

Living

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Inside:

Are You Ready To Rule?.....3

Leadership Training And Modesty5

Are You Coming Out of the World?.....7

Ambassadors of God's Kingdom.....10

Atonement: Becoming Sons Of Light.....13

Season of Hope and Glory17

Texas Pre-Teen Camp 200920

Local Church News22

Commentary24

Be Grateful for Jesus Christ's Sacrifice!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

As we approach the autumn festival season, we usually emphasize Christ's return as King of kings, His Millennial rule and the Great White Throne Judgment. This is all well and good, and we certainly *should* focus on these awesome events. It is exciting and encouraging to read Revelation 11:15, "Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'" Remember, after describing the wars, great earthquakes, famines, disease epidemics and "great signs" at the time of the end, Jesus said: "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near" (Luke 21:28).

So we, in the Church, *should be* encouraged as we see these things happen. Although the short-term effect of these events is very sad for those who are not walking with God, it does draw *all* of us—including those who are not walking with Him—closer to the time when a glorious new world will begin under Jesus Christ. Therefore, we can anticipate these events with faith and courage, can "watch" prophetic events with a positive attitude and certainly can look forward to Christ's coming and His Millennial rule and all that follows.

Nevertheless, dear brethren, I would like to remind all of us that—as a Church—we have often tended to focus *so much* on biblical prophecy and the end-time events that we unwittingly *de-emphasize* or virtually *leave out* the profound feeling that we ought to have for Jesus Christ Himself—for His wonderful sacrifice, for His love and guidance as our faithful High Priest, and for *how* He will rule in the future as Prince of Peace.

It is *not only* at Passover time that we should think about Jesus Christ! *All year long*—certainly *including* the autumn festival season—we should pray, study and meditate about how Christ is to *live His life within us!* All year long, we should have the profound realization that—as I have often preached—we are "*the Church of the forgiven.*" We ought to have a profound and humble realization that we *need* Jesus Christ's saving blood, and God's mercy on us, through Him, in order to be reconciled to God and be made qualified through His Spirit to *be there* in God's coming Kingdom. All year long, we should meditate on Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by

the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (KJV).

Let us also constantly think about Jesus’ statement, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). For Jesus Christ—as our Savior and High Priest—is the *only way* we will ever enter into the Kingdom of God!

As the Church of God began, the Apostle Peter was inspired to spend that first sermon, on Pentecost, describing Christ as our Savior: “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).

All through the book of Acts, we find that the true apostles *constantly emphasized*—month in and month out—how Jesus was our Savior, High Priest and King. As Peter opened his mouth and gave the first sermon to Gentiles at the house of Cornelius, he stated, “The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly” (Acts 10:36–40).

This is the emphasis the early Christians had in their minds *all through the year!*

When Paul and Silas were released from prison through a supernatural *earthquake* God sent to break the prison doors open, they told the Philippian jailer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31). And in reasoning with the Jews for three Sabbaths, Paul was “explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ’” (Acts 17:3).

Meeting with the Ephesian elders—perhaps for his last time—Paul explained how he had “kept back nothing that was helpful” but was “testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:20–21).

Scripture describes that Paul, at the very end of his life, was “preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (Acts 28:31). Certainly the *Kingdom of God* and

Continued on page 21

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Are You Ready To Rule?

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

Dear brethren, nearly all of us understand by now that this world and its governments are in a horrible mess! The American government is bringing our peoples into financial bondage for generations to come. The British government is in similar straits. Around the world, *billions* of people are being oppressed by their governments in various ways—dictatorships and autocracies in Russia, North Korea, Iran, Venezuela and in *many* nations on the African continent and in the Middle East. People’s basic “human rights” are being trampled. People are being *tortured, raped*, brutalized and often killed for opposing their governments. Increasing *hundreds of millions* are literally beginning to starve to death—often *because* of continuing wars, misappropriation of money and misguided government programs.

Though most around us do not understand, the very *real answer* is what Jesus commanded us to pray for: “Thy Kingdom come!”

In His inspired word, God reveals that He would “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 3:20–21).

As the above scripture clearly indicates, *this message*—the *real* Gospel of Jesus Christ—was being proclaimed in one way or another by “all His holy prophets” since the world began. Now, at last, we are on the very verge of His actual *return to this earth* as King of kings! Even we in God’s Church may become lethargic, because many of us have had to “wait so long”! However, the time is drawing near, and we must

not lose our zeal and our dedication in preparing for that very real government and for *our part* in ruling this earth under Jesus Christ.

Dear friends, this world will really *need* and quickly begin to appreciate our help in straightening out the world when Christ returns. I do not need to go into all the details here; most of you know that the Bible *clearly describes* how civilization will be shattered, and how people will be starving, diseased and in confusion and psychological trauma all over this world.

Yet, after Christ’s return, Satan the Devil will be **out of the picture!** He will no longer be deceiving the nations, for the living Jesus Christ will bind Satan “so that he should *deceive the nations no more* till the thousand years were finished” (Revelation 20:3). Then, people’s eyes will at last be opened and they will be willing to learn the *Truth*. Describing the House of Israel, Jeremiah writes, “They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn” (Jeremiah 31:9).

Later in the chapter, God tells us, “Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded, says the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope in your future, says the LORD, that your children shall come back to their own border” (vv. 16–17).

Yes, indeed, there is a magnificent **hope** for the future in the coming peaceful, prosperous, magnificent Government of God **soon** to be established on this earth under Jesus Christ! So, we in God’s Church need to grasp more fully the **reality** of what is soon coming upon us. For we will soon have the wonderful opportunity—and the *responsibility*—to assist Jesus Christ in this coming Government.

As God’s word tells Israel, “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. . . . I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 36:24, 26–27).

Learn God’s Approach to Governing

The Creator here clearly indicates that a completely *new attitude* will permeate the House of Israel, which is nearly *always* used as a “type”—a forerunner—of what will happen to all the nations. God will put *His Spirit* (v. 27) within the people, and cause them to walk in “His statutes.” Therefore, we—now—must learn to *study* and *meditate* deeply on the *commandments* and the *statutes* of God, thoughtfully considering them to learn their full meaning and application in the coming Government of God. We must emulate King David’s approach and fill our minds with an understanding of God’s laws and statutes and *how they should apply* in the coming Government of Christ—amplified, of course, by the New Testament and the Spirit of God. As you study God’s statutes in Exodus 20–24 and in Deuteronomy 12–28, try to *think through* how the wisdom in the statutes applies to every facet of life. Think about how the statutes will apply to the carrying out of the administration of *your city* or nation *if* you truly overcome and receive what Christ promised the most zealous overcomers: “Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, *have authority over ten cities*” (Luke 19:17).

Brethren, we must all move forward with *zeal* and with *faith* to fulfill

our responsibilities and our opportunity! Remember, through God's Spirit, we **will** be given the extra *help* we need! Christ inspired the Apostle Paul to tell us, "I can do *all things* through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). Since God has called *you* at this time, He will certainly be with you, strengthen you, encourage you and *guide you* as you sincerely try to walk with Him and prepare for your soon-coming responsibility in assisting Him in bringing genuine peace and well-being to this confused world.

Of course, we must do our very best to be genuine "overcomers" so as to be fit for this responsibility. For Jesus Christ stated, "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'—as I also have received from My Father" (Revelation 2:26–27). As Jesus proclaimed, "To him who **overcomes** I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Revelation 3:21).

What will we face when our new responsibilities begin in Christ's Government? First of all, Satan will be **gone**, as already mentioned. He will no longer be deceiving people and stirring them up against God and His ways. Also, having endured horrible sufferings in the Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord, people will be *genuinely humbled* and will be willing to **listen**. Jeremiah 31 vividly describes the peoples of the twelve tribes of Israel then being gathered back to Israel "from the ends of the earth" (v. 8). Among them will be the *blind* and the *lame*. We read: "They shall come with *weeping*, and with **supplications** I will lead them" (v. 9). And later, God reveals, "they shall *sorrow no more* at all" (v. 12). Then, God says, "They shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is **hope** in your future, says the

LORD, that your children shall come back to their own border" (vv. 16–17).

YOU Should Be Part of This Magnificent FUTURE!

Yes, dear brethren, millions and millions of people will eventually shed *tears of joy* as they realize that there is genuine deliverance *at last!* That there is a *real God*. That He is a God of *love!* That He is *blessing them*, guiding them, *delivering* them—and will give them "the desires of their heart" as they learn to walk with Him. For God's word tells us, "Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:3–4).

Therefore, we all need to *study* deeply and genuinely the "statutes" of God, and to understand how they expand upon the Ten Commandments and apply the principles of God's law to an entire civil nation. We need to come to understand God's law and His statutes as they would apply under the New Covenant with the help of God's Spirit. King David set us the example, for he stated, "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.... I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, to the very end" (Psalms 119:97, 112). As you genuinely **study** God's statutes in Exodus 20–24 and Deuteronomy 12–28, try to *think through carefully* how these laws and principles would apply—under the New Covenant—as the basis of the entire society in Tomorrow's World! Carefully read *all* of Psalm 119 to see how important God's *commands* and *statutes* were to David—the future King over all Israel.

Beside studying all of these laws and statutes, each of us needs to learn to be the *right kind* of leader and governor through exercising God's wisdom, balance, love and self-control in our own daily lives. Looking forward to your role in Christ's government,

try to learn to make the right decision every single time!

Study the book of Proverbs for wisdom.

Throughout the book of Proverbs, God tells us in many different ways, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she will promote you; she will bring you honor, when you embrace her" (Proverbs 4:7–8).

Each of us must learn to **seek** for wisdom, *pray* for it and try to *exercise it* every single day of our lives. Learn to get *all the facts* before you make a decision, brethren! Do not "jump" to a quick conclusion without getting all the facts—thinking them through in the light of God's word. Also, as we are reminded throughout the book of Proverbs, "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but *in the multitude of counselors* there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14). We must learn to seek out a number of wise counselors—and learn to *listen* to their advice and, in most cases, *heed it*. Then we must learn to *cry out* to God for His guidance in making the *correct decisions*.

Dear brethren, *if you learn to do all of these things* and "walk with God" as best you can in every phase and facet of your lives, then God will be fashioning you, molding you and truly preparing you to **rule** with Christ in His coming Kingdom. That is why we are called *now*. That is the magnificent future we can look forward to—the opportunity to assist Christ in "wiping away every tear," healing the sick, delivering the troubled, releasing captives from prison and bringing joy to the entire earth. Again, as we saw in Jeremiah's inspired prophecy: "There is **hope** in your future, says the LORD" (Jeremiah 31:17)! That hope—that *magnificent opportunity* to straighten out this earth and bring *genuine* peace and joy to millions—is what should motivate all of us to press toward the Kingdom of God with all of our hearts! ■

Leadership Training and Modesty

By Rod McNair

Every year as we keep the Feast, we gain new insights into our soon-coming role as kings and priests. We are reminded that we are learning leadership for the Kingdom of God. One key leadership concept is *godly modesty*.

What does “godly modesty” have to do with leadership? Actually, quite a lot! We practice leadership when we teach and encourage modesty in our homes and families. We exercise leadership when we refuse to selfishly treat our spiritual brothers or sisters like “eye candy,” but instead value and appreciate modest behavior. In this way, God’s people are leaders when they take the initiative to wear modest clothing. Single men and women in the Church exercise leadership when they set high examples of good taste and decorum in behavior and attire, and encourage others to do so as well.

Our society has an enormous modesty deficit—we all know this. But we in God’s Church have been called to set the pace as leaders in the coming Millennium, even in something as seemingly mundane as modesty. How can we do this?

Follow Jesus Christ

At the Feast, one enlightening exercise can be to imagine what Tomorrow’s World will be like. What kind of transportation vehicles will be used? How will the economy work? How will cities be laid out? What will people’s everyday lives be like? These are fascinating topics on which to meditate.

As part of our reflections, how often do we ponder: “What will people wear?” It can be hard for us to guess exactly, since we typically see the future through the lens of today. Today’s typical styles for formal, casual and relaxed situations all seem “normal” to us. But would these styles seem normal to King David, Abraham or Elijah? Would they think that some of our styles today are strange, ridiculous—or even downright lewd?

Would society go back to “Victorian” coverings common in the 1800s? Maybe not. But, by the same token, Tomorrow’s World certainly will not resurrect the “anything goes, I dare you” styles common in our 21st century. What does our world consider “normal” today? As *Newsweek* writer Kayleen Schaefer recently explained, the growing trend even in bridal fashion—once symbolizing purity and modesty—is “cleavage- or lower-back-baring bridal gowns that might get a gasp from conservative relatives.” Schaefer explains that a growing fad for brides in the last few

years is to pose in a pre-wedding photo shoot “in lingerie or nothing at all and give the prints to their grooms” (“Like a Virgin No More,” Kayleen Schaefer, June 4, 2009). Do you think Jesus Christ would simply bring over many of the seductive styles and trends of today for a thousand more years in the Millennium?

How we dress is important. In the parable of the wedding supper, Jesus explained that one of the guests was rejected for not coming in appropriate attire (Matthew 22:11–13). As God’s ambassadors of the coming Kingdom (2 Corinthians 5:20), we must understand and practice modesty now, so we can teach it in the future.

Yes, more than we might sometimes realize, God does care what we wear! As Dr. Roderick C. Meredith explained several years ago in his sermon, “What Would Jesus Really Do?”—which should be available as sermon 402 in your local sermon library—“We ought to have high standards... in the way we act, in the way we dress, in the way we talk, in the way we conduct ourselves, the way we think... How would Jesus dress? How would Jesus’ sister dress?... Would Jesus’ sister be showing off her body in some semi-vulgar way? No, she would not!”

Many people who call themselves Christians give lip service to the question, “What would Jesus do?” But if we truly seek to follow Jesus Christ, we should also be thinking, “What would Jesus Christ *wear*?” That should guide our thinking and educate our choices, at the Feast and throughout the year.

Lead in the Home

At the Feast, whether we are leading or following, we are learning about leadership. When we serve as ushers, or help park cars, or staff an information table, it is easy to see how we are practicing leadership skills. But even when we are the ones being guided by ushers or parking attendants, we are learning important lessons of leadership, particularly by setting the example of a cooperative and supportive attitude.

Leadership is not always a “public” role, however. Even at the Feast, fathers and husbands have important duties of leadership in the household. Paul explained that the husband is the head of the wife (Ephesians 5:23) and the guide of the whole family (1 Timothy 3:4). One aspect of this leadership is in matters of teaching modesty—by word and by example.

Fathers, do you monitor what your children wear? Do you think about which clothing styles are good for them,

and which might not be? As head of the home, this is your responsibility. Fathers may be more comfortable dealing with their sons' problems, but they also have a responsibility to daughters. As author Meg Meeker explains, "Let [your daughter] know that modesty is just another form of respect... and that she shouldn't follow fashion trends and flaunt her sexuality just because others do... When you teach her that modesty is an important way to protect and honor her integrity, she'll understand that too, because kids have an innate sense of modesty. **You have to be your daughter's protector and fight a culture that lies to her about sex and denies her right to modesty**" (*Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters: Ten Secrets Every Father Should Know*, pp. 96–98).

Give your children encouragement to wear well-fitting, quality clothing that is appropriate for who they are. Be patient to teach decorum and good taste. Teach them that what is important is not how "adult" or "cool" they can look, but rather how their character shines from within. Encourage your wife to support you, and to lead and inspire your children by her words and example, as you lead your family in practicing God's way of modesty.

Proper leadership must be applied in love. If you are a father, it is your responsibility to lead. If you are learning to someday "rule" a city, are you practicing now to "rule" your own children with love, gentleness and supportiveness (1 Timothy 3:5)?

Husbands, your wife is *not* your child! Yet you still have a responsibility to her as her leader. Appreciate her beauty! Compliment her on her appearance, and shower her with praise! Make sure she knows (yes, you have to *tell* her!) that you think she is the most attractive woman on earth. Consider buying her a new dress for the Feast, as your budget allows. Encourage her to feel good about her appearance. But if her clothing is too revealing in public—at Feast activities or at Church services—show that you love her by letting her know. Love her enough to gently and tactfully ask her to wear something else, for her sake and others' (Leviticus 19:17).

Wives—follow your husband's lead. Appreciate his desire to lead in the right way. Appreciate the fact that he is watching out for you. Children—appreciate and follow your father's lead as well! He cares for you. It is his job to protect you as you grow up. Husbands and fathers have an important leadership role to play in encouraging modesty in the home—at the Feast and throughout the year.

Honor the Hoary Head

God commanded the Israelites to "rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man" (Leviticus 19:32). But this scripture represents far more than just a physical action. It represents an attitude of

respect for the values and perspectives of the previous generation.

Do we honor the older generation in how we dress? Paul told Titus to teach "the older women likewise... that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed" (Titus 2:3–5).

Younger ladies, consider what Paul is saying. While styles and fashions may change with time, the older generation is charged with setting the example for younger women about life issues—in principle, certainly including dress. Paul understood that the senior generation provides the Church with stability and wisdom. Do not automatically discount what the older ladies might say (or think) about dress. Do not dismiss their opinions just because they are getting up in years. What they say and think should be treated with great respect and honor.

For the older ladies, this can be an opportunity to show true leadership, in love. Be thoughtful and tactful. Do not offer advice unless it is asked for. *Get to know the younger ladies personally*. Ask God to help you develop a real relationship with them. If they feel you really care, they may feel comfortable enough to confide in you and open a door for you to give meaningful, gentle and timely advice. These lessons of applied leadership will then last us for a long time—a thousand years and more!

Love God, and Love Others

The two great commandments, which Jesus outlined in Matthew 22:37–39, are: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" We must evaluate how we dress in regard to both of these commands.

It is interesting to note how Paul dealt with "meat offered to idols." Though his conscience was not personally troubled by eating meat offered to idols, he said, "If food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble" (1 Corinthians 8:13). Each of us should strive to apply this principle to our dress and decorum at the Feast, and year round.

For example, we should be careful at the Feast not to serve alcohol to (or even have it around) any brethren who may be struggling with a drinking problem. Even though alcohol consumption might not be a problem for us, we should be willing to refrain from serving or drinking alcohol because of others' sensitivity to it.

Continued on page 21

Are You Coming Out of the World?

By Dibar K. Apartian

Coming out of this world—completely out of its ways and attitudes—is prerequisite to entering God’s Kingdom.

Do you really understand the meaning of Christian living? Do you know what it means to be *in* the world—but not *of* the world?

Just before His crucifixion, Jesus Christ prayed to God the Father for His disciples: “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one [Satan]. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (John 17:15–16).

Can you stand to live without being immersed in the satanic customs, practices, holidays, ways of thinking and ways of acting that make up this world?

Billions of people around the world cannot. Even many who call themselves “Christians” cannot. They compromise. They stumble—and they sometimes give up!

How about you? Do you occasionally let your doubts and disappointments pull you down? Are you discouraged because your spiritual growth is slow? Whether you are aware of it or not, when you feel this way, the main reason is that God is not first in your life! You may think He is. You may even spend much time on your knees—or studying His Bible. Yet God might not be first in your life—and, if He is not, you are not ready to enter His Kingdom!

Love Your Neighbor

Some go to extremes. They are not balanced. They either expect God to do everything for them, or they do

not rely on Him when His help is readily available.

Do you realize that, often, you may pray for an answer when the answer is already at hand? You do not see it because it does not please you.

In His last prayer with His disciples, Christ said to His Father, “Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world” (John 17:11).

He was speaking not only to those who were with Him at the time, but to all His disciples—including you and me. We cannot help being in the world, but we are instructed not to participate in its evil ways. Ask God to give you the discernment you need. Ask Him to help you set right priorities for your life.

When you put God first in your thoughts and in your deeds, you will have a totally different perspective of life—an altogether different viewpoint and understanding. You will begin to love your neighbor as yourself, because you will understand that God loves your neighbor as much as He loves you.

Dissensions and quarrels with your neighbor, or jealousy and hatred against others, mean that you are not close enough to God. You are, as Christ said, leaving the weightier matters of the law undone, however “spiritual” your behavior may otherwise seem (Matthew 23:23).

Take time and think: Of what value are your prayers to God if you belittle your neighbors or do evil to them? What good will come of your prayers and your Bible study if you do not first practice justice, mercy, compassion and love?

The Apostle John wrote: “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (1 John 4:20).

Imagine—God calls you a *liar* if you claim that you love Him while nourishing evil thoughts against your neighbor.

Christ and the Rich Man

Are you perhaps like the rich man who loved and obeyed God (at least, he thought he did)? One day, he ran up to Christ, knelt before Him and asked Him what he should do to inherit eternal life (Mark 10:17).

Notice. This rich man was respectful and sincere. In his own way, he was a decent and obedient believer. He must have been relieved when Christ told him that the way to eternal life was to keep God’s commandments.

“Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth,” he assured Christ (v. 20).

In other words, ever since his childhood, he had learned to do what was right and had lived accordingly—as much as anyone could on his own. What else was there for him to do? What did he lack? Was he not fit for the Kingdom of God?

“One thing you lack,” added Christ. “Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me” (v. 21).

What was that? Did the man hear right? Was he told to give up all his

possessions—everything he owned—to follow Christ? Why? Why such a drastic condition?

The man found the price much too high to pay. He could not accept Christ's offer. He had not thought he would need to fulfill that kind of a bargain to be worthy of eternal life. According to the Bible, he was saddened by Christ's words, and he went away sorrowfully—terribly disappointed, because he had great possessions (v. 22).

All of us are being tested—or will sooner or later be tested—in like manner.

It may be in the area of our physical possessions, or it may be something else. We may have to give up family and friends for the truth of God. We may lose a job. We may need to endure being considered strange by people in the society around us. God knows us. We will be tested on our weakest point.

Then, and only then, can we prove to God that we should be part of His Kingdom.

Now, compare the rich man's attitude with Abraham's.

God asked 75-year-old Abram to give up everything. Yet he obeyed without murmuring. He left his country, his kindred and his father's house, to go to the land God would show him: "So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him" (Genesis 12:4).

This is the attitude each of us needs at all times to prepare for the Kingdom of God. It leads to eternal life.

The rich man did not really love God, because he had put a price tag on his love. Abraham truly loved God, because he set no conditions whatsoever. He did not worry about the consequences.

Do Not Worry

Some do not understand what Christ taught about not worrying.

They think they can just let down, because God has promised to take care of their needs. They do not seem to realize that specific conditions accompany all of God's promises.

Christ said: "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25).

What did Christ mean? Not worrying does not mean to be lazy or idle, or to neglect our duties. We can only stop worrying if we accept God's conditions, and diligently carry out our own responsibilities. God is always ready to help, provided that we strive to act like Christ did. Then—and only then—can we trust God without worrying.

Christ said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (v. 33).

Read the entire verse, not just the first part of it. Christ did not put a period at the end of the phrase "seek first the kingdom of God"—He added "...and His righteousness."

David wrote that *all* of God's commandments are righteousness (Psalm 119:172). To seek God's righteousness is to live by His laws—to fulfill your responsibilities, to love your neighbor as yourself. If you seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness, you need not suffer from any form of worry or anxiety.

Study the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37)! Why do you think the priest and the Levite passed by the wounded man without offering their services? What went on in their minds? Perhaps they each uttered a silent prayer and then considered their task done. Why did they fail to help?

Could it be that they considered themselves too busy with their important religious chores and engagements? Whatever their reasonings,

they did not prove themselves fit for the Kingdom of God. In this parable it was the Good Samaritan alone—a man who was not even an Israelite—who acted like a true Christian.

The Apostle Paul believed in God. He walked with Him, talked with Him—and never turned away from Him. Yet Paul's sufferings and trials were many.

What *really* made Paul remain firm? What made him hold fast to his faith when so many others gave up? How can you hold fast when others give up today?

Under God's inspiration, Paul revealed how he did it: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1–2).

When you set your affection on things above, you renounce your selfish desires. You cease to do the works of the flesh. You no longer let the vanity of this world dictate your conduct.

Paul continued: "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (v. 5).

He further stated that to be fit for the Kingdom of God, you must "put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth" (v. 8).

Learn to rely on Christ. Let Him be the center of your relationship with others. Always know that God sees and appreciates your good works, even if no one else does. Seek to please Him—no matter what happens.

Are You Ready Now?

Are you ready for the Kingdom of God? Some are not, because their attachment to this world is too strong. It prevents them from coming out of

this world to be ready for the Kingdom. Obviously, you cannot come out of this world if you follow its ways.

Consider the excuses some people gave when Christ asked them to follow Him. They were not fit for His Kingdom. One man said, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.” But upon hearing that Christ had nowhere to lay His head, the man went away (Luke 9:57–58).

Why, then, in the first place, did he tell Christ, “I will follow You wherever You go”? Did he really mean it? No. Like many people today, he would only accept the conditions that pleased him. He wanted an easy way—*his own way*—to be a Christian.

Another person, after expressing a desire to follow Christ, said to Him, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father” (v. 59). What was wrong with that? Why did this request disqualify him from being a disciple of Christ? Because it showed the man’s lack of understanding of the value of the call! God did not come first in his life.

“And another also said, ‘Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house’” (v. 61).

Again, there is nothing wrong with wanting to bid farewell to those you leave behind. The question is, what were this man’s true intentions—his real motives? In all probability, he would have let his friends and his close family convince him to change his mind and decide not to follow Christ.

“No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God,” Christ explained (v. 62).

In other words, when you look back and regret what you are giving up for Christ—if your love for the other members of your family, or for whatever you possess, surpasses the love you have for Christ—you are not worthy of His Kingdom.

As true Christians, we are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb—to the most wonderful wedding ceremony of all, and all the joyful festivities (Revelation 19:7). Are you looking forward to this? When the time comes, what will be your own excuses not to attend?

Strange as it may seem, Christ said in one of His parables that many would turn down their invitation to the marriage supper. “Then He said to him, ‘A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, “Come, for all things are now ready”’” (Luke 14:16–17).

Notice again that the reasons they gave were not necessarily wrong—they were not bad things in and of themselves. But the timing was wrong, and so was their sense of priorities. God did not come first in their lives. Their eyes were set on things below, and not on things above.

Put God First

The world is filled with shiny but deceitful lights. Temptation is all around us, because of the “god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Satan wants us to put him first in our

When you set your affection on things above, you renounce your selfish desires. You cease to do the works of the flesh. You no longer let the vanity of this world dictate your conduct.

Surely you would expect that all the guests, upon receiving such a wonderful invitation, would be delighted to accept. You would think they would have looked forward to the occasion with great joy and enthusiasm.

But it did not happen that way: “But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused’. And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.’ Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come’ ” (vv. 18–20).

Can you believe it? Instead of being thankful and grateful to have been invited to this most wonderful banquet, they begged to be excused. They told Christ they had other, more important things to do.

minds and in our hearts. His goal is to destroy each one of us! Do not let him! Turn quickly away from him—and look at the real God who loves you and wants to give you eternal life.

Satan the deceiver will offer you “the kingdoms of the world and their glory”—just as he did to Christ (Matthew 4:8–9). He will tempt you to lust after the flesh. He wants you to bow down before him and worship him.

Do not let him win! However attractive his worldly promises, our answer at all times must be, “Away with you, Satan!” (v. 10).

That is what Christ said in order to win the greatest battle in the whole universe—the battle for the right to rule over the Kingdom of God. With Christ’s help, you and I, too, can win our battle and be worthy of His joyful and everlasting Kingdom, to live and rule and accomplish forever and ever with Him! ■

Ambassadors of God's Kingdom

By Scott D. Winnail

God's called-out ones—whom the Apostle Peter calls a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9–10)—will soon be journeying to locations around the globe where God has chosen to place His name. Though we appreciate the opportunity to see new places and enjoy new experiences at the Feast of Tabernacles, do we *truly* realize that we will be traveling *not* as mere tourists—but as “ambassadors” of the Kingdom of God?

God has called the weak and base of the world, such as were most of us before we were called (1 Corinthians 1:26–31). But now that we have been called, He is training us to be His firstfruits. If we are truly “overcomers,” we will have a special responsibility of service in His Kingdom, helping to re-educate the people and to guide and rebuild the nations.

We go to the Feast of Tabernacles to develop a deeper understanding of God's Kingdom—a kingdom that we each represent in our daily lives as His ambassadors. At the Feast, we receive highly specialized “ambassadorial” training that can help us function more effectively in our temporary, earthly homes, when we return home from the Feast after a little more than a week of special training.

Are you prepared spiritually for the opportunity of attending the Feast of Tabernacles in a few weeks? Will you wisely use the time to further develop the skills and perspectives of a true ambassador of God's Kingdom?

Every baptized member of God's Church, and everyone in the process of being called by God, is called to be an ambassador of God's Kingdom. No matter how old or young we are, God wants us to surrender to Him, so He can use us as His ambassadors to this declining world. Children, teens, young adults, those in middle age, and those in the autumn of their physical years are all called to be Christ's ambassadors—right now!

But what are some of our responsibilities as ambassadors, and why is the Feast of Tabernacles such an important event for us? We need to understand who we are, as we assemble at God's Feast sites around the world—and ultimately, after we return home following the Feast.

What Is an Ambassador of God's Kingdom?

In 2 Corinthians 5, the Apostle Paul shows us how we should view our earthly, physical bodies. He describes them as our “earthly house” or earthly “tent,” which will

be destroyed (v. 1). Paul then points us to the heavenly “habitation” for which we yearn (v. 2)—a spiritual body that the “firstfruits” will receive at the return of Christ. We do not “go to heaven” for our eternal reward—rather, this glorified body comes *from* heaven at the resurrection. We understand that as long as we are “at home” in these physical bodies, we are absent from the Lord (v. 6). Though we must rejoice in every day of life that God grants to us, we must never be completely “at home” in the flesh. We must always yearn and hunger to become full spiritual members of the God Family (1 Corinthians 15:54).

Paul goes on to explain that if we are truly in Christ, we must be a *new creation*, putting off old and ungodly ways, ideas, habits, thoughts, feelings and attitudes (2 Corinthians 5:17). God calls us so we can assist Him in the mission of preaching His Gospel of the Kingdom to the world—a ministry or teaching of reconciliation (v. 18). We have a message to proclaim, through word and deed, which emphasizes human beings being reconciled or “brought back” to God through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ (v. 19). The Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day picture the time when, under the Kingdom of God, the whole world will have the opportunity to be reconciled to the Father through Christ. You and I, called in this present age, are ambassadors of that soon-coming Kingdom, each called to help spread this awesome and exciting “good news” to the world.

But what are “ambassadors”—and what are their responsibilities? In his essay, “The Makings of a Good Ambassador,” we read the perspective of Japan's former ambassador to Vietnam and France, Kideo Kitahara:

“...First, he [the ambassador] must have in-depth knowledge and understanding of major world problems. ... So ambassadors should try to form a clear picture of the international situation, to analyze it properly and to evolve their own judgment. They can no longer be content with understanding bilateral relations alone, in view of the interdependence of nations [essentially, ambassadors must understand how the actions of one nation impact other nations and the entire world]... As regards the human qualities an ambassador should have, it seems to me that the principal one is broadmindedness [we would call this

“vision,” or the ability to see the “big picture”]. Ambassadors should be open to cultural diversity and be able to understand it [Paul demonstrated this as he worked *with* the culture of the Athenians (see Acts 17:16–34)]. They must certainly strive to promote their country’s national interests, but should not follow narrowly nationalistic impulses to which people are subject who have not made international relations their career [they must use discernment, gentleness, mercy, and love as they teach, they cannot force people to see their perspective]” (Source: <http://www.ediplomat.com/nd/essays/kitahara.htm>)

Kitahara’s words can help us understand what is expected of an ambassador. Of course, as begotten sons and daughters of God today, we do not automatically carry the full weight of Christ’s authority. Yet Christ lives within each converted Christian, and He has put us in a very responsible position. To carry out our Christian responsibilities, we must bear the “fruits” of an ambassador of God’s Kingdom, so that God can use us to the extent that we do actually represent Him (Matthew 7:20). True Christians are called to represent Christ in the way they live and act—in being the “light” of the world and the “salt” of the earth. Each and every true Christian can have a powerful influence on others by his or her example, and by zealously supporting the proclamation of the message of the soon-coming Kingdom, or Government, of God.

Ambassadors, even while *in* their host nations, are not *of* those host nations. In modern diplomacy, they often enjoy “diplomatic immunity” from some of the laws of their host nations, which often puts them at odds with the citizens of their host nations. Residents of New York City will recall, over the years, the many scandals over parking violations and unpaid fines by United Nations diplomats who considered themselves “above the law” of New York. As Christian ambassadors, however, we seek to live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18). We obey the law of our host nations as fully as possible, where it does not contradict God’s law (Romans 13:1).

When people look at you, or at me, what do they see? Do they see the government we are supposed to represent, or do they see carnal human beings striving to get their own way? As ambassadors of the Kingdom of God, we must allow Christ to live in and through us (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 2:5). Jesus Christ could say to His disciples, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Are you and I staying so close to God that others who see us can recognize God in us?

Where Is Your True Home?

God expects us, as His elect, to be “strangers and pilgrims” in this physical world today, while we earnestly seek our real, tangible, “heavenly country”—the nation and kingdom that we ultimately represent. Do we view ourselves as strangers and pilgrims in this world today, or do we “fit in” as citizens of the world and our local nations? The Apostle Peter describes God’s elect as “pilgrims”—resident foreigners (1 Peter 1:1–2; 2:11). Our real citizenship is not as a European, an American (North, South, or Central), an African, a Filipino, an Aussie or Kiwi, or as any other physical nationality of today—despite what our passports may say! Our true and rightful citizenship, as God’s elect, is from God’s heavenly Kingdom (Philippians 3:20). Our true passport is, in essence, stamped by the Almighty God, since we are part of His spiritual nation of Israel (Galatians 6:16). As citizens of that nation, God even expects us to adhere to a set of laws that transcend and far exceed the feeble, surmountable laws of man (Acts 5:29). Is there any doubt why God has called us to “come out” of this world (Revelation 18:4)? The society we live in, under the sin-filled influence of the god of this age, is temporary and will pass away (1 John 2:15–17; 2 Corinthians 4:4). But we are ambassadors of Jesus Christ, and representatives of the soon-coming Kingdom of God. We are to come out of this world and be separate, because our true and real citizenship is not of the nations of this world, but of the soon-coming and very real Kingdom of God.

Ambassadors at God’s Feasts

God’s Holy Days, including the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day, are shadows or foretastes of awesome events that are yet to come in God’s plan (Colossians 2:16–17). Through these days, we catch a glimpse of the wonderful Kingdom of God that is coming—the Kingdom that we represent (1 Corinthians 13:12). As we travel to the Feast, we must remember that the Feast pictures the coming Kingdom of God—the “heavenly country” that we represent. That Kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). This is why we are not to love the things of this world (1 John 2:15).

In his September/October 2008 *Tomorrow’s World* article, “How would Jesus Vote for President?”, Mr. Meredith wrote of the coming Kingdom and our role as Christ’s ambassadors in it:

“The mission and calling of all true Christians is to help prepare the way—as advance emissaries—for the Kingdom of God, the literal government that the living

Jesus Christ will soon set up. It will replace all the misguided human governments of this earth. We should conduct ourselves with love and respect for all human beings—including those in political offices. But we must always remember that our ultimate citizenship is not in or from the governments of this Satan-inspired society! Although we should serve others and do good on an individual basis, we cannot and must not get involved with military or political efforts to reorganize or to clean up Satan's deceived world. For the system itself is not God's system! He is only allowing deceived human beings to go their own way and experiment with various types of government during this present 6,000 years of human experience. Paul wrote: "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?" (2 Corinthians 6:14–15)."

Truly, we are of another nation—another kingdom. In the way we talk, the way we act, the way we dress, the way we treat others and the way we live our lives, we are examples to the world around us. Yet, although we are emissaries and ambassadors—and should be examples to the current world around us—we should also be careful to limit the scope of our interaction with that world, because it is a Satan-influenced and even Satan-directed world.

As we travel to and from the Feast of Tabernacles, we need to remember the tremendous responsibility that we bear as ambassadors for Christ. This is our full-time job, even during the Feast. We bear the title not only while at the Feast, but also as we travel to and from the Feast—and after we return home.

When we interact with people on the way to the Feast, we need to speak to them with the respect, patience and clarity of a true representative of God's Kingdom. They should know, by the way we address them and interact with them, that we are "different" in a godly way. What about our attire as we travel? Will our "traveling clothes" be appropriate for an ambassador of God's Kingdom, or would they be more typical for a citizen of *this world*? Of course, we do not have to wear "church clothes" at all times, but our attire—just like our words and actions—should reflect the higher standard of God's Kingdom. We will be known by how we present ourselves—how we talk, how we act, how we treat others, and even how we dress. Our appearance speaks volumes about who we are—and about our attitude toward the Kingdom we are supposed to represent—even before we open our mouths to speak.

What about our attitudes? Will we display the positive, excited, and encouraging perspectives appropriate to emissaries of God's Kingdom, or will we allow Satan to influence our approach? Will we display God's character traits of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, meekness and faith—privately to our families, as well as publicly toward all the brethren—or will we display Satan's character traits of lewdness, uncleanness, hatred, contentiousness, wrath, drunkenness, selfish ambition, dissension, heresy, envy and revelry (Galatians 5:19–23)? Which character traits *should* ambassadors of God's Kingdom display?

Returning Home

The Feast of Tabernacles reminds us of the impermanent nature of this life, as we reside for eight days in our temporary dwellings (as the ancient Israelites resided in their own temporary booths). However, even when we return home from the Feast, we should remember that the dwellings to which we are returning are also "temporary" abodes, where we await the arrival of our Kingdom at the return of Jesus Christ.

When we return from the Feast, will we remember to view our present earthly homes in their true "temporary" light, or will we fall back into old habits we left behind while at the Feast? Will we further implement and apply the training that we receive at the Feast, or will we quickly resume a worldly routine that can lull us into spiritual complacency and prevent us from acting like the true representatives of God's Kingdom that we should be?

God's plan for humanity is truly magnificent! He has chosen a few average individuals who were fully engrossed in Satan's world, and made them ambassadors of His soon-coming Kingdom! He has invited us, as His ambassadors, to eight days of specialized training for our duties, in His specially prepared locations around the globe, for the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day. Will we take that training seriously, using the many hours of God-inspired instruction and fellowship to help us become better representatives of our "heavenly country" to the present ailing world?

We must not take God's Feasts for granted! We must squeeze out of them every last drop of wisdom and godly instruction we can, so that we can return to our temporary earthly homes ready to more powerfully represent God's soon-coming Kingdom. So, bon voyage, my fellow ambassadors! May your Festival experience this year be truly memorable, and may you be continually vigilant as you represent your heavenly country to a world that desperately needs righteous government—a world in dire need of the righteous leaders God is training us to be! ■

ATONEMENT: Becoming Sons of Light

By Wyatt Ciesielka

In Luke 16:8 and John 12:36, Jesus refers to the “sons of light.” In 1 Thessalonians 5:4–5, Paul prophesies that the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord will not overtake the sons of light, and that they will receive salvation (vv. 9–10) at Christ’s return.

What does this have to do with the Day of Atonement? Examining and understanding this question is not only fascinating, it is a *crucial key* to our understanding the ultimate fulfillment of the meaning of the Day of Atonement—and how we, as the “sons of light,” will eventually replace Satan and his demonic hosts as rulers in the soon-coming Kingdom of God!

Yes, the ultimate fulfillment of the Day of Atonement is coming soon! Satan knows his time is short, and in that time God’s faithful Church must be preparing actively for an awesome destiny! Do we understand how the sons of light will soon replace Satan? Do we understand the qualities that we must now be developing? Are we making ourselves ready for the ultimate fulfillment of the Day of Atonement?

Two Goats

Nearly 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ willingly offered Himself as the perfect, complete and final sacrifice to once and for all provide propitiation for the sins of all humanity (John 3:16). Christ was the perfect Passover Lamb (Hebrews 10:1–10). His scourging was so severe that He was disfigured beyond recognition (Isaiah 52:14). And His brutal scourging provides for our physical *healing*, while

His death was propitiation for our sins and provides for our spiritual *redemption* (Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24; Hebrews 9:28).

Each year, during the Passover season, we solemnly remember Christ’s perfect sacrifice. But we know that, in addition to the Passover, ancient Israel observed another animal sacrifice that *also* foreshadowed Christ’s redemptive plan. It took place on the Day of Atonement, the Holy Day on which *two goats* bore the people’s sins. These two goats could not possibly represent more spiritually different beings! One goat represented the father of lies, the most evil and corrupt being. Another goat represented the Son of God—the Word, our compassionate High Priest, our coming Messiah.

The *slain* goat represented Christ (Leviticus 16:8, 15)—innocent, but sacrificed for our sins. The *azazel* goat represented Satan. The people’s sins were placed on the *azazel* goat before it was led into the wilderness by a “suitable” or a “strong” man (Leviticus 16:21). The *azazel* goat suffered the same fate that Satan will soon suffer: removal and banishment. This annual act *foreshadowed* *anciently* what will happen to Satan in the near future (Revelation 20:1–3).

Whereas the *azazel* goat was cast out into the wilderness, the *slain* goat provided for *atonement* to God. Christ’s perfect sacrifice replaced the ancient requirement of animal sacrifices (Hebrews 10:1–10). Today, God’s law is being written into the hearts of the firstfruits; members of His Church. In God’s Kingdom, after Christ’s second coming, the law will

be written in the hearts of the entire world (vv. 11–18). God writing His law in our hearts was made possible through Jesus’ perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 10:12), and began with the establishment of the New Testament Church on Pentecost, 31AD (Acts 2:16–17, 38–39). This process will be fulfilled during the Millennium, after Christ returns as the conquering King of kings, when all of His enemies will be subjugated under Him (Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 10:13; Revelation 17:14).

Spiritual War and the *abyssos*

Satan is not currently bound or removed from ruling this world! However, as Satan knows well, his “time is short” (Revelation 12:12), and he will soon be led away to where he cannot harm people. Then, those who are truly living with Christ in them—who are fully submitted to God’s law, and who have grown in love toward one another—will replace Satan and become immortal, perfect and powerful kings and priests under Christ (Revelation 17:14).

And, just as the *azazel* goat was bound “by a strong man” and cast out, or “banished” into the wilderness, so will a mighty angel bind and banish Satan into a “bottomless pit” (Greek: *abyssos*), meaning an immeasurable and unbounded gulf of separation, or an *abyss* (Revelation 20:1–3).

This “bottomless pit”—or *abyssos*—is *well known* to Satan. In ancient times, year after year, Satan

saw the *azazel* goat led into a desolate wilderness *typifying his future banishment!* At Jesus Christ's return, Satan will be bound and banished into that *desolate abyss*, just as in ancient times the *azazel* goat was bound and banished to the desolate wilderness!

The Day of Atonement means much more than fasting and asking for forgiveness of our sins; it is about two absolutely contrary ways of life and two absolutely contrary paths. The Day of Atonement is about our *ceasing* to be children of darkness, and seeking God's strength to become sons of light.

When we fast properly before God on the Day of Atonement—when we “rend our heart” before the Lord and ask Him for that strength—He *will* be gracious to us, and He will give us the spiritual strength to overcome all things (Joel 2:12–13; James 4:7–10).

Satan Is a Liar, But Christians Love the Truth

Satan is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). He has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9). One of Satan's most deceptive lies has been to replace God's Holy Days with pagan rituals.

One key reason why Satan has so viciously attacked God's Holy Days is that these days show us God's roadmap to salvation—for Christians individually, and for the world as a whole. Satan absolutely *hates* that God is working out a plan of salvation with a small firstfruit harvest that will rule under Christ to *replace* the devil as rulers of this world. Satan also knows full well the meaning and the implication *for him* behind such Holy Days as the Day of Atonement!

In the Millennium, God's law will be in effect. Prophetic scriptures such as Isaiah 66:23 and Zechariah 14:16–20 are simply irrefutable proclamations that when Christ rules as King

of kings on this earth, with His saints under Him, God's biblical laws, seventh-day Sabbath and Holy Days will be taught and observed throughout the earth!

Countless millions of professing Christians have swallowed one of Satan's biggest lies—that while God's laws were in effect from the days of Adam and Noah, through Abraham, and to Christ, they were somehow “nailed to the cross” at Jesus' death. In truth, we know that Christ and the Apostles plainly observed the Sabbath and the Holy Days (Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2) and that our Savior *commanded* His disciples to go into all the world to “make disciples of all the nations” and teach “them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20)—not to try to “do away with” the Sabbath and Holy Days that Christ and His Apostles clearly kept.

True Christians, who are described as “sons of light,” should take great comfort in knowing that God *cannot* lie (Titus 1:2). Satan's administration is founded on lies, but God's government is founded on truth—so we can *believe* the promises God has made to us. Sons of light are required to *practice* and *teach* these truths—because we *love* Christ, and because we will continue to teach these truths and these laws in the coming Kingdom of God (Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2; Revelation 20:6)!

Obedient Christians who are “crucified with” Christ *now*, and in whom Christ lives *today* (Galatians 2:20), are preparing in a very real way for this rulership in the Kingdom of God. When we love and *practice the truth*, we not only reject Satan, but we also fulfill John's instruction in 1 John 3:18 where he wrote, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” Conversely, those who accept Satanic lies—willingly or unwittingly—are deceived, at best,

and are guilty of terrible sin against God at worst!

In his powerful book, *Satan's Great Deception*, Dr. C. Paul Meredith powerfully addressed the topic of those who teach that God's law, Sabbaths and Holy Days are done away. He wrote, “The ministers today do not represent God. If the ministers today do not represent the True God then they represent other gods and the people worshiping under them are worshiping in idolatry! This is the one thing above all things that God will not tolerate. Never can they obtain eternal life by this means. They are breaking the first commandment, ‘Thou shall have no other gods before Me’ (Exodus 20:3)” (p. 125, 1953 edition). This is a very sobering admonition.

We must be very careful to submit our thoughts and intentions to God daily, and we must be determined to practice and teach the *Truth*. We need to be very careful to humbly submit to God our Father and Christ our High Priest. Let us *never underestimate* Satan, nor his terrible demonic servants and the lies they propagate!

Satan and his demons continually wait for us to stray from our Mighty Shepherd, and sin is what distances us from Christ (Isaiah 59:2). If we distance ourselves from Christ, then Satan and his demons will attack like vicious predators (1 Peter 5:8). But when we draw close to Christ, Satan will flee from us (James 4:7). On the Day of Atonement, especially, we should be drawing very, very close to Christ.

Satan Harms, But God Heals

We have seen that the two goats represent two completely different and contradictory systems—two absolutely different ways of life. One is the way of darkness, lies, disobedience, harm and death. The other is

the way of light, truth, obedience, healing and eternal life.

Satan is a destroyer, but God is a healer. We have already seen that by Christ's *stripes* repentant Christians are healed, and that by His death our sins are forgiven (Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24). Through Christ's sacrifice, He has authority to both *heal* and *forgive sins*. And, just as healing was part of Christ's ministry (Matthew 4:23–24; Luke 6:17) and continued through the Apostles (Acts 5:12–16), and is part of what the Church of God continues to do (James 5:14–16), healing and blessing the nations will likewise be a *vital part* of what Christ and the saints will do in the Kingdom (Isaiah 58:8).

Our God is *Yahweh Ropheka*—the Eternal who heals (Exodus 15:26). If we ever doubt how much God wants us to have health, consider that He gave His perfect Son to be brutally struck, scourged and beaten until the flesh was ripped from His body and He was disfigured beyond human recognition (Isaiah 52:14) *for our healing*. While developing righteous *character* is of primary importance to God, health and healing for each of us individually, and for the entire world, is also undeniably central to God's will.

If we have ever carelessly harmed our bodies by chronically missing sleep, continually eating “junk food,” smoking, practicing sexual deviance (which often brings communicable diseases), abusing alcohol or drugs or engaging in any type of physical behavior that destroys our body—which is “the temple of the Holy Spirit” (John 2:21; 1 Corinthians 6:19)—we should realize that those acts of ours are the precise ones that required the terrible, bloody and brutal beating and scourging that our Lord suffered. This aspect of Christ's sacrifice was for our physical health and healing.

Christians Practice Mercy Now

Do we, as Christians, not only do our best to take care of our own health, but also to forgive others and pray for God to heal them? We should continually pray for each other, asking for God's intervention for our spiritual brothers and sisters. In fact, we are *commanded* to do so (James 5:16)!

We must be kind to one another and forgive offenses against us (Luke 11:4). This must be our *daily* way of life. On the Day of Atonement, it is *especially appropriate* to ask God to strengthen love and mercy in us, and to create in us hearts that are *even more* kind, forgiving and desirous of others' spiritual and physical well-being. This is *core* to true Christianity (John 15:13; 1 John 3:16).

Isaiah 58:5–10 is a good passage to meditate upon when we consider how God associates righteousness, compassion, mercy and “laying down one's life” with becoming worthy to be part of Christ's team who will provide *healing* in the Millennium.

Those who learn to live righteously and compassionately now will be the ones whose lights “shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you” (Isaiah 58:8). In verses 5–10, God inspired Isaiah to prophesy about the coming days when the sons of light will inherit immortality. It is clear that at that time, patterns of mercy, kindness, forgiveness, blessing and healing toward others—qualities that we must be developing now—will be *magnified* beyond what we can now imagine!

Notice how God associates *proper fasting* with our future mission of helping Christ heal the entire world (vv. 5–6). The prophet is also inspired to point toward that millennial time when the Day of Atonement will be fulfilled and when Satan will be bound and *removed*. It is at that time

when our lights will “break forth like the morning” and we will rule under Christ as kings and priests, healing the entire world!

Satan's Kingdom, or Christ's Kingdom?

Christ has delivered us from the power of darkness, which is Satan's kingdom (Colossians 1:13). Let us be so very thankful for that deliverance, and for having been called to the Truth. Let us remember that when we turn from darkness to light, we turn from Satan to Christ (Acts 26:18), and from Satan's kingdom to Christ's kingdom.

We are sons of light, and we love the light—we love the truth of God. God's people recognize His true ministers who teach according to the scriptures—which includes teaching and keeping God's law, His Holy Days, His seventh-day Sabbath and His Gospel message of the soon-coming Kingdom of God under Christ's rule. No matter how well-intentioned the priests and ministers of this world may be—and they may indeed be very “nice people”—they demonstrate by their teachings and their actions that they are simply *not* ministers of God, and do *not* have God's Holy Spirit in them (1 Thessalonians 5:5; Isaiah 8:20).

In Tomorrow's World, Christ will be *the* Light and the source of all truth and law (Revelation 21:23). Today, as Christians, we must let our lights shine—radiating that true light living in us, Jesus Christ. “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden” and “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14, 16). We “were once darkness but now are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8).

In his very important booklet, *Your Ultimate Destiny*—which all of

us should really study in order to help gain strength and courage to continue our Christian journey through life—Dr. Roderick C. Meredith addresses the “ultimate purpose” to which a Christian is called:

Let’s turn to 1 John 3 for a moment. After describing how we shall be “like” Christ and be able to look right into the face of that blinding glory, John writes, “And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (v. 3). Once we grasp the ultimate purpose of God, the truly incredible human potential that our Creator has planned for us, we have every reason to want to be “pure,” to live a righteous and holy life.

Our true reward is not some vague and nebulous “pie in the sky” concept of “rolling around heaven” all day, with nothing to do. Rather, it involves becoming “sons of the resurrection” and joining Christ in actively ruling this planet for at least the next 1,000 years. What will Christ’s saints be doing? They will be cleaning up pollution, stamping out pornography and war and healing the sick. The saints’ job will be to bring indescribable joy to a shell-shocked world. Could anything be more personally rewarding?

We shall not merely rule over humans, but over the mighty angels of God! Notice 1 Corinthians 6:2–3: “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge

angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?” Our whole Christian experience of developing Christ’s mind (Philippians 2:5) and character is for this supreme purpose (p. 16).

Time To Become Ready!

To a true Christian, the Day of Atonement pictures so much more

As powerful kings and priests under Christ, we will be busy rebuilding the earth, healing the nations, teaching God’s law and comforting the multitudes. We will be busy repairing six thousand years of mankind’s damage, which will have culminated in the prophesied cataclysmic events leading up to Christ’s return.

than the world can realize. When Atonement is fulfilled in the coming years—when Satan is bound and cast into the *abyssos*, and the saints truly become “at one” with Christ as “firstfruits” whom He “by His own will” brought forth by the word of truth (James 1:18)—we will deeply understand that our lives are just beginning.

As powerful kings and priests under Christ, we will be busy rebuilding the earth, healing the nations, teaching God’s law and comforting the multitudes. We will be busy repairing six thousand years of mankind’s damage, which will have culminated in the prophesied cataclysmic events leading up to Christ’s return. When the “meek in-

herit the earth” (Matthew 5:5), the earth will be a smoldering, radioactive and toxic wasteland, having barely survived the terrible Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. It will be our job to work under Christ to repair and to heal the world, rebuilding the “waste places” (Amos 9:13–15). This is why the whole creation groans and yearns for “refreshing” by the firstfruits (Romans 8:19–21).

Satan is seething with rage because he knows that *he* is headed for the abyss, and that *we* will “shine like the brightness of the firmament” in incredible power and righteousness (Daniel 12:1–3), much more powerful than he is or ever was! And he knows that *we* will *replace him* as righteous rulers of this world, under the King of kings, Jesus Christ!

The only way for us to realize this awesome promise is to resist the devil and humble ourselves deeply before the Lord every single day (James 4:6–10). An integral part of that humbling comes through keeping God’s annual Holy Days. As King David humbled himself and through fasting sought God’s mercy in the face of his adversaries (Psalm 35:13), so too must we humble ourselves daily—*especially* on the Day of Atonement.

As we spiritually prepare ourselves for this special day, let us be sure that we are in a very real way drawing closer to God. And, although our adversary seeks to devour us, notice the promise that when we resist Satan, and humble ourselves before God, He is *making us ready for His Kingdom* (1 Peter 5:5–10)! God speed Christ’s return and the establishment of that Kingdom! Let us eagerly look forward to the events that the Day of Atonement portends for us, for Satan—and for the entire creation! ■

The Fall Festivals: Season of Hope and Glory

By John H. Ogwyn (1949–2005)

The promises of Tomorrow's World offer a very dramatic contrast with the reality of today's. While today's world is filled with pain and sorrow, tomorrow's world is characterized by hope and glory. As we approach the fall festivals, our focus is lifted from what the Bible terms "this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4) to the world that is to come. How real is that world to us? How clearly do we understand the fulfilled hope and the glory that lie just around the bend, in Tomorrow's World?

Almost two millennia ago, Jesus Christ took three of His disciples with Him up into a high mountain. Shortly after arriving at the top, the disciples noticed something strange. Jesus of Nazareth, the friend and teacher with whom they had already spent countless hours, began to emit a strange glow. In the moments that followed, His skin and clothing shone with an increasingly powerful white light until finally His face shone like the very sun itself. During this time two other men appeared at His side, also emitting a brilliant glow. As the disciples watched, absolutely overwhelmed by the awesome sight they were beholding, Jesus began to converse with the two men. The disciples soon perceived that these two men were none other than Moses and Elijah (cf. Matthew 17:1–8)!

About a week before this amazing event, Jesus had told His disciples that some of them would see the coming Kingdom of God during their lifetimes (Matthew 16:28; 17:1). When Jesus spoke those words, the disciples did not understand how His promise would be fulfilled. Christ had selected three of them to be transported through time, as it were, to experience—in vision—a brief glimpse of the glorious Kingdom to come.

While the three were watching Christ visit with Moses and Elijah, a powerful voice suddenly boomed from Heaven: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matthew 17:5). Shortly afterward, the vision faded, and the disciples found themselves back in the mundane world of their own day. Christ told them to tell no one of the vision that they had seen until after His resurrection.

Decades later, in the closing months of his life, the Apostle Peter thought back on that glorious event. He had written to the young Church about the problems, persecution, and suffering that would have to be faced and en-

ured, but he kept coming back to the theme of hope. Every problem and every difficulty fades and pales when compared to the glorious hope that lies ahead. Peter spoke of hope and glory. Those few brief moments when he saw the future were indelibly burned into his mind (cf. 2 Peter 1:16–19).

What about us? How clear is the reality of our hope and how vivid is our concept of the glory that we anticipate? The answer to those questions will to a large extent determine the way in which we face the trials and adversities in the immediate months and years ahead. Because apart from the normal problems of life that we face day by day, there is coming a time of judgment that will plunge the world into the most colossal time of trouble ever seen. How will we be able to go through the times ahead?

Each of the three festival seasons God gave to His people emphasizes one of the three phases of salvation. The early spring season of Passover and Unleavened Bread puts a focus on how we can be moved from a state of guilt and condemnation to one of innocence. This is the justification phase of salvation. Pentecost, the second festival season, puts a focus on our being sanctified, made a holy people through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God. The fall festivals, the third season in God's Holy Day plan, anticipate the culmination of our salvation—the time when we will be born into the Kingdom of God as glorified Sons of God. We can learn important lessons by looking closely at the meaning conveyed by this festival season in which we now find ourselves.

Trumpets: A Rendezvous with Judgment

Many centuries ago, before the days of electric sirens, there was an emergency alarm system in ancient Israel. It was the shrill blast of the *shofar*, or ram's horn, that would carry over the fields, alerting one and all to the approach of danger. When God gave His festivals to the Church in the Wilderness, He stipulated that the first day of the seventh month should be observed as "a memorial of blowing of trumpets" (Leviticus 23:24).

It remained for the New Testament to amplify the meaning of this blowing of trumpets in a way never made entirely clear in the Old. From Revelation 8 we learn that there are seven heavenly trumpets to be sounded at the end of this age. They are blasts of alarm that warn of the step-

by-step phases of God's impending judgment. The final seventh trumpet blast signals the inauguration of the Kingdom of God on this earth and the time of the first resurrection, the resurrection of the saints to glory (1 Corinthians 15:52).

In Revelation 6 the Apostle John records a vision in which he saw a series of events that will set the stage for the return of the Messiah and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Earlier he had seen a scroll containing God's revelation for the end time, which was sealed with seven seals. The only one who was authorized to open the seals was Jesus Christ, the Lion of Judah (Revelation 5:5). He opened the seals one by one and John saw vision after vision.

As John later recorded this experience, his mind must have gone back to a time over sixty years earlier when Jesus of Nazareth had sat down in a secluded spot on the Mount of Olives. John and the other disciples had gathered round Him with burning questions on their minds. "Tell us," they had asked, "what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (cf. Matthew 24:1–3). In response to the questions of His disciples, Jesus began to summarize the events that would characterize the times leading up to His return and the establishment of the Kingdom of which He so frequently spoke. Now, decades later, John saw in vivid pictures the events he had heard Jesus describe on the Mount of Olives. False prophets, wars, famines, and pestilence—each pictured by a rider on one of four successive horses—were followed by visions that revealed future tribulation and martyrdom, and then great terrifying heavenly signs.

Following the heavenly signs of the sixth seal and prior to the trumpet plagues of the seventh seal, one other event occurs. This is the sealing of the 144,000 recorded in Revelation 7. Clearly this is a yet future event whose purpose is to insure that God's servants are protected from the wrath of God (v. 3). This wrath will be poured out upon a disobedient and rebellious world. It will be signaled in its progressive phases by the seven angelic trumpets that are to be blown. These seven seals collectively constitute the seventh seal.

The future time of God's judgment upon His creation is pictured by the Holy Day that is a memorial of the blowing of trumpets. It points us to the future time when the God of Heaven will step into history and hold human beings accountable. The psalmist exhorts us in the interim not to be fretful and anxious because of evildoers, but we should realize that the wicked will be cut off while the righteous will flourish forever (Psalm 37). This is not a description of today's world where it often seems that those who are corrupt are "getting by with it." Rather, it points us to the future, to the time pictured by the ancient festi-

val that memorializes the blowing of trumpets. There is a day of reckoning and accountability that is coming. Whatever we might see around us in this present world must never cause us to lose sight of that vital fact. It puts everything else into perspective.

The culmination of the Day of the Lord, during which the seven heavenly trumpets are blown, is the blast of the seventh and final trump. This begins the climax of God's plan. It marks the time when human beings, made of matter but formed in the image of the Great God, are changed from flesh to spirit. It is the time when they will break forth into the same radiant, shining glory with which three of the disciples saw Jesus, Moses, and Elijah shine forth in the vision on the mount.

The Great God, who has called us to share in His virtue and His glory (2 Peter 1:3), reminds us of this every fall. The Feast of Trumpets, which begins the sequence of the four fall festivals, points us toward the events that will forever change the future of our world. There are three Holy Days in the year, which precede Trumpets and three that follow. The Feast of Trumpets, picturing events that lead up to and include the return of Jesus Christ, represents the pivot point of all of history!

The Day of Atonement

Nine days after the Feast of Trumpets comes the Day of Atonement. Differing from all of the other festivals catalogued in Leviticus 23, this Holy Day is a fast day. In ancient Israel, it was characterized by solemn ceremonies involving two goats. It was the only day of the year on which the High Priest was permitted to enter the inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies. Also, it was the day upon which, every fiftieth year, the trumpet that proclaimed the Jubilee was sounded. How do all of these ceremonies carried out by the Levitical priesthood tie in with God's plan and the events of the end time?

Leviticus 16 informs us that lots were cast over two goats brought before the High Priest. One was chosen for the Eternal and the other was for Azazel. The Hebrew term *azazel* is rendered "scapegoat" in the King James and in a number of other English versions. The term scapegoat is simply an older English form, which means "the goat that escaped." In modern usage, scapegoat came to mean, "one made to bear the blame for others." Yet, Satan the devil, symbolized by the goat that escaped, is deserving of his judgment and will be blamed.

The goat chosen for the Eternal was sacrificed and its blood taken into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled before the Mercy Seat. The High Priest laid his hands on the head of the other goat, "the goat that escaped," confessed over it all the sins of Israel, and

then sent it away by the hands of a capable man into the wilderness.

The significance of this ceremony is made clear when we read Revelation 20. After the return of Jesus Christ at the seventh trump, there is one crucial event that must occur before the rest of the plan unfolds. That event is described in the opening verses of Revelation 20, where we learn that a mighty angel will be dispatched to take Satan the Devil and bind him in the great abyss for a thousand years. No longer allowed to deceive the nations, Satan will be restrained from interfering as God works with the minds of human beings.

In Genesis 3 we learn that our first parents listened to Satan and disobeyed their Creator. The result was that they were expelled from God's presence and were faced with a world filled with sorrow and requiring much hard effort in order simply to survive. While Christ's sacrifice paid the penalty for the sins of all of mankind, symbolized by the blood sprinkled before the Mercy Seat, God's justice demands that the originator of sin will ultimately have to take responsibility for his actions. Satan must be dealt with before the Millennium can begin.

Significantly, the Day of Atonement rather than the Feast of Trumpets was the starting point for the Jubilee (Leviticus 25:9–10). Why? The Jubilee was a pattern that God established for ancient Israel to give the nation a fresh start. It was a time when the land was given rest and reverted back to its original owners. It was a time when slaves were freed and families were given a chance to start over, no longer encumbered by the debts and poor economic decisions of a previous generation.

We are told that after Christ's return, the great trumpet will sound forth and the enslaved Israelites languishing in the concentration camps of the future will be set free (Isaiah 27:13). They will be brought back to the land of Israel and given the opportunity for a fresh start. Christ's return will set in motion the fulfillment of what the Jubilee pictured. However, there can only be real freedom when the enslaver of mankind is put away.

As we fast and seek to draw near to God on the Day of Atonement, we are demonstrating to God what is really important to us. We are consciously rejecting the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16) to which our first parents yielded at Satan's urging. After all, Genesis 3:6 shows that Eve recognized the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as good for food (lust of the flesh), pleasant to the eyes (lust of the eyes), and something to be desired to make one wise (pride of life). By fasting, we are reversing in our own lives the process that began with our first parents in the Garden.

The Feast of Tabernacles

The highlight of the year for most Church families has long been the Feast of Tabernacles. It reminds us of that part of God's plan when the Kingdom of God will hold sway over all of the earth, and the earth will be as filled with the knowledge of God as the sea is filled with water (Isaiah 11:9).

From Revelation 20 we learn that after Satan has been shut away so that he can no longer influence and deceive the nations, there will begin the one thousand-year reign of Christ and the saints. Many prophecies in the Old Testament anticipate that glorious time when the saints of the Most High will possess the Kingdom (Daniel 7:22), a time when a King shall reign in righteousness and Princes will rule under Him, executing right judgment (Isaiah 32:1). It will be a time of physical healing for sick and hurting people (Isaiah 35:5–6) as well as a time of rejuvenation for the environment itself (vv. 1–2, 7).

Immediately prior to Christ's return, global catastrophes will overwhelm the entire planet. Water all over the earth, for instance, will become like congealed blood and all fish and sea life will die (Revelation 16:3–4). The earth will be a planet in its very death throes. At the crucial moment, however, the living Christ will return in power and glory. Immediately after that return, a stream of living water will break forth from under the ground and begin flowing into the Mediterranean as well as the [formerly] Dead Sea. Water all over the world will become miraculously pure as a result of this flow and dead sea creatures will have life miraculously restored (Ezekiel 47:1, 8–9). This healing water is in itself symbolic of the outflowing of the Spirit of God, which will bring life and healing to a desperate world. This astounding event will set the stage for the entire Millennium.

The Feast of Tabernacles pictures this glorious time when Christ and His saints will administer God's government over the whole earth. Spreading out from Jerusalem to the most remote spots of the globe will come the knowledge of God and the ensuing peace and prosperity, which will flow from God's blessing. At this future time the veil that shrouds the understanding of people the world over will finally be removed (Isaiah 25:7). As we celebrate this time of rejoicing and abundance, we should always be reminded of that time when God will make a "feast of fat things" to the whole world (v. 6).

The Last Great Day

The final Holy Day of the fall festival season was the one least understood by the Jews. It was simply called the "eighth day" or later the "great day of the feast." Clearly,

from the instructions given to ancient Israel, this eighth day—coming right on the heels of the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles—is a separate festival with a separate meaning. From the instructions given regarding the Levitical sacrifices in Numbers 29, we can see that this day is distinct from the preceding festival. It is linked with the Feast of Tabernacles, yet distinct. This is much in the same way that Passover is connected with, yet separate and distinct from, the seven day Unleavened Bread Festival that immediately follows it.

Revelation 20, which most clearly explains the significance of the fall festivals, helps us to understand the meaning of this day as well. We learn that after the one thousand year reign concludes, Satan is turned loose for a short time. He and those who have elected to follow him and rebel against God are dealt with, and then a remarkable event occurs. All of the dead, small and great, are raised from their graves and restored to physical life. The books of the Bible are opened to their understanding for the first time and they are then judged based on what they do with that new knowledge. Isaiah 65:20 hints that this

period of judgment will be carried out over a time of one hundred years. At the end of the period of judgment, those who have embraced God's salvation will enter the Kingdom of God while those who have rejected it will be burned up forever.

God's great plan so far supersedes any ideas and dreams of human beings that there is no comparison. This fall festival season focuses our attention on the climax of God's plan for dealing with mankind. As we look around us at the pain, sorrow, and desperation that grip so many in this present world, we can be recharged by setting our eyes on the hope and glory this season anticipates. Jesus Christ came bringing the *good news* of the Kingdom of God. We are part of the Work that God has raised up to take that same message to a hurting and dying world.

As we see the end time events of which Christ and the prophets of old spoke, we can lift up our heads knowing that our salvation draws near (Luke 21:28). The season of hope and glory is drawing near! The fulfillment of the fall festivals and all that they mean is just around the corner. ■

Texas Pre-Teen Camp 2009!

Amidst the scenic wonders of Parker State Park, 95 staff and campers gathered June 7 to commence a successful LYC Pre-Teen camp. Activities this year included: field sports, canoeing, overnight-canoe and campout, archery, BB-gun marksmanship, life skills for boys and girls, teambuilding, Christian living classes and consistently delicious and wholesome meals.

We also want to thank God for His obvious intervention in protecting and providing for His campers. In almost an exact repeat of last year, the entire staff again saw God powerfully intervene to disperse severe weather in our area. Wednesday evening, during our boys' overnight canoe trip and campout, approximately 30 miles to our north and west, very powerful thunderstorms abruptly erupted. Seventy-mile-per-hour winds, baseball-size hail and rapid lightning strikes covered the entire north Texas area. Mr. Hall and camp staff quickly convened to monitor the weather situation using NOAA radio and National Weather Service Internet radar.

Following our crisis management plan, camp staff quickly evacuated the overnight campers, returning

them to the safety of their dorms. We then watched in amazement as the weather radar showed the eastward moving storms split and move north and south of the Parker State Park area. While towns west, north and south of us lost power and suffered from this very severe weather, our campers simply cleaned up and spent a comfortable night back in their dorms. We wish each of you could have seen the radar images and how God created a complete calm in our area in order to protect His campers. It was amazing.

Park attendant and retired school principal, John Bush commented, "The LYC Texas camp stands out among all other groups. You are the most organized group I have seen. While other groups let their children go, you actually teach your children something." He concluded, "You are a super group!"

This year, as in years past, it was inspiring to see young people growing in confidence, trying new things and experiencing that God's way works! Camp concluded with a talent show, highlighting the talent among God's youth.

—Deric Forrestier, Myron Short, Wyatt Ciesielka

Leadership Training*(Continued from page 6)*

Consider this, too: Statistically, addiction to *pornography* is a bigger problem than addiction to alcohol! The American Psychological Association Help Center reports that in 2006, nearly 14 million adult Americans had an alcohol-abuse disorder. By contrast, in the same year, almost three times that number—40 million U.S. adults—admitted they regularly visited Internet pornography websites.

Ladies, is it “loving” to your brother to wear clothing that is overly

suggestive or revealing? What if he is struggling with overcoming an addiction to pornography? We would never want our thoughtlessness to be a catalyst for a brother to sin—that would be a serious offense (Matthew 18:6). Furthermore, the patriarch Job said, “I have made a covenant with my eyes” to keep away from sexual lust (Job 31:1). It is important that spiritual sisters in the Church see the importance of supporting their brothers’ desire to keep their “covenants with their eyes,” and not unwittingly cause them to sin.

The Feast of Tabernacles teaches us that when Christ returns, the

saints will have the great honor of reigning with Him over the earth. This year, as we go to the Feast, let us not only think about being patient with the waiter at the restaurant, kind to the hotel staff and friendly to the people who work in the meeting hall. Let us all exercise leadership in the area of good taste and decency in how we dress (1 Timothy 2:9). After all, we will all soon be teaching modesty—along with a whole new way of life—to human beings for a thousand years. Let us be sure we are practicing that way now! ■

Be Grateful for Jesus Christ’s Sacrifice!*(Continued from page 2)*

all that it involves *must* be preached and *will* be preached by us! But we must never forget that *Christ Himself* is the **King** of that coming Kingdom! We must never forget that we have *no way* to enter the Kingdom *except through Jesus Christ’s shed blood*, our heartfelt *acceptance* of His death in our stead—and our willingness to *walk with Him* and surrender to let Him *live His life* within us through the Holy Spirit. *Only* in this way will we be able to “grow in grace and knowledge” and allow God to prepare us to be those kings and priests serving under Christ in Tomorrow’s World. *Only* through Jesus Christ living within us will we be able to develop the genuine love, outflowing concern, wisdom and spiritual power to rule this world under Jesus Christ in the way God desires of us. So, we must humbly and steadfastly “walk with Christ” all year long—*especially* at these wonderful Holy Day seasons.

And let us *never forget* how God Himself—in inspiring the Bible—describes the “blood of Jesus” and the sacrifice of His Son, even when describing the glory of God at His throne in heaven. *Always remember*, dear brethren, what God’s word tells us in looking ahead toward the Kingdom—and how the “scroll” describing the coming seals and plagues of God was presented by pointing out that it was *only* through the “Lamb of God” that understanding was given. Notice what God inspired John to write: “But one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.’ And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent

out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne” (Revelation 5:5–6).

Even in describing this heavenly scene with *no human beings present*—and the powerful “four living creatures” and 24 elders looking on—our Creator Himself focuses on “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he reminded them, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:1–2). The heartfelt *focus* on the suffering and death of Jesus Christ in our stead was *always* at the front of Paul’s mind. *So it must be with us!*

As I have often reminded you, brethren, we are truly the “Church of the forgiven”! If we are profoundly and constantly aware of this fact, and if we sincerely *humble ourselves* as we grow toward God’s Kingdom, God can and will use us—and will eventually give us unusual power to finish the Work. Then, He will make us His *full sons*, with *glory* radiating from us as Jesus Himself! But it all goes “back to the beginning.” The beginning fact is that we can *only* do any of this through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and through Him—as our living Head and High Priest—*living His life* in us through the Holy Spirit! As we approach the autumn festival season, please meditate on this profound truth and “walk with God with all your heart” as you, and I, and all of us approach the coming Kingdom of God.



Local Church News

In Loving Memory

Mr. Honore Belanger, of the Calgary, Alberta, Canada congregation died June 15 at the age of 87, after a lengthy illness. He is survived by Agnes, his wife of over 55 years. Mr. Belanger came into the Church in 1969 and was a faithful member whose friendly smile and kind heart endeared him to everyone. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Mrs. Jayne Breeden, 80, of the Baltimore, Maryland, congregation, died April 13 after an extended illness. She is survived by two sons, one daughter, four grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Mrs. Breeden was a long-time Church member, twice widowed, who faithfully cared for each husband, also Church members, through their long illnesses. She was a true "Proverbs 31" woman, known for her devotion to God and family, practical wisdom, hospitality and encouragement to the brethren. She was much loved and will be sorely missed by all who knew her.

Mr. E.M. (Enoch Madison) Clayton died March 10, after a short illness. Mr. Clayton was a faithful loving member of the Church of God, baptized in 1958 by Mr. Roderick Meredith on a baptizing tour. He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Carol June Clayton, one son and two daughters, five sisters, two brothers, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He will be greatly missed by his family and friends.

Mr. Shane Franke, deacon in Soldotna, Alaska, died June 17. He was 49 years old and had been baptized

in 1986 and ordained a deacon in 2001. He is survived by his wife Kim and three sons and one daughter. Mr. Franke set an inspiring example of concern for others, even in pain, and was very encouraging to others. The funeral was June 19.

Emma Ruth "Peggy" Foreman, 64, of the Atlanta congregation, died in the faith on January 30 after a long illness. With her at the end were her husband Robert, sons Rob and James, and daughters Debbie and Jessica. High school sweethearts, the couple had been married for 47½ years. On February 5, Mr. Jack Lowe conducted a memorial service amid some 40 family members, Church members and friends.

Peggy Hoover George, 60, died quietly at home May 25. Peggy attended the Williamsburg, Virginia congregation. She faced a fatal motor neuron disease with confidence and courage, without blame or bitterness. She served as a genuine, devoted, and much-loved faith example to all. She is survived by her husband Richard, sisters Carol Mosholder and Mary Shipley, and many friends.

Mr. Tom Herring, 81, died on May 2. He was preceded in death by his wife of almost 60 years, Melva Jane, who died April 25, 2007, and is survived by one brother and numerous nieces and nephews. Mr. Herring lived most of his life in Louisiana. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II and he and his wife lived in Harrison, Arkansas, for a few years where they hosted the Global/Living Church of God video

group. Mr. Herring loved to serve and did so quietly, kindly, and efficiently. He was baptized in 1967 and ordained a deacon in 1971. The attending physician and the social worker at the nursing home where he lived at the end of his life both called to comment on his thoughtfulness and concern for others. He set a wonderful example which, with his humor and ready smile, will be greatly missed by all who knew him. Mr. Donald Wood conducted the graveside funeral service on May 6.

Mrs. Dorothy Ochs, 90, of Tucson, Arizona died April 9. Mrs. Ochs was baptized in 1961 with her late husband, Peter Ochs, a deacon in the Worldwide Church of God. Mr. and Mrs. Ochs, long-time members of God's Church in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin congregation, operated a family-owned music store for many years, and were remembered fondly for the music programs Mr. Ochs developed there and in the Wisconsin Dells Feast site. Mr. and Mrs. Ochs had three daughters, ten grandchildren and 31 great-grandchildren. The funeral service was conducted on Sunday, April 19, 2009 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, by Mrs. Ochs' grandson, Jonathan McNair, pastor of congregations in the northeast U.S.A.

Thomas Wayne Wood died May 7, at age 60. He was baptized in 1973 and served faithfully in the Montgomery, Alabama area. He will be sorely missed. Jack Lowe and Gilbert Morris officiated funeral services at Brookside Memorial Gardens in Millbrook, Alabama.

Births

Paul and Tammy West and big brother, Hunter, of Kansas City, Missouri are delighted to announce the birth of *Sawyer Paul West* on March 9, weighing in at eight pounds three ounces and 19 inches long.

Jonathan and Mellisa Westrick, of Ocala, Florida are pleased to announce the birth of their first daughter *Jaqualeen Hope Westrick*, born November 14, 2008. She weighed seven pounds, five ounces and was twenty-one inches long. Grandparents Val and Kathy Burgett of Ohio and Doloros Westrick of Florida were excited to see her arrive.

Anniversaries

Mr. and Mrs. Lehman Lyons celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary on May 28. The Walterboro, South Carolina congregation honored them by presenting them with a bouquet of red roses and a cake on the Sabbath, May 30.

Mr. and Mrs. Roy Monger (Betty) celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary on May 1. They attend the Knoxville, Tennessee congregation, where Mr. Monger serves as an elder.

Ordinations

Mr. Simbert Hodebar was ordained a deacon on April 9 by Evangelist Mr. Dibar Apartian. He serves the brethren in Fort-de-France, Martinique.

Mr. and Mrs. Marc Arseneault (Annie) and *Mr. and Mrs. R. Shane Kruse (Lorraine)* were ordained as deacons and deaconesses on April 15 by Canadian Regional Director Mr. Gerald Weston. They serve the brethren in the Mississauga, Ontario, Canada congregation.

Mr. Sergio Carvajal was ordained an elder on April 18 by Regional Pastor Mr. Mario Hernandez. He serves the brethren in Chile.

Mr. Aaron Bravo was ordained an elder on April 25 by Regional Pastor Mr. Mario Hernandez. He serves the brethren in Argentina.

Mr. Graeme Hemphill was ordained an elder on May 2 by Australasia Regional Director Mr. Bruce Tyler and Area Pastor Mr. Michael Gill. He and his wife are transferring from Melbourne to Sydney, Australia, to serve the brethren there and in Canberra.

Mr. Mark Kruse was ordained a deacon on May 9 by Regional pastor Dr. Jeff Fall. He serves the brethren in the Reno, Nevada congregation.

Mr. Vernon Bush was ordained a deacon on May 30 by Director of Church Administration Dr. Douglas Winnail and Area Pastor Mr. Jack Lowe. He serves in the Atlanta, Georgia, congregation.

Mr. Manuel Burdette was ordained a deacon on Pentecost by Dr. Scott Winnail and Area Pastor Mr. Ron Poole. He serves the brethren in the Anderson, South Carolina congregation.

Mr. Richard Thomas was ordained an elder on Pentecost by Area Pastor Mr. Dexter Wakefield. He serves in the Ft. Lauderdale, Florida congregation.

Mr. Juan Carlos Jidy was ordained a deacon on Pentecost by Area Pastor Mr. Dexter Wakefield and elder Mr. Rick Thomas. He serves in the Ft. Lauderdale, Florida congregation.

Mr. Robert Stephens was ordained a deacon on Pentecost by Area Pastor Mr. Dexter Wakefield and elder Mr. Rick Thomas. He serves in the Ft. Lauderdale, Florida congregation.

Ms Patricia McKinnon was ordained a deaconess on Pentecost by Director of Church Administration Dr. Douglas Winnail, Area Pastor Mr. Bob League and elders Mr. Tex Malone and Mr. James Sweat. She serves the brethren in the Nashville, Tennessee congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ridgeway (Patti) were ordained deacon and deaconess on Pentecost by Dr. Scott Winnail and Area Pastor Mr. Ron Poole. They serve in the Anderson, South Carolina congregation.

Mr. David Wakefield was ordained an elder on Pentecost by Dr. Scott Winnail and Area Pastor Mr. Ron Poole. He serves the brethren in the Anderson, South Carolina congregation.

Mr. Edward Lever was ordained a deacon on June 6, 2009 by Australasia Regional Director Mr. Bruce Tyler, and Area Pastors Mr. Dayrell Tanner and Mr. Graeme Hemphill. He serves in the Sydney, Australia congregation.

Commentary

Do You Want God's Protection?

By Richard F. Ames

A friend of mine fought in the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. As an 18-year-old American soldier, he joined his comrades in facing incoming artillery shells exploding all around them. My friend told me, "There were no atheists there that day. The men were trying to remember all their childhood prayers in that frightening attack."

Why is it that we human beings, created in the image of God, generally ignore our Creator until some tragedy or calamity strikes? Is it because many of us by nature are procrastinators? Do we realize what we may be giving up by procrastinating? How deeply do we really want God's protection? It is there for us *now*, if we seek it.

Historically, the servants of God have always urged the human family to seek God *now*—not to wait for a so-called deathbed repentance (which rarely if ever actually occurs).

The Apostle Paul told the scholarly Athenians, "Truly these times of ignorance God overlooked, but *now* commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). You need to establish a deep and profound relationship with the Creator and His Son, Jesus Christ, if you have not done so already. God promises guidance, blessings, and protection for those who love Him, obey Him and serve him.

Notice this promise in the book of Psalms: "The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them" (Psalm 34:7). Yes, God will give divine protection to those who reverence Him. Read Psalm 91, where God again promises protection for those who trust in Him.

Today, we face many dangers. Our children may be gunned down at their schools; terrorist bombings threaten the normal routine of society; highway accidents bring grief to many thousands every year; wars and regional hostilities are also killing thousands every year and fear of disease epidemics looms on the horizon!

God *does* allow Christians to suffer persecution and to experience trials to test their faith—but He *also* gives spiritual strength and power to His children to endure and overcome!

We all face our own personal tribulations. But *you* should not wait for calamity before reforming your life and submitting to the Creator of the universe. Read your Bible *now*. Respond *now* to the love and the instructions of your Lord. As the prophet Isaiah urges us, "Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6–7).

Now is the time to seek God's love. Pray to the Creator with all your heart—and if you are willing to truly serve Him and *obey* Him, then claim His promises of divine protection!

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.