

THE

LIVING

CHURCH NEWS

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Build Now for Your Future!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

Greetings again from Charlotte! As most of you know, my wife and I enjoyed a very fruitful trip to Britain recently. Our “Special Presentation” there went exceptionally well—for which I am thankful. We had a record-breaking crowd of 290 people present—including 94 LCG members—with dozens of brand-new visitors attending. The crowd was very enthusiastic, and a few dozen came up later to talk with me personally. I pray that many of them will begin to attend Sabbath services with us over the next several weeks and months—it often takes a while—and that God will truly build and bless His Work in Britain—the “mother country” of many of us.

We have a fine “team” in Britain, and great prospects for growth there and on the European continent in the future. In addition to our outstanding British ministers, Dr. Douglas Winnail has done a wonderful job of inspiring and coordinating the growth of the Work there—and, indeed, all around the world. I am very grateful for the loyal “team” we have there—and that we have here at Headquarters, and all over this earth! Our wonderfully unified and inspiring Council of Elders meetings have gone especially well in the last couple of years, and the depth of commitment of virtually all of our leading men in this Work is exceptional. Also, our recent General Ministerial Conference—with more than 230 ministers and wives in attendance—was truly an outstanding example of love, dedication and unity in our ministry. We have *much to be thankful for!*

Brethren, as the “autumn” festivals approach, we should be *very thankful to God* that we in His true Church have been blessed with genuine *understanding* of the real meaning of

current events—and of the *entire purpose* for our lives! Very few on earth have this understanding. The approaching Feast of Trumpets points out specifically that—at the end of this age—the whole world will be in a time of war and chaos with national upsets, ethnic conflicts and “little wars” all leading up to the **major** wars just before Christ’s return. Each newspaper and each television news broadcast clearly tells us, in effect: “*He is coming soon!*”

Therefore, we can take great encouragement—unlike the world—even from news events that, on the surface, appear to be sad and bad. For *we* can understand where these events are leading. And, as Jesus said, “Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:28).

However, what should we in God’s living Church be **doing** in our personal lives? What should we be *concentrating on*?

First, we should be *doing* the Work with all our hearts! Jesus Christ foretold, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). Remember how Herbert W. Armstrong stated again and again that he found—over the years—that people’s spiritual condition is often best measured “by the *degree* to which they have their hearts in God’s Work!” In my more than 60 years in the Church, I have certainly found this to be true. How *much*, are you, personally, giving of yourself and of your resources in actually doing the Work of God and backing it and supporting it “with all your heart”? Are some of you “waiting” until the very end before going “all out”? As you

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can realize, when it is put that way, this “wait until later” approach is **not** the right or the Christian way of acting. **Now** is the time. **Now** is the need! **Now** is your opportunity to show the living Jesus Christ *where you stand* and how much commitment you have to Him, to His Gospel and to His Kingdom.

Then, the goal of being “overcomers” should be our second main focus. We must in *every way* be preparing to *become* those kings and priests who will assist Jesus Christ in His coming Government *on this earth*. Throughout the New Testament—not just in Matthew 24, Luke 21 and Mark 13, and in the book of Revelation—we learn that true Christians are now “in training” to be genuine kings, true leaders, in God’s coming kingdom. The Apostle Paul *specifically* wrote of this. “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?” (1 Corinthians 6:2–3).

Dear brethren, if we truly are to assist Christ in **ruling** this earth as those coming kings and priests, *how vital* it is that we *concentrate on that* and *prepare* for this soon-coming responsibility! So, each of us should genuinely **study**, **meditate**, *pray* and practice in our own lives how to be a truly **wise** judge, leader and king—while all the time remaining a servant to others in the way we do this. For we must *all* truly learn to be “servant leaders”!

Each of us should truly “feed” on Jesus Christ and His inspired word so that—in every way—we have the “mind of Christ” more and more each day as we approach the resurrection (Philippians 2:5). We should *constantly* read and reread thoughtfully the New Testament, and then go back regularly to **study** and **meditate** on the *laws* and the *statutes* of the *Old Testament*—which *spell out in detail* the “mind of God” and the specific way Christ ruled the human nation of Israel through His servants in times past.

Think!

Why will King David again be placed over all twelve nations of Israel? It is obviously because he *performed that exact role* for some 40 years with great distinction! *All day long*—for many years—David had to hear about the

problems—personal and national—of Israel and its people and make wise decisions and judgments as the active king over the entire nation. Your Bible shows that David himself constantly *meditated* on God’s law and His statutes to better prepare himself for this responsibility.

Although these same principles are mentioned throughout the book of Psalms—and indeed throughout the story of David’s life—Psalm 119 is particularly filled with instruction regarding his preparation for rulership. Notice just a few of these remarkable statements: “I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your *statutes*; I will not forget Your word. Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word. Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your *law*” (Psalm 119:15–18). Again, “Princes also sit and speak against me, but Your servant meditates on Your *statutes*. Your *testimonies* also are my delight and my counselors” (vv. 23–24). And again, “Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your *statutes*, and I shall keep it to the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your *law*; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart” (vv. 33–34).

David even acknowledged that he had to be chastened and humbled from time to time, to fully understand and **learn** the meaning and vital importance of God’s statutes: “It is good for me that I have been afflicted, *that I may learn Your statutes*. The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver” (vv. 71–72).

Most of us are familiar with these next verses, “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation” (vv. 97–99).

King David of Israel will soon be the literal “boss” of millions of God’s people in Tomorrow’s World, and is even appointed to be over the apostles in Christ’s coming Kingdom. He took time to *study*—to *think through* all the implications of—and to **meditate** on God’s commandments and His statutes continually.

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EDITORIAL

We Need More Faith!

By Roderick C. Meredith

The Apostle Paul made a very interesting observation upon which all of us should meditate deeply: “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church” (Colossians 1:24).

Are there, indeed, a certain number of the “afflictions of Christ” that every true Christian needs to face before entering eternal life? Is a certain amount of trying, testing and even suffering usually necessary to teach us the profound humility, the steadfastness and the total commitment needed before becoming a *glorified spirit being in the very Family of God*?

Paul does not directly answer this question.

However, from one end of the Bible to the other, God’s word is full of examples of His servants going through profound trials. Do we find a wonderful *purpose* for all these trials? We read of “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away” (1 Peter 1:4). Then, Peter goes on to state: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (vv. 6–7). These grievous trials force us to think through what is really important. They force us to cry out to God for help and to more completely commit ourselves to serving Him *no matter what*. They are the crucible through which God is fashioning us to become *His full sons*!

Recognizing the profound *reason* for these trials can help give us greater

peace of mind and greater *faith*, and help us appreciate, as the Apostle Paul wrote, that “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). Down through the ages, God-fearing men and women have had to look beyond the immediate circumstances and “know” that God was there and that He was alive and in charge, and that He would definitely work out their specific trial for “good”—*even if* it required them to give up their physical lives! That is the basis for the radiant *faith* of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. King Nebuchadnezzar was absolutely *furios* at their refusal to worship the gold image he had set up. Here was the greatest monarch on earth being put to shame by three young Jews. *He would have none of it!*

Nebuchadnezzar disdainfully challenged these young men: “And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?” (Daniel 3:15). They answered the king: “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” (vv. 16–18).

Yes, even if God chose **not** to deliver them, the God of Israel was “real” enough to these brave men that they committed their lives to Him—*regardless!*

How about you and me?

Are we prepared to give our lives to Jesus Christ—*no matter what*? Is God so absolutely “real” to us that we could go through the terrifying shock of beatings, imprisonment or death?

Could we go through a long, drawn-out trial as Joseph did? Remember, Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery. For *13 long years* he had to go through trial after trial—being sold into slavery, threatened with death, put in prison, along with many other trials—until he was *finally* exalted to be the second person in charge of the entire Egyptian empire! Thirteen years is a **long time**.

We understand that for approximately *ten years*, King David had to flee from King Saul—hiding out in caves, in the wilderness and in all kinds of dangerous and uncomfortable situations. Yet, David retained his unwavering *faith* in Almighty God, and maintained his deep love and respect for Saul’s office and for Saul himself. Even when David had opportunity to destroy Saul, and was so close to him in a cave that he was able to cut off the corner of his robe, notice the profound humility and respect in David’s heart: “Now it happened afterward that David’s heart troubled him because he had cut Saul’s robe. And he said to his men, ‘The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD’s anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD’” (1 Samuel 24:5–6).

Later, when David and Abishai came and found Saul sleeping, with his spear stuck in the ground by his head, notice what happened: “Then Abishai said to David, ‘God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please, let me strike him at once with the spear, right to the earth; and I will not have to strike him a second time!’ But David said to Abishai, ‘Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD’s anointed, and be guiltless?’ David said furthermore, ‘As the LORD lives, the LORD shall strike

him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish. The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed. But please, take now the spear and the jug of water that are by his head, and let us go" (1 Samuel 26:8–11).

In a similar way, *all* of us need to look beyond man, and see the purpose of God in the situations that may develop in the years ahead. God will be working with us, fashioning and molding us, teaching us lessons for all eternity. We need to have a deep and lasting *faith* that this is so—and put our faith and trust in God!

Each of us should recognize that the long periods of trying and testing, throughout most of our Christian lives, are for the *specific purpose* of refining us, polishing us and making each of us an absolute “jewel” in God's sight. Therefore, we must understand *this concept* as we read Jesus' instructions to His disciples and to us: “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works” (Matthew 16:24–27).

It is so easy for each of us to desire to “save” our lives. We may want to “live it up” and focus *too much* at times on physical things for ourselves and our families—to devote so much time and energy to material pursuits that we do **not** live the life of sacrificial service to God and man that Jesus Christ requires of us. Who among us does not fall short of this standard? We need to focus on Jesus' promise that when He returns with the “glory” of His Father, He will definitely reward each of us in a magnificent way. The Apostle Paul was inspired to expand on this: “The Spirit... bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and

if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that *the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*” (Romans 8:16–18).

The *glorified body* that God has in mind for us, and the awesome opportunity to interact with Him and with Jesus through all eternity, are beyond our full understanding as weak human beings. But we understand that we are called, *literally*, to “fellowship” with God and with Christ—as well as with one another (1 John 1:3)—*through all eternity!*

Each of us should recognize that the long periods of trying and testing, throughout most of our Christian lives, are for the specific purpose of refining us, polishing us and making each of us an absolute “jewel” in God's sight.

Therefore, by “feeding” on God's word (John 6:57)—by constantly reading, and reminding ourselves that our Creator is *real* and will *always* deliver His servants—we can, through His Spirit in us, build the profound *faith* in Him that we will absolutely need in the years just ahead!

Many of us may remember the touching and beautiful example of “Ebed-Melech” the Ethiopian, as set forth in Jeremiah 38. Jeremiah had been thrown into a prison and let down into a pit of mire. Hearing of this, Ebed-Melech, one of the king's eunuchs, told the king and obviously requested the opportunity to help Jeremiah. The king gave him permission. Verse 11 picks up the story: “So Ebed-Melech took the men with him and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took from

there old clothes and old rags, and let them down by ropes into the dungeon to Jeremiah. Then Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, ‘Please put these old clothes and rags under your armpits, under the ropes.’ And Jeremiah did so. So they pulled Jeremiah up with ropes and lifted him out of the dungeon. And Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison” (vv. 11–13).

Ebed-Melech obviously took his life in his hands by opposing the princes who had gained the king's favor in the first instance. But “the rest of the story”—as revealed later on—indicates that Ebed-Melech was looking *beyond* these princes. Though an Ethiopian eunuch in the king's household, he put his faith and trust in the Eternal God of Israel. And God *rewarded* him for this! Many weeks or months later, after the Babylonians had conquered Judah, God's Word came to Jeremiah and told him to contact Ebed-Melech: “Go and speak to Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I will bring My words upon this city for adversity and not for good, and they shall be performed in that day before you. But I will deliver you in that day,” says the LORD, “and you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you are afraid. For I will surely deliver you, and you shall not fall by the sword; but your life shall be as a prize to you, *because you have put your trust in Me,*” says the LORD” (Jeremiah 39:16–18).

So, what will we do? When we are persecuted and perhaps even thrown into prison for preaching and obeying the Truth—both in our present society and, later, as the modern Babylonians conquer many of our lands—will we look with **faith** to the God of Israel to deliver us, as did Ebed-Melech? May God grant that each one of us slowly but surely develops the understanding and the radiant **faith** displayed by every one of the outstanding servants of God. And may God deliver each one of us and say to us: “Your life shall be as a prize to you, because you have put your **trust** in Me.” ■

Lessons from the Day of Atonement

By Douglas S. Winnail

The Day of Atonement, one of God's seven annual Holy Days, pictures a major event in God's Plan—the binding of Satan at the beginning of the Millennium. English-speakers have often heard the analogy that Atonement pictures our coming *at-one-ment* with God. But have you ever asked yourself, “What am I doing to *prepare* for this great event?”

Are you *ready* for what the Day of Atonement pictures?

Some may assume that since God will take care of binding Satan before the peoples of the earth become *at one* with God, there is little for us to do to prepare for this significant event. However, the parable of the ten virgins suggests otherwise. In the biblical account, the *wise* virgins took a supply of oil with their lamps and, when the bridegroom came, “those who *were ready* went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut” (Matthew 25:10). The *foolish* virgins were out of oil when the bridegroom came, and missed out on being part of the wedding—because they were *not ready*! Symbolically, the wise virgins became *at one* with the bridegroom at the wedding because they had *prepared* for this event. The foolish virgins lost the opportunity to become *at one* with their prospective husband, because they were not prepared when He came. The wedding in this parable portrays the marriage of Christ and the Church (Revelation 19:7–9). The oil is symbolic of God's Holy Spirit. The wise virgins were filled with the Holy Spirit, and were ready to become *at one* with God. The foolish virgins were not nourishing or using God's Spirit, so they were *not ready* for this momentous event.

In this article, we will look at **three important lessons** that we must learn if we want to be ready for the Day of Atonement and what it pictures—a time when the world will finally have the opportunity to become *at one* with God. We will also discuss what we need to understand about *this world* so we can be ready to rule with Jesus Christ in the “world to come” (Hebrews 2:5).

REMEMBER THE MEANING

The Bible reveals that the Day of Atonement is to be observed as a high Sabbath and a holy convocation (a commanded assembly) on the tenth day of the seventh month on the Hebrew calendar (Leviticus 23:26–32). The statement that “it shall be a statute *forever*” indicates how important this day is to God (v. 31). God commands us to “afflict” our souls on the Day of Atonement—meaning we are to *fast* on that day (Isaiah 58:3). Fasting is a very humbling experience; it pleases God, and helps us become more receptive to His teaching and willing to do as He commands. Paul's comment that “the Fast was already over” refers to the fast on Atonement, which clearly indicates that the New Testament Church was observing that fast (Acts 27:9).

The full meaning of the Day of Atonement is not revealed in Leviticus 23, where the Holy Days are listed and discussed, but other chapters of the Bible explain many details. God told Moses to perform, on the Day of Atonement, a ceremony involving two goats (Leviticus 16). The first goat was offered as a sacrifice (atonement) for the sins of the people (vv. 15–16). This sacrifice *foreshadowed* the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ that would reconcile sinful human beings to God (Romans 5:10–11; 2 Corinthians 5:18–19). It is significant that the word *atonement* means *reconciliation*. The Hebrew name for the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*, comes from the Hebrew word *kaphar* which means to cancel a debt or *reconcile*. Through the annual observance of the Day of Atonement, we are reminded of God's plan to ultimately reconcile—restore a right relationship between—human beings and Himself.

The second goat in this Old Testament ceremony is less understood—and is even puzzling to many theologians. This second goat was to bear the sins of the people, and be sent “away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man” (Leviticus 16:21). Many Bible commentaries and handbooks speculate that the two goats represent “two natures of Christ,” or that the second goat represents “an aspect of Christ's sacrifice” (see *Clark's Commentary*, *Unger's Bible Handbook*, *Halley's Bible Handbook*). However, Scripture clearly reveals that is not the case at all. While some versions of the Bible refer to the second goat as a “scapegoat,” the actual Hebrew word from which it is translated is *Azazel*—a name that comes from the Hebrew word *azel*, meaning “separated” or “removed.” Jewish tradition has linked the *Azazel* with the prince of the fallen angels: Satan the Devil.

In the New Testament, the Apostle John records a vision that reveals the second goat's significance. John saw “an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished” (Revelation 20:1–3). The Bible reveals that the role of the “suitable man” who sent the second goat into the wilderness will be fulfilled by an angel, and that the second goat pictures the devil—who will be restrained during the Millennium. When we observe the Day of Atonement, we are reminded of this major event in the plan of God. Most professing Christians have no idea of the meaning of this day, because they do not observe it as God commands.

But what does all this have to do with becoming *at one* with God? Are there important steps that we must take, or will God do everything for us? What must we do to *be ready* to become *at one* with God? Another lesson we need

to learn from the Day of Atonement is how to *recognize*, *resist* and *overcome* the influence of Satan. This is an important step towards becoming *at one* with God.

OVERCOME SATAN'S INFLUENCE

The Apostle Paul told Christians in Corinth that they were living in a world influenced by Satan. He explained that Satan has been the actual “god of this age,” and has *blinded* the minds of most people regarding God’s plan and purpose for the human race (2 Corinthians 4:3–4). The Bible also reveals that Satan “deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9) by promoting lies and spreading false and misleading ideas (John 8:44), and that he has even used *misguided ministers* (2 Corinthians 11:1–15) to preach a different gospel and deceive people by twisting scriptures out of context (2 Peter 3:14–16). Paul admonished Christians to “come out” of this world and “separate” themselves from the misinformed ways of human-devised social and religious practices (2 Corinthians 6:14–18). Paul warned Church members that they must understand how the devil operates, and that they must not be ignorant of his devices, “lest Satan should take advantage of us” (2 Corinthians 2:11). The devil’s deceptions include provoking wrong thoughts and ideas that lead to wrong actions (Ephesians 2:2), and fostering erroneous assumptions—for example, the idea that if something *seems* right to us, it must be right. The results of such false thinking can be devastating (Proverbs 14:12).

The Apostle Peter warned believers to “be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). Peter was understandably concerned, because he knew that he, too, *had been deceived* by Satan (Matthew 16:21–23). Scripture reveals that Satan not only wanted access to Peter (Luke 22:31–32); he even wanted to deceive Jesus Christ and divert Him from His mission (Matthew 4:1–11). Christians must learn to *recognize* and *resist* the advances of Satan (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9) if we hope to become *at one* with God and be in His kingdom. In order to overcome the temptations that Satan puts in our path, we are told to put on “the whole armor of God” (Ephesians 6:10–11). That armor includes proving the Truth, obeying God’s commandments, learning to live peaceably with others, trusting in God’s promises, learning to nourish and use His Spirit and maintaining a close relationship with God through prayer, Bible study and fasting (Ephesians 6:13–20; Joel 2:12–14). This is how Jesus Christ overcame the satanic pulls of this world (John 16:33) and could be *at one* with God (John 10:30). It was also Christ’s prayer that we, too, would grow to become *at one* with God (John 17:11).

DEVELOP GOD’S MIND

The third lesson we should learn by observing the Day of Atonement is that in order to become *at one* with God, we

must develop the mind and perspective of God. We must learn to think like God. Jesus told His disciples, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30) and, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). In essence, Jesus was saying that He and the Father share the same values and the same perspectives—they both think along the same lines and are of the same mind. On the night before He was crucified, Jesus prayed in the presence of His disciples, “Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that *they may be one as We are*” (John 17:11). Jesus understood the important step in God’s plan that the Day of Atonement pictures.

The Apostle Paul explained *how* we can become *at one* with God and with Jesus Christ. He wrote: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). With the mind of God, Jesus humbled Himself and “made Himself of no reputation” as He obeyed God and fulfilled His mission on this earth (Philippians 2:7–11). Many problems within society, within the Church and between people would disappear if people would be willing to *humble themselves* as they serve others, instead of seeking attention and promoting their own agendas. Paul pleaded with Church members in Corinth, who were divided into factions, urging them to “all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10). Paul later explained that when we are able to understand the truth of God, and share the same perspectives on spiritual matters, it is because “we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:7–16).

If we have the mind of Christ, we will be humble and teachable. We will want to do things God’s way, instead of insisting on our own way. We will reflect the attitude of Jesus Christ who, when faced with a difficult decision, said to His Father, “not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39). Paul had this same attitude when he urged the Galatians to let Christ live His life through their lives by guiding their minds and actions (Galatians 2:20). As we develop the mind and perspective of God, our lives and thoughts and actions will begin to radiate the very nature and character of God. This is an essential element in how we become *at one* with God, which is God’s ultimate goal for human beings.

As we reflect on the Day of Atonement, we should remember its biblical significance in the plan of God—that Satan will be bound, and the peoples of this earth will have the opportunity to become *at one* with God. In order to become *at one* with our Creator, we must learn to recognize, resist and overcome the deceptive, divisive and destructive influences of Satan. We must also develop the very mind and perspective of our Father, so we will be able to think and act like a member of the God family. This is why we were created as human beings. Are you making progress toward this goal? Will you be ready for what the Day of Atonement pictures—the time in the future when we will ultimately become *at one* with God? ■

Under the Mighty Hand of God

By Wyatt Ciesielka

We are commanded in 1 Peter 5:6 to humble ourselves “under the mighty hand of God” so “that He may exalt [us] in due time.” What specifically does Peter mean by this? How does this relate to the Feast of Trumpets? And, how does this relate to our being *exalted in due time*?

This is vital for each Christian to understand, as a potential firstfruit (James 1:18), because such humbling is an *individual requirement* if we are to become the *worthy bride* that Christ will glorify at His return—and it is also a *national requirement* that we will help the nations learn, after His return.

There are two vital components to humbling ourselves under God’s mighty hand. We can gain important insight from King David, the Apostles Peter and Paul, and from Jesus Christ Himself into how we can understand and fulfill this duty.

DAVID, PETER, PAUL AND JESUS

The *first* component is to acknowledge, trust in, and glorify God’s greatness and His majesty. What was ancient King David’s attitude about God’s greatness and His majesty? As an accomplished warrior and mighty *human* king, David’s attitude was such that he wrote, “Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all” (1 Chronicles 29:11).

The *second* component is to completely surrender our will to His, understanding that, “Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might, in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all” (v. 12). King David’s attitude was one of

acknowledging God’s greatness and *surrendering* to His will. Consequently, we know that God *will* exalt King David in the first resurrection, to *rule* under Christ as king over the twelve tribes of Israel (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:23–24).

Peter echoes this *same attitude*. After Jesus’ resurrection, Peter committed himself to serving Christ, feeding His sheep, and yielding to His will, *even to the point of his own death by crucifixion* (John 21:15–19). Peter also *acknowledged* God’s greatness and learned to *surrender* to His will. So, Peter will *also* be “exalted in due time.” He will *rule* in the coming Kingdom of God as a *king* over one of the twelve tribes of Israel, under Christ (Matthew 19:28).

This level of trust, adoration and submission may seem beyond our ability to attain, and it is! *Humanly*—using *our* abilities—it is impossible.

Paul addresses this challenge in Romans 7:23–25. Although we “will” to do good, our carnality “wars” within us to sin. Then, Paul asks: “*Who* will deliver me from this body of death?” (v. 24)—a question he answers by thanking God that he *is* and *will be* delivered *through Jesus Christ*.

But, *how* does Jesus Christ “deliver” us? Again, Paul explains in Galatians 2:20 that he had confidence and faith in victory over sin because he had learned to surrender his will and his ambitions to Christ (being “crucified with Christ”). As did David and Peter, Paul also understood that we *can* accomplish what is humanly impossible *if* we let Christ live fully and unreservedly in us (Philippians 4:13).

Scripture is full of instruction in how we can both *understand* and *live* according to these admonitions. Fittingly, Jesus Himself provides our ultimate example.

ONENESS

Prior to His arrest at Gethsemane, and aware of the terrible events about to unfold, Jesus beseeched the Father in heartfelt prayer. His supplications are recorded for us in John 17. Toward the end of His prayer, Jesus was taking strength and comfort from knowing that He and the Father *had been* at one, *were* at one, and *would again* be at one. He was at remembering the *oneness* in glory that He and the Father had possessed for eternity, and was looking forward to that oneness again, after the short but horrible scourging and death that He would soon face.

However, there is an *additional* element in Jesus’ prayer. He was also thinking of, and praying about *us*, His potential firstfruit harvest to be “raised incorruptible” at His return (1 Corinthians 15:52)!

Jesus was looking forward to the reality that those who would believe and be “made perfect” would also become “one” in spirit with each other, with Him and with the Father (John 17:20–23). This includes not just Peter and the other Apostles, but also the many other faithful saints through the ages—as well as those in God’s Church today, *if* we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Savior (2 Peter 3:18), and *if* we endure to the end (Matthew 24:13).

Jesus was required to live perfectly and blamelessly, personifying love, patience, kindness and forgiveness (Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 4:32). He was the perfect Lamb “without blemish and without spot” to the point of death (1 Peter 1:19). Likewise, He is preparing His Church to reflect these same qualities. He desires for us to be “a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27) so

we may become His worthy bride, the “Lamb’s wife” (Revelation 21:9).

As members of the Church of God, do our thoughts and actions show our Lord that we *really* love and respect the brethren and the ministry and that we *really* want to be “one” with those whom God has now called? Are we *working and growing together* into a “Holy Temple” (Ephesians 2:19–22)? Having a heart to fulfill Jesus’ prayer in John 17 to be “one” means that we will do our part to become a *cooperative* and *active* part of His body (1 Corinthians 12:12–17; 1 Peter 5:5) in which there should be “no schism” (1 Corinthians 12:25).

Love is required. The saints with whom God is pleased are *not* self-righteous, detached, judgmental, apathetic, vindictive, antagonistic, arrogant or independent. Instead, the saints with whom God is pleased understand that although imperfect now, they have been called by God to become *one* with Him and Christ in this life, *and* for eternity (Ephesians 1:15–23)! As such, we *must* show Christ our love for Him by showing our love for each other (John 13:34–35). We are showing this love when we worship together in peace and harmony at Sabbath services (1 Corinthians 14:33), when we extend hospitality to the brethren (Romans 12:13; Galatians 6:10), when we are fervent in intercessory prayer for one another (James 5:16), when we visit and serve the fatherless and widows in their times of need (James 1:27), when we forgive and reconcile with our brother, understanding that this is required in order for God to hear and answer our prayers (Isaiah 1:14–17; Matthew 5:22–24; 1 Timothy 2:8)—and when we remain zealously committed to the Work of preaching the gospel to the world (Mark 16:15).

If we strive to fulfill these scriptural commands, then the command not to forsake assembling ourselves together to worship and fellowship on the Sabbath day (Hebrews 10:25) will come naturally. Being a Christian in whom God is well pleased—and to whom God will give future glory—requires

more than simply knowing the law and understanding prophecy. For that matter, **by itself**, a good *understanding* of the law and prophecy may still leave people as lukewarm Laodiceans, whom God will vomit out of His mouth for their refinement during the time of Satan’s wrath (Revelation 3:16; 12:17; 19:10).

In his November–December 2008 *Tomorrow’s World* article titled “Who Are You, Really?” Dr. Roderick C. Meredith wrote: “All of us—of every race and ethnic background—become ‘grafted’ into ‘spiritual Israel’ when we repent and are baptized into God’s Church today (Romans 11:19–23). We must all, whatever our backgrounds, be willing to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and cry out to Him for help in learning every lesson which He wants us to learn so we can be in His Kingdom for all eternity” (p. 8).

If we become *lukewarm* and detach ourselves from the Work that God is doing through His Church (Revelation 3:15–17), trusting in ourselves rather than God and His duly appointed ministry (Hebrews 13:17)—then can we honestly say to our High Priest that we heard His prayer that we become “one” and that we *practiced* love toward one another (John 13:34–35) and yielded to one another?

NATIONAL EXAMPLES FROM THE FIRST AND SECOND EXODUS

Just as humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God requires us to *individually* acknowledge and glorify His greatness and His majesty, and to completely surrender our *individual* will to His, the same components are also required *nationally*. King David, Peter, Paul and Jesus illustrate for us what is required *individually* to please the Eternal and for Him to then glorify us “in due time.” But, God will *also* teach the *nations* to acknowledge and glorify His greatness and His majesty and to bring the national will under His in the Kingdom of God.

The Exodus was not only an awesome example of God’s supernatural intervention to free His enslaved people; the Exodus was also a truly epic *military maneuver*. Under God’s great power—*and through His appointed leadership*—God witnessed to Egypt and freed Israel exactly 430 years after He had made His covenant with Abraham (Exodus 12:41; Galatians 3:17).

It was under the human leadership of Moses—a *most humble man* (Numbers 12:3), but also a *most able* military general who had years earlier brilliantly defended Egypt against overwhelming Ethiopian forces (Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book II, Chapter X, part 2)—that a few million Israelite ex-slaves exited their Egyptian bondage (Exodus 12:37–38). God indeed exalted His servant Moses “in due time” in his lifetime to be “a ruler and a deliverer” to ancient Israel (Acts 7:35), and God *will* exalt Moses again in His Kingdom!

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He demonstrated His power and His glory at the *national level*. But, did the ancient Israelites glorify God and yield their will to Him? No! Consequently, God severely rebuked Israel for rejecting His authority and His law. “The house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments... they greatly defiled My Sabbaths” (Ezekiel 20:10–13).

Time and time again, the prophets record how ancient Israel went after foreign gods and pagan customs, doing what God considered *abominable* (1 Samuel 15:23; Jeremiah 9:13–14; Ezekiel 20:30; Hosea 11:2). But not only did the ancient Israelites refuse to practice true religion, they even conspired to remove God as their King. God’s will was to rule Israelites through His priests. But when Israel confronted a very real problem with Samuel’s corrupt sons (whom they feared would soon succeed the aging prophet), instead of trusting God to deal with the problem, The Israelites took matters into their own hands. They

demanded to be “like all the nations” and have a *human king* appointed to rule over them (1 Samuel 8:3–5).

Did God approve of Israel’s *human reasoning*? No! God plainly states that Israel had not rejected His aged *priest*, but they had in reality rejected *Him* (v. 7)! From this moment until Christ’s triumphant return as King of kings, the house of Israel has nationally rejected God as its King. Thus, we sadly see that the people failed to conform their national will to God’s will. The problem or “fault” was with the people—not with God (Hebrews 8:8–9)!

But, the Bible foretells of a *second Exodus* that will likely occur not too many years from now. The second Exodus will occur *after the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord*—a time that will bring the entire earth to the brink of annihilation (Matthew 24:22). Individuals and nations will finally be ready to begin to learn to *humble themselves under the mighty hand of God!*

During *and after* this *second Exodus*, Christ will again display His “mighty hand” (Ezekiel 20:33–34), but this time He will deploy His perfect, righteous and powerful firstfruit saints to teach and to reign under Him on the earth (Revelation 5:10). Will we be there with Christ, as His resurrected, immortal saints to help bring order, peace and healing to the world? We will, *if* we learn to humble our will under the mighty hand of God.

As awesome as the account of the first Exodus is, it is simply a foreshadowing of the second Exodus. Jeremiah 23:7–8 reveals about the *second Exodus* that people will no longer say, “As the LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,” but ‘As the LORD lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.’”

The Feast of Trumpets pictures Christ’s return as conquering King of

kings (Revelation 11:15; 19:11–19), when He will crush all opposition during the terrible “Day of the Lord” (Joel 2:1). Satan’s rule will be quickly crushed, and the Devil will then be bound for a thousand years (Revelation 20:2). During Christ’s ensuing millennial reign, He will simply not indulge rebellion—individually or nationally. Notice God’s proclamation: “‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you. I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a

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mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face. Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you,’ says the Lord GOD” (Ezekiel 20:33–36).

What a tremendous promise! Not only will God *rescue* His people, but He *will rule over them with a mighty hand*. While Christ is the good and kind Shepherd (John 10:11), during this millennial rule, He will rule with a “rod of iron” when needed (Revelation 19:15). He will not permit harm, rebellion or idolatry (Isaiah 11:9). *All nations* will honor, worship and submit to the Eternal (Isaiah 56:6–8). Nations that were once enemies will learn to live in peace, and *all nations* will be blessed by the Eternal as they learn to submit to His will (Isaiah 19:24–25).

GLORIFICATION UNDER GOD’S MIGHTY HAND

Who will assist Christ, the resurrected Apostles, King David, Abraham, Moses and others in teaching, governing, healing and rebuilding the nations in the Kingdom of God? The resurrected firstfruit saints will (Isaiah 61:4; Jeremiah 33:7; Acts 15:16)! The Feast of Trumpets is an annual reminder that at the seventh trumpet the glorified saints will join the triumphant King of kings (1 Corinthians 15:52, Revelation 11:15) to rule under Him during the Millennium (Revelation 5:10).

However, national obedience will not come automatically (Zechariah 14:17–19). But, Christ and the resurrected saints will teach the nations how to live and worship *righteously* (Isaiah 30:21). Christ and the saints will also lead the efforts to reclaim, rebuild and recover the multiple millions of acres of land ravaged and destroyed during the Great Tribulation (Isaiah 41:18–20).

Shortly, *because Israel and all the nations will begin to learn to submit under God’s mighty hand*, abundance, life and good health will flourish, with blessings flowing first from Israel (Ezekiel 36:33–37), and then throughout the entire earth (Isaiah 27:6; Jeremiah 30:17)!

The Kingdom of God promises blessings and abundance! But, just as ancient Israel rebelled against God, so does most of the world today. And rebelliousness can even infect some of God’s saints. Sadly, what Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong wrote in Lesson 37 of the *Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course* applies not just to the world, but even to some Christians: “Most human beings cannot grasp this marvelous truth. They are unwilling to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God and wait to be exalted in His due time.”

All of us must “search out and examine our ways, and turn back to

Continued on page 18

Is the Door Closed?

By Wallace G. Smith

Does Jesus Christ still expect His Church to go “all out” and preach the gospel to the world?

To those with eyes to see, it is very apparent that we are in the last days leading up to the return of Jesus Christ. Speaking to us through the corridors of time, the Apostle Peter tells us of scoffers who will walk according to their lusts and who will ridicule the idea of a returning Messiah (2 Peter 3:3–4). However, even among those who *do* believe in Christ’s return there can be scoffers in these final days, who ridicule the mission of the Church to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ to the world, making disciples and providing a witness before the end comes.

You may have heard the teachings of some of these scoffers. For instance, some say that the door to preach the gospel was only open in the Philadelphian era of the Church, and that it is closed in the Laodicean era. Some even say that to **attempt** to preach the gospel to the world is an insult to the late Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong—that the commission to do the Work was given only to *him*, and that he finished that commission before he died. Some people go so far as to say we are *cursed* if we attempt to preach the gospel!

Others are willing to preach the gospel “as resources permit,” but insist that the main emphasis—for some, the only emphasis—should be on the personal growth of Church members, “preparing the bride” to rule in the coming Kingdom of God after Christ’s return.

How do we respond to these ideas? The Living Church of God is committed to “preparing the bride,” and it recognizes the unique role of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong in preaching the Gospel. However, from the *very beginning*, the Church has emphasized that our first and greatest commission is to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world as a witness. Are we wrong? What does the Bible say?

IS THE “DOOR” STILL OPEN?

We sometimes hear the question: “Is the formerly open ‘door’ to preach the gospel to the world now closed?” This question is often rooted in a

misunderstanding of the prophetic Church eras listed in Revelation 2–3.

Look first at the promise given to the Philadelphian Church—which saw its eponymous era reach its climax during the ministry of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong: “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens: I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name”’” (Revelation 3:7–8).

What “open door” did God give to the Philadelphians? We note that it is a door that God the Father or Jesus Christ must open! We also note that if He opens it, only *He* can close it—and if He closes it, *no one else can* open it!

Using the Bible to interpret the Bible (Isaiah 28:9–10), the nature of this divinely opened door becomes clear. In Colossians 4:2–4, the Apostle Paul prays that God would “open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ” (v. 3)—an opportunity to preach the gospel! Notice how Paul recognized that *God* must open the

door. Paul also writes of this door—a “great and effective door” to preach “Christ’s gospel”—in 1 Corinthians 16:9 and 2 Corinthians 2:12. In each case, it is a door that God must open *for* him, not a door that Paul can open. In Acts 14:27, Paul’s frequent and faithful companion Luke uses the *same language*, describing the “door of faith” that God had opened for the Gentiles to receive the gospel of God’s Kingdom.

Clearly, this door that Christ opens—a door that only He can open and shut—is the opportunity to preach His gospel! And, indeed, the gospel of the Kingdom of God went out with a power and vitality during the Philadelphian era that was unprecedented since the first century after Christ!

So, has Christ now closed that door? We should note that God gives the promise not simply to an era, but to a **group of Christians** in Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7, “to



the angel [or messenger] of the *church* in Philadelphia”). And Scripture reveals that a remnant of Philadelphians will survive into the next, final era—the “Laodicean era”—in which a different spirit will predominate in the Church overall, and in which the Philadelphians will ultimately be protected from the Tribulation preceding Christ’s return (Revelation 3:10).

How, then, should we understand the mention of a *closed door* in the prophecy of the Laodicean era, in which we now find ourselves? Yes, a door is mentioned; but *is it the same door*? No, it is not! We can rightly divide the word of truth to understand (2 Timothy 2:15). We must not be deceived!

Jesus Christ says to lukewarm Laodiceans, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20). This clearly **cannot** be a door to preach the gospel! Why? Because this is a door that Christ **cannot** open, for He must stand outside and knock to enter! This is a different door than the one which no **man** can open (v. 7) but only **Christ** can open (v. 8). Read closely: Christ says to the Laodiceans, “If any man hear my voice, and open the door...” (v. 20, KJV). Clearly this is **not** the door Christ opened to the Philadelphians, which “no man openeth” (v. 7, KJV)!

If this closed door does not represent the opportunity to preach the gospel, as it did for the Philadelphians, what does it mean? What is this door that only man may open but Christ may not? It is the opportunity to have a truly deep and authentic relationship with Jesus Christ! Christ says that if a Laodicean will repent and let Him in, He will *dine* with him, indicating fellowship and communion together (v. 20; see also Acts 2:41–42; 1 Corinthians 10:16; Genesis 18:1–5; Luke 24:36–43). Those who open the door will enjoy *fellowship* with Christ—a fellowship that Laodiceans endanger when lukewarm attitudes place distance between them and their Savior (Revelation 3:15–16).

Nowhere does Scripture state that the Philadelphian remnant—faithful brethren of the Philadelphian era, a remnant prophesied to exist all the way to the return of Christ—encounters a closed door! The only “closed door” we see in Revelation is the door between the Laodiceans and Christ—a door that they, themselves, have closed, preventing intimate fellowship with their Lord and Savior!

SHOULD WE FOCUS ON “PREPARING THE BRIDE”?

But what of the claim that God’s purpose for His Church has changed in the last era—that Christians must shift their focus away from preaching the gospel, and emphasize the preparation of the bride of Christ, which is His Church? After all, during the final Church era, many in God’s Church suffer from a lukewarm attitude and a lack of zeal, as we read in Revelation 3. Does this then imply a need to focus inwardly? When we read in Revelation 19:7 that the

Lamb’s wife “has made herself ready” does this imply that the Church will, in the end-times, concentrate on its own spiritual state in preparation for His imminent return?

Mr. Gerald Weston covered this question thoroughly in his *Living Church News* article, “Preparing the Bride.” As he reminded us, “we can understand that ‘preparing the bride’ does not somehow conflict with, or replace, the Church’s mission to preach the gospel. If ‘preparing the bride’ meant a different mission for the Church, we would have to conclude either that those who went before us did not really preach the gospel, or else that they were not really preparing themselves and will miss out on the marriage supper. Preposterous!” (July–August 2006, p. 4). Indeed, it is nonsensical—and unbiblical—to believe that one can “prepare the bride” and “feed the flock” by **deemphasizing** the Work of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. God’s Philadelphian remnant “prepares the bride” by **doing the Work** of the Great Commission!

The Apostle John relates a powerful example that speaks clearly to us almost 2,000 years later. In John 4, we find the account of Jesus speaking to the Samaritan “woman by the well,” teaching her that the Father is seeking those who worship Him “in spirit and truth,” and affirming to her that He is the Messiah who will rule the Kingdom of God in Tomorrow’s World (vv. 23–26).

Later, knowing that He was hungry after the journey from Judea to Sychar, Christ’s disciples urged Him to eat something. Perhaps seeing an opportunity to teach them something about His (and *God the Father’s*) priorities, Christ told them, “I have food to eat of which you do not know... My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (vv. 32–34). *The food of Jesus Christ was to do the Work of God!*

What did He mean in this instance by “His work”? Was it His living a sinless life to be our perfect sacrifice? Was it simply teaching His disciples? The context—that Christ was referring to His encounter with the Samaritan woman—should make clear His meaning. Yet Christ’s own words describing “His work” make His meaning clear beyond doubt! Describing what He calls “My food,” He continues: “Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!”

The Father’s “work,” which Christ called His “food,” is inseparable from His looking to the “fields” of humanity—like the Samaritan woman to whom Christ had just spoken—and *going into those fields to “harvest” those whom God is calling!* To deny this essential aspect of the “work” Christ was describing (Matthew 28:19) is to completely ignore both the context and content of His teaching!

This brings us to an absolutely vital point. We see here that the “work” of preaching the gospel is the “*food*” of Christ—that which *nourishes Him and sustains Him and*

fills Him with life and vitality, which is what food does to a body! Remember, too, that the Church of God is the Body of Christ, today (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:12, 5:23; Colossians 1:18, 24).

If preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God was the *food of Christ* in the first century—that which nourished and fed His body—then does it not follow that such work is *still* the food needed by the Body of Christ? Yes it does! For, as we must recognize, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8)! What fed and sustained Christ then *feeds and sustains His Body today!*

With this in mind, we see the utter folly of those who suppose they can somehow “feed the flock” and “prepare the bride” *without* doing the work of preaching the gospel! In fact, even more tragically, we see that those who claim to “feed” God’s people **without preaching Christ’s message** to the world are *depriving* the Body of Christ of its “food”—*effectively starving the Body of Christ to death!* God will hold them—and us—accountable for such choices!

To those being guided by the Holy Spirit, this should make perfect sense. God’s purpose is to instill a supreme and overriding focus on the way of “give” deep in the hearts and minds of those whom He is preparing to inherit “all things” and rule under His Son forever. God expects our cooperation in what He is doing; He will not instill His character in us “by fiat.” But if we put our predominant focus on taking care of ourselves—*our* development, *our* nourishment—at the expense of God’s command that we reach out and share His glorious truth with *others*, we are practicing the way of “get” instead of “give”! For those who persist in practicing the way of “get,” the result will be an undernourished Body of Christ, and a people unprepared for the glorious destiny God intends for them.

WAS THE COMMISSION ONLY FOR MR. ARMSTRONG?

If Jesus Christ has not commissioned His followers to do the Work of preaching the gospel, then it would, of course, be presumptuous folly to attempt it. Indeed, there are some who insist that God gave the Philadelphian commission specifically and exclusively to Mr. Armstrong and to no one else, and that he finished it before he died. Consequently, some of these people say that it is an insult to Mr. Armstrong and an affront to God to attempt to preach the gospel to the world today. Is there any merit in their argument?

Surely, God did do a *remarkable* Work through Mr. Armstrong—a Work the likes of which had not been seen

since the first century after Christ! The Living Church of God plainly recognizes that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was an apostle of God called to raise up the Work of God in these end times! In fact, it is that very Work that we in the Living Church of God are continuing today, under the leadership of men ordained and trained by Mr. Armstrong—Dr. Roderick C. Meredith, Mr. Dibar Apartian, Mr. Richard Ames, and others. These men are striving to uphold the trust and stewardship God placed in them through Mr. Armstrong—who did not instruct any of them to stop carrying out Christ’s commission upon his death.

Remember, we see from Scripture that Christ gave His commission not just to one man, but to the Church. In all four of the gospel accounts, we read of Christ explaining the commission given to the *Church* through the apostles (Matthew 28:18–20; Mark 16:14–18; Luke 24:44–49; John 20:19–23).

Would we say that this commission was given only to the Twelve Apostles, for their time? Absolutely not! The Bible describes leaders **other than Apostles** preaching the gospel in the first century, and we should be sure that we read Christ’s commission carefully. In Matthew’s record of the Great Commission, Christ says: “lo,

I am with you always, even to the **end of the age**” (Matthew 28:20). The Work of God is the Work of the Church, and Christ’s commission is to the Church and to its leaders in *every* age.


Mr. Herbert Armstrong was as clear in this as he was in anything else he said: The very *purpose* of the church is to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God! The quotes that could be provided to establish this are *many*, but here we will note a small sample from only one of Mr. Armstrong’s many years in the ministry—a series of letters he wrote to the brethren in 1974:

“...the GREAT COMMISSION for our time—PREACH THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM IN ALL THE WORLD FOR A WITNESS UNTO ALL NATIONS, as we are now doing.... Why, dear brethren, THAT is the VERY REASON for the Church” (February 25, 1974).

“WHY has God called you and me NOW, while we still have to fight and resist the cunning of Satan, AHEAD OF TIME—instead of WHEN CHRIST SHALL HAVE COME, AND PUT SATAN AWAY, AND SET HIS HAND TO CALL EVERY LIVING PERSON? The answer is, TO GET THIS JOB DONE!” (May 2, 1974).

“And God has given us ‘the WORK’ to do as the VERY MEANS BY WHICH we may grow spiritually, so we

God’s purpose is to instill a supreme and overriding focus on the way of “give” deep in the hearts and minds of those whom He is preparing to inherit “all things” and rule under His Son forever.



At the Threshold of Tomorrow's World

By John H. Ogwyn (1949–2005)

We, God's people, are going to the Feast of Tabernacles this year with many significant events happening in the world around us. While events in the Middle East have dominated the news, important developments are going on behind the scenes in Europe as well. Most of us realize that these days we are preparing to celebrate will finally be fulfilled in the not-too-distant future. Down through the centuries, thousands of God's servants have anticipated this coming time of hope and glory, but we are now living in the generation of people that will actually experience this transition from today's evil world to tomorrow's glorious world.

How is what we are preparing to do, in the days immediately ahead, relevant to this coming new world? As we prepare to leave for the Feast of Tabernacles, do we truly grasp that we are on the threshold of tomorrow's world? If we *really* grasp this important concept, it will shape the entire way in which we go about celebrating this festival season.

WHY GO TO THE FEAST?

In Deuteronomy 14:22, Moses instructed the ancient Israelites that they were to truly tithe all of their increase every year. In this context, however, he is discussing a different tithe than the tithe intended for the Levitical priesthood (Numbers 18:21–24). This verse refers to a second tithe, one that the Israelites were commanded to “eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain

and your new wine and your oil, of the firstlings of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always” (Deuteronomy 14:23). In this verse we encounter the **first** reason that God commanded His people to come to the Feast. That reason is simply that we may learn how to fear—*to deeply reverence*—the Eternal Creator God more deeply and fully.

The second reason for going to the Feast is spelled out in verse 26: “And you shall spend that money [your second tithe] for whatever your heart desires... you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household.” The heads of households in ancient Israel were commanded to appear before the Eternal with their families and *to rejoice* there before Him. Learning to deeply reverence and stand in awe of God is viewed as a prelude to rejoicing with the whole family in God's presence.

Underlying the Israelites' attendance at the Feast was the concept that they were literally going to appear before their Creator. They were going to be eating “*before the LORD your God*” (v. 23)—that is, in His very presence! The festivals were times to be with God, and to fellowship with Him in a very special way.

If we have the realization that we are coming into God's very presence in a special way at this time of year, it will set a tone for all of our festival activities. We come before Him to learn His ways more deeply—to develop an even more deep and profound awe of the great God. We also come so that we may rejoice together as a family in His presence. Understanding these principles ourselves, we should desire

to instill them into our children. If we all grasp that we are coming into the presence of God in a very special way at the festivals, this will have a tremendous effect on every part of our celebration and approach.

Even many in the world understand this concept, though they apply it wrongly. You may recall an event widely broadcast on television a few years ago. Pope John Paul II had come to the United States on a special visit, and was to hold an outdoor service in Washington, DC. A few individuals had been pre-selected for presentation to him prior to his address. Among them was a family consisting of a father and mother and many children ranging from early teens down to toddler age. It was interesting to watch the children as they moved onto the stage and went with their parents to meet the Pope. They were all “scrubbed and shiny” as the saying goes, and were attired in their “Sunday best.” Clearly, their parents had impressed upon them the specialness of the occasion, and they were on their best behavior. They were deeply conscious of coming into the presence of one they viewed as holy, one they viewed—however wrongly—as the very Vicar of Christ on earth. Their sense of awe and wonder at the occasion was clearly evident. The object of their awe and wonder was wrong, but we can find a lesson here. If the world and professing Christianity can often readily place its awe and reverence in things against God, how much more ought true Christians be ready to approach the true God with awe and reverence?

If we truly understand the concept that we come to the Feast *to appear*

before God and to feast in His presence, this will instill within each of us a sense of awe. We, in turn, need to convey that sense to our children. This is why it is important for families to sit together at the Feast, and to discuss the sermons and sermonettes at appropriate times during the day. It is vital that parents help their children absorb maximum benefit from the services and come to understand more about God and His ways during the Feast. We are coming to worship the Creator, the Lord of Hosts, together as a family unit.

Understanding the real *why* of going to the Feast will ensure that we strive to be at every service on time. It will mean that we seek to get sufficient rest so that we can be alert and attentive during the services. Additionally, it will mean that our eating and drinking and our fun activities are carried out with the realization that we are rejoicing *in the presence of our God*. If such an understanding is present, then there will never be any excessive drinking or questionable activities—because who would ever do such things in the presence of God?

Celebrating the Feast in this way is preparation for being able to share it with all humanity in a few short years. We are, after all, standing on the threshold of a brand-new world—a world in which we will have the opportunity to directly assist Jesus Christ in serving humanity and preparing individuals for an inheritance in God's family. Have you thought about what it will be like to go through the transition and see a brand new world—built upon a very different value system—ushered in? The Apostle John explained to his readers that this present world—based upon the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life—was destined to pass from the scene. Those who love this system and its values will pass away with it, while those who truly

serve their Creator will abide forever (1 John 2:15–17).

THE INAUGURATION OF TOMORROW'S WORLD

The world in which we live is filled with pain and suffering. The Apostle Paul in Romans 8 compared the world and its current sufferings to a woman in labor pains. He said that the entire creation was “in labor,” yearning for the manifestation of the sons of God (v. 22).

Festival time is preparation time for Tomorrow's World, and for whatever time stretches out between now and then. We are in preparation to be those who will be entrusted with the government of the coming age. Do we truly grasp that reality?

The fall festivals, all of which come in the seventh month of God's sacred calendar, focus on the fulfillment of the hope that God has given to mankind. They anticipate the time when God's people will actually put on immortality and enter into glory. Most professing Christians do not understand the great purpose that God is working out for all of mankind. Most think that right now is the only day of salvation, and must therefore conclude that the vast majority of all of mankind is lost forever. God is not in some desperate contest with the devil trying to determine whether the world will be saved or lost. Rather, God is in control and has declared the conclusion and outcome of His great plan from the very beginning.

A few years from now, the most awesome series of events in the history of mankind will be ushered in by the blast of angelic trumpets. We celebrate

that time of God's coming intervention every year on the Feast of Trumpets.

Revelation 8 and 9 contain most of the information about the first six of these trumpets, with additional information about the seventh trumpet contained in chapters 10 and 11. Revelation 8:1–2 shows that the seven trumpets collectively constitute the seventh seal, the time period called the Day of the Lord or the time of God's wrath. They represent His end-time punishments on rebellious nations who continue to ignore the warnings of God's true servants.

It is the sounding of the seventh trumpet, mentioned in Revelation 11:15, that ushers in the final aspect of God's intervention. This will signal the return of Jesus Christ, God's final judgment and conquest of the nations and the resurrection of the saints to immortality. It will also signal the pouring out of the bowls containing the seven last plagues upon rebellious humanity (Revelation 16). These last seven plagues occur after the seventh trumpet has been blown and prior to the binding and removal of Satan described in Revelation 20:1–3.

The next Holy Day celebrated by God's people is the Day of Atonement, which anticipates the time that Satan is put away and no longer allowed to walk the earth, tempting and deceiving human beings. Have you ever wondered why God chose to make this particular festival a fast day? Have you ever noticed that God anciently decreed that the year of the Jubilee began on the Day of Atonement, not nine days earlier on the first day of the month, the Feast of Trumpets? Why?

In Revelation 12, God uses the metaphor of a great dragon to describe Satan. In the Old Testament, the term Leviathan is used for the dragon. Job 41 describes this dragon-like Leviathan and concludes in verse 34 by asserting that “he is king over all the children of pride.” Pride, of course, was Lucifer's original sin. Ezekiel 28:17 informs us

that his heart became lifted up, while Isaiah 14:13–14 makes plain that he sought to ascend into heaven, exalt his own throne and be like the Most High.

Fasting is described in Scripture as a means by which we humble our souls (Psalm 35:13). In fasting on Atonement, we are demonstrating that we value humility over pride and are rejecting that great dragon who reigns over all of the children of pride. Once Satan—the enslaver of mankind through sin—is put away, then liberty can be proclaimed throughout the land. This is what the law of the Jubilee, as given in Leviticus 25, foreshadowed—it was the time when the dispossessed could return to their inheritance and when slaves were released. It anticipated the days of the Messiah, who would proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord by offering deliverance and liberty. These events are linked together in the prophecies of Isaiah 27. We learn in verse 1 that God will punish Leviathan the twisted serpent. Verse 13 describes the subsequent blast of the Jubilee trumpet announcing freedom to the Israelite captives and their return to their inheritance in the Holy Land. This sets the stage for the entire Millennium, symbolized by the Feast of Tabernacles.

A FEAST OF FAT THINGS

This future time when the Eternal will make “a feast of fat things” to all of the nations (cf. Isaiah 25) is characterized by the festive nature of the Feast of Tabernacles. There will be a 1,000-year time of peace and prosperity, when all of mankind learns and follows the ways of God. The curses that were the result of sin will be removed. All will finally have rest from sorrow, from fear and from hard bondage (Isaiah 14:3). The whole earth will be at rest, and will “break forth into singing” (v. 7). Fear, sorrow and hard bondage were all first mentioned in Genesis 3, and represented the

aftermath of man’s sin. Once Satan is removed, and the government of the Messiah reigns over all of the earth, there will be true rest and peace.

The Feast of Tabernacles was intended to be both a time of festivity and of spiritual renewal. The Israelites dwelt in temporary dwellings and decorated them in a festive manner with available vegetation (Leviticus 23:40–42). They ate and drank and celebrated in the presence of God, giving thanks to Him for His bounty. They were to assemble every day to hear God’s word read and expounded (cf. Nehemiah 8:18). As we do this in our modern setting, we focus our attention on the coming world of which we desire so deeply to be a part. We should come away from the Feast with our appetites whetted, and our minds more educated, about the wonderful world that is to come. We should be gaining more understanding about the whole way of life that in just a few short years we will be helping others to learn.

When the Feast is understood in this context, it is far more than a vacation. It is a time for giving and sharing with others (cf. Nehemiah 8:10), as well as a time for celebrating and learning. There is a new world coming, based upon values far different from those of the world in which we now live. As God’s people, we are to be preparing for that new world, and anticipating it eagerly.

Coming at the conclusion of the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles is the Holy Day that is least understood by both Jews and professing Christians alike. In the Old Testament it is called simply the “eighth day” or the day of solemn assembly. We commonly use the term Last Great Day, based upon the description given in John 7:37.

What will happen to the billions of people who have lived and died without ever having really *known* the truth of God? Are they doomed to eternal damnation, even though they

never even had a chance for salvation? The answer to this often-pondered but much-misunderstood question is revealed in the meaning of this final Holy Day of God’s great plan.

It is in the aftermath of a thousand years of Christ’s government on this earth that “the rest of the dead”—those individuals both obscure and famous who have lived throughout mankind’s history—will be once more restored to life. The books of the Bible, the criteria by which all must be judged, will be opened to their understanding and the Book of Life will be opened so that they will have a chance to now have their names inscribed there. Only after every human being has had a chance to accept or reject God’s salvation will the final judgment of God take place to destroy the unrepentant wicked. It is in the aftermath of that time that the New Heavens and the New Earth will come into being, representing the “end of the beginning” and the very threshold of eternity!

With a deeper realization of the meaning of these festivals, our celebration of them should be enhanced. When we think about why God wants us to come before Him—so we can learn to fear Him more fully and to rejoice in His presence—this should determine our approach in celebrating these festivals. We are preparing to participate in a government that will finally solve the problems of this hurting and strife-torn world. Festival time is preparation time for Tomorrow’s World, and for whatever time stretches out between now and then. We are in preparation to be those who will be entrusted with the government of the coming age. Do we truly grasp that reality?

As we stand on the threshold of tomorrow’s world observing God’s fall festivals, we are celebrating the soon-coming time that represents the fulfillment of mankind’s age-old dreams and hopes. We are truly approaching the days of hope and glory! ■

The Proverbs: A Study on Diligence

By Dibar Apartian

Some people seem to have a natural ability to succeed; others seem to fail in most of what they do. What makes the difference between success and failure—between reaching the goal and missing the mark?

In many cases, the answer can be found in one word: **diligence**. But, just what is diligence? How can we have it? Where can we find it?

If we look up “diligence” in a dictionary or thesaurus, how do we find it defined? Persevering application. Assiduousness. Industriousness. Vigor. Care.

Diligence is an *attitude* that drives us to accomplish a mission successfully. Simply put, diligence is the opposite—the **extreme** opposite—of laziness.

But, what about you? Consider your tendencies. Are **you** truly diligent in your projects or undertakings? Do you pursue your projects with a positive attitude? Do you work as hard as you can? Are you really determined to succeed? Do you pursue your goals with perseverance and determination, convinced that you are able to succeed? If so, you are a diligent individual. This is what life requires of us: effort, courage, confidence that we can succeed.

The book of Proverbs teaches us much about diligence. How does God look at diligence? Are His teachings easy to follow, easy to understand? What are the methods He recommends in the Bible? In short, what are His instructions on the subject of diligence?

Through many striking examples, contrasts and comparisons, the book of Proverbs explains and illustrates the concept of diligence. It teaches us the secrets of how to be diligent—not the way we human beings think, but the way God the Creator thinks.

Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs under God's inspiration. We in God's Church need to study this book's instructions much more seriously than most people do. Since these instructions are inspired of God, they should be a part of our daily Bible study and our spiritual nourishment. God will give us the right counsel in every case—the right approach and judgment, the right guidance. Each chapter of Proverbs is a practical manual for success. Each proverb relating to diligence shows the difference between failure and success—between missing the mark and achieving the goal.

For instance, Solomon writes, “Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep—so shall your poverty come on

you like a prowler, and your need like an armed man” (Proverbs 6:6–11).

God compares the ant and the sluggard to show us the difference—the contrast—between the two opposites: diligence and laziness. Sometimes we want to achieve our goals without working hard, without making the necessary sacrifice. Undoubtedly, that is **not** the way to succeed. Success **does** require hard work, as well as learning and studying to prepare ourselves for the tasks ahead.

LAZY HANDS LEAD TO POVERTY

We read, “He who deals with a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes one rich” (Proverbs 10:4). A slack hand is a lazy hand—an inactive hand. Such a hand leads to poverty. If you lead your life with slackness, you are headed for poverty. On the contrary, if you are diligent—if you firmly pursue your tasks—you enrich yourself.

How do **you** measure up in this respect? Answer yourself honestly. Do you easily abandon a project because you find it difficult? Always count the cost before starting a project. Weigh the positives and the negatives—then, once you start work on it, persevere until the end without becoming discouraged. Do not give up. Do not quit. Do not follow the footsteps of those who fail to make it to the finish line.

We read, “He who gathers in summer is a wise son; he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame” (Proverbs 10:5). You must work in due season. In agriculture, if you do not sow a field in the right season, you will have nothing much to harvest. You will find yourself poor. This principle can be applied in other fields. We might have brilliant ideas, but they will fail if we do not apply them the **right way** and at the **right time**.

“The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting, but diligence is man's precious possession” (Proverbs 12:27). What good is it to go hunting or fishing if we do not follow through to prepare what we catch? We need to work to finish what we begin—without ceasing to do our part and without waiting on others. We need to be diligent. Diligent people will always be able to provide for their needs with God's help. They are ready to do what is necessary. “The person who labors, labors for himself, for his hungry mouth drives him on” (Proverbs 16:26). We all need to eat to survive, and so we must work (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

But there should also be joy in work. If we enjoy our jobs (and we should), and if we commit our works to God, our labor will make us appreciate what we earn to support ourselves. Our very existence will drive us to work hard, and we will be blessed in our work.

“The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich” (Proverbs 13:4). Some people complain about their situation. They may blame their failure on a lack of education, talents or resources. They justify their idleness by talking about what they do not have, instead of making the most of what they do have, and striving to gain what they lack. Inactivity can become a barrier that the idle seem unable to overcome. Often, failure is not caused by scarcity of talents, but by laziness. We want to **have** more but **do** less. This goes against the principles that lead to success. Fight against laziness, follow God’s instructions, walk in the way of His commandments, do not make excuses, do not blame others for your problems—and God will make the path for success straight for you (Proverbs 15:19).

Most people who fail **talk** much, without **doing** much. We read: “In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty” (Proverbs 14:23). Talk without action means nothing. Unimplemented ideas lead to nothing. But those who are diligent produce results. They understand the difference between empty words and serious work.

WISDOM OR HUMAN REASONING?

“The king’s favor is toward a wise servant, but his wrath is against him who causes shame” (Proverbs 14:35). Those in authority, when they entrust a task to someone under them, are relying on their servant’s wisdom to accomplish the mission. Such a servant is called wise if he assumes his responsibilities—fulfills his mission—with understanding and wisdom. But if he does not do what is required of him—if he becomes slack—he will bring shame to his superior. Do you see what this means? **You** can make the difference between success and failure in your workplace! **You** can bring shame or honor to your boss—and even to God.

“Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts [plans] will be established” (Proverbs 16:3). This is an absolute guarantee for success, because God does not lie. He keeps His promises. Put this proverb to the test. Commit your works to God. This means doing what is right in His eyes. You cannot be blessed if your works are against God’s will.

“The lazy man says, ‘There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!’” (Proverbs 22:13). Obviously, that excuse seems ridiculous—but that type of attitude will prevent us from executing our plans and progressing in life. We must open our eyes to see the help God is giving us. Know that it is His will for us to succeed. He will always give us His help and protection.

“The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly” (Proverbs 26:16). We all have our reasons for being lazy and they seem reasonable to us. Does this apply to you? We usually find it easy to notice this

behavior in others, but we do not recognize it so easily in ourselves. You probably have your own opinions on many subjects—and you hold on to them. And you esteem your opinions to be better than those of others. Most individuals think that they are right—at least more right than their neighbors. We should have wisdom to discern which of our thoughts are righteous and which are not; which thoughts are intelligent, and which are not. We should ask God to help us follow the thoughts and ideas that are pleasing to Him—those that are inspired by His wisdom and intelligence.

“Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread” (Proverbs 20:13). “Laziness casts one into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger” (Proverbs 19:15). The Bible often repeats the same principles in different ways, because we all learn differently. If you waste your time—if you are negligent, if you love excessive sleep—your efforts will not produce the desired results.

OPEN YOUR EYES!

Open your eyes—first to learn, then to put into practice what you have learned! Certainly, we do not all have the same abilities or energy levels, but we all have the abilities we need to fulfill the purpose for which God has created us! Keep this in mind. This is how to understand God’s justice. God is your Creator. Trust Him. Follow the way that He has laid out before you. By so doing, the desired end-result will be guaranteed. Never make vain excuses. Do not rationalize your vain reasoning. Diligently face reality with God’s help. Diligence will lead to success; laziness will lead to failure.

“The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty” (Proverbs 21:5). Think and plan ahead before you act. We are usually in a hurry to see results. It is better to proceed slowly and surely than to act precipitously. Avoid shortcuts, and concentrate on the task at hand. Prepare yourself mentally to be strong in case of setbacks. “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small” (Proverbs 24:10). Most people abandon their projects when they encounter trials. In reality, we should be more courageous and more persevering when we encounter trials.

Do not try to “escape” life by seeking temporary physical pleasures (Proverbs 21:17). The word “pleasure” in this context means pleasure in a physical sense, not joy in the spiritual sense. Many people give themselves over to carnal pleasures and intoxicating vices, without really obtaining the satisfaction they are looking for. Long-lasting joy and happiness will be found in the way of God. Certainly, we can use and enjoy physical things, but we should never abuse them. Sadly, in this world, most people give priority to physical pleasures that end in disappointment. “For the drunkard and the glutton will

come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags” (Proverbs 23:21).

“He who is slothful in his work is a brother to him who is a great destroyer” (Proverbs 18:9). Slothfulness leads to failure and destruction. Failure is often due to laziness—physical, mental or even spiritual. Being diligent is part of our calling as Christians. We must “bear fruit”—produce results (Galatians 5:22–23). Be diligent in all that you do, especially in maintaining your relationship with God (Hebrews 2:3). Spend time with your Bible to understand God’s mind. In your prayers, ask God to help you know Him better. Be willing to receive God’s instructions. Admit your faults and your shortcomings.

SEEK GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS!

Do not justify yourself. On the contrary, ask God daily—every time you talk to Him—to instruct you in the way of righteousness, to instruct you, to teach you the humility that you need. Every human being needs to be humble. Ask Him to help you understand the changes that you need to implement in your life in order to overcome slothfulness and start living a life of diligence (Proverbs 19:25).

“Prepare your outside work, make it fit for yourself in the field; and afterward build your house... I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man

devoid of understanding; and there it was, all overgrown with thorns; its surface was covered with nettles; its stone wall was broken down. When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest; So shall your poverty come like a prowler, and your need like an armed man” (Proverbs 24:27, 30–34). Heed God’s counsel in the book of Proverbs. You will see how your life will change. You will be happier, and you will face trials with a better attitude. Do your part and you will always be blessed, no matter what trials you encounter in life.

The Bible reveals these fundamental truths so that we are without excuse for failure. Those who submit to God—who do His will—have an absolute guarantee for success. Nobody was born to fail. Nobody was born to suffer forever. We should thank God for giving us all the tools that we need to achieve our goal—to fulfill the purpose for which we were born.

The more you study the Bible, the wiser you will be—if you put into practice what you learn. God is always good to those who walk in His way, which leads to success and happiness. We were created to be born into the Kingdom of God. But to fulfill God’s purpose for us requires diligence on our part. Submit to God. Do His will. Stop complaining and making excuses to justify your mistakes. Trust in God, follow the way that He has laid out in the Bible—and you will be on the path to success. ■

Under the Mighty Hand of God

Continued from page 9

the LORD” if we find we are in error (Lamentations 3:40). But will we? Will we hear Jesus’ prayer *now* to be “one” in Christ with each other (John 17:20–21) *now*, under God and under His appointed human authority in His Church (1 Corinthians 12:28; 1 Timothy 2:7)? Those who say they are spiritually “rich” and “have need of nothing” are violating 1 Peter 5:6 and are *not* humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God.

Some have become *apathetic*, and are not zealously working out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). Others have rejected authority and have drifted off into small, *ineffective* groups, not only *not* learning submission now, but also *incapable* of powerfully doing the work of warning the world as required in Mark 16:15 and elsewhere.

Others, with “itching ears” are pursuing *unsound doctrines* (2 Timothy 4:3), and following false ministers and self-appointed prophets whose preaching may once have been founded on truth, but has become demonstrably fallacious and even heretical because of their rebelliousness.

Still others, using *human reasoning* like those in Samuel’s day, have rejected godly government, have watered down doctrine, and have made “doing the Work” a secondary priority. Some have adopted a Babylonish religious custom—*practiced by most false churches*, from the Catholics and Eastern Orthodox who “elect” their Popes and Patriarchs, to the Baptists or Protestants who “elect” their ministry—and have decided to *vote* for who and what *they* want. However, from Genesis to Revelation there is *not a single verse that endorses balloting for offices within God’s Church!* Note that “casting lots” was *not* voting—the lot was thrown and God decided how the lot fell. It was

not a tabulation to determine the majority opinion (Proverbs 16:33; John 19:24; Acts 1:26)!

God does not intend us to be apathetic *or* divided, and Christ is judging us *now* (1 Peter 4:17) regarding whether or not we will choose *now* to live by every word of God (Luke 4:4).

Will we make excuses and *stray* from the faith (1 Timothy 6:20–21)? Will we even completely *leave* the faith (2 Peter 3:17)? Can we learn to humble ourselves under God’s mighty hand now? Or, will we fall into *Satan’s* hand during the coming Great Tribulation (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 12:12; Revelation 13:7)?

God desires to lose none whom He has called (John 6:39), that we may be part of the firstfruit harvest that Christ will raise up as His glorified saints at the seventh trump (1 Corinthians 15:52)! Let us learn to be “one” *now* (John 17:22), humbling ourselves under God’s mighty hand now, *so we may be exalted in due time* (1 Peter 5:6)! ■

Tomorrow's World Special Presentations: Preaching the Gospel with Power!

Tomorrow's World Special Presentations have given thousands of *Tomorrow's World* magazine subscribers the opportunity to learn more about the Living Church of God, and in many cases to hear directly from *Tomorrow's World* telecast presenters or magazine writers. These presentations serve as a powerful introduction to the Living Church of God, relating the prophetic themes of the *Tomorrow's World* telecast and magazine to the Work being done by the Church.

Although presentations have been going on for several years, the formalized *Tomorrow's World* Special Presentation (TWSP) program was given new emphasis in 2009 by Presiding Evangelist Dr. Roderick C. Meredith, and the number of presentations has increased greatly since then. More subscribers were invited to TWSPs in just the first half of 2010 than in 2006–2008 combined. Since January 2010, more than 2,100 non-member subscribers have attended one or more presentations.

Despite the lingering effects of the stroke he suffered in September 2008, Dr. Meredith has been able to give three TWSPs in 2010. On April 3 he spoke to about 234 guests in Joplin, Missouri—including more than 130 non-member *Tomorrow's World* subscribers. On May 29 he spoke in London, England, to a crowd of 290, nearly 200 of whom were non-member subscribers. In Dallas, Texas, on July 10, he spoke to more than 280, of whom more than half were non-member subscribers.

Dr. Douglas S. Winnail, Director of Church Administration and regular *Tomorrow's World* magazine writer, has been the busiest Headquarters evangelist in presenting TWSPs, having held 18 presentations from his November 2007 presentation in Boone, North Carolina to his August 2010 presentation scheduled for Memphis, Tennessee.

Evangelist Richard F. Ames, following on the success of his Barbados TWSP in February 2008, has given two more Caribbean TWSPs in 2010—in Kingston, Jamaica and in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. Across the United States, this year, Mr. Ames has also given presentations in Atlanta, Georgia; Brooklyn, New York and Los Angeles, California.

The Canadian Work is participating very actively in the TWSP program. Evangelist Gerald Weston, Regional Director for Canada, gave 32 TWSPs from June 2009 through June 2010, with

another 11 currently scheduled between August and October 2010. Mr. Ames gave a presentation in Toronto, Ontario in September 2009, and Canadian ministers Mr. Norm Aitchison and Mr. Michael Elertson have also given presentations.

In Europe and Africa, Regional Director Mr. Rod King has since August 2009 given presentations in Ireland and South Africa, as well as in the United Kingdom.

Typically, after each presentation, a handful of subscribers will inquire about attending Sabbath services. Since 2006, more than 360 prospective members have

begun attending Church services after attending a TWSP, and at least two new Church congregations have been established to accommodate the growth.

When Dr. Winnail or another visiting evangelist gives a TWSP, there is usually a follow-up presentation a week or two later by a local pastor—and several pastors have given stand-alone TWSPs without a visiting evangelist. The Church Administration Department is looking forward to more area pastors giving TWSPs even without the involvement of a visiting evangelist.

Although these presentations are of special benefit to our *Tomorrow's World* subscribers, another benefit is that they help to involve the local congregation and its members in preaching the Gospel to the world as a witness. As stated in the "Planning Handbook" released by the Church Administration Department, TWSPs "provide local brethren with an energizing opportunity to be on the front lines of preaching the gospel. Local brethren are a crucial part of the success of these local presentations, as 'ambassadors for Christ' (2 Corinthians 5:20)."

If a *Tomorrow's World* Special Presentation comes to your area, be sure to become involved. And even if there is not, please continue to pray fervently for the continuing success of these important vehicles for preaching the true gospel as a witness, and feeding those new brethren whom God may call.



Dr. MEREDITH IN LONDON, MAY 29, 2010



Dr. WINNAIL ASKS, "WHAT'S AHEAD FOR AMERICA?"



Dr. MEREDITH CHATS WITH LONDON VISITORS.

Is the Door Closed?

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may enter His Kingdom at Christ's coming. In 47 years I have observed that ONLY those whose hearts are fully IN THE WORK continue to overcome and GROW SPIRITUALLY, and ENDURE" (November 18, 1974).

Can it be any clearer? In fact, exactly the opposite of what some claim, it is *failing* to preach the gospel to the world—let alone *refusing* to go to the world—that would be an incredible *insult* to Mr. Armstrong! Consider these words of Jesus Christ: "For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors" (John 4:37–38). Nearly every minister involved in this present-day Work of God has observed that many—not all, but *many*—of those he contacts in response to the *Tomorrow's World* telecast and special presentations are people who had seen and heard Mr. Armstrong in the 60s, 70s, or 80s, but who lost contact with the Work due to the apostasy of the 90s. The Work of the Living Church of God gave them the opportunity to find the Church once again, and become a part of the

growing body of Christ! Truly, we continue to reap from Mr. Armstrong's labors!

Should these individuals—whose minds began to be opened by God through Mr. Armstrong's efforts—be forgotten? Are we to ignore them? Are we to turn our backs on them? In the name of Jesus Christ, how can we? How *dare* we? Talk about an insult to Herbert W. Armstrong!

WORK NOW OR WAIT UNTIL LATER?

In John 4, Jesus said, "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" (v. 35). In Jerusalem, the great harvest came in the autumn, four months after the "firstfruits" harvest. Reflect for a moment on Christ's words, keeping in mind that Pentecost (picturing the start of the Church age) comes four months before the Feast of Tabernacles (picturing the great harvest of humanity in the Millennium). In effect, those who prefer to "wait" until the Millennium—who decline to do the Work of preaching the gospel now, in the Church age—are neglecting the imperative Jesus described in John 4, while the fields are still white for harvest *now*!

Yes, *this is the day!* We are not to make excuses—we are to focus on the harvest God is providing *now*! And, as we have seen so abundantly in the Living Church of God, He is providing a harvest.

YOU WERE CALLED FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS!

When it comes to going *all out* to preach the life-changing gospel to a world that so desperately needs to hear it, an undeniable fact remains: Just as Mordecai charged his young ward in Esther 4:14, *you have been called by God for such a time as this!* There is a *reason* why those in the first resurrection are described as "those who turn many to righteousness" (Daniel 12:3). Do not let someone rob you of your purpose with foolish and deceptive counsel. Preaching the truth of God to this sin-torn world, both with our lives and with our words, is our sacred duty, our solemn responsibility, our great commission, and our humbling privilege. As the Apostle Paul—a passionate preacher of the gospel if ever there was one—said so long ago in 1 Corinthians 9:16, so must we say now: "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!" ■

Build Now for Your Future!

Continued from page 2

WE MUST REALLY PREPARE

Do you and I actually *do* this? Very few of us do to the extent that we probably should. Undoubtedly, this is part of what Jesus meant when He indicated that we should "feed" on Him and on His word (John 6:57). Through constant study, meditation and "thinking through" how God's laws and statutes apply under the New Covenant, we should inculcate deeply into our hearts and minds the principles God has revealed in chapters 20–24 of Exodus, chapters 16–27 of Leviticus, chapters 18–19, 27–30 and 35–36 of Numbers, and

chapters 12–28 of Deuteronomy. As we do so, we will be *far better prepared* to make right judgments in our own lives, in directing our own families, our businesses and in whatever positions of service God may give us in His Church today. For these principles reveal the "mind of God."

When Moses faced a difficult decision that literally involved life or death, he sought God's direct guidance. This was referred to as "the mind of the LORD" (Leviticus 24:10–15). In like manner, the Apostle Paul was inspired to instruct us, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16). "Inspiration," in the Greek language, literally means "God-breathed!"

And, as you know, the *only written scripture* at that time was what we call the Old Testament. Jesus referred to this same principle when He commanded

His followers to live “by every word of God” (Luke 4:4).

Therefore, when we continually “feed” on Christ by truly **studying** and **meditating** on the Bible—and especially on God’s law and His *statutes*—we are *specifically preparing ourselves* to be those kings and priests who will soon assist Christ in *ruling this world* (Revelation 5:9–10).

Brethren, please *think about* the opportunity we will soon be given to help bring to the entire world a depth of *peace, prosperity* and absolute joy that it has never before experienced! Under Jesus Christ’s personal direction, and *filled* with His Spirit, we will literally “wipe away tears” from untold millions of the suffering and starving peoples of Africa, Asia and elsewhere all over this earth. We will teach people the “way of peace”—which is, of course, based on genuine obedience to God’s laws and His statutes. And, as **Spirit-born** members of the very Family of God, we will make absolutely sure that the nations do **not** “learn war” anymore (Micah 4:3).

SEEK WISDOM AND WISE COUNSEL

In addition to specifically *studying* God’s laws and *statutes*—and **meditating** on how they will apply in the soon-coming millennial reign of Christ—we should also concentrate on seeking *wisdom* and developing the right kind of *leadership*! Of course, the entire Bible is filled with instruction and examples of using wisdom. But the biblical book that most specifically focuses on wisdom is the book of Proverbs. I encourage *all* of you to read it, again and again. Really **study** this book, and inculcate its principles into the very way you think! The inspired writer of Proverbs tells us, “My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:1–6).

If you and I really do “cry out” for discernment and wisdom as we are instructed—if we regularly try to use wisdom in **all** our decisions—then we will develop, over time, the “mind of God” that will help prepare us to assist Christ in **ruling** this entire world in a truly righteous manner. And we must never forget to *seek wise counsel* regularly! Far too many people fall into the trap of thinking that they can just develop the *self*, learn some “smarts,” and somehow be a “lone ranger” in their decisions and in their lives. But God’s word clearly indicates that such an

approach is *dead wrong*. Proverbs tells us, “Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established” (Proverbs 15:22). Again, this masterful book instructs us, “A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against all wise judgment. A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart” (Proverbs 18:1–2).

In context with verse 2, as some Bible commentaries point out, verse 1 shows us that a “lone wolf” type of person often seeks his *own desires* and “rages against all sound wisdom.” Too often, such people think they do *not* need to seek wise counsel, and their “plans” go “awry,” as we read in Proverbs 15:22.

Let us all humble ourselves and learn to regularly seek *wise counsel*—**not** just from our friends or buddies who may already think as we do—but to seek a “**multitude**” of counselors, as God’s word instructs. Learn to tap into the wisdom and experience of a fair number of people—*especially* those who are deeply converted and are learning to develop “the mind of God.” Of course, in any decision involving large financial transactions, take the advice of those who are *trained* and *experienced* in such matters. In decisions such as which television set or computer to purchase, seek out the technical expertise of those with knowledge in the relevant field. And on any *major* decision in your life, as on any major move or financial expenditure, regularly and carefully involve older, dedicated brethren and family members who may help you see the “Big Picture.”

In every way, learn to use your growing wisdom and your knowledge of God’s laws to *build*, to *help* and to *serve* others, and so help them also find success in this life—and as “firstfruits” in Tomorrow’s World, if God is calling them. Dear brethren, our Father in heaven has set before us a truly *magnificent future*! If we really “go all out” in walking with God, in truly preparing ourselves to obey and to serve Him and to let Jesus Christ *live His life* within us, we will soon have the opportunity to help and to serve this *entire world* in a manner beyond what most of us can fully imagine! *God is good*! His soon-coming Kingdom is **real**. Let us deeply understand this and do *our part* to specifically prepare ourselves—in every way we can—to “grow in grace and in knowledge” and so prepare ourselves to actually *be there* in the coming World Government soon to be set up under our Savior and Lord—the living Jesus Christ who is working with our minds and hearts *right now*! Brethren, let us truly **act** on these vital principles and be “ready” when Christ returns!

With Christian love,



LOCAL

CHURCH NEWS

Ordinations

Mr. Terrence Kennell was ordained an elder on the Sabbath of May 29 by Pastor Mr. Dexter Wakefield and Elder Mr. Rick Thomas. Mr. Kennell and his wife, Nohora, serve in the Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, congregation. It was a joyful and moving occasion for the brethren there and the congregation broke into applause when the ordination was announced.

Mr. James English was ordained an elder on the Sabbath of June 12 by Pastor Mr. Jack Lowe. Mr. English serves the Atlanta, Georgia, congregation.

Anniversaries

Mr. and Mrs. Travis (Brenda) Nicholson celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on May 22. They were treated to a special cake and gifts by brethren of the Blairsville, Georgia congregation, which Mr. Nicholson serves as an elder. A wonderful covered-dish meal added to the occasion, which was attended by the Nicholsons' children and grandchildren, all of whom attend the Blairsville congregation. Thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Nicholson for their shining example of dedication and love!

Mr. and Mrs. Jon (JoAnn) Elertson of the Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin congregation celebrated 40 years of marriage on June 20. They have been part of God's Church for more than 30 years, rearing three children (and nurturing five grandchildren) in the faith, and serving tirelessly—steadfastly demonstrating through their marriage their commitment to God's way of life.

In Loving Memory

Mr. Chester A. Atwood, Jr., died May 15 at age 79. He is survived by his wife, Maxine. They both began attending the Springfield, Missouri, congregation about two years ago after attending a *Tomorrow's World* Special Presentation. Mr. Karl Beyersdorfer conducted his funeral service on May 19.

Mrs. Sonja (Sunny) Cherney died June 13, at her home in Valdosta, Georgia. She was 87 years old. Mrs. Cherney was a faithful servant of God for 37 years and was loved as a mother by others in the Thomasville, Georgia, congregation. A light to everyone around her and a delight to be with, she will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Mrs. Marie Peagler, of Summerville, South Carolina, died June 17 at age 82. She was a long-time member of the Walterboro, S.C., congregation and will be greatly missed by all who knew her humble disposition and her dedication to God's Church. Mrs. Peagler enjoyed the North Carolina mountains, reading and crocheting. She is survived by two daughters, Michal Garlock and Kathy Cotter; one son, Russell Peagler; one sister, Virginia Love; seven grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. Her funeral was conducted by Mr. Bill Whitaker on Sunday, June 20.

Mrs. Ann Stein, of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, died June 16 at age 85. She and her husband, Walter, who died in 2002, were visited on an early baptizing tour by Dr. Roderick Meredith and were very active in God's Church through the years. She was baptized in 1951. They were pioneer members of the Oklahoma City congregation when it was raised up in 1960 by Mr. Carl McNair. Mrs. Stein always had nice things to say about people and had a way of making even strangers feel welcome. Mrs. Stein is survived by two daughters, Vicki Dunlap and Patty Pope, five grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, numerous cousins, nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends. She was deeply loved and will be greatly missed. Mr. Karl Beyersdorfer conducted her funeral on June 21.

Upstate South Carolina Spring Holy Day Weekend

Visitors from nine states joined the Anderson, South Carolina congregation during the weekend of April 2–5 for the third Upstate South Carolina Spring Holy Day Weekend. Weekend activities were held in Greenville, SC. The 46 guests came from as far away as California.

On Friday night, Anderson pastor Mr. Ron Poole conducted a Bible Study on “Pure Religion.” Mr. Rod McNair, Associate Pastor of the Charlotte, North Carolina congregation, joined us for Sabbath services and spoke on “Contentment and the Exodus.”

On Saturday evening, participants enjoyed the Black and White Banquet and Ball. An excellent meal was provided by the Greenville Hilton staff and even included matzos. Robert Pitts from the Anderson congregation was the deejay for the dance and played a selection of music that kept the dance floor full throughout the evening.

Fifteen runners got up bright and early Sunday morning to kick off the inaugural Upstate South Carolina 5K race in Cleveland Park. Martin Martinez of the Kansas City, Missouri congregation nosed out Leo Dove from the Winchester, Virginia, congregation for the overall win. Kristin Vorel from the Winchester, Virginia congregation was winner of the ladies’ race.

Next up was a co-ed softball game. Participants are ready for a rematch at next year’s event. After a lunch of southern fried chicken and the “fixings,” many enjoyed a walk from Cleveland Park to Falls Park in downtown Greenville. Falls Park is the location of the Liberty Bridge, which is a one-of-a-kind suspension bridge spanning the Reedy River and Falls. Everyone enjoyed the millennial beauty of the spring foliage and flowers and the landscaping along the Reedy River.

The weekend concluded with Holy Day services on Monday. The morning sermon on “Remove the Leaven of Hypocrisy” was given by Mr. Ron Poole. Gaylyn Bonjour, Asheboro pastor and manager of the Mail Processing Department of the Living Church of God, gave the afternoon sermon on “Lessons of the Days of Unleavened Bread.”

After the final service, participants had a hard time pulling themselves away. Many commented that this weekend was the best ever and are looking forward to next year’s event.

—Manuel Burdette

Atlanta News...



May 1 was a Sabbath to remember in the Atlanta, Georgia congregation. The Church youth, under the tutelage of Mrs. Burnetta English, studied the Ten Commandments in a Bible Study series that lasted more than a year. The result of their efforts was evident on the Sabbath after services when they recited Exodus 20:1–17 before the congregation. Mr. Jack Lowe, the area pastor, presented each child with a certificate of merit for committing God’s commandments to memory. After the recitation, Ms. Gladys Andrews and Mr. and Mrs. Jonas and Beverly Burnett were baptized into God’s Church; their baptisms are fruit of the *Tomorrow’s World* Special Presentations held in Atlanta. Mr. Lowe and Dr. Richard Franz, a local elder, conducted the baptismal service, which was witnessed by most of the brethren here. Everyone is thankful for what God is doing in the Atlanta area.

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COMMENTARY

A Letter from the Grave

We seem to make too few friends as we go through life. The friends we have in childhood and in high school are often just a memory, as life and the demands of making a living unfold and the years roll by. As adults, we have business associates, co-workers and casual acquaintances, but usually just a few deep, abiding friendships.

I had one of those genuine friendships. My friend and I did not always agree on everything, but that did not really matter. When differences of opinion arose, we spoke our minds, agreed to disagree, and moved on. Even after we were separated by miles and years, the spark of friendship was still there and we would occasionally get in touch. When I learned of his death I was saddened.

A couple of years later, I was surprised to hear from his son, who explained that in going through his father's papers he found a letter addressed to me with the notation, "Deliver to Davy after my death." This was the only time I have ever received a letter from someone who had already gone to the grave.

The content of the letter saddened me. It revealed that I had offended my old friend some years before, yet he had never told me. As I remember the conversation that had hurt him, there was no anger or heated discussion; we had simply agreed to disagree.

However, according to the letter from the grave, my friend not only disagreed strongly; he took serious offense. But my friend never let me know of his hurt while he was alive, and I learned of it only after it was too late to do anything about it.

Sadly, this type of misunderstanding happens far too often. Friendships are shattered and relationships are damaged beyond repair. But it does not need to be that way. The Bible contains instructions on interpersonal relationships that, if followed, can ensure lasting relationships that endure the ups and downs of life.

Jesus said, "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established'" (Matthew 18:15-17). This is obviously difficult for people to do, because so few actually do it.

Another wise verse tells us how to handle anger. "Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:26). Imagine if this were followed; the judicial courts would probably be empty! Jesus restated an ancient biblical principle when He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

Never let some petty offense or disagreement, real or imagined, come between you and your friends. By following the Bible's instructions, relationships can be salvaged—even improved and strengthened—and precious friendships maintained.

—J. Davy Crockett, III

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.