

Living

Church News

Volume 12, No. 1

January–February 2010



Pray for More of God's Gifts!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

We enjoyed a magnificent Feast of Tabernacles this year! In many ways, it truly was the “best Feast ever.” Our attendance figures—still coming in as I write this—indicate that we were *well above* the 7,000-attendance mark at the Feast in 2009. We are grateful for that growth, but most of all we are thankful for the wonderful sermons, the fine fellowship and the deep sense of unity that was felt virtually everywhere at the Feast sites.

However, this world around us lacks that unity. It is truly *coming apart* in many ways. In the Middle East, the tiny nation of Israel does seem on the verge of attacking Iran in order to protect its own survival! Meanwhile, the United States appears to be “sitting on its hands” and is losing power and prestige continually in foreign affairs. China is moving ahead in financial, military and naval power—beginning to challenge the U.S. more and more in these areas. The American people are gradually becoming genuinely *upset* with the “big government” programs being pushed at them, contrary to the spirit in which their nation was founded. Yes, in the U.S., internal trouble lies just ahead! As the American dollar increasingly drifts lower, imported goods will go *way up* in price! Obviously, the way things are going, America’s standard of living and entire way of life will continue to go *down*!

Initiatives are being pushed to make abortion more accessible, and the “gay agenda” is being forced on the English-speaking peoples continually. Same-sex “marriage”—legal in Canada for several years—is now allowed in five American states! This is growing across the nation. Tremendous pressure is being put on Americans in general—upon the media, upon colleges and universities and upon companies and corporations—to go along with the entire homosexual agenda. *Our nation is truly sick.*

Yet the American and British-descended peoples seem *unable* to understand the connection between our increasingly *vile* way of life and our *national problems*! The Bible makes this very plain. Over and over, God tells us that if we turn away from Him, *everything* will begin to go wrong. You brethren understand the dozens of verses describing this, as we give them to you continually in articles in the *Tomorrow’s World* magazine and our booklets.

However, dear brethren, *we* in the Living Church of God must genuinely *stand out* as a “**beacon of light**” in this confused world. *If* we are truly converted, we **know** the Truth. We *have* God’s Holy Spirit to help us not only understand, but to *live* that Truth. As we yield ourselves to the living Jesus Christ, this Work of the Living Church of God and our powerful mes-

Inside:

Are You Truly Humble?3

A Question of Attitude4

The Ten Virgins: A Parable for Our Time7

Family Planning and Contraception: A Biblical Perspective for Christians10

Festival 2009: A Joyous Taste of the Millennium!14

Local Church News30

Commentary32

sage of **right government** will continually grow in power and influence. As the prophetic events come crashing upon the people around us, they will **have** to begin to listen! For this we can be thankful.

Most of us are *sincerely trying* to be true Philadelphians in our way of life and in our service in God's Work. Most of you are backing the Work through your prayers, your tithes and offerings, and even your personal service and help to others in the Church and in Church-related activities. *Thank you*, dear brethren, for that!

However, as we analyze the affluence and ease of our lives, in comparison with those of Jesus and the Apostles Peter and Paul, it is clear that we *come up very short!* In physical ways, most of us enjoy very comfortable homes and comfortable circumstances. Too few of us are daily on our knees, constantly "crying out" in a truly *heartfelt* way to our Creator, literally "begging" Him to intervene and send Jesus back and to *use us* to prepare the way and to intervene powerfully in blessing and empowering His Work.

So, **now**, we must "follow through" on the inspiration the Feast of Tabernacles should have given us all. We need to exercise the kind of *total commitment* and **zeal** that the original apostles displayed—if we expect to be granted the real **power** that they had, the "gifts of the Spirit" God gave them, and the wonderful *protection* and *deliverance* they experienced when faced with trials and tests. One vital element that is far too rare in us today is the *living faith* of Jesus Christ and the gifts of the Spirit.

Jesus Himself warned us about this. After describing the widow who kept coming to the "unjust judge" and was finally heard because of her "continual coming," the Lord said, "*Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?*" (Luke 18:6–8).

Indeed, as Scripture indicates, there will be *very little genuine faith* on this earth by the time Jesus Christ returns. But, again, we in the Living Church of God can and should be different! We must truly **believe** and totally **trust** in God the Father—and in Jesus Christ as our living Savior and Head!

As I think back over the last 60 years, I am inspired to realize *how very many* of the prophecies I heard Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong explain have *already* come about. For he said that a united Germany *would* come up and dominate its neighbors. He taught that the nations of Europe *would* get together in a kind of "European Empire." He explained that America and Britain would *go down* and that our "pride of power" would be **broken**. He showed that we would **lose** many of our great "sea gates" such as Suez, the Panama Canal, the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Hormuz and others. He told us that the Eastern European nations *would break away* from the Soviet Union—

Continued on page 29

Living Church News

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

Regional Offices

UNITED STATES:

P.O. Box 3810

Charlotte, NC 28227

Phone: (704) 844-1970

<http://www.lcg.org>

AUSTRALASIA:

P.O. Box 300

Clarendon, SA 5157, Australia

Phone: (08) 8383 6288; Fax: (08) 8383 6388

CANADA:

P.O. Box 409

Mississauga, ON L5M 0P6, Canada

Phone: (905) 814-1094; Fax: (905) 814-7659

NEW ZEALAND:

P.O. Box 2767

Auckland, New Zealand

Phone/Fax: (09) 268 8985

PHILIPPINES:

MCPO Box 492 ■ Araneta Center Post Office

1135 Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines

Phone: 63-2-723-0499; Fax: 63-2-414-5349

SOUTH AFRICA:

Private Bag X7

Hatfield, Pretoria 0028

Republic of South Africa

Phone: (27) 58-622-1424; Fax: (27) 58-623-1303

UNITED KINGDOM:

BM Box 2345

London, WC1N 3XX, United Kingdom

Phone: 44 (0) 844-800-9322

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

©2010, Living Church of God™. Printed in the USA.

All rights reserved. Postage paid at Charlotte, NC.

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

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

Are You Truly Humble?

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

Even in God's Church it is possible to find many men and women who are very lacking in humility. Each year, at the Passover foot-washing service, we participate in the "ordinance of humility" and practice an outward sign of our inward humility. But how many of us, throughout the rest of the year, *genuinely* meet the test of true humility? It is vital that we each consider this point.

True humility is not just an outward appearance before our fellow human beings. It is a totally sincere inner state of mind—a basic attitude.

If you saw a man who was "hot" with anger and who literally *smashed* two precious objects that God Himself had directly fashioned, you might easily *assume* that this man totally lacked humility and the fear of God. Yet, that is *exactly* what Moses did when he came down from the Mountain of God with the Ten Commandments. "So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain" (Exodus 32:19).

If you were one of the Israelites at that time, all you would have seen was Moses' act of heated anger. You would *not* have known that this man, Moses, had just finished rejecting an offer from God to destroy these rebellious Israelites and to make of *himself* a great nation (vv. 9–14). You would probably *not* know that the Creator God gave this description of the man who smashed the tablets: "Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth." (Numbers 12:3). Was Moses perfect? No. Did

God greatly honor him despite his faults, and appreciate him in ways his fellow Israelites did not? Yes!

Notice how Moses later described that memorable scene from his own meek perspective: "Then I took the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes. And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry with you, to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me at that time also. And the LORD was very angry with Aaron and would have destroyed him; so I prayed for Aaron also at the same time" (Deuteronomy 9:17–20).

Still later, Moses recounted how he again interceded with God to spare Israel punishment for its continual rebellion: "Thus I prostrated myself before the LORD; forty days and forty nights I kept prostrating myself, because the LORD had said He would destroy you" (Deuteronomy 9:25). You see, Moses' fellow Israelites *did not see him* falling on his face before God, over and over, on their behalf. Even if they had, they were so filled with "self" that they would not have fully appreciated either his actions or his motives.

All of us must meditate on David's thoughtful words: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?" (Psalm 8:3–4). Truly, brethren, all of us put together have practically no physical or mental power compared to our Creator. As our Father in heaven reminds us: "For My

thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the LORD. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts'" (Isaiah 55:8–9).

Yet how quickly even many of us come up with "our" opinion and "our" judgment of this or that—sometimes in *direct conflict* with the inspired revelation of the Great God whose massive intellect is unfathomable to our puny minds! *All* of us need to become more *truly* humble, yielded and teachable before God. *All* of us need to pray fervently that God would make us more sensitive to *His* will in contrast to our own wishes and desires.

If each of us concentrates on being a genuine "bondslave" of Jesus Christ—letting Him use us as "tools" in His hands—then we will practically never get our own feelings hurt, and practically never have a feeling of envy or resentment that *someone else* got a position or blessing that we coveted. For we will want *God's* will to be done. We will grow in the realization that *He really does know* what is best for us even if our human impulses at the moment tell us otherwise.

This attitude will help us take correction from God—and *from His called and chosen ministers*. We will really believe what the writer of Hebrews tells us: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives" (Hebrews 12:5–6). So, when we are corrected in a sermon, we will take it to heart and *pray about it*—feeling that the correction is *from God!* Even if "Mr. So and So" is not our "favorite" minister, we will know that he is in an *office*—and that

Continued on page 28

A Question of Attitude

By Dibar K. Apartian

Living the Christian life demands that we develop the right attitudes and motivations—and avoid the wrong ones.

Has anyone ever accused you of being in a “bad attitude”? What exactly is a “bad attitude”?

It is easy, of course, for us to think we can perceive when **others** are not rightly motivated—not acting or thinking as true Christians should. After all, we can hear their nasty remarks. We can see the wrong things they do and the selfishness they display. We may wonder, “How can anyone be so awful?”

Good question! But how about you? Are you—at least occasionally, and maybe even more than occasionally—in a similar frame of mind? When you are, do you abhor your own thoughts and deeds as much as you do others’?

Do you even recognize when you are in a bad attitude? Are you deeply, honestly aware of it?

Perhaps you have misled someone—maybe clouded an issue or shaded the facts to make yourself come out looking better. Perhaps you have been harsh toward a friend. Maybe you turned down an opportunity to help someone.

Are you converted enough to recognize and repent of your mistakes, to try to repair the damage and to do what you are supposed to do?

Some people are only in a good attitude when everything goes well with them—when their needs are fulfilled to their own satisfaction. But is there any merit in that? The more important question is: Can you remain in a good attitude when you are sick or when you lose a job or when people spread false rumors about you? Can you still fully live the Christian way when things get really tough?

Attitude spells success or failure, depending on whether that attitude is good or bad. A good attitude can mean a happy home, a pleasant job situation, genuine friends—and certainly a closer relationship with God. By contrast, a bad attitude can result in a broken home, unhappy surroundings, frustration and loneliness!

For the true Christian, having the right attitude is all-important. God judges us according to our attitudes! Having the right attitude is a key to God’s Kingdom.

After God’s Heart

Consider the criterion God used to choose David to be king over Israel. When God told Samuel to go to the house of Jesse to find out which of Jesse’s sons God would select

to replace King Saul, Samuel first looked—as we all commonly do—at the sons’ outward appearances.

“But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart’” (1 Samuel 16:7).

And God chose David. But why? What made David—and not his brothers—a man after God’s own heart? The Bible clearly reveals the answer in a single verse: “I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will” (Acts 13:22).

Notice it! David was a man after God’s own heart because he was ready and willing to fulfill all God’s will. Not his will, but God’s. Despite his many sins—and none of us is without sin—David’s heart was right.

This mental framework of wanting to obey and serve God is the essence of a right attitude—and it is the opposite of a bad attitude. When you are wrong, are you willing to admit it? The hardest thing for human beings to do is to admit that they are wrong. Yet a willingness to see and correct error is an important part of a right attitude.

Christ gave a striking example to illustrate the importance of correcting wrong: “A man had two sons,” Christ said, in parable, “and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go, work today in my vineyard.’ He answered and said, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir’ but he did not go” (Matthew 21:28–30).

Which one of the two sons most resembles you? The decisions you make may not always be wise, but after thinking things over and examining the facts, are you Christian enough to change your mind and do what you should have done in the first place?

If you are not willing to recognize your mistakes and change, Christ will give you the same answer He gave those who heard this parable, saying: “Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you” (v. 31).

We all have wrong attitudes from time to time, and we need to overcome them. When we do, we will have made a giant step toward the Kingdom of God. In this article, we will briefly examine four aspects of wrong attitudes.

Finding Fault Continually

Some people constantly look for faults in their neighbors. They criticize and condemn, making themselves judges. This always wanting-to-find-fault attitude makes them feel superior—fills them with self-righteousness.

Do you realize that we can never enter God's Kingdom until we get rid of this attitude?

Christ said: "Judge [condemn] not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:1–3).

Satan was the first to develop and exercise this fault-finding attitude. As the archangel Lucifer, before he became Satan, he found fault with God's government and began to want to take God's place (Isaiah 14:12–14, Ezekiel 28:12–15). He influenced one-third of the angels to develop this same rebellious attitude toward God, convincing them to join him in an unsuccessful attempt to knock God off His throne (Revelation 12:3–4).

Then, after God created the first man and woman, Satan convinced Eve that God was wrong to forbid eating of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. She and her husband believed Satan and disobeyed God. Consequently, they were afraid when they heard the sound of their Creator's voice in the Garden of Eden. They hid themselves.

When God asked them why, Adam answered, "I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself" (Genesis 3:10).

God then asked: "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" (v. 11).

Adam's answer is typical of those who want to justify themselves by accusing someone else. He did not think that he should be blamed for his disobedience. According to Adam, it was the woman's fault! "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate," he told God (v. 12).

Did Eve, then, accept any blame? No. Her answer was just as self-justifying and accusatory as Adam's. She, too, put the blame on someone else, saying, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (v. 13).

All things considered, Adam probably reasoned that the fault for the whole incident was God's—since God made the serpent who, in turn, deceived the woman who convinced Adam to eat the fruit.

Such reasoning, strange but familiar to all of us, is called human logic. It enables us to blame others for our own shortcomings or wrongdoings. Rather than admitting and correcting our mistakes, we declare ourselves innocent and expect others to repent of having been instrumental in our misbehavior.

Before it is too late, we need to get rid of this always-wanting-to-find-fault attitude.

Being Unwilling To Forgive

Do you easily forgive others? For instance, if there is a misunderstanding between you and another member of your family, are you willing to recognize your faults and forgive his? Suppose one of your friends does you wrong, then afterward tells you he is very sorry. Would you forgive him? Or would you hold a grudge against him?

Most of us do not have a forgiving attitude. We want to get even with people—to vindicate ourselves and prove our own righteousness. But one fact is sure: if we do not forgive our neighbor, God will not forgive our sins.

In the model prayer Christ gave, He taught us to ask God to "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). Christ added: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (vv. 14–15).

God is love. He is always willing to forgive us, if we truly repent of our sins. He wants us to develop this same forgiving attitude. Remember Christ's answer when Peter asked Him how often he should forgive his brother? Was it seven times? "Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven'" (Matthew 18:22).

Afterward, Christ spoke of a servant who owed a considerable amount of money to his master. That master, filled with compassion and showing mercy, forgave his servant and canceled the debt.

Shortly thereafter, the same servant was unwilling to write off a small debt someone else owed him. He "went

Most of us do not have a forgiving attitude. We want to get even with people—to vindicate ourselves and prove our own righteousness. But one fact is sure: if we do not forgive our neighbor, God will not forgive our sins.

out... and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe! So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all'" (vv. 23–29).

But he would not. He threw his fellow servant into prison. Upon hearing this, his own master called him and said: "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" (vv. 32–33).

Of what value are these parables if we do not learn the lessons they contain for our growth? What would your attitude be if you were arrested on false accusations and sentenced to die? Suppose your persecutors even mocked you and spat on you. Would your attitude be one of forgiving those who falsely condemned you?

Stephen was arrested, persecuted and falsely accused. His attackers cast him out of the city and stoned him. But he knelt and "cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts 7:60).

A true Christian should have this type of forgiving attitude at all times. This is the attitude Christ Himself had toward His own murderers! He said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).

When you repent, God completely forgives and forgets your sins. You cannot enter God's Kingdom unless you follow God's example and learn to forgive your brother's sin.

Feeling Sorry for Yourself

Some people are perpetual mourners—they cannot stop feeling sorry for themselves. Suffering from self-pity, they consider themselves victims of circumstance. They seem to be burdened with questions like, "Why me?" and "Why did it have to happen to me?" Somehow everything always seems to go wrong for them, and they convince themselves that they have no reason to be happy.

Are you like this? Think of all the seriously handicapped people on earth who have succeeded despite adverse circumstances. There are countless people who have worked hard to achieve simple goals that most of us take for granted. But no matter what their trials, these successful people had one thing in common: They never let themselves become overwhelmed by self-pity; they never let a handicap discourage them or stop them from overcoming an obstacle. They did not waste time complaining about their circumstances. They simply worked as hard as they could, to do the best they could—and they finally overcame their adversities and succeeded!

Are you like this?

Think: If people in the world—without God's Spirit—can succeed despite their handicaps, how much more reason do you and I—we who have God's Spirit of power—have to succeed?

God loves you no matter what physical or emotional handicaps you may face. He wants you to understand that these are only temporary physical hindrances, and that He will never forsake you. So you should be courageous and grateful for what you have. Stop complaining about what you do not have! Stop feeling sorry for yourself. Greatness was never attained through self-pity.

No one will enter God's Kingdom until he learns to appreciate life.

The Apostle Paul suffered more than most people. He endured hardship, persecution and all kinds of accusations. He would have had good reasons, humanly, to pity himself. After all, before his conversion, he was a well-respected, powerful individual, filled with zeal for the task he performed (Philippians 3:4–6).

When he became a Christian, Paul lost just about everything he had, including his friends in the world. For a long time, even those in the Church doubted his conversion and turned away from him. Also, he continually suffered from a thorn in the flesh—an unspecified handicap (2 Corinthians 12:7).

It might seem that Paul had enough reasons to complain. But Paul did not pity himself; instead, he wrote for our instruction: "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4).

When you rejoice in the Lord you cannot pity yourself—rejoicing and pitying are opposites. How did Paul endure suffering and still remain in a good attitude? What formula did he use?

Under God's inspiration, he revealed it to us: "...whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

The greatest curse in life is when you are cut off from God—when you are left without His Spirit. But Christians who have God's Spirit are not cut off from God. They are not alone. If you are a true Christian, you have His Spirit. Therefore, whatever your problems, you—a begotten child of God—must never pity yourself (1 John 3:22). You can always have the courage to go forward in life in the right attitude.

Feeling "Holier Than Thou"

Some people suffer from an inferiority complex; others have a vain sense of superiority. How about you? If you pity yourself, it may be that you suffer from an inferiority complex. On the other hand, if you think of yourself—or boast of yourself—as being better than

Continued on page 27

The Ten Virgins: A Parable for Our Time

By Douglas S. Winnail

Nearly 2,000 years ago, Jesus spoke the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1–13). For many, it is a nice little Bible story about lamps, oil and getting ready for a wedding; yet the parable is actually a *warning* about conditions that will exist in the Church at the *end of the age*. The target audience is the generation that will see the return of Jesus Christ! The parable is linked with prophecies about the *last days* that are coming to pass today (see Matthew 24–25).

But just how does the parable relate to us? It is often assumed that Christ spoke in parables to *clarify* the meaning of His teachings, yet Scripture reveals *just the opposite* (see Matthew 13:10–17). The Bible indicates that God has hidden the true understanding of Scripture from the world, but He reveals that vital information through His Spirit to those He is calling (1 Corinthians 2:7–16). Those willing to be led by the Spirit of God will search out and understand the real meaning of Scripture. What can we learn from the parable of the ten virgins? What vital lessons, *relevant to us today*, can we draw from the parable?

Who Are They?

We first need to consider: *who* are the ten virgins? The parable pictures ten virgins who go out to meet the bridegroom (Jesus Christ). Many Bible scholars have simply described the ten virgins as “the expectant Christian community” (see *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*). Many who call themselves “Christian” today certainly expect the Messiah to return.

The parable, however—more powerfully than most realize—indicates that even *many* true Christians who are looking for Christ’s return *will not receive* the reward they are anticipating (Matthew 7:21–23), because they have not learned vital lessons contained in this parable. They will be shocked and surprised, but that is what the Bible clearly states.

We are told that five of the virgins were *wise* and five were *foolish*. Just what does it mean to be wise, or foolish? How does the Bible define these terms? Into which category do

vice and listen to correction (Proverbs 10:8), but fools *ignore* advice and resent correction (14:16). A fool reacts to situations with immediate anger, yet a wise person ignores insults and exercises self-control (Proverbs 12:16). Fools are always right in their own eyes and are fully convinced about their own opinions, yet a wise person is willing to listen to counsel (Proverbs 12:15; 28:26). A wise person looks ahead and anticipates where decisions and actions will lead, and strives to avoid making

We are told that five of the virgins were wise and five were foolish. Just what does it mean to be wise, or foolish? How does the Bible define these terms? Into which category do you fall?

you fall? Jesus explains that the wise are those who not only listen to His teachings, but *actually follow* those teachings (Matthew 7:24–29). Jesus defines a foolish person as one who hears but *does not follow* the word of God! Foolish people concoct reasons and excuses why the commandments and instructions of Scripture no longer apply to us today.

The book of Proverbs provides additional definitions. A wise person fears to disobey God’s word and *seeks* knowledge, wisdom and understanding (Proverbs 4:4–9; 9:10), but “fools *despise* wisdom and instruction” (1:7)—they are not willing to put forth the effort required to obtain these important needs. A wise person will seek ad-

mistakes, but fools do not anticipate the consequences of their actions and thus repeatedly wind up in trouble (Proverbs 22:3). Our choice of friends also influences what we become, as he “who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20).

The lesson from this part of the parable is to be alert to the category in which our actions place us! Are we seeking to be led by God’s Spirit and to follow His revealed instructions, or are we continually seeking a way around Scripture so we can do our own thing? The parable indicates that upwards of 50 percent of those who consider themselves members of God’s Church could be making foolish decisions! That should be a warn-

ing to us as we approach the end of the age.

Oil or No Oil?

The parable indicates that the foolish virgins took no oil for their lamps, but that the wise took an extra supply while they waited for the bridegroom to come. Commentaries offer various ideas about what the oil symbolizes (e.g. grace or good deeds), yet the Bible indicates that oil is symbolic of God's Spirit. When Saul and David were chosen as kings of Israel, Samuel *anointed them with oil* and "the Spirit of the LORD" came upon them (1 Samuel 10:1–6; 16:13). The Bible states clearly that if we want to be in the Kingdom of God, we must *bring forth fruits* (Matthew 3:8; John 15:1–8). Galatians 5:22–26 lists the fruits of the Spirit, which God wants us to display. These include love [an outgoing concern for others], joy, peace, patience, faithfulness and self-control. God's Spirit is reasonable and easily entreated (James 3:17). Other prominent fruits of God's Spirit include strength of conviction and a sound, *discerning* mind (2 Timothy 1:7). Those who lack these fruits become impatient, will not listen to input, will focus on themselves, will let go of their faith, will compromise their convictions and will fail to discern truth from error. They allow their supply of oil [God's Spirit] to run low and become exhausted.

God's Spirit is a *dynamic quality*—it ebbs and flows in our lives—depending on how we take care of it and use it. This is why Paul admonished Timothy to "*stir up* the gift of God" (2 Timothy 1:6). We are also warned: "*Do not quench* the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). We stir up God's Spirit through regular prayer, Bible study, fasting and striving to exercise the fruits of that Spirit—acting in a loving and patient manner, even when our normal tendency would be to fly off

the handle! This is what it means to be "led by the Spirit of God" (Romans 8:14). If we are led by the Holy Spirit, we are children of God and heirs with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:14–17). God gives His Spirit to those who *obey* Him (Acts 5:32). Without God's Spirit, we are not really Christians (Romans 8:9). If we let our oil supply run low, the fruits of God's Spirit will not be evident in our lives and we will not be ready to meet Christ when He returns. We will have foolishly wasted our opportunity to be in the first resurrec-

others would veer off course in the pursuit of wealth and temporary worldly pleasures (Matthew 13:18–23). It is sobering to notice, in the parable of the ten virgins, that they *all* went to sleep while they waited for Christ's return!

The recent history of the Church of God is also instructive. Church writings and teachings caused many to conclude that Christ might return in the 1970s. When this did not happen, some began to branch out into their own religious endeavors. Mr.

Most people are flushed with enthusiasm when they first learn the truth, yet that often fades. Jesus warned that some would begin to ignore, and break, the commandments and would slip back into self-indulgent worldly ways (Matthew 24:45–51).

tion as firstfruits! This is another vital lesson we can learn from the parable of the ten virgins. When was the last time you checked *your* oil?

A Revealing Delay

One of the most crucial aspects of the parable is what happened when the bridegroom *delayed* his coming. Down through the ages, many have tried to predict when Christ would return. The disciples initially thought that He would return in their time (Luke 19:11), however, the Bible indicates that there would be a *long* delay (Matthew 24:45–51; 25:5, 14, 19). What we do during that delay reveals much about our conviction and depth of conversion. Most people are flushed with enthusiasm when they first learn the Truth, yet that often fades. Jesus warned that some would begin to ignore, and break, the commandments and would slip back into self-indulgent worldly ways (Matthew 24:45–51). He also warned that some would stumble and give up the faith as a result of trials and persecution, and that

Armstrong long expected that Christ would return during his lifetime. When he died and Christ had not returned, some began to question whether Mr. Armstrong might have been wrong on many other issues. The ensuing doctrinal discussions and changes led to splits and more fragmentation. Today, many have rejected clear commandments and instructions of the Bible, and now believe that all that is necessary is to "love the Lord and believe in Jesus." Much of this has happened because Jesus Christ did not return when many expected He would. Our challenge, and another lesson of the parable, is to hold on to the Truth and to our convictions—and to continue zealously doing the Work that Jesus commanded—*until* He returns! Once we have made a commitment, if we begin to look back and think about what might have been, or what we have missed, the Bible states that we are not fit for the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:62). Are we awake and focused on the goal of the Kingdom? Or have we gone to sleep? Are we wallowing in

nostalgia for what we gave up? This parable should be a wake-up call!

The Midnight Cry

The parable implies that the *slumbering* virgins were *all* taken by surprise, encountering the bridegroom in the middle of the night. How does this relate to you and your situation? Do you recognize the *significance* of the times in which we are living? Are you aware of specific prophecies being fulfilled, almost daily, right in front of your eyes? Or have you been lulled to sleep by those who are saying that all prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus, and that Old Testament prophecies are not relevant to the beliefs of New Testament Christians?

Do you recognize *where* the Work of God is being done today? Who is *really* teaching according to Scripture (Isaiah 8:20), and who is watering down the Truth and changing doctrines? Who is preaching the *true* Gospel that Jesus and the Apostles preached (Mark 1:14–15), and who is preaching a *different* gospel (Galatians 1:6–9)? Who is warning the world of the prophetic significance of today's news events as Christ did (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21), and who is preaching in Christ's name (Matthew 24:5) about *another* Jesus (2 Corinthians 11:1–4)? Can you identify those who are wolves out to divide and devour the flock of God? Can you discern those infected with a Laodicean attitude? We need to be able to recognize the "midnight cry" when we hear it, because God's servants will be actively involved in delivering this warning (see Isaiah 58:1; Ezekiel 2; 3; 33). However, Satan will also have false and deceived ministers active at the end of the age—and they will *deceive many* who—like the virgins—have begun to slumber! We cannot afford to go to sleep

at this crucial time in history (see 1 Thessalonians 5:1–6)!

The Lamps

The lamps of the ten virgins illustrate another important lesson. The lamps of the wise virgins who brought oil were burning brightly. Filled with oil, these lamps were able to be a light to the world, fulfilling Christ's expectations for His chosen disciples (Matthew 5:13–16). If we are nourishing God's Spirit, others will see in our lives the fruits of love, obedience, faith and good works. Regrettably, the lamps of the foolish virgins were going out because they were running out of oil. If we begin to compromise the truth of God, and begin to ignore or disobey His laws and instructions, we begin to lose the Spirit of God. The fruits of God's Spirit will begin to disappear, and will be replaced by self-centered thoughts and actions that are often vain and ugly (Galatians 5:19–21). Sexual sins, arguments, heresies and divisions will thrive, and unity will evaporate in churches and families (1 Corinthians 1:10–17). Individuals who let their lamps get into this condition will not participate in the wedding, and will not fulfill their calling to become firstfruits in God's Kingdom. This is a serious warning! What is the condition of your lamp? Is it burning brightly, or is it going out? If you are not sure, ask others what they see. Ask God to show you the condition of your lamp, and be ready to listen for His answer.

Cannot Borrow—Must Buy!

A particularly sobering lesson of the parable is that whatever amount of faith, courage, character, conviction, preparedness, good works or degree of conversion you have achieved, it *cannot* be loaned, shared, given to or borrowed by someone else! These are

very personal qualities that are part of the spiritual house that we are each building in cooperation with God (1 Corinthians 3:5–17). However, Scripture also reveals that whatever we build will be *thoroughly tested*. If it stands the test, we will be rewarded, but we will lose the reward if it fails the test. So how we build—and the materials with which we build—are very important. We must build *carefully* and choose our beliefs *wisely*!

In this regard, we each need to ask some very personal questions. Have I found the Truth, and has my mind been opened to understand that Truth? This is a special opportunity that *few* are being given today (Matthew 13:10–17; John 6:44, 65).

Have you invested heavily—of your heart, mind and energies—in this "pearl of great price" that you have been offered (Matthew 13:44–46), or do you have "itching ears" that would rather listen to "new truths" and fables (2 Timothy 4:3–4)? Have you *carefully proven* what you believe, or do you *follow your feelings* and listen to the latest doctrine or self-appointed prophet or teacher who comes along (1 Thessalonians 5:21)? Are you seeking first the Kingdom of God, or do you make other priorities more important in your life (Matthew 6:33)? Are you striving to grow close to God while He can be found, or are you putting off the most important decisions in life until later (Isaiah 55:6–9)? Are you eagerly anticipating and actively preparing for Christ's return, or are you hoping for more time to enjoy the transient pleasures of this world? Jesus said that our treasure—our investment of money, time and energy—will be where our heart is (Matthew 6:19–21). We may fool others, but we do not fool God. The parable of the ten virgins makes it clear that we cannot make it into

Continued on page 27

Family Planning and Contraception: A Biblical Perspective for Christians

By Scott D. Winnail

What can the Bible teach us about birth control and contraception? What do Christians need to know about birth control as they plan their families? Are the words “Bible” and “birth control” contradictory? Indeed, **should** a husband and wife actually “plan” their family?

As a teacher (ultimately receiving my Ph.D. in the field of health education and public health, and teaching at the university level), I have lectured on these topics in various settings since 1994. Over the years, pastoring several Living Church of God congregations, I have fielded members’ questions about issues surrounding birth control and family planning, and I have seen firsthand just how vital this topic is for Christians—not just for married Christians who are contemplating the use of birth control, but also for young adults discussing family plans with a prospective spouse, as well as for older adults to whom God has given the responsibility of sharing their wisdom and guidance with younger generations (Titus 2:1–10).

God created us with the potential to become like Him one day—to be future members of the God family (1 John 3:2). God desires “godly offspring” (Malachi 2:15). He designed man and woman—husband and wife—to reproduce in His image, and to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:26, 28). Sexual intercourse is not sin; it is a beautiful gift God has given to His children (see “Is Sex Sin?,” *Tomorrow’s World*, July–August 2005). It is a gift He intends human beings to reserve for husband and wife (see “Teaching Chastity in an Unchaste World,” *Tomorrow’s World*, July–August 2002).

God loves children; He created them as a heritage from Him and a reward to their parents (Psalm 127:3). He makes it clear that we as Christians have a responsibility to prepare our environment and our lives for family (Proverbs 24:27). We are commanded to ponder or “prepare for” our future (Proverbs 4:26; Luke 14:28).

But God’s purpose for the sexual relationship between husband and wife goes far beyond His intent for the physical act of procreation animals perform. For human beings—made in the image of God—sexual intercourse is not just a means of physical reproduction; it begins the lives of potential future members of the God family (Ephesians 3:14–15). Additionally, God made sexual intercourse as a tool to bind a husband and wife more tightly together in

marriage—to help them become “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24), physically for a time, as well as spiritually and emotionally. Sexual intercourse is God’s gift of love to the people He created, to help them express love for each other. It is an act of love and giving, intended for use only within marriage, to help cement the marriage relationship (1 Corinthians 7:1–5).

Does God make plans? Yes, indeed, God has planned from the **beginning**. The Father and the Word planned for the future as They created the earth, created human beings and created a 7,000–year plan for human life and civilization. They did not randomly scatter planets, continents, trees and animals across the creation. From “before” the foundation of the world, they planned Christ’s sacrifice as the coming “Savior,” and planned for those of us in God’s Church today to be firstfruits (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20). They planned for Christ to be born as the first of firstfruits (1 Corinthians 15:20). They planned to create human beings who would one day be “raised” up at “the last day” (John 6:44) and change from fleshly to spirit beings (1 Corinthians 15:51–53). They planned for a future Millennium and Great White Throne Judgment through which the vast majority of human beings—first the firstfruits, and later the rest of humanity—will ultimately inherit all things alongside our elder brother and joint-heir, Jesus Christ (Revelation 21:7; Romans 8:17). God is a family, and is the ultimate practitioner of “family planning.” The timing, sequencing and spacing of His family was planned out in fine detail from the beginning.

God similarly expects all of us to plan wisely for the future. He does not appreciate when we fail to plan, and then attempt to pressure Him into bailing us out (Matthew 4:7). Nowhere does the Bible teach against the principle of contraception or birth control. In fact, powerful godly principles support it. Respecting God and His word involves both listening to what it says and recognizing what it **does not** say. Notice what Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, a dedicated long-time servant of God, pointed out decades ago in his book, *The Missing Dimension in Sex*:

“Planned parenthood violates NO LAW OF GOD! Planned parenthood is a *definite contribution* to this supreme purpose of character building. It entails,

of course, the responsibility for right and wise planning...

Any teaching or legislating which violates this divine PURPOSE of God—which instills in wives the dread of and *fear* of pregnancy—is a religious heresy, and/or a violation of the higher Laws of Almighty God!

No wife should ever need to suffer the *fear* of pregnancy... To prevent having children and producing a FAMILY would be a direct violation of God's command, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.' But to PLAN a family in an intelligent manner, as to the time of the first arrival, and the time-spacing of other children—that is a different matter. Nothing in the Bible forbids this. MUCH in the Bible, in principle, supports it!" (p. 232).

When Does Life Begin?

The biblical birth control debate is founded on the traditional Christian understanding that "life begins at conception"—at the moment that the father's sperm joins with the mother's egg. This is and has always been the understanding of the Church. As Dr. Douglas Winnail wrote in a *Tomorrow's World* article, "the biological fact is that life begins at the moment of conception. From that point, every cell in the developing embryo contains the exact number of chromosomes and all the genetic material that distinguishes this new human being from its parents" ("Abortion: A Modern Holocaust," March–April 2005, p. 11). In fact, by describing us as "begotten" but not yet "born," God is characterizing Christians today as spiritual embryos (John 3:1–11). This point is a key to understanding the methods of birth control—some of which **do**, some of which **do not**, and some of which **may or may not** threaten the life of a living being developing inside the mother's womb.

Once the father's sperm, with its genetic material, penetrates the mother's egg, an embryo (a new life) is formed. This point in time is called conception. At conception, the embryo's cells immediately begin developing under the direction of the new individual's own unique DNA. Cell division occurs rapidly in the first week, preparing the way for

the development of body organs in this new embryo. From the moment of conception (which occurs in the fallopian tubes of the mother), it takes about one week for the new embryo to move through the fallopian tube and implant in the uterus wall, where it will grow and develop for approximately nine months. If the embryo does not attach to the uterine wall, it cannot obtain nourishment to further develop and it dies and is discarded by the mother's body. When a once-attached embryo detaches from the uterine wall, this is called "spontaneous abortion" or "miscarriage."

How Does Contraception Work?

Contraceptive methods prevent pregnancies in one or more of three ways:

1. They may prevent the sperm—the father's genetic material—from reaching and fertilizing the mother's egg.

This is commonly achieved through "barrier" methods such as condoms.

2. They may prevent the mother's body from releasing an egg, by using chemical contraceptives such as the "birth control pill."

3. They may prevent the egg from implanting in the womb **after** it is fertilized, by using chemical methods such as the "morning after pill" or physical devices placed in the uterus.

For Christians desiring to make godly decisions in every aspect of their lives, including family planning and birth control, it is vital to understand the types of birth control available and how they work. As God's people, we need correct information so we can make the best choices possible,

based on God's written word and a clear understanding of how the body works.

Birth Control Methods

It is not possible to cover all birth control methods in this article, but a brief description of the categories and most prevalent methods of birth control will follow, outlining how they work and whether or not they potentially violate God's principles.

ABORTION, a several-thousand-year-old practice, is the termination of the life of a developing baby in the mother's womb. In society today, abortion is often used

The biblical birth control debate is founded on the traditional Christian understanding that "life begins at conception"—at the moment that the father's sperm joins with the mother's egg. This is and has always been the understanding of the Church. As Dr. Douglas Winnail wrote in a *Tomorrow's World* article, "the biological fact is that life begins at the moment of conception."

as a birth control method and is performed either chemically or surgically.

God knew us before we were even born, as He does all developing babies (Psalm 139:13–15). Abortion is a clear violation of the sixth commandment—“You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13). Although David chose to transgress God’s law by having Bathsheba’s husband Uriah murdered, we see that he never thought of murdering his unborn child to avoid embarrassment, even though evidence suggests abortive agents were known, even then, in both physical and chemical forms. God clearly regards even the life of an unborn child as precious (Exodus 21:22–23). In this regard, we should note that chemicals in “morning after pills” are designed not to prevent pregnancy, but rather to prevent the embryo’s implantation in the womb and even to cause miscarriage. Like the knife in a surgical abortion, these pills can terminate a life.

CHEMICAL CONTRACEPTION involves using chemicals that mimic a woman’s natural reproductive hormones in order to *prevent* pregnancy. The “birth control pill” has proven to be effective in preventing pregnancy 92–99.5 percent of the time, depending on use (*Contraceptive Technology*, 19th ref. ed. [2007]). Chemical

contraceptives are not risk-free for the mother; they have been shown to bring about an increased risk of stroke, blood clots, high blood pressure, heart attack, some types of cancer, and possibly dental caries.

The most prevalent chemical contraceptive methods are the birth control pill, Depo-Provera (a hormone injected at three-month intervals) and Norplant (chemical strips inserted under the surface of the skin, effective for five years). New chemical birth control methods are constantly being developed. Chemical contraceptive methods are intended to work in three widely recognized ways: 1) in the majority of cases, they should prevent ovulation, or release of the mother’s egg—making pregnancy impossible, 2) they should thicken mucus in the mother’s cervix (the opening to the uterus), making it more difficult for sperm to reach the egg, and 3) in the cases where they fail to prevent ovulation or fertilization, they should prevent attachment of the fertilized egg to the uterus wall (a process that some refer to as “chemical abortion,” because this causes the fertilized egg to die).

Even with the use of chemical contraception, ovulation can still occur. In fact, depending on hormone concentrations and user diligence, reported ovulation rates vary widely—from 2 percent to 65 percent—among those using the pill (Latimore, W.L., Stanford, J.B. [2000]. “Post-fertilization effects of oral contraceptives and their relationship to informed consent,” *Archives of Family Medicine*, 9, 126–133). So, even though these methods **should** typically work by preventing ovulation, fertilization and conception, in **some** cases they work by causing a “chemical abortion”—preventing implantation of the fertilized egg. Using a very conservative 2 percent conception rate, the organization *Physicians for Life* estimated that the birth control pill terminates the life of 800,000 embryos annually in the United States alone. There is some controversy regarding whether or not chemical contraceptives actually do cause chemical abortions; however, even pharmaceutical companies refer to this on their package inserts as one way these methods are designed to work. There is also some controversy surrounding whether or not chemical contraceptives actually prevent release of the mother’s egg.

Because of the confusion and lack of clarity on this matter in the medical community, the Church

ABORTION, a several-thousand-year-old practice, is the termination of the life of a developing baby in the mother’s womb. In society today, abortion is often used as a birth control method and is performed either chemically or surgically. God knew us before we were even born, as He does all developing babies (Psalm 139:13–15).

has not made doctrinal determinations regarding the appropriateness or inappropriateness of each specific variety of chemical contraceptive. What can be stated clearly, however, is that **abortion is murder**. Brethren whose research convinces them that a particular chemical contraceptive does **not** pose an abortion risk may exercise their consciences and use that contraceptive responsibly. However, those who are persuaded of the above-mentioned risks will **not** consider chemical contraceptives a viable means of birth control for Christians. The Apostle Paul explained that “whatever is not from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). As in many other matters of conscience, the principle, “When in doubt, don’t do it!” is a proper standard here.

INTRAUTERINE DEVICES or IUDs are small devices of copper or other metals, inserted by a physician into a woman’s uterus. They can remain in place for one to ten years. Their primary function is to change the environment of the uterus in order to *prevent implantation* of the fertilized egg **after conception**. Some IUDs contain an additional chemical component designed to prevent ovula-

tion. IUDs have proven effective in preventing pregnancy more than 99 percent of the time (*Contraceptive Technology*, 19th ref. ed. [2007]), but they are essentially abortion inducers, and are therefore **not** a viable birth control option for Christians.

BARRIER METHODS, like male and female condoms (latex and non-latex), the sponge, and the diaphragm, create a barrier that prevents the sperm from reaching the egg—thus preventing conception. These methods are usually about 84–98 percent effective, depending on how careful the users are (*ibid.*). *There is no biblical condemnation of this method of birth control.*

Some mistakenly cite the example of Onan as a condemnation of barrier methods (Genesis 38:8–10). Onan's sin, however, was **not** the withholding of semen as birth control; it was his intent to prevent his widowed sister-in-law from having an *heir* as God had commanded (Deuteronomy 25:5–6). By choosing not to sire children—failing to fulfill his duty to his dead brother—Onan directly disobeyed God.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING or the **RHYTHM METHOD** uses the woman's monthly cycle and “periodic abstinence” from intercourse when the woman is most likely able to become pregnant. This method can involve a wide variety of measures, such as use of a calendar to count days of the woman's cycle and keeping track of body temperature and cervical mucus. This form of birth control is less effective than some others, but can be quite effective with the dedicated efforts of both husband and wife (75–88 percent), and with a commitment to abstain from sexual intercourse for several days to a week each month, or to use a barrier contraceptive at that time.

There is no biblical command against this method of birth control, when used properly. However, some teachers of this method go so far as to advise couples to have sexual intercourse during the woman's monthly period—which theoretically will prevent pregnancy. God plainly **forbids** that practice (Leviticus 18:19). Not only does the blood contain certain disease-causing organisms; some research also suggests that intercourse during menstruation can increase the risk of endometriosis (the dangerous presence of uterine tissue elsewhere in a woman's abdomen).

STERILIZATION: Tubal ligation for women, and vasectomy for men, are ways for a couple to prevent pregnancy indefinitely, because the path that the egg or sperm follows is surgically “removed” or “sealed off.” These procedures require surgery, are expensive, and are essentially irreversible, though they are essentially 100 percent effective. The Bible does not directly discuss this method of birth control, but husbands and wives who are considering sterilization should carefully consider their perspective re-

garding surgical alteration of the body, and should evaluate their action and the current size of their family in light of God's command to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28). Couples contemplating this serious step should also carefully consider: “Are we both certain that the potential side effects and costs of sterilization outweigh our concerns about having another child?”

The “**NO METHOD**” method—the deliberate choice **not** to plan—is practiced by some couples whose idea is, “We will be happy with whatever God wills.” This method generally leads to pregnancy 85 percent of the time (*ibid.*). By failing to plan, families can grow to large numbers—and, in theory, *will* do so unless there is a biological problem.

Interestingly, however, most animals only mate one or a few times throughout the year, because of their instinct and the way God designed their reproductive cycles. By contrast, God designed marriage as an institution in which husband and wife can enjoy unique intimacy with each other through sexual intercourse. Because of this, a husband and wife have many more opportunities to begin a pregnancy than is typical for most creatures. Yet human beings are not “animals” who must constantly reproduce for the survival of the species. Ask yourself: is it really God's intention for a woman to become pregnant at every opportunity? Would a loving husband really desire his wife to remain pregnant for decades on end, for as long as she is fertile? Will a wife be endeared to her husband if she fears pregnancy every time he is near her? Can a couple really afford to maintain an unusually large family? These are important questions to ponder.

The ministry of God's Church has a responsibility to teach God's people how to develop more of God's mind and character in their lives. God's ministers must provide His people with truthful and accurate information, and teach them godly principles for living. But it is up to individuals to apply these principles in their own lives. Christians are to “work out” their “own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).

Building a family is an exciting and fulfilling opportunity God gives to husbands and wives. God created the institution of marriage as a way for human beings to assist in His plan of reproducing Himself. That is an amazing blessing, and the decision to have children is an important and serious matter. God expects responsible parents to plan wisely for the birth, upbringing and education of the future God-beings whose lives He begins in their care. And, although family planning and birth control can be used for godly purposes within marriage, some of today's most common “planning” methods are not godly at all! Future parents need to know the facts, biblically and biologically, so they can make truly godly choices! ■

Festival 2009: A Joyous Taste of the Millennium!

More than 7,600 brethren around the world observed the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day at 44 Feast sites around the globe. Below are reports from many of those sites.

Kauai, HI

Aloha! The “Garden Isle” of Kauai, Hawaii was once again the near-millennial setting for more than 420 enthusiastic Feast-goers from across the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia. Services were held in the lovely Performing Arts Center of the Kauai Community College. We were privileged to have Mr. and Mrs. Roderick Meredith in Kauai for the entire Feast. Mr. Meredith gave four very powerful messages, spoke at the Seniors Luncheon and Deacons and Elders Luncheon, fellowshipped at length with the brethren, and participated in several activities. Messages during the Feast focused on various aspects of preparing for rulership in the Millennium and beyond and our incredible opportunity to serve for eternity. The weather was nearly perfect, but the attitudes and fellowship of the brethren were what really shone the most.

This beautiful tropical island provided warm breezes, inspiring ocean views, lush countryside and incredible inland mountain vistas. Not only did a spirit of peace and harmony permeate the brethren, but a zeal to go above and beyond in service was very noticeable. Regardless of the activity or need, we always had an abundance of cheerful, enthusiastic volunteers. And, in addition to the inspiring messages, wonderful fellowship and enjoyable activities, we were also blessed to have a baptism and an engagement during the Feast!



Organized activities included teen and singles mixers, luaus, cruises along the spectacular Na Pali coast, a family dance, and Family Day beach activities. Family Day began with a catered lunch, then young and young-at-heart partic-



ipated in sand castle sculpting, volleyball, various games and snorkeling in a protected cove with beautiful, multi-colored tropical fish. Many Feast-goers also enjoyed horseback riding, helicopter tours, hiking, and sightseeing with old and new friends between other organized activities. The Kauai 2009 Feast of Tabernacles will be long remembered as one of the best ever!

If you were not able to attend the Feast in Kauai this year, do not despair—we are planning to have it here again in 2011.

Mahalo,
—Jim Meredith and
Wyatt Ciesielka

Newport, OR

What makes the Feast in Newport, Oregon so spectacular? Is it the explosion of color as the sun meets the ocean at sundown and sunrise? Is it the power of the waves as they crash sky-

ward against the boulders off shore? Is it the charm of a working fishing village on a picturesque bay front? Is it the tranquility of the Pacific vista off each balcony? Is it the hope of seeing a whale breach? Maybe it's the wonderful assortment of unique restaurants, or the seaside shopping. Much more than those, it is the camaraderie at the resort where most of the activities occur. No one need be left out because of singleness, handicap or lack of transportation because so much takes place in the lovely surroundings of the Hallmark Resort. After breakfast at Georgie's restaurant, where every seat is taken by a Feast-goer, we go just down the hall to congregate outside the Salon for fellowship before services. Do your children want to fly 3-dimensional kites on the beach—it's right there. Do the sin-



gles want to hang out at a seaside bonfire—it's right there. Want to organize a sand volleyball game? You guessed it—it's there. Nearby you can visit 4 different lighthouses, golf 18 beautiful holes, ride horseback on the beach, go dune bugging, surf, take a marine cruise, deep sea fish—and the list goes on and on. A Newport highlight is the evening fellowship on the 'D Deck' where a fireplace flickers and brethren from the oldest to the youngest chat or play games before bed.

Many well-attended activities included a Family Day outing to the world class Oregon Aquarium where we

stopped to visit with friends and meet new ones as we enjoyed the exhibits. We were treated to animated poetry recitations, songs and, instrumentals for the Fun Show. One special treat was the fine display of arts and crafts produced by the brethren. Whether it is the teens' pool party, the family dinner dance, the Fun Show, various luncheons or evening fellowship gatherings, one feels the togetherness.



The locals remarked how great the weather was while we were there and God certainly blessed us with sunshine and beautiful cloudscapes.

The spiritual food was indeed a Feast focusing us on the vision of God's Kingdom and our future as priests. Messages reiterated our present mandate to warn our nations and the world of the tribulations ahead and our hope beyond. Sermons convicted us of what we must do to be there. Mr. Whitfield was with us for the first half of the Feast, Mr. Gilchrist and Mr. Way each spoke twice, and dedicated servant elders contributed to spiritual meals.

Could we ever thank God enough for His blessing of our calling, this huge family reunion, and second tithe, as well as all the other blessings He pours upon us?

—Diane Gilchrist

Prescott, AZ

Brethren from around the world gathered at the mile-high city of Prescott, Arizona for the 2009 Feast of Tabernacles. Beautiful blue skies and crisp cool air created an atmosphere of peace and tranquility while the local community provided a warm reception for Festival attendees. Many of the local businesses indicated they were pleasantly surprised by the courteous behavior demonstrated by the Church brethren. Services were conducted at the Prescott Inn and Suites, with many of the brethren lodging in the same fa-

cility. Adding to convenience, economy, and fellowship was a complete buffet-style breakfast served free of charge each morning. Over 360 registered attendees enjoyed inspiring messages of the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

The Festival activities began with a Singles Reception and Family Dinner Dance followed by a family tour to Flagstaff. A tour to the Grand Canyon created memories that will last a lifetime and Family Day participants enjoyed fun and fellowship at Prescott's Freedom Station, a local recreational facility. Many of the attendees boarded the Verde Canyon train for a 20-mile excursion through the Verde and Jerome Canyon, followed by a chuck wagon dinner and western entertainment, while others visited Sedona. The Prescott Festival site provided an opportunity for all family members to embrace the vision of "Tomorrow's World."

—Roger and Laura Bates

New Braunfels, TX

The hill country town of New Braunfels played host to 446 attendees who were thankful to be "Together in Texas," the theme that adorned the souvenir totes handed out to all households.

Special guests Mr. and Mrs. Rand Millich visited the first half, and Mr. Millich gave two sermons, titled "Why the Kingdom of God Will Last Forever" and "The Joy of Being in God's Family." Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ames came for the second half; Mr. Ames delivered a message at the Deacons and Elders Luncheon, and a Last Great Day sermon titled "Salvation for the World." Other sermons were "Can We Fix It?" and "The End of Loneliness" by Mr. Phil Sena, "Let Peace Begin with Me" and "Our Calling — A Pearl



of Great Price!" by Mr. James Sweat, and "How to Attain the Kingdom" by Mr. Ron McGowen.

A live video stream of each day's service was viewed by up to 38 additional households who were unable to attend the Feast. Many viewers expressed heartfelt appreciation to be able to share in the Festival in this unique way for the first time. One said the video stream was "truly an amazing and wondrous experience." Others were able to hear the live service through an audio connection.

Other highlights were the separate Men's, Women's and Family Bible Studies conducted by Mr. Sena. Using an interactive format, brethren were asked to find scriptures related to the question, "What does God expect of Christian men (and women and families, respectively)?" Discussion centered on what prevents us from fulfilling these expectations and how we can better meet these expectations. Many expressed regret that these discussions couldn't last longer.

During the Feast, pre-teens had creative fun at a Kid's Corner four times after services, teens and singles enjoyed separate mixers and activities, and seniors were treated to a delicious luncheon. In addition, the majority of attendees attended a free bowling activity, Family Day at a local resort, and a no-cost Last Great Day luncheon. On many levels, this year's Feast in Texas was truly a special and blessed celebration.

—Phil Sena

Wisconsin Dells, WI

Over four hundred brethren gathered to observe the Feast of Tabernacles in the beautiful Wisconsin Dells. We met for services each day in the spacious Wisconsin Dells Center, which amply provided for all of our meeting hall needs.

Sermon titles included: "When the Righteous Rule," "Utopia—An Impossible Dream?," "The Millennium and

the Restoration,” “Prepare to Rule—Qualities of Godly Leaders,” “The Tale of Two Kingdoms,” “Why Is God’s Kingdom Different from All Others?,” “Tomorrow’s Cities” and “The Meaning of the Last Great Day.” The sermonettes were also powerful and encouraging.

Activities at this year’s Feast were well organized, enjoyable, and well attended, and included teen and singles mixers and horseback riding, a scramble golf tournament, an afternoon of teen activities, the Deacons and Elders Luncheon, a Seniors Luncheon, Family Day, a formal dinner dance, and a Pirate’s Cove adventure golf outing.

The luncheons and mixers were held at the Chula Vista Resort in the highly acclaimed Kaminski Brothers Chop House overlooking the cool blue water of the Wisconsin River. Visiting speaker Dr. Douglas Winnail presented a message titled, “Take Heed to Your Ministry,” at the Deacons and Elders lunch. Young people ages 12–20 served the seniors at the Seniors Luncheon, which also included musical entertainment and a closing message presented by visiting speaker, Mr. Rand Millich, titled “The Still Syndrome.”

Approximately 235 attended a Wisconsin cookout and picnic at nearby Easton Lion’s Park for the Family Day activity. Buffalo burgers, elk burgers, beans, potato salad, chips, lemonade, locally grown apples, and freshly made fudge were just some of the items served for lunch. Following lunch a large number participated in a variety of outdoor games and activities.

The formal dinner dance began with family photos in front of a rustic fireplace. White-linen-covered chairs and tables, exquisite centerpieces, programs on miniature handmade birch-bark easels at each place setting, a fabulous buffet line, a wintery stage set

and backdrop, and background music greeted the arriving brethren. After dinner, the dance floor remained full throughout the evening! Everyone enjoyed outstanding mid-evening entertainment. Next door, children enjoyed an activity area complete with a buffet, games, a movie and popcorn.

God’s presence and blessing were obvious throughout the Feast. Although the weather was cool and rainy, God heard the prayers of His people and the rain ceased during the afternoon hours on all three afternoons in which outdoor activities had been planned! This spiritually uplifting Feast of Tabernacles will be one that we will not soon forget!

—Sheldon Monson

Branson, MO

The city of Branson, Missouri—America’s capital of family-friendly entertainment in the millennial Ozarks—served 825 people observing God’s Feast of Tabernacles this year.

Mr. and Mrs. Lambert Greer spent the beginning of the Feast with us and Dr. and Mrs. Douglas Winnail joined our ranks for the second half. Mr. Greer spoke powerfully on capturing the vision of God’s Kingdom and on the foundation of hope that God’s promises provide. Dr. Winnail helped all of us to see the importance of growing in leadership now so we can be ready to serve in God’s Kingdom, and the powerful Truth—unknown to so many—that God has given us concerning the Last Great Day. Other sermon topics included “Vision of the Kingdom,” “Vision and the Fear of God,” “Scenes from the Millennium,” and the “Joys of the Kingdom.” Many members com-

mented on the obvious inspiration behind the messages, Feast videos, and special music this year.

Outside of services, the brethren enjoyed the many attractions and opportunities available in Branson. Singles enjoyed a cruise and dinner show on the Branson Showboat Belle, while teens and their families had fun at a “Wii, Pizza, and Ice Cream” social. Two Bible Studies provided more opportunities to learn from God’s word.

Mr. Greer was the guest speaker at our Deacons and Elders Luncheon and everyone enjoyed an inspiring vocal solo by Mr. John White. The attendees at our Seniors Luncheon heard from Dr. Winnail and enjoyed the dulcet tones of Mr. Bill Oswald’s steel guitar.

Our Western-themed Family Day began with a Fun Show put on by members and their families and then moved on to a wonderful barbeque buffet. The “Visions of the Millennium” member art exhibit was a huge hit with more than 20 entries. After dinner the family dance began, featuring a variety of musical styles, including country, swing, salsa and big band, and the dance floor was busy all night! It was also a busy night for the popular “Old Time Photo” booth, which provided free photos of families and friends in western period costumes. With crafts and activities for little children as well, our Family Day was the highlight of the Feast for many.

Our thanks to the great God of Heaven who so abundantly showered us with His blessings this year in Branson, Missouri!

—Wallace Smith

Cobleskill, NY

This year, the Feast site at Cobleskill, NY was a happy highlight for more than 170 members. Most had never visited the rolling hills of upstate New York and were impressed by the beautiful fall colors of the patchwork of fields and forest blanketing this area. It truly was a millennial setting.



Beginning with Mr. Meredith's opening night message, we were educated in the details of how our present evil world will collapse and be replaced by a world of peace and harmony led by Jesus Christ Himself. On the First Day of the Feast, Mr. Jonathan McNair gave a message titled "The First Day of the Millennium." Dr. Jeff Fall, our guest speaker spoke about "The Best Job in the World." Mr. Joe Brown exhorted us to "Rejoice Before God," while Mr. Val Burgett explained "The Role Christians Will Play in the Kingdom." Mr. Charles Knowlton talked about "Lessons from Plowing" and our vision of the coming of God's Kingdom.



activities were rounded out by a trip to the Cooperstown Baseball Hall of Fame, where we saw the memorabilia from baseball's greatest heroes. Mr. Jonathan McNair highlighted the lesson on Friday evening with a Bible Study about "God's Hall of Fame."

The Feast at Cobleskill was an opportunity to learn, fellowship and grow in an intimate, millennial setting. When asked about returning to Cobleskill next year, the answer was almost unanimous... yes!

—Jonathan McNair

Sunset Beach, NC



Smiles, laughter, and warm fellowship were in abundance at Sea Trail Resort, as 1,067 brethren gathered for the 2009 Feast of Tabernacles in Sunset Beach, North Carolina. Not only do the balmy weather, picturesque beach, saw-grass dunes and tall Carolina pines contribute to a quiet and peaceful setting, but the area has won many awards as a "family-friendly" destination—an ideal locale for the Feast. Evangelist Richard Ames was the first guest speaker and encouraged Feast-goers to prepare for their roles as judges in the coming millennial reign of Christ. In his second sermon, he exhorted brethren to value their calling as royal priests in God's government. Dr. Jeffrey Fall, the second guest speaker, described the saints as doing "the best job in the world," serving humanity for a thousand years. On the Last Great Day, he explained that the release of Satan will be a final test of Satan's way of ruthless competition. In his sermons, festival coordinator Rod McNair encouraged Feast-goers to have a spiritual Feast and to see the Bible as living history to be taught to the next genera-

tion. Assistant coordinator Jack Lowe gave sermons on catching the vision, and ruling well in our family kingdoms now in preparation for ruling in the future. Assistant coordinator Carl Ders-tine spoke about God's people as "pilgrims on a mission."

Taking advantage of the site's proximity to the ocean and the adjoining Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway, several cruises were organized for Feast-goers, including a Dolphin Adventure cruise and a singles sunset dinner cruise aboard the "Jungle Princess" riverboat. Teens tested their mini-golf skills at "Tribal Island Tiki Adventure Golf" and also enjoyed an ice-cream social. Heavy rains on Family Day reduced our beach activity to a small gathering of hardy souls at the Ocean Isle Beach Community Center, as many others opted instead to tour the indoor Coastal Carolina Museum, which opened as a courtesy to the Church. Seniors enjoyed a special luncheon, and a well-attended banquet and dance featured live music provided by J.R. Wells and his band. Dr. Fall was the guest speaker at the Deacons and Elders Luncheon.

Brethren certainly let their light shine. On one occasion during the Feast, a local resident with car trouble reported "a dozen cars with green stickers stopped to offer help."

He was so impressed with the brethren's willingness to reach out and help that the next day he walked several miles to come to "check us out," and even volunteered to help

clean up and take down after the Last Great Day!

As the Feast concluded, many brethren expressed gratitude for the rich and fulfilling spiritual food provided over the eight-day period, culminating in Dr. Roderick C. Meredith's

The activities began with a teen pool party where our teens set a fine example of leadership, helping the younger children have a great time splashing in the indoor pool. The next activity was an on-site family bowling



afternoon. Young and old fellowshiped together as we cheered each other on. A trip to a local "corn-maze" for the children finished out that afternoon. More than 100 brethren were awed by the magnificent handiwork of God deep underground at the famous limestone Howe Caverns. Another favorite Feast activity was our "Fellowship Progressive Sampler," where members Intermingled and rotated throughout the afternoon to different refreshment locations. Fellowship was also a highlight at our "Mexican Fiesta" dinner-dance, as we enjoyed food and music from "south of the border." The



heartfelt exhortation on the Last Great Day to go “all out” to seek God. Sunset Beach 2009 was truly an inspiring and unforgettable Feast for all.

—Rod McNair

Red Deer, AB, Canada

Brethren from seven Canadian provinces and several American states observed the 2009 Feast of Tabernacles in Red Deer, Alberta. The atmosphere for the Feast was warm, friendly and enjoyable, despite cool temperatures and some light snow. Average attendance was 156 with a high of 181. Inspiring messages, joyful hymn singing and friendly fellowship every day prompted many sincere comments of appreciation for the encouragement received.

Activity highlights included a boat cruise on Sylvan Lake for the singles, the Family Day at Heritage Ranch complete with hay wagon rides and outdoor games, an enjoyable dinner dance and the Seniors Luncheon.

—Dale Trenerry

Orford, QC, Canada

One short expression is sufficient to summarize the 2009 Feast of Tabernacles at Mount Orford, Quebec: a joyful peace and calmness!

More than two hundred people enjoyed this bilingual site where every message was given and simultaneously translated into either French or English. All the messages were wonderfully inspired and orchestrated by our great God for our encouragement, giving us uplifting insight of the world to come and beyond. It was a marvelous voyage of discovery into the awesome future that the Almighty has in store for us and for all humanity! At the same time, we were strongly and regularly admonished to stay alert, to get ready, to really change and to accumulate oil in our lamps while we have opportunity.



God manifested His presence in many ways, especially by keeping sickness away from His camp. At the beginning of the Feast a number of people, including some in the ministry, were on the brink of having a kind of flu. All were anointed; the illness and the symptoms disappeared and everyone was able to enjoy the eight days!

Among the group activities, the Seniors Dinner and the ever popular dinner dance were the highlights of the Feast.

The “Behind the Work” DVD had a powerful and inspiring impact on the brethren. It was really an eye-opener for all of us, showing the great and sophisticated Work that God is accomplishing through a tiny but most dedicated and competent group of people that He has prepared and brought together at Headquarters.

—Yvon Brochu

Charlottetown, PEI, Canada

The beautiful Prince Edward Island was again host to the Living Church of God for 82 joyful members of the Living Church of God at the annual Feast of Tabernacles.

The warmth of the brethren matched the beauty of the North Country’s trees, which were arrayed in breathtaking fall colors. The island was at its best this year with its bright red soil and lovely green fields and the splendid agrarian landscape of farms, horses, sheep, cattle and with an occasional bald eagle flying overhead! All were a constant reminder of the soon-coming Millennium.

The warmth and fellowship of our Canadian brethren provided a marvelous spiritual uplift which was pres-

ent throughout the entire Festival and God’s presence was felt in every activity.

This year’s Seniors Luncheon, which our older and more seasoned members thoroughly enjoyed, was hosted by Mr. D w a i n Crisman of Dallas, Texas in the Library Room of the Holiday Inn Express, where this year’s Feast was held. During the luncheon Mr. and Mrs. Roland D’Eon were presented a gift in honor of their 60th wedding anniversary!

Mid-week, we enjoyed a “Sweet Sensations” ice cream treat which was followed by an excellent Bible Study by



M r . Michael Elertson, our festival coordinator. He compared Solomon’s physical

reign to Jesus Christ’s spiritual reign in the Millennium.

Mr. Gary Ehman and Mr. Winston Gosse were our guest speakers. This year’s theme was definitely “The Coming Utopia,” with all four ministers contributing sermons which dove-tailed together beautifully, clearly showing the inspiration of our God in providing what He intended His people to hear. The message was clear and concise and much appreciated by those present.

On the Last Great Day we were reminded that all who have ever lived will finally get their chance to be taught God’s plan of salvation and be given the opportunity to either accept or reject their calling!

—Jim Arnaldo

Llangolen, Wales, U.K.

Some 220 Feast-goers from the UK, Ireland, Europe, U.S.A., Canada, Australia and New Zealand gathered to

keep the Feast in this idyllic Welsh town that straddles the bubbling waters of the River Dee. The breathtakingly beautiful scenery of the area provided a fitting location in which to anticipate the beauty, peace and tranquility of Tomorrow's World.



Services were conducted at the Bryn Howel Hotel, where we had exclusive use of the facilities, and we heard messages from an international array of ministers. Michael Gill, from Australia, encouraged us to “Grasp the Vision” and to look forward to “Festive Happiness Forever.” Feast Coordinator and English minister John Meakin provided a context for Christ’s millennial reign in “The Fifth Kingdom,” and highlighted the importance of “The Book of Life.” Northern Ireland minister, John Murphy, showed us the “Link between Faith and Love.” Visiting from the United States, Davy Crockett outlined the curses to be lifted in the “Times of Refreshing,” Gene Hilgenberg described the “Characteristics of a Great Teacher,” David Wakefield reassured us about the “Certainties of the Kingdom,” Ed Breaux focused our minds on “Lessons Learned at the Feast,” and, in “Change Has Come,” Mike Germano focused on the personal changes needed now and in the future. He also gave us a fascinating and informative Bible Study on “Education and Living University.”

Activities included outings to Conwy Castle, Thomas Telford’s Aqueduct over the River Dee, and Ironbridge, the acknowledged

birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. There were also visits to historic Chirk and Powis Castles, a scenic ride on a steam train, a canal boat trip over the Aqueduct, hikes and activities at the local sports center, buffet meals, dances, and an entertainment evening. A major highlight was the sumptuous medieval banquet at Ruthin Castle Hotel, complete with entertainment and beautiful Welsh music.

The Feast in Wales will long be remembered for its stirring messages and the warmth, unity and excitement that permeated our fellowship throughout the week.

—John and Lynne Meakin

Forges-les-Eaux, France

The pretty town of Forges-les-Eaux in Normandy is where God brought His children to celebrate His Feast this year. Ministers came from Canada, England, France, America and Belgium, and the overriding theme was the same—God seeks unity among His children now, because this is how it will be during the Millennium and throughout eternity. Mr. Apartian, pioneer of God’s Work in many of the French-speaking countries of the world, welcomed everyone, and especially the Belgian brethren, who had come to celebrate the Feast with us for the first



time in the Living Church of God. The sermons were both exciting and moving. Mr. Rick Stafford’s sermon titled “A Shepherd Heart,” had many in tears. Mr. Apartian spoke about the danger of pride in a Christian. Mr. Lardé encouraged the brethren not to doubt God’s promises

of eternal life. Mr. Rees Ellis explained the wonderful subject of the Book of Life. Mr. Jacques Secours taught the brethren how to prepare now to be leaders in God’s Kingdom, and Mr. Roland Lecocq asked, “Will there be an end to this age of Satan?” The brethren enjoyed eating together in the resort’s three large connected dining rooms, and dishes from the Normandy area were served with local wines. On tours to nearby ancient Normandy family farms, the brethren tasted Neufchatel cheese and exotic flavors of cider. The highlight excursion for many was the trip to a nearby equestrian facility where brethren were enthralled at the stunts performed by horses and riders. Evening activities included Russian dancers performing to

traditional music and ballroom dancing performed by couples in traditional formal dress. During the Feast, four baptisms were performed and Feast-goers joyfully welcomed the new members, and Mr. Eric Boyer from the Paris congregation was ordained a deacon by Mr. Apartian. This was a truly wonderful Feast and many members are already making plans to attend next year’s Feast in France.

—John Laggar and Dibar Apartian

Montego Bay, Jamaica

Over 250 brethren from the United States, Canada and Trinidad and Tobago joined the local Jamaican brethren to celebrate the Feast at the Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort in Montego Bay. This city, located on our island’s north coast, is Jamaica’s premier tourist destination and is dubbed the “Friendly City.” The messages were powerful, uplifting, positive and encouraging. The love, warmth, camaraderie and fellowship evident at our first Feast of Tabernacles in Jamaica four years ago continued and were reflected in excellent attendance at the three family activities: a Family Cook-out and Fun



Day, a Night of Biblical Presentations and a Musical Extravaganza and Talent Show. Other activities included a Teens and Singles Mingle, Seniors Luncheon, a Spokesman's Club meeting and a "hymn sing" on the eve of the Last Great Day. The fifth day was designated a "tour day" and the worship service started earlier to allow more time to visit local attractions.



Our visiting brethren commented on the warmth, friendliness, love and hospitality of the Jamaican brethren and the beauty of the location. All seemed spiritually rejuvenated to face the challenges of the year ahead as we look forward to the reality the Feast pictures.

—Lascelles Fraser

Taupo, New Zealand

Taupo, on the central plateau of New Zealand's North Island, hosted about 110 Living Church of God Feast-goers this year. Kiwis were joined by members from Australia, the U.S.A., Canada and Jersey, one of the Channel Isles. This was the eighth time we have observed God's Feast of Tabernacles in Taupo. It is beautifully sited with lake and mountain vistas and fine amenities. This year surrounding hills and mountains received a blanket of fresh snow. Spirits were high and there was much fellowshiping and making of friends.



Our visiting minister was Mr. Bill Whitaker of South Carolina, who preached a series of inspiring sermons. He spoke of the folly of human attempts to achieve utopia and pointed to the true utopia which Christ will bring. We learned of the timeless cry of humans, "Hosannah, Save Us We Pray!" Also, using video to illustrate his ser-

mon, he inspired us with the promise that the faithful will inherit the universe. We enjoyed the "Behind the Work" film, learning of the detailed processes and skills involved in making the *Tomorrow's World* programme. It's a privilege to support this Work.

Another highlight of the Feast was the baptism of Carlo Rhode in front of many witnesses during the young people's evening early in the Feast. I spoke briefly to the group explaining that repentance and baptism is the vital first step of a Christian's life which, if we remain faithful, will lead to eternal life.

Many of us enjoyed a visit to a lion park and trout springs in Rotorua. Seniors enjoyed a Subway-Style lunch and played indoor bowls. Children took fly-casting lessons and each had success in catching trout for their family's table. Young adults enjoyed a fine silver-service dining experience at a top restaurant. A few were towed aloft in a sailplane and were able to ride the thermals while enjoying panoramic views of Lake Taupo and mountains to the south.

It was evident that God had blessed us throughout the past year. Members were moved to respond with generous offerings. We delighted in the spiritual food provided to us and we enjoyed the many opportunities to fellowship together as a unified family.

—Kinnear Penman

Coffs Harbour, Australia

For the first time, Coffs Harbour in New South Wales was the site for 225 of God's people in the Living Church of God to assemble for the 2009 Feast of Taber-

nacles. Situated by the Pacific Ocean, it was a truly millennial setting. The Australasian Regional Director, Evangelist Bruce Tyler, delivered three sermons: one encouraged us to rejoice at the Feast and at all times, another explained the Government of God and how it relates to us, and his final one exhorted us to rule our personal lives by using our time wisely and seeking God's Kingdom. Mr. Rod King from the United Kingdom added his own brand of Australian humour to his messages and brought to us his unique perspective on Europe as well as insights into the taping of the *Tomorrow's World* program. His messages were: "Triumph and Rejoicing in God's Kingdom," "I have waited for your salvation O Lord," and "Life! The Last Great Day." Dayrell Tanner spoke about "Past, Present and Future Heroes" and Rob Tyler exhorted us to "Obey God and Enter His Rest."

The weather throughout was perfect. Some much-needed rain at the start washed the haze from the atmosphere and then we had beautiful blue skies with occasional refreshing breezes. The senior members enjoyed a luncheon and lawn bowls while the young in heart among us went ice-skating, nine pin bowling, tobogganing, water sliding as well as played cricket and other ball games. A very energetic traditional Aussie Bush Dance was fun for all ages, the little children delighting in the action along with the adults. The Talent and Fun Show was just great and there was much laughter as our emcee, Garry Walz, introduced the acts with his dry humour.

Feast-goers unanimously agreed that Coffs Harbour was indeed a Feast that was blessed by God and that it truly was the best Feast that they had observed. Our first-timers were overwhelmed with everything—the inspiring messages, the activities, and the warm fellowship and friendship amongst brethren of like mind. Everyone re-



turned home with fully charged spiritual batteries, eager to meet again at God's Holy Feast, next Sabbath and next year.

—Dayrell Tanner

Induruwa, Sri Lanka

God called His little flock in Sri Lanka to keep the Feast of Tabernacles at the Induruwa Beach Resort Hotel, 67 kilometers (42 miles) south of Colombo, the country's capital. They were joined by families from the United States and from Australia. Mr. Zig Svalbe (with his wife Jennifer), pastor of Sri Lanka, was the minister-in-attendance.



From the Opening Night sermon delivered by Dr. Roderick C. Meredith, all the sermons during the Feast were profoundly inspiring and powerfully presented to strengthen and refresh the brethren spiritually. Of special note was Mr. Richard Ames' "Our Calling as Priests, Kings and Judges." The Colombo brethren and their guests were also powerfully motivated by the "Behind the Work" DVD that highlighted the behind-the-scenes activities at Headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina.



Special music was provided by Kuma de Silva and on the Last Great Day the senior members of the congregation formed a choir to sing "Be Not Afraid."

Sri Lankans can't be kept away from cricket and a match was played by two teams, one team led by Australian Colin Standing and the other by Ray Pereira. And, of course, the Sri Lankan side won—by one run. That was great good fun.

The Family Day activities led by Ms. Swarna Williams and her team of young helpers were not only hilarious but a roaring success. The Senior Citizens Luncheon was hosted by Mr. and

Mrs. Svalbe, and the seniors were well served by the attentive and courteous youth at a particularly nice corner of the restaurant with a panoramic view of two bays, warm blue sea and golden sand, prompting the comment that this was paradise indeed. The good music, dancing and fun of the Family Dance was thoroughly enjoyed by young and old alike. The finale to Feast activities was the Talent Show, a scintillating blend of dance, drama, poetry recitals, singing and music that showcased both Sri Lankan and

Australian talent. The curtain was brought down by a beautiful and moving rendition of "So Long, Farewell" from "The Sound of Music" performed by the children of the congregation.

The Last Great Day wound up a truly encouraging eight days of powerful messages, close fellowship and interaction. The courtesy of the hotel staff in all departments was appreciated and they invited our patronage again saying that we were the best behaved guests they had in one whole year!

—J.B. Miller

Glentana, South Africa

Despite a severe drought in the area, Glentana was as beautiful as ever and hosted some 130 brethren from South Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe, the U.K. and the United States. As usual, almost all the brethren stayed in the small village, which is centrally located in the Garden Route between the towns of George and Mossel Bay.

Sermons and sermonettes gave practical and spiritual pointers on a variety of subjects, including work ethic, the youth and Tomorrow's World, angels and how the Millennium is reflected in the Sabbath rest. The guest speakers for the Feast were Mr. Karl Beyersdorfer and Dr. Donald Roach, who both contributed richly to the spiritual upliftment at the Feast. On both the first and the last days of the Feast, combined lunches were held, as is the tradition—with everybody contributing as they were able. Tables were set under the trees next to the hall, with the sound of birds and the ocean waves in the background, a truly Millennial setting.

The traditional Family Day barbeque was supplemented by many activities that challenged the mind, memory and physical abilities. New to the activities this year were a tug-of-war that involved even the very young ones and an "Amazing FOT Race" for teens and their parents. Other activities that brethren participated in as families or groups of friends included treetop gliding, elephant riding, a boat trip and lots of fellowshiping. The visiting Roach sisters complemented the piano with the sounds of violins, which added another dimension to the worship service and was greatly appreciated by everybody. Three choirs sang to edify the congregation: the Lesotho and Kimberley choir, the Swazi choir and the Festival 2009 choir. It was sad to see everyone go home, but the promise remains that next year will be even better!

—Thea Wallace

Barbados



The Barbados Beach Club was the location for 120 joyful brethren to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. The warmth of the island brethren was evident throughout the Feast in their preparations and good fellowship. Services were characterized by

enthusiastic singing and strong messages in the filled hall. The ministry present included Dr. Scott Winnail, Mr. Charles Ogwyn, Festival Coordinator Mr. Dexter Wakefield, Mr. Clyde Skeete of Barbados and Mr. Barry Walker from Canada.

There was a full schedule of activities featuring a submarine dive on local reefs, a sailing cruise to a bay where the brethren could swim with sea turtles, a Family Day featuring island food and cricket, and a Bajan BBQ dinner.



Services were held in an area that overlooked the brilliant blue waters of the south coast of Barbados. The speakers in services couldn't help but note that soon, "...the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). If the seas at Barbados are any indication, it will be beautiful knowledge indeed.

—Dexter Wakefield

Baguio City, Philippines

Despite the aftermath of Typhoon Ketsana (locally called Ondoy) the brethren started the Feast of Tabernacles with optimism and ended it with great joy. Through the national and personal trials and tests leading up to the Feast and even when a second typhoon Melor (local name Parma) hit the Feast site, the hope and the vision for Tomorrow's World was felt more profoundly at God's festival, reminding us of Christ's soon-coming Kingdom.

Most of the brethren arrived at Baguio Teachers Camp on October 2, 2009 at the break of dawn. They were greeted by cool weather and picturesque mountain scenery in complete contrast to the urban sprawl many of the brethren are used to seeing. The early rays of the shy sun touched on



lofty pine trees, brilliant flowers in full bloom and the outstanding landscapes of the mountain ranges bringing color to the Feast site. As is customary in the Philippines, families and single brethren shared cottages and rooms

that extended fellowship and camaraderie. The warmth and fellowship of the 276 Feast-goers made the Feast even more enjoyable and extraordinary. This number

includes guests from the United States, South Africa, Australia, Japan and China who came to keep the Feast in the Summer Capital of the Philippines. The Filipino brethren included 17 video groups from the archipelago.

The activities began Monday afternoon after services with the children's party, where various games and fun-filled activities bonded the new generation together and introduced them to one another. Simultaneously, the youth and singles activity challenged the participants as they matched the flags with the Feast sites

on the map and answered Biblical questions in an indoor obstacle course. In the evening, a combined get-acquainted party, dance and video-group gathering brought all the brethren closer together. Tuesday afternoon held sports activities (basketball and volleyball) and festival show rehearsals followed in the evening. A second rehearsal was held Wednesday afternoon, following a youth Feast

program to help the youth set their goals and priorities in life. The next day, lead men and women and seniors enjoyed a banquet in appreciation for their hard work and dedication in the

service of God. In the evening was the much-awaited Festival Show. Come Friday, the children had a Bible Study and a viewing of various Bible heroes in short movie clips followed by a fellowship entitled "Goat Together 2" where goat meat was served along with a repeat performance of the highlights of the Festival Show.

As it turned out, the fellowship lasted beyond the Last Great Day because the main routes leading out from Baguio City were impassable due to the typhoon's devastation. The brethren continued together, rejoicing and thankful for the protection and guidance God gave to the Feast-goers. An ice cream and dance party encouraged everyone. The brethren received another blessing when the Teachers Camp opted not to charge a single centavo for the extended lodging. Though going back home proved to be an ordeal with a 10-hour trip through detours and re-routes, everyone arrived safely with



more steadfast faith amidst physical and spiritual calamities. It was indeed another Feast to treasure!

—Jahra Roxas

Davao, Philippines

The phrase "Come and let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord" became common, as 88 enthusiastic and faithful Feast-goers kept the Festival for the second consecutive year at Hope Mountain, Ulas, Davao City. With blossoming fruit trees, flowers and grasses, the site was apt for Bible study, meditation, fellowshiping and also games. The brethren enjoyed the scenery overlooking the buildings, houses and trees afar off. Fine weather throughout the Feast added to the joyous celebration of thanksgiving.

Brethren were nourished with spiritual and physical meat. The opening night message of Dr. Roderick Meredith fed the brethren with the purpose

of the feast, and with renewed hope of salvation. The first half of the Feast was highlighted with live sermons from Mr. Gaylyn Bonjour, guest minister from Headquarters. He reiterated the purpose of the Festival and that it is celebrated as both spiritual and physical. Mr. Bonjour also emphasized the keys to the Kingdom of God and that God's people should strive towards perfection.

Mr. Felipe Casing, festival coordinator, stressed the meaning of the Feast by showing the significance of dwelling in booths for eight days. It is a time for families to serve, study and have fun together. Likewise, Mr. Johnny Bolences, assistant festival coordinator, expounded the significance of the Kingdom of God to be set up on earth.

Another highlight was the visit of another guest minister, Mr. Gideon Benitez, whose messages inspired the brethren to be strong and courageous towards God's Kingdom.

On the physical side, brethren demonstrated love, service and cooperation in attending various activities. The Seniors activity was held with Mr. and Mrs. Bonjour in attendance. Singles had an open forum, where topics about baptism, overcoming the world and the purpose in attending God's Festivals were discussed, and answered by the ministers. Family night showed the brethren's talents, and for the first time the ladies had a get-together party. Other activities included a youth and children's activity, a beach outing, a ministerial dinner, a sports day and a farewell function, all of which the brethren enjoyed immensely.

This hilly area of Hope Mountain, where the brethren kept the Festival this year, reminded the Feast attendees

of the time when all mankind will keep the Feast in Jerusalem, when the Government of God is installed on earth, and the people will really say, "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

—Felipe Casing

Maranding, Philippines



Beautiful weather and peaceful and orderly conditions in the local community enhanced the 2009 Feast of Tabernacles in Maranding. The business community in this

progressive city has continuously developed and increased the number of accommodations in the area. Banking institutions, telephone systems, internet cafés, supermarkets and Western Union money transfer agencies on-line are all now available in Maranding.

On the first day of the Feast, there were 135 Filipino brethren in attendance. Many brethren commented that the messages all contributed to each individual's spiritual and material growth. Our visiting minister, Mr. Benito Parbo, delivered two sermons entitled "God is Calling Us" and "Be Prepared for the Judgment Day," while Mr. Freddie Benitez delivered three sermons

entitled, "The Future and a Hope," "None of the Diseases—Utopia, the Impossible Dream?" and "To Overcome." They were all inspiring and encouraging and it was noted that the messages were truly

"meat in due season." Videos on "Behind the Work" and "The Big Picture" opened the minds and the perspective of the brethren to the fact that the

Work is being done, not only in Maranding or in the Philippines, but is being spread to the whole world—that this Gospel shall be preached to all the world as a witness.

During the luncheons, the brethren ate to the full, and enjoyed delicious foods and delicacies. Social and physical activities were well attended and enjoyed and the enthusiastic brethren were very grateful for the blessings of the Feast of Tabernacles.

—Gideon Q. Benitez

Don Carlos, Philippines

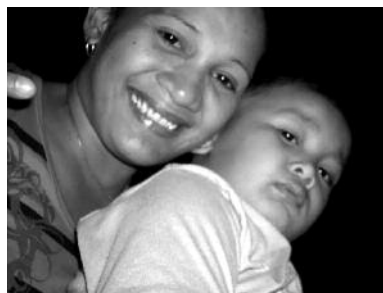
Don Carlos, Bukidnon hosted the 2009 Feast of Tabernacles for central Mindanao. Most of the brethren were lodged in cottages and houses owned by Church members adjacent to the Church's own building where services were held. All of the accommodations were free of charge.

Approximately 140 members attended the Feast there, which was the highest attendance we have ever had at the Don Carlos site. The messages were inspiring and there were plentiful delicious foods in due season. Everyone enjoyed and was inspired by Mr. Meredith's messages during the opening

night and on the Last Great Day

During the Feast, Mr. Freddie Benitez gave three sermons: "Our Calling as Kings, Priests, and Judges," "The Future and a Hope," and "Who's Who in God's Kingdom." Mr. and Mrs. Arendain attended the first half of the Feast with us and he gave one sermonette, "It is More Blessed to Give Than to Receive" and a sermon, "Unity of the Days/ Time of Dedication."

Mr. Gideon Benitez arrived from Maranding and gave two sermons, "Be strong and of Good Courage" and "Who Are Written in the Book of Life." Mr. Casing and family arrived from Davao on Thursday, and he de-



livered three messages, “It’s Time for Family,” “Peace Maker,” and “From Here to Eternity.” Mr. and Mrs. Parbo arrived also from Maranding and he gave two sermonettes, “Time of Peace” and “Food in My House”

The singles and youth activity was very successful. Activities such as “a trip to Jerusalem,” an apple-eating contest and dancing added color to an enjoyable evening. We all had fun playing games, basketball and volleyball on Sunday and there was a table tennis competition. On the evening of the seniors’ and widows’ night, Mr. and Mrs. Freddie Benitez gave awards to the senior citizens, especially to the oldest woman member attending, Mrs. Pastora Omadlao at the wonderful age of 89! The Leaders Fellowship on Tuesday evening was held at the A and G Resort and Restaurant, where delicious foods were served. Mr. Gideon Benitez spoke on the importance and the role of a leader in the Church.

We also rejoiced in three baptisms on October 2 at Matanug Spring Resort, all from Mr. Redoble’s family.

—*Jongkoy Benitez*

Orap, Vanuatu

Sixty-seven of God’s people attended the Feast in Orap, including two who came from the distant Banks Islands to the north. We all had a profitable and enjoyable Feast of Tabernacles, meeting across the river from the village of Orap where most of us live.

We experienced a great blessing on the first day when, just before the service, God blessed us with heavy rain. This gave us enough clean drinking water for the Feast, filling our almost-empty tank. Then, for the rest of the Feast right through until the afternoon of the Last Great Day, we were blessed with good sunshine which enabled us to enjoy all the programmed activities such as sports, a picnic, music night, fun show and to take care of the laundry, etc. Our land had provided us with an abundance of

food, which satisfied the physical appetites of all festival attendees.

On top of these physical blessings spiritual food gave even more satisfaction. The coming Kingdom of God and responsibility of members to prepare to serve as kings and priests were the themes of Headquarters sermons, which we viewed via DVDs. Local speakers offered encouraging messages and a spirit of love and friendship motivated everyone. Especially encouraged were some who were attending their very first Feast. No one was lonely and everyone felt part of the family of God and we all look forward to the next Feast.

—*Jerry Sam*

Martinique

The 2009 Feast of Tabernacles was held in Saint-Luce, Martinique, a picturesque fishing port and a very popular seaside resort, thanks to its 13 kilometers of beaches. We benefited from unseasonably warm tropical weather, which was especially enjoyed by our international visitors. Some 40 Feast-goers stayed at the Caribia hotel, located about 100 meters from the beach. Feast services were held at a second establishment, hotel Les Amandiers, across from Caribia. A third nearby hotel, Amyris, provided dining facilities so we could all partake of a bountiful buffet on the Holy Days.

The children enjoyed the amenities at all three chain establishments!

This year we particularly appreciated a palette of sermonette speakers with diverse accents who covered subjects appropriate to the Feast: a future world of peace, the importance of prayer, the functions of the spiritual and physical family, our earthly and spiritual pilgrimage, our Calling and the meaning of our offerings and the Blessing of the Little Children. Most of the spiritual dishes were presented to

us by ministers from Headquarters, and dubbed into French by Mr. Brochu, minister in Quebec City. We heard one live sermon on intelligence, presented by Dr. Wilner Pierre of Charlotte, and a Bible Study on the apostasy, presented by Mr. Jean Matte of Quebec. Mr. and Mrs. Matte became grandparents for the first time during the Feast!

Feast activities were especially designed for our international visitors, who were able to appreciate the mangrove (sanctuary of life in the tropics) and a dinner barbecue on an islet under the soft light of a full moon. An excursion to the city of Saint-Pierre was “a must,” while another small group went to the magnificent botanical garden of Balata. Another excursion was organized to visit the Slaves’ Savanna. An earthquake education activity was also part of the schedule.

It was a full week for all Feast-goers who did their best to make this Feast as uplifting as possible, both physically and spiritually. We hope our visitors left with a little of Martinique’s sunshine and full of happy memories of our island and its people. Those of us in Martinique will cherish the good times that we spent together, which make us long more urgently for Tomorrow’s World.

—*Françoise Metayer*



El Cusco, Peru

Sixty-five brethren from Peru, the U.S.A. and Puerto Rico celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in the Imperial city of El Cusco, a city set 11,150 feet above sea level. This was the first year we had visitors from overseas.

We enjoyed wonderful sunny days. Activities included a talent night and trips to the Inca ruins of Machupicchu, Sacsayhuamán and Quenko, sites of amazing human engineering

During these eight days brethren conversed about the Work of God in the end

times and we enjoyed group discussions focused on the youth and the family.

We had a great Feast filled with unity and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. God instructs us how to be happy and although the distance between brethren is far, we rejoice in knowing of the coming Kingdom of God.

—Eden Hurtado

Bayu, Indonesia

After so many days hearing media reports of earthquakes and the victims, the Feast of Tabernacles was indeed a great relief for every one of us. There were 21 keeping the Feast in Bayu for the second time there. We love the place very much. Batu is a popular resort city, with scenic hills and surrounding mountains, fresh cool air and natural products of fruits and vegetables. Located at 850 meters above sea level, Batu city is much cooler and fresher than any nearby cities. The temperature ranges from 17C to 23C degrees during the night, and from 27 to 30 degrees during the day.



Sermons given during the Feast have given us a great spiritual strength to move forward. A glimpse of Tomorrow's World pictured in the sermons has made us realize even more how we have to hold fast to the Truth and maintain courage and diligence in order to enter the Kingdom. The atmosphere of togetherness, fellowship, and sharing are also important factors to encourage us.

We had more children this year, five, counting our son, Clement, who was born in January. Some activities were specifically designed for children, including the outing to the zoo.

Overall, it was another successful Feast, and we have all agreed that eight days is not enough for us. Hence, we are looking forward to welcoming the coming Kingdom of God when we can be together forever even with Jesus Christ and God the Father Himself.

—Arius Nusantara

Penang Island, Malaysia

The 2009 Feast of Tabernacles in Malaysia was held at the Tanjung Bungah Beach Hotel in Penang Island. A total of ninety-five people, comprising 76 locals and 19 visitors from Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Philippines and Indonesia assembled together to observe the last two annual Festivals of God. This year, we were privileged to meet Mr. and Mrs. Graeme Hemphill from Sydney, Australia, as our visiting minister.



Many members commented on and appreciated the quality of the sermons and sermonettes. Uplifting topics were covered during the entire duration of the Festival, providing the whole congregation with hearty and balanced spiritual nourishment.

This year also saw new faces presenting special music during the services in addition to the power-packed performances of the Festival Choir. The music proved to be a wholesome treat for the congregation. Three combined luncheons and a barbecue were organized at the Festival this year, providing a wonderful opportunity for all in attendance to share meals together while fellowshiping.

Mr. Moses conducted two baptisms at the swimming pool of the hotel this year. After the ceremony and the laying on of hands, brethren joyfully welcomed the new members of the family of God.

The youth enjoyed going bowling and beach volleyball and games brought the Church together with wholesome joy. A special treat this year

was the speech club, where eight members were given specific assignments touching on the “Nine fruits of the spirit.” Mr. Hemphill gave an overall evaluation after each speaker. Other activities included a “family seminar” conducted by Mr. Moses. The highlight of the activities was the traditional Talent Show, which fascinated the audience as children, youth and adults showed many gifts and skills in the musical performances and Biblical sketches that were presented.

Truly it was another “Wonderful and Best Feast Ever” to go down in our Church history.

—Joseph Isaac and Rajan Moses

Huatusco, Mexico

The brethren celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in Huatusco, Veracruz, Mexico, a place where God has opened a door for several years. Huatusco is a quiet place far away from noise and surrounded by vegetation. This year the weather was pleasant and gave us the opportunity to enjoy outdoor activities such as the children's fiesta, river rafting, a trip to the city of Jalapa and a bonfire. The Mexican dance with live music was incredible because the brethren left their aches and pains at the dance floor! We also enjoyed a Talent Night, and a Bible Marathon.



The fellowship was special and brethren had the opportunity of having two meals together. Services were enlightening for our spiritual growth.

May God help us to understand His purpose and plan pictured in these last two Feasts of His calendar.

—Gabriel Ortega

Panajachel, Guatemala

Panajachel is one of the most beautiful places of the world, a tourist city located on the shores of Lake Atitlan surrounded by majestic volcanoes. This was the second year we celebrated the Feast here and we thank God for such a great blessing.

Brethren from Guatemala, Canada, Costa Rica, United States, Mexico and Puerto Rico were present to hear Messrs. Antonio Mora, George Schaubeck and Sergio Roca. Through sermonettes and sermons, they instructed, exhorted, and motivated us to keep sight of God’s plan and purpose and to take advantage of the opportunity He offers to be part of His family and to rule with Jesus Christ, King of kings in His coming Kingdom (Matthew 6:33).

We enjoyed excellent activities for the whole family, strengthening ties of love between brethren of different countries and at the same time appreciating the beauty of God’s creation during our several boat trips to visit Mayan ruins in Guatemala.

During the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day we received appreciative comments from the brethren that visited us, showing gratitude to God for the many blessings He gave us in this Feast site. Closing the Feast, the brethren left with faith and trust, looking forward to another Feast cycle. Let us remain faithful to Jesus Christ our High Priest.



—Rocael Ralda

Bahia Blanca, Argentina

The 2009 Feast of Tabernacles in Argentina was held at Sierra de la Ven-

tana next to the famous Argentinean Pampa. God provided a place of natural beauty and millennial blessing that pictures, in its abundant production, the desire of God the Father and Jesus Christ our King to give gifts to mankind. Fifty-

eight brethren enjoyed services and group activities together. The tradition of eating the three meals together gave us the opportunity for fellowship with

brethren from the United States, New Zealand, Mexico, Argentina and Puerto Rico. Colder weather than usual was not an obstacle to the warmth of the Holy Spirit in God’s people nor to the learning of lessons to last for eternity. We enjoyed spectacular views on a hike, a foretaste of the coming glory to this land and to all peoples in the imminent Kingdom of God.

eight brethren enjoyed services and group activities together. The tradition of eating the three meals together gave us the opportunity for fellowship with



—Estela Bravo

Armenia, Colombia

This year the Feast in Colombia was celebrated once again in Armenia, Colombia’s coffee producing region. The Hotel Portal del Sol is a beautiful and peaceful place that contributes to fellowship and unity of the brethren. The hotel’s excellent service was only surpassed by the brethren’s attitude of pleasing others above themselves.

We thank God for allowing us to know the true purpose and meaning of His Feast by giving us messages that lead us in His knowledge and fill us with motivation and faith to continue in this way. Every day at sunset the book of Deuteronomy was read, reminding us of the laws of God that we need to practice every day of our lives.



Mr. Mario Hernandez performed the wedding of local elder Armando Orrego to Juliana Pastrana—a beautiful occasion that added to the joy among the attendees.

The teamwork throughout the Feast was harmonious, coordinated and organized because God’s Spirit was abundant in our hearts.

—Cristian Orrego

Tobago

The Feast of Tabernacles 2009 began in Tobago with a total of 115 brethren comfortably seated in Trimm’s Meeting Hall. Before and after the service, the hall was electrified with the pulsating sound of brethren experiencing wonderful fellowship. Sermons throughout the Feast discussed “God’s Power” and other inspiring topics.

Activities included a youth activity at Pigeon Point Beach, a tour of Tobago, a glass-bottom boat tour of the Buccoo Reef, an evening of fun at Canoe Bay, and a talent show. A jubilant time was experienced by everyone.

—Fitzroy Greeman

El Quisco, Chile

For the second year 25 Chilean brethren celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in the oceanfront resort of Puertas del Sol located about 80 miles from Santiago.

During the Feast we had excellent messages of joy, Christian living and prophecy. Services were uplifting with special music by the Chilean choir.

Among the activities we had a children’s fiesta, a champagne celebration for two couples celebrating anniversaries, and a meal to welcome the newly wed couple, Armando and Juliana Orrego. The weather was wonderful with sunny days and comfortable temperatures. Also the brethren enjoyed the Chilean beaches.

We thank the Eternal for His wonderful Feasts, His protection and His blessings.

—Sergio Carvajal Arellano

A Question of Attitude*(Continued from page 6)*

others, then you are manifesting a “holier-than-thou” attitude.

Examine yourself! Do you think of yourself as better than others—a little more Christian? When you are proven right and others are shown to be wrong about something, do you feel superior to them?

“Whoever desires to be first among you,” said Christ, “let him be your slave” (Matthew 20:27).

The book of Proverbs gives us many admonitions regarding vanity, conceit and self-righteousness. For instance, we read in Proverbs 26:12 “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” Or, “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts” (Proverbs 21:2).

In other words, you might think that you have more going for you than

someone else. You might consider yourself a better person—perhaps a more valuable helper. But whatever your achievements—however great they may be—if you have conceit in your heart, you are in the wrong attitude. And unless you repent of that wrong attitude with all your heart, you will never enter the Kingdom of God.

“Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips” (Proverbs 27:2).

Read the parable Christ gave about the prayers of a publican and a Pharisee. The Pharisee, disdaining the publican next to him, had nothing but good to say about his own attitude, his praiseworthy deeds and willingness to sacrifice. By contrast, the publican—realizing how insignificant he was before God—would not even raise his eyes while praying (Luke 18:9–14). God accepted the publican and not the Pharisee!

Are you a Pharisee or a publican? Where is your greatness? What do

you have that you have not received from God? Every blessing comes from God. All the glory is His (2 Corinthians 10:17–18).

If you want to be a Christian after God’s own heart, then you must get rid of conceit and boastfulness. You must serve in all humility, counting others better than yourself (Philippians 2:3). You must help without seeking glory.

God is not a respecter of persons. He loves us all and wants us all to be great. But remember: the greatest among you is the humblest of all—and the servant of all!

In this area, as well as in the case of every one of God’s commandments, we need to strive mightily to have the right attitudes pleasing to God.

Start the change now—do not put it off! Your attitude is the key to making you a Christian after God’s own heart—and will unlock before you the door to the Kingdom of God! ■

The Ten Virgins*(Continued from page 9)*

God’s Kingdom on another Christian’s effort. We must make the investment and effort ourselves!

Ready or Not?

The final lesson of the parable has to do with our state of readiness when Jesus returns. Those who are ready will be invited to take part in the wedding. Those who are not ready will *miss out*, even though they *hoped* to be included in the celebrations! How do we prepare for Christ’s return? Scripture states that the bride, preparing for the wedding supper, “made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7–9). She grew in her understanding of the Truth, learned to live by every word of God, built strong and solid Christian character, overcame trials, remained faithful and zealously endured to the end. She was ready when the bridegroom came. Those who follow this example will be invited into the wedding, and then *the door will be shut*.

Others who look forward to the return of Christ, and desire to attend the wedding—but are caught unprepared—are *not necessarily evil people*. They may simply be doing what *they think* is right, including “good works” (Matthew

7:21–23), but *not* doing what Jesus Christ *instructed* them to do! God commands us, for example, to “remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). Jesus and the Apostles kept the Sabbath (Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2), and it will be kept in the Kingdom of God (Isaiah 66:23). However, people today are being told that God will accept our keeping any day as a worship day—but that is *not* what God tells us in His word, and it is *not* the example Jesus set for us! To those who insist on doing things their own way, Jesus said, “I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’” (Matthew 7:23). They will not be invited to attend the wedding—because they will not be ready when the Bridegroom arrives. The door will be shut, and they will be left standing outside, pleading to be let in! The question we each need to ask is: *where will we be* when the door is shut? Will we be seated inside with Jesus Christ, or will we be outside—*disillusioned* and *disappointed* (Matthew 24:51)?

The parable of the ten virgins contains *vital lessons* that are extremely relevant for, and specifically targeted to, those living at the end of the age. God inspired these warnings for our benefit, because He loves us and wants us to be among His firstfruits in the coming Kingdom of God. We need to *heed* the warnings and *learn* the lessons of this important parable, so we do not miss out on an incredible reward! ■

Are You Truly Humble?*(Continued from page 3)*

God will *guide* and *use* that office of the ministry to speak to us *unless* the man in that office turns completely away from God. In that case, God will *remove him*, or will **make it clear** that we should go *elsewhere*.

But a truly humble person is not looking for reasons to be offended or to leave the Church that is primarily *doing* God's Work. Even *if* human mistakes are occasionally made—and there will *always* be human mistakes while we are still in the flesh—a genuinely humble and converted individual will try to learn even from imperfect teachers and imperfect situations.

For the deeply converted person will always be “teachable” and willing to learn from every situation. *This* is the attitude God wants to see in all of us: “For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones’” (Isaiah 57:15).

The Apostle John was inspired to show us how this attitude is to affect our *human* relations as well. “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? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also” (1 John 4:20–21). And: “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:16–18).

Brethren, we need to reflect on the awesome humility of Jesus Christ Himself (Philippians 2:5–9). Just as Christ was willing to wash His disciples' feet, God is eager to cleanse us of all vanity, selfishness and stubbornness—if only we will turn to Him and *besech* Him to do so.

As John instructed, let us “lay down our lives” for one another in the Church—and in the *Work* of get-

ting Christ's message to the untold millions who desperately *need what we have to give!* In heartfelt humility and out-flowing concern, let us emulate the Apostle Paul who said: “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more... To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:19, 22).

Dear brethren, let us so live our lives **now** that God *who knows our hearts* will see that we truly intend to *serve* Him, *honor* Him and *obey* Him throughout all eternity—no matter what the cost. Through our thoughts, prayers, words and actions we must let God and our *fellow men* know that we are *here to serve*. We must be “givers”—not merely “takers”—who can heartily wish, with the Apostle Paul, that “according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:20–21). ■

Upcoming **Tomorrow's World** Telecasts

WGN: Sunday, 6:00 AM ET

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

WORD: Sunday, 7:30 PM ET

AIR DATE	BROADCAST TITLE
January 3	2010 and Prophecy
January 10	Bring Back the Family!
January 17	Hope for the Future
January 24	Seven Signs of the Antichrist
January 31	How Does Satan Deceive You?

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

Schedule subject to change

Pray for More of God's Gifts!*(Continued from page 2)*

that the “two Germanys” would come together again, and the Berlin Wall would have to come down! Brethren, **all** this has already happened, and most of Mr. Armstrong's other biblically-based “Big Picture” prophetic statements are **now** beginning to happen.

In this present Work—continuing the Work that Christ began through Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong so many years ago—we *are* genuinely **restoring original Christianity** in our teachings and practices. We **are** reaching out through television and other media far more than any other “Church of God” group on earth.

How are we able to do this? God “delivered us” again and again from all kinds of crises that came along as we were starting the Global/Living Church of God. I may write *an entire article* sometime about how God obviously intervened to help this present Work get started in the first place, and how we could have easily *failed* to be able to carry on when the “split” came about back in 1998. Miraculously, God *gave us back* key office space that we had had before. He restored to us most of our ministers and members. He retained for us our fleet cars, our meeting halls, our television stations and—most of all—the *ability* to do the Work! In spite of efforts of evil men who tried to “tear us down,” *God intervened* in an unusual way. For He **wants** this Work to continue. He *wants* us to move ahead with **faith** in Him and to have a real **impact** on this confused world! I pray that all of us will do our part in this.

We should always remember that even young men who were **not** apostles or ministers were granted the gifts of the Spirit during Jesus' lifetime. As Jesus sent out the “seventy others,” He told them, “Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. And **heal** the sick there, and **say** to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’” (Luke 10:8–9). But did they also “cast out demons”? *Yes!* For Luke continues later, “Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the **demons are subject to us** in Your name’” (v. 17).

Therefore, just as Jesus continually told the original apostles to *preach* the Gospel, *heal* sicknesses and to *cast out demons* (Mark 3:13–15), so He also had these other 70 young men do the same, even though they were **not** in the ministry and the Holy Spirit was *not even yet given* as an indwelling power. For these gifts are important signs to weak people, to unconverted people—and to many others who **need** God's physical intervention and encouragement in order to fully turn to Him.

Remember, Stephen and Philip were ordained as deacons, not elders, in Acts 6:1–6. Yet in Acts 8, we read, “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and

preached Christ to them” (v. 5). How was this deacon's preaching received? Your Bible states, “And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the **miracles** which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. *And there was great joy in that city*” (Acts 8:6–8).

Obviously, today also, there would be tremendous *enthusiasm* and **joy** among God's people if we were granted more of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is something *every one of us* should **pray about**. It does not involve **only** the ministry—although God's ministers are of course involved in a special way. But remember, dear brethren, even Jesus Christ—the Son of God—was **not able** to perform mighty works when He went back to His home area: “Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief” (Matthew 13:58).

So, if there is an “atmosphere of **doubt**,” God Himself will not supernaturally heal many people—even if it is Jesus Christ personally involved! That is **why** it is *so very important* that we, as a Church, begin to think about all the things God *has done* for us. We must learn to “stir up” a *spirit of faith* and *absolute trust* in God and learn to *walk* and to *live* by **faith** (2 Timothy 1:6; Ephesians 2:8). Then, brethren—and *only then*—can we *cry out with confidence* and ask God fervently for the gifts of His Holy Spirit.

Wow!

We so very much **need** these “gifts” to begin to have the real **impact** on our brethren—and especially on the world—that we need in order to truly “finish” the job. So I beseech you to join with me in being one of those striving to “go all out” in seeking God, and trying in every way we can to “give” our lives to Him in zealous obedience and service, and to **cry out** for the gifts of God's Holy Spirit for His Work, His ministry and **all** His people!

If we truly do this as a Church, then the “follow-through” from the wonderful Feast of Tabernacles will be inspiring and powerful indeed. As truly *terrible* things happen to our nations—and *many of us* suffer even as ancient Israel suffered the first three plagues of God—we will *still* have great faith and joy, because we will see God intervene powerfully in our lives, and in our bodies, and in blessing us *in spite of* the catastrophic prophetic happenings that *must come!* May God help **all of us** to *do this*, that we may truly honor our Father in heaven and hear Him say, “Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities” (Luke 19:17).

With Christian love,



Local Church News

Ordinations

Mr. Gary Pate was ordained a deacon on the Sabbath of June 20, 2009, by Messrs. Glen Gilchrist, Gary Ullerick and Terry Graves. He serves the congregation in Seattle/Tacoma, Washington.

Mr. Stanley Roper was ordained an elder on Sabbath, June 27, 2009, by Pastor Mr. Martin Fannin. He serves in the Asheville, North Carolina, congregation.

Mr. Joe Picker was ordained an elder on Sabbath, July 18, 2009, by Messrs. Glen Gilchrist, Gary Ullerick and Terry Graves. He serves the congregation in Richland/Tricities, Washington.

Mr. and Mrs. Carl and Kathy Grimes were ordained deacon and deaconess on Sabbath, August 22, 2009, by Pastor Jack Lowe. Mr. and Mrs. Grimes serve the congregation in Macon, Georgia.

Mr. Marc Arseneault was ordained an elder on the Feast of Trumpets by

Canadian Regional Pastor, Mr. Gerald Weston. He serves in the Chatham, London, and Mississauga, Ontario, Canada congregations.

Mrs. Judy Cook was ordained a deaconess on the Feast of Trumpets by Pastor Mr. Gary Ehman. She serves the congregation in Statesville, North Carolina.

Mr. Larry Crooks was ordained an elder on the Feast of Trumpets by Regional Pastor Mr. Dan Hall. He serves the congregations in Abilene and Midland, Texas.

Mr. Richard Liter was ordained a deacon on the Feast of Trumpets by Pastor Mr. Paul Shumway. He serves the congregation in Ripley, West Virginia.

Mr. Robert Riggan was ordained a deacon on the Feast of Trumpets by Pastor Mr. Gary Ehman. He serves the

congregation in Statesville, North Carolina.

Mr. Sam Shrader was ordained a deacon on the Feast of Trumpets by Pastor Mr. Paul Shumway. He serves the congregation in Bluefield, West Virginia.

Mr. Anthony Stroud was ordained a deacon on the Feast of Trumpets by Pastor Mr. Gary Ehman. He serves the congregation in Statesville, North Carolina.

Dr. Richard Franz was ordained an elder on the Day of Atonement by Pastor Mr. Jack Lowe. He serves in the Atlanta, Georgia congregation.

Mr. Eric Boyer was ordained a deacon during the Feast of Tabernacles by the Director of the French Work, Mr. Dibar Apartian and elder Mr. Vincent Larde. He serves the congregation in Paris, France.

Anniversaries

Mr. and Mrs. Rod (Judy) Reynolds were honored at a reception celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary. Before the meal after the morning services on the Feast of Trumpets, the Baton Rouge, Lafayette and New Orleans, Louisiana congregations presented them with a special cake and a ruby Waterford crystal vase. Thanks and appreciation were expressed for their fine example of family values and their leadership and dedication to the Work and the brethren in the congregations in his area.

The Baltimore, Maryland, congregation last summer held receptions for two 50th wedding anniversaries. *Mr. and Mrs. Roger (Kay) Crawford* celebrated their anniversary

on Sabbath, June 13 and all the brethren rejoiced with this faithful couple. *Dr. and Mrs. David Armitage (Barri)* celebrated their anniversary on Sabbath, August 29, also a joyous occasion for the brethren. Mrs. Armitage is a deaconess in the Baltimore congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Roland (Lewela) D'Eon celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on October 13. They have been dedicated members and servants in God's Church since 1968. They were honored and surprised by a party held for them by their physical and spiritual family while attending the Feast of Tabernacles in Prince Edward Island. They attend the Kingston, Ontario, congregation.

Births

Mr. and Mrs. Josiah (Mindy) Ruttencutter of the Jacksonville, Florida, congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their son, *Myles Steven Ruttencutter*, born on Fathers' Day, June 21, 2009. He weighed 7 pounds and was 21 inches long. Both baby and mother are doing well. Grandparents are Joan Ruttencutter, Will Ruttencutter and Mr. and Mrs. Steven (Donna) Shifman.

Joseph and Ashley Meyer of Marietta, Georgia, have expanded their home by two feet. They are pleased to announce the birth of their son, *Hayden Joseph Meyer*, on September 5, 2009. He weighed 7 pounds, 5 ounces and was 19.5 inches long. Grandparents Roger and Laurel Meyer of Columbus, Ohio, and Thomas and Rebecca Brooks of Athens, Georgia, are overjoyed by the arrival of their grandson.

In Loving Memory...

Mrs. Beulah Ruth Johnson Hearn died on December 30, 2008 after a short illness. She was 94. Mrs. Hearn was born September 15, 1914 in Oklahoma but spent most of her life in Arkansas and her adult life in Little Rock. She outlived her husband, mother, father, sister and brother and a nephew. She is survived by several nieces. She was a long-time, faithful member of the Church of God, baptized in 1962. Mrs. Hearn was a deaconess and a true servant, helping many people over her long years of life. She will be missed by all who knew her.

Mr. Brather (Bill) Annas of the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation died May 6, 2009. He was 84 years old. Mr. Annas was baptized in 1974. He was a Navy veteran who served in the Pacific in World War II and a retired technician. Mr. Rod McNair, Associate Pastor of the Charlotte congregation, conducted the funeral service on May 8.

Mrs. Erma Travis of the Rolla, Missouri, congregation died in her home on July 18, 2009 after a long illness. She was 90 years old. Mrs. Travis was baptized at the Feast of Tabernacles in Big Sandy, Texas, in 1962. The funeral service was conducted by her son, elder Mr. Glenn Travis.

Mrs. Gladys McLain of Columbia, Louisiana, died on August 19, 2009 after a long illness. She was a long-time member of the Monroe, Louisiana, Living Church of God congregation. She and her husband had just celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary on February 13. She is survived by her husband, Mr. J. D. McLain, also a Church member, two children, seven grandchildren (one of them a member), and seven great-grandchildren. All who knew her experienced her love and kindness along with her lively wit. She is missed greatly. Mr. Donald Wood conducted her funeral.

Wedding

Mr. Aaron Lee Vice of the Monroe, Louisiana congregation, and *Miss Shelby Christine Watkins* of the Little Rock, Arkansas, congregation, were joined in marriage on May 17, 2009. The ceremony was conducted by Mr. Davy Crockett, the grandfather of the bride, on the front steps of historic Trapnall Hall on a beautiful sunny day in Little Rock. The bride's parents are Phillip and Audrey Watkins and the groom's parents are Donna Vice and the late Wendell Vice. Many family and friends gathered to witness the ceremony and enjoy the reception afterward. The couple now resides in Monroe, Louisiana.

Mrs. Louisa Mabel Austin Dunbar died August 21, 2009 at her home near Tonasket, Washington after a long illness. She was 72 years old. Mrs. Dunbar was a member of God's Church at Tonasket since moving there in 1993. She is survived by one sister, three brothers, two daughters, five sons (including Timothy Shawver of the Eureka, California Living Church of God congregation), 16 grandchildren and 24 great-grandchildren. Ms. Dunbar was a talented and adventuresome lady who will be long remembered and greatly missed by family and her many friends. A memorial service was held on September 13, Mr. Eldon Davis officiating.

Mr. James Dale Duke died in his sleep on September 5, 2009. He was a long-time member of the Monroe, Louisiana, Living Church of God congregation. He is survived by two daughters, a step-daughter, three grandchildren, a sister, and a brother, Glen Duke (also a Church member), a niece and three nephews (one a Church member). He was a veteran of the U.S. Navy. He enjoyed serving and greeted everyone with a hearty handshake each Sabbath. Mr. Duke's friendly smile and quiet manner will be deeply missed. His funeral was conducted by Mr. Donald Wood.

Miss Nadine Grace Puzon, 16-year-old daughter of Jesus and Melissa Puzon, of the Quezon City congregation in the Philippines, died September 13, 2009 after a short illness. Her name, which means hope and grace, is apt because she was a gift to her family for her short life and now, though they sorrow and grieve, they have hope of the joyous reunion with her in the future, as the fall Holy Days are fulfilled. Nadine is survived by her parents, two sisters, Pamela and Lynette, and one brother, Jethro, as well as other relatives and many friends. Mr. Jesus Puzon is an elder serving the brethren in the Philippines. Mr. Basilio Osillos conducted her funeral on September 16.

Commentary

Nimrod's Promise

By Wyatt Ciesielka

While it is unlikely that President Obama even knows about the *Tomorrow's World Bible Study Course*, his September 25, 2009 speech on the accomplishments of the recent G-20 summit contained startlingly similar language to something the Living Church of God published nearly ten years ago—and echoed Nimrod's promises from four millennia past.

Lesson Three of the *Tomorrow's World Bible Study Course* is titled, "Can You Understand Bible Prophecy?" It explains topics ranging from the four ancient kingdoms of Daniel 2—the Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Greco-Macedonians, and Romans—to the Four Horseman of the Apocalypse. The reader is then guided through a study of the end-time, worldwide trading combine identified in Revelation 18:9–21 and Ezekiel 27, commonly called "Babylon the Great." The Bible reveals that this final, world-dominating empire is in fact a final revival of ancient Babylon. Its roots and spiritual heritage are founded in ancient Babylon, the first of the four Daniel 2 kingdoms.

Referring to this end-time system, *Bible Study Course* Lesson 3 states: "The end-time manifestation of Babylon will promise what Nimrod promised the human family at the Tower of Babel: unity, security and prosperity. This is what Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus the Great, Alexander the Great, and Caesar Augustus, each in his turn, also offered" (p. 11).

Speaking to G-20 leaders in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on September 25, 2009, President Obama touched on the need for international governance in confronting world challenges. He said: "We leave here today more confident and more united in the common effort of advancing security and prosperity for all of our people"

No, the G-20 is not "Babylon the Great," and there is nothing wrong with "unity, security and prosperity." President Obama appears to be a well-intentioned man trying to deal with complex world problems. Yet Bible prophecy reveals that in the coming years, the world's nations and institutions will become increasingly dominated by Babylon the Great—and in exchange for unity, security and prosperity, Babylon the Great will demand that nations give up political sovereignty and religious freedom.

The significance of promises made to promote this coming world-order should not escape us. The powers behind this system are becoming increasingly active. And God's faithful Church has long and accurately warned of this coming system, which will be dominated by a German-led core group of European nations led by ten "kings"—rulers who are the successors of the eastern and western branches of the ancient Roman Empire.

As Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong wrote decades ago, "You must soon choose whom you will obey—this coming Roman Empire resurrected by a United States of Europe, ruled by traditional Christianity—or whether you shall obey God!" (*Who or What is the Prophetic Beast?*, p. 35)."

In the dangerous years ahead, God's people must remember that despite world leaders' tempting promises, genuine unity, security and prosperity—and abundant blessings—will not become a reality until Christ establishes His millennial rule.

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.