

THE

# LIVING

# CHURCH NEWS

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## Prepare for “Trumpets”!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

As many of you brethren know, I grew up for 19 years in Joplin, Missouri. Earlier this year, my former hometown was terribly devastated by the worst tornado in America’s recorded history. Reading about it—seeing it on television—and hearing from dear family friends and from other local residents such as Mr. and Mrs. Karl Beyersdorfer have made it very real to me! For this was *my* hometown being struck—the place of most of my youthful memories.

The Feast of Trumpets is coming soon. As we in God’s Church think on the absolutely **horrifying** end-time events described in your Bible recording the prophesied “trumpet plagues” (Revelation 8–9), this should help us realize **how helpless** we human beings are in the face of what is coming. This should teach us a sense of humility, and remind us of the need to **cry out** to God more than ever. Certainly God promises, overall, to protect His people. But, as Herbert W. Armstrong many times reminded us, “God helps those who help themselves.” Our Creator wants us to do *our part* in preparing for sickness, disasters and tragedies. And we must all realize that God—while still protecting His people overall—did actually allow ancient Israel to *go through* the first three plagues He poured out on ancient Egypt (Exodus 7:20–8:23).

As Bible-believing Christians, we **must** prepare to do *our part* in protecting ourselves and our families during the tumultuous times leading up to the “Great Tribulation” and the trumpet plagues! So, I am “sounding the trumpet” now, to urge **all** of you dear brethren to realize that we *really are* now *very close* to that time! As we think about what could be just ahead for *any* of us, I want to share with you an excerpt from a very touching memo that was posted by a doctor right after

the tornado that struck Joplin. This may help us visualize the actual type of horrific situations we may face—and for which we need to **prepare**—in the near future:

### 45 SECONDS: MEMOIRS OF AN ER DOCTOR FROM MAY 22, 2011

My name is Dr. Kevin Kikta, and I was one of two emergency room doctors who were on duty at St. John’s Regional Medical Center in Joplin, MO on Sunday May 22, 2011.

You never know that it will be the most important day of your life until the day is over.

The day started like any other day for me: waking up, eating, going to the gym, showering, and going to my 4:00 p.m. ER shift. As I drove to the hospital I mentally prepared for my shift as I always do, but nothing could ever have prepared me for what was going to happen on this shift. Things were normal for the first hour and half. At approximately 5:30 p.m. we received a warning that a tornado had been spotted. Although I work in Joplin and went to medical school in Oklahoma, I live in New Jersey, and I have never seen or been in a tornado. I learned that a “code gray” was being called. We were to start bringing patients to safer spots within the ED and hospital.

At 5:42 p.m. a security guard yelled to everyone, “Take cover! We are about to get hit by a tornado!” I ran with a pregnant RN, Shilo Cook, while others scattered to various places, to the only place that I was familiar with in the hospital without windows, a small doctor’s office in the ED. Together, Shilo and

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I tremored and huddled under a desk. We heard a loud horrifying sound like a large locomotive ripping through the hospital. The whole hospital shook and vibrated as we heard glass shattering, light bulbs popping, walls collapsing, people screaming, the ceiling caving in above us, and water pipes breaking, showering water down on everything. We suffered this in complete darkness, unaware of anyone else's status, worried, scared. We could feel a tight pressure in our heads as the tornado annihilated the hospital and the surrounding area. The whole process took about 45 seconds, but seemed like eternity. The hospital had just taken a direct hit from a category EF-4 tornado.

Then it was over. Just 45 seconds. Forty-five long seconds. We looked at each other, terrified, and thanked God that we were alive. We didn't know, but hoped that it was safe enough to go back out to the ED, find the rest of the staff and patients, and assess our losses.

"Like a bomb went off." That's the only way that I can describe what we saw next. Patients were coming into the ED in droves. It was absolute, utter chaos. They were limping, bleeding, crying, terrified, with debris and glass sticking out of them, just thankful to be alive. The floor was covered with about 3 inches of water, there was no power, not even backup generators, rendering it completely dark and eerie in the ED. The frightening aroma of methane gas leaking from the broken gas lines permeated the air; we knew, but did not dare mention aloud, what that meant. I redoubled my pace.

We had to use flashlights to direct ourselves to the crying and wounded. Where did all the flashlights come from? I'll never know, but immediately, and thankfully, my years of training in emergency procedures kicked in. There was no power, but our mental generators were up and running, and on high-test adrenaline. We had no cell phone service

in the first hour, so we were not even able to call for help and backup in the ED.

Brethren, throughout the New Testament, God warns us repeatedly that the final events—including Christ's Second Coming—will come *unexpectedly* for most of the world. Jesus said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, *watch* and *pray*; for you do not know when the time is" (Mark 13:32–33). And the Apostle Paul warned the brethren in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–3, "But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then **sudden destruction** comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape." He then encourages us to "watch" and "be sober" (v. 6).

God wants us to be constantly *alert* and "ready" by drawing truly close to Him through prayer, meditation, Bible study and fasting, and by *doing our part* to take care of ourselves and our families as we see the shocking number of so-called "natural" disasters beginning to come down on America. We have seen terrible tornadoes in various parts of the Southeast, and in Midwestern cities like Joplin; we have seen terrible floods engulf vast areas of Queensland, Australia; we watched with horror the record-breaking earthquake and tsunami in Japan, the vast flooding down the entire Mississippi Valley here in America and the almost unprecedented wildfires sweeping across Arizona, Texas and New Mexico. So, it is incumbent upon us to realize that these are all *preparatory events* to **humble** God's people and help us be more willing to **listen** to the message we are preaching—of Christ returning soon, and of our need to **repent** of personal and national sins. Similar events have happened—and **will happen** more than ever in coming years—throughout the United States, Canada, Britain, Australia, New Zealand and especially in the areas where the descendants of ancient Israel



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# EDITORIAL

## FAITH: ANTIDOTE TO WORLDLINESS

By Roderick C. Meredith

We have some *excellent* articles in this issue about the Fall Holy Days, which picture the time when Christ will return to set up His Kingdom here on the earth, and will usher in a Millennial rule in which Satan will be banished and people will experience the blessings of living God's way.

As you know, in the Millennium, and in the White Throne Judgment that will follow, **billions** of formerly deceived and confused human beings will have their *first opportunity* to experience the joy and peace and profound happiness that can come through the deep faith in God that leads converted Christians toward obedience to the life-giving teachings of Scripture.

You and I today, as converted Christians, are among only a very few in this present age whose minds have been opened to the Truth, and who have been able to receive blessings that most of mankind will not know until the Millennium and beyond. But even though we as "firstfruits" have access to the benefits of God's way, we must remember that we are living in a type of "Babylon"—or "Egypt"—from which we must flee just as the ancient Israelites fled from their captors during the events pictured by the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Like our forefathers, we had better be preparing to flee modern "Egypt" in order to come out of sin. Yet, when I have visited Church brethren, I have often found that they—and *all of us at times*—still "enjoy" Egypt too much! Many still

"feed" their minds and hearts **not** on God's word as much as they do on television programs, computer games, magazines, romance novels and other forms of diversion.

These things are usually filled with *this world's* (Egypt's) attitude toward romance, sex, marriage, child rearing, what to do when

their own private television sets, stereos or computers in their rooms, where you simply **do not know**—and some of you cannot even **imagine**—the degree of violence, pornography and other filth they will be feeding their minds on!

### PARENTS TAKE NOTE!

Please do **not** think your children are somehow "better" and not susceptible to these powerful influences. Please **heed** what I am saying or you may wake up someday and find that *your* teenagers are suddenly like "different persons"—having attitudes toward various aspects of life at **total variance** with everything you have tried to teach them. Yet, if you are honest, you may come to realize that the number of hours you spent teaching them was **far** surpassed by the number of hours they spent at the feet—so to speak—of the television "teacher" or the often perversely violent and obscene computer sites and computer games.

It is vital for you parents to realize that young children are being exposed to these influences—at increasingly younger and younger ages than you were. Their young minds—in fact their entire spiritual outlook on life—can be **twisted, warped and polluted** by the rotten garbage, that is being spewed out on our modern nations by Hollywood and its ilk. So please, for your own good and the good of your children and of their entire future, *examine yourselves!*

What is your home *really* like? What are the "patterns" of conduct and activities of your children? How much

IN FILLING OUR MINDS WITH THE MESSAGES AND APPROACH TO LIFE CONVEYED BY THIS WORLD'S PRINT AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA, WE ARE BOMBARDING OUR BRAINS WITH THE ATTITUDE OF SPIRITUAL EGYPT AND BABYLON, WHICH WE ARE COMMANDED TO COME OUT OF!

you are sick, violence, brutality, disrespect toward parents, teachers and nearly all in authority and, implicitly, disrespect toward God Himself.

In filling our minds with the messages and *approach to life* conveyed by this world's print and electronic media, we are bombarding our brains with the attitude of spiritual Egypt and Babylon, which we are commanded to **come out of!**

So, as a servant of the true God, I urge all of you *in Jesus' name* to cut **way back** on your exposure to this world's media. And from my own hard-earned experience and suffering, I urge you **not** to allow your underage children to have



time and effort do you really put into teaching and training them, interacting with them and guiding them—with God’s help and through much prayer—to reflect the values of Jesus Christ? What are the kinds of entertainment your children expose themselves to? What kinds of **goals** do they have for their future?

Again, as we approach the Holy Days, ask yourself, “How much do I genuinely **abhor** this modern Babylon that we all live in and yet are not to be part of?” Remember Jesus’ final prayer for His disciples: “I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:14–17).

If we zealously “feed” on Jesus Christ (John 6:57) through constant and earnest Bible study, meditation, prayer and fasting, then we will not be “of” this world even though we are still in it. We will then begin to reflect Jesus Christ more in everything we think, say and do. Only in this way can we truly overcome ourselves, this present evil world and Satan the Devil.

Brethren, if we are to be among the select group of people God uses to finish His Work, we are going to have to continually put forth a “second effort.” We need to rekindle the spiritual **zeal** many of us had at baptism. And we are going to have to make a more profound commitment to genuinely “walk with God” in every phase and facet of our lives!

Jesus Christ asked the rhetorical question, “When the Son of Man comes, will He really find **faith** on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). Most people in

the Church of God today are exposing themselves so much to the influences and attitudes of this confused world that they simply cannot have the degree of clean, wholesome, Spirit-led **faith** that the original disciples of Jesus had.

### FAITH TO WALK ON WATER?

I have actually seen people supposedly “studying” the Bible with the television set blaring away right in front of them! How deep was their concern to **come out** of this world and



focus earnestly on the Kingdom of God? Remember the account of the Apostle Peter literally walking on the water toward Jesus Christ? Jesus was walking on the Sea of Galilee and, when first seeing Him, the disciples “cried out” for fear. “But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.’ And Peter answered Him and said, ‘Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.’ So He said, ‘Come.’ And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me!’ And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to

him, ‘O you of **little faith**, why did you doubt?’” (Matthew 14:27–31).

There are *several* lessons in this inspired account. As long as Peter was **not** focusing his mind on *this* world’s attitudes and approaches, he **did**, in fact, walk on water! But as soon as Peter got his mind off Christ and began to consider the “around”—the things of *this world*—he began to sink.

But *does* God really want us to have enough **faith** to walk on water? Yes, He *really does!* For when Peter started to sink, Jesus immediately said, “Oh you of little faith, **why** did you doubt?”

Yes, it is *so easy* to get our minds off Jesus Christ and let them drift on to the things of this world, because this is *Satan’s* world. And Satan is *continually* “pumping out” his perverted propaganda—his perverted approach to life, which emphasizes “doing your own thing” or “Do not get too interested in God, it might make you unbalanced” or “God is not fair” or “You need to decide what is right and wrong.” These are the kinds of messages we constantly receive from “SBS”—Satan’s Broadcasting System.

Remember how the Apostle Paul warned us about walking “according to the course of this world, according to the **prince** of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others” (Ephesians 2:2–3). Satan is, indeed, the “**prince**” of this world (John 14:30, *KJV*). He and his rebellious fallen angels—now **demons**—“work” continually to pull human beings down to their level. They constantly strive to impart *wrong attitudes* of hate, lust, selfishness and rebellion, as they seek to prevent humans from joining the Kingdom of God and therefore ultimately becoming **rulers** over them (1 Corinthians 6:3). In our own lives and in the lives of our children—who, with their childish

minds, cannot understand fully—we have to be constantly on guard against this Satanic warfare!

### COME OUT OF EGYPT!

Brethren, if we are going to restore the original Christianity of Jesus Christ, we must truly “come out” of this society—this modern Egypt and Babylon. This will make it possible for a more profound relationship to be built between each of us and Jesus Christ our Living Head and Savior. This will help us draw *far closer* to our Father in heaven and be able to have the *living faith* we need to fully preach the Gospel and to do the Work in a way that honors Him.

If many of us continue to have one foot in the world and one foot in the Church, we cannot have the faith we need, because one of the greatest “destroyers” of faith is **guilt**. And when you and I “compromise” ourselves with this world and with Satan, we are markedly decreasing our own faith and closeness to God!

The Apostle John was inspired to write: “Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, *because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight*” (1 John 3:21–22). But when our “heart” does condemn us—and often *for very good reason* when we compromise and “water down” our approach to God and His ways—then we, feeling this **guilt**, obviously *do lack confidence in God*. Our **faith** in God has been damaged! That childlike attitude of complete **trust** in God our Father, in His laws, His ways and His promises has been “sabotaged” by our compromises with **sin**.

### DO NOT COMPROMISE!

Any time we begin to “pull back” from God in **any** facet of our lives, this action undermines our faith. Some brethren compromise by watching *far too much television* or going to

worldly movies—thus weakening their own defenses against all kinds of assaults by Satan. Some brethren then proceed to compromise in their fidelity to their mates and bring upon themselves and their mates untold grief and sorrow. Some compromise in the way they keep the Sabbath or Holy Days. Some even compromise

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by **stealing** God’s tithes! (Malachi 3:8–10).

Whatever type of spiritual “compromise” *you* make, realize deeply that it is **definitely** going to undermine your *faith* and **trust** in God. For that trust must be based upon a *total reliance* on the fact that God is **real**, that His laws and ways are **right**, and that true Christians acknowledge this and—in *their hearts*—determine to put their trust *wholly in God*!

Brethren, we must **believe** the words of King David which God inspired to be placed in the Bible: “The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And those who know Your name will put their **trust** in You; for You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You” (Psalm 9:9–10). And again, “But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; He is their strength in the

time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they **trust** in Him” (Psalm 37:39–40).

It is not only at the Passover that we need to “examine” ourselves. Are we truly “in the faith”? Are we allowing Jesus Christ to live His life within us? Have we disqualified ourselves by carnal rebellion against the One who created us (2 Corinthians 13:5)?

Are we truly thankful for the gift of the Holy Spirit through which we can have Christ’s very **life** within us? We must understand just how important it is that we come **out** of this modern Egyptian/Babylonian society that surrounds us! We need to guard our minds zealously. We need to constantly bring “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

It is vital that we all realize that every sin we commit, every spiritual compromise we make—all work to **destroy** the depth and joy of the close relationship we should have with Christ, and the profound **trust** we *must* have in God to make it through the years ahead. As the inspired Paul wrote about “compromises” with physical things such as food and drink: “Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; *for whatever is not from faith is sin*” (Romans 14:22–23).

Dear brethren, let us strive and let us **pray**—and *pray for one another*—that we may grow to attain the level of absolute *faith* and **trust** in our God, which we must have! *Then* the Work of Christ through us will go forward with even greater **power**. And the promised “signs” (Mark 16:17–18) of casting out demons, healing the sick, and *other signs*, will be manifest—and more and more people will come to **know** that there is a real God and that He still has *faithful* servants on this earth today. ■



# Can You Picture the Millennium?

By Scott D. Winnail

Every year at the Feast of Tabernacles, God makes His coming Kingdom feel more real to His people through the many sermons and sermonettes they hear. God's plan commands us to leave our homes, dwell temporarily in an apartment, hotel or guesthouse, and spend our "second tithe"—10 percent of our annual income that we have saved throughout the year—to enjoy an eight-day festival. All of the physical aspects of the Feast of Tabernacles are designed to help us better visualize both the physical and spiritual fulfillment of this awesome festival.

So, how "real" is God's coming Kingdom to you? Can you "taste and see" (Psalm 34:8) what it will really be like, for the physical human beings and for the Spirit beings who will rule over, guide, and direct them? Or, is your vision of God's Kingdom a bit hazy? God clearly states that without faith, we cannot please Him (Hebrews 11:6). But, to have faith, there must truly be "substance" to our hope (v. 1)—which is the millennial reign of Christ and the saints on the earth! Is there substance to your hope? Is your vision of God's Kingdom real?

## WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD WE ASK?

Have you really considered what type of society God's saints will be called upon to administer? What will the Kingdom of God look like? What will it "feel like" for physical people? What types of jobs and professions will today's Christians, after being born as Spirit-members of the Family of God, be directing and supervising during the Millennium? What details does the Bible relate about these important aspects of life in the Kingdom of God?

God's word reveals amazing details about life in the Millennium. But identifying and understanding these details requires two things of us. First, we must take time to really **meditate** on the word of God—to ponder over it, to look into it and to flesh out the details. Second, we must know **which** aspects of God's word are the ones on which we should meditate. When we meditate on what God has revealed, we may be amazed at how clearly God's Kingdom comes into focus.

## CONNECTING THE FEAST AND GOD'S LAW

Have you ever noticed that when the ancient Israelites finally entered the Promised Land after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, God commanded them to *meditate* on the Book of the Law *day and night* (Joshua 1:8)? King David observed that a person is blessed for delighting in God's law and *meditating on it day and night* (Psalm 1:2). Have you ever wondered why God commanded that the law should be read *at* the Feast of Tabernacles during the "year of release" every seven years (Deuteronomy 31:9–13)? Why did God command that the law should be read at the *Feast of Tabernacles*, and not during another festival such as the Feast of Unleavened Bread or Pentecost? Surely this is because understanding and meditating on the law of God is essential if we are to envision clearly the time that the Feast of Tabernacles pictures—the Millennium, the ultimate fulfillment of the annual Feast of Tabernacles—under the rule of the Kingdom of God.

God inspired the prophet Ezekiel to write that God's statutes and judgments *will be kept* in His Kingdom, when David will once again be king over Israel (Ezekiel 37:24). God's laws and statutes will not become obsolete; they will become more relevant than ever, magnified by Christ as He administers them with the help of His saints. God inspired Isaiah to write that, during the Millennium, the law will proceed forth *from Jerusalem* (Isaiah 2:2–4), and that knowledge of God's way will ultimately cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9). God has called today's Christians to serve as spiritual leaders and teachers in His coming Kingdom, and we will fulfill this role on the earth (Revelation 5:10). Even when we are Spirit beings, we will be teaching people on the earth—people who will see and hear us clearly, and will be able to interact with us (Isaiah 30:20–21).

As teachers under Christ, God's firstfruits will help teach, implement and reinforce His law. During the Millennium, God's law will be the "backbone" of society—the "royal law" of the Kingdom of God. When it is finally in full force—when everyone keeps it—it will liberate society from the satanic



tyranny under which human beings have been held captive for nearly 6,000 years (James 2:5–13).

How many laws currently regulate today's society? Hundreds? Thousands? Tens of thousands? Today, our governments employ "professional law makers" whose sole responsibility is creating new laws, statutes, and mandates to regulate society. Judges, lawyers and legislative analysts dispute about what laws mean, as they comb through literally thousands upon thousands of pages of obscure man-made laws, trying to discern what should be done. And we know that many laws are not just; they are implemented to serve some special interest or powerful lobby rather than the good of all the people.

By contrast, God's law is a "perfect law of liberty." So, what will society look and feel like when that royal law is in place and fully being practiced? How far-reaching will God's law be when it is fully implemented? Ten simple laws, when kept in the letter and the spirit, will totally change how people think and live! God's statutes will also give clarity to so many details, giving examples of how to judge difficult situations.

In the rest of this article, by considering the tremendous effect of just two of the Ten Commandments, we can begin to understand more deeply what human society will be like in the Kingdom of God.

### THE POWER OF ONE COMMANDMENT

The Eighth Commandment states, "You shall not steal" (Exodus 20:15). Just **how different** will society be during the Millennium, when theft will be practically unheard of?

How many people today worry that someone might break into their home or vehicle, or steal their property? How many are fearful to stay at home alone? How many are afraid to walk down the street for fear of being robbed? How many parents become anxious when they lose track or sight of their child, fearing that someone may have taken him or her?

Scripture tells us that in God's Kingdom, society will be so safe that old men, women and children will play in the streets (Zechariah 8:4–5). There will be no more fear of being beaten or robbed. No more fear of kidnapping. No more fear that someone might *steal* the virginity of your daughter or granddaughter. No more fear that someone might "steal" your spouse's affection through seduction and adultery. No more pornography to steal innocence or marital faithfulness. No more prostitution to steal the bond of marital intimacy from husband and wife.

Many people today live in "walled villages." Perhaps these are not literally fortifications, but many homes are surrounded by high fences or block walls. Many homes have bars on their windows, and most have locks on their doors and gates. Some even have expensive security systems installed to defend against intruders. But what will home life be like under the rule of the Kingdom of God? God tells us, through Ezekiel, that the land of Israel will be an assortment of "unwalled villages." Its people will dwell in complete safety with "neither bars nor

gates" (Ezekiel 38:11). This is a far cry from modern society—where the poor put gates on their windows, and even the richest people often live cloistered lives in "gated communities" because they do not consider it safe to do otherwise.

Think about the professions that will not need to exist when the Eighth Commandment is in full force. Today, one of the largest sources of employment in the developing nations is the security industry. By contrast, in the Millennium there will be no "security system" industry, and no need for security fence builders or installers. During the Millennium, the work of a locksmith will change dramatically, if not go away entirely. Factories will not need to produce metal gates and window bars. Homeowners will be able to sleep peacefully at night, not disturbed by the noise of police sirens or car alarms going off. Cities will not need to employ large police forces, and states will not need to employ vast armies of prison guards to incarcerate thieves. Today, some local economies revolve almost entirely around prison systems and security—but this will not be the case in the Kingdom of God!

Can you see how powerfully just this one commandment will transform society during the Millennium? Can you imagine what it will be like for human beings who will be able to live without fear of theft? Is there anyone alive today who would not want to experience a society like that? And what will it be like for the Spirit beings who rule a society where theft is almost entirely a subject for the history books, where the very few hardened rebels are dealt with quickly according to God's law so they do not spread their influence to the society around them?

### WHAT WILL TRUE REST BE LIKE?

What will life be like in a society where the Fourth Commandment—to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy—is the law of the land? Have you ever taken the time to deeply meditate on this awesome question? God commands: "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God" (Exodus 20:9–10).

Society will be geared toward productivity, with people working and accomplishing for six days each week. In fact, Paul explained that those who will not work will not eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10)! Instead of a system where the lazy can experience seven "days of rest" every week, taking from productive members of society, people will receive the fruits of their labor. "Unemployment" will be a thing of the past. No longer will people spend their youth training for a career, then later find that career unattainable because of economic or social changes. Yet neither will people be "married to their jobs," feeling forced to work in order to have enough wealth to get by. God's law makes provision for balance between work and family.

The Sabbath command continues: "...In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor

your male servant, nor your female servant” (Exodus 20:10). Even cattle and the stranger in your home shall rest from their work (*ibid.*). Society will be geared so that all can take proper advantage of the “Preparation Day”—the day before the weekly Sabbath (see Exodus 16). Today, for many in God’s Church who work from Monday through Friday, their pre-Sabbath preparation is hurried and stressful, if it occurs at all. By contrast, under the rule of the Kingdom of God, no employers will press people to toil at their jobs until the last possible moment before Friday’s sunset.

Just as all businesses will be geared to the rhythm of the Sabbath, so too will all those who employ household servants. Employers and employees both will rest from their labors every Sabbath. With everyone expected to keep the Sabbath, no more will a family’s Sabbath rest be broken by the sound of a neighbor’s lawnmower or leaf blower. Yard work, and other noise and clamor, will not be part of the Millennial experience of the Sabbath. Proper preparation will occur so that the Sabbath day will be a delight for all and a true rest from even the smallest and most menial labors, as the whole of society will rest and rejoice in this weekly Holy Day. There will be peace and quiet as all will be able to “be still.”

Some of the smallest details of how Scripture describes the Millennium can reveal important truths. Notice, for example, Zechariah 14:20. After a description of how the Feast of Tabernacles will be kept during the Millennium, we read a description of horses adorned with bells. On each bell is engraved the phrase, “Holiness to the LORD.”

If Millennial society had only a few horses, mostly put to pasture, who would hear the ringing of these bells? Clearly, this is picturing an agrarian economy devoted to the true worship of God. But think, too, of some practical implications. If even cattle and livestock must rest on the Sabbath (Exodus 23:12), and if horses are a primary means of transportation, how far will people travel on the Sabbath when their transportation is also resting? With the whole world observing the Sabbath, no longer will people need to endure long Sabbath-day trips to gather together for worship. Not only will the Sabbath day be a time for rest and refreshing—even the typical journey to Sabbath services will be short. Imagine that!

Another vital aspect of Sabbath observance in the Millennium will be the “land Sabbath.” Apparently, even ancient Israel never fully implemented the entirety of God’s statutes pertaining to the 50-year Jubilee cycle (Jeremiah 34:14), but in the Millennium the whole world will be

functioning on the exact same series of seven-year cycles! For six years, planting and harvesting will occur as usual. However, during the sixth year, God will provide everyone with a “super harvest”—enough food to last for the entire seventh year and until the eighth-year harvest comes in (Leviticus 25:18–22).

During the seventh year of each seven-year cycle, no one is to plant or harvest (Leviticus 25:1–7). Animals that will not be plowing or harvesting for a year will grow strong on the land during their rest, and will also be performing two other important jobs. Their manure will fertilize the land during its Sabbath rest, and their hooves will mash and till the manure and the chaff back into the soil. After a year, when it is again time to plant, the soil will be wonderfully renewed, and the next six years will bring “bumper harvests” as the plowman overtakes the reapers (Amos 9:13). The fruit of the vine and stalk will be full of goodness and full nutrition, as God intended from the beginning.

Think about how this will change the rhythm of daily life. In God’s Kingdom, it will not be “office jobs” that set the pace for society. Human beings will live close to the land, yet they will have one year out of seven when even their agrarian duties will cease. Imagine! There will be a year to “catch up” on maintenance chores and projects. There will be workdays, of course, but there will be ample time to “be still” and grow closer to the Great God. There will be time to play, to plan for the future, and to enjoy the company of family. Can you imagine the peace during such a year? What about the mental, physical and spiritual rejuvenation? And how might people be better able to help one another when they not tied down by planting and harvesting for a whole year? How might they be able to give of their time and resources in ways not feasible during six very busy years of work?

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### **THE POWER OF GOD’S LAWS**

During the Millennium, the Ten Commandments will be the foundational law of God’s Kingdom. Even in briefly considering the changes that just two of the commandments will bring, we can begin to see just how wonderfully this will contrast with human society today.

How many people today would willfully reject the opportunity to live in a society where theft is practically unheard of? How many people today would willingly turn

**Continued on page 18**





# JUDGE WISELY

**W**e see it all around us. Someone has sinned—we are sure of it—and quickly our friends join in a chorus of condemnation: “Look what he did!” “Does she think she can get away with that?” “What un-Christian conduct!”

Before we know it, we are joining in—first decrying the sin, then the sinner. “He deserves to be disfellowshipped!” “She had better not show her face around here anymore!”

Eventually, if it seems that the sinner has not received what we consider a deserved punishment, we may become impatient—even with God Himself—“Why are they letting him get away with that?” Or even, “I know better; I’ll take the matter into my own hands!”

Indeed, it can be amazing how quickly the carnal mind can jump to the conclusion that someone may have sinned and that it is our responsibility—nay, duty—to carry out the sentence and bring down God’s wrath on the head of the supposed offender.

But is this what the Bible says we should do? Is this what Jesus of Nazareth taught?

Why did the Word—the Logos—come to earth as a physical human being? Contrary to what some assume, His first coming was not to execute punishment upon the wicked at that time. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:16–17).

Yes, the time will come when all will receive the judgment they justly deserve, and those who have responded to God’s call through repentance, baptism and obedience will enter into His Family. At the present moment, however, none of us can rightly claim to “deserve”

salvation. It is a gift that we cannot earn (Acts 2:38). No one can come to the Father except through Christ (John 14:6)—and that can only come after repentance and accepting Jesus’ shed blood in payment for sin. “He who believes in Him [Jesus Christ, the Savior] is not condemned [to destruction]; but he who does not believe is condemned already, [the sentence of eternal death



has been pronounced but not yet carried out] because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).

Those who believe what Christ taught, and who use God’s Spirit to help overcome their human nature and sins are counted among His saints. “But he who does the truth [obeys God’s laws] comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God” (v. 21). This does not mean that the saints are now perfect; it means that they are not practicing sin, and that when they stumble they are quick to repent and grow closer to their Savior.

Sadly, some people love the pleasures of sin and Satan’s ways more than they love their Creator, even after they have tasted the good things of God and have heard the wonderful news regarding His kingdom. “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light

and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed” (vv. 19–20).

What does this mean for us? As Christians, we look forward with anticipation to the day when we will enter the Family of God. But what about those whose lives fail to demonstrate the fruits of the Holy Spirit—who habitually demonstrate carnal, rebellious behavior? As Christians, what is our responsibility when we encounter such people? Do we want for them the same blessings God has promised for us?

## WHAT DO YOU MEAN: “JUDGE”?

Many people, when they first hear the phrase, “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Matthew 7:1), come to an easy misunderstanding of the passage, based on an incomplete understanding of the English word “judge.” *Strong’s Concordance* opens an important dimension to this scripture.

Greek word G2919 “judge” *krino*, kree’-no. Properly to distinguish, that is, decide (mentally or judicially); by implication to try, condemn, punish: avenge, conclude, condemn, damn, decree, determine, esteem, judge, go to (sue at the) law, ordain, call in question, sentence to, think.

This passage of Scripture does not forbid us from discerning right and wrong. What it forbids is condemning—pronouncing sentence upon another—a duty that is God’s prerogative, not ours (Romans 12:19).

Only God is able to render perfect spiritual judgment, because only He can read the hearts and minds of human beings. “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit,

and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:12–13).

We as mortal human beings have not been assigned the responsibility—or the right—to decide who will receive eternal life and who will be committed to the Lake of Fire. Here, then, is how we must heed Christ’s command: “Judge not [do not condemn to destruction], that you be not judged [yourself be destroyed]. For with what judgment [condemnation] you judge [condemn], you will be judged [condemned]; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you” (Matthew 7:1–2). The sentence we presume to pronounce upon someone else will set the terms of our own punishment!

Jesus said: “You judge according to the flesh; I judge [condemn] no one. And yet if I do judge [condemn], My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me. It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me” (John 8:15–18).

### CONDEMNING OURSELVES?

Christ has made it clear. When we usurp God’s responsibility of judgment, we bring condemnation upon ourselves. This is easy enough to understand; after all, can any of us deny that we, too, deserve condemnation for our own sins? Remember: “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). So, how can we dare to condemn a brother or sister in Christ, when we ourselves would be eligible for condemnation were it not for God’s mercy upon us? Do we really think we can goad God into punishing someone else while ignoring the punishment we deserve? If we cry out for vengeance

against another, how can we expect mercy for ourselves?

We need to understand that our loving Creator is working with each of us in many different ways. “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you [each of us] to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness

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and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’” (Romans 2:4–6; Hosea 12:2).

Pride is a fundamental human sin. How much pride must we have in order to consider ourselves fit to serve as the accuser, arresting officer, prosecutor, judge, jury and executioner in spiritual matters concerning another person? Remember the little desktop sign that reads: “Be patient; God isn’t done with me yet.”

As our Creator, only the perfect and sinless God has the right, ability and authority to determine eternal guilt and innocence, life or death. “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck [a little fault] from your eye’; and look, a plank [a huge sin] is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the

speck from your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:3–5). When we condemn others for their mistakes and faults, are we not, in effect, mistakenly assuming that we are without sin and therefore have the right to pass sentence? However, the Apostle John, under the inspiration of Christ, disputes this notion. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us” (1 John 1:8–10).

### DISCERNING MOTIVES

Consider the example, recorded in John’s gospel, of Christ discerning the case of a woman caught in adultery. “Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?’” (John 8:2–5).

Though His enemies were “testing” Him, Christ did not “take the bait” and deliver an answer sure to draw controversy. Rather, He responded by writing something on the ground in plain view of those questioning Him. “So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, ‘He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.’ And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it [those who saw what Jesus was writing], being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last” (v. 7–9). What did Jesus write that pricked these critics’ consciences? We understand that He wrote the crimes of the men questioning Him—men whom He knew were as guilty as this woman. “And Jesus was left alone,

and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, ‘Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more’” (vv. 9–11).

Notice that the biblical account does not dispute the Pharisees’ charge that this woman was an adulteress. Her accusers, however, failed to deflect their own guilt onto her, and left without receiving forgiveness. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Like these scribes and Pharisees, we should recognize that some who are quick to judge others are hoping to distract others’ attention from their own sins.

### GOD APPOINTS JUDGES

We live in a society where there are mechanisms for determining guilt and administering punishment. Yet we should understand clearly that it is ultimately God, not any human being, who determines who will sit in judgment over other human beings. “And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him” (Daniel 2:21–22).

God commands Christians to submit to the *legitimate* judgments of the governments under which they live. “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment [Strong’s 2917, “damnation”] on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do

what is good, and you will have praise from the same” (Romans 13:1–3).

If we are tempted to lash out at an unjust judge, we need to remember that our Creator has given us the rulers we deserve, according to our sins. “Because of the transgression of a land, many are its princes” (Proverbs 28:2). Were human beings not in a state of rebellion against God’s laws and statutes, there would be no need for the present human bureaucracies watching over so many details of our lives. Mankind brought this upon itself.

What about God’s Church? It is also up to God to appoint His ministers, to discern spiritual matters that pertain to His people. The Apostle Paul, for example, had the responsibility of rendering judgment and prescribing the correction of a Corinthian man who was having an adulterous relationship with his father’s wife. “For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged [passed a sentence to disfellowship] (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:3–5).

Was this an act of Paul’s vengeance, to “get back at” the sinner? No! It was a plan to bring him to repentance. Indeed, after the man repented and his brethren were reluctant to welcome him back into fellowship, it was Paul who commanded the Corinthians to accept him (2 Corinthians 2:3–11).

Paul made it clear that the ministry must encourage obedience both to the law of God and the legitimate ordinances of the land. “Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and

the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, [which] He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:1–7).

In our daily lives, if we see a criminal perpetrating a crime, we understand that it is ordinarily best to contact the police rather than to take on a law-enforcement role that is not ours. The same principle applies in spiritual matters. When we encounter conflict with a brother or sister in Christ, God has delineated our role as peacemakers by giving us a simple formula to use to seek reconciliation (Matthew 18:15–17). If a fellow Church member will not respond to our entreaties, we are to take the matter to the ministry, to whom God has deputed the authority to maintain peace in the congregation.

Sadly, however, we sometimes encounter those who seem to refuse to live at peace with others. They reject correction and are quick to speak ill of worldly and ministerial authorities. Often, these are the very same people who are the quickest to presume to condemn other people. What does the word of God tell us to do when faced with such people and attitudes? “But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned” (Titus 3: 9–11).

One famous instruction from the book of Proverbs gives us the “bottom line” solution for dealing with those who reject peace and seek to spread discord. “Cast out the scoffer, and contention will leave; yes, strife and reproach will cease” (Proverbs 22:10). We are not the judge of the scoffers



# Scheduled Maintenance

By Jonathan McNair

**A**t one time or another, nearly everyone has had something brand new. There is nothing like a new toy to brighten the eyes of a young child. A new dress or pair of shoes is a special joy to the lady in our life. And driving a car for the first time is a thrill for the whole family.

New is great! When we meet new people, and discover that we instantly click with them, we feel the joy of a new friendship growing. If friendship blossoms into marriage, we live the joy of newly having a husband or wife.

God understands what a joy this is for us. He even created a statute for the ancient Israelites that gave men an exemption from military duty during the first year of marriage. In Deuteronomy 24:5 we read: “When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken.” God recognized the specialness of a new marriage. And those blessed with children have known the delight of holding a new baby in their arms for the first time.

Indeed, “new” is great! But it does not only apply to the physical things around us.

Ephesians 4:24 instructs us to “put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” When we begin our new life as we are baptized and receive the Holy Spirit, we are given a new start. We are given an opportunity to put everything we ever did—everything we ever were—behind us. In God’s eyes, we start with a clean, new slate. We are given a new way of life.

But it does not stay new. What was new becomes old. That new toy loses its shine. It gets stepped on. The dog chews on it. That new dress begins to fade a little, collecting ketchup stains. The new car loses its new car smell.

Our Christian life can also lose some of its shine. Over time, it can begin to rust and break down. The Apostle Paul encouraged us to be vigilant about our Christian condition. He told the Corinthians that they needed to examine themselves (see 2 Corinthians 13:5), and honestly judge if they were holding fast to the faith. We spend the Passover season focusing on growth and change. That is good. But just as in maintaining a vehicle, we cannot expect to maintain our Christian way of life on a once-a-year service plan.

The Church leases vehicles for the ministry through a fleet program. The lessor owns the vehicles, which it provides for the ministers’ use. Since the vehicles will later be sold to other customers, the lessor expects the ministry to take proper care of the cars. Ministers using the cars receive reminders when it is time for an oil change or a brake job,

or when other required maintenance is necessary. We even receive phone calls to remind us!

Maybe you are just as diligent in the maintenance of your car. And maybe you are extremely careful to maintain your house or yard. But are we as careful to maintain our spiritual walk? What are some of the areas that require special attention? And how do we go about it?

## CHRISTIAN MAINTENANCE?

Maintenance is not usually a very exciting topic. If one had a choice between getting a brand new vehicle or crawling under the old car to change the oil and do a grease job, I know which choice I would make. I imagine most people would feel the same. Maintenance may sound like an unwelcome chore. Besides, are we not supposed to be growing—getting more knowledge and getting better all the time—instead of just “maintaining?”

Sadly, many Christians have thought this way, have lost sight of the fundamentals and have gone off the track into spiritual confusion.

*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* defines “maintain” as, “to keep in an existing state (as of repair, efficiency or validity): preserve from failure or decline.” In other words, maintenance is concerned with keeping something as close to new as possible. If something is well taken care of, we say that it is “as good as new.”

The Bible gives us many examples of maintenance—of preserving, of keeping in good repair. God gave the Israelites extensive instructions about how to maintain their health. For example, in Leviticus 13 and 14, He explained how to handle infectious skin diseases. He also showed them the danger of mildew. This mildew was dry rot or mineral crystals, which affected the stone walls and could spread rapidly, promoting diseases. God promised not to curse them with the diseases He had used to strike Egypt (Exodus 15:26), but they had the responsibility to maintain cleanliness to safeguard their health.

In the Proverbs, Solomon encouraged his son to maintain the wisdom which had been given to him. “I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching... take hold of my words with all your heart... do not forget my words or turn away from them... Do not forsake wisdom...” (Proverbs 4:2–6, *NIV*). He hoped his son would preserve the words of wisdom that had been given to him, even as he grew in knowledge and maturity.

In the New Testament, Paul encouraged the Christians of Thessalonica to maintain their new way of life. “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were

taught, whether by word or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). He told Timothy the same thing. “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13). In Hebrews, the same encouragement is given. “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:23).

Growing in knowledge is good. Growing in experience and maturity is good, but not at the expense of our job to maintain the way of life that we committed ourselves to at baptism. In fact, three of the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are given specific warnings to “hold fast,” to preserve their commitment to God (Revelation 2:25; 3:3; 3:11).

### MAINTAINING OUR FIRST LOVE

In Revelation, we find a very positive message to the Ephesian brethren (Revelation 2:1–7). They had great works. They labored long and hard in God’s Work. They were patient and did not tolerate false teachers. But they also had a major flaw—one so insidious that it actually caused them to “fall” (see v. 5). What was this flaw? “Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love” (Revelation 2:4).

Most of us have read this scripture often in recent years. But the warning is still serious, no matter how many times we read it. Take another look at it.

From early on, the first-century Christians had a love of God. This “first love” was not the love we hear about in romantic pop songs on the radio. This was not the emotional infatuation of a teenager encountering the explosive mixture of hormones and the opposite sex for the first time. And it was not just a special exuberance because of the newness of their calling. We might find ourselves talking about a “first love” when we were new to the Church. We refer to it as if it were a less mature, less real type of godly love. In our “we have seen-it-all” approach to God’s Church, we can easily excuse our lack of dedication and commitment, to being “past that first love.”

But in reality, there is no special Greek word for “first love.” The Greek word translated as “love” in verse four is the familiar word *agape*, the word describing the ingredient added to our minds and attitudes when we are imbued with God’s Holy Spirit. That ingredient is very real. It is related to a word that was used to record Christ’s statement in Mark 12:30. “‘And you shall love [*agapoa*] the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.”

This was the type of love that the Ephesians had at the beginning, but did not keep in good repair.

They did not maintain their existing state. They did not protect that love from failure or decline. For us, it may seem

hard to believe. Some of these people had personally known Christ’s original disciples. Some may have actually met Jesus Christ, or at least knew people who had. Some observed amazing miracles. Many of the saints who had died had been raised to life (Matthew 27:52). Yet the warning is clear. The stinging rebuke of that era is that they left the godly love that they had at the first. *It is not that they did not start out with it. They did not maintain it!*

How easy is it for us to do the same? As we go through life, we can be fooled into assuming that we are still in our original “new” condition. But perhaps we have not maintained our *agape* love as we should have. Maybe we assume that we are growing, when in fact we are not even maintaining what we started with.

Maintenance is rarely exciting. It can seem tedious at times. But things have a natural way of falling apart, and if we do not constantly work to keep them together, they will fall into disrepair. Peter wrote, “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble” (2 Peter 1:10).

And there is another area that we must maintain, if we are to maintain our commitment to Christ.

### GOOD WORKS TOWARDS MEN

In Paul’s letter to Titus, we read, “This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men” (Titus 3:8).

Some years ago, I had the opportunity to meet, and later baptize, a man who had no previous contact with the Church. At first he was suspicious. Later, he saw that this was the Truth, and that it was God’s Church, and he became more serious. After some months, I was thrilled to be able to baptize him. We conducted the baptism at a local health club pool. After it was all over, we returned to his home. He stopped me, though, just as I was beginning to leave. He said, “There’s something I’d like to talk about.” I said to myself, “Uh-oh. What’s he going to bring up that could sound so serious?”

He said, “I just feel like I’m not serving enough. How can I serve more in the Church?” It was the last thing I had expected.

When we are new to the Church, we often have a great desire to serve and help, and to be with other brethren. We tend to talk with everyone at services, instead of falling into a clique. We visit all the shut-ins, instead of avoiding those with annoying personality quirks. And nothing will stop us from fellowshiping with our brethren at Sabbath services.

Some of us, however, after years in the Church, again begin to think of ourselves more than others. We allow our

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good works to dwindle. We do not maintain the service that we used to devote to others around us. We find ourselves saying: “I have gotten burned out with serving. I just want to take a rest for a while.” Yet that does not correspond to the Biblical instruction. As Paul exhorted Titus: “And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful” (Titus 3:14).

Paul was not suggesting that we ruin our health, go bankrupt or neglect our own family, frantically “doing things for people in the Church.” We should always be wise in the use of our time and resources. We should help and serve others, including our family, our brethren and others, as we are able. The way we serve changes over time. Our physical abilities change. Our skills, strengths and weaknesses change. Other people’s needs also change. But the fact remains. As part of our Christian way of life, we are commanded to maintain our good works, our service, for others. There will never be a time to “take a break” from doing good works.

### THREE-STEP MAINTENANCE PLAN

If we want to maintain our vehicle in “like-new” condition, we must have a plan in mind. It has an “owner’s manual” that came with it, to help formulate that plan. Likewise, there are points to keep in mind for our spiritual maintenance plan.

#### *First, learn to be aware constantly of our current state.*

We can pretend that our car is new, even though it is five or ten years old. Some do-it-yourself car washes even have “new-car” fragrance that can be sprayed into your vehicle. We can treat ourselves to the illusion that we have a new car, but we know that we really do not. That is why we are always listening for knocks and squeaks.

Yet, spiritually, we may ignore the knocks and squeaks that signal possible problems. We can go through a time of soul-searching and review during the Passover season, and then forget that maintenance is a year-round job. Our best friend has not spoken to us in a month, but it does not occur to us that there might be a problem with our relationship. We cannot seem to get past “Father in Heaven” when we kneel down to pray, but do not realize there is a problem with our relationship with God.

In Psalm 51, David showed that he was willing and able to recognize the warning signs whenever they came. He could have glossed over the episode with Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Samuel 11). He could have told Nathan (2 Samuel 12), “Look, Nathan, you really do not understand what it is like being king. You do not understand the pressures I am under. And you do not understand how lonely I am. Sure, I make mistakes now and then, but just get past it and forget about it.” But he did not.

Instead, he grasped that his episode with Bathsheba revealed a critical flaw in his character. We read his thoughts in Psalm 51. “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin... Purge me with hyssop, and I shall

be clean... Create in me a clean heart, O God...” (vv. 2, 7, 10). As David did, an important part of maintenance is to regularly, and often, review our current condition.

#### *Second, develop a maintenance schedule.*

The ministry’s fleet lease agreement requires that we change the oil in our vehicles every 5,000 miles. This is part of a maintenance schedule. We have other instructions about changing filters, brakes, tires and other items. We would be foolish to say, “Well, it was new when I got it. Why should I have to do any of these things?”

When we learn the Truth, we are given a ready-made maintenance schedule. God gave us His Holy Days. Leviticus 23 lists the basic yearly schedule. Just as the owner’s manual does not explain every reason why we should change the oil every 5,000 miles, Leviticus 23 does not explain every detail about the lessons of the Holy Days. But the rest of the Bible does. There we learn in fine detail why we need to cover the Holy Day topics each year. Without this schedule in our hands, we might not be conscientious enough to review these topics as regularly as we should.

#### *Third, prepare for emergencies.*

Even with regular maintenance, we cannot guarantee that normal wear and tear will not make a repair necessary. We can be doing all the right things to take care of our car, and still have a breakdown or an accident. We have to prepare for what might happen. We are foolish if we do not take precautions such as learning how to change a tire, or putting some money aside for a possible car repair, or signing up for emergency roadside assistance.

Wise spiritual maintenance is similar. Peter reminds us that trials will come. He said, “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you” (1 Peter 4:12). Trials that we do not expect will occur in our lives and the lives of those around us. If we are mentally prepared to accept this, we will be better able to handle spiritual emergencies.

God is concerned about maintaining and preserving us. When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, He did not bring them to the other side of the Red Sea, then say, “Okay, I have brought you this far. Now you are on your own.”

Deuteronomy records these very encouraging words that God gave to Israel: “When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you?’ then you shall say to your son: ‘We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the LORD showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the

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# Why War?

By Dexter B. Wakefield

From time to time, if you listen to music on the radio, you may remember hearing a song with the lyrics: “War? What is it good for? Absolutely nothing!”

The song was a Billboard number-one hit in the United States in 1969, during the height of the Vietnam War, and again reached the Billboard Top Ten in 1986. Clearly, it expresses a popular sentiment. But, is it true? Is war good for *absolutely nothing*? If so, why do seemingly intelligent people regularly wage war?

All over the world, wars rage with devastating consequences for the affected peoples. Huge sums are spent on military budgets—funds that could otherwise be used to enrich people’s lives. Yet, often, it is the people themselves who **want** to go to war. Military conflict is on everyone’s mind these days. War is in the news every day.

The 20th century saw dozens of wars, taking more than 100 million lives even by conservative estimates. Right now, there are ongoing wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, as well as other less-publicized areas around the globe. Politicians may speak against the waste and devastation of war, but they continually prepare for it and wage it.

The daily news reminds us again and again about the worldly reasons for war, but most people fail to recognize the spiritual reasons underlying what takes place. So, we need to consider the subject of war from a biblical perspective. The Bible says a lot about war.

## “RATIONAL” REASONS FOR WAR?

One big motivation for war is *profit*. For example, when the ancient Assyrians attacked Israel, they hoped to gain slaves, booty and tribute. The Babylonians attacked Judah for a similar reason. The Romans also profited greatly from their wars. More recently, during the last half of the 20th century, the Soviet Union hoped during the “Cold War” to profit ideologically as well as materially by spreading the political system of communism around the world. For some, seizing power can be seen as a kind of profit.

Jesus told His disciples to count the cost of their commitment to God, and as an example He mentioned how rulers calculate carefully before entering armed conflict. “Or what king, going to make war against another king, does

not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?” (Luke 14:31).

Even when the “cost” is high, some may choose war when they think the cost of not warring is higher, as when facing an oppressor or aggressor. For instance, many American colonists in the 18th century preferred war to continued British rule. Patrick Henry famously said, “Give me liberty or give me death.” He got liberty—and so did his

nation. Similarly, faced with the prospect of fascist rule over Europe and Asia, the Allies banded together during World War II.

By contrast, there have been wars that in retrospect were senseless. Today, most historians view World War I that way. It was a conflict that none of the participants really wanted, but into which nations were pulled because of unwise alliances. It was a horribly destructive “war of attrition” fought with 19th century tactics but using 20th century weapons.

Still other wars have been motivated by sheer hatred between people of different races or ethnicities.

So, why do we have war? Scripture gives us this very simple and profound insight: “Where do wars and fights come

from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war” (James 4:1–2).

This can apply to individuals, or to whole societies as well. One desires and takes... another resists... so they struggle.

## THE SPIRIT BEHIND CONFLICT

God uses His creation to give us insight into His nature. He uses the physical to help us gain greater illumination about spiritual matters. “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20).

With this in mind, we can see how physical wars among human beings picture a greater spiritual conflict. Scripture also describes the first spiritual war: “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you



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have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit” (Isaiah 14:12–15).

Lucifer lost that war, and his name became *Satan*, which means “adversary.” We read: “And He [Jesus] said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven’” (Luke 10:18). Because of his war and his fall, many people have a terrible misunderstanding about Satan, his role and his power. The following “pop quiz” can illuminate the problem:

What is the opposite of good? *Evil*.

What is the opposite of right? *Wrong*.

What is the opposite of light? *Darkness*.

So, what is the opposite of God?

*It is not Satan!* God has no opposite! “For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and *there is none like Me*, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure’” (Isaiah 46:9–10).

Satan, though a spirit being of immense power, is merely a **created being who rebelled** against the Creator. Yes, he tries to convince gullible human beings that he and Jesus are in an ongoing tug-of-war for human souls—and, if that is the case, Satan would seem to be winning. But this is not the case—it is merely one of Satan’s biggest deceptions.

Even some religions that claim to honor Jesus Christ have put forward the idea that Jesus and Satan are “brothers” or that both are created beings. Some religions teach that there is no absolute good or evil, but merely two sides of the same divine “force.” We find this in the Chinese notion of *Yin* and *Yang*. Even Western popular culture has embraced this idea; the Star Wars series features Jedi and Sith each using an aspect of “the Force” to achieve their goals.

Satan would love to be seen as God’s peer in an age-old struggle. But this is just one of his many lies. Satan’s power is the power to tempt and deceive. He demonstrated this with Adam and Eve. God may allow Satan to have certain influence from time to time—as was the case with Job—but ultimately Satan has no power other than what he is given. Even when Satan confronted Jesus Christ in the wilderness, when he tried to take the crown of the Second Adam, it was not a physical struggle. Satan tried to *talk* Christ out of His crown—to tempt Him as he had tempted the first Adam—and Satan lost that battle completely when Christ defeated him with the breath of His lips, saying, “Get thee behind me Satan” (Luke 4:8).

After that battle, Christ went on to die for our sins, and God the Father resurrected Him to sit at His right hand. God promises us that even the grave will not prevail against God’s Church. Satan’s fate is sealed. In a sense, the final years of this present age are like the end of a chess game. Satan has lost, but out of sheer hatred he will play out his failed position down to the last piece.

Why does Satan have such hate? He is consumed with jealousy and envy, realizing that the least of God’s children in the Kingdom of God will be far mightier than Satan. In the end, Satan cannot win! He is, quite simply, a bitter loser. However, for the time being, he still has great power to deceive and to tempt—and to cause conflict and war. Today’s physical wars are an echo of the spiritual war in which Satan is still engaged. Just as Satan is consumed with envy and hatred, he can transfer those attitudes to willing human victims, tempted by the “god of this age” to engage in mortal combat.

### **IF WAR IS SO BAD, WHY DID GOD COMMAND ISRAEL TO FIGHT?**

Ancient Israel was a physical nation, given physical promises—and they always had a lot of physical problems in addition to their spiritual ones! Again and again, they rejected the spiritual solutions and *insisted* on the physical ones, so God gave them the physical solutions they sought.

Consider that when Israel and Judah went into physical slavery, it was because of their spiritual captivity to sin, which preceded the physical captivity. Their spiritual condition of rebellion came first—then came war and capture. Even so, God promised that He would free them when they repented and turned to Him with all their hearts.

When God took Israel out of Egypt, He did it with a mighty hand to show His power over mankind—a power He asserted repeatedly, otherwise the Israelites would not have believed Him. “For ask now concerning the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether any great thing like this has happened, or anything like it has been heard. Did any people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live? Or did God ever try to go and take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation, *by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors*, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?” (Deuteronomy 4:32–34).

Israel saw and believed for a time, but not for long.

But why would a God of love tell Israel to war against its enemies? Some people accuse the God of the Bible of being inconsistent for teaching love while promoting war. What people forget is that, originally, **Israel did not need to fight**. God promised that He would fight for them! *But that benefit was conditional*; all they had to do was to trust God and obey Him.

Remember, God fought the Egyptians on Israel’s behalf. “And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD.... The LORD will *fight for you*, and you shall hold your peace” (Exodus 14:10, 14).

Later, however, when the Israelites lost faith, they had to fight against Amalek. “They tempted the LORD, saying, ‘Is the LORD among us or not?’ Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, ‘Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand’” (Exodus 17:7–9).

Notice that God made an important *conditional* (“If... then...”) promise: “Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.... But *if* you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, *then* I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off... I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you. I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land” (Exodus 23:20–23, 27–30).

There are other examples of God fighting on behalf of the Israelites. “Nevertheless you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; and you complained in your tents, and said, ‘Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us....’ Then I said to you, ‘Do not be terrified, or afraid of them. *The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.*’ Yet, for all that, *you did not believe the LORD your God*” (Deuteronomy 1:26–32).

Also: “Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: “When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall *drive out* [not kill] all the inhabitants of the land from before you, *destroy* all their engraved stones, *destroy* all their molded images, and *demolish* all their high places; you shall *dispossess the inhabitants* of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess”’” (Numbers 33:50–53).

By the time Israel had arrived at the Jordan River to cross over, God was requiring them to take up arms. But we should

notice that they did not start out in the wilderness that way. They only took up arms after much rebellion and distrust against God.

So, why did God on occasion order the Israelites to fight against certain peoples? There were reasons such as ending the horrors of pagan child sacrifice, but ultimately it was His purpose to remove those peoples from the land so He could accomplish His purpose for Israel. The first century Church understood that Israel had received “the land possessed by the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers until the days of David” (Acts 7:45). The Israelites could have trusted in God and avoided physical combat, but they rejected His protection. Instead, God had to use human means to accomplish His purpose, but ultimately it was still God who put the pagan peoples out.

War is not the only area in which God made conditional promises to Israel. He also said He would heal their diseases, and that He would bless their crops, their cattle, their weather, their childbearing and many other aspects of their lives—if they would only obey. But again and again they did not obey, and the result of their sin was continuing violence.

Even so, God kept faithful to His promise when Israel believed and trusted Him. For instance, God defeated the Ethiopians for King Asa (2 Chronicles 14), and He defeated Sennacherib for King Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 32).

**HUMAN NATURE HAS NOT  
CHANGED OVER THOUSANDS OF  
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### **WILL WE SEE PEACE OR COSMOCIDE?**

Human nature has not changed over thousands of years, but our ability to cause destruction has increased dramatically in the last century. What will be the outcome of this?

The Bible says it plainly: People say they want peace, but “the way of peace they have not known,” because, “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Romans 3:17–18). Therefore, mankind continues to say, “Peace, peace!” when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 8:10–11).

We in God’s Church understand that Scripture foretells a final cataclysmic war at the end of this age—a conflict that will demonstrate the evil character of the god of this world. “Proclaim this among the nations: ‘Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruninghooks into spears; let the weak say, “I am strong.” Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O LORD”’ (Joel 3:9–11).

As shocking as this may seem, the armies of our world will actually fight against Christ when He comes: “And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered



together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army” (Revelation 19:19). Of course, Christ will defeat them: “And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths” (Zechariah 14:12).

Just as the physical nation of Israel was born with Christ destroying the armies of Pharaoh in the sea, so the returned Christ will destroy that pagan system’s successor, the Beast power. And He will do so in righteousness. *The Day of Atonement pictures that great day when Christ retakes Zion by force, locks up the Adversary and frees a world held captive!* Our Lord will then usher in a new age when, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9). *There will be no more war for a thousand years!*

### DO CHRISTIANS FIGHT?

Yes, Christians do fight in this age, but not like everyone else. The Church of God wages a *spiritual war*, and—unlike the world, which is blind to this war—we can recognize the spiritual forces we fight against. God reveals them. “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12).

The fortresses we pull down are of a different sort. “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according

to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3–5).

Christians are to fight—but not as the world fights. Our fight is spiritual. “*Fight the good fight of faith*, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1 Timothy 6:12).

What will be the outcome of that fight? Our Lord is zealous for peace! “Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:7).

The God of Israel encourages us in our spiritual warfare as we await the final cataclysmic battle that will end this age and Satan’s rule. He tells His Church, “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and *having done all, to stand*” (Ephesians 6:13).

War is a skill that many in our day study and perfect, but this will soon come to an end. “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, *neither shall they learn war anymore*” (Isaiah 2:2–4).

Until that day, we in God’s Church can take heart—as spiritual Israel—in the inspiring words of Scripture: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). ■

### Can You Picture the Millennium?

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down a chance to live a life in which they are promised not only a *day* of “absolute rest and peace” every week, but where they are also promised, every seven years, an *entire year* of abundant living without the pressures of their ordinary workload? Think about it! That is exactly the society that God has planned for human beings from the beginning. That society, the Kingdom of God, will be established during the Millennium, and we can begin to picture it today as we study and meditate on Scripture—especially on God’s laws and statutes that help us visualize the reality of what is to come.

Satan the devil has orchestrated a society in which most people hate God’s law and are neither willing nor

able to keep it (Romans 8:7). He has taught his followers to “nail God’s law to the cross.” He has deceived mankind into believing that God’s commandments, laws and statutes are obsolete relics of a harsh and subjugating covenant—a legalistic creed for weak-minded people. Satan, the “father of lies,” has blinded most people to the amazing blessings of God’s law—because if they were not blinded, who in their right minds would willingly reject the opportunity to experience the blessings of living God’s way?

Jesus Christ will soon return to planet Earth. He will establish God’s law, and in doing so proclaim liberty to a world long held captive (Isaiah 61:1–6). Long ago, God commanded that His law should be reviewed at the Feast of Tabernacles. Why? Because

it is through this royal law and our meditation on it that we can see right into God’s millennial society. Without God’s law we cannot clearly envision the Kingdom, and our soul and our hope would have nothing to be anchored to (Hebrews 6:19).

Can you see now why King David delighted in meditating on God’s law day and night? Are you beginning to “taste and see” how, through the lens of God’s law, His Kingdom comes into clearer focus? Take time, at this upcoming Feast, to talk about and meditate on God’s awesome, royal law of liberty. As you do, you will gain a more clear and inspiring view of the Millennial society in which God has called us to participate as His firstfruits, ruling with Christ to bring the blessings of God’s law to the whole world as never before! ■

## Scheduled Maintenance

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LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day” (Deuteronomy 6:20–24).

God gave the Israelites His protection and His laws, but for what purpose? To preserve and maintain them—to keep them well, prosperous and in peace. He wanted to ensure that they would maintain themselves as a nation that would remain under the guiding and blessing hand of the Eternal God.

Similarly, the Apostle Paul knew that God was concerned about maintaining and preserving him, whatever trial and tribulation came. He said to Timothy, “And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!” (2 Timothy 4:18). We can be just as confident as Paul.

Many of today’s true Christians learned deeply about the Bible, and

overcame many challenges and struggles as they began to live God’s way of life. But their knowledge and experience did not prevent them from falling down when it came to maintaining their Christian way of life.

Peter wrote about a condition in the early Church that mirrors our present situation. He described people who had known the truth but had forsaken it (2 Peter 2:15). These were not outsiders, people who did not know and understand God’s ways. They were members of the Church (vv. 13, 15).

Peter’s condemnation is sobering. “For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the

true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire’” (vv. 20–22).

If we do not change the oil in our car, and our neglect damages its engine, we can buy another car. But if we do not maintain ourselves spiritually, the damage could be much more costly.

There will come a time when we will be new beings. We will not have to worry about maintaining these physical bodies. We will be new, clean and complete in glory like Jesus Christ, our elder brother. We will even be given a new name to go with our new bodies.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it” (Revelation 2:17). As we wait for that time, we must remember the importance of maintaining the Christian way of life God has given to us. ■

## Judge Wisely

Continued from page 11

around us, and we must want the very best for them as potential members of God’s Family, but we should not let them drag us down to their level.

### BE A FRUIT INSPECTOR

Perhaps you have heard the saying, “I have not been called to be a judge, but I **am** a fruit inspector!” If we have Christ living in us, we should be able to discern the works of the flesh and the attributes of the Holy Spirit. “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19–21). Those who secretly indulge in the works of the flesh should fear, because their sins will become known (Numbers 32:23; Mark 4:22–23).

Christ said it plainly: “By their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:20). Christians—begotten sons and daughters of God, filled with the Holy Spirit—are able to recognize

that others are growing in the grace and knowledge of God. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another” (Galatians 5:22–26).

God would be pleased to see that all were saved (1 Timothy 2:4). Yet it is His responsibility to determine who can be saved, and who must be condemned. If we ever catch ourselves “hoping” that someone will be condemned—will receive God’s eternal punishment—we can be sure that we are not exercising the Holy Spirit. As Christians, using the gifts of the Spirit, we are to discern others’ actions in light of Scripture (1 Corinthians 12:4–11). But while we must judge deeds rightly, we must not condemn people.

God has given the Church a framework through which His ministry is to provide guidance, direction and discipline to those whose conduct is hurting them or the Church. Let us each understand our responsibility within that framework, and not exceed the authority we have been given. Let us empty our pockets of whatever stones we may still be carrying with us. Remember, we will receive for ourselves what we wish for others.

—LCG Editorial Staff

**Prepare for “Trumpets”!**

Continued from page 2

have been scattered. Certainly, *all over the world*, events will grow worse in certain ways before Christ’s return.

We need to “cry out” and ask God for more of His Holy Spirit, and we need to **give ourselves** to God more than ever to use us in His Work today in preparing for the soon-coming Kingdom of God. Remember, in *doing our part*, we need to take proper action to protect ourselves and our families. Along with this letter is included (in the box below) a set of specific steps we all should be taking to better prepare ourselves physically for disasters ahead. Please *study* the instructions! Of course, this list is a general overview, and is not 100 percent complete—

for example, it does not list the obvious need to have extra flashlights, and perhaps other non-electrical lighting sources, available in case of a long power outage. Consider extra warm clothing if you live in an area where you rely on vulnerable power sources for winter heat. Do use wisdom in implementing and extending your preparations beyond this list.

May God inspire us **all** to “take action” and to do our part in every way—yet *seeking God* more than ever so that we are “walking with God” and can then have His protection and His guidance in the days just before the final events of this age occur—*as they surely will*.

With Christian love,


**CREATING A DISASTER PLAN**

One of the most important steps you can take in preparing for emergencies is to develop a household disaster plan.

- Learn about the natural disasters that could occur in your community from your local emergency management office or American Red Cross chapter. Learn how to prepare for each potential emergency and how to respond.
- Talk with your household about potential emergencies and how to respond to each. Talk about what you would need to do in an evacuation.
- Plan how your household would stay in contact if you were separated. Identify two meeting places: the first should be near your home, perhaps a nearby tree or a telephone pole where you could meet if your home were on fire; the second should be away from your neighborhood in case you cannot return home.
- Pick a friend or relative who lives out of the area for household members to call to say they are okay.
- Draw a floor plan of your home. Mark two escape routes from each room.
- Post emergency telephone numbers by telephones. Teach children how and when to call 911.
- Make sure every member of your household knows how and when to shut off water, gas and electricity at the main switches. Consult with your local utilities if you have any questions.
- Take a first aid and CPR class. Local American Red Cross chapters can provide information. Official certification by the American Red Cross provides “good Samaritan” law protection for those giving first aid.
- Review property insurance policies before disaster strikes—make sure policies are current and be certain they meet your needs (type of coverage, amount of coverage, and hazard covered—flood, earthquake).
- Be certain that all your health insurance policies are current and meet the needs of your household.
- Consider ways to help neighbors who may need special assistance, such as the elderly or the disabled.

- Make arrangements for pets. Pets are not allowed in public shelters, though “service animals”—for those who depend on them—are allowed.

**DISASTER SUPPLY KITS**

Assembling the supplies you might need following a disaster is an important part of your disaster plan. You should prepare emergency supplies for the following situations:

- A disaster supply kit with essential food, water, and supplies for at least three days—this kit should be kept in a designated place and be ready to “grab and go” in case you have to leave your home quickly because of a disaster, such as a flash flood or major chemical emergency. Make sure all household members know where the kit is kept. *Consider having additional supplies for sheltering or home confinement for up to two weeks.*
- You should also have a disaster supply kit at work. This should be in one container, ready to “grab and go” in case you have to evacuate the building.
- A car kit of emergency supplies, including food and water, to keep stored in your car at all times. This kit would also include flares, jumper cables and seasonal supplies.

The basic items that should be in a disaster supply kit are water, food, first-aid supplies, tools and emergency supplies, clothing and bedding, and specialty items. You will need to change the stored water and food supplies every six months, so be sure to write the date you store it on all containers. You should also re-think your needs every year and update your kit as your household changes. Keep items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire disaster supply kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers such as an unused trashcan, camping backpack or duffel bag.

—Excerpted from *Are You Ready? A Guide to Citizen Preparedness*, Federal Emergency Management Administration, pp. 4–10.



# LOCAL

## CHURCH NEWS

### Births

Michael and Gina Heykoop of the Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, congregation are pleased to announce the birth of their first child, *Makayla Renee Heykoop*, on May 28. She weighed 8 pounds, 1 ounce, and was 21 inches long. Makayla is the fourth grandchild for Mr. and Mrs.

Cor Heykoop, the third grandchild for Mr. and Mrs. Winston Gosse, and the eleventh great-grandchild of Mr. and Mrs. Willem Heykoop.

Sean and Deborah Stephenson members of the Charlotte, North Carolina congregation, are very

pleased to announce the birth of their first child, *MacKenzie Lynn Stephenson*. MacKenzie was born on May 6, weighing 6 pounds, 5 ounces, and she measured 19¼ inches long. Her grandparents—Skip and Glenda Stephenson, and Lehman and Lori Lyons,—are thrilled!

### Anniversaries

*Mr. and Mrs. Charles (Virgie) Collins*, of the Dallas congregation, celebrated their 63rd wedding anniversary on May 5. They were baptized 50 years ago, on the Feast of Trumpets, 1961, and have served God's people as deacon and deaconess for many years. The Dallas, Texas, congregation honored Mr. and Mrs. Collins with a cake in celebration of their anniversary. Mr. and Mrs. Collins have set a fine example of commitment to God and His way of life, and their example in marriage is an inspiration to many.

*Mr. and Mrs. Gaylyn (Leona) Bonjour* celebrated their 46th wedding anniversary on June 19. The Asheboro, North Carolina congregation, which Mr. Bonjour pastors, joined by visitors from California, Oklahoma, and Headquarters, honored them with a festive meal, cake, punch and a gift after services. The Bonjours are much loved and appreciated for their excellent example and long-time servant leadership in God's Church.



**FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD 2011, CALASIAO, PHILIPPINES**



**PENTECOST 2011, MARTINIQUE**

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

## In Loving Memory

**Mr. Zeferino Cortez**, of the Auburn, Massachusetts, congregation, died September 8, 2010, having lived 107 “very happy” years. He was born May 4, 1903, in Pennsylvania, of Cherokee Indian and Scottish descent. As a youth, he travelled to England, Russia, and Ireland while working as a cattle wrangler on a cattle boat. “Tony,” as he was known to his many friends, learned to play several stringed instruments exceptionally well, and became a member of a band which featured Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra. He travelled with this group and others such as B.B. King and Chuck Berry. In the mid-1970s he came into the Worldwide Church of God and was baptized in 1980, when he was in his late 70s. He soon was put in charge of opening the building and setting up the hall every Sabbath and his little red Toyota was the very first car on the parking lot each Sabbath. In the last year of his life he was unable to attend services regularly and he deeply missed being with the brethren he loved so well. Mr. Cortez was a pleasant, mild-mannered man with deep blue sparkling eyes, and he is sorely missed by his friends and brethren, who look forward to seeing this loyal and faithful brother in Christ in the near future. Mr. Cortez had many children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. He was buried in Dorchester, Massachusetts, south of Boston, which had been his home for more than fifty years. Mr. Cortez was the oldest member of the Living Church of God.

**Mr. Stanley B. Snider**, of the Asheboro, North Carolina, congregation, died at his home April 26 after a lengthy battle with melanoma. Stanley was baptized in January 1975 by Mr. Bob League and he was a faithful servant in God’s Church. He is survived by his loving wife Helen of

40 years marriage. He is also survived by his son David, daughter-in-law Jill, two granddaughters Mercedes and Taylor, as well as his parents, Bruce and Vonciel Snider. His funeral was conducted by elder George Webb. Stanley will be greatly missed by all of his family and friends.

**Mrs. Millie Gray Barnes** of the Columbus, MS, congregation, died May 7 at age 87. She was predeceased by her husband, Mr. James Barnes, and survived by four sons, twelve grandchildren, and four great grandchildren. Mr. Evo Walker and Mr. Ed Breaux officiated at her funeral service and burial.

**Mrs. Hilary Francis Murphy** of the Belfast, Northern Ireland, congregation, died June 4 at age 57, after being in declining health for some years. Mrs. Murphy was baptized in 1972 and had served as a deaconess for years. Mrs. Murphy’s resolute faith in the face of debilitating illness was an inspiration to many, and her service of sending thoughtful and encouraging cards from the congregation to countless people was much appreciated. She is survived by her husband, elder John Murphy, three children and six grandchildren. The funeral service and committal were conducted by Regional Director Mr. Rod King and elder Henry Cooper.

**Mr. Franklin Ernest Zastrow**, a longtime faithful member of the Merrill, Wisconsin, congregation, died on June 17, at age 78. Mr. Zastrow is survived by his wife, Beatrice, four sons, a daughter, and seven grandchildren. He was baptized into God’s Church in 1971. Mr. Zastrow’s funeral was performed by Mr. Adam West on June 21.

## Upcoming Tomorrow’s World Telecasts

**WGN: Sunday, 6:00 a.m. ET**

**WORD: Sunday, 7:30 p.m. ET**

**Discovery: Sunday, 6:33 a.m. ET**

**CW-PLUS: Sunday, 8:00 a.m. ET/PT**

**VISION (Canada): Sunday, 4:00 a.m. & 5:30 p.m. ET; Monday 1:30 a.m. ET; Monday–Friday, 3:00 a.m. ET**

WGN

Air Date	Broadcast Title
September 4	Diagnosis: Christianity
September 11	Answered Prayer
September 18	Death, Resurrection and Your Future
September 25	Reaping the Whirlwind
October 2	How Does Satan Deceive You?
October 9	Revelation: The Mystery Unveiled!
October 16	Will Christians Be Raptured?
October 23	Who Is the Antichrist?
October 30	You Can Understand Prophecy

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

# Ordinations

**Mr. Marcus Nicholson** was ordained an elder on the Sabbath of March 19, by Area Pastor Martin Fannin and elder Travis Nicholson. Mr. Marc Nicholson serves the brethren in Blairsville, Georgia.

**Mr. Bill Long** was ordained a deacon on the Sabbath of March 26, by Evangelist Douglas Winnail and Area Pastor Daniel Friz. Mr. Long serves the brethren in the Detroit, Michigan congregation.

**Mr. Alan Cornefert** was ordained a deacon on the Sabbath of April 23, by Evangelist Douglas Winnail and Area Pastor Rick Stafford. He serves the brethren in the London City congregation in the U.K.

**Mr. Glen Harrison** was ordained an elder on the First Day of Unleavened Bread by Evangelist Douglas Winnail, Pastor Ron Poole, and elder David Wakefield. He serves the brethren in the Braselton, Georgia congregation.

**Mr. Alex Celan** was ordained a deacon on the Last Holy Day of Unleavened Bread by Regional Pastor Dan Hall and elders

Gary Stein and Dwain Crisman. He serves the brethren in the Dallas, Texas congregation.

**Mr. Melvin (Trey) Johnson** was ordained a deacon on Pentecost by Area Pastor James Sweat and elder Tex Malone. Mr. Johnson serves the brethren in Athens, Alabama.

**Mrs. Chantal Duval** and **Mrs. Jeanine Hodebar** were ordained deaconesses on Pentecost by Area Pastor Wilner Pierre and elder Marcel Ginier. The Martinique brethren were deeply moved by the ordination of these two ladies who have served faithfully with their husbands (both deacons) for several years. Mrs. Duval and Mrs. Hodebar are the first deaconesses to be ordained in the French-speaking Caribbean since the beginning of the Living Church of God.

**Mr. Anthony Stroud** was ordained an elder on the Sabbath of June 25 by Presiding Evangelist Roderick C. Meredith, Evangelist Richard Ames, Evangelist Douglas S. Winnail and Pastor Bob League. Ordained in Charlotte, North Carolina, Mr. Stroud moved to Missouri in July to assist Mr. Rand Millich.

## LITERATURE TRACKING: YOU CAN HELP!

The Mail Processing Department at Headquarters is constantly looking for ways to improve the speed with which mail is delivered to brethren and others requesting Church materials. Since much of our mail is sent at “bulk rate” to receive the lowest-possible mailing charges, it is vital that we monitor the speed of delivery, so we can work with our U.S. Postal Service contacts to help local post offices do a better job of meeting their published delivery times.

In the MyLCG area of the Member Resources Web site at [www.cogl.org](http://www.cogl.org), there is a Literature Tracking feature. When you receive a co-worker letter, *Living Church News* or *Tomorrow's World* magazine, U.S. residents can provide important help to the Mail Processing Department by going to the Literature Tracking area and recording the date on which you received the item. No matter whether you received the item quickly, or whether it took longer than usual, your data is very helpful to the Mail Processing Department, as it helps staff gain a more accurate picture of where our mail delivery is going smoothly, and where there may be problems to overcome.

From a number of states there are already frequent reporters, but we need more. We particularly need more tracking reports from the Dakotas, Kentucky, Maine, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Utah, West Virginia and Wyoming.

The same username and password that you used to register for the Feast of Tabernacles will also grant you access to the Literature Tracking area. You are holding the September-October 2011 *Living Church News* in your hands. When you put this issue down, why not go to [www.cogl.org](http://www.cogl.org) and let us know the date on which you received it? Thank you in advance for your help.

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# COMMENTARY

## Atonement

This year, the annual Holy Day known as the Day of Atonement begins at sunset on Friday, October 7. Most of the world thinks of this day as *Yom Kippur*—a “Jewish” observance consisting of a total fast from food and drink. However, a very “little flock” of true Christians keep this festival, which God intended for all His people and which Jesus Christ and the Apostles taught by their very own example.

Some modern “scholars” like to say that Paul and others, through what they sometimes call “progressive revelation,” moved the early Church away from observing the Day of Atonement and the other annual Holy Days found in Leviticus 23. The truth, however, is that Paul and the other Apostles all kept the biblical Holy Days, and taught Christians to do the same (Acts 18:21).

Remember that the New Testament Church itself was established on the annual Holy Day known as Pentecost. Scripture also documents plainly that Christ kept the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:8).

The example is clear. Original Christianity—which we in the Living Church of God are striving to restore fully in our lives day by day—kept the weekly and the annual Sabbaths.

In Acts 27:9, the Day of Atonement is referred to as the “Fast”—because it was observed by fasting in order to humble oneself before God. So, should Christians in this day and age keep the Day of Atonement? Yes, we should! On the Day of Atonement, Christians humble themselves before God, remembering the awesome sacrifice of the Lamb of God, the

Messiah, Jesus Christ, whose blood atoned for our sins. The Hebrew word for Atonement, *kaphar*, literally means “to cover over.” Our death penalty has been paid for us, and our sins have been buried, or “covered over.”

The Day of Atonement also looks forward to the time when the whole world will have the same opportunity for forgiveness and reconciliation. That future time, which we call “Tomorrow’s World,” will see the establishment of the Kingdom of God, under the rulership of the King of kings, Jesus of Nazareth, which will encompass all the earth. The Day of Atonement also signifies the time when the god of this world, Satan the devil (Ephesians 2:2) will be expelled and restrained for a thousand years. It is a supremely important and meaningful day for Christians.

Each and every one of us needs forgiveness, because we all have sinned. We as Christians need to deeply examine our lives. Christ and the Apostles commanded everyone to repent and believe the true Gospel of the Kingdom of God. The King of that Kingdom—Jesus Christ—shed His very own blood to make possible our forgiveness and our entrance into His Kingdom.

On the Day of Atonement, let us consider all that the day pictures—in regard to our individual lives now, and to our future in Tomorrow’s World, when true peace will be established and the world will finally be “at one” with God.

—Roderick C. Meredith