

# THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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## All Eyes on the Goal!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

A powerful maxim nearly all leaders advocate is: “Keep your eye on the ball.” We know that our own ultimate goal is to be born into the Kingdom of God as firstfruits at the return of Jesus Christ, who said: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).

For many, the immediate goal is just to “get there”—to make it into God’s Kingdom. That is understandable. But apart from personal selfishness and the powerful instinct of self-preservation, what specifically should we be thinking about and *preparing for* as we go through our day-to-day lives, and as we try—with God’s help—to “grow in grace and in knowledge”?

After all, our real goal is not to “float around heaven all day with nothing to do.” Our actual future job, our wonderful responsibility and opportunity in Christ’s soon-coming world government, will be to serve as kings and priests. We will be assisting Jesus Christ in teaching the entire world the *right* way to live, and helping to organize and guide the human societies and institutions in the Kingdom of God to follow the “Way” of God. This is why it is vital that we think *now* about the *reality* of Christ’s government, and that we meditate on *how* we should prepare to assist Christ and be ready to *do our part* when we are changed (or resurrected from the dead) and given the responsibility to rule this world under the living Christ.

Remember, Jesus Christ directly prophesied that this will be the job of all true saints! In the famous parable of the pounds (or “minas,” as the *New King James Version* more precisely translates this passage), Jesus rewards the servant

who has been *faithful* in using his talents in this life: “Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities” (Luke 19:17). To another, who had been less zealous but still faithful, Jesus said, “you also be over five cities” (v. 19).

As revealed throughout the *entire Bible*, the job or responsibility of God’s faithful saints will be to assist Jesus Christ in ruling and bringing peace to this confused world. Daniel was inspired to tell us that, after the coming Beast and False Prophet are put down, “Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him” (Daniel 7:27).

To those who are “overcomers,” Jesus directly promised: “And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—as I also have received from My Father” (Revelation 2:26–27). For, in His awesome Plan, the Eternal God has “made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:10).

Dear brethren, please meditate on the *reality* of Christ’s coming Kingdom—His righteous *government* soon to be set up on this earth! And meditate on the opportunity each one of us who overcomes will have to assist Christ in bringing order, peace, prosperity and joy to a world that today is overflowing with war, violence, rape, torture, starvation, disease and suffering! We should deeply look forward to this very real opportunity we will be given to *genuinely help* our fellow human beings in a way that all the “do-gooders” on earth today, despite their noble intentions, are simply not able. For we—as resurrected Spirit

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Beings—will be filled with God's Holy Spirit and the fullness of His knowledge, wisdom, love and big-mindedness, far beyond the capacity of mortal human beings.

Describing Christ's coming government, God tells us, "He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor" (Psalm 72:4). As millions of the survivors of the coming Great Tribulation come streaming back to the land of Israel after their prophesied national captivity, we who have overcome will be there to help and comfort them as "the blind and lame" return, as "they shall come with weeping and with supplications" (Jeremiah 31:7–9). We will be there to help them understand that the eternal God finally had to intervene to prevent the human race from totally exterminating all life from this planet—as Jesus prophesied (Matthew 24:22).

As mankind increasingly descends into total anarchy and rebellion against the laws and ways of God—people *murdering* their own unborn children by the millions, men "marrying" men and following various ideas of "man-boy love," bestiality and every form of perversion, increasing incidence of AIDS and other disease epidemics brought about by all the above, finally leading to cannibalism, utter hopelessness and suicide—Almighty God will eventually say, "Enough!"

He will intervene and send Jesus Christ back to earth—this time as King of kings. And we, if we truly overcome, will be there to help Him wipe away every tear, right every wrong and bring about a truly righteous society, "the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

But are *you*, personally, genuinely preparing to play *your part* as a king, a judge, a teacher and a leader in this coming world government?

*Think!* What do you know about how to run a city, how to organize a righteous educational system or how to "judge" in the disputes among peoples and nations? In general, God does not call the great leaders of the world at this time (1 Corinthians

1:26). So, obviously, our Father in heaven will have to *give* us special wisdom, help and guidance through His Holy Spirit in our future responsibilities. He will certainly do that—as the entire Bible indicates. But above and beyond that, what should we be doing now to prepare for our future responsibilities? What kind of people did God use in the past in His government? Does this give us a vital clue as to what He *will do* in the future?



In ancient Israel, we find the first description of God's kind of organized government. In Exodus 18, we read the explanation of how Moses had been trying to do everything himself, and so was guided to appoint others to help him. We see that God's government is *always* by **appointment**—not in any case by politicking or voting. God led Moses' father-in-law Jethro to advise him to appoint others to judge individual situations under Moses' overall guidance. He instructed Moses, "Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens" (Exodus 18:21).

Brethren, *all of us*—men and women—need to be such people, who "fear God" and are people of *truth*, hating covetousness and dedicated completely to God's way in every situation. As each of us in our own lives learn to stand up for Truth, and strive to be totally fair and honest in all our dealings, this certainly **will** help us qualify to be kings and priests in Christ's government. We should always strive to take the time to get "all the facts" if we are making significant decisions. We should heed God's instruction, which He repeats over and over in the book of Proverbs: "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14).

We should also genuinely **study** in detail the laws and statutes of God. We should go over and over them to see how they apply to various situations. **Think** about the fact that the

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# EDITORIAL

By Richard F. Ames

## THE SAINTS WILL STAND BEFORE GOD'S THRONE IN HEAVEN

**D**r. Roderick C. Meredith has been very busy with other important projects, so he asked me to write this issue's Editorial. In it, I will share with you some of what we have recently discussed in our Council of Elders meetings, on which I elaborated during a presentation at the Ministerial Conference in May of this year. The points I will cover are meant to help us better understand our relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ, who have destined for us an amazing future as full members of the God Family if we "endure to the end" and are born into the Kingdom of God.

Some of you have heard me preaching on some parts of what follows, but have not heard it all "put together" as I will try to do here. You may also have heard Dr. Meredith discussing this, as he did briefly at the Feast of Tabernacles in Panama City Beach, Florida, last year. In fact, much of what Dr. Meredith and I have preached, and what I discuss in this article, follows closely from what Mr. John Ogwyn wrote in 2003 in his powerful booklet, *Revelation: The Mystery Unveiled!* Please be assured, brethren, that Dr. Meredith and I, and the many other faithful ministers in the Living Church of God, are not "departing from the truth." We are simply striving to fulfill the biblical imperative to grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18), and to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

In doing so, we should consider the example of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. Many of you may remember his booklet, *Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days—Which?* Note the humility with which Mr. Armstrong presented the following discussion of Christ's return:

"And perhaps the glorious second coming shall occur, in whatever year

it may be, on this very day of the Feast of Trumpets—who knows? While we cannot say for certain, yet cannot we see this possibility?... Repeatedly Jesus warned us to watch, regarding His second coming! Could it be possible that, unless we are observing the Feast of Trumpets, as the first-century Church of God was observing Pentecost, that we shall not be ready, or caught up to meet Him? We do not—we cannot, of course, say; but we do ask the question. Is it not possible? Let us humbly and willingly yield to walk obediently in all the light" (p. 40, 1974 edition; p. 34, 1976 edition).

Today, some scattered members of God's Church insist vehemently that Christ will come for His saints on Pentecost—something that the Living Church of God does not see in Scripture and, as a result, will not teach. Others proclaim, far more ardently than Mr. Armstrong, that Christ will and **must** set His feet on the Mount of Olives precisely on the Feast of Trumpets. **Many** who assume they are "holding fast to the letter" of what Mr. Armstrong taught are, in fact, relying on the unspoken assumption that God has given them clear answers He did not reveal to Mr. Armstrong.

For that reason, this article will endeavor to stay particularly close to Scripture. If some of its conclusions involve details that Mr. Armstrong did not discuss, we should not be fearful of considering them, as long as we can recognize that they are biblically correct, and in harmony with what the Church has taught and will continue to teach.

### HEAVEN IS NOT OUR REWARD!

God's true ministers have for many years emphasized the vital biblical truth that heaven is not the "reward of the saved." We in the Living Church

of God continue to teach this essential understanding. Contrary to the false ideas of "mainstream Christianity," which teaches nonsensical ideas about "floating off to heaven when you die," the Church of God has proved from Scripture that today's Christians will spend the Millennium and Great White Throne Judgment ruling under Jesus Christ **on the earth**.

We understand that God has called today's Christians to prepare to become kings and priests to reign with Christ on the earth for a thousand years (Revelation 5:10; Matthew 5:5; Revelation 20:4–6). We know that our service in this capacity will begin when the true saints of God are resurrected at the "last trumpet" (1 Corinthians 15:52) to meet Christ in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). At that point in the end-time prophetic sequence, the wife will have finished making herself ready for her marriage to Christ (Revelation 19:7).

### DARBY'S FALSE "PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE" THEORY

In the 19th century, Protestant theologian John Nelson Darby introduced a false teaching that has become widespread among today's Protestants. Contrary to clear scriptural statements showing that the resurrected saints will be caught up into the air to meet Christ **long after** the Great Tribulation has begun—in fact, very near its end—Darby promoted the idea that Jesus would "rapture" Christians away so that they would be absent from the earth during the events of the Great Tribulation. Of course, this misunderstanding forces Darby and his supporters into all sorts of erroneous conclusions. If all Christians were taken to heaven before the Great Tribulation,



Darby's theory could not account for the two groups of Christians remaining on the earth—one in a place of safety, the other being persecuted by the great false church. Darby's theory also relies on the false teaching of the "immortal soul"—since, in his theory, the "raptured" are supposedly kept in a disembodied state in heaven, awaiting a coming judgment, contrary to the clear biblical account.

By contrast, Scripture teaches that when the saints are caught up into the air, at the seventh trumpet, to meet the returning Christ, they will be Spirit Beings—God's literal children who have overcome and been born into the Kingdom of God. And the reward they receive will **not** be heaven—their reward will be to serve under their Elder Brother as kings and priests in the Kingdom of God on planet Earth.

### THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER

If anyone doubts that the Living Church of God is teaching this point correctly, I urge that they watch two of our recent *Tomorrow's World* telecasts. Mr. Rod King's powerful program, "Is The Rapture Coming Soon?"—with its most recent airing scheduled from August 23–29, 2012—shows that the Living Church of God rejects the world's false doctrines and has the correct understanding. Also Mr. Wallace Smith's "Will Christians Be Raptured?"—last aired in October 2011, but still available for viewing on the *TomorrowsWorld.org* Web site—confirms our clear understanding of this point.

Why would the resurrected saints go to heaven to visit God the Father? We know from Scripture that God the Father will **not** come down to the earth until it is purified with fire (2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 21:1–3). Some have made the assumption that these New Testament references to a "sea of glass" and standing "before God's throne" indicate the use of a portable throne, as found in Ezekiel chapters 1 and 10. But the Revelation accounts indicate the

presence of the heavenly hosts who are **not** found in the Ezekiel descriptions.

Putting this all together, what can we conclude? When we are born into the God Family, will we be forbidden from seeing our Heavenly Father "face to face" for 1,100 years? If that is the case, how could the Father officiate at Christ's marriage to His bride? Of course, if the Father were to come to the earth for the ceremony, this would contradict the teachings of Scripture that He will not come to the earth until after it has been purified with fire. Yet some in God's Church have expressed

AS CHRISTIANS ANTICIPATING OUR DESTINY OF BEING BORN INTO GOD'S FAMILY AS FIRSTFRUITS, UPON THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, WE LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING CHRIST IN THE AIR AT THE SEVENTH TRUMPET, AND THEN GOING TO GOD'S THRONE, READY FOR OUR MARRIAGE TO THE LAMB. THEN WE WILL SEE OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN, AND WE WILL BE ONE WITH HIM AND THE LAMB (JOHN 17:20–23).

discomfort at the idea of Scripture showing Christ's bride coming before the Father's throne in heaven for the wedding.

Since heaven is not the reward of the saved, must we assume that the resurrected saints—born into the Family of God as His full children—will be "barred" from any access to God's throne in heaven? Or, can we determine from Scripture that the saints **will** appear before God's throne for their wedding to Christ? To understand this point more clearly, we need to look carefully at what the Bible tells us.

### "STANDING ON THE SEA OF GLASS"

The Apostle John describes God's glorious throne room in heaven and

states: "Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal" (Revelation 4:6). Later, John describes those who "have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God" (Revelation 15:2).

Note that the saints who have overcome are shown standing on "the sea of glass." John sees this sign in heaven, as the seven angels are about to pour out the seven last plagues. He sees the resurrected saints, standing on the sea of glass before God's throne, singing the song of Moses and the Lamb's song in praise to God. Notice John's account: "Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, **standing on the sea of glass**, having harps of God. They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: 'Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!'" (Revelation 15:1–3).

### "WHO FOLLOW THE LAMB WHEREVER HE GOES"

One of the major proofs that the saints will see the Father is the intimate relationship the born-again saints will have with Christ, for Christ and the Father are **one** (John 17:22). Note this description of 144,000 saints. "These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who **follow the Lamb wherever He goes**. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault *before the throne* of God" (Revelation 14:4–5). As the bride and wife of Christ, the saints will be **with**

**Him.** Note that these “firstfruits” follow the Lamb *wherever He* goes (see also John 10:27)!

Exactly who are the 144,000? Are they the Philadelphians? Are there two groups of 144,000 indicated in Scripture? Ideas abound, and this article will **not** attempt to resolve that question. Still, we can see clearly that—just as Christ has access to the Father instantaneously at all times—the saints **will** be with the Lamb, even before the Father’s throne. Notice also that Jesus’ prayer to the Father reveals that Christ’s disciples will be **one** with Him and the Father! “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that **they also may be one in Us**, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me” (John 17:20–23).

If we are **one** in the Father and in Christ, we will certainly have immediate access to our Father in heaven. As God’s immortalized children, we will live in another dimension. We will be in a spiritual dimension not limited by time or space. The billions of light years to distant galaxies will not impede our instantaneous travel. And we will inherit “all things” (Revelation 21:7). However, for the sake of our calling to serve human beings for a thousand years, we will operate in time and space as kings and priests on the earth.

### “BEFORE THE THRONE”

We saw that the 144,000 “follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” Notice **where** they sing a new song: “Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. And

I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang *as it were* a new song **before the throne**, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth” (Revelation 14:1–3).

The ambiguous “as it were” in verse 3 does not appear in the original Greek. Several other translations such as the NIV put it simply: “And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders.” Where do the twenty-four elders reside? Before God’s throne in heaven (Revelation 4:4). Yes, even now, on the earth, we “come boldly to the throne of grace” in prayer (Hebrews 4:16). But, **nowhere** do we find “the twenty-four elders” **anywhere else** but before God’s throne **in heaven**. Revelation 14 is describing events at the **heavenly** “Mount Zion”—not a crowd gathered near Jerusalem.

From the plain statements in Revelation 14:1–3 and Revelation 15:1–2, we see that the saints are standing on the “sea of glass” and “before the throne.” We look forward to meeting Christ in the air at the seventh trumpet, and then going to God’s throne, ready for our marriage to the Lamb. “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

### THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The seventh trumpet will announce the takeover of the earth’s nations by the Kingdom of God (Revelation 11:15). Then, the first resurrection takes place. Christ will come to planet Earth’s atmosphere **for** the saints, who will follow Him to God’s throne. Then we will rejoice in our marriage to the Lamb: “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7).

Certainly the Father will officiate at the wedding of His Son!

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong came to believe that the seventh trumpet will take place on the Feast of Trumpets—the first day of the seventh month on God’s sacred calendar. We also know that the seven last plagues “complete the wrath of God,” beginning with the seventh trumpet. Notice again **where** the born-again victorious saints will stand as the seven last plagues are poured out: “Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God” (Revelation 15:1–2).

After this momentous event, the seven last plagues described in Revelation 16 will be poured out for the next nine days—culminating in the putting away of Satan on the Day of Atonement. Earth’s armies will gather at Megiddo, preparing their futile attempt to fight against Christ (vv. 14–16). As Mr. Ogwyn writes in *Revelation: The Mystery Unveiled!*, “Most likely, the action that is described in the book of Revelation as occurring between the blowing of the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11:15 and the putting away of Satan in Revelation 20:2 will take place in a nine day span between Trumpets and Atonement” (p. 42).

### CHRIST COMES WITH HIS SAINTS

As Mr. Ogwyn noted in his booklet, the Revelation 19–20 sequence indicates that, either on or just prior to the Day of Atonement, Jesus Christ will come **with** His army—the saints and the angelic host—to conquer those who seek to fight against Him. He will banish Satan, and will set up His Kingdom here on earth. “Now I saw

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# THE “7,000 YEARS” DOCTRINE

By Dexter B. Wakefield

“Do not forget!” God inspired the Apostle Peter to use these words to tell us to *be sure to remember* a certain thing: “But, beloved, *do not forget this one thing*, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8). Why is this so important that, of all Peter could have emphasized, he said we are not to forget “*this one thing*”?

We understand that God’s perception of time is different from ours, that “*with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*” Many people understand this in *only* that general way. But looking at the context of the scripture provides important additional information.

*The context is millennial.* Prior to Peter’s statement in verse 8, verse 3 refers to “the last days.” Those are the days just before Christ returns to establish His Kingdom. Verse 7 refers to “the day of judgment.” Then, in verse 10, Peter mentions “the day of the Lord.” In verse 12, he writes of “looking for and hastening the coming of the *day of God.*” Clearly, Peter is writing in a millennial context. So, what is he writing about here—and why is it so important?

Many critics are fond of saying that we should not take the Bible **too literally**. Sometimes, however, when people have trouble understanding the Bible, it is because they do not take it **literally enough**. Peter was not writing figuratively or metaphorically. Rather, *he meant precisely what he wrote*.

Biblically, what day is like a thousand years? *The Sabbath day is like a thousand years*—it pictures the millennial rule of Christ, which is His millennial rest. And which thousand years is like a particular day? The seventh millennium, during which Christ will rule over the Kingdom of God on the earth, is like the seventh day. Christ is Lord of the seventh millennium—His millennial Sabbath—and He is “Lord of the Sabbath” (Luke 6:5). This information is apparently very important for God’s people, because Peter urged that we “*do not forget this one thing.*” And, indeed, this information survived for centuries after the time of the apostles. Yet, as with so much of what Christ and the apostles taught, this doctrine was later changed and then entirely rejected.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE “7,000 YEARS” DOCTRINE

The “7,000 years” teaching has an ancient history that is well known to scholars. The respected historian Edward

Gibbon wrote a famous passage regarding the first-century Church: “The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ. As the works of the creation had been finished in six days, their duration in their present state, according to a tradition which was attributed to the prophet Elijah, was fixed to six thousand years. By the same analogy it was inferred that this long period of labor and contention, which was now almost elapsed, would be succeeded by a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years; and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon earth till the time appointed for the last and general resurrection” (*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 1, p. 403).

Gibbon understood these points from secular history, not from a reading of Scripture. The “7,000 years” doctrine was often mentioned by early writers both in and out of the Church. For instance, writing shortly after 100AD, the author of the apocryphal *Epistle of Barnabas* makes a detailed reference to it, commenting on the belief of the first-century Church: “‘God made in 6 days the works of His hands, and made an end on the 7th day, and rested on it, and sanctified it’ (Gen. 2:2). Attend, my children, to the meaning of this expression, ‘He finished in 6 days.’ This implieth that the Lord will finish all things in 6,000 years, for a day is with Him a thousand years. And He Himself testifieth saying, ‘Behold, today will be as a thousand years.’ Therefore, my children, in 6 days, that is, in 6,000 years, all things will be finished. ‘And He rested on the 7th day.’ This meaneth: when His Son, coming [again], shall destroy the time of the wicked man, and judge the ungodly, and change the sun, and the moon, and the stars, then shall He truly rest on the 7th day” (*Epistle of Barnabas*, Chapter 15).

Late in the second century AD, Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyons, France, wrote: “For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded... This is an account [Gen. 2:1–2] of the things formerly created, as also it is a prophecy of what is to come. For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years, and in 6 days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the 6th thousand year... These are to take





place in the times of the kingdom, that is, upon the 7th day, which has been sanctified, in which God rested from all the works which He created, which is the true Sabbath of the righteous...” (*Against Heresies*, Book 5, Chapters 28, 33).

The millennial doctrine in various forms had many other supporters in the first and second centuries, and there remain records of active debate on the subject. Some other ancient historians who mentioned the doctrine include Ketina, Lactantius, Victorinus, Hippotylus, Justin Martyr and Methodius. History shows that the first-century Church believed as the Apostle Peter taught.

Later, however, other influential theologians such as Origen (ca. 185–254AD) scorned the millennial beliefs of the early Church, which he saw as interpreting prophecy “in a Jewish sense” and “refusing the labour of thinking, and adopting a superficial view of the letter of the law.” In his *Amillennialism* (“no millennium”), Origen rejected a literal approach to understanding prophecy and supported the idea that Christ’s millennial rule was *merely an allegory*. Origen opposed the view known as “Premillennialism”—that Christ would return at the beginning of a thousand-year millennium. Premillennialism, however, was the belief of the first-century Church, and is the teaching of God’s Church today.

Perhaps the greatest opponent of the doctrine of a 7,000-year week of millennial days was Augustine of Hippo (354–430AD), known to Roman Catholics as “Saint Augustine.” As has been noted by Richard Landes, Associate Professor of History and director of the Center for Millennial Studies at Boston University, Augustine was “the most powerful anti-apocalyptic, anti-millennial thinker in the Latin Church... His insistence that millennialism never had any part of true Christianity and that responsible leaders (clergy) should never espouse apocalyptic beliefs, should never ‘read’ contemporary events by the light of the book of Revelation, dominated ecclesiastical circles. He and the centuries of theologians, copyists, and archivists who followed in his lead worked diligently to muffle the voice of the [premillennialists] in their texts for the sake of the Church, the social order, and the salvation of their souls” (*Heaven on Earth*, p. 85).

Historian Gibbon wrote: “The assurance of such a millennium was carefully inculcated by a succession of fathers from Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, who conversed with the immediate disciples of the apostles, down to Lactantius, who was preceptor to the son of Constantine. Though it might not have been universally received, it appears to have

been the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers [those who followed the apostle’s original teaching]... But when the edifice of the church was almost completed, the temporary support was laid aside. The doctrine of Christ’s reign upon the earth was at first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism” (Gibbon, p. 404).

Note also this from historian Landes: “The first time the ‘grand narrative’ of western history was told (fourth to fifteenth centuries), *religious* historians chose not to include millennialism in the story. Theological [doubters] like Eusebius (ca. 300), Orosius (416), Gregory of Tours (ca. 570), Isadore (ca. 600), Bede (ca. 700), Otto of Freising (ca. 1150), and Baronius (ca. 1600), reconstructed a history of the Church, purged as much as possible of both apocalyptic and millennial elements. The second time, in the massive revision of modern historiography from Gibbon to Charles Homer Haskins, *secular* historians determined to push religion into the background of their story, were hardly interested in highlighting religious phenomena that even ecclesiastical historians considered ridiculous” (*op. cit.*, p. 83).

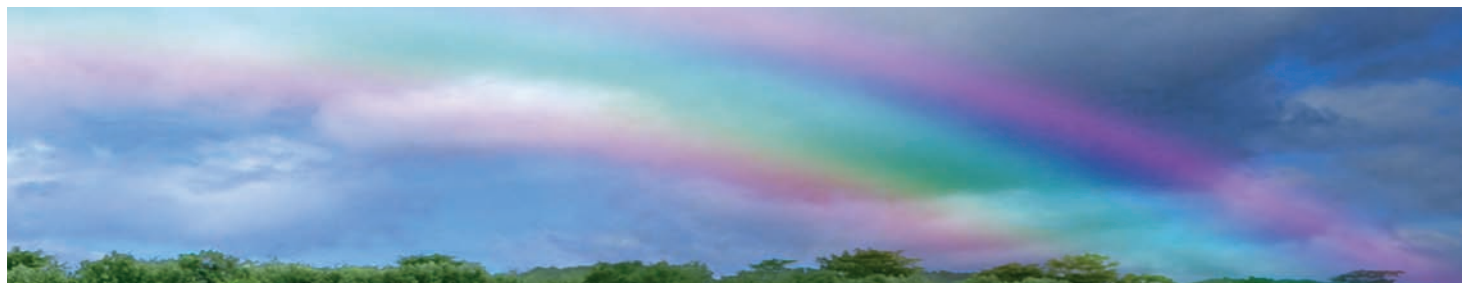
Thus was the plan of God and the true gospel of the Kingdom of God, as believed by the first-century Church, suppressed—as it continues to be suppressed today. *The Apostle Peter’s exhortation, “do not forget this one thing,” was forgotten!*

### THE “7,000 YEARS” DOCTRINE FOUND IN ANCIENT JUDAISM

Although the doctrine’s origin is the Bible, not Jewish tradition, it can be found expressed in ancient Judaism—one reason (as in the case of Origen) why most of professing “institutional Christianity” later came to reject it. The Lutheran *Augsburg Confession* (1530), for instance, characterizes ideas of a messianic millennial rule on earth as “Jewish opinions” (Article XVII). The *Anglican Articles* (1553) describe belief in a millennium as “Jewish dotage.”

Nevertheless, the doctrine remained in Jewish writings. It was mentioned prominently in the writings of the Sanhedrin of Jesus’ day. Also, the Talmud records the commentaries of various sages and presents the doctrine in various ways. Some examples:

“It has been taught in accordance with R. Kattina: ‘Just as the seventh year is one year of release in seven, so is the world:



one thousand years out of seven shall be fallow, as it is written, “And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day,” and it is further said, “A Psalm and song for the Sabbath day,” meaning the day that is altogether Sabbath—and it is also said, “For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.””

“The Tanna debe Eliyyahu teaches: ‘The world is to exist six thousand years. In the first two thousand there was desolation; two thousand years the Torah flourished; and the next two thousand years is the Messianic era’” (*Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Sanhedrin Folio 97a*).

## THE “7,000 YEARS” DOCTRINE FOUND IN THE BIBLE

God promised that He would “restore all things” (Matthew 17:11) in the time leading up to the return of Christ. One thing He has restored is the doctrine of His 7,000-year plan for humanity.

The millennial day is well established in Scripture. In a prayer of Moses in the Psalms, we read, “For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night” (Psalm 90:4). Also, we read that the saints will reign with Christ for 1,000 years—a millennial day. “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6).

This principle of the millennial Sabbath indicates a period of six millennial days—a millennial week of mankind’s misrule—that precedes the millennial rest of the rule of Christ. Just as the Eternal finished His creation in six days and rested on the seventh, He is laying the groundwork of His plan in this current age, and the world will then experience rest and restoration in the coming millennial Sabbath. In this current 6,000-year period—a time allotted for mankind to make his many failed experiments at self-rule—a deceived world labors in Satan’s bondage, just as ancient Israel labored in slavery in Egypt, picturing Satan’s rule in this age as “the ruler of this world” (John 14:30). Where Egypt pictured the world’s bondage in this age, Israel’s Promised Land pictured the Kingdom of God and the millennial rest to come.

Throughout Scripture there are a number of significant six-one pairings, and it is interesting how often God repeats this theme. For instance, a Hebrew could be sold into bondage, but only for six years. After that, he went free. “If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing” (Exodus 21:2). Satan now has the world laboring in bondage, but during the millennial Sabbath the slave-master himself will be bound for 1,000 years—and the world will have rest and freedom. The world’s slavery—whether physical or spiritual—is not of God, but of Satan. God has merely **allowed** it in order to present a picture of the spiritual condition of mankind in this age.

In Hebrews 4, the Apostle Paul discusses how the weekly Sabbath pictures the millennial Sabbath as God’s millennial rest.

Paul uses the Promised Land of Israel to portray the millennial rest to come. It was because of disobedience and lack of faith in God that Israel had to wander for 40 years in the wilderness. In this age, humanity toils in a world held captive for 6,000 years by the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), after which there will be a long-promised millennial Sabbath of rest.

“Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it” (Hebrews 4:1). The Apostle Paul advises us that we must be diligent to make our calling and election sure. But ancient Israel failed to believe and obey God. “For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: ‘**So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest,**’ although the works were finished from the foundation of the world” (vv. 2–3). Of those over age 20, only righteous Joshua and Caleb survived for 40 years in the wilderness (Numbers 14:29), but that did not change God’s plan for humanity. It was ordained from the beginning of creation.

“For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: ‘**And God rested on the seventh day from all His works;**’ and again in this passage, ‘**They shall not enter My rest.**’ Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, He again fixes a certain day, ‘Today,’ saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, ‘**Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.**’ For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. So **there remains a Sabbath rest** for the people of God. For the one who has entered His [God’s] rest has himself also rested from his [human] works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience” (vv. 4–11, *NASU*).

Still, the world routinely profanes the holy time of the weekly Sabbath, and—in doing so—disobeys God’s commandment: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). And the Sabbath will be kept holy in the Kingdom. “And from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the LORD” (Isaiah 66:23). God’s holy people keep His Sabbath holy and remember what it promises.

## WHAT IT MEANS TO US TODAY

In an important sense, the Bible is a “7,000-year book.” God has set forth a plan, “from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8; 1 Peter 1:20; Ephesians 1:4; John 17:24), and will complete it in a millennial week of creation, just as He restored the earth in the creation week (Genesis 1, 2; Exodus 20:11). The Bible reveals an overall chronology maintained by writer after writer, century after century. Though it is a book recorded by many authors, they all



wrote from one point of view: that of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It begins in Genesis at the beginning of a 7,000 period, and ends in Revelation just after the end of that time.

It is possible to track the chronology from Adam to the construction of the first temple by Solomon (see *Tomorrow's World Bible Study Course*, Lesson 2, Part 2). However, because of the vagaries of the ascension years of the kings of Israel, we cannot get a perfectly accurate fix on the exact years of the biblical chronology since the first temple. In other words, God has arranged it so we cannot yet know exactly, to the year, where we are in the context of end-time events—we can only know the general time frame (2 Peter 3:8). Also, in Peter's phrase, "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," the English word "as" is translated from the Greek word, *hos* (*Strong's* 5613)—which

*Understanding the 7,000-year millennial week gives us the context to understand what Scripture is presenting.*

### Do Most Today "FORGET THIS ONE THING"?

Not only have the world's religions forgotten the "7,000 years" doctrine; most have specifically **rejected** it! But we are told that, as Christians, we can know the times and seasons. "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place... But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:28–32). "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not



elsewhere is translated as "about" (Mark 5:13; 8:9; Acts 13:18, 20). *Hos* means "as" in the sense of "about," "even as" or "as it were." So, we cannot conclude that the length of this age will be *exactly* 6,000 years, only that it will be *about* 6,000 years—six millennial days.

Christ told us that only the Father knew the day and hour of His return—not even the angels in heaven: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36). Satan, a fallen angel, can certainly measure 6,000 years to the day, but God has said "about" concerning the millennial count. Even Satan, who certainly reads and quotes scripture (Matthew 4:5–6), can know only "that he has a short time" as the end of his six millennial days approaches. But he **can** count—and he does know the times—so he unleashes his evil on the world, "having great wrath" (Revelation 12:12).

Countless events of history have passed, recorded or unrecorded. The Bible, however—"the 7,000-year book"—contains the history that we need for understanding God's plan, and the instruction that shows us how to live His way of life. It also contains the *prophecy*—history recorded in advance—that we need to know in order to understand God's plan. For those whose minds God has opened, His word allows them to understand the past, the present and the future in the context of a completed panorama of history. The Church of God has been given eyes and ears to see and hear this marvelous word, and to understand its consistent purpose. What other book has such extraordinary content?

expect. But no one knows the day or hour" (Matthew 24:44). If we knew the day and hour, we might become complacent rather than vigilant and spiritually awake. But Christ tells us, "**Watch** therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming" (Matthew 25:13).

Because we do not know the exact timing, occasionally, someone will ask, "Well, what if these *aren't* the end times and time just goes on and on?" The answer is that if you are in the Church, obeying God's commandments and keeping the Sabbath **just** so you can escape the Great Tribulation, or if the only reason you obey God is because you hope to see prophecy fulfilled, then you are in the Church for the wrong reason. What about all our brethren who lived in the last 2,000 years and were faithful to the end? What was their reason? They wanted to have their sins washed away and to live God's way of life for their whole lives—*regardless of where they were in prophecy*—because they **loved God's law and way of life as a great blessing**. They believed that God would raise them up to immortality in His kingdom in the last day, whether they saw the end-times or not. So, they **lived their lives in faith and obedience—and did the Work** of their day.

The Bible is, in an important sense, a "7,000-year book." It tells the end from the beginning. No matter where you live in that 7,000-year period, if you believe God, you too can know the end from the beginning. **We are commanded to watch**, and as we see the end approaching, we encourage ourselves and pull together in confidence in the Truth and Work of God. ■

# Is God Fair?

By Gerald E. Weston

It used to be common for itinerant preachers to travel from city to city across North America, setting up tent meetings, calling sinners to “accept Jesus.” Emotions would be roused as the preacher ended each gathering by making a passionate appeal for congregants to walk down the sawdust-strewn aisle and “give their heart to the Lord” while there was still time. “Jesus might not return tonight,” the preachers would warn, “but if you die as a sinner tonight, you will writhe forever in hellfire because you didn’t accept Him right now!”

With that threat hanging over people’s heads, it is not hard to understand why so many walked down the proverbial sawdust trail. But did these preachers accurately portray the God of the Bible? Is it true that the billions who have lived and died without accepting Jesus Christ—most of whom never heard His name, and even fewer who heard His Truth being preached—are all lost forever? If so, where is the fairness of God?

What about babies who died before they were old enough to understand God’s love, much less choose His way? And will people be lost forever just because they grew up in a family or a whole society devoted to atheism? What about the billions of Muslims who grew up being taught falsehoods about Jesus Christ? Will God treat them differently than the billions of professing Christians who lived and died hearing only a false message about a false “Christ”?

The Apostle John taught plainly that, “God so loved *the world*” (John 3:16). Here, “the world” is not a reference to planet Earth, but rather to the people who dwell here. And, no matter how you count it, by any reckoning there have always been far more “unsaved” than “saved.” So, if God “loved the world,” how can this be? Is He so weak that He cannot save the majority of His creation? This leads

to the question, “Is God fair? Is He a respecter of persons? Has everyone—or will everyone—have a genuine and fair opportunity for salvation?”

This vital question is one that perplexes even most professing Christians. I once visited a young man in Greenville, Mississippi who had confronted his minister with the question: “What will happen to all



those millions of people who never heard of Jesus Christ?” The minister’s dogmatic reply was that these people would all go to hell for eternity. When pressed about the fairness of God, this clergyman then reasoned, “Well, I suppose that God will judge them according to what they do with what they do understand.”

Not convinced, this persistent young man then asked, “Are you saying that there is another way to salvation than through the name of Jesus Christ?” He brought up the verse, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). This young man’s minister was left speechless—he felt he had no choice other than to deny the Bible or to admit that God is unjust and unfair.

Another approach to this question is typified by a discussion I had with a repairman who came to my home. Like so many other professing Christians, this

man believed that everyone will either be saved or lost at the end of his current lifetime. When I protested that billions of people have lived and died and never even heard of Jesus Christ, his reply was that if they wanted to know, God would get the word to them by some means. In effect, this man was saying that God knowingly created the vast majority of people to be lost forever.

Consider a man dying in the outback of Australia in 31AD, a week after Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. No one ever told him about Christ and what He had done. Yet: “For *‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’*” How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:13–14). So, would this man really be lost forever, never be given the opportunity to accept Christ’s shed blood on his behalf? Would this man then go to a place of unbelievable torment to writhe in pain forever? This certainly does not seem like the fair and just plan of a loving God.

Of course, we must also recognize the truth, clearly expounded in Scripture, that “as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law” because they “show the work of the law written in their hearts” (Romans 2:12–16). This scripture and many others tell us that all are guilty of sin and “all the world [is] guilty before God” (Romans 3:9, 19). But does this mean that God created billions and billions of people whom He expected would burn eternally in Hell, as part of a plan to save just a relatively few? Actually, the fact that all are sinners does not point to a cruel God; it does not even address the question of whether God’s plan is to give everyone an opportunity to understand the only way to have sin removed!

Ask yourself: “If God truly loves the world, would He deny that man in

the Australian outback an opportunity for salvation?” Or is God so weak that His plan requires billions to burn in Hell forever just to save a few? Indeed, if God is in a “soul-winning” contest, Satan appears to be winning. But is that what God is doing? Or does the Bible reveal some other explanation?

The truth is that, as your Bible makes clear, God is working out a plan. It is a loving and just plan, involving His desire to save all of mankind, and it involves far more than the believer saying a few “magical” words at the end of the sawdust trail, even if spoken in all sincerity. It involves more than living out one’s life on earth as preparation to spend eternity in some kind of great “candy store in the sky.” There is a reason why the Christian life is to be one of godly character development (Ephesians 4:11–16).

### A FATAL CHOICE

When God created the first man and woman, He placed them in a beautiful garden, full of trees that bore nuts of all kinds and fruits of many colors, textures and tastes. God told these first human beings that they could enjoy the fruit of **all but one** of these trees—and that, if they ate the one forbidden fruit, death would be the result.

As we know, Adam and Eve chose the prohibited fruit. By this act, they declared their rejection of God and their desire to decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong. For doing this, God thrust them out of the Garden of Eden and told them, in effect: “You want to do it your way? Go to it!”

Ever since, whatever mankind puts its hand to build is a mixture of good and evil. The inequity, the suffering and the heartache that we see all around us are the results of the decisions we make—yet we often have the gall to blame God! But what does God really have to do with this? He wants us to know that there are tragic consequences when we choose

to do things our own way. However, at the same time, God has a plan that—when all is said and done—will have given every human being a fair and genuine opportunity to accept salvation. Sadly, some will knowingly and deliberately reject that opportunity (Hebrews 6:4–6; 10:26). And it is important to realize that, in order for someone to reject it, the “knowledge of the truth” must first be given and understood.

The Bible reveals that the vast majority of human beings in this present age have been cut off from God and the tree of life (Genesis 3:22–24). That is the reason so few understand the Bible. Sadly, many have been deceived into thinking Jesus came to save everyone **now**.

I remember an incident that occurred one day in my Sunday School class. A student asked: “Why did Jesus speak in parables?” And the teacher explained: “Because people at that time were fishermen, shepherds, and farmers. Jesus spoke to them in language they could understand.”

Now, to a twelve-year-old, that sounded pretty good, but I later came to understand that my teacher’s answer was totally wrong! Scripture describes Christ’s disciples asking this same question, and receiving a very different answer. “And the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given’” (Matthew 13:10–11; Mark 4:11–12). Jesus also taught: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44, 65).

So, we see that Jesus spoke in parables to hide His meaning from the general public. Only those whom God calls can come to Him—and only relatively few are doing so in this present age. But does this mean He is unfair and does not care about the vast majority of people who are now living or who have ever lived? Not at all!

### AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

The Apostle Paul tells us that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3–4). The Apostle Peter explains that God is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). So, we can see that it is God’s long-term purpose to call everyone who has ever lived to come to Him. It is obvious, though, that He has not yet called most people. So, for those who will live and die without having been called, what will God do?

Numerous scriptures reveal there is more than one period of judgment—and more than one resurrection from the dead. Consider the implications of Matthew 11:21–22: “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.” The Gentile inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon did not know the God of Israel, yet Jesus spoke of a coming day of judgment during which those cities’ people will fare better than some of the Jews of Jesus’ day. Christ made a similar statement involving the city of Sodom, known for its gross sexual perversions (Matthew 11:23–24).

Many assume that “judgment” necessarily means “sentencing”—but this is not always the case. The Bible often uses the term “judgment” to describe a period of evaluation—a time during which those being judged are to prove themselves. Scripture explains, for example, that judgment right now is on those who are of the household of God (1 Peter 4:17). Judgment is an ongoing process for the people of God, and judgment in fact *begins* with God’s people. The ancient peoples of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom will have their “day of judgment”—their time to prove themselves—in the future.

The Apostle John’s writings confirm there is more than one day of judgment:



“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God.... And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4). Now, notice carefully: “But *the rest of the dead* did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection” (Revelation 20:5).

How clear! Those who are Christ’s at His return will be resurrected to life in what is called the “first resurrection,” after which they will rule with Christ over the nations of this earth: “And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth’” (Revelation 5:9–10).

But what about those who are not Christ’s at His coming? Will they be lost forever? Not at all! They will take part in the next resurrection, called the *general resurrection* or the “Great White Throne Judgment.”

Near the end of Jesus Christ’s thousand-year millennial rule on the earth, Satan will be loosed from his place of restraint to go out and deceive the nations once again (Revelation 20:7). He, along with those who follow him, will be defeated. But what will happen after that? “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it... And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books” (Revelation 20:11–12).

Here, John describes open books. Many professing Christians jump to the conclusion that these books are filled with the salacious details of people’s lives, but this is a misunderstanding. We have already seen that the vast majority of human beings, cut off from the tree of life, will have lived and died without hearing God’s Truth. God calls

only a few in this present age, and Jesus spoke in parables to hide His meanings from the masses (Luke 8:10).

In effect, the “books”—*biblos*, from which we get the word “Bible”—are closed to most people who live and die in this present age, and will remain closed until this Great White Throne Judgment. Yet it is by the contents of these *biblos*—the Bible—that they will be judged when their minds are opened and God reveals His Truth to them.

Notice also that the “Book of Life” is described as open, not closed. This indicates that the Great White Throne Judgment is a period of time during which those judged by “the books” will have the possibility of having their names written in God’s “Book of Life.” This is the time of judgment for the vast billions of people who lived and died while Satan was the “god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:3–4). The billions who were deceived by Satan—and, remember, deceived people do not know they are deceived—will finally hear God’s Truth preached and have their first opportunity to accept that Truth and obey Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

In a remarkable passage of Scripture, the prophet Ezekiel describes this coming resurrection. He describes a valley filled with an “exceedingly great” number of dry bones, and the prophet is asked if they can live again (Ezekiel 37:1–3). Then comes a description of the dry bones being resurrected to physical life. Bones come together, then flesh, connecting tissues and skin. Finally, the breath of life enters the bodies as the people are resurrected to mortal, physical life (vv. 4–10).

This is not a resurrection to immortality or to a reward being received. These resurrected people do not think they are saved. On the contrary, they think they are lost! “Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, “Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!”’” (v. 11).

This passage describes people who did not know God during their lifetime, but who will come to know Him after they are resurrected and given His Spirit. “**Then** you shall know that I am the LORD, **when** I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. **I will put My Spirit in you**, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. **Then** you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it” (Ezekiel 37:13–14).

How long will these resurrected people have as their period of judgment? The Church has traditionally pointed to Isaiah 65:17–20 as a strong suggestion that people will be given as many as a hundred years of physical life during this second resurrection. **Yes, God is fair**, and He will give everyone who has ever lived a genuine opportunity to make an informed decision. It may be sobering to realize that many of our friends and relatives in the world are cut off from the tree of life at this time. They truly do not understand, because God has not yet opened most people’s minds to come to Christ (John 6:44, 65). The time *will* come, however, when they will be resurrected from the grave, and will be given a full and fair opportunity to choose God’s way.

We need to understand—and this cannot be emphasized enough—that this is not a “second chance” for people. It will be their *first* opportunity to hear God’s Truth with an open mind. And, even then, not everyone will accept it. Some who are called to the Truth today deliberately reject it. Similarly, even in the White Throne Judgment, God will not *force* anyone to be in His Kingdom (Deuteronomy 30:19).

What a reassuring truth it is to know that God is fair and that He loves all of the human beings He has created! The Bible explains God’s plan for *all* human beings—for the deceived, for infants and little children who died prematurely, and for those who lived and died never hearing of Christ.

This is a truth so few understand about John 3:16, **and what a wonderful truth it is!** God truly is reconciling the world to Himself through Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19). ■



Titus 2:3-5

# Woman to Woman

## Women at War

By Shirley Young

I was a child growing up during World War II, when our county in the southeast corner of England—only 21 miles from France—became known as “Bomb Alley.” Throughout the Battle of Britain, our small market town sustained many direct hits with a number of houses flattened and whole families wiped out. A little girl in my sister’s class at school was among those who lost her life. As I sit here thinking, many memories flash through my mind of what it was like to be a young woman in a time of war.

Nearby was a small airfield—Detling Aerodrome—situated on the top of the North Downs. One day, the German airplanes mounted an attack on that airfield in order to shoot up the planes sitting on the ground. My mother recalled hearing the bells of ambulance after ambulance ringing as they sped up the hill to the burning airfield. Civilians in the nearby town of Tonbridge would stand up on a high hill and watch the horrifying red glow that lit up the night sky—it was London burning! The fires could be seen for miles.

The stark reality was that the very existence of our nation was threatened.

The first German raid on London took place around 4:00 p.m. on September 7, 1940. The German Luftwaffe made a *blitzkrieg* (lightning) attack, sending 348 bombers escorted by 617 fighters over the English Channel from France. London’s docks and streets were bombed for 57 days and a third of the capital was destroyed.

The frightening banshee wail of the sirens eerily announced each attack. Soon we would hear the heavy drone of Heinkel 111 bombers. This would be closely followed by the answering *womp-womp!* of the anti-aircraft guns. Few could sleep. Barrage balloons hung everywhere in an attempt to cause the German planes to fly higher and so miss their targets.

When the air raids came at night, my sister and I would be rushed out of bed and down into the cellar or under the dining room table. We would hear the terrifying scream as bombs whistled down followed by that inevitable sickening *thud!* Then we would all wonder who had “copped it” (been hit or killed) this time.

There were times when “dog fights,” as they were called, raged overhead, with German and British planes “going

at it” head to head. People would often stand out in the street shouting and waving their fists in the air, as though encouraging our smaller number of fighters to see off the enemy with their larger, more powerful air force. This they did, because of God’s faithfulness to His promises (Leviticus 26:7–8).

Towards the end of the war, when I was a little older, Hitler decided to send over the V-1 rockets or “flying bombs.” They became familiarly known as “Doodle Bugs.” The distinct noise of their jet engines would cause us to rush out into the garden

and watch them go over. They were unmanned vehicles with vicious-looking flames shooting out the back. We would sigh with relief if their engines were still throbbing because they were only set to fly a predetermined mileage. Their engines would then cut out, causing them to fall and explode.

Royal Air Force planes would scramble to meet them and fire at them, or try to tip them over with their wings in order to bring them

down in open country before they reached London. Of course the anti-aircraft guns also thundered away. Many of them were able to be brought down into the sea off the southeast coast, but hundreds fell in our county of Kent. Today, there are still maps of Kent with all the myriads of black dots representing every “Doodle Bug” that came down.

Many evenings, at 9:00 p.m., people would huddle around their radios to hear the gravelly voice of Winston Churchill rallying the British people, his own bulldog-like stature epitomising the determination to never give in. Blackout after dusk was rigorously enforced. Food was rationed and people were encouraged to “dig for victory.” However, had it not been for the courageous sailors who braved the German U-boat packs in the Atlantic, bringing generous food aid from America, Britain would undoubtedly have been starved out.

Food was strictly rationed, and on one occasion—when one of my uncles was home on leave (he was in General Montgomery’s tank corps)—he came walking through the town to our house carrying a rabbit, and told me later that one or perhaps two people had stopped him



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# Make Time to Fast Regularly!

By Scott D. Winnail

**W**hy is fasting so difficult for so many? When was the last time you fasted to draw closer to God? What are common barriers or obstacles to fasting? What can we do to help ensure that we fast more frequently and effectively?

This article is not only for baptized adult readers, but also for adults who are not yet baptized and even for teens. Younger people can benefit from learning the concepts that will be explained in this article. They, too, will be in a position to fast in the years ahead—and may already be, pending parental approval.

Would you say that you fast on a “regular” basis, or is your fasting sporadic? Do you fast multiple times throughout the year, or generally only on the Day of Atonement and perhaps an occasional Church-wide fast? This article will provide three different strategies you can use in order to help ensure that you fast regularly before God (Luke 2:37; 2 Corinthians 6:5; 11:27).

Fasting—going completely without food and water for some time (Deuteronomy 9:9, 18)—is one of the “big four” tools of spiritual growth that each of us should employ *regularly* if we deeply desire to become firstfruits in the Kingdom of God. These four powerful spiritual tools are: *prayer* (Psalm 142:1–2), *meditation* (Psalm 119:97–98), *Bible study* (Acts 17:10–11) and *fasting* (Daniel 9:3). Christians are admonished to engage in the first three of these *every day*. As Presiding Evangelist Dr. Roderick C. Meredith and other ministers have repeatedly emphasized, we should generally have a goal of fasting personally about once a month. Nearly all adults should aim to fast this often, barring some extreme health condition and the advice of a physician and their local minister. God’s people **must** engage in this essential activity in order to grow spiritually. Without regular fasting, Christians run the risk of spiritually **stagnating**.

True Christians will constantly prod themselves to draw closer to God and overcome, and fasting is an oft-neglected, underutilized tool for doing this. It can propel our spiritual



growth in a way nothing else can! In the January-February 2007 *Living Church News*, Dr. Meredith gave the following admonition: “These are trying times. Make no mistake about it; we need God’s help and His direct intervention... We need spiritual help in resisting ourselves, in overcoming the world (which strikes us from many different directions) and in resisting and overcoming Satan the devil, who is also striking at us in remarkable and unusual ways he has never used against us before.... Some of the big problems in our lives, and in God’s Church—and some of the attacks by Satan the devil—can only be overcome by prayer **plus** fasting. **We must not leave out fasting**” (“But by Prayer and Fasting,” pp. 3–4).

In truth, brethren, with very few exceptions, we will **not** be able to develop the humility, faith and courage to endure to the end and enter the Kingdom of God as firstfruits **unless** we are fasting *regularly*! Even Jesus Christ Himself fasted (Luke 4:2)!

For more information on *how* to fast, and on *why* fasting is important, it would be helpful to review sermons that have been given on the subject. Two excellent choices would be “Lessons from Fasting” by Dr. Douglas S.

Winnail and “Fasting and Repentance” by Mr. Richard F. Ames. You may find these in your local congregation’s sermon library (sermons 628 and 577, respectively) or you may watch them online at the [www.LCG.org](http://www.LCG.org) Web site. Also, ask your minister and others for practical tips on how to avoid headaches and other distractions during your fast.

So, why do so few of God’s people fast on a regular basis? And, what are the common barriers that make it so difficult to fast regularly? Here are three reasons many find regular fasting so difficult, and three strategies that can help us overcome these very common barriers.

## **Barrier 1: “I DON’T LIKE TO FAST.”**

Why do so few of God’s people fast on a regular basis? One very common answer is that most simply dislike the experience. We love to eat! God made us to both need and enjoy eating, and most of us simply do not enjoy “going without” and afflicting our souls! Yet denying our physical desires, however difficult, is essential for our entry into God’s Kingdom (Matthew 16:24–25).

So, how do we overcome this barrier? We simply must “push” ourselves to fast regularly, regardless of how much we dislike it at first—because it is *the right thing to do*! James 4:17 reminds us clearly that if we know to do good but do not do it, it is sin! We all know that regular fasting is extremely important and expected by God, and thus we *must* make it happen (James 1:22–25; 4:7–10). Christ said His servants would be fasting (Matthew 9:15).

Thankfully, as we learn to fast more regularly, and as we learn how to properly prepare for and end a fast physically, it becomes less difficult. Also, as we learn how to more fully focus our efforts spiritually, we will actually begin to look forward to our fasts—even with excitement! We will begin to enjoy the



experience and look forward to the spiritual growth that results from the fast.

### **BARRIER 2: “I DON’T HAVE TIME TO FAST.”**

Many truly desire to fast, yet cannot “find” time to do it *regularly*. Sometimes we intend to fast “in the next few weeks,” but when the intended time arrives, we are “too busy”—and we forget, only to remember a week or two later. Does this sound familiar?

One very useful key is to **schedule a time to fast**. Yes, that is right—write it down on the calendar and plan other events and activities **around** your scheduled fast.

Regular fasting requires prudent use of the time God has given us. We are to be “redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15–16). We must use the time while we have it or it will be gone! In reality, if we do not schedule a time to fast, we can guarantee that Satan will help our lives become *exceptionally busy* around the time we **intend** to fast. The result? Before we know it, we may find ourselves several weeks past our intended fast date, still trying to find “a good time” to fast. The key is to pick a specific time every month, at the beginning, middle or end, and write it on your calendar. Be sure to let your spouse know (or your parents, for young people still living at home), so they do not expect you for meals that day.

### **BARRIER 3: “SOMETHING KEEPS COMING UP.”**

Have you ever planned a fast, only to arrive at the date and have a major incident or opportunity come up, resulting in delaying or foregoing your fast? As we plan to fast, not only should we schedule a time to fast *every month*, but we should also **protect** that time with all of our might—preventing anything else from disrupting this time we set aside to draw closer to God (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Years ago, I worked with a colleague who used her lunchtime every day to go for a walk. It was impossible to schedule

any type of meeting with her from noon to 1:00 p.m. on a weekday, because she “protected” that time for her walks and would not yield. Although at the time I thought her example was a bit extreme, I tried to learn from her stubborn and steadfast practice. As I meditated and prayed about it, I realized that I should be willing to “protect” my time to fast, as she guarded her time to walk! The reality is that we now live in Satan’s world (Ephesians 2:2). When we start to plan a fast, Satan is also aware of it and will do all he can to preempt or delay our fast. He knows that if we are overly busy, overly stressed, or if we have a “special opportunity” arise, we will more than likely delay or forego our fast. Very occasionally, events will occur in our lives that do force us to postpone a fast. But, we must be careful, because the more frequently we delay or cancel a fast, the easier this action will become.

So, we must pick a day to fast when we will be the least busy. Perhaps a Sunday is best. We might need to take a day off work from time to time. Occasionally, we might even use the Sabbath to fast and draw closer to God. It is best to avoid fasting on a workday or school day, as you will typically be focused on “other things” all day and have little time to clearly focus on God and the reasons you are fasting (Matthew 22:37–38).

Remember, Satan *also* knows we are fasting or planning to fast and will do his best to disrupt this vital spiritual activity! God also *allows* situations to arise to see how important our fast is to us—situations that tempt us to break or compromise our fast. God allows this testing to see where our priorities truly lie. Christ warned that if we deny Him, He will deny us to the Father (Matthew 10:33). When we say we **intend** to fast, but then **allow** some circumstance to preempt our intention, are we—in effect—denying Christ?

I can recall various times when I have been tempted during a fast. Many times during a fast I have been offered tasty baked goods. I have had to **catch myself** before taking and eating them. On other occasions, I (alone or with my family) have been invited to eat with

brethren during the time of a personal fast. We have been faced with the options of either declining the dinner invitation and asking for a different date, and possibly offending the host, or breaking a commitment with our Creator.

### **WHAT MUST WE REMEMBER?**

Fasting is a practice that we all need to engage in on a *regular* basis. It is both crucial and essential to our spiritual growth. Thus, we must **make** the time to do it. In order to successfully fast regularly, there are three barriers that we must overcome.

*First*, we must fast no matter how much we dislike the feeling at first (again, barring any major health issue). Fasting is the **right** thing to do—and we need it in order to grow spiritually! *Second*, we must **make** time to fast regularly by scheduling it ahead of time. We must plan for it—arrange the week or weekend around it. Let close family members know we are planning it so that they do not **expect** us to eat that day. We must plan our schedules so that nothing will interrupt our focus on God and the reasons for fasting. *Third*, we must protect the time that we set aside to fast. Do not let **anything** overrun this special time to focus on God and grow spiritually. We must avoid situations where we *know* we might be tempted to break our fast. We must not create or allow situations in which we can come up with “excuses” for breaking the fast. And we should avoid people and situations that may tempt us to end a fast early.

As we employ these three keys, we **will** be able to fast more regularly, and our fasting experiences will become more meaningful and bring about far greater spiritual growth. And, we will develop the faith and courage that are essential for entry into God’s Kingdom! We must all be absolutely sure to **make time to fast regularly!** So... when will you schedule your next fast? Mark it on your calendar today, and start preparing right now! ■

# Ministerial Conference 2012

More than 270 Living Church of God ministers and wives gathered in Charlotte for the 2012 Ministerial Conference, April 30–May 2, 2012. Meeting at the Renaissance Charlotte Suites Hotel, just west of uptown Charlotte, ministers from around the United States and around the world enjoyed formal meetings and many informal opportunities to renew old acquaintances, establish new friendships and discuss matters of shared interest to the ministry.

Even before the official sessions began, a warm spirit of unity and fellowship was readily apparent. The local Charlotte congregation met at the conference hotel on the Sabbath of April 28, when many of the visiting ministers were already present. Brethren were reminded of the international reach of the Work from the very beginning of services, as Malaysian elder Mr. Rajan Moses gave the opening prayer and Canadian elder Mr. Stuart Wachowicz gave the sermonette.

On Monday morning, the conference sessions were launched by Presiding Evangelist Dr. Roderick C. Meredith, who

gave a powerful opening presentation discussing milestones in prophecy and in the Work, and setting the ministers' minds on where we are headed. Evangelist Richard Ames followed with an update from the Media Department, describing our expanding television coverage and doors that God is opening for the preaching of the gospel.

Then came a special highlight of the conference, as ten Living University graduates were present to receive certificates or diplomas. Mr. Paul Kearns, from Australia—a ministerial trainee now serving in New Zealand—gave the valedictory address on behalf of his classmates. Living University President Dr. Michael Germano and theology professor Richard Ames also gave stirring speeches reminding attendees of the importance of recapturing true values in education.

Topics of discussion covered a range of areas pertinent to the needs of field pastors in this “Internet age.” Charlotte elder Mr. Wyatt Ciesielka, who directs the Church’s Internet operations, gave an informative presentation on “Doing the Work in Cyberspace,” highlighting





the many resources the Church makes available online to support the ministry in its many duties. Another presentation by Mr. Ciesielka, “Technology Tools for the Ministry,” shared information about Skype (an online conferencing service,



especially valuable to a ministry that must respond to inquiries from people many miles away) and other such innovations that can save the ministry significant money and time.

Other topics discussed included counseling tips and techniques, issues involving working with Church youth and guidelines for effective preaching.

Many attendees found especially inspiring the brief-but-powerful reports from the International Regional Directors, who shared news of growth in the Work all around the world. Messrs. Mario Hernandez, Rod King, Bruce Tyler, Gerald Weston and Scott Winnail joined the Director of Church Administration, Dr. Douglas S. Winnail, to give conference attendees tangible evidence of the power of the Work in areas of which many in the United States are only scarcely aware.

Dr. Douglas Winnail gave an informative presentation about the “Falling Away” described in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. He demonstrated from Scripture and from the clear teachings of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong that this prophesied event involves an end-time rebellion and deception encompassing the whole world. Ministers also heard an informative presentation by Evangelist Richard Ames, Director of Media Operations, who presented to the ministry a draft paper discussing some key prophetic details involving those faithful Christians who will be resurrected and caught up to be with Christ at the prophesied seventh trumpet. That paper, now reflecting some helpful input brought out by several ministers’ questions, is presented for the entire Church on page 3 of this issue of the *Living Church News*.

Between sessions, most of those attending were able to pose for portrait photographs that will be included in an upcoming Ministerial Photo Album that will be sent



to every Living Church of God member household upon its completion later this year. The previous Ministerial Photo Album, completed in 2006, featured black-and-white photographs; this edition will be our first in full color.

B u d g e t permitting, the Church Administration Department has sought to have “general” Ministerial Conferences—to which all LCG ministers are invited—at approximately two-year intervals. This year’s conference, the first “full” conference since 2010, elicited many encouraging positive comments from attendees. Here are some of those comments:



- “Best conference ever.... Many thanks for all the well prepared sessions, all are valuable tools to perform in a more effective way.”

- “The conference was tremendous! Thank you for such an inspiring event. Every part of it was wonderful!”

- “Dr. Meredith, your love for God and His Work keeps us all moving forward. It is indeed our joy to serve God and His people!”

- “The fellowship, camaraderie and love shown one to another, and the overall atmosphere that prevailed, showed that Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit was with this conference.”

- “Despite the jet lag, I found this conference exhilarating and exciting, especially experiencing Dr. Meredith’s powerful and encouraging messages, and his unforgettable prayer for the sick.”

- “The conference was super fantastic. Love, unity, and inspiration could be seen and felt. All of the presentations were great... God truly opened the windows of heaven and tremendously blessed the conference.”

- “What was most outstanding to me: How Christ is working with the leadership at Headquarters to teach and direct His

elders in accomplishing the work of the gospel. There is unity and it is evident. Headquarters is setting the example by leadership. This conference has blown my mind—it has been extremely exciting. God’s presence is evident.”

—LCG Editorial Staff



**Women at War**

Continued from page 13

and asked if they could buy it. Meat was very scarce.

My father took very seriously the admonition to “dig for victory” and rented a piece of land to grow our own vegetables. One Saturday afternoon when we were all there (we were not in God’s Church),

we heard a German plane coming. We dashed for a small copse nearby and flung ourselves down in the grass. Even now I vividly recall looking up through the undergrowth as a German plane swooped low overhead. Fortunately he did not fire, and did not return.

Often my father was not present. He had been excused military service as he had what was called “a reserved occupation,” but he would still do fire watching duties at night and was in the Home Guard. Consequently, my mother would take charge, telling my sister and me to bow our heads, place our hands together and ask for God’s protection. Thankfully, He graciously heard her prayer!

Since all eligible men were called into military service, older men served in the Home Guard or performed other duties. The absence of men inevitably left a vacuum that only women could fill.

Women joined the Land Army. Some drove tractors, harrowed, planted and reaped the crops. Others worked in munitions factories or drove ambulances, and elderly schoolmistresses kept the schools running for the children who came carrying their obligatory gas masks.

At that time, it was God’s will to give the victory to the Allies, but men nevertheless had to fight and often die

for freedom. In that great battle, women too were part of the equation.

**At War Today**

witness, and to teach and baptise those whom God is calling. So, much like those who were “called-up” to military service, we Christians who are “called out” by God have a big job to do today.

Perhaps as women we unconsciously think of this as “men’s work.” After all, it is men who present the telecasts, do the preaching and conduct the baptisms. Yet, as Dr. Meredith has stated: **we are at war**. It is a case of “all hands on deck”—and that means us, as women, too.

Since we live in a Satan-driven world, our adversary naturally does not want the gospel of Truth being preached when he is busy and successfully deceiving all the nations (Revelation 12:9).

Therefore this “little flock” (Luke 12:32) has a titanic job to do—a job that can only truly be accomplished by God’s Spirit. Nevertheless, we all have our part to play, no matter how small.

Even in the time of Christ and the apostles, many women aided and supported their work (Luke 8:3; Romans 16:3, 6, 12).

Although this 21st century is a very different world to that time, we still

But what has all that to do with us?

Before Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, He gave His Church a commission to fulfill—to preach the Gospel to all the world as a

have a veritable army of dedicated ladies tirelessly working in Church offices around the world. Ministers’ wives go visiting with their husbands. Younger women teach their children the value of following God’s way. But, what about the rest of us? What can we do?

In particular, we can **pray**. Pray in a refined “beaten fine” manner about every detail of God’s Work and His people (Revelation 5:8). As we have often heard, the Work of God’s Church moves forward on its knees. We must not underestimate the value of prayer!

We can also stay in touch with new lady members and maybe answer their questions. We can phone, write letters or send e-mails to those who are sick or going through trials, giving encouragement and comfort.

We can be hospitable in our homes (health allowing) or prepare food for the Holy Days and after Sabbath services. We are all part of the Body of Christ and each of us has a part to play. We are engaged in a mighty battle to get this Work done before the return of Jesus Christ.

However, unlike the allies in

WWII who were never completely sure of the outcome, **we know we are on the winning side.**

Jesus Christ will return and then some words from a famous WWII song will be truly realised:

**“There’ll be bluebirds over  
The white cliffs of Dover  
Tomorrow, just you wait and see,**

**There’ll be love and laughter  
And peace ever after  
Tomorrow, when the world is free.”**

Free... in Tomorrow’s World. ■



## The Saints Will Stand Before God's Throne in Heaven

Continued from page 5

heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:11–16).

This is the "battle of that great day of God Almighty"—or "Armageddon" as it is popularly called (Revelation 16:14). But **who** are the armies in heaven? We read in a previous verse that the Lamb's wife is "arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the *saints*" (Revelation 19:8). Now, notice how the saints are described in the New Testament book of Jude, which quotes Enoch as stating, "Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His *saints*, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him'" (Jude 14–15).

The Beast and the "ten kings" with him will fight against Christ at His coming. And who will be with Christ when He comes? "These [the Beast's army] will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14).

Christ and "those who are with Him"—the saints (those who are "called, chosen, and faithful")—will come from heaven (Revelation 19:11–14) and judge the nations. Scripture describes the saints carrying out the duty described in Jude 14–15: "To execute on them the written judgment—this honor have all His *saints*. Praise the LORD!" (Psalm 149:9).

The King of kings will lead the charge against the world's armies, and the beast and the false prophet will be thrown into a lake of fire. Note that this will occur **just before** Satan's incarceration. "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. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat

on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh" (Revelation 19:19–21).

Immediately following chapter 19, we read that Satan will be put away (20:1–3), and the saints will rule with Christ for a thousand years (20:4–6). The Day of Atonement will also announce the Jubilee and the second Exodus. "Note that the Jubilee began on the Day of Atonement, the day that symbolized Satan's banishment. At this point, the remnants of all 12 tribes of Israel will begin to be regathered from their captivity to the land of Israel (Isaiah 27:1, 13)" (*Revelation: The Mystery Unveiled!*, p. 42).

## CONCLUSION

As Christians, anticipating our destiny of being born into God's Family as firstfruits, upon the resurrection of the dead, we look forward to meeting Christ in the air at the seventh trumpet, and then going to God's throne, ready for our marriage to the Lamb. Then we will see our Father in heaven, and we will be **one** with Him and the Lamb (John 17:20–23). As Spirit beings, we will live in a dimension where time and space will not affect us, even as we serve human beings as kings and priests on earth for a thousand years. Our reward is **not** heaven, but we will inherit more than the earth—we will inherit "all things," including the entire universe! "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son" (Revelation 21:7).

Brethren, I hope you have read Dr. Meredith's comments in the March–April 2012 *Living Church News*: "We all agree, as Scripture teaches and as Mr. Armstrong plainly taught, that our reward as Christians is not in heaven. After the resurrection, we are to be kings and priests on this earth for a thousand years, before God the Father comes to the earth with the New Jerusalem. But does this mean that we cannot go wherever Jesus takes us? Of course not! Revelation 14:4 shows that the 144,000 'go where He goes' ('Is It Wrong To GROW in Knowledge?', p. 2).

Though some details are not yet fully clear to the Church, let us be grateful for the clarity we **have** received, and let us follow Mr. Armstrong's example. As he wrote, "Let us humbly and willingly yield to walk obediently in all the light." I hope this article has shed light on how Scripture appears to show Christ coming for His saints on the Day of Trumpets, and that He will be present on the earth **with** His saints on or just before the Day of Atonement. God will complete His wrath through the seven last plagues, which Scripture shows taking place between the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement. Christ will put all His enemies under His feet, and will rule all nations, assisted by the resurrected saints, ruling under Christ here on the earth. The Prince of Peace and the saints will then re-educate the world to God's Way of peace, love, and prosperity. We look forward to standing before God's throne in heaven, to see our Father and our Lord. "**Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God**" (Matthew 5:8). ■

**All Eyes on the Goal!**

Continued from page 2

man God Himself will use as king over all Israel, King David, did exactly that (Hosea 3:5). For David was inspired to tell us: “Princes also sit and speak against me, but Your servant meditates on Your **statutes**. Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors” (Psalm 119:23–24). Further on, David stated: “My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments, which I love, and I will *meditate* on Your *statutes*” (v. 48). So, King David of ancient Israel—the “man after God’s own heart”—constantly thought about and **meditated** on God’s statutes, turning them over and over in his mind to see how they might apply in *his job* as king over all Israel. For he had to make many hundreds of decisions affecting the nation as a whole, and affecting people’s individual problems that were brought to him. This is the kind of **meditation** you and I *must do* on a regular basis in order to prepare ourselves to be kings and priests in Christ’s government!

Also, as stated, we must meditate and pray and ask God for His help and guidance in having the attitude of **servant leadership** in all that we do. As we approach our jobs as future kings and priests in the Kingdom of God, we must each think, “How can I genuinely *help* and *serve* these wonderful people given into my care? How can I be sensitive to their needs and help them and guide them in the *right way*, even though they may not at first understand God’s law or His government? How can I carry out this responsibility in a way that will encourage and inspire people to do what is right? How can I do all these things in an attitude of ‘service’—**not** just trying to ‘show off’ my power and authority?”

Remember, when His disciples were discussing who would be the “greatest,” Jesus told them: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25–28).

God will be able to use ancient King David, because David learned *this approach* in ruling over Israel. God will be especially able to use him in the overall direction of all twelve tribes of Israel because David *had experience* in doing just that! Since we in the Living Church of God *do practice* God’s government, as best we can, in approaching the activities of the Church, we should each try to get *right in the middle* of God’s Church—taking part in the socials, in the Living Leadership Course classes, in the Spokesman Club, in preparing for and helping during the Feast activities and in preparing for and helping set up and follow through with the various duties involving our *Tomorrow’s World* Special Presentations, and in so many other ways. Then, as we learn to work together as a “team,” *submitting* to one another in the fear of God, we will be learning the attitude of servant leadership. We will gain valuable practice in carrying out *God’s*

*approach* to government in many different ways. This can carry right on over into God’s Kingdom, where we can use the **same** experience and the **same** approach in genuinely serving even *millions* of human beings, over time, bringing them to a way of life that will fulfill their hopes and dreams more than anything they have ever before experienced.

In all of the above, we need to put into practice the direct word of God *first*—above all other ideas and advice. Learn to truly “saturate” your heart and mind with Scripture, so you learn to “think like God thinks.” As Jesus said, “As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me” (John 6:57). And, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (v. 63). Also, *if* you are a fast reader and have the time, I would suggest that you read and think about vital lessons given in the biographies and autobiographies of great leaders—men and women. Often, their lives will give various examples and “clues” as to what makes a person a real leader and *how* a genuine leader should function. God tells us, “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20). So, although we cannot personally “walk” with every wise man, we may partially “see” many of them in action, heed their advice and follow their example, as we study well-written biographies and autobiographies and other books describing their leadership.

In this regard, one of the most helpful books along the lines of management and leadership I have read in my 82 years of life is the seminal work of Peter Drucker—often called “the Dean” of management. He is regarded as one of the greatest thinkers in the field of management, and is often referred to by other top managers, leaders and writers. For he, personally, was paid large sums to consult and advise top leaders of nations and major corporations. Mr. Drucker explains how a top leader ought to focus on “contribution,” on what actually happens, on the **results** of what happens through his work. That is the approach we need to take as we think about and prepare for *serving* others in Tomorrow’s World. He writes:

“The focus on contribution turns the executive’s attention away from his own specialty, his own narrow skills, his own department, and toward the performance of the whole. It turns his attention to the outside, the only place where there are results. He is likely to have to think through what relationships his skills, his specialty, his function, or his department have to the entire organization and *its* purpose. He therefore will also come to think in terms of the customer, the client, or the patient, who is the ultimate reason for whatever the organization produces, whether it be economic goods, governmental policies, or health services” (*The Effective Executive*, p. 53).

Brethren, as you and I think about our own coming contribution in the government of Tomorrow’s World, we also must think about the “Big Picture”—the **purpose** of our service



to so many millions of human beings and the ultimate reason for the Kingdom of God. As we do so, we will better understand and prepare to assist Christ in putting into place an entire new world arrangement—affecting the social lives, the family lives, the working lives and the educational and legal systems governing billions throughout the entire earth! This will help us to know the type of books we should be reading and studying—and results we should hope to achieve, under Christ's direction, as we help Him reorganize the whole world according to God's law!

In preparing for top leadership in Tomorrow's World, it is vital that we come to deeply understand the genuine needs of every type of human being. We need to understand the different needs and aspirations of old people, young people, black people, white people, men, women and so many other different aspects of the human condition. Rather than be sidetracked by the misguided focus of today's "political correctness," we need to study the book of Genesis—all of the Bible—along with history and current events to realize that different people have different strengths and weaknesses. People of different ages and nationalities, who have been through different experiences in the tragedies of this present age, will need different approaches in how we instruct them and help them overcome in order to develop God's character and a truly happy society in Tomorrow's World. So, it is important that we try to learn to "understand" people: the way they think, the way they feel—the way they really are. The great leaders will generally have a broad-based approach to people through having had contact with many different kinds of men and women throughout their entire lives. Ideally, in most cases, such a leader will have been married, had children and a reasonably sized family, and thus have learned to perceive people's different types of approaches. Such leaders will be well able to love those God has put under their care, just as they do their own relatives, understanding their problems and showing genuine love as they help and teach them to overcome.

All too often in today's society, men and women bury themselves in watching inane programs on television—the false "reality" created in Hollywood and elsewhere. They may play weird computer games that absorb their attention with unrealistic situations and a whole unrealistic world—often *totally unlike* what they would see in the genuine men and women in the world around them. As a result, many are unable to empathize with, to understand, to "feel for" **real** people—and are unable to gain the respect and love of other people around them. *Unless they change*, this will make them *unable* to lead others.

Another danger—faced especially by younger people—is the tremendous infatuation so many have with the computer and with computer-related "information." Peter Drucker describes how important it is for a leader to perceive the "big picture" and trends and changes in the world that a leader has to understand. He writes:

"Such changes, however, have to be perceived; they cannot be counted, defined, or classified. The classifications still produce the expected figures—as they did for Edsel. But the figures no longer correspond to actual behavior.

The computer is a logic machine, and that is its strength—but also its limitation. The important events on the outside cannot be reported in the kind of form a computer (or any other logic system) could possibly handle. Man, however, while not particularly logical, is perceptive—and that is his strength.

The danger is that executives will become contemptuous of information and stimulus that cannot be reduced to computer logic and computer language. Executives may become blind to everything that is perception (i.e., event) rather than fact (i.e., after the event). The tremendous amount of computer information may thus shut out access to reality.

Eventually the computer—potentially by far the most useful management tool—should make executives aware of their insulation and free them for more time on the outside. In the short run, however, there is danger of acute 'computeritis.' It is a serious affliction" (*The Effective Executive*, p. 17).

In the end, we all need to go "back to the beginning" as Mr. Armstrong did. We need to reread and *meditate* upon Genesis 1:26, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'" As we study, pray, fast and meditate on God's *purpose* in making us in His image, we will be better equipped to genuinely help thousands or even millions of other human beings achieve the ultimate purpose which God has in mind for all of us. We will try to sincerely *think through* the details of how we might help human beings under our care in Tomorrow's World achieve the ultimate reason for their existence. We will try not to become too involved in all the twists and turns and details in today's world—its movies, television programs, computer games and the "information overload" provided by myriads of modern books, magazines, newspapers and computer-related reports.

Instead, we should often go outside, slowly and thoughtfully look up at the sky and ponder—as King David did—the really *big questions* of life, "What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor" (Psalm 8:4–5).

Truly, we have been made a "little lower" than the angels for a while. However, our ultimate destiny is **awesome**. Let us thoughtfully and prayerfully prepare in a consistent, genuine and prayerful way for that wonderful destiny.

With Christian love,



# LOCAL

## CHURCH NEWS

### In Loving Memory

*Mr. Ken Case*, of the Crossville, Tennessee, congregation, died June 25, 2011 at the age of 74. Mr. Case faced the challenges of being a double amputee with a number of health problems but he was very faithful in attending Church and Church activities. He is survived by his wife Ann, daughter-in-law Denise Case, and grandson Matthew Case. Mr. Case is greatly missed by his family, friends, and brethren. Mr. Martin Fannin conducted the funeral.

*Mrs. Velma Lorraine Droz Coleman*, age 82, of Birmingham, Iowa, died Thursday, April 26. Mrs. Coleman was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, and her siblings. She is survived by five

children, five grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. Mrs. Coleman was baptized in 1981.

*Mrs. Verly Stelly Mouton*, of the Lafayette, Louisiana, congregation died April 23 at the age of 71. Mrs. Mouton was preceded in death by her parents and her husband. She is survived by two daughters, three grandsons, seven great-grandchildren, three brothers and one sister. Funeral services were conducted by her pastor, Mr. Rod Reynolds.

*Mrs. Nelda Allen*, of Ruston, Louisiana, died May 23 at the age of 76. Mrs. Allen was born in Choudrant,

Louisiana. She attended Louisiana Tech after high school and she and her husband were baptized in 1968. She was an accomplished seamstress and good homemaker. Everyone in the congregation enjoyed the baking she brought to the monthly congregational meals. She is survived by her husband of 57 years, Mr. John Allen, three sons and their wives, seven grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren, and one great-great grandchild. Mrs. Allen's kind, quiet and gentle ways will be very much missed. She set a sterling example and all who knew her realized that they were seeing the Proverbs 31 lady in action. Funeral services were conducted by Mr. Donald Wood.



Pictured are brethren from the Pétion-Ville (Port-au-Prince), Haiti, congregation, with a few visitors from the United States, during the Days of Unleavened Bread 2012.

### Wedding

Mr. and Mrs. Michael (Kimberly) Kreyer of Knapp, Wisconsin, are pleased to announce the marriage of their daughter *Naomi* to *Matthew Lyons*, son of Mr. and Mrs. Scott (Jenny) Lyons of Walterboro, South Carolina. The ceremony was performed by Mr. Sheldon Monson in Stillwater, Minnesota, on Sunday, May 20. The couple and their parents would like to thank all those who traveled from near and far to help celebrate the event. The couple will reside in North Charleston, South Carolina.

**Clarification:** The date of the wave sheaf offering is always a Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread, and the count to 50 begins with that milestone, even when the Last Day of Unleavened Bread falls on a weekly Sabbath. See "Counting Pentecost" on page 13 of the March-April 2005 *Living Church News* for a more complete explanation than was given in "The Little Flock" (on page 11 of the May-June 2012 *Living Church News*).

# Births

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob (Krista) Kidney of the Akron, Ohio congregation are happy to announce the birth of their first child, daughter *Miranda Elaine Kidney*, born December 11, 2011. The baby weighed 7 pounds, 2 ounces and measured 19½ inches. This is the third grandchild for happy grandparents Ray and Bette Kidney, also of Akron.

Mr. and Mrs. Victor (Kate) White, of the Lafayette, Louisiana congregation, are delighted to announce the birth of their daughter, *Gabriella Nichole White*, on March 20. She weighed 6 pounds, 7 ounces and was 19 inches long. The

happy grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Don (Kim) White, also of Lafayette, and Mr. and Mrs. Randall (Diane) Davis of Little Rock, Arkansas.

Mr. and Mrs. Ryan (Laurel) Kemp of the Dallas, Texas congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their daughter, *Vivian Claire Kemp*. Born April 4, she weighed 7 pounds 9 ounces and measured 21½ inches long. Vivian is the first grandchild of Mr. and Mrs. Glen (Diane) Gilchrist of the Pacific Northwest Area, and the third of Mrs. Jayne Kemp of the Monterey, Louisiana, congregation.

## Ordinations

*Mr. and Mrs. Naas (Madeleine) De Jager* were ordained as deacon and deaconess on May 25, 2011 by Pastor Jonathan McNair. Mr. and Mrs. De Jager serve the Hammonton, New Jersey, congregation.

*Mr. Jove Jean-Pierre* was ordained as an elder and *Messrs. Gérard Sajous* and *Boniface Louijamé* were ordained as deacons on the first Day of Unleavened Bread, April 7, by Dr. Wilner Pierre. All three men serve in the Port-au-Prince, Haiti congregation.

*Mrs. Tina Burchette* was ordained as a deaconess on the first Day of Unleavened Bread by Pastor Gary Ehman and elder Robert Riggan. Mrs. Burchette serves in the Statesville, North Carolina congregation.

*Mr. Jason Fritts* was ordained as an elder on May 2, during the

Ministerial Conference in Charlotte. Evangelist and Director of Church Administration Douglas Winnail presided over the ordination, assisted by Regional Pastor Lambert Greer and Area Pastors Bob League and James Sweat. Mr. Fritts plans to move from Tennessee this summer to serve as an Associate Pastor in the Michigan and Indiana area congregations.

*Mr. Larry Alverio* was ordained as an elder and *Mr. Tom Benjamin* was ordained as a deacon on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, April 13, by Area Pastor Sheldon Monson and elders Ray Clore and Maynard Marvel. Mr. Alverio serves in the Winchester, Virginia congregation and Mr. Benjamin serves in the Baltimore, Maryland congregation. The ordinations took place as those congregations combined in joyful fellowship with the Washington,

DC congregation, all meeting in Frederick, Maryland.

*Mr. James Dawson* was ordained a deacon on Pentecost, May 27, by Area Pastor Sheldon Monson and elders Larry Alverio, Ray Clore and Maynard Marvel. Three congregations, Baltimore, Winchester, and Washington, DC, observed Pentecost together in Baltimore and rejoiced at the ordination. Mr. Dawson serves in the Winchester, Virginia congregation.

*Mrs. Shirley White* was ordained as a deaconess on the Sabbath of June 2 by Pastor Ron Poole and elder Harry Wilson. Mrs. White serves in the Braselton, Georgia congregation.

*Mr. Todd Lawrence* was ordained as a deacon on Sabbath, June 9, by Pastor Daniel Friz. Mr. Lawrence serves in the Knox, Indiana congregation.

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)).

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# COMMENTARY

## Beautiful Treasure

Many years ago, while exploring in the dark recesses of our attic, I saw a treasure—a *violin*, left among the piles of old saved things. I knew this was a rare find, and that someday I would recover it and make beautiful music. Years went by before I retrieved the old violin, but after some string work I was ready to make music beyond my wildest dreams. Then, much to my surprise, I found that I needed something else.

What I needed was a gift for music. Although I had learned to play a trombone for a few years in the school orchestra, I had to admit—I did not have the gift of truly understanding music.

In many ways, people's lives are like my experience with that violin. They spend their lives in mechanical ways, marching about like ants, unless their activity is inspired by a particular gift.

Of all such gifts, none is more precious than God's Holy Spirit. This Spirit gives human beings a special perspective that spurs them to behave in ways different from those around them whose lives are moved solely by human nature.

Scripture tells us: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22–23). Many non-Christians will respond, "But I already have those attributes! What's so special about this 'Spirit'?" It is important to understand that the fruit of the Spirit is not just the mechanical achievement of those

wonderful qualities. It is not emotion or feeling. It is an inward peace, which passes all human understanding (Philippians 4:7), from which those qualities flow.

That peace is itself a gift. On the first Day of Pentecost after Christ's resurrection, the Apostles were preaching in Jerusalem. "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38). God gives this gift after we repent. Repentance is more than "being sorry." Worldly sorrow is sorrow at having been caught, but true repentance involves a change, a turning from the old behavior in order to go God's way.

As we learn God's way, through Bible study, prayer, meditation and occasional fasting, we learn to make the needed adjustments in our lives. We are no longer mechanically going to and fro. Just as I adjusted my violin, Christians will adjust their lives to produce the beautiful conduct of which we are capable through the Holy Spirit. As the poet said, "only God can make a tree." Only God can give us this gift that sets us apart.

Not long ago, I attended a high school music recital. I heard a young man playing a violin solo that brought many in the audience to tears. This individual had nurtured a special gift that set him apart as a treasure to his listeners. We, too, can become beautiful treasures when God calls us and we respond, obeying Him and putting Him first.

—Charles Knowlton