in carrying out the baptismal tours, and in getting the *Plain Truth* and *Good News* magazines coming out regularly for the first time. That was a great privilege and honor, for which I will *always* be grateful.

When I think back on those early years of Ambassador College, and on the opportunity I had to help the Work of God really get going, I have **never** been sorry that I "missed out" on going to the parties and dances I would have attended if I had stayed in Missouri. I **never** have felt sad that I missed out on dating a variety of pretty girls in some larger college, or that I went without other social and personal opportunities.

When I *deeply meditate* on the lessons of those 55 years in Christ's ministry, I *always* realize that the only big lacks during those years were the times when I did **not** put God's Kingdom *first* in every-

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# Correct Church Government Is Vital

## Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

**T**he religions of this world are confused about almost every major doctrine in the Bible. It should be no surprise that they are also confused about the biblical form of Church government.

Yet the *biblical* form of Church government is absolutely *vital* in identifying where Christ is working, and in teaching members of God's Church the important lessons of correct government. After all, true Christians are *preparing to rule*—under Christ—the cities and nations of this *entire world*. Therefore, learning about *right government* and the experience of *practicing that form of government* is crucial in the development of the future kings and priests who will *soon* be given that responsibility when Christ returns!

Also, it is vital that we all understand how wrong it is for “every Tom, Dick and Harry” to rush off to start his *own* church, whether or not he is in *any way* qualified! Mr. Herbert Armstrong used to explain this very carefully and thoughtfully. He would often quote Hebrews 5:4, “*And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.*” Throughout His inspired word, God is *very specific* in condemning men's efforts to “ordain themselves”—or appoint themselves to some job in the ministry!

Perhaps the most dramatic example of this is the situation involving Korah and the “two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown” (Numbers 16:1–2). As we see in verse 3, these men tried to *exalt*

*themselves*, and indicated that *they* should be able to take the job of leadership over the congregation “just like” Moses and Aaron. So Moses said, “and are you seeking the **priesthood** also” (v. 10). Obviously, God knew the hearts of these men—and knew that *Moses was correct* in his assessment. These men were trying to take over the leadership, even though God had clearly appointed Moses and Aaron to that responsibility.

God dramatically gave us a powerful **lesson** when “the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly” (vv. 32–33). We should all **study** Numbers 16, and *learn the lesson* that **none** is to “appoint” himself as a minister—or spiritual “priest”—apart from God using those He has already put into the ministry to do the appointing or ordaining.

As most of you know, Mr. Armstrong was ordained by the Sardis era Church of God back in 1931. I was ordained personally by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong—along with four others—as an *evangelist* of Jesus Christ on December 20, 1952 in front of the entire Headquarters congregation at Ambassador College in Pasadena. I did **not** try to “appoint” myself, but when the apostasy began in the late 1980s I simply carried on as an “evangelist”—the office to which Mr. Armstrong had appointed me.

All of us need to understand that practicing correct Church government is a matter of **faith** in Christ! For the Bible is very clear that God *does* guide His Church, overall, in spite of occasional human errors,

and we must **trust Christ** to do His job! *No one* should try to “appoint himself” to the ministry or to take an office Christ has not given him!

Remember, following correct Church government involves **faith** that *Jesus Christ is alive* and doing His job. But in today's society, most people place great value on *democratic* government, because that is currently the most popular form of government in much of the Western world. But will democracy be the inspired form of government *after* Christ's return? Remember that Jesus Christ “is the *same* yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). What form of government did He *always* lead His true servants to follow—in both Old and New Testaments? And what *kind* of government will be followed in the soon-coming Kingdom of God?

Jesus stated, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God’” (Luke 4:4). Are we willing to open our minds and hearts and see the *biblical* approach to Church government? God says, “For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist,” says the LORD. ‘But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word’” (Isaiah 66:2). Will you fear and tremble before God's word, and determine to be absolutely sure that *your church* is following the *biblical* form of government?

## The Gospel and Our Future Calling

Scripture clearly describes the true gospel: “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is ful-

filled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:14–15). God’s people should realize that Jesus was talking about a *literal* kingdom—or government—that would be set up on earth when He returned. We remember that, after Jesus’ resurrection, His disciples asked Him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” Here Jesus had a marvelous opportunity to disabuse them of the idea of a literal government if God’s form of government was *not* a kingdom.

But what was Jesus’ answer? “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority” (Acts 1:7).

Throughout the New Testament, the Bible tells us that during the Millennium the true “saints” will help Christ in administering the literal government of God over this earth (Revelation 2:26; 5:9–10). Paul was inspired to write, “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?” (1 Corinthians 6:2–3).

Remember, Paul made these statements because some of the Corinthian brethren were *going to law against other brethren!* Paul reminded them that we are now *in training to judge the world*, so we ought to be learning to practice that judgment in God’s Church today! Paul exhorted, “If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, [why] do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? I say this to your shame. Is it so that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?” (vv. 4–5). Yes, God’s people need training to administer *His* kind of govern-

ment. We need to understand and *practice* the very kind of government we will be responsible for carrying out during the Millennium.

Yet, in making this judgment about the young man caught in incest, Paul wrote, “For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have *already judged* (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed” (1 Corinthians 5:3). Although Paul must have had detailed information, and probably also received *counsel* from the other leaders of the Church, he had the authority to disfellowship this blatant sinner. Obviously, Paul was not seeking permission from any committees or “boards” of men to carry out this action!

As future kings and priests, God’s people should be learning to practice and administer the very form of government they *will* be administering over the cities and the nations of this earth in a few years!

### **God’s Government in the Old Testament**

The nation of Israel was also called “the congregation in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38). How did God inspire this church-state body to be governed? Notice this instruction, which Jethro gave under inspiration from the One who became Jesus Christ: “Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be *that* every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear *the burden* with you” (Exodus 18:21–22).

So God led Moses to *appoint* dedicated men to these responsibili-

ties. Certainly, much counsel, thought and fervent prayer must have been involved. There was no “politicking”—and *no voting!*

Later, God led King David of Israel—the “man after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22)—to use the *same form of government* (2 Samuel 18:1). Remember that in the soon-coming resurrection, David will be back in *his same job* as king of all Israel (Jeremiah 30:9). And then—understanding more fully the *spirit* of the law—King David will again govern the people using God’s *laws*. “David My servant *shall* be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them” (Ezekiel 37:24).

It is clear that God’s government was, throughout the Old Testament—*as it will be* in God’s soon-coming Kingdom here on Earth—a hierarchical government with direction from God through the leaders under Him directing His people. Scripture does not record any exceptions to this practice receiving God’s blessing.

Remember that the Being who emptied Himself to become our Savior was the God of the Old Testament. “And all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4). The author of Hebrews tells us: “Jesus Christ is the *same* yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). So, it should be obvious that Christ does not keep “*switching*” His form of government in directing His people through the ages.

### **Church Government in the New Testament**

Throughout the New Testament, we find the living Christ directing His servants to follow the *same pattern* of government that He had

inspired over the previous 1,500 years. Jesus Himself set the example. “Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and *from them He chose twelve* whom He also named apostles” (Luke 6:12–13).

Here, Jesus gives us a powerful example. A true servant of God must *pray fervently* and seek God’s will—*not his own!* And yet, in the end, such a leader should make the decisions involved in directing the affairs of God’s Church. There were never any “boards” or committees directing Jesus, Peter, James, John or Paul, telling them what to do. After much thought, and then *fervent prayer* to the Father throughout the night, Jesus then *chose* the twelve apostles.

In the book of Acts, we find that Paul selected Timothy to assist him in the ministry. So, “He took him and circumcised him” and began to train him (Acts 16:3). Later, we find Timothy was an “evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:5).

Along the way, Paul described to Timothy the *qualifications* one should consider before ordaining anyone (1 Timothy 3:1–13). Then he warned Timothy, “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure” (1 Timothy 5:22). What is clear from this warning, and *from all these examples*, is that Timothy, working with authority delegated by Paul, did not need the approval of any “board” or committee.

The pattern of government in the early inspired Church is very clear in Titus 1:5–9, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and **appoint elders** in every city *as I commanded you*, if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused

of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”

The letter to Titus begins, “Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Putting this together with verse 5, three basic points become clear:

Christ was the Head of Paul, *His* apostle.

Under the leadership of the living Jesus Christ, Paul had authority to direct the activities of Titus, an evangelist, and also to give him instructions on how to carry out his responsibilities.

Titus, responsible to Christ overall and to Paul especially in administrative matters, had authority to “appoint elders” within the guidelines set by *Paul*—not by any board of men.

This clear pattern of government is evident throughout the entire New Testament. The overall Headship of Christ is stressed again and again. But it is also made clear that Christ Himself has established important offices in the Church of God for the sake of unity: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11–13).

It should also be very clear that the living Christ has *always* directed

each phase of His Work primarily through **one man** at a time. Moses directed different phases of God’s Work within the Israel of his day, and after him Joshua, then Samuel, then others. God indicates that He primarily used the Apostle Peter to direct the Work to the Jews, and the Apostle Paul to direct the Work to the Gentile world: “But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised” (Galatians 2:7–9).

The above scripture shows that although Barnabas was an apostle, and James and John were “pillars”—certainly *leading* apostles—the Gospel to the circumcision had been committed to *Peter’s* overall direction. This division of responsibilities between Peter and Paul was necessary—*at that time*—because of the truly *huge* differences and antagonisms between the Gentile and the Jewish peoples of that day, and also because of geographical considerations and the lack of *instant world-wide communication*.

Today, such a division of responsibilities is *not* necessary, since we can have almost *instant* contact with people around the world via the Internet, telephones, fax machines and other means of communication. These modern tools enabled the vast majority of God’s people to be “one” under the inspired leadership of God’s servant, Mr. Herbert W.

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# Perspective: A Lesson from the Exodus

By J. Charles Ogwyn

**H**ow can two people in very similar situations have very different attitudes regarding what they are going through? Although personality and prior experiences greatly influence a person's attitude and approach, so too does one's perspective. Yet, unlike personality and prior experiences, one's perspective is very much the result of choice.

When you look at a building from a distance, at a slight angle, the part to which you are closest will appear larger than the rest of the building. Proximity, not just actual size, determines the relative size you perceive. This phenomenon is known as visual perspective. Although visual perspective does not involve choice, cognitive perspective does. Our outlook is defined not simply by what we know, but by the relative significance we assign to the things we know.

In other words, we make a choice, whether consciously or unconsciously, to consider some opportunities or troubles the most significant in our lives, and we then measure everything else against that. As we approach the Days of Unleavened Bread, we can find an instructive example of this principle in how the ancient Israelites viewed their deliverance from bondage. As we review the Israelites' experience of God's intervention in their lives, perhaps we can consider our own perspective on how God has dealt with each of us.

## God Reveals His Plan

When God revealed His plan to the Israelites, He told them that their release from bondage would not be an easy affair, and Pharaoh would not readily let them go. Indeed, God revealed through Moses that Pharaoh would not let them go but by a "mighty hand" (cf. Exodus 3, 4). From the signs that accompanied the message Moses and Aaron delivered, the Israelites understood that the God of Abraham had indeed heard their cry and would deliver them from captivity. God revealed at this early point that He intended to lead them to a great and abundant land, "a land flowing with milk and honey"—a land then tended by the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites,

Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. It is worth noting how much detail God revealed to His people about what lay immediately ahead. From what God had told the Israelites, they could understand that circumstances would grow more difficult before they would get better and that their freedom would not readily be granted, but that by the time God was finished dealing with Pharaoh and the Egyptians, the Israelites would leave Egypt with great riches. From what God told the Israelites about the peoples then inhabiting the land He had promised them, they could better understand what the land would be like and how it had been developed. In other words, they knew where they were going, and they knew what to expect when they got there. This is a remarkable level of detail. Physically speaking, this knowledge should have made it easier for the Israelites to face the obstacles that lay ahead.

## God's Mighty Hand

Just as God had foretold, Pharaoh was determined to do things the hard way. Instead of quickly agreeing to what Moses and Aaron had requested, Pharaoh made life even more difficult for the Israelites. Indeed, it had been foretold that Pharaoh's heart would be hardened against the Israelites. This set the stage for God to introduce Himself to the Egyptians as the Ruler of all that exists.

The Egyptians were very religious, worshipping and seeking to appease a multitude of gods. Each god had its particular domain. Hapi was the god of the Nile. Heqet was the frog goddess of childbirth and life. Baal was the god of thunder and storms. Ra—the deity the Egyptians considered the most powerful in their pantheon—was the god of the sun. God intervened to show that His domain encompasses all that exists, and that the Egyptians' multitude of gods were powerless compared to the God of Abraham.

During the first three plagues, the Israelites suffered just as did the Egyptians, as Almighty God showed that Egypt's objects of worship were impotent—unable to offer protection, and unworthy of

trust and worship. We should note that the Israelites had been greatly affected and influenced by the Egyptian culture in which they lived. They were not diligent in serving the God of their forefathers, and had instead adopted from their captors the worship of false gods. God intervened to show the Israelites that the false gods they had come to revere were empty and powerless. He began by turning the waters of Egypt into blood (cf. Exodus 7:14–25). Water is essential for survival, and the Nile was regarded as a source of life, but God struck it dead,

Egypt. Just as God had foretold, they did not leave empty, but spoiled the nation as they left (cf. Exodus 3:22; 12:35–36). After the Israelites left Egypt, Pharaoh had a change of heart and pursued them with his army. God then parted the Red Sea, leading the Israelites across on dry ground before the sea closed on top of Pharaoh's army (cf. Exodus 14–15). Imagine the flood of emotion that the Israelites must have felt as not only were they delivered through the Red Sea, but they also saw the destruction of their former captors. God showed Israel that His power

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along with the fish that were in it. Just as idolatry was a stench in God's nostrils, this object of worship was now the source of stench throughout Egypt.

Next, God caused frogs to leave the waters and spread across the land (cf. Exodus 8:1–14). Dead frogs were gathered into heaps, where the stench of their decay filled the nostrils of those who had once worshipped them. The Egyptians' objects of worship were being exposed as empty!

The last plague through which the Israelites suffered was the plague of lice. Beginning with the next—a plague of flies—God spared the Israelites from the plagues afflicting Egypt. God put a division between the Egyptians and the Israelites, so the plagues of flies, death of livestock, boils, hail and fire, locusts and darkness would afflict only the Egyptians (cf. Exodus 8–10).

Just as the Egyptians were in spiritual darkness, God made them dwell in physical darkness. Through these plagues—and through God's sparing the Israelites from the later plagues—God showed His limitless and supreme power. Amazingly, the first nine plagues were not enough to bring Pharaoh to the point of releasing the Israelites. Only the tenth plague—in which God struck dead the firstborn of men and beasts throughout Egypt—at last brought Pharaoh to the point of surrender, albeit temporary, to God's will (cf. Exodus 12:29–32).

## **Deliverance**

Just as God had foretold, Pharaoh released the Israelites from captivity and they were thrust out of

and ability to deliver was without limit; that He could do the unimaginable and the impossible to accomplish His will.

When the Israelites were thirsty, He turned the bitter waters sweet (cf. Exodus 15:23–25). When they were hungry, He provided bread from heaven. When they desired meat, He gave them quail (cf. Exodus 16). His care and attention to their every need is clearly evident. As the Israelites saw how God responded to their every need, they should have developed a clear idea of what to expect from Him. After God delivered the Israelites from bondage, He revealed to them even more detail about His plan to bring them into the land He had promised them. God said He would instill fear in the hearts of the land's current inhabitants, that He would use hornets to drive them out, and that he would drive them out over time, as the Israelites' numbers increased, so they could adequately tend the land He had given them. God's plan for giving the Israelites a land flowing with milk and honey is absolutely beautiful (cf. Exodus 23:20–33). There was no detail overlooked, nor any aspect that could be improved upon. God's plan was perfect.

## **Searching Out the Land**

When the Israelites came near to the land that God would soon give them, one spy from each of the twelve tribes was selected to enter and explore the land, then to return and give a report on what had been seen (cf. Numbers 13:1–21). Yet, although

these men were told to search out the land, the Israelites already knew much about it. God had revealed that it was a land of great agricultural abundance, and He had declared who its current inhabitants were. As the spies explored the land, they found it to be exactly as God had described. They saw the inhabitants about whom God had told them.

When they returned, they brought back the fruit of the land as tangible, physical proof of what it contained, and they stated their findings to the Israelites. The spies all agreed about what the land looked like and contained. No one disagreed about the conditions in this “promised land.” All twelve spies had experienced God’s intervention as they were delivered into freedom. All were aware of God’s intent to give them the land. Yet in spite of their common experiences, and the information God had given them about His plans, they did not all share the same perspective.

### **Perspective Rooted in the Here and Now**

The spies who delivered the evil report did not dispute any of the facts. They agreed about what the land was like, but their difference in perspective became clear when they attached meaning to what they had seen. They attached very little meaning to God’s ability to accomplish His will, but attached great significance to the visibly great military strength of the land’s inhabitants.


Although these spies’ experience with God should have shaped their perspective, it clearly did not. In making sense of what they saw, they clearly made the wrong choice, placing too great an emphasis on the physical, discounting their experience with the God of Abraham.

Upon seeing that the land was inhabited, with well-fortified cities, were the Israelites encouraged that they could simply move in at God’s order, with the work of construction already done? No! They were disheartened, because their perspective was rooted in the physical, the here-and-now, which emphasized the large numbers of people and physical military strength apparently greater than the Israelites’. The spies’ evil report was an abomination, and they died because of it. Those who acted based on this wrong perspective shared the same fate—wandering around, followed by death.

### **Perspective Rooted in Faith**

Joshua and Caleb brought back a very different report. They did not dispute the facts; they saw what the other spies saw. However, their analysis—their perspective—could not have been any more different. In forming their report, Joshua and Caleb placed great weight on their experience with God, and on His ability and desire to intervene and provide for the Israelites’ needs. They understood that everything God had foretold had occurred exactly as He had said. They would leave Egypt, but only by a strong hand would Pharaoh allow them to leave. They would take great riches with them when they left Egypt. God would give them a land of great agricultural abundance, and He had even told them who was then living in the land. All that remained was for God to drive out the current inhabitants, as He had said He would. Joshua and Caleb did not deny what their eyes had seen, but they attached far greater significance to what God had said. This gave them a different perspective than the other spies—a perspective rooted in faith.

Scripture tells us that “without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). Joshua and Caleb believed that God was able to do what He said, and that the physical obstacles, which appeared to stand in the way of the Israelites entering the land, were not obstacles to God. God said that the ancient Israelites “tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works,” yet the result was that “they have not known my ways” (Hebrews 3:9–10). Their example is recorded for our admonition, so we may learn from, rather than repeat, their mistakes. “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.... And to whom did He swear that they would not enter into His rest, but to those who did not obey?” (Hebrews 3:12, 18).

We cannot please God without faith. Joshua and Caleb shared a perspective distinguished by one main characteristic: faith. Their belief and trust in God shaped the way they viewed the world around them. Their example vividly illustrates the importance of maintaining a perspective of faith in God, measuring everything we see against our knowledge that Almighty God cares for His children and can accomplish His will. The spies who gave the evil report saw only the physical, so they had the wrong perspective. Which perspective do you have? 



# Why Did God Become Flesh?

By Rod Reynolds

**E**ach year in the Church of God, we once again experience the cycle of God's festivals, through which we should be gaining a greater understanding of His great plan for mankind. The first milestone in that annual cycle comes on Nisan 14, after sunset, when by observing the Passover we commemorate the death of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, as we know, is the spiritual "Rock" who led Israel out of Egypt (1 Corinthians 10:4). It is He—the Eternal or Self-Existing One—who spoke the Ten Commandments out of the cloud at Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:2; cf. Exodus 3:14; John 1:1, 18; 5:37; 8:58; Revelation 1:8). Have you ever stopped to consider why an eternal being—who existed before time (as we count it) began—would *choose* to become flesh and blood? Why would a being whose power sustains the entire vast universe decide to be changed into a mere human being, infinitely weaker—and more limited—by comparison?

The world most often pictures Christ either as a babe in a manger, or as a scrawny, effeminate, long-haired vagabond who (they allege) died of a "broken heart." The common understanding in most of professing Christianity is that His work was finished at His crucifixion. Anything after that, they assume, is anti-climactic. Yes, He was resurrected and ascended to heaven, but He has essentially been "retired" ever since His work of redemption was completed. Many who call themselves "Christians" today would consider it heresy—if not blasphemy—to assert not only

that Jesus Christ is alive today, but that His work is not finished, and that He will return to the earth in power and glory to punish a wicked world in righteous indignation and wrath, and then establish His kingdom to rule with supreme authority, to bring universal peace and joy to mankind. Indeed, when Jesus told the Sanhedrin that He would return in power, they accused Him of blasphemy (Matthew 26:64–65).

The Passover reminds us of Jesus Christ's suffering, humility and death. But to understand it properly, we must put it in its proper perspective. The Passover was the culmination of Christ's ministry as a flesh and blood human being. That is pretty much where the world leaves him—"hanging on the cross," as it were. But His death, commemorated by the Passover, was not the end of God's work of salvation—it would be more accurate to call it the beginning. We in God's Church, who keep all of the commanded feasts, understand this vital truth. By connecting the meaning of the Passover with the whole of God's plan, we understand its true significance, and it becomes much more meaningful than what most of the world's people—even those who call themselves "Christian"—can grasp.

But why, then, did the Eternal become flesh and blood, weakening Himself to become subject to death? The Bible reveals many more reasons than could fit in one magazine article, so for the moment we will look at seven reasons upon which we can be meditating as the Passover approaches.

## **1. To Save the World**

Jesus said He came "to save the world" (John 12:47). We are told that, "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17). From what did the world need to be saved? All human beings have sinned (Romans 3:23). The penalty of sin is death (Romans 6:23). The Son was not sent to condemn the world; the world—each person in it—was already condemned to death when He came! As John wrote, "he who does not believe is condemned already" (John 3:18).

Jesus Christ came so human beings could be delivered from the death penalty, so they "should not perish but have eternal life" (v. 15). His death was a necessary step toward fulfilling God's plan of salvation. Through the death of Christ, repentant human beings guilty of sin may be "justified by His blood," opening the way to salvation (Romans 5:9–10).

But if Christ's work of saving the world was **completed** on the cross, we would have to say that He failed—because the world is not yet saved! While Christ's death opened up to us the possibility of salvation, the completion of His work—of saving the billions of Israel and the rest of mankind—is yet future. Notice that Paul wrote, "all Israel **will be** saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob'" (Romans 11:26). The Holy Days reveal that salvation for most will not be fully accomplished until after

Christ returns, in power. Even those who through faith have already been qualified to inherit eternal life will not receive it in its fullness until Christ's return. So, in that sense, their salvation too is yet future.

## 2. To Overcome Sin in the Flesh

For God to fulfill His master plan for humanity, the problem of sin had to be addressed. Sinning human beings have earned the penalty of death, as God warned Adam and Eve while they were still in the garden (Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12; 6:23). Because of our own sins, each human being has fallen under the condemnation of the death penalty, and God does not compromise His perfect, spiritual law. The penalty must be paid!

No human being, beginning with Adam, had lived without sinning. But God, perfectly innocent, could redeem us from death by His own death. Only a perfect, sinless sacrifice could pay the penalty. But God is an eternal spirit being, incapable of dying. By becoming flesh, having the Holy Spirit indwelling without measure from the moment of His human conception, He was able to do what no other human being could—live a perfectly sinless life. So, from the beginning, God knew that the Word, whom we know as Jesus Christ, would become a human being subject to death, and would pay the penalty for our sins, so we could share eternal life with Him (John 1:1–3, 14; 1 Peter 1:18–20).

By living a perfect life in the flesh without sin (Hebrews 4:15), Jesus Christ overcame this present evil age (John 16:33), which is characterized by sin and rebellion against God. Because He lived a perfect life without sin in the flesh, He was the perfect sacrifice to pay the penalty

for our sins—"a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). In overcoming sin, He also set for us a perfect example (1 Peter 2:21–24; Revelation 3:21).

## 3. To Condemn Sin in the Flesh

"For what the law [the Old Covenant system] could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). The sins that stand condemned are the sins of mankind—your sins and mine. They are not Christ's sins, for he had none—it is our sin that was condemned in the flesh of Jesus at the crucifixion.

In Old Testament Hebrew, one of the words for sin is *chata*. It means to miss the mark, to fall short; hence to sin, to be blameworthy or guilty. The noun form of this very same word is also used to describe the sin offering, because sin itself was symbolically condemned in the sacrifice of the sin offering. When Jesus was dying on the cross as our sin offering, He became to God the embodiment of sin—our sins, the sins of the world. "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). We read that Jesus "Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). Through Him, our sins—if we repent in genuine faith—have been condemned and destroyed, and no longer have any power to destroy us.

## 4. To Put Away Sin

Scripture tells us, of Jesus Christ, that "now... He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26; cf. Hebrews 1:3). Those who, through faith in Jesus Christ, confess their sins and repent—in other words, forsake their

sins—are forgiven (Proverbs 28:13; Acts 2:38; 1 John 1:9). We read: "God set forth [Jesus Christ] to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:25–26).

Putting away sin includes helping us to overcome sin and helping us put it out of our lives. Those who are living by genuine faith in their Savior—having the very faith of Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:20)—are no longer enslaved to their fleshly lusts, but can overcome them and live righteously with Christ working in them through the power of God's Spirit (Romans 8:1–14; Ephesians 4:17–24). "And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not [practice] sin. Whoever [continues practicing] sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous" (1 John 3:5–7). The present indicative and present participle of the Greek *hamartano* (to sin) used in verse 6 implies one who "lives a life of sin, not mere occasional acts of sin" (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. VI, p. 222, A. T. Robertson).

Through His death, and through the life He lives in us, Christ puts away sin. He will appear a second time, having put our sins away, to bring us salvation (Hebrews 9:28).

## 5. To Reconcile Us to God

Paul wrote: "For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in

heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard” (Colossians 1:19–23).

Through Christ, Jews and Gentiles may be reconciled to God in one body (Ephesians 2:16–17). We see in the world today so many seemingly unsolvable controversies. How can Bosnia’s Serbians and Croats be reconciled? How can Arab and Israeli be reconciled? The list could go on and on, taking note of countless tribal, racial, ethnic, national, regional and many other divisions, hatreds and hostilities. Jesus Christ’s death on the cross makes possible not only our reconciliation with God, but also our reconciliation with one another.

Of course, while Christ’s death makes such reconciliation possible, it will not be accomplished on a universal scale until after Christ’s return, as is pictured by the Day of Atonement. Nevertheless, we who are now in Christ should right now be cultivating that spirit of reconciliation toward God and toward one another.

## 6. To Defeat Satan and His Works

“Inasmuch then as the children [who will be in God’s Kingdom] have partaken of flesh and blood, He [Jesus Christ, the captain of their salvation, Hebrews 2:10] Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their

lifetime subject to bondage” (vv. 14–15).

Satan is the ruler of this present evil world (2 Corinthians 4:4). He is the instigator of sin and death (Ephesians 2:1–3). He is the one responsible for the reign of death Paul describes in Romans 5.

Satan is already judged (John 16:11). His judgment is written in God’s word (Leviticus 16:21; John 12:31; 2 Peter 3:10; Jude 13; Revelation 18:2; 20:10). Christ’s coming in the flesh ensures that the judgment against Satan will ultimately be carried out, and his works of sin and death will be destroyed. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

## 7. To Confirm the Covenant

“Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering” (Daniel 9:27).

Some have observed that this prophecy of Daniel 9:27, concerning a covenant, may have a dual application, also pointing to a temporal covenant involving an outside malevolent power that will permit the reinstatement of physical sacrifices by the Jews for a limited time (cf. Daniel 11:21–24, 31). The Church has, of course, long understood another basic application of this prophecy. Jesus’ ministry began in the fall of 27AD, at the beginning of the seventieth prophetic “week,” following the principle of a day for a year (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6). His ministry began 483 years after Artaxerxes’ 457BC decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25; Ezra 7:6–28; cf. Ezra 4:1, 12).

To confirm means “to verify, to strengthen, to validate, to assure

beyond all doubt.” For the three-and-a-half years of His ministry, Jesus confirmed the covenant with His disciples (cf. Luke 1:54–55, 68–75). His very presence was a confirmation of the covenant (Isaiah 42:6; 49:8). After Christ had returned to the heavens, Scripture records the Apostle Peter telling a crowd at the temple that Jesus’ coming had confirmed the covenant made to the patriarchs, blessing the people in turning them away from their iniquities (Acts 3:25–26).

After three-and-a-half years—in the middle of the prophetic week—Jesus was “cut off” (Daniel 9:26) through His crucifixion. With His death, there was no longer a need for the physical temple and its sacrifices (Hebrews 10:5–10). Indeed, God allowed the physical temple to be destroyed by the Romans, along with the city of Jerusalem, in 70AD.

Jesus Christ confirmed the New Covenant, which, though prefigured by the Old Covenant, superseded it as a better covenant with better promises (Hebrews 8:6–13). In fact, however, the “New” Covenant actually preceded the Old Covenant, in that its essence—salvation by grace through faith in and of the Messiah—was contained in God’s covenant with Abraham hundreds of years before the time of Moses (Genesis 12:3; 22:18; Romans 4:16; Galatians 3:5–18). Note that Paul, following the common usage of his time, often uses the term “the law” when referring to the Old Covenant, as in Galatians 3 (cf. 4:21–24).

It is important to recognize that the covenant God established when giving His law to Israel did not annul the covenant that came before (Galatians 3:17). Israel was not faithful to the Old Covenant, so it came under the curse of that covenant (Galatians 3:10; Hebrews

*continues on page 21*

# Confession of a Murderer

By Don Davis

On that solemn night, nearly a year ago, I admitted to myself, and to my friends and loved ones, “Yes, I am a murderer.” Today, as I look back to reflect on my life, I ask: how did I start down the path that led me to become a murderer?

It began as far back as I can remember. I grew up on the south side of Chicago, Illinois, as the eldest of two children born to an average American couple who tried their best to rear me. My well-meaning parents reared me to accept the world’s ideas of right and wrong. They taught me the “glories” of Christmas and the “joys” of Easter. They sent me to schools that filled my vacant head with facts and figures, but also with the world’s foolishness, which blocked out any knowledge of the true God. I was on my way to becoming another cookie-cutter copy of a typically deceived human being, with no idea of my destiny or purpose. I did not know why I was born, nor whether there was any reason for my existence. All I really knew is that I was supposed to “get” something out of life.

As I matured, my murderous tendencies grew, even though I did not yet recognize them. The realization that God’s commandments could have helped me lead a happy and successful life had escaped me. Yes, I had heard of the “Ten Commandments,” but they did not seem to have much to do with me. My parents said, and the pastor of the church just a few blocks from our home taught, that we would all go to heaven when we died, and that hellfire was only for the “really bad people”—whatever that meant. I was sure I was not one of those “bad people,” so never really gave it much thought.

What was my first crime? Back then, I did not even think of it as crime, but I knew what I wanted from life. My flesh, my lust, my pride—surely the world could satisfy me if I worked hard enough at it—or so I thought (1 John 2:16). My parents did not agree, and looking back I must admit that they were fair in administering due punishment for my infantile tantrums when I did not get what I wanted. Though they might not have thought of it this way, they were doing what the proverb instructed: “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15). As I grew older, when I committed some offense, my Dad would send me to get the hairbrush Mom kept on her

dresser. What lesson did I learn? Did I give up my covetous ways? No. Mostly I just learned to keep my desires to myself. Childish rebellion had taken root in my mind.

Looking back, I realize that free moral agency in the hands of human beings, if we are not guided by God’s Spirit, will almost always lead us to make bad choices. “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (James 1:14–15). So, from an early age, I began to pile sin upon sin, unaware that my bad choices were earning me eternal death.

As a typically rebellious teenager, I had not been interested in religion, and I certainly had not read the Bible much at all. So, when—as a carnal 15-year-old—I heard a confident and compelling voice on the Prairie Farmer radio station, WLS, my attention was captivated. It was Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. I was attracted, like iron filings to a magnet, by the power and simplicity and plain truth of the words he spoke from the Bible. Before long, I had sent away for the *Plain Truth* magazine and a booklet, *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*. I began to understand that I was being called by some unseen force. But what had I “gotten myself into”? What would now happen to me? “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:29–30).

Weaned on the United States’ military victories in World War II, I had already set my adolescent sights on a career in the U.S. Army. Though I continued to read the *Plain Truth*, and even to take the *Bible Correspondence Course* offered by the Radio Church of God, I had very little understanding. I entered the Army, just as I had planned from my youth. My Creator was not forcing me into His Church, and He certainly was not rushing me. He was allowing me to learn, bit by bit, that the way I had chosen was not the way He had chosen for me.

When I finally realized, at age 24, that I had to give up my selfish dreams of military success in order to obey God, I thought I was making a big sacrifice when I left the Army and went to Pasadena. But after I was baptized, and had the Holy Spirit working in me, I soon came to the awful realization that my sacrifices were nothing compared to what God had sacrificed for me, and that I still

had a long way to go toward my distant goal of total submission to Christ.

### **True Surrender?**

Having been trained as a soldier, I usually found it easy to submit to men in positions of authority in God's Church. But surrendering to God was another matter. Even though I could muster the external appearance of submission, I began to realize that jealousy, vanity, lust and greed were more deeply rooted in my life than I could begin to imagine. Though I had some "head knowledge" of God's laws and His ways, my understanding and appreciation of them—and of the tremendous value of my calling—was only superficial. The "old man" still manifested himself too much and too often, and I did not fight against him as vigorously as I should have. Thankfully,

things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Perhaps for the first time, I began to understand the importance of the scriptural injunction: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22).

When I first responded to God's call, I thought I had repented. But as each year passed, I came to understand more deeply my need for further repentance. This is true for most of us when we are first called; we can often see others' sins more easily than our own. But if we ever stop seeing ourselves as sinners, we are declaring, in effect, that we do not need Christ's sacrifice. Yet we read that, "all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Our Savior knew He was coming to save sinners, not the self-righteous. The scribes and Pharisees complained about this, asking Him, "Why do You eat and

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**When I first responded to God's call, I thought I had repented. But as each year passed, I came to understand more deeply my need for further repentance. This is true for most of us when we are first called; we can often see others' sins more easily than our own. But if we ever stop seeing ourselves as sinners, we are declaring, in effect, that we do not need Christ's sacrifice.**

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Christ suffered long in dealing with my carnal human nature, as He continued to work patiently with the clay He was fashioning into a future brother. Looking back, I understand the wisdom of Christ's warning: "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

From my time in the military, I had thought I understood obedience. In God's Church, when my pastor needed someone to set up tables and chairs, I volunteered. When the widows needed to relocate into new homes, I was happy to help move their furniture. I served and served. Looking back, I was even a bit proud of my service. So, after 25 years on the Church's membership rolls, you can imagine my shock when a minister gave me the best piece of advice I had ever received on that subject. His words, paraphrased a bit, were: "Don, you have been 'serving' for all these years, but it's time you started serving God!" I was dumbfounded at first. Had all my "good works" been for nothing? But when I examined my life, I had to admit that my obedience to God had been seriously lacking in some important ways, no matter how "obedient" I had been to those ministers and brethren who requested my service. To this day, I still remember that minister's correction with gratitude; he smashed my prideful "obedience" with a spiritual sledgehammer. Christ was talking about people like me when He warned, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the

drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:30–32).

Indeed, God is now calling the weak of the world—not the wealthiest, not the wisest and not those who are relatively more righteous (1 Corinthians 1:27). Why is He doing this? He wants to prove that if Christ can save you and me, He can save anyone! God did not call me because I was righteous, or obedient or successful. He called me precisely because I was none of those things, so He could prove that He can make something out of nothing. Without His holy and righteous character in me, I am nothing, yet Christ loved me so much that He was willing to die so I could join our Father's family as His younger brother. "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all" (Romans 11:29–32).

### **Who Does God Want?**

You may sometimes find it hard to believe that God could actually want the likes of you and me in His

family. As Groucho Marx once joked, “I don’t care to join a club that accepts people like me as members!” No, God in one sense does not want “people like me” in His family. He wants people like Him—and we become like Him as we yield more and more perfectly, as each year goes by, to His Spirit in us, as we take on His holy and righteous character as our own. Some of us have had 50 years or more to learn submission to, and love of, His will and His way. Others have had only a few years, or even less. God is still calling new brethren to become His firstfruits. These brethren are taking the “crash course,” and must learn more quickly than some of us have. But if they endure to the end, they will receive the same reward as the “old-timers”—they will reign in the Millennium under their Savior, Jesus Christ, helping Him show the whole world the true way of life that brings peace and prosperity, and that prepares human beings to become part of His family.

God tells young Christians and newer brethren to look to the example and instruction of those who are older in the faith. Peter wrote: “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:5–7). But it is not that an “old-timer” is more righteous than a new brother or sister in Christ; if we think we have “made it” because of our years “in the Church” we are deceiving ourselves. Some of our newest brethren, who were baptized since the Living Church of God began, are to me wonderful examples of great faith and godly character. As for me, God seems to have given me more than 50 years to pursue His calling because He knew I would need that much time to lay a foundation on which He could build His holy, righteous character within my stubborn self.

As Paul warned: “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind” (Philippians 3:12–16).

### **“I Did It...”**

As another Passover approaches, I remind myself once more: I am personally guilty of murdering Jesus Christ—my Elder Brother, my Savior and my God! If I had been the only human being on Earth, Jesus would still have given His life to pay the penalty for my sins. By my sinful actions, I was in the mob shouting for Jesus’ crucifixion. By my selfishness, I was the lictor who lashed His body to a bloody pulp. By my carnal desire to please myself and gain favor in the eyes of men, I was the soldier who drove the nails into His hands and feet. By my wretched human nature I was the legionary who plunged a spear into my Savior’s side. I cannot blame anyone else: Christ’s death was my fault. I am a murderer—and the One I murdered is the One who is saving me by His death and resurrection!

Did I consciously murder Him? No. But that is no excuse. Like all my accomplices—others who have come to realize that they, too, murdered Christ—I can be eternally and tearfully grateful to God for the words Jesus Christ spoke as I crucified Him: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:33–34).

Each year, when the Passover comes, I hope I understand this truth a little more deeply than before. Scripture tells us that the Apostle Paul understood it well. “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life” (1 Timothy 1:15–16). Paul saw himself as a sinner, but more importantly as a sinner whom Christ had come to save, not only for Paul’s own benefit, but to show others His power to save.

Paul understood what we all should: “If Jesus Christ can save me, He can save anyone!” Not one of us is “righteous enough” not to need Jesus Christ’s sacrifice. “But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isaiah 64:6).

A year ago, at the Passover, I joined many brethren who, by taking the Passover, were confessing their own guilt as murderers—and who, having repented of the evil act, were able to rejoice that their Savior had forgiven them! This year, as you prepare for the Passover—which in 2008 we will take shortly after sunset on Friday evening, April 18—I hope my confession will help you see that even though you are a murderer, just like me, you have a Savior who loves you and will not give up on you, as long as you do not give up on Him! ☞

# Living Youth Camp 2008: Time to Get Ready!

By Gerald Weston

Scores of Living Church of God teens and young adults consider Living Youth Camp (LYC) a must! Many come back year after year; first as campers, then as high school staff, later as young adult staff, and some even return after they are married. What is it about LYC that keeps them coming back? And why is it that each year we have campers and staff eagerly coming for the first time?

There is no doubt that the north woods of Michigan, near the shore of Lake Huron, with its beautiful Les Cheneaux Islands, have an appeal that beckons all comers. Northwoods Christian Camp is a peaceful place where deer roam freely. Often one can see fawns grazing with their mothers on tender grass during Morning Motivation or Evening Reflection, and sometimes—if you are patient—you can feed one a handful of corn chips.

The campus lake can be crossed on foot by way of a scale model replica of the Mackinaw Bridge which connects the upper and lower peninsulas of Michigan. Blue skies, white fluffy clouds, clean air and gentle breezes through the pines, all round out the picture of this place that many of us see as our home away from home for two weeks each summer.

LYC is a fun place to be! There are dances, a canoe trip, sports (such as flag football, ultimate Frisbee, volleyball and soccer), classes in Christian Living, archery, speech—and media, in which campers produce a newscast shown during Morning Motivation. There are also pizza nights, game nights and cookouts. In addition, there are interesting personalities to meet, such as Mr. Mario Hernandez,

or one or more of the Work's senior leaders and their wives, perhaps *Tomorrow's World* presenter Mr. Richard Ames, or Presiding Evangelist Dr. Roderick C. Meredith.

Even more than the activities, LYC is fun because you are around fun people your own age who understand what it is like to be in the Church. There is plenty of time to make lasting friendships during fellowship time, eating meals together, paddling a canoe from island to island, sitting around a campfire and hanging out with your dorm-mates after Evening Reflection. How exciting it is to then spend time with these friends at the Feast, or chat with them online.

But are these all the factors that bring campers and staff back, year after year? Well, they are a big part of the picture, but certainly not all. What makes LYC such a wonderful experience is not the location, the facilities, the natural environment or even the activities. It is the way of life promoted at LYC. And here, we have a confession to make. LYC has something to “sell” you, and we make no apologies for that. You see, we believe in honesty in marketing. We have a product that we ourselves were sold, one that we happily purchased, and one that we have no intentions of returning for a refund. It is a way of life—the way of life many of the faculty members learned in *their* youth at Ambassador College.

This way of life is marked at LYC by a very simple goal. We strive to produce an atmosphere that encourages all to practice God's way of life. It is the way of give versus get, of caring for the other person rather than being self-centered. Specific foundational

principles from the word of God, either in the letter or in the spirit, form the philosophical basis by which LYC operates. Scripture teaches us that the most important of all the commandments is to love God with all your heart, and that the second is like it, to love your neighbor as yourself.

We understand this way of life in very practical terms. In today's world, everyone seems to be obsessed with self-image and self-esteem. Teens especially try to *out-cool* one another—“Hey, look at me!” This is often because of personal insecurities, but the result is self-centeredness and a lack of concern for others. When you are consumed with your own image, you are not concerned for the person next to you. What we want to see developed is a godly heart. At LYC, we emphasize that people who, from the heart, show outgoing concern for others will be more popular in the long run than people who think primarily of themselves.

I am not sure who holds the record (other than faculty), but several members of our LYC team have been coming to camp for nine or ten years. They started out as campers, volunteered as high school workers, and just kept returning after they became young adults. This is one reason why the program works—we have staff who really believe in the program. They know what it has done for them, and they are committed to sharing this vision and their happiness with others.

Fun things to do, great natural beauty, interesting people to hang out with, friends who understand your way of life, great food, the promotion of godly values, learning more about God's word and His way

of life, and staff who really care for your well-being—these are the reasons why campers and staff come back year after year, and why others want to try LYC for the first time!

If you are interested in attending LYC this summer, please go to [www.youth-web.org](http://www.youth-web.org), where specifics concerning dates, tuition and fees, ages, and camp activities are avail-

able. Applications—easy to fill out online—can also be completed there. Please see your local minister for application information if you do not have Internet access. ☞

### Texas Pre-Teen Camp

Excitement, adventure, and instruction in Christian living await all our pioneer pre-teens this summer at the 2008 Texas Pre-Teen Camp! The camp will take place from June 15 through June 19 at the historic Fort Parker State Park, located 80 miles south of Dallas. The park includes 1,458 acres with a 700-acre lake. This remarkable area offers not only scenic beauty and the wonders of the outdoors—with the backdrop of 18th century history and the last great Comanche chief, Quanah Parker—but it also offers a well-appointed group camp facility with kitchen, dining room, bathrooms and dormitories.

Activities this year will allow children from ages 8 to 12 to test the bounds of their abilities and courage, through such activities as archery, canoeing, flag football, basketball, BB gun target shooting, orienteering and a talent show. Campers will also have the opportunity to grow in understanding themselves and others through Christian living classes, arts and crafts, games and fellowship. Each day will conclude with an inspiring and encouraging evening reflection before bed.

Much prayer, thought and preparation have gone into the Texas Pre-Teen Camp to ensure a rewarding and safe experience! We expect that more than 40 campers will attend, along with 20 to 30 teen and adult staff members. As you can see, activities will be well-staffed and supervised, and we expect this year's Pre-Teen Camp in Texas to be the best yet! Do not miss out on the fun! If you are interested in attending Pre-Teen Camp in Texas this summer, please go to [www.youth-web.org](http://www.youth-web.org), where further information is available and applications—easy to fill out online—can be completed. Please see your local minister for application information if you do not have Internet access. For further information, you may also phone Mr. Dan Hall at (903) 882-8660, or Mr. Deric Forrestier at (903) 830-0198. ☞

### Missouri Pre-Teen Camp

As some of our pre-teens may remember, last year we had a *fantastic* Pre-Teen Camp in Missouri, yet the camp director, Mr. Wallace Smith, insisted, “We are looking forward to making next year even better!”

Summer will be here before we know it, and planning is already well underway for this year's camp, scheduled for June 15–22. Fun, exciting and educational activities are on the menu, to keep your young loved ones busy, and to provide them with a safe (mothers, yes, you can relax!), enriching, structured and well-supervised experience.

Activities will include riflery, archery, canoeing, team sports, nature walks and “the verse” hunt, to provide the campers with physical exercise, teamwork skills and appreciation of God's creation. Arts and crafts classes will afford an experience of creativity and “hands-on” proficiency.

The spiritual aspect of young campers' lives is not forgotten—it is, in fact, emphasized. Daily Christian living classes will be provided for campers' knowledge, growth and development in godly character. These classes will be taught by visiting ministers of God's Church. Of course, this spiritual component will also be included with the weekly Sabbath and Bible study.

Yes, parents, this year's Pre-Teen Camp in Missouri is sure to be the summer's highlight for your “little bundle of joy.” Camp will give them the opportunity to come out of the world and develop friendships with like-minded Church youth. Pre-Teen Camp is not only a fun place to be, but offers an atmosphere that encourages all (campers and staff) to practice God's way of life and to make godly choices—beginning at a young age.

If you are interested in attending Pre-Teen Camp in Missouri this summer, you may go to [www.youth-web.org](http://www.youth-web.org), where further details are available. Applications—easy to fill out online—can also be completed there. Please see your local minister for application information if you do not have Internet access. For further information, you may also phone Mr. Wallace Smith at (636) 744-1034, or contact him by e-mail at [wsmith@lcg.org](mailto:wsmith@lcg.org). ☞



## Church Government Is Vital

(continues from page 5)

Armstrong. Christ guided and *blessed* His Work in that unified way for more than 50 years! To deny that would be to deny reality.

### Common Misunderstandings

Misguided people often seize on several common examples to try to contradict the clear pattern of government God reveals in His word. One of these is the idea that in Acts 1:20–26, Matthias was chosen to replace Judas by a form of *voting*!

The above idea is clearly unscriptural, and some may hold it partly through ignorance of the Old Testament practice of appealing to God for a decision through the Urim and Thummim. Notice the context of this matter: after finding two dedicated men who met the *qualifications* of having been with Christ from the beginning of His ministry all the way to His resurrection, the apostles then appealed to God to make the decision between these two, “And they prayed and said, ‘You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.’ And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:24–26).

Notice this reference from *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*—“‘And they cast lots’. Deliberate selection and prayer played their parts in this appointment as well as the lot. The lot was a sacred institution in ancient Israel and was a well-established means for ascertaining the divine will (cf. Pr. 16:33), being in fact the principle of decision by

Urim and Thummim. This is the first and last occasion of the employment of the lot by [during] the period between the ascension and Pentecost; Jesus had gone, and the Holy Spirit had not yet come.”

Besides showing that this was an appeal to God’s will before the Holy Spirit had come, it is significant that this was the *last time* the apostles cast lots. Once the Holy Spirit came, the living Christ—through God’s Spirit—would guide His faithful ministers in all major decisions.

Some also read the practice of politics and voting into the appointment of deacons as described in Acts 6. Yet one need only look carefully at the scriptural context to see the error of that assumption. Verse 3 gives the key information: “Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, *whom we may appoint* over this business.”

So the brethren were to sincerely “seek out” a number of individuals who met certain qualifications. They may have found quite a few men whose “fruits” showed wisdom and the Holy Spirit. But then, did the brethren as a whole *vote* on *which* of these men would become deacons?

*Of course not!* That has *never* been God’s way at any time in human history, nor in the history of the true Church! No, the brethren did not vote. The apostles—no doubt after much counsel and prayer—*appointed* Stephen and the other deacons to be ordained.

Some have also misunderstood the account of the Jerusalem conference, as given in Acts 15. There certainly *was* an open and brotherly atmosphere in that landmark conference. There *was* obviously a good deal of hearty and perhaps even heated discussion among the “apostles *and* elders” (v. 6).

But, “And when there had been much dispute, Peter *rose up* and *said* to them: ‘Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us’” (vv. 7–8). Then Peter proceeded to explain God’s decision to give the Gentiles the Holy Spirit *without* having them first become circumcised.

Afterward, Paul and Barnabas also showed how God had backed up this principle by “miracles and wonders” (v. 12). James—the presiding apostle at Jerusalem—referred to Peter’s declaration, enlarged on it, and said, “Therefore I *judge* that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God” (v. 19). So James stated the consensus judgment or decision of the leadership.

Commenting on this procedure, *The New Bible Commentary: Revised* states: “It seems from v. 12 (‘all the assembly’) that other members of the Jerusalem church were present, although deliberation and decision rested with the leaders.” Again, it is obvious that there was no “voting” as such, but rather much hearty *counsel* from the apostles and elders. The apostolic “pillars” such as Peter and Paul made the major speeches, then James stated the final *decision* to which the Holy Spirit had led these dedicated men.

### Much Input and COUNSEL Must Be Sought

In all the above examples, a number of people gave advice or counsel before the leaders made a decision. God clearly tells us, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise” (Proverbs

12:15). As God’s word states, “Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established” (Proverbs 15:22).

For this reason, as the founding Presiding Evangelist, I established an *active* Council of Elders for the Living Church of God. Council members advise me on spiritual and physical issues pertaining to the Church, its plans and its programs. Council members are encouraged to advise me openly and heartily, and I do not ask for “yes men” when we talk about problems and opportunities facing the Church. The Council meets formally at least three times each year, and I talk often with Council members outside formal meetings, to ensure that I am following Christ’s guidance as best I am able, so that the Church can always be moving forward in its mission under its living Head, Jesus Christ.

A dedicated servant of the living God will *always* try to seek the “counsel” of at least several qualified individuals before making any major decision. Also, a true servant of God will spend *much time* in thoughtful, fervent prayer to God—asking for *His will* to be made clear—before making an important decision. We have already noted that Jesus *prayed all night* before choosing His twelve apostles (Luke 6:12). We remember how Paul fasted and prayed for three days in seeking God’s will after being struck down on the way to Damascus (Acts 9:9–11).

Notice also this fervent seeking of God’s will in the appointment of elders. “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” (Acts 14:23). Such humble, sensitive seeking of God’s will should be the hallmark of *all* His true ministers. As long as this attitude is maintained, Jesus Christ *will* be there to

guide His Church as its living Head (Colossians 1:18).

### Servant Leadership

A key distinguishing attitude of God’s true servants is that they *do* regard themselves as just that—*servants*. Finding the disciples arguing among themselves about “who is the greatest,” Jesus found an opportunity to explain a very important principle. “But Jesus called them to Himself and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’” (Matthew 20:25–28).

All in authority in God’s Church should *have*, and should *conduct themselves with*, this attitude of service. We all know that, in the past, some ministers would appoint themselves as “dictators” in their areas—trying to run the lives of the brethren even in purely personal matters. This was *wrong*, and is completely unjustified by Scripture! For each leader in God’s Church should humbly try to *serve* each of the brethren in ways that help them increase their *own* wisdom and develop their *own* human potential.

Each of us should try to understand those we serve, and we should endeavor to strengthen, encourage and inspire them to be like Jesus Christ in every aspect of their lives. Only in this way can we truly “love our neighbor *as* ourselves.”

Peter, who had been impetuous and “pushy” early in his ministry, was later inspired to write: “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a

partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1 Peter 5:1–4).

God clearly showed His approach to government from the very beginning, when *He* organized the family unit and set the *husband* in charge (Genesis 3:16). Yet, even here it is the living Jesus Christ to whom we should look as our ultimate Head under God the Father. “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Corinthians 11:3).

Notice that although there is *no voting*, and the husband is the undisputed *head* of the family unit in God’s sight (Ephesians 5:23), he is still admonished to practice “servant leadership” and to *serve* his wife in how he leads the family (v. 25). So *all* of us in God’s Church—and *especially* those in the ministry—should try to “lay down our lives” for the brethren. We all need to heed the Apostle John’s inspired instruction, “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16).

### FAITH in the Living Christ

If we have genuine *faith* in the living Jesus Christ as the active Head of the Church, we will quickly see and submit to His form of government in the Church. For we will look *beyond* men, and beyond the human foibles that we all have. We will see that Christ has anointed, with His Spirit, certain men who are preaching His full Truth and really *doing* His

Work—and that *He* has promised to be there to guide and inspire those ministers in leading His Church (Matthew 28:20).

Jesus said, “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:19–20).

So, in determining *where* Christ is working, and *whom* He is leading to walk more fully in His ways, one needs to look at the “fruits”—the *results*. Is the *biblical* form of govern-

So, once the “fruits” are evident, it is to the living Christ we should look to lead and inspire His faithful ministers to direct the affairs of His Church *in the right way*. Truly dedicated Christians will have *faith* in this. Not faith in men, but in the *living* Jesus Christ!

Some may say, “But mistakes were made in the past and people were hurt by *Church government!*”

This is exactly the kind of reasoning the people used in Samuel’s day (1 Samuel 8:1–7). Many had

ting adultery, perjury or larceny. Do you immediately do away with the office of the *presidency* or the prime ministership?

No! It *never* pays to “throw the baby out with the bath water!” Church leaders’ human mistakes *never* justify going against God’s *entire approach to Church government* and His law. Yet, when human beings find they have been in one ditch, they often leap out, *run across* the middle of the road, and jump into the other ditch! The *answer* is not in

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ment being followed? Is the message of the Kingdom of God being preached powerfully to the world? Is the prophetic *warning* of the coming Great Tribulation being proclaimed urgently to modern Israel—the Jewish people and the descendants of the so-called “Lost Ten Tribes”? Is the full *Truth* of God’s laws and ways being taught? Are people being taught to *grow* in grace and knowledge, “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”?

When the above “fruits” are present in a church organization, one can have confidence that Christ is there and will direct its leadership. And *if* the leadership should turn aside—“water down” the Truth significantly, or *fail* to really preach the true Gospel and do the Work—then Scripture clearly instructs the brethren to cease to follow such an organization and its leadership. As Paul wrote, “Be ye followers of me, *even as I also am* of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1, KJV)!

Notice how the apostles answered when they were threatened and pressured to stop preaching the Gospel. “But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

been hurt by Samuel’s sons misusing their offices. So, what did the people do? Did they cry out to God in prayer and fasting to either chasten or remove those offending persons?

No! They came to Samuel en masse—like a “march on Washington”—and they *demand*ed, “Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a *king* to judge us like all the nations” (1 Samuel 8:5).

These self-willed men were not merely demanding a redress of the current misuse of office. They demanded that the *entire form of government* be changed! They felt they could not trust God to direct Samuel and his sons, so *they wanted a form of government more like the carnal nations around them*. This would be like people today wanting democracy simply because it is the way of the world around them! And Israel has been *cut off* from God’s direct form of government ever since! Partly because of this, the modern descendants of Israel are soon headed to *doom*, in the Great Tribulation!

To use a modern example, suppose a president or prime minister abuses his *office*, perhaps by commit-

going to either extreme, but in *trusting* Christ to guide His Church, following the pattern of Church government *as He clearly reveals it* throughout the Bible.

Even back in Old Testament times, faithful men and women knew that God was responsible to guide His servants. Faithful King Jehoshaphat set judges in the land and said to them, “Take heed to what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment” (2 Chronicles 19:6). How much *more* will the resurrected Jesus Christ be with and guide His New Covenant ministers who *are*, in fact, preaching His Truth and *doing* His Work?

Be sure to examine *very carefully* the “fruits” of leaders who claim to be *of God*. If good fruits are clearly there, and they are practicing the principles described above, one can have faith that the Savior who died for us, and is now resurrected and seated at God the Father’s right hand, can and will lead and guide them—so long as they follow *His* form of Church organization and government, preach *His* Truth and do *His* Work. ☐

# Fifteenth Anniversary Celebration

For three memory-filled and event-packed days, Living Church of God brethren from across the United States gathered in Charlotte, North Carolina, to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the restoration of God's Philadelphian Work under the leadership of Dr. Roderick C. Meredith.

Dozens of brethren arrived in Charlotte on December 28, in time to participate in Friday afternoon's Marriage Seminar, at which more than 50 couples listened to presentations by Mr. Richard Ames, Mr. Rod McNair and Dr. Douglas Winnail, while their children were treated to an interactive "hands-on" tour of the Mail Processing Department and the audio and the television studios. Young people practiced their oral communication skills by recording "Letters to the Editor," from a recent *Tomorrow's World* magazine, which will be included on an upcoming CD distributed to visually impaired brethren.

On the Sabbath afternoon of December 29, more than 500 enthusiastic brethren packed the 4,600-square-foot Lakeshore Ballroom at the Hilton Charlotte University Place. After an inspiring opening prayer by Dr. Winnail, brethren were treated to an 18-minute video presentation, gleaned from 15 years of archival footage, offering a retrospective



look at the growth and development of the Work. The video traced the Church's expansion over the last 15 years, from the very first days of the Global Church of God—where the "Mail Processing Department" was the Davis family's dining room table—to the present, where the Living Church of

God mails out hundreds of thousands of booklets, audiovisual materials and magazines from a 9,000-square-foot warehouse in the 38,000-square-foot Headquarters building.

For special music, brethren heard Kathryn Ames on violin and Jennifer Colon on piano, performing "Berceuse," from the opera *Jocelyn* by Benjamin Godard.

Presiding Evangelist Dr. Roderick C. Meredith then gave the sermon, exhorting brethren to think often about their rich heritage, individually and as a Church. "We deeply feel we are the Philadelphia remnant," Dr. Meredith

reminded listeners. "Others have more social clubs and activities and things, but they're not doing the Work to the same degree. That doesn't make us better humanly, but we do have that opportunity and that understanding that perhaps they don't understand."

"We are involved in the greatest crusade in modern times," Dr. Meredith emphasized, noting that those who have departed have forfeited the privilege of serving in that God-inspired effort. But to be sure we will stay involved, he reminded

us, we must stay close to God. As he said: "Brethren, if we walk with God, if we talk with God, if we drink in of His word and feed upon it and pray on our knees and meditate, and then yield to God so that we're in a spirit of prayer, and having that communion with God all the time, we will be hand in hand with Christ and walk with Him right over into eternity."

After Mr. Ames closed the service with prayer, brethren fellowshipped for

a couple of hours, then after sunset most returned to the hall to enjoy a formal dinner and a lively evening of dance. Music was provided by the J. R. Wells Band. Between dances, many brethren visited the "Museum of Memories" in an adjoining room, where Barbara Crockett and Sandra Davis had assembled a sampling of props that had been used in telecasts and magazines over the years.

Sunday morning, December 30, saw the brethren enjoying two activities. Eighty-eight singles gathered at Headquarters for a Singles Seminar, which included presentations by Dr. Meredith, Mr. Ames, Dr. Winnail and Mr. Lambert Greer. At the same time, a family event at the nearby Masonic Hall gave nearly 200 parents and children an opportunity to enjoy games and fellowship.

Many commented that it was a weekend not only of fun, but also of uplift and encouragement, as so many brethren came together to reflect on where we have been as a Church, and on where we are going—and on the great privilege God has given each of us to be a part of His end-time Work.

—William Bowmer




**Why Did God Become Flesh?***(continues from page 11)*

8:9). But this did not cancel the promise of grace through Christ, made to Abraham.

Jesus preached a message of repentance and faith (Mark 1:14–15). To those who believe and obey Him, He promises not only the forgiveness of sins, but also the gift of the Holy Spirit, to help Christians overcome

the flesh by engraving His laws in their hearts and minds, as they become more like Him (John 14:15–17; Romans 8:12–14; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Hebrews 8:10–12).

One could enumerate still more reasons why God came in the flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. This article can only scratch the surface of such a vast topic. A key point to remember, though, is that—as God’s commanded feasts teach us—the

work of salvation was not finished when Christ died and gave up His human flesh. Even today, He is seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding on our behalf as our High Priest (Hebrews 4:14–16). The Bible is full of the message of hope in the salvation Jesus Christ will bring with Him at His second coming (Romans 9:27–28). That is why He came in the flesh—and why He will soon return in glory to finish His work! 

**We Must Be Forgiven!***(continues from page 2)*

thing I was thinking, saying and doing. If I had to do it over, I would have studied even more zealously and thoughtfully. I would have poured out my being even more heartily in prayer, meditation and fasting before God. I would have tried to be, even more, a “living sacrifice” in Christ’s service, and would have tried more to “burn my bridges” as far as looking back on the world, wanting to have “fun” or anything else that I may have let distract my thoughts or actions when I was a younger minister of Christ.

Two of my early “heroes” were King David in the Old Testament and the Apostle Paul in the New Testament. I had the privilege of introducing the “Epistles of Paul” class into the curriculum at Ambassador College. I was inspired to do this after seeing how, on the baptizing tours, we were again and again asked questions about various technical points in Paul’s writing. I realized how vital it was that Ambassador students be drilled on the details of Paul’s writings, so they could truly understand what he taught. In teaching the class, I found—as is often the case—that it helped me even more than the students! For I had to “know my stuff” in order to help them, and to answer their difficult questions. In doing so, I came to realize—and I now realize even more—the powerful meaning of Paul’s stated desire, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Philippians 3:10). Through the process of total surrender to Christ, and going all out in seeking Him, we may each come to know Him more fully as each year of our life goes by. Paul also wrote of his hope, “if, by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me” (vv. 11–12).

Dear brethren, I implore you in the name of Jesus Christ—as the end of this age comes ever closer—that each one of you learn to “press on” harder than ever, more sincerely than ever, more heartily than ever, toward the goal of becoming a full member of God’s Kingdom. Part of our overcoming and growing will obviously be reflected in how much we commit ourselves to doing Christ’s Work and honoring Him in that way with all our hearts. Mr. Herbert Armstrong often said that the degree of one’s conversion could be determined by how much each individual’s heart was in the Work of God.

As Jesus Himself said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34). He went on to describe how, “he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together” (v. 36).

As I think about the 6.5 billion human beings on this earth, I meditate, over and over, about how our “little flock” will be able to reach these people with the message of Jesus Christ! We are indeed a “tiny” group of Christians. So, it is only through Christ powerfully living in us that we will be able to accomplish what needs to be done. As we meditate on Jesus Christ heartily giving His very Being to pay for our sins, let us also think about how we, collectively, can heartily give of ourselves in doing His Work, while honoring Him as we do it and zealously preparing for His Kingdom. This must be the passion of our lives! Then, when Christ returns, we can have confidence that we will be given a truly awesome reward—for we will know that we genuinely went “all out” in serving our Savior, and in doing His Work with all our hearts. As the Apostle John wrote, “And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (1 John 2:28).



## Upcoming *Tomorrow's World* Telecasts

WGN: Sunday, 6:00 AM ET

VISION (Canada): Sunday, 5:30 PM ET; Monday–Friday, 3:00 AM ET

WORD: Friday, 1:30 AM ET

Air Date	Broadcast Title
March 2	Will the Dead Live Again?
March 9	Solving the Confusion of Christianity
March 16	The Prophetic Day of the Lord
March 23	The Real Future of True Christians
March 30	Make Your Marriage Happier

For additional stations and times, check the Television and Radio Log on page 31 of your *Tomorrow's World* magazine.

## Births

Aron and Heather Gunn of Kansas City, Missouri are happy to announce the birth of their son, *Isaac Thomas Gunn*. Isaac was born on July 12, 2007 weighing 6 pounds, 8 ounces, and measuring 19 inches long. He is the first grandchild of Robert and Vi Gunn of Olathe, Kansas and nephew to Todd and Barb Lee of Kansas City, Missouri.

Murray and Melissa Jamieson welcomed *Bethany Veronica Jamieson* into their family on September 10, 2007. Her sister Brielle and her brother Joshua are overjoyed with their new little sister.

Daral and Heather Millich were blessed with the birth of a beautiful daughter, *Elizabeth Ana Millich*, on July 30, 2007. Weighing 7 pounds, 2 ounces and measuring 20¼ inches at birth, she is well-loved by her parents, by grandparents Rand and Gloria Millich and Patty Burson, by many uncles aunts and cousins, and by her brother Gabriel.

Paul and Tammy West of Kansas City, Missouri are pleased to announce the birth of their son, *Hunter Charles Lee West*. He was born on July 25, 2007, weighing 7 pounds, 5 ounces, and measuring 19¾ inches long.

We want to hear more about the happy milestones in the lives of our brethren. If your family has had a birth, marriage or major anniversary, please ask your local pastor to send word to the *Living Church News*, PO Box 3810, Charlotte, NC 28227-8010 (or to send e-mail to [lcn@lcn.org](mailto:lcn@lcn.org)).

## Wedding

The Kareliusson and Clore families rejoice to announce the marriage of *Leif William Kareliusson* and *Jennifer Marie Clore*, on December 23, 2007. The ceremony, attended by about 200 family members and friends from across North America, was conducted by Dr. Douglas S. Winnail. Leif's brothers Jason and Ryan served as groomsmen; Jennifer's sisters Sabrina and Brittany were bridesmaids. The couple will reside in Washington, DC.

## Matching Gifts

Many companies are able to match charitable donations made by employees (and retirees) and their spouses. You may wish to check with your employer's Personnel office to determine whether your gift qualifies. Your employer's policy may significantly increase—or even double—your giving to the Living Church of God.

## In Loving Memory

*Mr. Henry H. Aman*, of the Minneapolis, Minnesota congregation, died on October 10, 2007. He was 94 years old, and was preceded in death by his wife Alma and son Keith. He is survived by children Wayne, Zelda (Michael) Hanisko and Jerry (Julie); four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren and by many friends. He and his wife were baptized in June 1964 by a summer baptizing tour and attended their first Feast of Tabernacles that fall. They attended services regularly until her death and his declining health afterward. Mr. Sheldon Monson conducted the funeral.

*Mr. Douglas Wayne Kress*, of the Dubuque, Iowa congregation, died on December 15, 2007 after a sudden illness. He was 42 years old. He will be greatly missed by family and friends. Mr. Sheldon Monson conducted his funeral on December 18.

*Mr. Bill Labus* died on October 31, 2007. He was 68 years old. Baptized in 1969, he served as a deacon in the Wisconsin Dells congregation, where he will be very greatly missed. Mr. Sheldon Monson conducted his funeral.

*Mrs. Frieda Schmidt* died on October 20, 2007, at age 87; her husband *Mr. Ben Schmidt* had died at age 88 on July 19, 2007. The Schmidts, both of whom were baptized in April 1960, were preceded in death by son Philip in 1975; they are survived by sons Richard, Calvin, Wayne and

James; daughters Nadine Szymkowiak and Elaine (Dan) DenHouter; twenty-three grandchildren and twenty-one great-grandchildren. Mr. Rand Millich conducted the funerals.

*Mr. Keith Allen Walden* died peacefully on November 29, 2007, age 62, in his 40th year of serving faithfully as an elder in the Church of God. Born the last of five sons to Aaron and Grace Walden in 1945 in Ironton, Ohio, he spent most of his boyhood growing up in Eugene, Oregon. He entered Ambassador College in 1964, graduated in 1968, and went directly into the ministry. Much loved for his sense of humor and big heart, he will be deeply



missed. Many brethren did not realize that, from childhood, Mr. Walden struggled with reading. This complicated his sermon preparation, but he never shunned his responsibilities. Although he was feeling very weak, he was able to attend and speak at the Feast this year, and finished his final sermon on the Last Great Day. He is survived by his wife Renee and three daughters and sons-in-laws, all of Austin, Texas: Tess and Wyatt Ciesielka, Audrey and John Robinson, Jodie and Shawn Dumas, and six grandchildren: Chloe and Kezia Ciesielka, Madeline and Ella Robinson and Finn and Kye Dumas. The memorial service was conducted by Dr. Douglas S. Winnail on December 9.

# Commentary

## Are You Too Busy for God?

By Rod McNair

One key danger facing Christians today is that they can become so busy that they lose their spiritual focus. As the pace of society hastens, busyness can be a real danger to spiritual growth!

Jesus Christ gave this warning to the last generation leading up to His second coming: “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot’” (Revelation 3:14-15).

Even many Christians, just before Christ’s return will be in a condition of profound complacency. They may not be “out in the world” in rebellion against Him, but neither will they be on fire for Him and His Work! They will just be too busy with other concerns. Cares of the world will crowd out their relationship with God. “So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth” (v. 16).

We make time for God when we deeply sense our need for Him. But sometimes we may become so busy that we do not study, do not pray, and do not think about our future. We need to make a living, we need to go to work, we need to take care of our family and our needs—but do these concerns become the focus of our lives? As someone once said, “Don’t confuse busy-ness with growth.” Are you growing, or are you just busy?

Notice this July 30, 2007 report, “Christians Worldwide Too Busy for God,” offered by author Audrey Barrick at [www.christianpost.com](http://www.christianpost.com): “Christians worldwide are simply becoming too busy for God, a newly released five-year study revealed. In data collected from over 20,000 Christians with ages ranging from 15 to 88 across 139 countries, The Obstacles to Growth Survey found that on average, more than 4 in 10 Christians

around the world say they ‘often’ or ‘always’ rush from task to task... The busy life was found to be a distraction from God among Christians around the globe... About 6 in 10 Christians say that it’s ‘often’ or ‘always’ true that ‘the busyness of life gets in the way of developing my relationship with God...’

“While the study does not explain why Christians are so busy and distracted, Zigarelli [the author of the study] described the problem among Christians as ‘a vicious cycle’ prompted by cultural conformity. ‘[I]t may be the case that (1) Christians are assimilating to a culture of busyness, hurry and overload, which leads to (2) God becoming more marginalized in Christians’ lives, which leads to (3) a deteriorating relationship with God, which leads to (4) Christians becoming even more vulnerable to adopting secular assumptions about how to live, which leads to (5) more conformity to a culture of busyness, hurry and overload. And then the cycle begins again.’”

As true Christians, we must consciously fight against this culture of hyper-busyness, to keep our focus and spend the time we need on preparing for the Kingdom of God. In the parable of the sower, Jesus warned: “Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world [or the “worries of this life”, or the “anxieties of this age” as it is sometimes translated], the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” (Mark 4:18–19).

Are you going to be a busyness casualty? Remember what is important in your life! If God has opened your mind to His awesome Truth, and called you out of this world of chaos and confusion, be grateful! Grow, and become involved in God’s Work. Never let busyness sidetrack you from fulfilling your ultimate destiny.

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The above is adapted from one of the many commentaries, discussing vital topics facing our world, available at the [www.lcg.org](http://www.lcg.org) and [www.tomorrowworld.org](http://www.tomorrowworld.org) Web sites.