

# THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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## OUR WONDERFUL YOUTH CAMPS!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

Warm greetings to all of you from Charlotte, North Carolina! Before writing this letter, I just returned a few days ago from an *absolutely wonderful* Living Youth Camp near Columbus, Ohio. It was—as most of you know—our *major* youth camp for the year, with almost 300 people attending, including campers and staff.

Of course, *other* very fine programs were carried on for the younger people, this last summer, in several “pre-teen” camps. And for older campers there was the very inspiring and challenging Adventure Camp, directed by Mr. Sheldon Monson, which this year went through quite a rugged and inspiring experience up in the beauty of Yellowstone National Park.

This year, I was privileged to visit the Ohio teen camp for its final few days, along with my son Jim and his wife Susan. At first, I had thought I would not go—since I had wanted Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ames to be able to see and experience the camp as well. And they did that, visiting during the first few days of the teen camp—adding a great deal to the campers’ understanding and enthusiasm. Even so, both Mr. Monson and my son Jim still urged me to go, also, since I am the “old guy” who started the whole program.

So, I did go for the last few days—and I was *very grateful* to see the *absolute wave* of love, enthusiasm and joy experienced by the campers and staff this year in Ohio! Each day, the campers experienced a wide range of activities—including

volleyball, flag football, softball, archery, riflery, dancing, swimming, water polo, water skiing, music and quite a number of other encouraging and enjoyable activities. Each morning, one of the ministers at the camp gave a “Christian Living Class” and explained basic principles of Christian living and leadership to the young people. In addition, after dinner, there was an activity called “Evening Reflections,” during which the campers sang and worshiped together, gave various announcements and comments, and then closed with a special talk from one of the leaders.



The very first evening after my Wednesday afternoon arrival, I was asked to give the “reflection” and was very glad to do so. Even though I had not directly “prepared” my remarks, I hope that I did inspire and encourage the young people *from the heart*. After all, in another sense I *have been preparing* through some 62 years of full-time service in Christ’s Work, and am very glad to share everything I can with our young people while I am still able. The campers were very attentive and appreciative—and I certainly felt that God’s Spirit was working there in every aspect of the camp.

After dinner on the second day of my visit, campers and staff put on the annual “Talent Show,” which was truly inspiring and uplifting—more so than any such event I have *ever* attended. It is not fair to make exact comparisons, of course, since our earlier camps did not have the same number attending or the same facilities. But the absolutely wonderful—and almost “semi-

Volume 16, No. 6



### Inside This Issue...

**Fast and Draw Close to God!..page 3 • Satan’s Little Shop of Deceptions: The “Ceremonial Sabbath”? ...page 5 • Charis, Hessed, Law and Grace...page 9 • Frequently Asked Questions about Living University ...page 12 • Amalek, Iran and Prophecy...page 14 • Woman to Woman: Pray Without Ceasing...page 18 • Local Church News...page 22 • Commentary...page 24**

professional”—performances put on by the campers this year were absolutely inspiring. I cannot begin to describe all of the performances, of course. But I want to note in particular that we had quite a number of truly top-notch performances by the Boyer family from France! They *added so much*—and it was obvious that they have been studying and learning music together for many, many years. We also had a fine vocal solo and other performances by Olivia Tyler from Australia—so the “Aussies” also added a great deal to the camp even here in the States! A number of Canadians were there and added a great deal to the camp as well—as did youth from Africa, Trinidad and elsewhere. The evening concluded with a wonderful piece titled “We Are Family,” performed by the entire Boyer family. It certainly was a good example to all of us as to what an *entire family* can do if its members work together. Special thanks for the entire musical program certainly go to Mr. Marcus McCullough, from Charlotte, who is our Music Coordinator. He does a *great job* of instructing, organizing and inspiring our young people in these programs, and we certainly appreciate it.

Throughout the entire camp, I witnessed again and again the absolutely inspiring examples of *giving* and *servicing* by many, many local brethren from nearby congregations—and even from foreign nations! A number of brethren gave whole containers of kitchen supplies and equipment, audio and filming equipment, etc., to help the camp be a complete success. Many of these men and ladies—including professional cooks and bakers and various helpers—gave of themselves freely. Some had to use up two weeks of vacation from their employers in order to come and *serve* these young people at this camp. It was *inspiring* to see this!

Truly, these dedicated volunteers saved the Work of God *many thousands* of dollars by their effort and their zeal. I pray God’s richest blessing will be upon all of you brethren who did this. I would like to try to mention each of you by name, but that would not be fair to the many others who gave and

served whom I cannot remember and would not be able to name. Your *real reward*, obviously, is laid up in heaven by our **great God**, who can give us *far more* than we can give Him. I know that you know this. But I personally want to *thank you very much* for the outstanding service you performed this year at the camp.

It was inspiring to take part in the closing banquet and dance, which was held on the final evening of the camp. It was an enormous success. The food was *delicious*. The younger staff who served the meal did so with professional grace, and all the others helped make it a tremendously uplifting event. The dance

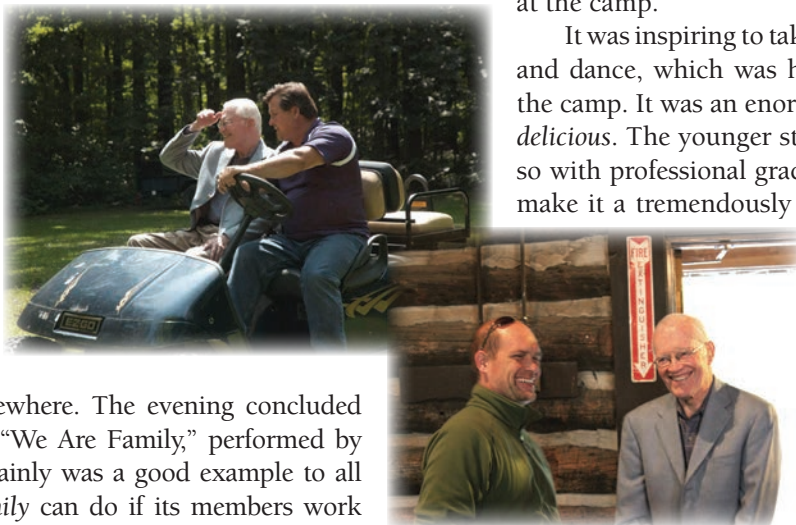
after the meal was also done very well, and there was a sense of absolute joy and “togetherness” as the camp ended.

Now, dear brethren, I must digress. I have a shocking “secret” to tell you. At the dance, I was able to dance with

my “secret girlfriend”! Please do not tell anybody about this, because some may be shocked that at age 84 I am still dancing with beautiful 17-year-old young women. It happens, however, that the beautiful young lady I was dancing with was, in fact, my *great-granddaughter*, Bria Martin! Our brethren in Kansas City know Bria, and will certainly appreciate knowing that she had the opportunity to help “hold me up” during the dance!

Seriously, though, I want all of you to know how much I deeply feel that these youth activities will certainly bring back to us a *hundredfold*—in years to come—the effort, money and prayers we put in to support them. For these young people today are our **leaders of tomorrow**. Throughout the Bible, we see how God encourages, by instruction and example, the training of our children and the strengthening of our youth. Remember how the Apostle Paul told Timothy—one of the most *outstanding evangelists* described in the Bible—“from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).

**Continued on page 21**



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## FAST AND DRAW CLOSE TO GOD!

For many of you reading this short article, this year's Day of Atonement in October will have been the last time you fasted. On that day, you were surrounded by brethren who were joining with you in fasting, honoring God's command.

However, the vast majority of fasts in each true Christian's life should be private and personal—just as the majority of our prayers must be private and personal.

So, as a member of the true Church of God, *are you fasting regularly? Why should we fast regularly? How should we plan so that our time of fasting will produce optimal results?*

Part of the answer is found in Jesus' instruction to His disciples in Matthew 9:14: "Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?'" The clear message is that Jesus' disciples—*while He was here in the flesh*—were already "close" to Him. *Think of it.* They were literally rubbing shoulders with God—though in the human flesh! They were constantly seeing and hearing the one *perfect example* who has ever lived! So they did not need to fast in order to draw close to God. In the person of Jesus Christ, God was *right there* with them. But Jesus did tell them, in this passage, that after He was taken away from His disciples, "*then they will fast*" (v. 15).

Therefore we, today—in a world cut off from God, and in a society constantly distracted by sights and sounds and "things"—*desperately need* to fast before our God in order to concentrate our minds on the *things of God!* The Apostle Paul powerfully reminds us: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1–3).

By earnestly *fasting*, by doing without food and water and *seeking God* in a special way during this time of self-abnegation, we are enabled to draw close to the invisible God—to *cry out in prayer* to God with more fervency and to humbly *meditate* on the fundamental issues of life. Remember, God tells us in His word: "But on this one will I look: *on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word*" (Isaiah 66:2).

As we approach the final years of this age, it is imperative that we all draw really close to God. If we in this "little flock" are going to complete at least *our part* of the Work of the living Christ, we profoundly need to have the great God "look on us" with favor! We need to *genuinely* "walk with

God" in a very special way—being sure that we guide our thoughts and keep in a "spirit of prayer" all day long. As we do this, we will both *feel* and *see* the power of God using us even more powerfully than ever before!

### A SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLE

We all know that the Bible is the revealed "mind of God." In His inspired revelation, God reveals to us how *He* views things. Clearly, God was orchestrating the events described in the book of Esther. In order to counteract the imperial decree to destroy *all the Jews*, Esther and Mordecai needed divine intervention.

So, what did they do?

Queen Esther was inspired by God to tell Mordecai:

"Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" (Esther 4:16).

The result?

The tables were completely turned on wicked Haman! Instead of Mordecai being hanged on the gallows, *Haman* was (Esther 7:10). Instead of all the Jews being put to shame, their *enemies* were (Esther 9:1).

But, remember, this was accomplished after *several thousand* faithful Jews cried out to the God of Israel with prayer and *fasting!*

And what about us? There *must* be a deep and powerful "yearning" in the hearts of God's people to be genuinely close to Him, *filled* with and *empowered* by His Spirit to overcome the lusts and vanities of this flesh, to *truly* "reflect" Jesus Christ in every aspect of life and to *do* the Work of God with a zeal and power never before experienced in modern times!

Remember that when Daniel needed encouragement and direction regarding the fate of his people and the Holy City, Jerusalem, he said: "Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes" (Daniel 9:3).

Describing Saul of Tarsus, struck down and totally blinded on the way to persecute the Christians at Damascus, God's word tells us: "And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank" (Acts 9:9).

When Jesus was about to be tempted by Satan the Devil for forty days, Luke tells us that "*in those days He ate nothing*" (Luke 4:2). So it is clear that at a time of great need, of extreme



danger, and/or at a time when *God's powerful intervention* is especially needed, true men and women of God will devote themselves to *fasting!*

### SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

To physically prepare for a fast, it is best to prepare by avoiding salty or spicy foods beforehand. Otherwise, your body will “cry out” for water excessively. Drink plenty of water ahead of time. Many do well to avoid caffeine for a week or so before a fast. *Do not* do any heavy work or exercise just before beginning the fast. Let your body and your mind “calm down.” Plan to take the day off work, if possible, or at least half a day. Or plan your fast on Sunday or on a day you are not fully engaged in other things. That way, you can *devote* yourself totally to resting, meditating and *seeking God* without undue interruption.

After the fast, it is best to eat a light, non-spicy meal at first and ease into your regular diet gradually. It is hard on a person to “gorge” himself with a big steak or huge meal right after fasting! And it does take away from that “extra edge” of zest and humility you may have gained during the fast. During the fast, stay out of the hot sun, take a nap or rest in the middle of the day and be sure you do not “overdo it.” If you have any health problems, get a checkup *before* fasting.

Spiritually, as you begin a fast, try to *focus* on the things of God. Remind yourself *why* you are fasting. And then draw close to Him—during the entire day or more that you are fasting—through diligent Bible study, meditation and prayer. *Be careful not to let other things interfere!* For your own human nature, your family or friends, or even *Satan the Devil* at times, may distract you and try to get your mind on physical things, lusts, vanities, problems, unpaid bills, etc.

So especially during a period of fasting, “guard your mind.” And ask God to earnestly help you in “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). Then, *concentrate* in a long, uninterrupted period of Bible study. Ask God—even *as you study*—to help you “feed” on Christ and fully drink in of Christ’s mind and of *His* will for your life (John 6:57).

During your fast, try to focus on those parts of the Bible that are personally corrective and instructive—such as most of the New Testament, Isaiah 53–60 and the Psalms. Then *meditate* carefully on what you have read. Apply it to *you!* Ask God to show *you* where *you* are wrong—or maybe falling short in any way.

Then, *take time* for long, unhurried periods of prayer and ask God with complete sincerity to help you repent of any wrongs, to clean you up and scrub you out and make you in *every way* more like Jesus Christ. Ask Him to help you to see yourself as *He* sees you, and to be willing to *change* and to *grow* to achieve the full stature of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:12–13).

*Ask God fervently* to help *all* of your brethren—and to help *all* in His Church—to draw close to Him and to honor Him as we should. Ask Him to help us be more truly sensitive to His will and respond more fervently in heart and mind to whatever He directs. Ask our Father in heaven to *pour out His Spirit* and to *empower* us to do the Work more as the Apostles did. Ask Him to grant us the “gifts” of His Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12) and to grant us the “signs” Christ said would follow His faithful servants (Mark 16:17–18).

Brethren, if the vast majority of us begin to *cry out to God* in this way with *earnest study, fervent prayer, and with meditation and fasting*, our Father and our God *will* hear us. He will fashion and mold us ever more perfectly into Christ’s image and will certainly *use us* more powerfully than ever as His “tools,” His “ambassadors” to help complete the Work of God among men today.

### WE MUST WALK WITH GOD!

Brethren, I hope and pray that each of you will “catch the vision.” It is time we go “all out” to seek and to serve our God. It is time that we are far more sensitive to God and to the things of God—and that we become far more willing to utterly *forsake* this present world. Truly brethren, we all need to realize more fully that our puny, weak, extremely short physical lives are only a tiny part of the total universe around us—a world inhabited by angels, by demons and ultimately controlled by our Father in heaven. In all of this, we need to realize more profoundly our genuine *need* to put our hand in God’s hand and to walk humbly and prayerfully with Him, day by day, even hour by hour, now and forever.

If each of us begins a personal crusade to draw closer to God and to beseech Him to grant His faithful servants the *full power of His Spirit*, we in this Church will have a dramatic *impact* on this world far beyond our numbers. As the Apostle Paul described: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20–21). ■



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# SATAN'S LITTLE SHOP OF DECEPTIONS: THE "CEREMONIAL SABBATH"?

By Dexter B. Wakefield

This is actually another chapter in a story that I began to tell in this publication a couple of years ago (*Living Church News*, November-December 2012). From time to time, I like to take a conceptual peek into a very dangerous place—called “Satan’s Little Shop of Deceptions.” You see, if you are in the market for a deception, you will likely find yourself standing in front of this particular establishment—with the proprietor beckoning you in for a sales pitch. Today, we will examine some deceptions Satan tries to sell regarding the Sabbath.

## AND OUR STORY BEGINS...

It is the first thing in the morning at “Satan’s Little Shop of Deceptions.” Things are quiet now, early in the day, and Satan stands in the door of his “Little Shop of Deceptions”—leaning up against the doorpost as usual. It is the most successful business in town, and he never seems to tire of selling his wares. The inventory consists exclusively of... *tailor-made deceptions*—which are extremely useful to the customers. Tailor made! Satan will size you up and put one on you. You see, these deceptions allow the customers to do something wrong... while still believing they are doing the right thing. There is a big market for that!

Today he expects the usual customer mix. Politicians, mainstream ministers, professors, even other businessmen. All are in the market for a deception that will let them do something they want to do, but cannot justify... that is, until they buy one of Satan’s products.

Satan’s power is mainly the power to deceive and tempt—and such other powers that God may allow from time to time. And when it comes to marketing deceptions, the old Adversary is Chairman of the Board of a booming business. Let me tell you the story of what happened early one day at “Satan’s Little Shop of Deceptions.”

Now, Satan always enjoys it when a politician shows up—because they are so easy to sell. But today, as he looks

down the busy sidewalk, one person catches his interest. Here comes his favorite type of customer—a “mainstream” minister! Satan sizes him up as he approaches. This particular subject is a middle-aged man, portly and bearded, and he seems angry and frustrated. Satan instinctively knows... this guy is “in the market.”

As the man passes by, Satan calls to him and says, “What’s the matter, pal? You seem angry and upset.” The minister replies, “I’ve got a theological problem—it’s the Ten Commandments. I don’t mind the ones like ‘no murder’ or ‘no theft’—but I have *zero interest* in keeping the one about the Sabbath. I’ve got to find a way out of it—and to persuade others not to keep it as well. But a plain biblical commandment is hard to ignore! I’ve tried the argument that the commandments are all nailed to the cross and done away with, but how do you explain that murder and theft are no longer sins? It’s hard to sell that to anyone, and besides, I only want to do away with *one* of them—the Fourth Commandment about the Sabbath.”

He continues, becoming more agitated. “I’ve tried telling people that when Christ died, the Ten Commandments were tossed up in the air and only *nine* came down—but that’s not exactly biblical, so I lose that argument every time.”

“I’ve tried telling people that they’re no longer called the Ten Commandments, they’re called ‘*The Nine Suggestions*’—but I can’t find that in the Bible either. What can I do?”

Satan is gleeful, “Boy, are you in the market! *Come on in!* I’ve got a bit of flawed theology that will allow you to deceive yourself and others about the Sabbath commandment. You’re gonna love it!”

The minister is intrigued and cautiously enters the shop. “So how does this work?” he asks.

“First,” Satan continues, “we divide God’s laws into three categories—the *moral law*, the *ceremonial law* and the *civil law*. We should avoid discussing the fact that the Bible doesn’t say that, because it’s important that people accept that division

without much analysis. The moral laws, the ones we say you can keep, are the commandments and laws which have their basis in the character of God—such as ‘Thou shalt not kill’ or ‘Thou shalt not steal.’ Moral laws are generally considered to be based on God’s own character, and therefore in force today.”

The minister replies, “Sounds OK so far.”

Satan picks up his sales pitch. “We say that those laws in the Bible which are ceremonial or civil in nature are not universal moral laws. Civil laws can vary from nation to nation. For instance, if you drive a car in the United States, you don’t have to obey the traffic laws of China. On the other hand, the ceremonial laws concern activities that may be OK some time and not OK another time. For instance, killing an animal for a burnt offering could be done lawfully only by a Levitical priest, but you can burn a barbeque in your back yard all you want. Ceremonial laws apply only to the Jews—like the sacrifices. Those are the ones you should **not** keep, because they’ve been done away with, due to the ending of the Old Covenant.”

The minister says, “OK, I guess... go on.”

Satan moves to close the sale. “Great! *Secondly*, we note that the Fourth Commandment forbids working on a particular day, Saturday. Now here we have to engage in some *really* creative theology. Since working isn’t a sin the rest of the week, work isn’t contrary to God’s character—like murder and theft are... so, bingo! We reason that the Sabbath commandment is **not** a moral law and hence, it must be **ceremonial!**... And therefore done away with! Neat argument, huh?”

The minister replies, “A bit contorted... but I love it! I’m buying one of those deceptions for every member of my “Sunday congregation!”

Satan chuckles, “Another satisfied customer! I think you’ll qualify for my *high-volume discount*.”

### BUYER BEWARE!

Can you spot the deception in Satan’s sales pitch? He relies on the fact that many people do not study their Bibles and therefore do not know what the Fourth Commandment actually says about the Sabbath. Those who conclude that the Sabbath commandment is ceremonial rely, in part, on the *false assumption* that it states, “Thou shalt not work on the seventh day.” That misrepresents it, as the actual biblical commandment is quite different. As Herbert W. Armstrong pointed out, you cannot reach a correct conclusion if you begin with an incorrect assumption.

The Sabbath commandment is *comprehensive* and states *four* things: (1) **What** we are commanded to do; (2) **When** we

are commanded to do it; (3) **How** we are commanded to do it; and (4) **Why** we are commanded to do it. It states:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:8–11).



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What we are commanded to do is “**Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.**” When we do it is the seventh day in a seven-day cycle. When the sun goes down on Friday evening, the time becomes *holy* for one day, and we are commanded to “*keep it holy.*” How we keep it holy is to *cease our weekly work* and have a *day of rest* from our labors. If we do our weekly commercial activity during that time, we *profane* what God has set apart—*sanctified*—for a special purpose. Note that the Sabbath commandment begins and ends with mention of the *holiness* of the Sabbath. It is God who defines holiness—we do not

get to modify what He says it is—and if we profane what He has hallowed, *it is sin*. The idea that we can disobey what God commands—and not sin—is a deception, no matter how it is rationalized. Why God *hallows* it—a big subject, stated briefly—is that God accomplished His work in six days, and the Sabbath demonstrates that completion: both in this age and the accomplishment of God’s plan of salvation in the millennial Sabbath to come, which is the Kingdom of God. In an important sense, *the Sabbath preaches the gospel of the Kingdom of God every week*. It is a weekly reminder of the true gospel, and you can imagine how Satan hates that!

The Sabbath was sanctified just after the creation week, not at Mt. Sinai. Genesis 2:1–3 states, “Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God *blessed the seventh day and sanctified it*, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.” In Exodus 16:28–29, we can also read that the Sabbath existed prior to the events at Mt. Sinai (also see Exodus 20:11).

*Nowhere does the Bible say that God has removed or transferred the sanctity of His Sabbath.* Historically, that was done



as a tradition of men, beginning in the second century AD. In fact, the *ongoing sanctity* of the Sabbath for the people of God is affirmed in the New Testament. “There remains, then, a *Sabbath rest* [Greek, *sabbatismos*] for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, *just as God did from his*” (Hebrews 4:9–10, also v. 4; NIV, ASV or NASB). The Sabbath was kept holy by the apostles *after* the death of Christ (Acts 16:13; Hebrews 4:9–10). It will still be holy shortly before the coming of Christ (Matthew 24:20) and will be kept holy in the Kingdom of God (Isaiah 66:23). *It is holy time today!*

### THE CHURCH HAS IT RIGHT

The Church of God has long taught that the actual Sabbath commandment is “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” In his booklet, *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?* Dr. Meredith writes:

“Notice that God said to ‘remember’ the Sabbath. They had *already* been instructed about the Sabbath from creation and again in Exodus 16—as we have seen. Then God said to ‘keep’ it holy. You cannot *keep* cold water hot! Likewise, the Sabbath had to have been *made* holy or Israel could not have kept it that way! Only *God* can make something ‘holy’—in this case, a period of time.... So we know that Jesus never transgressed God’s law—including the Fourth Commandment about keeping the Sabbath holy” (pp. 10, 14).

This is exactly what the Church under Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong taught. In his booklet of the same name, he wrote:

“The Sabbath is a space of TIME. God set it as that space of time from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. Whenever that time comes to us, *we are in holy time!* It is GOD’S time, not ours! God MADE it HOLY—and in the Ten Commandments... He commanded us to keep it holy! Many do not realize today that it is a SIN to profane that which is HOLY to God!... We *honor God* by *keeping holy* the things He made holy... The SIN is in profaning that which God made HOLY” (Pg. 25, 27).

“Observe more closely, now, the Sabbath command. “REMEMBER the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex. 20:8). God said REMEMBER this day! So men have insisted on *forgetting*—or trying to *change* it to a different day!” (pp. 44–45).

“In James 2:10 you read that if you break any one of these 10 points you are GUILTY of SIN. The same law also says: “REMEMBER the sabbath day, to keep it holy... the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy GOD.” *Whoever disobeys that command commits SIN!*” (p. 48).

The Sabbath is holy time; we are commanded to keep it holy, so **the spirit of the Sabbath commandment is in its holiness and sanctity.** We magnify the Sabbath commandment when we *delight in its holiness* (Isaiah 58:13–14) and in setting it apart from the rest of the week.

### A FALSE CHOICE

Satan loves a *false choice*, which is a type of fallacy in reasoning. A false choice usually involves a question presenting you with a choice that excludes the correct answer. For instance, you may be asked to choose between “Choice A” and “Choice B,” while the real answer is “Choice C.” The false choice in this particular Sabbath deception forces you to choose whether the Fourth Commandment is a “moral law” or a ceremonial law. That false choice prevents you from asking the *real question*—*whether it is a sin to profane what God has made holy.* The Bible says that it most certainly is!

Here is the false choice as one group presents it:

“Moral laws are generally considered timeless, eternal, and universal, based on God’s own character, and therefore in force today.... Some people claim that the weekly Sabbath is a moral law, and therefore required today. They often claim this simply because they assume that the Ten Commandments are all moral laws... The Sabbath law [commandment] says that behavior that is perfectly acceptable one day is forbidden the next, merely because it is a different day of the week. But God’s

morality does not change with the days of the week. If it is moral one day, it is moral on all others. God has the right to require different things on different days, but this would be a ceremonial law [commandment], not a law about what is moral all the time.” (“Is the Sabbath a Moral Law or a Ceremonial Law?” [www.gci.org/law/sabbath/moral](http://www.gci.org/law/sabbath/moral)).

God’s word disagrees, and exposes the error in the above statement. **The Sabbath day is *always* holy.** Six days we work, and one day is set apart for a divine purpose. The Bible states, “Six days shall you labor and do all your work,” but it also says that God made the seventh day in that cycle holy, and we are commanded to “*keep* it holy.” And profaning what God has made holy is sin—a violation of His commandment. Nowhere in His Bible does God ever remove the sanctification of that day. Roman Catholic theologians assert that the sanctification of the seventh day was *transferred* to the first day of the week on Rome’s authority, *after* the time of the apostles. They readily acknowledge that the sanctification of Sunday is not scriptural. But Jesus said, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?” (Matthew 15:3).

### MORAL LAW?

As to the division of God’s law into categories of moral law, ceremonial law and civil law, God’s word puts it differently. The biblical division is: *Commandments*, *Statutes* and *Judgments* (1 Kings 8:54–58). According to the Apostle Paul, an expert in the law, the sacrifices were “added because of transgressions” (Galatians 3:19). Added to what? Because of transgression of what?

Even if one accepts the “moral law” rationale, should God’s holiness be “...considered timeless, eternal, and universal, *based on God’s own character*” as we read earlier? The Bible answers: “...*but as He who called you is holy*, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘*Be holy, for I am holy*’” (1 Peter 1:15–16; Leviticus 11:44; Leviticus 19:2). Holiness is certainly part of God’s character. God is holy, and to profane something that He has made holy is sin. *And sin is most certainly a moral issue!*

### THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW

Because the Fourth Commandment states, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” the *spirit of the Sabbath*

*commandment is in its holiness.* Similar to the Fifth Commandment—which states, “Honor your father and mother”—in the Sabbath commandment God specifically prescribes something that we must **do**: keep holy what God has made holy. Do you *delight* in the holiness and sanctity of the Sabbath? Do you seek to magnify its sanctity?

Sadly, some who keep the Sabbath would rather put as much of the week’s customary activity in God’s holy time as they can reason is permissible. Even if it involves some of their weekly work or commercial activity, they reason that they honor God if they think that the activity makes the Sabbath more pleasurable and restful. That is the wrong approach. It does not honor God and does not evidence love for the holiness and sanctity of the Sabbath. Those who love the holiness of the Sabbath seek to **magnify** it. Of course, it is good to do enjoyable, restful things on the Sabbath, as long as those things are consistent with its sanctity. For example, a special Friday night dinner or fellowship time with the brethren during the day portion is special to the Sabbath and especially enjoyable. And of course, praising God at Sabbath services is very pleasant. Taking full advantage of the Preparation Day (which begins on Thursday at sunset) is helpful and usually needed.

God said through His prophet Isaiah: “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on *My holy day*, and call the Sabbath a *delight*, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking *your own words*, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken” (Isaiah 58:13–14).

We honor God when we *delight* in the holiness of His Sabbath and, therefore, seek to *magnify* it.

### A WEEKLY PICTURE

The “mainstream” minister mentioned earlier in the story thought the holiness of the Sabbath to be a burdensome thing to be avoided. But for God’s people, it is a great blessing! It is our weekly picture of God’s millennial Sabbath to come. *Would it not be wonderful if your Sabbath could be as sanctified and set apart from your week as Christ’s millennial Sabbath will be from this profane age?* Now, *there* is a delightful thought for your meditation, next Sabbath! ■

**THE SABBATH DAY IS ALWAYS HOLY. SIX DAYS WE WORK, AND ONE DAY IS SET APART FOR A DIVINE PURPOSE. THE BIBLE STATES, “SIX DAYS SHALL YOU LABOR AND DO ALL YOUR WORK,” BUT IT ALSO SAYS THAT GOD MADE THE SEVENTH DAY IN THAT CYCLE HOLY, AND WE ARE COMMANDED TO “KEEP IT HOLY.” AND PROFANING WHAT GOD HAS MADE HOLY IS SIN—A VIOLATION OF HIS COMMANDMENT.**



# CHARIS, HESED, LAW AND GRACE

By Peter Nathan

One result of the Protestant Reformation, in which many “daughter” churches broke away from their Roman Catholic parent, is that Protestants have almost universally accepted Martin Luther’s idea that God’s grace functions in opposition to His law.

Martin Luther was a considerable scholar who knew Scripture well, and had written commentaries on Genesis and the Psalms in which he had to deal with the subject of grace, so—although he should have known better—he was well able to present his deception very convincingly, establishing what has come to be an enduring fiction.

It particularly suited Luther’s theological ends, especially his interpretation of the Book of Galatians, to establish this idea of opposition. An example of his approach is provided from Luther’s *Lectures on Galatians*:

“Therefore I admonish you, especially those of you who are to become instructors of consciences, as well as each of you individually, that you exercise yourselves by study, by reading, by meditation, and by prayer, so that in temptation you will be able to instruct consciences, both your own and others, console them, and take them from the Law to grace, from active righteousness to passive righteousness, in short, from Moses to Christ. In affliction and in the conflict of conscience it is the devil’s habit to frighten us with the Law and to set against us the consciousness of sin, our wicked past, the wrath and judgment of God, hell and eternal death, so that thus he may drive us into despair, subject us to himself, and pluck us from Christ.” (*Luther’s Work Volume 26*, J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, eds., p. 1535. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House. 1999).

We read the consequence of this opposition every time we read John 1:17 in the *Authorised Version* or the *NKJV*, or even some of the more recent translations such as the *NET Bible*: “For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17, *NKJV*).

Notice that the conjunction, “*but*,” is in italics—indicating that the translators added the word to provide meaning. Even in modern versions that omit “*but*,” the translators use a semicolon or colon to separate the thoughts, hence maintaining Luther’s concept of opposition. In reality, however, the two phrases should be taken in parallel:

“God gave the law through Moses,” and  
“God gave grace and truth through Jesus Christ.”

Our Heavenly Father gave both, such that the two phrases represent a **progression** rather than an **opposition** of ideas. This verse is also the culmination and result of a thought that John was inspired to write: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). This is an important verse to which we will return.

## LUTHER’S FICTION

Listen to almost any preacher on radio or television today, and you will hear a view on Law and Grace that comes right out of Luther’s teachings. “The Law is done away,” they say, “and we are now under Grace.” Bible dictionaries and study aids also continue to perpetuate the error. One of the most complete Bible dictionaries, published in English in 1964, the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, states this in its entry for grace (*charis*) as used in John 1:14 and 17: “The Johannine writings very seldom use the word group.... Paul’s antithesis of grace and Law is adopted, but it is not developed. The statement is unique in John’s Gospel” (Kittel, G., Bromiley, et al. p. 399).

Despite his role in perpetuating this fiction, Luther was **not** the first to misunderstand grace. The Apostles and leaders in the early Church had to contend with those who misunderstood or misused the concept of grace. This is why Jude notes: “For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the **grace** of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 4).

Jude’s statement is very instructive. He tells us that a misuse or misunderstanding of grace leads to a denial or trivialization of the role of Jesus Christ. As we look further at the subject of grace, we will be able to appreciate Jude’s statement even more profoundly.

The Apostle Paul also had to teach the brethren about this same concept. Speaking to the congregation in Rome, he questioned the association of grace and lawlessness. “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that **grace** may abound?” (Romans 6:1). A few verses later, Paul made it clear that Christians are not to be servants of sin—lawlessness—now that we are under grace. The common Protestant view today is that Paul believed those under grace need not keep God’s law. But what he is actually telling us is that grace annuls the penalty of death associated with breaking the law—sin. We read “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you



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present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness? But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered" (Romans 6:14–17).

Interestingly, Paul used the Greek term *charis*—grace—three times in this section; verses 14, 15 and 17, though the last instance is not translated as grace in the NKJV. In fact, very few English translations even try to incorporate the idea of grace in translating the verse, opting instead for some use of “thanks” as has the NKJV.

### OLD TESTAMENT VS. NEW?

The end result of Luther's approach to law and grace was to enshrine within Protestantism a sense of opposition between the Old and New Testaments. The consequence was that the Old Testament was not seen as a source for understanding concepts that the New conveyed. Grace was seen as a New Testament subject, and was interpreted according to the Greek usage of the term.

Because of Luther's influence, few Bible students have looked closely enough at the term *grace*. In his teaching, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong used the definition of “unmerited, undeserved pardon” for the New Testament term “grace” or the Greek term *charis*. The basis for such definition is the Greek usage: “In the singular, *charis* can also mean ‘gracious disposition’” (Kittel, p. 375).

Interestingly, however, unlike Protestant theologians, Mr. Armstrong did not stop there. He felt the need to explicate more than was given by standard definitions; for instance:

“The word ‘grace’ means unmerited, undeserved pardon! God pardons those who REPENT! And ‘repent’ means to turn from rebellion, hostility, disobedience. ‘Repent’ means to turn to obedience to God's law. The fact that God chooses not to give this wonderful gift—the gift of immortality, which carries with it divine power—to those who would misuse it for harm and evil; the fact that He chooses to give it only to those who will rightly use it—does not mean it comes by works instead of grace. If there were no conditions, then everyone could demand it—and it would be received as a right by birth, instead of by grace!

The very fact of grace makes necessary God's required qualifications. But it still is an undeserved GIFT!” (*The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*, Worldwide Church of God, 1980).

Mr. Armstrong realized that three important aspects were not included in the standard Greek usage of the term: (1) the continuing application of God's law, leading to (2) repentance and the necessity of it, and (3) recognition of grace as applied in the pages of the Old Testament as well as New!

Dr. Meredith has produced *Tomorrow's World* programs on this subject, in which he has addressed the continuing opposi-

tion of law and grace as “one of the most deceptive and destructive misconceptions in the world today. Did Christ's sacrifice do away with God's laws, or is there a truth that involves both the grace of God and the law? Get your Bible and listen today” (“Law or Grace?” T111). Mr. Richard Ames has spoken recently on this subject in a sermon sent to Living Church of God congregations in 2013 (“Living Grace,” DVE697).

### HESED, CHARIS AND GRACE

In John 1:14, Jesus is described as coming “full of grace and truth.” To the Apostle John, these were elements of God's holy and righteous character, exemplified in the life and conduct of Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8), this grace would have been part of His character before He became a human being. The unchangeable nature of the character of the Being who became Jesus Christ was told in Malachi 3:6.

So, it is quite remarkable that historic and linguistic studies could lead scholars to make a statement utterly foreign to prior Protestant theology: “...the concept of grace never breaks out of the framework of the Law; on the contrary, it constitutes a sharpening of the Torah” (Kittel, p. 387).

How did this recognition come about, after centuries under the shadow of Luther's fiction?

The Hebrew word that is so important in terms of the correct Scriptural understanding of grace is the term *hesed*—sometimes transliterated as *chesed*. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* indicates that it can be translated as: “loving-kindness; steadfast love; grace; mercy; faithfulness; goodness; devotion.” However, for most of us who use the NKJV, *hesed* is most often translated into English as “lovingkindness,” a term that Miles Coverdale first used in his translation in the 16th century (Sakenfeld, Katharine Doob. *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry*. p. 17). The ASV, NAS and Darby translations follow Coverdale almost exclusively. So, the meaning and full import of grace in both the Old and New Testaments has been clouded to most since the reformation.

What can we learn from the term *hesed*?

One of the earliest usages is by Abraham's servant, Eliezer, when he was sent to find a wife for Isaac. He realized that he needed the Eternal's *hesed* (“kindness,” Genesis 24:12) to be applied so that the faithfulness of Abraham could be honored.

Moses used this term to show the great action of the Eternal in delivering Israel from captivity in Egypt. “You in Your *mercy* (*hesed*) have led forth the people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation” (Exodus 15:13).

Perhaps most surprisingly for all is the usage of *hesed* as part of the Ten Commandments. The use of this appears twice, directly in the second command and implied in the first command. In instructing Israel not to make images, the Eternal tells them that He applies *hesed* to those who keep His commandments. The NKJV expresses this as “mercy” in

Exodus 20:6. The first command has an expression of the Eternal's *hesed* for Israel. We often read the first commandment as "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3), but the preceding verse is part as well. Verse 3 and following verses are to be the response of Israel to what the Eternal has already graciously done for them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt and the bondage they suffered there. Moses has already described that act as one of *hesed* or, for us, grace.

Moses also learned and recorded for us details of the Eternal's *hesed* when he spent time on Mount Sinai. Moses desired to see the Being with whom he dealt, but was told he could not see the Eternal's face. Then the Eternal revealed his spiritual character to Moses in Exodus 34:6–7.

The Apostle John wrote: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, *full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14). Here, John describes Christ's nature by hearkening back to an Old Testament phrase that was used to describe the One who gave the tablets of the Ten Commandments: "And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and *abounding in goodness [hesed] and truth*'" (Exodus 34:6).

Thus we see the connection between the Hebrew word *hesed* (translated here as "goodness") and the Greek *charis*, also meaning "grace."

So, to say that Jesus came full of grace and truth, is to say that this had always been His character and by extension the character of His Father.

So Israel was delivered by a Being who was characterized by grace and truth—a fact that helps us see how grace is essential to all the workings of the God family with the creation. It is an essential part even of the law of God. So law and grace can never be considered to be in opposition. Martin Luther's understanding, and that proclaimed by so many religious broadcasters today, was—and remains—totally wrong.

It is worth considering again the statement of Jude. He stated that by misusing or misinterpreting grace, individuals deny or trivialize our Savior Jesus Christ, highlighting how lost and deceived this world remains to this concept. How grateful we should be for having been provided with a proper appreciation of godly grace.

### NO CONFLICT BETWEEN GRACE AND LAW

Let us return to the Old Testament for a moment before we finish. Here is a concise statement provided by one writer who has studied the application of *hesed* closely. Consider how her statements apply equally to those whom the Father has called to be in a relationship with His Son.

"The term *hesed* thus proves to be one which throughout the Bible was remarkably rich in its theological meaning. Here the sovereign freedom

of God and his strong commitment to his chosen people were held together in a single word. A single word expressed the utter dependence of the people upon [the Eternal] and his willingness and ability to deliver them. A single word communicated the promised faithfulness of God upon which the people could base their cry for help and the surprising faithfulness of God which transcended even his own declarations of judgment upon his people. God preserved the covenant community even in its failure, in accordance with his own commitment to the people—a sure and everlasting *hesed*, great beyond any human expectation.

And so Israel could proclaim in varied forms throughout her history: 'Praise [the Eternal], for he is good for his *hesed* endures forever' (Psalm 107.1)" (*ibid.*, pp. 238–239).

Speaking of the Psalms, one of those we have in our hymnal is the most concentrated exposition of *hesed* within God's word. Psalm 136 in the English speaks of God's mercy. Every verse extolls that virtue of our Creator. In actuality, the Hebrew term that is translated as mercy, is not the Hebrew for mercy at all, but rather *hesed*. In that single Psalm we have 26 distinct occasions on which the Eternal provided *hesed*—grace to His people Israel to whom was given the law and who were supposed to be law-abiding.

The apostles and writers of the New Testament had no problem seeing that the grace of our Father and His Son were consistent throughout the entirety of the Bible. Those that the God family worked with were always subject to grace. Notice the warning given by Paul about our ability to fall short and reject the grace offered to us. The first example of a person who lost contact with grace is Esau, who failed to appreciate his birthright and sold it for a bowl of potage. To Paul his failure to appreciate the grace of God was cause for his rejection (Hebrews 12:14–17). Just as Jude warned, Esau, an Old Testament individual, trivialized the grace shown to him.

Bearing that warning in mind, Paul concluded that section of his writing with this admonition; an admonition that holds as true today for us as it did for the Church in the first century: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28).

Where does this leave us? We serve a Being who has not changed in His character. We have a situation where the One who gave the law to Moses was the gracious One—a Being characterized by grace and truth. The giving of that law was an act of grace, so that grace and law can never be in opposition to one another as Luther claimed. We need to see the Father and Christ as Beings characterized by grace, and that all of their actions toward us are acts of incredible grace. ■

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT LIVING UNIVERSITY

By Scott Winnail

As Living University begins its eighth year of operations, we are keenly aware that many have questions about the University, its academic programs, and on-site study in Charlotte, North Carolina. So, we would like to answer some of the most commonly asked questions about Living University. For more detailed answers, and for further information, be sure to visit us online at [www.livinguniv.com](http://www.livinguniv.com). Our online catalog is available for download and is full of useful information. You can also e-mail or call us at [info@livinguniv.com](mailto:info@livinguniv.com) or (704) 708-2294.



## **“Who can take Living University classes?”**

*Answer:* The short answer is “just about anyone” as long as you have computer and Internet access. Our students have ranged in age from 15 to their early 90s.

## **“How do I get started?”**

*Answer:* First, visit [www.livinguniv.com](http://www.livinguniv.com). Click the “Become an LU Student: Apply Now” button and start the application process. There are a number of types of enrollment, including the pursuit of certificates, diplomas and degrees, but the easiest and quickest way to start is to enroll in the *Open Learning Program*. Enrolling through this program will allow you to audit or take up to 24 semester-hours of credit without formally choosing a certificate or degree program. Only 15 hours of previously completed credit can be applied to a certificate program. Early registration for the Spring/Semester II 2015 semester begins on November 10, 2014, and classes start on January 14, 2015.

## **“When do classes meet?”**

*Answer:* Because we are online and serve time zones around the globe, our learning method is “asynchronous.” This means that you can log in and study, submit papers, and listen to lectures anytime day or night—as long as you submit your assignments by their due dates.

## **“How much time should I plan to spend in my studies each week?”**

*Answer:* For a three-credit class (in other words, for most of the classes we offer), we recommend that you plan to devote about 10 hours per week, though this will vary depending on how quickly you read and how well you write. If you are auditing, it will generally take you 5–7 hours a week, depending on your reading speed.

## **“Can I benefit from Living University without having to worry about quizzes, exams and papers?”**

*Answer:* Yes! Through the “audit” option, you can register for a course, listen to the lectures and read the course materials—you will receive full access to the class you choose to take. However, by auditing a course you will *not* need to worry about completing and submitting assignments or studying for exams. This option does require a tuition payment unless you are age 65 or above, and you also need to purchase and read from the required textbooks.

## **“Why should I take Living University courses if I am already a long-time Church member? What do I stand to learn?”**

*Answer:* That is a very good question! Long-time members possess a great deal of knowledge and understanding and are often excited about learning even more. Living University classes address the Bible and related topics from a very detailed perspective, providing a great deal of background information and study not typically available via regular Sabbath sermons and Bible studies. Many long-time members completing our theology courses tell us how surprised they were to have learned so much about Bible topics they “thought” they completely understood before. Our highly trained and time-tested faculty members are skilled in helping students come to deeper biblical understanding. For those who desire to continue learning and growing in Bible knowledge and understanding, Living University provides an unmatched opportunity for in-depth learning.

## **“Should I take a Living University course even though I am enrolled in another university?”**

*Answer:* Yes! This is a great idea! You will learn a great deal through your coursework from other universities. However, what is one area that you will be missing? Biblical understanding or theology. Consider taking a Living University course, even just once a year, to *balance out* your other university coursework. Living University can provide you with the important “missing dimension in knowledge” that is lacking in a typical education. It will also help you build a more solid foundation and grounding in God’s truth.

## **“Does Living University offer classes on topics other than theology?”**

*Answer:* Yes! Although our strong point is definitely our understanding of the Bible, and most of our classes do focus on theology, we also offer courses in English and writing, health, communication and speech, working with youth, math,

business, education and archaeology. We offer certificates in Christian Family Studies and Archaeology and plan to offer them in Business and Communication. All of our courses, however, take a unique biblical approach to the subject area.

### **“Why should I consider on-site study?”**

*Answer:* On-site students still take their courses online, but they also benefit from weekly, in-person discussion sections with most of their professors. They participate in a weekly faculty/student Assembly with different presenters. They participate in student extracurricular activities and field trips. They typically serve in student work-study positions within a department of God’s Work. They get to know and serve with the leadership at the international headquarters of God’s Work. And, they participate in the many and varied activities of the Charlotte, North Carolina congregation along with its 250+ attendees. The on-site study option offers an even richer learning environment and opportunity to recapture even more “true values” than the online experience. It also offers the privilege of being part of the headquarters experience. Until we become accredited, however, this option is only open to United States citizens. We plan to increase the size of our on-site program as funds and donations allow us to grow, procure more student residence space, and greater library and classroom space—ultimately, we plan to grow as God allows.

### **“Do I need to be an on-site student for four years?”**

*Answer:* No! Some of our students do plan to stay for four years and complete a bachelor’s degree. Others, however, plan to come for only a year or two. Some plan to come for a year and end up staying longer. Whatever your plans, many have found the on-site experience to be very much worthwhile.

### **“What if I plan to go to college elsewhere? Wouldn’t Living University be a waste of my time?”**

*Answer:* Great question! The short answer is that building your spiritual foundation and decreasing your likelihood of being deceived can *never* be a waste of your time. In addition, in this age of high unemployment, where many college graduates and other young people are competing against those with real-life experience, taking a year or two to attend LU will help you develop that much more emotional and spiritual maturity. It will also help you develop more confidence, and even enrich your public speaking and interpersonal skills—which all employers desire, but that most are seeing less and less of. By adding a year or two of Living University maturity and skills to your resume, you will make yourself that much more marketable to future employers.

### **“Why do I need to go to Living University if my ambition is to be a wife and mother?”**

*Answer:* Choosing to be a wife and a mother—one of the most important decisions any young woman can make—is ultimately a “career choice,” even though Satan’s world teaches otherwise. Mothers are a primary spiritual teacher for their children, and education and preparation are important keys to success in any career. Thus, any wise woman will benefit from the opportunity to become more firmly grounded in the truth. The Living University curriculum was designed to develop a whole host of abilities that will be valuable to the wife and mother who will manage a home and rear children in God’s Way. It is an ideal way for a wife and mother to prepare for her future role!



### **“Will classes I take at Living University transfer to other universities?”**

*Answer:* That depends. Although the University is not yet accredited, we have had limited success with some classes transferring as “elective credit” to an accredited institution. Right now, it is up to the institution. One of the reasons we are developing an Associate of Arts (AA) degree is to increase transferability of LU credits. Once the state of North Carolina licenses the AA degree, this should increase the transferability of our classes. Then, when our programs become accredited (two to three years from now, God willing), that transferability will be enhanced still further. Transferability is always a case-by-case situation—which has so far worked in favor of Living University students.

### **“Is Living University accredited?”**

*Answer:* Not yet. We are currently working on an application for national accreditation through the Distance Education and Training Council. This is a two-step process that should take two to three years with God’s help.

### **“What are the benefits of accreditation?”**

*Answer:* Accreditation is a process designed to benefit the students. It assures students that the University will continue throughout their degree program and verifies that a quality education and quality teaching are in place. Accreditation will *not* dictate what we can or cannot teach in our theology classes. The following are benefits that our students can expect from accreditation: a) increased transferability of LU courses to other institutions, b) improved acceptability to graduate programs, c) improved employability of LU graduates, d) ability for international students to pursue on-campus study, e) donation-matching from some employers (some employers will match 100 percent of donations employees make to an accredited institution) f) use of federal grant and scholarship programs for Living University study (e.g., Pell Grants). ■



# Amalek, Iran and Prophecy

By Mario Hernandez

The disregard of this source has prevented rulers of nations and international organizations from fathoming the drama of the Middle East and its final outcome. We are talking about the greatest manual of geopolitics, the Bible, the only book that accurately pinpoints the origin, the character and the destiny of nations.

Once again: How can we explain the sudden and brutal 180-degree change of direction in the domestic and foreign policy of Iran after the overthrow of the Shah Reza Pahlavi in 1979? How could a former friend of Israel and the United States turn overnight into their most bitter enemy?

The Shah, who was a Muslim, considered himself heir and successor of the ancient kings of the Persian Empire. Statistics indicate that the majority of Iran's population today is of Persian origin. Both the historical record and the Bible clearly point to the fact that the Persian people have not been an enemy of Israel or the Jewish people.

What most people do not understand is that after the fall of the Shah, the government in Iran was taken over by a minority that is not of Persian origin.

Who is that minority?

Before we answer this fundamental question, we should review what the biblical record teaches us, concerning what the relations between Persians and Jews have been from antiquity.

## RULERS WITH A DIFFERENT HEART

In one of the most astounding prophecies of the Bible, God predicted the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire to world dominance, and actually gave the name of its king (Cyrus) about 137 years before his birth. God also predicted how Cyrus would conquer Babylon by drying the Euphrates River, give freedom to the Jewish captives in Babylon, and order the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1–3; Isaiah 44:27–28).

The prophecy continues: "Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors... That you may know that I, the LORD, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name" (Isaiah 45:1, 3–4).

According to the historian Flavius Josephus, when Cyrus took Babylon some of the Jewish captives showed him that his name—and what he was destined to accomplish—was written in the book of Isaiah more than a century before his

**W**ith ISIS fighters bringing bloodshed and fear to millions across the Middle East, many are wondering: "What will happen next?" While most attention is now focused on Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and the tiny modern state of Israel, others wonder about a great and ancient nation to the east—Iran.

As many of you readers know, some self-appointed prophets have made wild pronouncements about Iran's role in end-time prophecy, even labeling it the "King of the South" despite its location north of Jerusalem. Many mistakenly lump Iran in with the Arab countries to its south, and as a result fail to recognize important details about this mysterious nation.

So, can we discern any key that would allow us to better understand the background behind this nation's aggressive presence in the Middle East drama? Is there an explanation for the sharp contrast in the relations between Iran and Israel before and after the overthrow of the Shah Reza Pahlavi in 1979? Is it just a matter of religion? Or is there more?

## A FAMILY CONFLICT

It might sound strange to some, but the roots of the seriously aggravated tensions between the present rulers of Iran and the nation of Israel date back to a time when Islam did not even exist. We are faced with a family conflict that has been perpetuated throughout the centuries all the way to our time. There is only one source of information that can provide all the essential elements to identify and understand this conflict!

victory (*Antiquities of the Jews*, XI.I. 1–2). Apparently, the profound impression produced by this realization caused Cyrus to fulfill these prophecies by making the following proclamation through God's intervention:

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, ‘Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem. And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let



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or people who put their hand to alter it, or to destroy this house of God which is in Jerusalem. I Darius issue a decree; let it be done diligently” (Ezra 6:9–10, 12).

To further illustrate the attitude of the kings of Persia (modern Iran) towards the Jews, consider a letter preserved in the biblical record—the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest. This is the same Artaxerxes who—in the 20th year of his reign—gave permission to Nehemiah, a Jew who was his cupbearer, to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and its walls (Nehemiah 1:11; 2:1–9).

The following is an extract of the above-mentioned letter given by the Persian king to Ezra:

“Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, a scribe of the Law of the God of heaven:

Perfect peace, and so forth. I issue a decree that all those of the people of Israel and the priests and Levites in my realm, who volunteer to go up to Jerusalem, may go with you. And whereas you are being sent by the king

**WE CAN SEE FROM SCRIPTURE AND HISTORY THAT PERSIAN MONARCHS HAVE FROM ANTIQUITY HELD A PREVAILING ATTITUDE OF BENEVOLENCE TOWARD THE JEWISH PEOPLE—A DEMEANOR THAT WAS STILL PRESENT IN THE DAYS OF THE SHAH REZA PAHLAVI IN THE 20TH CENTURY, WHO EVEN HAD JEWISH CABINET MEMBERS SERVING IN HIS GOVERNMENT.**

the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:1–4).

The words of a Persian king about the rebuilding of the House of the God of Israel in Jerusalem stand in shocking contrast to the words for destruction of the Jewish nation, coming from the present rulers of Iran.

After the death of Cyrus the Great, King Darius, his successor confirmed and ratified the decree of Cyrus and added to it:

“And whatever they need—young bulls, rams, and lambs for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the request of the priests who are in Jerusalem—let it be given them day by day without fail, that they may offer sacrifices of sweet aroma to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and his sons.... And may the God who causes His name to dwell there destroy any king

and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, with regard to the Law of your God which is in your hand; and whereas you are to carry the silver and gold which the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem; and whereas all the silver and gold that you may find in all the province of Babylon, along with the freewill offering of the people and the priests, are to be freely offered for the house of their God in Jerusalem—now therefore, be careful to buy with this money bulls, rams, and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them on the altar of the house of your God in Jerusalem. And whatever seems good to you and your brethren to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, do it according to the will of your God. Also the articles that are given to you for the service of the house of your God, deliver in full before the God of Jerusalem. And whatever more may be needed for the house of your God, which you may have occasion to provide, pay for it from the king's treasury. And I, even

I, Artaxerxes the king, issue a decree to all the treasurers who are in the region beyond the River, that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, may require of you, let it be done diligently” (Ezra 7:12–21).

So, we can see from Scripture and history that Persian monarchs have, from antiquity, held a prevailing attitude of benevolence toward the Jewish people—a demeanor that was still present in the days of the Shah Reza Pahlavi in the 20th century, who even had Jewish cabinet members serving in his government!

### OLD HATREDS RESURFACE

Despite this ancient history, however, there is a key that may help us understand the fierce antagonism of the *current* leaders of Iran towards Israel—and their desire to erase it from the map.

The clue to discern the roots of this enmity is found in the Book of Esther. The story takes place in the days of King Ahasuerus, known in history as Xerxes I (486–464BC). Xerxes I ruled over the vast empire of the Medes and the Persians—127 provinces that stretched from India to Ethiopia. He was the father of Artaxerxes who, in the seventh year of his reign, authorized the return of Ezra the priest to Jerusalem invested with great authority.

The fascinating story of the Book of Esther illuminates and resolves the apparent contradiction of the historically good relations between Jews and Persians and the present obsession to destroy Israel exhibited by the Iranian government.

After the fall of Babylon, many Jews remained in the territories conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire, Esther, a young Hebrew maiden who had been adopted by her cousin Mordecai, lived in the city of Shushan, ruled by King Ahasuerus.

In those days, King Ahasuerus suffered a serious rebuff from Queen Vashti, his wife. It was decided in the aftermath to seek throughout the kingdom a suitable and beautiful young lady who would assume the role of the queen instead of Vashti. Among all the young women presented to the king, Esther found the greatest favor in his eyes, and so was chosen to be the queen. After making this choice, King Ahasuerus decided to appoint as prime minister over the empire a man named Haman.

Interestingly, the biblical record reveals that this Haman was not of Persian origin, but he was “the son of Hammedatha the Agagite” (Esther 3:1). By letting the Bible interpret itself, what can we discern about Haman’s ethnicity? It is written that Saul, King of Israel, “took Agag king of the Amalekites alive” (1 Samuel 15:8). The book of Esther clearly reveals that Haman, being “Agagite,” was a descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites. To add to the evidence, the historian Flavius Josephus unambiguously states that Haman was an Amalekite (*Antiquities of the Jews*, XI. VI. 5).

But, who is Amalek? In Genesis, chapter 36, we find “the genealogy of Esau, who is Edom.” Esau had three wives. One

of Canaanite origin, called Adah, “bore Eliphaz to Esau” (v. 4). Eliphaz, Esau’s firstborn (v. 15) was the father of Amalek (vv. 12, 16).

Yes, the Bible plainly reveals that Haman the new prime minister, was not a Persian, but rather was a descendant of Esau through the line of his firstborn, Eliphaz, the father of Amalek.

We should also remember that Esau was the twin brother of Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. Among these were the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Queen Esther was a descendant of Israel through the tribe of Benjamin (Esther 2:5–7). Keep in mind that Jacob and Esau were already at war from the very womb of their mother Rebecca (Genesis 25:19–26). God revealed before their birth that these twins would be the progenitors of two nations that would struggle against each other throughout the centuries.

When Esau gave up his birthright, what did he relinquish? That birthright consisted chiefly in the right to inherit the Holy Land (Genesis 28:13; Psalm 105:8–11). In letting go of that birthright, Esau revealed a serious character flaw—he let his primal, base instincts prevail in his decisionmaking. God points to this as an ongoing characteristic of the descendants of Esau (Edom): “[H]e pursued his brother [Israel] with the sword, and cast off all pity; his anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever” (Amos 1:11).

Esau has maintained a perpetual anger, coupled with the desire to retake the lost inheritance: “Because you have said, ‘These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess them,’ although the LORD was there, therefore, as I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I will do according to your anger and according to the envy which you showed in your hatred against them; and I will make Myself known among them when I judge you’” (Ezekiel 35:10–11).

The root of the conflict is the struggle between two brothers fighting over an inheritance.

Yet God had previously and solemnly declared “to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying ‘To you I will give the land of Canaan as the allotment of your inheritance’” (Psalm 105:10–11). This is why God gave the following pronouncement after Amalek’s attack on Israel, declaring: “Because the LORD has sworn: the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation” (Exodus 17:16). Other Bible translations supply a missing figure of speech, explaining that Amalek raised a fist against God’s throne or banner, in defiance of His sovereignty (*ISV*). Yes, Amalek raised his hand against the throne of God because he had the audacity to try to change with his own hands what was already established by the word of the Almighty.

In one sense, the Bible’s description of Amalek’s attack may be seen as the oldest preserved record of a terrorist attack. Notice that it has three characteristics common to terrorism: 1) It does not face the army, 2) it is an attack from behind, 3) it is on a defenseless civil population: “Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out



of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God” (Deuteronomy 25:17–18).

With this background in place, what can we learn about the full scope of the account given in the book of Esther?

### A LEGACY OF VIOLENCE

Mordecai, who had adopted Esther, used to sit at the king’s gate. “And all the king’s servants who were within the king’s gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage... When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath. But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai... Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, ‘There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people’s, and they do not keep the king’s laws. Therefore it is not fitting for

despite its history of tolerance and even friendship toward the Jews, has come under the influence of an Amalekite mentality—even an ethnic Amalekite leadership—which took the reins of power after the overthrow of Shah Reza Pahlavi.

### GOD WILL THWART AMALEK

What will happen between Iran and Israel? From the word of God, we can be sure that Iran will not succeed in its desires to destroy the nation of Israel. God strongly rebukes Israel and the Jewish nation through the biblical prophets for their sins, but He will not allow any nation to raise his hand against the throne of God (Exodus 17:16, *ISV*) and prevent the fulfillment of scores of prophecies that describe in great detail the immediate future and the final outcome of present events in the Middle East.

The rulers of Iran may wound Israel, with the help of Edomite supporters of Hezbollah. But their objective will *ultimately* fail—not because of the righteousness of the Jewish people, but because they will be fighting against the established design of the Almighty God! Alternatively, we

**WHAT WILL HAPPEN BETWEEN IRAN AND ISRAEL? FROM THE WORD OF GOD, WE CAN BE SURE THAT IRAN WILL NOT SUCCEED IN ITS DESIRES TO DESTROY THE NATION OF ISRAEL. GOD STRONGLY REBUKES ISRAEL AND THE JEWISH NATION THROUGH THE BIBLICAL PROPHETS FOR THEIR SINS, BUT HE WILL NOT ALLOW ANY NATION “TO RAISE HIS HAND AGAINST THE THRONE OF GOD” (EXODUS 17:16) AND PREVENT THE FULFILLMENT OF SCORES OF PROPHECIES THAT DESCRIBE IN GREAT DETAIL THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE AND THE FINAL OUTCOME OF PRESENT EVENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST.**

the king to let them remain. If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring it into the king’s treasuries” (Esther 3:2, 5–6, 8–9).

King Ahasuerus, not knowing that Esther belonged to the very people Haman was planning to exterminate, decided to let Haman proceed with the plan: “And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions (Esther 3:13).”

Here we see Haman’s Amalekite attitude causing a dramatic “180-degree” turnaround in the government’s attitude toward the Jewish people. This is remarkably like what we saw in Iran when the Ayatollah Khomeini came to power after the overthrow of the Shah. And here is a fascinating detail: in the grammar of the Semitic languages, “Khomeini” has the same root as “Haman”—notice the shared HMN.

So, is it any surprise that we find a parallel between Amalek’s attack against Israel in the desert (Exodus 17:8–16; Deuteronomy 25:17–18) and the increase of terrorism in the world favored (and sometimes even sponsored) by the current leaders in Iran? The Medo-Persian nation of Iran,

might see the Amalekite influence diminish in Iran in favor of the Persian majority, distancing the nation from the virulent anti-Jewish sentiment so common throughout the Arab world. Remember, in both ancient and modern history, the Persian mindset has been quite different from the Amalekite terrorist mentality.

In the past, God used the Persians (modern Iran) and the Medes (modern Ukraine and parts of Russia) to conquer Babylon by drying up the waters of the Euphrates. He will use again the eastern powers against modern Babylon: “Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared” (Revelation 16:12). Be sure to be following Christ’s command to “watch” as these things come to pass, revealing the approaching return of the Messiah, Jesus Christ! ■

**CLARIFICATION: IN MR. MARIO HERNANDEZ’S JULY-AUGUST 2014 ARTICLE, “SUFFERING, ENDURANCE AND ETERNITY,” A SPECULATIVE STATEMENT WAS INCLUDED REGARDING THE DURATION OF JOSEPH’S TIME IN PRISON, AND AN EDITING ERROR RESULTED IN AN INCORRECT ASSERTION OF DAVID SPENDING TEN YEARS IN PRISON, WHERE THE AUTHOR MEANT TO SUGGEST A PARALLEL TEN YEARS OF ENDURING TRIALS. WE APOLOGIZE FOR THE ERRORS.**

# Woman to Woman

By Elizabeth Stafford

## PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

I had just returned home late the night before from a very stressful trip, with barely enough time to buy groceries, clean the house and prepare our guest room for some unexpected guests. We then enjoyed such a delightful evening visiting with our guests that I stayed up far too late. Normally, I would leave the house to go to my part time job just before 6:30 a.m. On this particular morning, I rushed out the door still half asleep at 6:45 a.m. having forgotten to pray. Thankfully, God did not forget me.

It was early January, and the roads in our subdivision were slippery with ice as I yawningly made my way to the T-intersection of a major road. I stopped at the intersection, and I looked to my right to make sure there were no cars coming too close in the lane I wanted to turn left into. Seeing none, I pulled forward... and then I glanced back to my left, just in time to see the horrified expression of the man whose car was barreling toward me. Within a split-second, it seemed certain, he would plow straight into my car door, crushing me.

But before I could even blink, his car froze in place a few feet to my left, as did all the cars behind him. My car's momentum carried me forward, but in my panic I wrenched the wheel left too late, causing me to slide—correcting just in time to move forward in my lane before I could be rear-ended by the cars coming behind me. I had escaped a terrible accident! As I shakily drove forward toward the Interstate entrance ahead of me, I saw in my rear-view mirror that the cars behind me were remaining motionless. I could only imagine what the driver of that other car was feeling—perhaps as frightened of his car having stopped unexpectedly as of narrowly escaping a fatal accident.

As soon as I arrived at work, I went to a private restroom, locked the door, burst into tears and began to thank my heavenly Father for His goodness. This was one occasion when I truly began to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). I have often reflected since that day almost 20 years ago, about how God's mercy helps us *want* to change and draw closer to Him—as the Apostle Paul says: “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4). And after seeing God's powerful intervention almost 20 years ago, I found it

much easier to remember to thank God more often for His love and mercy.



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## RUTH AND ABIGAIL

Two of my favorite ladies of the Bible were also involved in potentially dangerous situations, and they would undoubtedly have been praying without ceasing too! Imagine what it must have felt like to be Ruth, on the evening she was told to sneak onto the threshing floor late at night and lie down at the feet of a man she barely knew (Ruth 3:3,4). That took tremendous faith, but I am sure she was also praying continually as she waited for Boaz to wake up. It was a night that changed the direction of

not only her own life, but also enabled her to become part of the family line of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5).

I thought, too, of Abigail, the beautiful wife of wealthy Nabal. She must have been in constant contact with God as she approached David and the fierce fighting men of his war party, sending gifts of food ahead of her and gathering even more to take with her (1 Samuel 25:18–31). God definitely guided her words, as we can see when we read of how David received her: “Then David said to Abigail; ‘Blessed is the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand. For indeed, as the LORD God of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal!’” (vv. 32–34). Clearly, when we or our loved ones are in danger, we have a greater motivation to pray without ceasing!

## PLAN TO PRAY

There are thousands of distractions all around us every day—some pleasurable, others irritating—from books, television, the Internet, phone calls and texting, to traffic jams and sitting in waiting rooms for appointments. As women, we may have many varied and different types of work and errands throughout our day, rather than being in one office or job site.

We also have important and often necessary priorities and time-sensitive emergencies or projects that demand our time and energy. Husbands, children, jobs, elderly or infirm family members, volunteer work—it all takes time and attention. Sometimes it helps to take some time to sit down and mindfully **plan** how to be sure we make prayer a top priority.

For me, it is not always as simple as just getting up earlier in the morning. No matter when I get out of bed in the morning, I can still become distracted. I finally had to make a deal with myself, upon waking, not to walk out of my bedroom and adjoining bathroom without praying first. Otherwise, on my way to the kitchen I would see so much around the house that reminded me of things to accomplish, or if I checked e-mail it might be an hour before I finished. When we travel, go to stay with friends or relatives, or attend the Feast, there are new and different challenges. After hearing a helpful sermonette reminding

live in us.” These opportunities for short prayers throughout the day are a way we can grow in this area and stay in contact with our Father. One of my greatest blessings in the past few years since my beautiful daughter became baptized, is that there is now a new depth to our conversations, and we often discuss spiritual things—we seem to be more and more on the same wavelength in our conversations. I have wondered if Jesus Christ and His Father sometimes smile at each other when they see that we are more on their wavelength in our conversation, our thoughts and our prayers.

### PERSEVERE IN PRAYER

We have all undoubtedly been helped over the years by seeing the many answers God has given to our prayers. Even the “no” answers from God have saved me from what I see

**We have all undoubtedly been helped over the years by seeing the many answers God has given to our prayers. Even the “no” answers from God have saved me from what I see now would have created big problems for me. And, the “not yet” answers really do help us to appreciate and to thank God for the answer to our prayers much more when it does come.**

us to plan ways to be able to pray and study even while away from home, I found it did help me to put some thought into this before taking off on a trip. It definitely can help to be actively looking for opportunities to have some private and quiet time even when in a house surrounded by other people and constant activities.

### TRUE FRIENDS SPEAK OFTEN

Many years ago, I confided in a wonderful older church lady and close friend, that prayer, to me, seemed harder than Bible study. As a mom with two young children, I often had to keep one ear open for the kids as I prayed, and it was sometimes hard to focus for very long. My friend told me that God was her best friend, so she really looked forward to sharing her thoughts and feelings about what was happening in her life or what was on her mind.

More recently, I was talking to a very special younger friend who has grown up without a father. She told me that, for her, God was her Dad—and she loved to talk to her Dad. Talking with her reminded me of just how much I love talking with my own Dad, and thinking about that really helped me feel closer to my spiritual Father and be able to pray even longer prayers at times.

While our longer daily prayers are usually on our knees if possible, there will usually be situations that require extra help and wisdom throughout our day—and it is encouraging to know that God does want us to ask for His help and guidance in more short or informal prayers throughout the whole day. We can literally pray without ceasing. Dr. Meredith continually encourages us in many sermons and articles to “walk with God” and, as Galatians 2:20 reminds us, “let Christ

now would have created big problems for me. And, the “not yet” answers really do help us to appreciate and to thank God for the answer to our prayers much more when it does come. A wonderful example of this is one Mr. Richard Ames sometimes uses in sermons to describe the importance of persistence in prayer. For 17 years, he prayed fervently again and again that God would give him a “desire of his heart” and arrange for him to visit Israel. How many times must he have felt tempted to give up on his prayers? Yet he persevered, and literally “jumped for joy” when he learned he was assigned to go to Israel with a group of Ambassador College students. To pray without ceasing can include even more than to pray throughout the day as we walk with God. It can also mean to persevere in prayer over many months or years in some cases.

Christ gave us an interesting example of a poor widow who would not take “no” for an answer, but kept asking an unjust judge for his help over and over again, till she finally wore him down and he helped her. And then Christ went on to tell us that our Heavenly Father is much more willing to hear us, because we are His own children (Luke 18:2–7). We are all either daughters or mothers, and can understand how much God wants us to talk with Him and let Him know what our needs are.

It is exciting to know that God wants to be our Helper in all ways—that He does want us to pray without ceasing. And, as we continue to ask God for His help in this, we will also be given even more of His strength and peace so that we can truly be “anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6). ■



### Our Wonderful Youth Camps! Continued from page 2

Earlier in this epistle, Paul wrote, “when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also” (2 Timothy 1:5). So, even today, just as in Timothy’s day, our wonderful mothers and grandmothers often have a *great deal* of impact on training our youth—including the *future leaders* of this very Work! One of the greatest influences on my own Christian life, as I have explained many times in the past, was my own grandmother, who lived to be 91 years old. She *taught me* to love and read the Bible, even though she was not called and did not fully understand it during this life. But *she helped me* over and over to gain an appreciation that the Bible is, in fact, the *inspired word of God!* I can never thank her enough for that. And we can never thank all of you dear mothers and grandmothers and aunts and uncles and fathers and brothers as well who have given so much to our young people.

In that same epistle, Paul also instructed Timothy: “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:1–3). We must indeed become “soldiers” of Jesus Christ and be willing to *drive ourselves* and “endure hardship” as the Apostle Paul instructed. I am trying my very best to delegate more and more opportunities in God’s Work to the younger men around me so we may all “commit these to faithful men who will be able to *teach others also.*” This is our job. This is our opportunity.

Regarding this, I certainly would be remiss if I did not give a *special thanks* and *praise* for the zealous and thoughtful efforts of Mr. Sheldon Monson, Camp Director, and our entire team. Mr. Monson—as most of you know—directs all of our youth

programs for the Church. He has instituted the “Adventure Camp” opportunity as well as directing the regular camp and overseeing all the others. He goes *above and beyond* in this service, and we thank God for this. Also, Mr. Wallace Smith—one of our outstanding TV presenters—also lends of himself to help coordinate and direct the activities at the main summer camp. He is a tremendous help and inspiration to the young people as well as to Mr. Monson. Then, our “younger” leader in this area is Mr. Jason Fritts. His enthusiasm, zeal and camaraderie with the young people is extremely helpful and inspiring to behold. So we *thank God for all* these ministers who lead the camp, plus *several others* who pitch in from time to time and assist in various important ways, plus *dozens* of staff members and other helpers, as I have already explained.

So, please increase your prayers and support in every way for these wonderful youth programs. *We all* need to become involved in every way we can and prepare these leaders of tomorrow with our personal encouragement to the young people in our congregations, our fervent prayers, and our willingness to contribute financially and in every other way we can to make these youth programs a real success. And we need to *expand* the types of programs we have so our young people *truly feel* that love, and increasingly desire to become “fully involved” in the very Work that Christ is doing through us at the end of this age. Again, *thank you* dear brethren who have been supporting these youth programs! And I want to especially *thank all of you* who came to camp and gave of your treasures, your energy, your talents and your hard work in helping this year’s Living Youth Camp become a wonderful success! May God encourage and bless you for this—as I know He will.

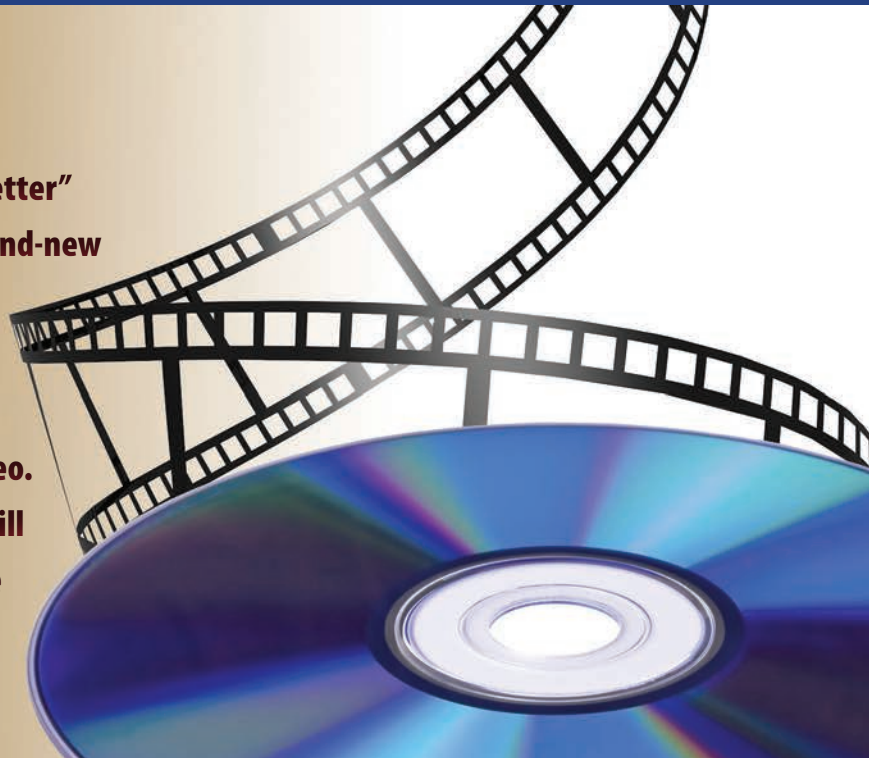
With Christian love,

*Roderick C. Meredith*



## SEMI-ANNUAL OFFER!

**Dr. Meredith's November 2014 "Semi-Annual Letter" to *Tomorrow's World* subscribers will offer a brand-new DVD titled, *The True Philadelphian Mission*. Brethren will watch a more Church-directed version of the DVD at the Feast of Tabernacles this year, as the annual "Behind the Work" video. All Living Church of God member households will automatically receive a free copy; there will be no need to request it when you receive Dr. Meredith's letter.**



## Birth

Larry and Sandra Bell of Reno, Nevada, welcomed *Madison Alexandra Bell* into the family on November 29, 2013. She weighed a healthy 6 pounds 8 ounces and was 19 inches long. Her big sister Rowen was so happy to finally see her and hold her. Madison is the sixth grandchild for Sid and Susan Nelson.

## Ordination

*Mr. Michael DeSimone* was ordained an elder on Sabbath, June 21, by Dr. Roderick Meredith, Mr. Richard Ames, Dr. Douglas Winnail and Mr. Bob League. Mr. DeSimone serves in the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation.

## Anniversaries

*Mr. and Mrs. Robert (Lenora) Wiklun* celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on June 27, and the Edmonton, Alberta, congregation happily acknowledged the great milestone on Sabbath, June 28. During a light meal after services, Mr. and Mrs. Wiklun were presented with a gift and everyone shared in the anniversary cake.

*Mr. and Mrs. Richard (Kathryn) Ames* celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on August 12. On August 5, before they departed for their anniversary trip, Presiding Evangelist Roderick C. Meredith officiated at a small celebration in their honor, attended by Headquarters staff and friends from the local congregation, at which the Ames' were given a small gift and several cards in honor of their happy occasion.

## MATCHING GIFTS

Many companies are willing to match charitable donations made by employees (and retirees) and their spouses. You may wish to check with your employer's Personnel office to determine whether your gifts qualify. Your employer's policy may significantly increase—or even double—your giving to the Living Church of God.

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@lcg.org](mailto:lcn@lcg.org)).

## WEDDINGS

*Brad Blake and Karla Bussey* were joined in marriage on Sunday, July 13, in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The ceremony, performed by Mr. Stuart Wachowicz, was followed by a reception and dance, enjoyed by family and friends. The groom is the son of Mr. Perry Blake of Edmonton and the bride is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harold (Melvina) Bussey of the Springdale, Newfoundland, congregation. The couple reside in Edmonton.

*Marc Therrien and Isobel Walper*, both of the Edmonton, Alberta, congregation, were united in marriage on Sunday, August 10. The small family ceremony was conducted by Mr. Stuart Wachowicz, with guests enjoying a beautiful countryside setting for the outdoor wedding. The couple reside in Edmonton.

## In Loving Memory...

*Mrs. Rebecca Akeyo Maucha*, age 63, of the Ndhiwa congregation in Kenya died March 2. She was a faithful member of God's Church for many years. Mrs. Maucha is survived by her husband, Jared, and five children: Monica, Kennedy, Alice, Elida and Oketch. Funeral services were conducted on March 16 by elder David Mwanzia. Mrs. Maucha will be sorely missed by her family and friends.

*Mr. Keith Hellyer* of the Sydney, Australia, congregation died May 2 at the age of 97 years. Mr. Hellyer was a long-time faithful member of God's Church. Regional Director Bruce Tyler conducted the graveside service on Monday, February 10. Mr. Graeme Hemphill and others also spoke during the service, remembering Mr. Hellyer as a man of deep faith, a true gentleman, and a great story-teller with a wonderful sense of humor. Those who knew and loved Mr. Hellyer are very grateful to have known him and shall greatly miss their dear friend and brother-in-Christ.

## Upcoming **TOMORROW'S** **WORLD** Telecasts

<b>NOVEMBER 6-12</b>	<b>666</b>
<b>NOVEMBER 13-19</b>	<b>THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION</b>
<b>NOVEMBER 20-26</b>	<b>FIVE STRATEGIES FOR PRAYER</b>
<b>NOVEMBER 27-DECEMBER 3</b>	<b>IS GOD CALLING YOU?</b>
<b>DECEMBER 4-10</b>	<b>COUNTERFEIT CHRISTIANITY</b>
<b>DECEMBER 11-17</b>	<b>THE SECOND COMING</b>
<b>DECEMBER 18-24</b>	<b>YOU CAN PROVE THAT GOD EXISTS</b>
<b>DECEMBER 25-31</b>	<b>SPIRIT BATTLES AHEAD</b>

SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

For stations and times, check the Television Log on pages 34-35 of your *Tomorrow's World* magazine

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# COMMENTARY

## WANTED: DEAD OR ALIVE?

Anyone who has watched cowboy movies set in the old American West is familiar with the “Wanted—Dead or Alive” poster, showing the outlaw’s picture and a healthy bounty for his capture—or for his killing. The awful crime could have been anything from robbery to murder. Sometimes, authorities would round up a posse and relentlessly pursue such an outlaw. One proverb states, “the way of the transgressor is hard” (Proverbs 13:15, KJV). Life was not easy for the wanted criminal.

Few of us would consider ourselves such outlaws that we could imagine deserving a “Wanted” poster with our own face on it. Who among us has robbed a bank, or held up a stagecoach, or shot a man in a gunfight? Surely, for the vast majority of us, our misdemeanors are far too ordinary and mundane to turn us into wanted outlaws. The truth, however, is that all of us before God have been outlaws and murderers. We have broken God’s law, His Ten Commandments, and have been responsible for the death of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, as our personal Savior, would have died for any single one of us alone. The breaking of God’s law is sin (1 John 3:4) and our sins have brought a sentence of death on each of us. But there is hope of a better outcome for us than that of the outlaws of the “Old West.” They were either

jailed or executed. Paul stated that though “the wages of sin is death... the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Despite our past deeds, God offers us a better choice than imprisonment or execution. Instead of pursuing us with a posse seeking vengeance, He offers us a program of rehabilitation. It begins with a kind of “execution”—the death of our “old self” through baptism after we repent of our sins. But after we are baptized, “begotten” as disciples of Christ, we are given a program of rehabilitation meant to change our entire way of life. We are to become outwardly focused rather than to continually be too concerned about ourselves. This is a much better way of life.

At His second coming, Jesus Christ will reward those who have firmly turned to His ways. Those who have died in Christ will be resurrected. Then, after Jesus’ thousand-year Millennial reign, those who never before had an opportunity to know the real God of the Bible will have that opportunity—and then they will be judged (Revelation 20:12–13).

No one needs to feel like a fugitive or outlaw. God wants we who are alive now, as well as those who are now dead and waiting to be resurrected in the future, to be able to take hold of His great plan and purpose for all mankind.

—Brian Pomicter