

Living Church News

Volume 11, No. 3 May–June 2009



Are YOU Prepared for the “Fiery” Trials?

Dear Brethren and Friends,

The Apostle Peter was inspired to warn us that “the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers” (1 Peter 4:7). He then continued: “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy” (vv. 12–13).

We would be remiss in our responsibility to you and to God if we did not specifically warn you brethren about the soon-coming “fiery trials”! Yes, in the end, we win! Yes, it is true that most of those who *really are* “Philadelphians” will be taken to the promised Place of Safety and will thus *escape* the full fury of the Great Tribulation (Revelation 3:10).

However, brethren, we have *always* recognized that some of us ministers—and many others—may be *persecuted, imprisoned or die* as martyrs before the Great Tribulation is fully underway. As you know, I have often stated this in sermons and Bible Studies over the years. Sadly, several of our brethren in Milwaukee, Wisconsin were murdered while attending Sabbath services in March 2005. Likewise, the early Church of God was shaken by the murders of Stephen (Acts 7:59) and the Apostle James (Acts 12:1–2). In addition, it is obvious from Scripture that God’s own people will suffer *many* discomforts and troubles, along with our worldly friends and neighbors, before the Great Tribulation begins. Remember, ancient Israel suffered the *first three plagues* right along with the Egyptians (Exodus 7:19; 8:6, 17). Then, before the fourth plague—the “swarm of flies”—God said that He would “set apart the land of Goshen” and the plagues would *not* come on His own people (Exodus 8:22–23).

Since Jesus Christ is the *same* yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8), the example of His dealings with ancient Israel gives us a clear insight into how He will guide events in our time. Jesus Himself warned us: “But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues” (Matthew 10:17). So do not *assume*, dear brethren, that we will not experience severe persecutions after this Work increases in size and power. For, as Jesus warned: “And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes” (vv. 22–23).

Armed with these *specific warnings* from Jesus Christ and His inspired apostles, what should we do? Most of us probably understand the basics—

Inside:

The PURPOSE for God’s Church3

The First New Testament Pentecost5

What Does Pentecost Mean to You?8

The Most Common Sin: Are You Guilty?11

Blogging Is Forever: Christian Communication in the Information Age14

The Road to Greatness17

Local Church News22

Commentary24

but are we truly going “all out” to put our **entire lives** fully in God’s hands? Many of our brethren pray fervently and study the Bible deeply—at least from time to time—and some are diligent in fasting occasionally. But—as a *way of life*—do you, personally, “seek God” with all your heart *every day*? Is God fully **real** to you personally? Or are you, like so many, so busy in your daily life that “seeking God” is just an occasional activity—merely on the “fringes” of your day-to-day activities? With constant duties in our jobs or professions, household responsibilities, taking care of children, and probably watching too much television, how profoundly do each of us **daily** “feed on Christ” (John 6:57) by *deeply studying* the Bible? How many of us regularly *pray fervently*, **meditate** on God’s word and set aside time regularly for *fasting* and profoundly seeking God?

How many of us strive to sincerely **give ourselves** to God in serving Him, seeking Him and in *outflowing concern* and **service** to our fellow human beings? How many of us go “above and beyond” in our prayers, in our tithes and offerings, and even in helping directly—when we can—in the very Work of the living Christ, preparing the way for His Kingdom? Jesus said that we must not be **focused** on making this present life “comfortable” for ourselves. For Jesus stated, “*He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it*” (Matthew 10:39).

Knowing, dear brethren, that we truly are near the **end** of this age, it is vital that each of us, more fervently than ever before, genuinely “seek God” with **all** of our hearts! That may sound trite or sentimental—but when things start crashing all around us, it will become an *absolute necessity* that we be close to God! After telling our forefathers that in the “latter days” they would be taken into slavery and serve “gods” in a far land, God states, “But from there you will seek the **LORD** your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the **LORD** your God and obey His voice” (Deuteronomy 4:29–30).

Notice the Apostle Paul’s inspired instruction that we must “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24–25). As the Day of Pentecost approaches, this year, we have *every reason* to “cry out” to God for more of His Holy Spirit—for more **love**, more **faith**, more **wisdom** and more spiritual **power**. For we will urgently *need* the help of God’s Spirit in the years just ahead. And the season of Pentecost is a very special time to focus on that.

Brethren, many of you may have seen the recent predictions by Gerald Celente, Chief Executive Officer of the Trends

Living Church News

Editor in Chief Roderick C. Meredith
Editorial Director Richard F. Ames
Executive Editor William Bowmer
Regional Editors Rod King (Europe)
Bruce Tyler (Australasia)
Gerald Weston (Canada)
Layout Editor Donna Prejean
Proofreaders Sandy Davis
Linda Ehman
Genie Ogwyn
June Olsen
Business Manager J. Davy Crockett, III

Regional Offices

UNITED STATES:

P.O. Box 3810
Charlotte, NC 28227
Phone: (704) 844-1970
<http://www.lcg.org>

AUSTRALASIA:

P.O. Box 300
Clarendon, SA 5157, Australia
Phone: (08) 8383 6288; Fax: (08) 8383 6388

CANADA:

P.O. Box 409
Mississauga, ON L5M 2B9, Canada
Phone: (905) 814-1094; Fax: (905) 814-7659

NEW ZEALAND:

P.O. Box 2767
Auckland, New Zealand
Phone/Fax: (09) 268 8985

PHILIPPINES:

MCPO Box 492 ■ Araneta Center Post Office
1135 Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines
Phone: 63-2-723-0499; Fax: 63-2-414-5349

SOUTH AFRICA:

Private Bag X7
Hatfield, Pretoria 0028
Republic of South Africa
Phone: (27) 58-622-1424; Fax: (27) 58-623-1303

UNITED KINGDOM:

BM Box 2345
London, WC1N 3XX, United Kingdom
Phone: 44 (0) 844-800-9322

The *Living Church News* is published bimonthly by the Living Church of God, 2301 Crown Centre Drive, Charlotte, NC 28227. Subscriptions are sent without charge to all members of the Living Church of God.

©2009, Living Church of God™. Printed in the USA.
All rights reserved. Postage paid at Charlotte, NC.

**Postmaster: Send address changes to
The Living Church News
P.O. Box 3810
Charlotte, NC 28227**

The *Living Church News* is not responsible for the return of unsolicited articles and photographs. Scriptures are quoted from the *New King James Version* (©Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

Continued on page 21

The PURPOSE for God's Church

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

As Mr. Armstrong used to ask: “Why are we here?” Every so often, it is good to review our *goals* and *purposes* in God's Church—and in the *Work* that He has called us to do.

First of all, it is obvious that God has called us to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and the “name” of Jesus Christ. In Mark 1:14–15, we read: “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.’” In Matthew 24:14, Jesus tells us: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

After His resurrection, Jesus commanded His disciples: “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned’” (Mark 16:15–16). And in Matthew 28:19–20, Jesus instructed His followers: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.” Note that even to the “*end* of the age” Jesus' disciples were to preach and teach

“all things” which Christ had commanded them during His earthly ministry—*not* some new “gospel of grace” supposedly introduced later by the Apostle Paul.

Then, we find in the book of Acts that Jesus continued to directly guide His Church and inspire its preaching. So when Philip went to Samaria to preach the Gospel, God's inspired word tells us: “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the *name* of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized” (Acts 8:12). Near the end of Paul's ministry, the Bible tells us: “Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (Acts 28:30–31).

Thus, God's word makes it clear that the good news of God's coming Kingdom was a basic part of the Gospel—along with the “name” or “the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 28:31). Throughout the Bible, the term “name” refers to the office, the authority, personality and even *character* of an individual. As *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* explains “The *name* in Heb. is sometimes used to signify the collected attributes or characteristics of the object named. This is particularly the case with the divine name (Exodus 34:5–6). Our Lord says, ‘I manifested Thy *name*,’ etc. (John 17:6), where *name* embraces the whole divine nature revealed by the Son.”

Our commission is to preach the powerful message of God's soon-coming *government* on this earth and describe its laws, its administration and *how* one should prepare to be part of this coming Government. Then, we need to make clear in our teaching the kind of Christ-like *character* God wants to develop within us through His Spirit. Putting two scriptures together, all true Christians must *grow* in “grace and knowledge” (2 Peter 3:18) “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). In every way we can, we need to help our brethren and new converts alike to capture and to build on these principles.

Next, since all true Christians are to understand and to *live* by every word of God, we must preach especially the *end*-time prophecies of the Bible and also give the vital “Ezekiel warning” to the peoples of the Israelitish nations. In Revelation 1:3, God tells us: “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.”

When we understand the Israelitish origin of the American and British-descended peoples, we would be derelict in our duty if we did not heartfully *warn* them of the coming Great Tribulation which will strike primarily at these peoples. God, in fact, warns *us* of this responsibility: “But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in

his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand" (Ezekiel 33:6).

As you brethren know, we are doing all we can to warn our peoples through the television messages devoted to this "Ezekiel warning," through articles in *Tomorrow's World* magazine and through our powerful booklet, *The United States and Great Britain in Prophecy*. We are holding Public Bible Lectures to give our subscribers a deeper understanding of what we teach. Later, if God opens the door and guides us to do this, we may expand these campaigns across America and our British-descended nations, as the prophesied punishments begin to occur and more people become eager to come to such meetings and to listen with open minds.

Then God's word tells us to "feed" the Church of God and strengthen it in every possible way. After His resurrection, Jesus told Peter: "Feed My sheep" and repeated this admonition three times (John 21:15–17). And the Apostle Paul commanded Timothy: "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Timothy 4:2–4).

In all of this we must try to help everyone we can—both within and without the true Church—to at least grasp the concept that true Christians are to "live by every word of God"—and that Christ is to literally *live* His life within us through the Holy Spirit (Galatians 2:20). A vital part of this mission is that we are to be **examples** and "lights" to the world (Matthew

5:14–16). As the "church of the living God, the pillar and ground [or "bulwark"] of the Truth" (1 Timothy 3:15), we, dear brethren, should set the *example* to the world—and to all professing Christians—of the *way* of life which Jesus taught!

In our personal lives, in our zealous work and productivity, in being closely bonded to our wives and families—and in a constant spirit of *giving*, serving and helping others—we should set a sterling example of what Christ really stands for! This is

**By our own examples,
we should set the
standard of self-control,
wisdom and judgment, of
faith and courage and—
most of all—of genuine
love and outflowing
concern. We should show
others by our conduct that
we do love God and put
Him and His commandments
above all else in everything
we think, say and do.**

an *awesome* responsibility for each one of us and is, in fact, part of our commission.

By our own examples, we should set the standard of self-control, wisdom and judgment, of faith and courage and—most of all—of genuine *love* and outflowing concern. We should show others by our *conduct* that we do *love* God and put Him and His commandments *above all else* in everything we think, say and do.

Finally, as adjuncts to these vital Christian imperatives, I have tried to stress in recent years three more im-

portant concepts we should all incorporate into our lives. First is the concept of Servant Leadership. This powerful, biblically based principle is simply learning to think through and *put in action* the many scriptures that tell us to "serve" one another. This concept informs us that even one in a high position or office is to use that office to *serve*—not to "get," not to exalt the self or domineer, but to do all he can to sincerely and humbly use his time, strength and talents to *serve* everyone with whom he deals. As Jesus 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).

I hope that by now you have all read our vital booklet, *Restoring Apostolic Christianity*. I pray that *all* of you will inculcate the principles in this booklet into your own thinking and in explaining the Truth to others. For it is *extremely important*, brethren, that we do not

let the world at large or Satan's ministers "box us in" with picky arguments about individual points such as the Sabbath, Holy Days or unclean meats. We must all come to understand that these are not "separated" issues that someone just put together in a disjointed manner. Rather, these basic doctrines and other important truths are all clearly derived from the original Church of God under the personal direction of the living Jesus Christ.

Continued on page 20

The First New Testament Pentecost

By Richard F. Ames

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples “returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey” (Acts 1:12). The disciples met in an “upper room where they were staying” (v. 13). Today, tourists in Jerusalem may visit a location called the Cenaculum (Latin for “supper room”) or Cenacle—often described in English as the “Last Supper Room” or the “upper room.” This room is actually not the original “upper room”—it is a Crusader-built fourteenth century memorial, though some have assumed it was built near—perhaps even over—the location of the original room where Jesus instituted the New Testament Passover.

Why have people considered this “upper room” so important? Christ’s most intimate disciples met together and prayed there: “And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers” (Acts 1:13–14).

Yes, Christ’s eleven remaining Apostles, along with His mother and brothers, met there. Jesus had told them to wait in Jerusalem for God’s *promise*. “And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now’” (Acts 1:4–5).

Pilgrims from sixteen different countries or regions had come to Jerusalem. They were there to observe the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22), also known as the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16) or “the day of the firstfruits” (Numbers 28:26). This was an exciting time for pilgrims—and even more so on the Day of Pentecost in 31AD. We read: “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1–4).

Thousands of people gathered to find out what was happening. To their great surprise, they heard the Apostles’ preaching in their own languages! Notice: “And there were

dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language” (Acts 2:5–6).

These visitors were not listening to strange languages they could not understand—each heard the apostles “speak in his own language.” Further, what did they hear and understand? “[W]e hear them speaking in our own tongues *the wonderful works of God*” (v. 11). There is no question that this gift of languages communicated God’s truth in words each pilgrim could understand.

Still, this large audience was perplexed—they could not grasp the historical meaning of this great event: “So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘Whatever could this mean?’ Others mocking said, ‘They are full of new wine’” (Acts 2:12–13).

Joel’s Prophecy

The Apostle Peter gave them the scriptural perspective by quoting the prophet Joel: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:17–18).

God’s people—men and women who are converted and close to God—will often speak to one another, or to non-Christians, with comforting counsel or inspired answers to questions. I have observed my wife giving inspired counsel to others over the telephone, and in person. Today, we all need that close contact with God more than ever.

Peter continued with Joel’s prophecy: “I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD” (Acts 2:19–20).

Why would Peter emphasize these astronomical signs? We know that the ultimate fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy will be the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12), which introduces the Day of the Lord—the year of God’s judgments on the nations. Many in Peter’s audience on the Day of Pentecost would also have been in Jerusalem for the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread two months earlier. Remember that during the crucifixion, Jerusalem had experienced an awesome astronomical sign of darkness for three hours:

“Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land” (Matthew 27:45).

Joel’s prophecy also foretold that the moon would be turned to blood! Had Peter’s audience seen the moon turned to blood just a few weeks earlier? A number of astronomical researchers have documented a lunar eclipse visible from Jerusalem on the night after the crucifixion—April 25, 31AD. Author Anthony Alfieri pointed out that this April 25 eclipse was the only one in ten years to be “perfectly blood-red in color” (*The Darkness at the Crucifixion*, Vol. I, p. 399, emphasis ours). Alfieri explains, “The red phase of this eclipse lasted over two hours, providing a spectacular display of the Moon shifting deeper and deeper into its full color gamut and then returning to normalcy” (*ibid.*, p. 396). This was the night after Jesus was placed in the tomb—the night we call the “night to be much observed” (Exodus 12:42, *KJV*). Such eclipses occur from time to time, but only occasionally do they align with important calendar dates; interestingly, astronomers predict that a similar eclipse will occur on Nisan 15 in the year 2015.

Yes, the Apostle Peter was speaking of cosmic phenomena most of his audience had recently observed! Peter continued preaching about the Messiah and the resurrection of Christ! When he told his audience that they were responsible for Jesus’ crucifixion, “they were cut to the heart.” Peter boldly proclaimed: “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:36–38). *More than 3,000* people heard Peter, since 3,000 were *baptized* on that day (Acts 2:41).

The Church Meets Together

When pilgrims came to Jerusalem, they congregated at the city’s most holy site: the Temple. So, too, did the Apostles and new disciples, every day: “So continuing daily with one accord *in the temple*, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:46–47).

Around the Temple plaza was a colonnade, the eastern part of which was commonly called Solomon’s Porch (though, strictly speaking, “portico” would be the correct term). Jesus often taught His audience at this location. The

Apostle John records one such event. “Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon’s porch” (John 10:22–23).

A wide variety of groups, or synagogues, would often gather in Solomon’s Porch. The Greek *sunagoge* can be translated “gathering” or “gathering place.” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* explains the term: “Synagogue. The meeting place and prayer hall of the Jewish people since antiquity. During Second Temple times the term ‘synagogue’ referred both to a group of people and/or a building or institution. Although these notions are not mutually exclusive, it is quite probable that at its inception the synagogue did not refer to an actual building but to a group or community of individuals who met together for worship and religious purposes” (Article: “Synagogue,” Vol. VI, p. 251). Many religious groups held gatherings in Solomon’s Porch rather than in a building of their own.

After Pentecost, we find that the disciples regularly met at the Temple: “And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch” (Acts 5:12).

Let us consider one more example of Peter speaking to a large audience. Shortly after Pentecost, Peter performed a great miracle that eventually led to his summons before the Sanhedrin. “Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour” (Acts 3:1). Peter, in the name of Jesus Christ, healed the lame man who begged at the Temple gate called Beautiful. “So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God” (Acts 3:8–9).

As a result of the miracle, a large crowd gathered to hear Peter speak. Where did that take place? “Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them *in the porch which is called Solomon’s*, greatly amazed. So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: ‘Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know’” (Acts 3:11–16).

Peter then spoke a message similar to his Pentecost exhortation: “Repent therefore and be converted, that your

sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19–21).

The Apostles and disciples were “with one accord” at the Temple, where thousands of pilgrims and worshipers met for Pentecost. Various language groups or synagogues met in Solomon’s Porch.

The colonnade comprising Solomon’s Porch or Portico was very impressive. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* gives this description: “A colonnade which made up part of the temple complex built by Herod in Jerusalem. This colonnade like the others that surrounded the temple precinct, provided a meeting place for individuals to discuss Scripture preceding and following the observation of religious rituals. Jesus’ disciples gathered at this location and the early Jerusalem church also met there (John 10:23; Acts 3:11; 5:12). It was located on the E side of the temple complex overlooking the Kidron Valley (Josephus *Ant* 20.9.7). According to the tradition reported by Josephus, Solomon’s temple utilized a covered area supported by a platform (*JW* 5.5.1; *Ant* 8.3.9). The location described as Solomon’s portico in the NT was certainly designed by Herod’s architects. This colonnade was reportedly double columned and spanned 49 feet. The columns were 38 feet tall monoliths of white marble and supported cedar-paneled ceilings” (Article: “Solomon’s Portico,” Vol. VI, p. 113).

Pentecost Today

The New Testament Church began on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus declared the enduring quality of the Church when He said, “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). God’s people can take great encouragement from that truth! As we look forward to the Second Coming, we have a responsibility to carry on the mission Christ gave His Church. Remember, before His ascension to heaven from Jerusalem, Jesus assured His disciples that they would receive “the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now’” (Acts 1:4–5).

God’s Spirit is not “a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). It is by this awesome power that God has given us the means to fulfill the mission He has entrusted to the Church. Jesus’ last instruction to His servants before His ascension was: “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when

the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:7–8). Brethren, we must all be committed to fulfill that mission. Be sure to read Dr. Meredith’s Editorial, “The PURPOSE for God’s Church,” on page 3 of this issue.

As we observe Pentecost this year, we must remind ourselves of the power God has given us through His Spirit. Be sure to review the article “Trust in God’s Power in 2009” (*Living Church News*, Jan-Feb 2009). Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong summarized the characteristics of God’s Spirit in his article, “A Voice Cries Out Amid Religious Confusion (Part 4).” He wrote: “What, then, is the Holy Spirit? It is the very divine life-begetting Power of God, that imparts divine and immortal life to a repentant and believing Christian, begetting such a person as a child of God. And it is MUCH MORE!” (*Plain Truth*, May 1980, p. 42).

Mr. Armstrong continues his description of the Holy Spirit: “It is the POWER emanating from God by which God creates. It is the LOVE of God which the converted Christian receives from God. It is the FAITH of Christ. It is the Spirit that imparts to the human mind spiritual comprehension. It is the power of God by which the child of God may overcome sin. It is the Spirit by which, on human surrender, repentance, faith and decision, God imparts HIS CHARACTER to a human” (*ibid.*).

Brethren, at this Pentecost and beyond, we must remember who we are and the responsibility our calling requires of us. In his article, “What Does Pentecost Mean to You?” on page 8 of this issue, Dr. Douglas Winnail describes our “special calling.” Always remember that we are God’s begotten children and the servants of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Thank God for the awesome spiritual power and gifts He gives us. As we saw earlier, the Apostles and disciples of the first century spent much of their time at the Temple. Today, God has called His people to be the “temple.” The Apostle Paul gave the Corinthians a warning that we, too, must apply to ourselves: “Do you not know that *you are the temple of God* and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple *you are*” (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

Brethren, God had continually blessed His people at His house, the Temple (John 2:16–17). Now, *we* are His temple, and we must honor Him by all that we do and think and say. Christ is the living Head of His body, the Church (Colossians 1:18). Let us go forward with Christ’s loving and powerful leadership, to fulfill the Work He has given us to accomplish, because we do so, “‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6). ■

What Does Pentecost Mean to You?

By Douglas S. Winnail

In Acts 2, we read the account of the New Testament Church beginning on the Day of Pentecost in 31AD. It began when 3,000 people made a baptismal commitment after witnessing the dramatic outpouring of the Holy Spirit and listening to the inspired preaching of Jesus' disciples. But did these 3,000 people merely decide on the spot to "give their hearts to the Lord"? Or was there something more going on—something unique and profound? Do we really understand what God was doing on that Day of Pentecost when the New Testament Church began? Were those events related to God's previous actions in history? And how do the events on Pentecost relate to you and the Church of God today?

A Special Calling

It is instructive to notice that when Jesus began His ministry, He did not stand on street corners and invite just anyone to become His disciple. Jesus called specific individuals to become His original disciples (Matthew 4:18–22). Later, as He trained His disciples, He explained to them, "it has been *given to you* to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [those in the world and those who followed Jesus out of curiosity] it has not been given" (Matthew 13:10–11). Jesus explained that only a few would be called initially to follow Him, and that those not called would be blinded to an understanding of the True Gospel. Jesus then told His disciples, "*blessed* are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly... many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it" (Matthew 13:16–17). In other words, Jesus' disciples were called and given a special un-

derstanding of the plan of God, which others were not yet given.

On another occasion, Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44). Jesus then launched into a spiritual discussion about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, which many in His audience did not understand. Jesus then repeated His earlier statement that "no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father" (John 6:65). At that point, those who did not grasp what Jesus was talking about ceased to follow Him—and Jesus did not pursue them. On the night before Jesus was crucified, He told God in a prayer, "I have manifested [revealed] Your name to the men whom *You have given Me* out of the world" (John 17:6). Some years later, the Apostle Paul wrote to Church members in Corinth, "For you see your calling, brethren, that *not many* wise according to the flesh, *not many* mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise" (1 Corinthians 1:26–27). James identified those who are called into the Church as the "*firstfruits*" in the plan of God (James 1:18).

From these verses, we learn that people do not decide on their own to become Christians, and that God is not now calling everyone into His Church. He is calling a *few individuals* to become "firstfruits" who will reign with Christ when He returns to set up the Kingdom of God on this earth (see Revelation 5:10; 14:4; 20:4–6). Jesus said that a calling to be His disciple was a *unique opportunity* and a *very special privilege* that would only be offered to a *few* in this age. This means that what happened on the Day of Pentecost in 31AD was according to a plan and that something very profound was going on.

The people who made a baptismal commitment on that day did not just decide on the spot to "give their hearts to the Lord." The individuals who were baptized had been *called* by God and given a special opportunity to be part of His Church. They were given the ability to understand the *meaning* and *significance* of what they had seen and the message they heard from the disciples whom Jesus had called and trained. What happened on Pentecost in 31AD was part of the plan of God that has important implications for each of us and for the Church of God today.

Admonitions and Warnings

The Apostle Paul admonished the ministry of God's Church, "Preach the word! Be ready *in season* and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine... they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Timothy 4:1–4). Paul told the ministry to deliver messages *appropriate to the season*—which means that messages on the Holy Days should explain the meaning of those days, so the understanding of what those days picture would not be lost or forgotten. However, Paul also warned—in the context of the "last days" (2 Timothy 3:1–5)—that many would follow *false religious* teachings and practices.

In another letter, Paul warned that prior to the return of Jesus Christ, a "man of sin"—a "lawless one"—would appear on the world scene and deceive many with miraculous signs and false doctrines, but that real Christians should "stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught" (2 Thessalonians 2:1–15). The "lawless" teachings include

the ideas that because of Jesus' sacrifice, Christians are not to strive to keep God's law with the help of the Holy Spirit—rather, they can continue in their sinful ways with God's blessing.

However, such teachings do not agree with the teachings or example of Jesus, who said, “*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill*” (Matthew 5:17). Scripture plainly teaches that Jesus came to “magnify the law” (Isaiah 42:21, KJV) and to show that the letter of the law (such as Exodus 20:13–14, forbidding murder and adultery) also has a spiritual dimension (Matthew 5:21–28, “do not be angry or lust”). It is clear from Scripture that Jesus kept the Sabbath and the Holy Days, and that He taught others to follow His example (Luke 4:16; John 7:1–10).

The Apostle Paul warned that false teachers would preach about *another Jesus* (2 Corinthians 11:3–4). His warning has come to pass in stories about an effeminate, law-breaking individual whose birth is celebrated on December 25. These false teachers would preach a *different gospel* (such as the idea that you can be saved merely by “giving your heart to the Lord” and that your reward for doing so will be to spend eternity in Heaven). These false teachers would be led by a *different spirit* that promotes lies and fables instead of the Truth, and that turns a blind eye to the facts of history. This is why the Apostle Jude warned Christians to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Jude was writing ca. 65AD, when men had entered the Church with an agenda of “turning the grace of our God into lewdness” (Jude 4). Such misleading ideas were promoted by Gnostics who used Jesus' name, but referred to the law of God as a burden (contrary to 1 John 5:3). These Gnostic

teachers, though claiming to be Christians, told people that it was acceptable to keep other religions' holidays to honor Jesus, and that they could choose their own day of worship instead of the seventh day. These false Gnostic ideas were absorbed by the Roman Catholic Church, and were later transmitted into Protestant churches where they are still believed today. For an excellent account of this process, read *Primitive Christianity in Crisis* by Alan Knight. This is why Catholics and Protestants have lost sight of the Holy Days and their meanings, and why they do not understand the truth about the plan of God.

Holy Days: Commanded Assemblies

What is the purpose of keeping the Holy Days? What truths are they intended to convey? What lessons can we learn—especially about Pentecost—that are relevant to Christians today? Scripture states that the Sabbath and the Holy Days are not the feasts of Moses or the Jews, but are “the feasts of the LORD” (Leviticus 23:2). These festivals are also referred to as “holy convocations”—they are *commanded assemblies* that were established to be kept “forever” (Leviticus 23:4, 14, 21, 31, 41). God did not establish His Sabbath and Holy Days as nice options, for us to observe out of the goodness of our hearts if we are so inclined. Rather, He *commanded* His people to observe the festivals He established. We are told in three different passages in the Old Testament, “Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year”—in the spring at the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, in early summer at Pentecost [the Feast of Weeks] and in the autumn at the Feast of Tabernacles (Exodus 23:14–17; 34:22–23; Deuteronomy 16:16). It is interesting that the idea of “firstfruits” is closely associated with the Feast of Pentecost

in these passages, yet this idea is not fully explained in the Old Testament. The Apostle Paul mentions that the festivals of God provide “a shadow of things to come” (Colossians 2:16–17), and it is in the New Testament that we learn the real significance of “firstfruits” in relation to the plan of God and the events that occurred on Pentecost in 31AD.

But what instructions did God give to the ancient nation of Israel, and how do those instructions relate to Christians today? In Deuteronomy 4, Moses reviewed the conditions of the covenant that God had made with the nation of Israel. He explained that God gave them His laws—including the Sabbaths and Holy Days—for their benefit, and that they were not to add to, nor to take away from, any of His commandments. This would include not rejecting the Holy Days and replacing them with pagan holidays. Moses explained that God gave Israel His laws to set them apart from other nations, so they could be an *example* to the world of a wise and understanding people—setting an example that the peoples of the world would want to emulate when they saw the blessings that the Israelites would experience by following God's laws. Jesus gave similar instructions to His disciples when He told them to keep His commandments and be lights to the world (John 14:15; Matthew 5:14–16).

Moses also instructed the Israelites to teach the laws of God to their children and grandchildren, so that they would never forget the covenant they made with God nor how God dealt with their nation. Yet, in spite of these warnings, Moses perceived that these instructions would be forgotten (Deuteronomy 4:9–40). Moses reminded the Israelites that God *chose* them and raised them up from humble origins to be His “special” people—to be blessed and be an example of holiness to the world if

they would obey His instructions (Deuteronomy 7:6–26). God gave the Israelites His Sabbaths and Holy Days as a *sign* to set them apart from the nations of the world, and keep them mindful of His great plan (Exodus 31:12–18). Those God is calling into His Church today have been called for the same reason (1 Peter 2:9–10).

Sadly, the ancient Israelites forgot God's instructions, rejected His laws and failed to observe His Sabbaths and Holy Days. They lost sight of their special mission, corrupted themselves, went into captivity and lost their national identity (see Deuteronomy 31:26–29; 2 Kings 17:18; Ezekiel 20). Those whom God has called in our present day to become part of His Church, to be lights to the world, must be alert to these lessons of history—and not repeat the mistakes of the past!

New Testament Pentecost

As we have seen, Jesus did *not* come to do away with the laws of God. Jesus *kept* the Sabbath and the Holy Days all His life, and taught His disciples to follow His example (Luke 4:16; 22:14–16; John 7:8–10, 37). Jesus' disciples taught the early New Testament Church to do likewise (Acts 17:2; 18:21; 1 Corinthians 5:8; 11:1). In the days after His resurrection, Jesus *commanded* His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–8). It was on the Day of Pentecost—a Holy Day that God's people have been commanded to observe forever (Leviticus 23:21)—when God poured out His Spirit and began the New Testament Church of God (Acts 2). We are told that God gives His Spirit “to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:32). *Because* Jesus' disciples were following His commandments and instructions, God poured out His Spirit in a dramatic and visible way, enabling the disciples to speak in different languages so the Gospel could

be understood by people who spoke other languages (Acts 2:1–12).

This sudden capacity to speak in a different language or tongue was not—as most in the world today *assume*—a personal ecstatic experience in which participants began to babble a series of unrecognizable syllables. Rather, God supernaturally gave the disciples the ability to communicate with each listener *in his or her own language*, so the Gospel message could be understood and spread. This miraculous sign of speaking in another tongue is also mentioned in Acts 10:44–48 and Acts 19:1–6. In each case, the ability to speak in a different language was a sign that God was leading His Church—not a personal ecstatic experience meant to give the speaker some enhanced personal sense of spirituality.

Scripture shows how God began His Church—and added to it—by calling individuals out of this world, to whom He gave the Holy Spirit to guide them into understanding His truth and His plan. On several occasions, Jesus said that to be called by God, and to be given the capacity to understand His truth, is a *unique opportunity* and a *special privilege*. Those who made a baptismal commitment on the Day of Pentecost took advantage of that opportunity to become part of the New Testament Church. If God has called you and given you the capacity to understand His Truth, you, too, have been given this same unique opportunity and special privilege to become part of His Church and play a role as a “firstfruit” in God's plan of salvation that will change the whole world. The Day of Pentecost should be a sobering and exciting reminder of that special calling.

Gifts of the Spirit

Those whom God called to be part of His Church on Pentecost in 31AD were told that they would re-

ceive the *gift* of the Holy Spirit if they would repent and make a commitment to accept Jesus Christ's sacrifice to pay for their sins (Acts 2:38). Repentance involves changing our lives and coming ever closer to God by living ever more fully according to His laws. Remember, Jesus told His disciples to keep His commandments, and taught that God gives His Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). We also learn from Scripture that God imparts the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands by God's ministers after baptism (Acts 8:14–18). This is how we receive the Holy Spirit—not through some emotional project we undertake on our own effort.

Jesus called the Holy Spirit the “Spirit of truth,” and said that the world “cannot receive” that Spirit, which it neither sees nor knows (John 14:16). Scripture plainly states that people are not real Christians—and will not receive the Holy Spirit—unless they are called by God, they repent and accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as payment for their sins, and at baptism they make a commitment to obey God (Romans 8:9).

Jesus also said that God's Spirit will lead Christians and His Church “into all truth” (John 16:13). These verses explain why the Church of God understands the meaning of the Holy Days and that these days picture the plan of God. This is also why the Church of God understands the “mystery of the kingdom of God” (Mark 4:11), and why the Church of God is able to have a “more sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19–21, KJV). God makes these gifts available to His Church so it can accomplish the mission He gave it.

The *gift* of the Holy Spirit comes with a *responsibility*. Once we receive the Holy Spirit, we must *nourish* that Spirit—by daily prayer,

Continued on page 20

The Most Common Sin: Are You Guilty?

Your spiritual growth—absolutely vital for entrance into God’s Kingdom—is measured in large part by the vital Christian quality of gratitude.

By Dibar K. Apartian

“What a beautiful day!” I exclaimed. “Look at that clear blue sky and those snowcapped mountains on the horizon!” I was in France, conversing with a Church member as we stood on the balcony of a hotel room facing the Alps.

“Yes, indeed,” he answered without the slightest hesitation. “It certainly is a magnificent day. It is breathtaking.”

All of a sudden, I felt embarrassed, rather ashamed of myself. My companion, a war veteran, was blind. But somehow, in my enthusiasm, I had forgotten this.

“Please don’t feel bad about it,” he assured me, sensing my embarrassment. “Even though I am unable to see, I can smell and hear. I can touch and feel what you sometimes only see with your eyes! I’m not terribly handicapped after all, am I?”

No, he was not. He was not handicapped much at all. Actually, he could see better than I. There was no trace of sadness on his face, not a single word of complaint on his lips, no bitterness whatsoever in the tone of his voice. He was a grateful person—grateful to be alive, grateful to

have friends and, above all, most grateful to be in God’s Church.

What a pity most people do not know how to count their blessings—how to appreciate what they have, how to be thankful and grateful.

Meditate on These Things

Does your mind dwell on all the things that you as a Christian can be

true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

Did you notice that there is not a single unhappy thought in these instructions? No complaints. No gripes. No negative attitudes. This truly is a commandment of God, but how many of us in God’s Church today respect it? A lack of gratitude can prevent us from putting this teaching into practice.

Have you learned to be grateful? Are your prayers to God filled with praise and thanksgiving, or do you continually bother Him with requests and complaints? Examine your heart the next time you get on your knees to talk to Him in secret.

One of the most frequently quoted verses in Scripture, even by those who do not consider the Bible to be inspired, is Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Do you actually believe that all things are working together for your good? You should, if you fulfill the clearly stated conditions: You must love God, and you must be

Do you actually believe that all things are working together for your good? You should, if you fulfill the clearly stated conditions: You must love God, and you must be one of those called according to His purpose. This promise definitely applies to those of us in God’s Church!

positive about, or do you have trouble thinking of things for which you can be thankful?

As the Apostle Paul wrote, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are

one of those called according to His purpose. This promise definitely applies to those of us in God's Church!

Consider the story of the ten lepers who begged Christ to have mercy on them. What happened after they were healed? Only one of them, "when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks" (Luke 17:15–16). And he was a Samaritan, not even an Israelite!

Whether Gentiles or Israelites, where were the other nine? Were they also healed? Yes! That is the very question Christ was posing when He asked, "Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" (v. 18).

David's Example

What made King David a man after God's own heart? Was it perhaps his courage? Was it his willingness to repent of his sins? Was it his earnest desire to search God's ways?

Undoubtedly all of these were contributing factors, but one of David's greatest qualities was his gratitude toward God. Amidst sorrows, trials, and persecutions, David constantly praised God; he always sang psalms of thanksgiving and appreciation.

Notice Psalm 100: "Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands! Serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations."

How uplifting! Do you, as a Christian, feel this way? Do you share David's sentiments? Are you grateful to God for everything? Be honest! What are your thoughts most of the time? When you rise in the morning? In your conversations during the day? What is your attitude toward the people around you at work? What thoughts do you generally entertain when you are alone?

**Life is not always easy—
for anyone. You may be
having serious problems
today—experiencing
trying moments that are
hard to understand and
for which you do not
honestly feel you can
be grateful.**

If you are truly converted, the thoughts of Psalm 100 should be on your lips and in your heart, whatever your circumstances.

Christ: A Man of Joy

Suppose you were asked to count your blessings one by one? How would you go about it? What would be at the top of your list? Your spouse? Your children? The health you may enjoy? The job you have? The country in which you live?

Would you think of God's love for you as your greatest blessing? Are you grateful for your calling—for being in His Church with the tremendous opportunities it offers you to serve? Some lack gratitude—they do not truly appreciate their calling.

But how about you?

Life is not always easy—for anyone. You may be having serious problems today—experiencing trying moments that are hard to understand, and for which you do not honestly feel you can be grateful.

But can you name *any* servant of God who did not encounter hardships and persecutions? Of course not! Life challenges us with circumstances that contribute to our growth. Did Jesus have an easy life on earth? Easier than yours? You know better: "For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:3–4).

Despite all this, Jesus was a man of joy. And He told us to share His joy with Him! Trials, tribulations and persecutions are necessary in building our Christian character.

On one occasion, when Christ told a man that being a true Christian meant to be willing literally to give up everything and follow Him, His own disciples were upset at hearing this. They thought the conditions Christ set were much too harsh to allow anyone to be saved.

But Christ told them: "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:29–30).

A Christian, therefore, is promised not only blessings, but also persecutions. That is part of your calling—part of your joy. Are you willing to accept your share of the

covenant—and to meet life’s challenges? Sadly, when persecutions come, some weaken and forget to be thankful. They forget their blessings and begin to count their sorrows.

Actually, all of us in God’s Church, whatever our condition, are very blessed. All of us—whatever our problems—have more reasons to be thankful to God than any other human beings on earth.

James wrote: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:2–4).

Do you really understand this teaching? You need to “count it all joy” not only when things go right, but also when they go wrong. Anyone can be happy and joyful when life is full of smiles. But only a true Christian can express gratitude when undergoing trials.

Paul Rejoiced

The Apostle Paul suffered more, perhaps, than any other disciple of Christ. Yet his epistles are filled with thanksgiving and gratitude. He exhorts us to “Rejoice always” (1 Thessalonians 5:16). You cannot possibly rejoice if you keep complaining and counting your miseries. And you cannot be in the right attitude if you forget the will of God. Remember: “in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God,” wrote Paul (v. 18). Rejoicing, prayer and giving thanks are commanded by God.

Like King David, Paul too was a man after God’s own heart. He was courageous, obedient and repentant, and wanted to learn God’s ways. He had learned, as we all must, to be happy in whatever state he found himself (Philippians 4:11–12).

Here was Paul’s secret. He knew that God’s Spirit in him strengthened him in all of his trials, and actually enabled him to do “all things” in the fulfillment of his mission (Philippians 4:13).

If you have this type of attitude, then no matter what happens to you—whether you are sick or in good health, whether you are poor or rich—you can always get down on your knees and praise God, saying: “Thank you, God, for your blessings. Thank you for your love and mercy. Thank you for your patience with me.”

No Temptation Too Great

You probably have read Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong’s autobiography. You saw the way God dealt with him and brought him down to his knees. After reading his story and seeing what he went through, would you say that Mr. Armstrong’s life was an easy one? Certainly he suffered much hardship and many adverse circumstances. But God blessed him for enduring. Notice how much Mr. Armstrong’s heart, despite all his trials, was filled with gratitude toward God.

God tells us that He will never allow any temptation to test us beyond our endurance. “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Growth in gratitude is a sign of spiritual growth.

The moment you stop being grateful, you put yourself on Satan’s wavelength and become vulnerable to his attacks. Satan wants you to complain, because that is one sure way of making you turn away from God.

Decide To Be Thankful

Here is a challenge for you: Make up your mind that for twelve consecutive hours, you will not complain. Do not allow any gripes or murmurs to enter your words or your thoughts, no matter what happens. Say to yourself, “All things work together for my good.” You may be surprised at the result and the sudden wonderful change in your life.

In all probability, you may find this challenge rather hard to meet, because complaining could very well be a part of your daily life—a routine you follow, whether consciously or not. But try it—force yourself to try it. Set your mind, your eyes and your thoughts on the ultimate goal—on the purpose of your existence, and on the opportunities you will have in God’s Kingdom to help and serve. Discard from your mind any thoughts that may be a hindrance to your resolution. Like my friend who was blind, feel what you cannot see, and be joyful and thankful for what you have.

If you do not succeed the first time, try it again until you succeed. And then make a habit of it. God Himself will give you all the help you need. The promise He made to the ancient Israelites also applies to you: “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace” (Exodus 14:13–14).

What more encouragement do you need? God will fight for you, so you can “hold your peace”—stop complaining—and express gratitude.

Then, having done so, you will fully grasp the deep meaning of Paul’s words, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). ■

Blogging Is Forever: Christian Communication in the Information Age

By Rod McNair

As computer technology continues to develop at an ever-increasing pace, the networked personal computer has become an indispensable tool for many families in America and around the world. Its multiple uses have altered the way companies do business, and have dramatically changed the lives of us all. The “Computer Age” is upon us, and the “Information Superhighway,” which was only a vague concept in the minds of most a few short years ago, is now a reality.

The opportunity to personally interact with others is no longer limited to e-mail, instant messages, chat rooms, or forums, but now extends to social networks using Facebook, MySpace and YouTube, and to online diarists—“bloggers” (short for “Web loggers”)—using services such as WordPress, Blogspot and TypePad. Many people enjoy creating their own personal Web pages, where they can post photos of family and friends, and can express their religious or political views—or even what they are doing at random moments throughout the day, as do millions of Twitter users.

While the Internet provides many exciting ways to make new friends and keep in touch with old ones, Christians need to evaluate carefully how we use this technology. Even in cyberspace—*especially in cyberspace!*—the “same old” guidelines for Christian communication apply. In Colossians 4:6 we read, “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” Keeping spiritual principles of communication in mind, here are a few general guidelines that all members in God’s Church should follow.

Take It to Your Brother, Not to the Internet

One of the most common mistakes many of us in God’s Church make is the misapplication (or lack of application) of Matthew 18:15. Christ instructed: “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him **alone**.” All too often, we do not take it to our brother alone—we complain to anyone within earshot!

And now the Internet takes this problem to a whole new level. Instead of just one or two others in a local congregation hearing our grievance, Internet communication now makes it possible for gossip to be spread to hundreds *or even thousands* of people. This is not an overstatement! The potential for wrecking relationships and damaging others’ reputations by careless words on the Internet is enormous.

When posting videos or blogging at the numerous sites that are now available, we must at all times avoid personal attacks on the character of others, or any statements that could be misconstrued as slanderous. This is not only for moral reasons, but for legal ones as well. Any blog entry, photo or video that is perceived as defamation or slander could find its way into the courts. God says, “What right have you to declare My statutes, or take My covenant in your mouth.... You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother’s son” (Psalm 50:16, 19–20).

In contrast, true love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8), and a true Christian will follow this admonition. We all need to uphold high standards of conduct when discussing anyone, in or out of God’s Church. If we have a problem with a brother or sister, we must take it to them—not to the Internet.

Weigh Your Words Online

While I was in college, I had an overseas assignment during which students were cautioned to be circumspect in letters written home, because of the long distances and time lag in long-range communication. We were cautioned against writing when we were having troubles with loneliness or adjustments in our new surroundings, or when we might have some problem with our work or our co-workers. It was better to wait until our emotions had cooled and our perspective had improved. Why? It took two weeks for our letters to arrive home. By the time parents read a letter’s “tales of woe” and had been worried sick as a result, the student who wrote in a momentary burst of emotion would often have long since forgotten what had prompted such a strong comment!

In the same way, we need to weigh our words today, because the Internet puts a new spin on this problem. Posts and e-mails are dispatched instantaneously, at the touch of a button. Now, friends, acquaintances, and sometimes even strangers, can read our words of frustration and angst almost immediately. And our words can have virtual, never-ending life on the Internet, long after we have recovered from our immediate frustration.

Remember, what goes on the Internet, stays on the Internet! Once you hit the “send” or “post” button, you are putting your trust in how other people handle the in-

formation. Do not write or post anything that you do not want the entire global population to know! Undisciplined chatter on a blog, or posting inappropriate photos, may come back to haunt an individual years later. Companies now monitor blogs and social networking sites, and search the Web to make sure they are hiring only the most qualified candidates. They do not want an employee who has been caught angrily attacking a former boss or company, or someone who indiscriminately lashes out at others. They also may shy away from hiring a potential employee who is pictured in inappropriate photos of partying with alcohol or dressing suggestively. Wisdom is the key!

We all become frustrated from time to time. We all say things we wish we could take back. But as hard as it can be to “take back” words that were said face to face, it is even harder to take back our postings or e-mails, which others may circulate long after we have changed our minds about what we wrote. How many of us have clicked “send” or “submit” and then later regretted what we wrote in haste? In the age of the Internet, the proverb is even more meaningful: “Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him” (Proverbs 29:20). We must weigh our postings carefully, especially in the Information Age, for “in the multitude of words sin is not lacking” (Proverbs 10:19).

On a more sobering note, **parents must be aware what their children and teens are posting.** Monitor the use of the Internet by your children and teens, and help them understand the dangers that lurk in “cyberspace.” Everyone needs to be careful when posting on sites such as Facebook, MySpace, or YouTube. Cyberstalking is a real threat, and many perverted individuals prey on young people. It is a good practice to instruct your children about Internet guidelines, and view their activities regularly. Have them show you their Facebook or MySpace page, as well as the pages of their friends. Keep informed about new trends they may be viewing on the Internet, and be aware of the dangers that are present. If you are not familiar with computers and the Internet, take the time and make the effort to educate yourself! It is simply too dangerous to fail to be aware of how your child is using the Internet. It is our responsibility, as parents, to protect our families by being aware of what our children are writing on the Internet, and to whom.

One golden rule of Internet use is: *never* give out personal information that could be damaging to you if it fell into the wrong hands (such as addresses, phone numbers, Social Security Numbers, etc.). Another rule is: *never* reply to a message requesting personal information, passwords, account numbers, etc., in a reply message. Go to the site directly to look for a message to reply to (such as eBay or PayPal) or use the phone to call, using a phone number. Never give out passwords over the Internet.

Reflect Christ in Cyberspace

How is our example on the Internet? Do our postings represent positive reports? Do they speak the truth—or just what we might have heard through the grapevine? Are they just and fair comments to the parties involved? Are they pure, lovely, and virtuous? Are they of “good report” and worthy of praise? These are qualities that Paul said should characterize what we think (Philippians 4:8). As members of God’s Church, whatever we say and post is a reflection on His Church and even Christ Himself.

Are we glorifying God and edifying the body of Christ by our words? Or are we just satisfying our own ego by expressing our opinions? What about how we speak about the Church, or decisions by the ministry? Is it respectful to those in leadership positions? Jude warns against speaking evil of dignitaries (Jude 8).

In today’s world, people are encouraged to “say everything”—“let it all come out, both good and bad.” The result is that shocking, unimaginable filth clutters the Internet. Some have no respect for others’ feelings at all. Sometimes anonymous posts or the use of pseudonyms can embolden individuals to post things that they would never write if their identity were known. Obviously, this should not be the case for us, if we are members of the body of Christ. Some who go online have cast aside all rules of etiquette (or, to use the neologism coined in the 1980s, “netiquette”). Yet Solomon said a man is a fool if all he is interested in is expressing his own heart (Proverbs 18:2).

The Bible really teaches a different way. Paul exhorted us to be responsible “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20). We are to use a *filter* on what comes out of our mouth and what we express to others. In Psalm 141:3, David implored God, “Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.” What is that filter? *Love*. As the Apostle Paul explained, we must speak the truth, but it must be *in love* (Ephesians 4:15).

Most of us who use the Internet can remember times when well-meaning brethren have tried to play the role of “online spokesman for Church doctrine” but have ended up doing more harm than good. If someone is genuinely confused about a particular policy or procedure set in place, or if there is a biblical question, the matter should be addressed to the local pastor for clarification. Every effort will be made to clear up any misunderstanding of policy, or to answer any question that is asked. God’s ministers are always available, and are eager to teach and explain the scriptures to anyone seeking an answer. New contacts can be directed to the Church’s Web sites and literature for clarification on a particular doctrine or point of prophecy.

We are grateful that many Church members have the time, skill and interest to help Area Pastors set up and ad-

minister local congregation Web sites. If you have the inclination and skills, contact your Area Pastor for instructions on how to get started. The Church has put together a protocol of standards and guidelines for local congregation Web sites. Members may obtain a detailed review of guidelines for creating these sites by contacting our Legal Affairs or Media Department at LCG International Headquarters (you can reach them via e-mail at legal@lcg.org or media@lcg.org). You can also contact Legal Affairs or the Media Department for guidelines on posting links to the Church's Web sites on personal Web pages.

The Church certainly wants to encourage creativity and communication among its membership, but it is vital that we never let our “creativity” come at the expense of our Christian responsibilities toward one another. When we communicate, in any medium, we should remember that we are doing so as converted Christians—representatives of Christ and His Church—and that as a result we should always show love toward one another and avoid confusion in all that we say or do. As Paul wrote: “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Give an Answer, Not a Sermon!

What about being called to answer for our beliefs? Is it wrong to express our beliefs in personal online communications? Of course not! Jesus warned that in the last days His disciples may be called upon to give testimony for Him (Luke 12:11). The Apostle Peter instructed us to “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). We need to be ready to give an answer. Paul told the brethren that by this time they ought to be capable of teaching (Hebrews 5:12).

But applying Peter's instruction takes discretion and discernment. It takes understanding what our role is, and what it is not. Though we are all called to be part of the body of Christ, we are not all called to be the mouth or the spokesman (1 Corinthians 12:18). Those who find themselves discussing Church matters online should make it clear that they are expressing their **personal views** and do not speak for the Church—unless they have been appointed to such a role. The Internet is full of self-exalted teachers of doctrine—it seems to be one of the signs of the times. Even members of God's Church must be wary of falling into this temptation. James said we should not covet the job of teacher, for teachers are judged more strictly. It

is a serious warning—as teachers are held responsible for what they teach (James 3:1).

Even in posting personal expressions of belief, be wise and discerning. To put a new twist on an old phrase, “whatever can be misunderstood will be misunderstood!” Especially in today's highly critical environment, and because your words can be archived and available for years after you have posted them, any explanations you give of your beliefs and activities need to be careful and well thought out.

Even the Apostle Paul, with his tremendous depth of understanding and grasp of doctrinal nuances, was misunderstood—and his writings were twisted—by some (2 Peter 3:16). Today, articles published in the *Living Church News* and *Tomorrow's World* are pored over by a group of editors and reviewers. Even articles written by long-time ministers and experienced authors are still checked and double-checked for accuracy and clarity, to try to ensure that they really convey what the Bible says and what the author intended. And even then, as Paul experienced, sometimes misunderstandings can ensue. How much more important it is for each of us individually, who do not have a staff double-checking our words, to be extra careful of what we write for public consumption! If you post opinions quickly and carelessly, without taking time to prayerfully review your words, you do so at your own peril. Once you have posted something that a reader can prove is incorrect, it is out there in cyberspace, and may already have been archived, copied or printed by others before you catch your mistake and fix it. Even today, Web users can search old USENET postings from the 1980s, from a time when many were not so careful about their words—and many of those old words remain a permanent embarrassment to people who posted in haste decades ago! What you post online may last longer than you expect—and, even more importantly, your choices in communicating will have a lasting effect on your ability to cooperate with God instilling in you His holy and righteous character!

Jesus Christ warned that each of us will be held accountable for every “idle word” (Matthew 12:36). As Christians in God's Church, we are learning to be kings and priests. We are in training for that position right now. As we strive toward the high calling that God has prepared for us, let us all review our actions with regard to proper Internet communication, and let us make sure that we surpass the world's standards of politeness. We have a much higher standard to live up to—that of Jesus Christ. He is listening and watching. Notice Malachi's prophecy. “Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them” (Malachi 3:16). As a Christian, you have a glorious future ahead. When you blog, post or e-mail, do so with that future in mind! ■

The Road to Greatness

By Gerald Weston

In his January-February 2009 *Living Church News* Editorial, Dr. Meredith asked the question, “What Is Deep Conversion?” In that article, he wrote about the kind of humility that is required to take correction and not become offended. Our outward evidence of conversion—such as Sabbath and Holy Day observance, the kind of meat we eat, and even going through a baptism service—does not necessarily reflect our inner heart. Personally, I found the message simple yet most profound.

True humility is a matter of the heart and of the mind—it is how we view ourselves. We can put up an outward front of being humble, but true humility comes through when our pride is tested—when we are challenged, or are confronted with adversity. Sadly, when it comes to true humility, many men and women have been found wanting.

Humility can be described as having a childlike attitude or a servant’s attitude. You are likely familiar with the passage in which the disciples asked Jesus, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (Matthew 18:1–4). Jesus called a little child to come to Him in the midst of the disciples. He then explained that His followers must be converted and become as little children if they hope to be in the Kingdom of God at all—much less be *greatest* in the Kingdom. Christ was focusing here on the humility of little children—and it is the *most humble* who will be the greatest in God’s Kingdom.

A short time later, the mother of James and John came to Jesus, kneeling before Him to ask that her two sons sit at His right and left in the Kingdom (Matthew 20:20–28). Again, Jesus made the point that the

one who *humbles himself to serve others* will be the chief amongst them. Yet even here we see Jesus deferring to His Father, saying that the Father would decide who would sit at His right hand and His left. Christ did not assume a prerogative that was not His. By contrast, how often do we see people taking upon themselves matters that are not theirs to decide, or that should not be their concern?

The Road to Peace

Psalm 131 is one of the shortest Psalms in the Bible. It only has three verses, but it is filled with deep meaning. David declares that “my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, nor with things too profound for me” (v. 1). Since the death of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong in January 1986, we have seen haughty hearts and lofty—prideful—eyes among some of those who should be servants of God’s people. We see self-appointed apostles, self-proclaimed prophets and self-declared witnesses springing up here and there—and, amazingly, there are people foolish enough to follow them. We have also seen men who gave in to “hurt feelings” and decided to go off and “do their own thing”—which has generally been a little thing or nothing.

By contrast, notice how David declared his limitations. He did not concern himself “with great matters,” nor with things too difficult—matters over his head or beyond his area of responsibility.

In verse 2 of this psalm, David speaks of a calm and quiet soul. We see that by avoiding the vices of verse 1, David could keep his soul from feeling unsettled and troubled. Not seeking to be noticed and honored,

he would not feel slighted, unappreciated and hurt when such notice and honor did not come. Instead, David describes feeling as settled as a weaned child. Parents know that a weaned child—a youngster perhaps three, four or five years old—is not constantly clinging to its mother, and is not constantly in need of a source of comforting nourishment. Yet we can certainly contrast this attitude with that of a teenager who “knows it all” and not only is independent from his mother, but actually *rejects* his mother’s comfort.

Then, in verse 3, David shows that we should look to God, since He is the source of our inner peace and our hope. Our “need” to be noticed, or to feel important, will ultimately not satisfy us. Only He will ultimately satisfy us. He is the One who will take care of those “great matters” that are above and beyond our ability to respond.

Jesus was no hypocrite when He instructed His disciples to exercise humility. He constantly held up His Father as greater than Himself. Christ did not claim the prerogatives of His Father, and He set an example of service, as when He washed the disciples’ feet (John 13:1–17). Here, Jesus took it upon Himself to perform the job of the lowest household servant, the one who washed the dusty and tired feet of guests—no matter who they were.

Of course, the most outstanding example of service is found in Christ’s sacrifice for all of us. Even though He was with the Father from the very beginning (John 1:1–3), Jesus did not see it as beneath Him to subject Himself to the indignities and cruelties of hostile men and women who spat upon Him, hit Him, hurled insults at Him—and finally crucified and killed

Him (Philippians 2:5–8; Matthew 27:27–31).

The Road to Dust and Ashes

Humble men and women recognize their place in the scheme of things. Abraham was a humble man. He saw himself as nothing more than “dust and ashes” in comparison to the One who came to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:27). By contrast, we read that Job was a very righteous man who did not quite get the picture of who he was in comparison to God. But even here, God was merciful and granted him his wish to have his story told.

In describing Job, God said there was “none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil” (Job 1:8). Yet, God allowed Satan to persecute this upright man so He could teach Job—and all the Jobs of every age—where they fit in the grand scheme of things. In the process, Satan took away Job’s family, his fortune, his health and his dignity. The only ones he left behind were Job’s wife (who had the sympathetic habit of advising him to “curse God and die!” in Job 2:9) and three friends who met the description of, “with friends like these, who needs enemies?” Nevertheless, God did grant Job one of his wishes during all these trials (see Job 19:23; 31:35).

Job’s trial must have lasted for months, but its end finally came when God answered Job out of a whirlwind—and it was quite a lecture. “Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me” (Job 38:1–3). God peppered Job with question after question that he could not answer. God caused Job to look beyond what Job himself had done, and to look up

at what God had done (Job 38–41). Chapter 42 shows that God had made Himself understood when Job responded, “I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, ‘Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak.... I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (vv. 2–6). Yes, Job came to “dust and ashes”—just as Abraham did when he met the God of the Old Testament before the destruction of Sodom.

The Road to Change

God also had to humble the Apostle Paul, who described his old self in this way: “I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man” (1 Timothy 1:13). Yet, after his conversion, Paul found a humility he had not previously known. He saw himself as “less than the least of all the saints” (Ephesians 3:8), and as a “wretched man” who could not deliver himself from the bondage of sin apart from Jesus Christ (Romans 7:24).

The sincere realization of our own worthlessness is essential to our spiritual survival and growth. Humility paves the way for understanding. It recognizes that, apart from God, we are nothing (Isaiah 40:17). All of humanity put together amounts to less than a bacterium on the sole of a shoe against the backdrop of an endless universe. The only thing that makes us significant is God’s plan, purpose, interest and involvement in our lives. Isaiah describes the attitude of mind we must have if we want God to look upon us favorably: “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).

It is important, however, to recognize that while we are not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to, we **are** to appreciate the work God is doing in us and through us (Romans 12:4–11). When we have the right perspective, we are neither haughty nor timid. We can and should “therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

Humble people do not promote themselves; they let others praise them (Proverbs 25:6; 27:2). By being focused on others’ needs rather than their own desires, they get along better with those around them (Ephesians 4:1–2, 5:21). “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” It is in this context that Paul instructs us: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:3–5).

Because humble people have realistic views of themselves, and self-promotion is not their way, they are able to be taught. God’s ministers, when visiting new contacts, look more than anything else for a humble and teachable attitude. Too often, however, we encounter people who want to be the teachers. I am reminded of a visit several years ago with two young ladies who were looking for a church where everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the church’s doctrine. They had been studying the Bible for about a year, and one of them said, “I think it is arrogant when someone thinks he has all the knowledge.” Of course, we had not claimed to know everything; the problem was that she did not like

what she was hearing, and was self-willed. Her carnal mind could not recognize the arrogance in assuming that her year of Bible study put her knowledge on an equal footing with others who had been studying Scripture for many decades!

The Road to Answers

We all want God to hear our prayers, but have you realized the connection between humility and communication with God? “Though the LORD is on high, yet He regards the lowly; but the proud He knows from afar” (Psalm 138:6). *Think deeply about that.* As great and lofty as God is, He humbles Himself to regard the lowest amongst us. Yet, at the same time, puny insignificant individuals who exalt themselves in their own minds are left far from Him, while He hears the desire of the humble (Psalm 10:17).

Note the example of Mary’s words upon learning of God’s plan. “My soul magnifies [declares the greatness of] the Lord” (Luke 1:46–55). Throughout her song, Mary declares God’s greatness, praising Him for noticing

one so lowly as herself. Yes, God chose a humble young woman to be the mother of His Son. Take time to read and meditate on this song, which displays such a beautifully humble spirit.

Luke also records the well-known parable of the “Pharisee and the Tax Collector” (Luke 18:9–14). You are no doubt familiar with the contrast between the two men. Jesus teaches us that God is not impressed by all our personal righteousness, but rather by a genuinely humble heart. Only with a sincere attitude like the tax collector’s can we be justified in God’s sight.

The Road to Honor

With God, humility precedes honor. God tells us this many times in Scripture, which should prompt us to cry out for the true humility He desires in us (Proverbs 15:33; 18:12; 22:4; Matthew 23:12; James 4:6). The psalmist Asaph tells us: “I said to the boastful, ‘Do not deal boastfully,’ and to the wicked, ‘Do not lift up the horn. Do not lift up your horn on high; do not speak with a stiff neck.’ For exaltation comes neither from the east nor

from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one and exalts another” (Psalm 75:4–7).

We, as human beings, may sometimes become concerned about “getting ahead” in this life. How often do we see someone develop hurt feelings because someone else has received some honor? People fight over the most trivial matters—who hands out hymnals, who is made an officer in Spokesman Club, who is ordained as a deacon or deaconess, or how “our” job was taken away and given to another. Yet, in the end, do any of these matter? They matter only to a person filled with carnal pride.

Our ultimate honor will be to inherit the earth in the Family of God. Who does God tell us will receive that honor? “What does the LORD require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8). “But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Psalm 37:11). “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). This is the road to the greatness God desires for us. ■



Tomorrow's World Unveils New Set!



In late February, *Tomorrow's World* presenters began taping programs in the new studio building, on a new set implemented in consultation with Gelbach Designs, a nationally renowned design firm based in Charlotte.

The first airing of a program taped on the new set, Dr. Meredith's "A New World Is Coming," is currently scheduled for May 14–20.

What Does Pentecost Mean to You?*(Continued from page 10)*

Bible study and meditation (2 Corinthians 4:16). Jesus told His disciples that we glorify the Father when we bear much fruit (John 15:8). Scripture describes the fruit to which Jesus referred. Individuals God calls to be Christians must be distinguished by genuine outgoing love and concern for others (John 13:35; 15:12–13). They must strive to develop the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). They must become peaceable, easily entreated, full of mercy and without hypocrisy (James 3:13–18). The Apostle Paul explained that when we are plagued with doubts, we are not using or being led by God's Spirit. However, those who are continually renewing and being led by God's Spirit are confident about what they believe, and can discern where and how God is working (2 Timothy

1:6–7). Another visible fruit of the Holy Spirit is unity—that those renewing and being led by God's Spirit will be able to work together in harmony because they share the same mind and the same judgment (1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:1–3).

When we gather together to observe the Day of Pentecost, we need to remember these important concepts. We are commanded to remember and observe a day that pictures an important step in the plan of God. It pictures the fact that God is calling a few to become the firstfruits of what will ultimately become a great harvest. It is a reminder that God is calling a few into His Church now, to be educated and trained to teach others God's way of life in the coming Kingdom of God. God is giving His Spirit to those He calls so that we can develop the fruits of the Holy Spirit, which will enable us to become as He is. As we observe the Day of Pentecost, let us remember and deeply appreciate this unique opportunity and very special calling! ■

The Purpose for God's Church*(Continued from page 4)*

If we are to be effective servants of Christ, we *must learn* to *explain* these doctrines as part of the entire pattern of true first-century Christianity. For that is *exactly* what they are. And, as our booklet explains, both the inspired New Testament and countless references in early Church history show that we are following in the footsteps of Christ and the Jerusalem Church of God—the *true* Church of God under the immediate direction of the original Apostles.

Finally, you have undoubtedly heard some of our sermons emphasizing the absolutely vital need for us to build an “atmosphere of *faith*” within God's Church. We know that we are living in the most mechanized, industrialized and probably the most hedonistic civilization in human history. We are surrounded by “things” mankind has made. And our minds are bombarded with the worldly messages pumped into our homes via television, radio, the printing press and now the computer. Nearly all of this

can be *faith-destroying*—if we allow it to be so.

Therefore, we tend to have *less* faith in the invisible God, and *fewer* healings and miracles than in times past. As Jesus prophetically asked: “when the Son of man comes, will He really find *faith* on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

To counter this spiritual stagnation and retrogression, we need to purposefully do all we can to rekindle the kind of *faith* exhibited by the early Christians. We need to deeply *study* the word of God and “feed” on Christ (John 6:57). For *faith* comes by hearing “the word of God” (Romans 10:17). We need to *pray* for faith! In the end, it is *God* who will put within us the needed faith *if* we truly seek this from Him. Indeed, faith is one of the “gifts” of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4–9).

Yet, throughout the Bible, God gives us example after example showing that we should *cry out* to Him for our physical and spiritual needs—even as Jesus Christ did when He needed extra faith and strength in order to be our Savior and High

Priest. The inspired book of Hebrews describes Jesus, “who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement *cries* and *tears* to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear” (Hebrews 5:7).

As the end of this present age swiftly approaches, I am sure that all of us desire that the powerful “signs” Jesus spoke of in Mark 16:17–18 would follow us today, more frequently and more powerfully: “And *these signs* will follow those who believe: in My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

If we seek God with all our hearts and cry out to Him for the living *faith* that I have described, then I know we will see an outpouring of these “signs”! Then—even though most are not called to repentance now, vast numbers of people all over the earth will begin to “know” that there is a *real* God. And they will also begin to

realize *through whom* He is working. So let us each do *our part* to seek God with absolute fervency and ask Him to put within us, individually and collectively, the powerful *faith* we need to truly be His ambassadors and effectively complete His Work at the end of this age!

Dear brethren, I hope that all of you will “catch the vision” and join with us in fulfilling this *sevenfold* commission. Of course, it could be worded or structured differently, but these key elements of Christ’s commission to His Church—as outlined above—can be broken down into seven parts:

1. Preach the Gospel of the Kingdom and the true *name* of Jesus Christ.
2. Preach the *end*-time prophecies and the Ezekiel warning to the Israelitish peoples.
3. Feed the flock and build all our members to the stature of Jesus Christ as best we can.
4. Be *examples* to the Church of God, and to the world, of Christ’s way of life.
5. Learn and practice Servant Leadership in all our dealings with others.
6. Restore Apostolic Christianity and all that this implies.
7. Build an atmosphere of radiant *faith* within God’s Church.

Again, “*Why* are we here? *What* is God’s Work and our commission all about?” I hope that the above explanation will help and inspire all of us to understand *why* we exist and *what* we ought to be doing as the Living Church of God. Let us then move ahead on *all fronts* and honor God and our Savior Jesus Christ as we zealously fulfill these vital elements of the Great Commission.

Please *study*, *meditate* and *pray* about these points and ask God to help you build them into your daily lives, so that this Work of God may go forward with *zeal* and *power* as never before! ■

Are YOU Prepared for the “Fiery” Trials?

(Continued from page 2)

Research Institute—a man renowned for his accuracy in predicting future world and economic events, including the 1987 stock market crash and the fall of the Soviet Union. Considering Celente’s past record of accuracy, his most recent forecasts may send a chill down your spine. Speaking to Fox News late last year, Celente warned that by 2012 America will become an undeveloped nation, that there will be a revolution marked by food riots, squatter rebellions, tax revolts and job marches, and that holidays will be more about obtaining food, not gifts. “We’re going to see the end of the retail Christmas.... we’re going to see a fundamental shift take place.... putting food on the table is going to be more important than putting gifts under the Christmas tree,” said Celente, adding that the situation would be “worse than the great depression” (“Revolution, food riots in America by 2012,” *Commodity Online*, December 1, 2008).

We are not setting dates, nor are we saying Celente’s forecasts are definitely correct. But this man’s predictions *may well* come to pass, in time! As Christians, we must examine our own hearts and be sure we are prepared to remain *faithful* even in a time of food riots, race riots, various rebellions and tax revolts and a period of unusual *lawlessness* which may come upon us before the final end of our nation. May God help each of us to love one another, *forgive* one another—and even forgive those who try to do us physical harm. We know all of the scriptures about this, but—during the next several years—we may have an opportunity to *put these teachings into practice* in a way we have never done before!

Each of us will need to *genuinely walk with God*, just as His servants of old did in times of stress, war and even persecution. We must always remember that the Apostle Paul spent about *five years* of his life in prison. Yet, even in prison, God used Paul to write some of his most inspired letters to the churches, to instruct many brethren in Rome and to accomplish many other things.

While in Rome—probably as a civil prisoner with an iron ball chained to his ankle—Paul wrote: “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:4–7).

If we truly “seek God” on a regular basis, and learn to profoundly *walk with God*, we will also be able to have “the peace of God which surpasses all understanding” even in times of trial and stress. May God grant that we each build *this* kind of relationship, so we may be able to follow the inspiring example of the Apostle Paul in such times as this. And always remember Jesus’ edifying and encouraging instruction: “Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:28).



Local Church News

Brisbane Update

Most of the Brisbane, Australia congregation recently enjoyed a get-together after Sabbath services at the home of Garry and Shirley Walz, even though it was one hour's drive from Brisbane. Everyone had great fellowship, and those who were "game" experimented in a little Karaoke. The whole evening was a great time for everyone to get to know each other a little better in a relaxing and fun environment. Thanks to Garry and Shirley for hosting such a great evening.

There are quite a number of GOTOs that are progressing to the point where they could soon be among us as prospective members, and there are others that are on the soon-to-be-visited list. After the loss of a number of members who have transferred to other church areas, we are seeing God replace these people with fresh sheep. Recently ordained elder Mr. Dan Love and his wife Heather, together with Mr. Norman Crouch, our new deacon, have stepped into the breach to assist in caring for the brethren during Mr. Tanner's frequent absences. The Church is growing to a point where we will have to find a larger hall to accommodate us, especially when our larger meeting room at the place we currently meet is not available. We are thankful for the growth that God is supplying. —Dayrell Tanner

In Loving Memory

Clara Kemner, of Osoyoos, British Columbia, Canada, died peacefully on December 15, 2008 at age 88. A member of the Tonasket, Washington congregation for many years, she was dearly beloved by all the brethren who knew her. She is survived by one daughter and several grandchildren.

Marshall Duhaime, a deacon serving the Waterville, Maine congregation, died on March 9 while recovering from a heart attack. He was 64 years old. He is survived by his wife Jo and his brother Jack. A memorial service was conducted on March 20 by Mr. James Arnaldo. Loved by all who knew him, he will be sorely missed.

Ordinations

Mr. John Campbell and *Mr. Ellis Noll* were ordained as deacons on February 14 by Area Pastor Dr. Scott Winnail and Mr. Joe Brown. Mr. Campbell and Mr. Noll serve the brethren in Live Oak, Florida.

Edmonton Winter Social



The Edmonton, Alberta congregation in Canada was joined by brethren travelling from Calgary and Red Deer for the Winter Social on the first weekend of 2009. Braving cold temperatures (-32 C), a hearty group ventured out to Rundle Park on January 1 for an afternoon of skating and Frisbee golf. It was so cold that some of the Frisbees shattered on impact with trees! The day was completed with a hot evening meal and get-acquainted game. There was bowling for young and old on Friday morning, then a soup

and sandwich supper preceding the Bible Study in the evening. Forty-seven people attended Sabbath services on January 3, and enjoyed a hymn sing-along before a cold turkey and salad supper. That evening, brethren enjoyed dancing, chatting and playing board games. The weekend was concluded with a pancake breakfast with all the trimmings on Sunday morning. Thanks to those who hosted, volunteered, contributed and attended, this event was a wonderful opportunity for brethren in the province to fellowship, to learn and have fun together!

North Florida Family Weekend



Food, fun, and fellowship were in abundance at the North Florida Family Weekend, February 13–15 in Dowling Park, Florida. Approximately 90 members attended the event, which combined congregations from Jacksonville and Live Oak, Florida; Thomasville, Georgia and Ocean Springs, Mississippi. Visitors came from congregations in south Florida and the Carolinas as well. The event kicked off Friday evening with a Bible Study titled “God’s Work in Jamaica,” conducted by Area Pastor Dr. Scott Winnail, which encouraged brethren to think critically about their future responsibilities as rulers over cities in the Kingdom.

Using the beautiful island nation as a case study, members were encouraged to consider how they could capitalize on the good things that various nations and cultures have to offer, while leaving behind the “things of the world.”

The next day, after Sabbath services—highlighted by Dr. Winnail’s inspiring message on prophecy, a sermonette by Assistant Pastor Joe Brown and special music from the area’s Combined Youth Choir—the Sabbath concluded over dinner with another opportunity for excellent food and fellowship. The weekend’s entertainment highlight began after sundown as the Family Fun and Talent Show got underway. Featuring 29 performers in 18 acts, the show included a variety of instrumental and vocal talent, poetry and comedy. At the end of the two-hour show, all felt that God had richly blessed His Church with talent.

The weekend concluded with a Sunday morning brunch, followed by outdoor activities including Frisbee, hiking along the beautiful Suwannee River and kayaking. Comments from brethren included, “This was the best church weekend ever,” and “we need to do this four times a year!” Brethren especially relished the opportunity to develop stronger ties and closer relationships with each other.

Births

Rebekah Arlene Price was born October 23, 2008 to Johnny and Melissa Price of the Cincinnati, Ohio congregation. She weighed 6 lbs., 9.6 oz. and was 18¾ inches long. Rebekah is the little sister of Ryan and Rachel, the granddaughter of Bob and Rose Creekmore of the Cincinnati, Ohio congregation and the niece of Samantha Kreis of the Charlotte, North Carolina congregation.

Mark and Amanda Sandor of the Fayetteville, Arkansas congregation welcomed their first bundle of joy into the world on November 9, 2008. *Abraham Louis Sandor* was 9 lbs., 7 oz. at birth, and measured 21¾ inches. Abe is the first great grandchild to Charles and Nancy Moshier of the Statesville, North Carolina congregation. All are well and enjoying life!

Anniversaries

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Best (Betty) celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on December 19, 2008. Brethren of the Prince Albert congregation marked the joyous occasion by having a special meal, cake and gift for this most dedicated and delightful couple on December 6, 2008, during the Bests’ monthly visit to the Prince Albert congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Arch Miller (Joyce) celebrated their 55th anniversary on November 28, 2008. Mr. and Mrs. Miller attend the St. John, Newfoundland congregation in Canada.

Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Rorie observed their 50th wedding anniversary on January 31. Mr. Rorie attends the Charlotte, North Carolina congregation along with his son Philip.

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).

Commentary

Patience, Mercy, Longsuffering and Forgiveness

By Jonathan McNair

These are hard words. They are easy to say, and easy to ask for, but much harder to give—at least sometimes. I am convinced that, much of the time, I am just about the most easygoing person in the world. At least, I feel like the most easygoing person I know. But other times, in different circumstances, I feel like I do not have an ounce of patience or a glimmer of mercy. It is as if I have run out that day, and I just do not feel like having any more of those wonderful emotions for anyone—no matter how unsuspecting and how undeserving my next victim may be.

But maybe that is the problem. If our patience, mercy, longsuffering and forgiveness are only human emotions, coming from our human spiritual resources, we will surely run out. Human patience falls short. Godly patience does not. Human mercy fails. God's does not. It is not as if we never have mercy, patience or other admirable traits. It is just that ours tend to run thin at times.

Every one of the fruits of God's Spirit would also be considered an admirable human personality trait. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22–23).

Sometimes we *feel like* being good, kind and gentle. But sometimes we do not. And therein lies the difference between us and God, between the human spirit and God's Spirit.

Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, wrote, "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish" (Galatians 5:16–17). The word "lust" here embodies the range of human wants, feelings and priorities. Paul warned against youthful desires (2 Timothy 2:22), the desire to be rich (1 Timothy 6:9) and desire for new doctrine (2 Timothy 4:3). In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul warned against "deceitful lusts" (Ephesians 4:22).

In short, Paul was dealing with our human proclivity to take on godly characteristics "part-time." Paul acknowledged that he fell prey to that same human problem and had to battle to overcome his flesh (Romans 7:14–25). Christ warned us that we face the same battle, saying, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

Is the goodness of our human spirit "good enough"? Are our "good days" good enough for God? Is our "occasional joy" okay with God? Does God "understand" that we sometimes just do not feel very kind or gentle? Are we content with occasional lapses of self-control, as long as we are usually pretty good—better than the average guy, anyway. Or are we, in fact, only as godly as our least merciful moment?

It need not be that way. Paul told the brethren at Philippi, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). Let this mind—this whole, complete, constant way of thinking as God thinks—be in you. Let us never have a "least merciful moment."

The above is adapted from one of the many commentaries, discussing vital topics facing our world, available at the www.lcg.org and www.tomorrowworld.org Web sites.