

THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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WILL YOU WALK WITH GOD?

Dear Brethren and Friends,

Greetings from Charlotte! This past weekend we had a truly *outstanding* “Family Weekend.” The unusual warmth, love and enthusiasm of the 667 brethren who were in attendance on the Sabbath was *truly inspiring*! Also, we were very grateful to celebrate the **22nd anniversary** of this very Work! For on December 26, 1992, the Global Church of God held its first services in my home—with 19 people in attendance. Nearly 22 years later, in 2014, our Feast of Tabernacles attendance was almost 10,300! So we have much to be thankful for in our growth and in the unity and love that we have experienced for over 22 years! Uplifting fellowship was certainly experienced in the fine display of sportsmanship and energy put forth in the basketball games, the volleyball games and other forms of sports that were carried on by the young people throughout the entire day of Thursday.

Then, on Friday, some excellent Bible Studies and seminar-type lectures were given about issues facing younger and older married people, teens and singles. On the Sabbath, at services, God inspired me to give a sermon on “How To Walk With God.” At the end of the sermon, we played a beautiful recording of the song as sung by Mario Lanza. I had described how this very song *inspired me* when I first heard it in the film, *The Student Prince*. Although I have done this very imperfectly, I have tried to make this concept a theme of my life for many decades.



Brethren, in the tumultuous years just ahead of us, we will **all** need to genuinely “walk with God”—probably more than we have ever done. For the “little boy soldiers” of ISIS are being trained by this perverted organization to learn the details of how to behead other human beings and other vile practices. The scars on their minds may never be erased in this age. The increasing numbers of kidnappings, rapes and other instances of brutality experienced in the tribal warfare of Africa are going on over there *right now* as I write. Also, in a National Public Radio interview I heard just this morning, a woman from the Gaza Strip described the increasing *hate* and *slaughter* of the *many hundreds* of men, women and little children over there. Describing this, this woman stated emphatically: “This war will go on forever.”

We in God’s Church will soon be *surrounded* by situations where whites are killing blacks, blacks are killing whites, and almost *no one* truly loves and trusts people of other races or ethnic backgrounds. We will come to the place where increasing numbers of **demons** will be “set loose” and unleash truly powerful attitudes of **hate** and **violence**. Literally **millions** of people in Europe will become so deceived by Satan and his demons that they will literally “*make war*” against Christ Himself as He returns to this earth as King of kings! Remember, as I have explained a number of times, Revelation 17:12–14 makes this very clear. Those brainwashed young men in the coming army of the “Beast” will “make war

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with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen and faithful.” This very real “war” against **God Himself**—in the person of Jesus—will occur within the lifetimes of many of you! It will be a time like that described back in Genesis 6:5–10.

At that time, “Then the LORD saw that the **wickedness** of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart” (Genesis 6:5–6). At that time—as our time is becoming—men were so filled with hate and violence that God said, “I will **destroy** man whom I have created from the face of the earth” (v. 7). But this time—instead of destroying mankind almost entirely—God will spare *many millions* if they are willing to find “grace” in the eyes of God (v. 8). For Noah and just seven other human beings were protected because: “Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah **walked with God**” (v. 9). For “walking with God” does **not** involve merely studying the Bible a “little bit” for inspiration or encouragement. It does **not** involve offering an occasional “sleepy time prayer.” It involves the *surrender* of the human heart and spirit to the true Creator God by *giving* one’s **entire life** to serving Him, interacting with Him and making Him and *His will* the **very center** of our lives!

Do you “walk with God” in *this way*?

As the world around us begins to come apart with increasing hate and violence—upset nations, people being killed, raped, tortured and utterly discouraged by the seeming *hopelessness* of our human situation—we who are called by God to understanding truly **must** “walk with God” to retain our sanity and to “make it” through these coming trials and tests. We must learn to genuinely **believe God** and to put our total trust in



Him and in *His inspired Word* to achieve this spiritual growth. Our part is to “seek God” with all of our hearts. Remember that Jesus instructed us to do this very thing in the “Sermon on the Mount.” Jesus told us: “But **seek first** the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).

Again, God inspired Isaiah to tell us: “**Seek** the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near” (Isaiah 55:6). Sadly, not all will do as God instructs. So, God told our forefathers that a time will come when His people, facing distress, will realize their need for God—in some cases, realizing this for the very first time: “But from there you will **seek** the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice” (Deuteronomy 4:29–30).

Dear brethren, at such a time perhaps even *some of us* who have not been truly **close** to God, or some of our children, will begin to realize that we need to absolutely “**cry out**” to our Creator and ask for His mercy and His forgiveness, His guidance, His deliverance.

For those of us whom God is now calling, He will not “make us” obey Him. Rather, as we learn the **reality** of God and His ways, we must at least do our part to “seek” God and let Him know that we **really do** want His help and His guidance in the future so that our lives will finally amount to something.

Then, we will realize our need to “feed” on Christ by genuinely **studying** His Word—asking God fervently as we study to give us **understanding** and the **strength** to obey our Creator. We will learn to **meditate** as Jesus said, “He who eats

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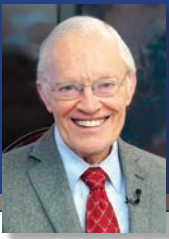
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INSPIRING EXAMPLES OF FAITH

Thinking about the trials and tests that lie ahead for God's people, individually and collectively, I often find special inspiration and encouragement in reading the Psalms of David. I have found in these Psalms—again and again—*powerful* examples of the great **faith** that David exercised in so many of his own trials and tests. Often, we focus on his *courage, bravery* and *commitment*. But we may not fully connect these fine attributes with the remarkable faith of King David of Israel.

A vital part of David's faith was that he constantly cultivated a very close, very personal and extremely heartfelt relationship with God. From his earliest years, David continually put God at the very **center** of his entire existence—and his thinking about virtually every facet of his life, no matter how big or how small. When David looked up at the stars, he thought about **God**: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?" (Psalm 8:3–4).

Often staying out in the open fields as a young shepherd, David was vividly aware of God's creation. He meditated on the beauty, the power and the intricacy of the creation, worshiping and praising the great God who brought this about. We can picture David meditating: "He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine that makes glad the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread which strengthens man's heart. The trees of the LORD are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He planted, where the birds make their nests; the stork has her home in the fir trees. The high hills are for the wild goats; the cliffs are a refuge for the rock badgers" (Psalm 104:14–18).

DAVID'S PROFOUND AWARENESS

David knew that God watches over and sustains His creation in a marvelous way: "He appointed the moon for seasons; the sun knows its going down. You make darkness, and it is night, in which all the beasts of the forest creep about. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from God. When the sun rises, they gather together and lie down in their dens. Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening. O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made

them all. The earth is full of Your possessions" (Psalm 104:19–24).



Aware that even his own body was carefully fashioned by God, David exulted: "For You formed my inward parts; you covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them" (Psalm 139:13–16). All of this helped David fully understand the concept that the Apostle Paul later put into words: "For in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring'" (Acts 17:28).

So through this process of constantly *meditating* on God's creation, of deeply *studying* and *meditating* on God's wonderful **law** (Psalm 119:97), of walking with God and *experiencing* how God *does really bless* those who serve Him, David developed a truly remarkable **faith** in his Creator and his God! David exclaimed in the magnificent 18th Psalm: "For You will light my lamp; the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness. For by You I can run against a troop, by my God I can leap over a wall. As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him. For who is God, except the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God?" (Psalm 18:28–31).

Yes, David's God was his "**Rock**." This powerful concept enabled David to fully **trust** in God through



thick and thin—through every *manner* of trials, tests, illnesses and discouragements. No matter what, David **knew** that the true God was solid as a “Rock”!

Through David, God tells the leaders of the world today: “Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. *Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him*” (Psalm 2:10–12). We will *all* be “blessed” if we put our **trust in God**! Again, David was inspired to write: “The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You” (Psalm 9:9–10). If *we*, today, set ourselves to truly **seek God** and to more fully “**know His name**”—His awesome beauty, wisdom, love and total **power**—then we will learn to put our full **trust** in our heavenly Father in a way we may never have done before.

A MODERN EXAMPLE

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was a modern “apostle of faith.” After describing how he gave up a small ministerial salary from a religious group that was pressing him to take actions he considered to be unscriptural, Mr. Armstrong wrote: “As for me and my house, I then said firmly, ‘we shall serve the Eternal our God, and Him **only** shall we serve. If **men** pay us a salary—even as small as \$3 per week—we have now learned we must preach only what **men** order us to preach. If we are to **work for God** we must look to God as our **employer, and trust Him to supply our every material need**. And then, I added, ‘if we fail to serve Him as **He** commands, He will stop our income.’ I wrote my wife to this effect. It may seem like a step that required great courage to give up even a \$3-a-week income, when that was all we had.

Of course, a few offerings were by this time being handed to me personally—but they were usually a dollar or less, and averaged less than the \$3 weekly salary. But it really did not require any real courage. My wife and I *knew* we were obeying and serving God. We *knew* He was using us. The **fruits** being borne were loud testimony of this. God had prepared us for relying solely on Him by many miraculous answers to prayer. Therefore we *knew* in perfect faith, God would supply our need” (*Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong*, Vol. 1, p. 585).

Later in his *Autobiography*, Mr. Armstrong described how he and his wife had to **trust God fully** to give them the needed resources to preach the Truth on radio during the depths of the Great Depression: “And I have explained how, in those bottom-depression days, this took real living faith! When 25¢, 50¢, and \$1 per month was all that people felt they could afford to pledge, you may realize how big the unpledged balance appeared. At that time Jesus Christ *opened the door!* I walked through it. I *trusted Him* to keep the balance coming. **He kept it coming!** Sometimes the necessary \$2.50 was not on hand up to 30 minutes before broadcast time. Then one of the brethren might knock at our front door and *just happen* (?) to leave some tithe money, or an offering, at that psychological minute! Never once did Christ fail to provide. Never did we have to miss a broadcast! Real faith requires that *courage of believing, and acting* on it! This, let me explain, was not like going in debt for something consumed and unpaid for. We didn’t go into debt. We trusted Christ to send the money to pay before each program, in advance” (pp. 614–615).

If we, today, set ourselves to truly seek God and to more fully “know His name”— His awesome beauty, wisdom, love and total power—then we will learn to put our full trust in our heavenly Father in a way we may never have done before.

GOD’S WAYS ALWAYS WORK!

Yes, even in modern times, God’s ways always work. For the God of Abraham, even today, will bless, guide, heal and deliver those who really put their **trust** in Him. And God inspired David to write these words as part of Holy Scripture: “But let all those rejoice who put their **trust** in You; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You. For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield” (Psalm 5:11–12).

If we in God’s Church today will fervently **seek God and trust Him**—as David did—He will begin to use us even more to do a genuinely **powerful** Work. The true gospel of the Kingdom of God will be preached effectively around the world, and more and more people will be brought to **real surrender** of their lives—to *serve* and **obey** God and let Christ fully live within them (Galatians 2:20). More will be supernaturally *healed, blessed and delivered* during the terrible trials to come at the end of this age, and many more will be made ready to enter God’s Kingdom in the *first* resurrection—the “better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35). ■

THE DEATH OF JUDAS

By Dexter B. Wakefield



all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:9–10).

The word “perdition” comes from the Greek word *apoleia* (Strong’s 684), which refers to *complete* destruction. This term is applied to Judas at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion, when Jesus referred to Judas as “the son of perdition” (John 17:12). When Jesus and the disciples took their last Passover together, *Satan entered Judas*, and he left the supper. “When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.’ Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke... Jesus answered, ‘It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it.’ And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, **Satan entered him**. Then Jesus said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly.’ But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, ‘Buy those things we need for the feast,’ or that he should give something to the poor. Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. *And it was night*” (John 13:21–30).

Perhaps one of the most sinister and evil human figures in the Bible is Judas Iscariot. He was one of Jesus’ closest disciples—even an apostle—yet he chose to betray the One who is the hope of the world. *And he did it for money!*

THE SON OF DESTRUCTION

Judas had a number of character flaws, but the one mentioned most prominently in the Scriptures is his love of money. Judas often fell into temptation because of money. “But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, who would betray Him, said, ‘Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’ This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it” (John 12:4–6). Judas clearly did not believe that Jesus was God in the flesh, and it appeared to him that the authorities were going to stop Jesus one way or another. It was time to cash in, if possible, and an offer of 30 pieces of silver would be sufficient for Judas to make his deal.

Judas’ lust for money led him down a path to his destruction. “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in **destruction and perdition**. For the love of money is a **root** of

Judas’ lust for money led him down a path to his destruction. “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.”

Judas went out to earn his wages by a brief but dreadful labor... a kiss of betrayal. The night that he went out into may have been dark, but it could not compare with the darkness that was in Judas’ heart as he went—that of the Prince of Darkness!

When Jesus prayed before His crucifixion, he mentioned Judas. “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the **son of perdition**, that the Scripture might be fulfilled” (John 17:12).

The term “son of perdition” or “son of destruction” is applied to only one other person besides Judas in the scriptures—the end-time “man of sin.” He will also be controlled or possessed by Satan as Judas was. “Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the **rebellion** comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, **the son of perdition**, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God” (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4, RSV).

What emotions would Judas have felt when he was in the grip of the “power of darkness”? He surely felt hate and resentment. Perhaps power and exultation? Nevertheless, with



Christ's sinless death, the end of Satan's reign was assured. Ultimately, Satan left Judas with emptiness, hopelessness and crushing depression. Judas only wanted... to die.

Ultimately, Judas' greed, and the grievous sin that resulted from it, led to his complete destruction—in a horrific way!

THE DEATH OF JUDAS

Exactly how Judas died is a bit controversial. Matthew gives an account that some say conflicts with Luke's account in the Book of Acts. Notice how Matthew described Judas' pathetic end. "Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had

Some critics even cite these two descriptions as proof that there are contradictions in the Bible. But actually, the account of Judas' falling does not contradict the account of his hanging; rather, it adds information. That is the case with many so-called biblical contradictions.

been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' And they said, 'What is that to us? You see to it!' Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and **went and hanged himself**. But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, 'It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood.' And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me'" (Matthew 27:3–10).

But in the book of Acts, Judas' death seems to have another description. "Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry: (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and **falling headlong** [Greek: *prenes*; leaning forward, prone], **he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out**. And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, *Akel Dama*, that is, Field of Blood.) 'For it is written in the Book of Psalms: "Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it"; and, "Let another take his office"' (Acts 1:16–20).

So, did Judas die of hanging—or of a fall?

Some critics even cite these two descriptions as proof that there are contradictions in the Bible. But actually, the account of Judas' falling does not contradict the account of his hanging; rather, it *adds information*. That is the case with many so-called biblical contradictions. Matthew 27:5 states that Judas died of hanging, and that was the actual cause of death. Notice that the statement in Acts 1:18 does not say that Judas *died* of a fall. It only says that his body fell and broke open.

When a man dies by hanging, when does his body fall? *When he is cut down, of course*. This is the most likely explanation in the case of Judas' death.

Judas hanged himself during the Days of Unleavened Bread, which was a very important festival to the Jews of his day—and remains so today. But if a Jew were to touch a dead body, he would be unclean for a period of time and would not be able to participate in the festivities. Notice the law regarding this.

"He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be *unclean seven days*. He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean. Whoever touches the body of anyone who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD. That person shall be cut off from Israel. He shall be unclean, because the water of purification was not sprinkled on him; his uncleanness is still on him" (Numbers 19:11–13).

In order to ease the body of a hanged person to the ground, it is necessary to touch it. But a devout Jew would be very reluctant to touch the dead body of a suicide by hanging, especially during the Passover season. As the Law of Moses says, "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for **he who is hanged is accused of God**" (Deuteronomy 21:22–23).

Even if Judas' body stayed on the rope of his hanging all that day, it would have fallen when it was cut down. But when someone commits suicide by hanging, they usually do it in a very private place. It could have been days before Judas' body was discovered and the bloated body cut down. The scriptures give no

information on how long Judas' body was on the rope. In either case, we have the ghastly scene of Judas' body falling headlong and his bowels bursting open upon impact with the ground.

A STUDY IN EXTREMES

But why would Luke add such a gruesome detail in his Church history in the Book of Acts? One interesting reason may be that **Judas and Jesus are a study in polar opposites**. Here are some examples:

- When Jesus died, He poured out His blood that cleanses the whole world.
- When Judas died, all manner of uncleanness came out of him.
- Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Judas was possessed by Satan.
- Jesus is the Son of the Creator God, and He created all things.
- Judas became the “son of destruction” because Satan entered him. Satan is called Apollyon—which is Greek for “Destroyer.”

There is no contradiction in the accounts of Judas' death. Rather, when the accounts are taken together, they add information and give us a more complete picture of the events. By giving us the grisly extra details of Judas' death, Luke was pointing out the extreme opposite to Jesus that Judas represented.

- When Jesus was taken to the chief priests, He was severely beaten. “Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, “Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?” (Matthew 26:67–68).
- When Judas went to the chief priests, he was well-received and paid. “And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money” (Mark 14:11).
- Jesus' every word was truth.
- Judas was the epitome of insincerity and deception when he betrayed Jesus with a kiss. “Jesus said to him, ‘Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?’” (Luke 22:48).
- Jesus was sinless, and He removes the guilt of our sins.
- Judas' sin was grievous, and he betrayed an innocent man. He died in his sins having said,

“I have sinned by betraying innocent blood” (Matthew 27:4).

- Jesus is King of kings!
- Judas lost his office. “For it is written in the Book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it’; and, ‘Let another take his office’” (Acts 1:20).
- Jesus inherited all things!
- Judas threw away the price he was given for betraying Jesus, and the money was used to buy him a place to be buried. The man who loved money died with nothing.
- Jesus' burial place was the unused chamber of a rich man. “Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid” (John 19:41).
- When Judas died, he was pushed into a grave in a pauper's field for those who were considered unworthy to be buried with decent people. “Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it” (Acts 1:20).
- Jesus' body was treated with respect and dignity and received a proper burial in accordance with Jewish custom. “Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury” (John 19:40).
- Judas had an ignominious death and could not be buried properly in accordance with the manner of the Jews.
- Jesus loved His friends to the end. “Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (John 13:1).
- Judas betrayed his friends.
- Jesus was resurrected to eternal life.
- Judas died in ignominy and came to nothing. He is dead to this day.
- Jesus will live in glory forever!
- For Judas, “It would have been good for that man if he had not been born” (Matthew 26:24).

There is no contradiction in the accounts of Judas' death. Rather, when the accounts are taken together, they *add information* and give us a more complete picture of the events. By giving us the grisly extra details of Judas' death, Luke was pointing out the extreme opposite to Jesus that Judas represented. That great contrast should give us an increased appreciation for the glorious and exalted role of our Savior as we prepare for the Passover and meditate on the magnitude of His sacrifice—and our indebtedness to Him. ■

Bound to One Another

By Gary F. Ehman

Very soon, baptized members of the Church of God will again be observing the Passover, following Christ's example and command. In the months, weeks and days leading up to this annual event, true Christians will be examining themselves in preparation for their individual role in this commemoration. They will be reflecting on God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the sacrifice through

which today's Christians will be able to achieve the marvelous destiny for which God is preparing them as future members of His Family and the Kingdom of God.

It should be obvious to us that the Passover is *not* a mundane, routine ritual we perform each year. The Passover service is one of the most vital activities in a Christian's life. With its observance, Christians partake of, and in, the actual unity of God and man. This is a crucial point that we must understand.

Jesus emphasized the immense significance of the Passover observance when He said, "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world" (John 6:48–51).

HIS BODY AND BLOOD— WITH US AND IN US

Just what, exactly, was Jesus telling them—and us today—when He said that "if anyone eats" he would not die and would live forever? In

one sense, we "feed" on Christ whenever we "consume" God's word through deep study. But that is not the whole meaning. Jesus was referring to something even more tangible, significant and impactful. He was referring to the coming Passover, which He was going to share with His twelve apostles.

Examine what Scripture tells us actually happened: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'" (Matthew 26:26–28).

Jesus established a memorial, the *Christian* Passover, in which we consume bread and wine that represent His body and blood, given for all who would receive salvation. The gospel of Luke brings more clarity to the event: "And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you'" (Luke 22:19–20).

The key to all of this is the word "remembrance." The Greek word is *anamnēsis* (an-am'-nay-sis) a remembering, a recollection, or a recalling. But why remember? What is it we are to remember? Jesus said we are to remember Him. Christians are to center their lives on Jesus, always keeping focused on Him and on what He did for them.

That is why the Passover is not just symbolic of our feeding on God's word, but also of having Jesus Christ *live His life in us*; it reminds us of the *Church's bond*—collectively and individually—*with Jesus*, via the Passover experience. That is also why taking the Passover is a **memorial** service—a reminder—rather than a **renewal** of the covenant we made with God at baptism. A covenant with God is **forever** until broken by either God or us, individually. Jesus clearly tells us of the process: "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may *abide with you forever*—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He *dwells with you* and *will be in you*" (John 14:16–17). The Passover memorial should spur us to renewed *dedication* to fulfill our part of the covenant, but from God's perspective the covenant is unchanged and is sure.

We have been sanctified, and the Holy Spirit is no longer just *with* us; it is *in* us. Paul amplifies this in the



book of Hebrews: “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (Hebrews 10:12–14).

The Apostle Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthian brethren, focuses on the concept of a memorial, or a remembrance: “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me’” (1 Corinthians 11:23–25).

Again, the word “remembrance” is *anamnēsis*, a remembering, a recollection or a recalling. So we associate the eating and drinking, the bread and the wine with the reality of Jesus’ human life, His sacrifice for the sins of mankind and His presence in us individually and collectively through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

ONE BREAD, ONE BODY

Why is this important for us to understand? Paul says, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (v. 26). Those preparing to keep the Passover need to think deeply about this, because taking part in the Passover will place Christians in a very visible position, as noted in verse 26. A true Christian, in taking the Passover, openly “proclaims” the entire process of Jesus’ sacrifice—the starting point for establishing the coming Kingdom of God.

“Proclaim,” *kataggellō* (kat-ang-gel’-lo), means to proclaim publically, or to publish. We tell the world with our support of preaching of the gospel—showing ourselves to be true Christians—and demonstrate it by our daily lives of overcoming, worshiping God the Father and Jesus Christ. We proclaim this in observing the Christian Passover.

Some of the Christians in Corinth were misunderstanding the meaning of the Passover. They were struggling against the pulls of the pagan society in which they had reveled before their conversion. In their former free-swinging lives, they were self-centered, thinking only of the pleasures they could achieve through worship of their gods and goddesses. Corinth was a totally corrupt, pagan society given over to vile, hedonistic religious practices.

In response, Paul found it necessary to rebuke them for falling back into self-centered practices (1 Corinthians 11:20–22). The Corinthians had been corrupting the message of Christ’s Passover: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we

break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:16–17).

This is crucially important to us, as we view keeping the Christian Passover. We eat and drink the Passover as **one body**, partaking of that one body, Jesus—and in doing so **we become one through Him**. The word “communion” in the Greek is *koinōnia* (koy-nohn-ee’-ah) meaning fellowship, or partnership, but from a participatory point of view. We participate in the blood and body of Jesus by eating and drinking the symbols at the Passover.

Paul gave a similar admonition to the Philippian brethren: “Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Philippians 2:1–2).

The apostle continues this concept, “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Philippians 3:10). The word “fellowship” is also *koinōnia*. Overall, the contextual meaning is participation, with overtones of partnership.

Paul gives this further weight using the word “conformed” *summorphōō* (soom-mor-fo’-o), meaning to assimilate, to receive the same form—in this case, in regard to His death. Paul makes this clear when he writes: “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were

baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been **united together** in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection” (Romans 6:3–5).

Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians, which also applies to us today, that we all partake of that one bread (1 Corinthians 10:17), is key to what Christians will be doing the night of the Passover. We all partake of that one bread. The word “partake” is *metechō* (met-ekh’-o), meaning not only to partake of, but implying that partaking means to **belong to**. When we eat that bread together, we are connected not only to the bread, representing Jesus Christ; we are **connected to one another**. We truly become **one** through partaking of the Passover.

This should provide a clearer understanding of what it means for Jesus to be the Christian’s focal point through taking the Passover: “For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him” (John 6:55–56). Jesus is central. He is the Passover Lamb. In the Old Testament observance, the Passover lamb was eaten and there was a unity for the Israelites; they all did the same thing at the same time. Interestingly, they eventually became disunited when they began to keep the



Passover on the wrong day, Nisan 15, rather than the scripturally enjoined Nisan 14.

BOUND TO ONE ANOTHER

How important is all of this eating and drinking, oneness and unity? The answer is made clear by the key words Jesus linked to the upcoming Passover service in John's gospel. To eat of it one would "not die" (John 6:50); one would "live forever" (v. 51); unless you eat there would be "no life in you" (v. 53); by eating and drinking of the body and blood, one would have "eternal life"—through the resurrection (v. 54); if you feed on Him you "will live" (v. 57); and again, to eat, one will "live forever" (v. 58). Is this enough to get our attention?

While the Passover certainly zeroes in on Jesus and His sacrifice as the keystone to salvation, there is another extremely important concept He was attempting to convey to the disciples—and us today—when He established it. This concept is centered in words He used often, and which He inspired His writers to incorporate into Scripture. It lies at the heart of why we take the Passover and why God wants us to memorialize Christ's sacrifice each year.

Jesus, regarding His disciples, used the term "one another" numerous times. The two words are first linked in the New Testament in the gospel of John, and significantly in John 13:14: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." The Greek phrasing for "one another's" is *allēlōn* (al-lay'-lone), literally *each* other's, meaning to wash anyone's feet regardless of who they are. This combination is used about 39 times throughout the New Testament, and in the vast majority of instances it refers to a relationship of love and service among Christians.

Jesus uses the term in various ways, comparatively and as a direct command to the Christian: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love **one another**; as I have loved you, that you also love **one another**. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for **one another**" (John 13:34–35). This was an extremely important issue with Jesus: "This is My commandment, that you love **one another** as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you" (John 15:12–14). He further emphasizes it in verse 17: "These things I command you, that you love **one another**."

This theme, under inspiration, was picked up by the Apostles: "Be kindly affectionate to **one another** with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to **one another**" (Romans 12:10); "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve **one another**" (Galatians 5:13); "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere

love of the brethren, love **one another** fervently with a pure heart" (1 Peter 1:22); "For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love **one another**" (1 John 3:11).

THE PRAYER FOR ONE AND ALL

No other place in the Bible makes this point of love, unity and sacrifice come alive more poignantly than it does in Jesus' prayer for us. His words need to be in the center of our thoughts as we contemplate the wonderful Passover service just ahead: "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are" (John 17:9–11).

We are kept in the name of God—the Church of God. By keeping the Passover, as commanded, we are brought into remembrance of **who** we are, and **why**. It is Jesus who prayed for that recognition; it is Jesus who expects us to remember what He prayed for: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they

may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me" (vv. 20–23).

Because we do this in remembrance, each and every Passover, we know the truth. We are set free from ignorance to fulfill the Apostle Peter's expectation: "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:2–4).

TO REMIND AND SHARE

God the Father wants us to share—to be "partakers" with Him in eternity as His very sons and daughters. He provides the wonderful opportunity for us to experience this relationship in a limited, physical way—fellowshipping, partnering, participating—and partaking of Jesus Christ through the bread and wine of the Christian Passover. ■

How Did Jesus Christ Die?

By Peter Nathan

For many professing Christians, the cause of Jesus Christ's death is an enigma. Like Pontius Pilate, many inquirers are left questioning how He could have died so soon (Mark 15:44). Examine the centuries of art attempting to depict Christ's death, and we typically see no more than a small trickle of blood from a flesh wound, reinforcing the impression that Christ died of a broken heart. To others, the expression that Jesus simply "gave up the ghost" conveys the mistaken impression of a voluntary death, rather than realizing that the expression is a metaphor for death itself (Mark 15:37; John 19:30; Acts 5:5, 12:23, KJV).

In the Church of God, we have long understood, quite correctly, that most texts of Matthew's Gospel now omit a key line depicting a soldier spearing the crucified Christ and thus killing Him violently. One may read more about this in the Personal Correspondence Department's L147 on this topic (see page 13). Yet, even what is present in the rest of the Gospel accounts may in fact reveal more than we might at first notice. Could some of the answer be *lost in translation*?



ZECHARIAH'S PROPHECY

The Gospel of John provides us with a useful insight into this matter. After providing details about how the robbers crucified with Jesus Christ had their legs broken, John was inspired to quote a prophecy from Zechariah 12:10 about Jesus (John 19:34). Traditionally, most consider that John refers to the pinprick of a wound represented in most art relating to Christ's death. The Hebrew term used by Zechariah denies this idea. The nail holes in Christ's hands and feet are clearly not an appropriate fulfillment of that prophecy. The prophecy demands something greater. The Hebrew term *daqar*, translated as "pierced" in most English translations of Zechariah, is used to describe a fatal wounding of a subject. Two examples help appreciate the gravity of the prophecy. The same Hebrew term is used when Phinehas thrust his spear through an Israelite man and Moabite woman, impaling them. (Numbers 25:6–8). Likewise, when King Saul was injured by archers and facing defeat at the hands of the Philistines, he asked his armor bearer to take his sword and "to thrust me through with it" so that he was not taken alive (1 Samuel 31:4). This same term, used by Zechariah to describe the piercing of the Messiah, was used to describe the taking of lives in both those examples.

For Zechariah, as with the Apostle John, the wound from the spear thrust was intended to be obvious for all to see. John

himself is aware of this need. The wound was large enough for the resurrected Jesus to invite Thomas to put his hand into it (John 20:25–28). It was not a pinprick of a wound—it was large enough for Thomas to put his hand into! As the one who was inspired to write the book of Revelation, John once again invokes the prophecy of Zechariah, enlarging the mourning from members of the tribe of Judah to all nations of the earth (Revelation 1:7).

So why should something that happened to Jesus Christ's body be a feature of His returning glory? If it was not part of His suffering, and only occurred to a dead body, why the need for this prophecy that John refers to?

Consider then the importance of the prophecy. Why would such a major prophecy relate to the dead body of Jesus Christ? Isaiah also was inspired to write of the death of Jesus Christ in terms of His sacrifice: "Because He poured out His soul unto death" (Isaiah 53:12). The term "poured" is used metaphorically of a person giving rather than taking all. This would fit with the imagery John is seeking to convey in the later part of John 19. The prophecies about Jesus Christ

relate to His life, death and resurrection. We know that He was to make His grave with the wicked (Isaiah 53:9), and that He would be resurrected before corruption and decay of His body set in (Psalm 16:8–11; Acts 2:27, 31). The prophecies do not relate to events surrounding Jesus' dead body.

Consider also that Jesus stated that He was to be killed—*apokteinō* (Matthew 16:21; 17:23; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22). The Greek term involves the taking of someone else's life. It is not used of suicide or self-destruction.

The verb denotes the violent termination of life by human beings. The preposition *ἀπό* strengthens the negative meaning of the verb: "hyper-characterizing, picture-painting" (*Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 1:134).

The apostles appreciated this. When speaking to the Sanhedrin, they accused them of murder (Acts 5:30). Hence we must accept that someone or something must have taken His life. No concept of a voluntary action on Jesus Christ's part can be involved. We have two options from the Gospel accounts: death by crucifixion itself, or from some other violent action taken *to kill Christ prematurely*.

CRUCIFIXION

Crucifixion was a form of prolonged torture, with death resulting from one of several consequences of being hanged



on a tree or a stake, including but not limited to strangulation, hypothermia or dismemberment by wild animals, so that death may come after several days of suffering. In other words, an autopsy would not necessarily list crucifixion as the cause of death; crucifixion would be the act that brought on some other immediate cause of death.

The goal of crucifixion was torture, to inflict as much pain as possible on the victim while allowing suffering to continue for as long as possible. It was to convey a powerful, intimidating message to all who saw the victim. Accordingly, crucifixion was usually performed in a highly trafficked public place so that those nearby would see and fear. Roman legions each had a specialized squad whose duty was crucifixion. Well-trained, and without feeling for human suffering, they inflicted their skills on subject peoples.

This allows us to make sense of Pilate's question about what would have been a very premature death for Jesus in terms of crucifixion and why it was necessary to break the legs of the others to hasten their deaths because of the impending Holy Day. Without any support from their legs, the crucified men would be unable to breathe, which, coupled with the intensified pain, would bring death to them rapidly.

Jesus Christ, like others who were crucified with Him and those before and after Him, did not die of crucifixion alone. Hence the only other option the Gospels provide is the violent action of a soldier with a spear.

When did the soldier strike?

The English translation of John 19:34 begins with the conjunction “But”—seeming to indicate that its actions occurred at the same time the other men's legs were broken. Upon closer inspection, however, we find that the Greek requires more care in translation. One commentary states, “The adversative [contrast] particle *ἀλλά* is etymologically derived from *ἄλλος* (cf. Ger. *sondern*, which is both a verb, ‘separate,’ and a conjunction, ‘but, rather’) (*EDNT* 1:61).”

What follows after the conjunction, then, is not a continuation of what went before—in this case, breaking the criminals' legs—rather, it can reflect on a separate (and in this case, previous) event.

John 19:34 is a case where *ἀλλά* is used to contrast the state of Jesus with that of those crucified on either side. Hence the action of the soldier with the spear is not to be read as contemporaneous with the breaking of legs, but could have happened previously. The verse could be translated as: “One of the soldiers had” or, “Because one

of the soldiers had”—thus providing the necessary time lapse between this event and breaking the other victims' legs.

Remember, if Christ was not killed as a consequence of the spear thrust, we are left with a situation where it is easy to assume that Jesus Christ died at His own behest. That idea creates two problems. We would have to question whether He was truly sacrificed as

Jesus Christ, like others who were crucified with Him and those before and after Him, did not die of crucifixion alone. Hence the only other option the Gospels provide is the violent action of a soldier with a spear.

the Lamb of God. It also comes very close to Docetism, a Gnostic philosophical error that John was seeking to refute! The nature of the death of Jesus Christ had not been a problem for the previous Gospel writers who recorded Christ's words of being murdered. Eyewitness accounts also added detail to that given in the record by the three Synoptic writers. John, writing a few years later when eyewitnesses were few

and far between, was seeking to refute the conclusions that some philosophers were creating about the personage of Jesus Christ.

DO THE OTHER GOSPELS SUPPORT THIS IDEA?

The other three Gospels tell us that Jesus died crying out in a loud voice (Matthew 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46). The cry to His Father quoting Psalm 22 had been earlier than this cry. This loud cry is presented by all three Gospels as immediately preceding His death. Death of a heart attack, stroke or such form of death is normally associated with disorientation and not major pain or screaming. Because He was still able to pray to His Father and cry out with a loud voice, strangulation or some form of asphyxiation was clearly not the problem. Normally, screaming would be associated with pain, and makes sense for someone being violently stabbed through the abdomen and rib cage with a spear. This would fit the scenario given by Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Consider, too that the situation at the place of crucifixion was also highly charged, with the religious leaders taunting Christ to exercise power and show He was the Son of God by coming down from the stake (Matthew 27:42, 49). Was the soldier motivated to avoid a major spectacle of someone getting down from the stake?

Of course, by using his spear, this anonymous figure brought about the death of our Savior at the exact time the Father intended. Little did the soldier understand that Jesus Christ, after being placed in the tomb, would be resurrected three days and three nights later! ■

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Dear Friend,

Thank you for your questions about John 19:33-34, and whether these Scriptures say that Jesus Christ was dead before He was speared in the side.

Did Christ really die of a broken heart as some say He did, or did He die from a spear being thrust into His side, causing Him to bleed to death? The answer to this puzzle is one of translation, centered in the gospel account of Matthew. The *King James Version* and several others have a missing verse, one that has been the center of controversy for many centuries.

In Matthew's account we read: "Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Some of those who stood there, when they heard *that*, said, 'This Man is calling for Elijah!' Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled *it* with sour wine and put *it* on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. The rest said, 'Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him.' And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit" (Matthew 27:45-50).

The *Ferrar Fenton* translation reads: "But another taking a spear pierced His side, when blood and water came out. Jesus, however, having again called out with a loud voice, resigned His spirit" (vv.49-50). Now the *Moffatt* translation: "But the others said, 'Stop, let us see if Elijah does come to save him!' (Seizing a lance, another pricked his side, and out came water and blood.) Jesus again uttered a loud scream, and gave up his spirit" (vv. 49-51).

In the original copy of the *Vaticanus*—the oldest complete manuscript of the Greek New Testament written in the third century—Matthew 27:49 states: "And another took a spear and pierced His side and there came forth water and blood."

Translators of the *KJV* based their work on Matthew, using a spurious copy of Matthew claimed to have been written by Barnabas, allegedly found in his tomb in 477AD. The *KJV* translators did include the missing verse as a marginal reading when it was published in 1657. Early Greek manuscripts, as late as 510AD, continued to include this verse.

Now to the question of John's account and whether it contradicts what Matthew wrote. Again, there is a problem with the translated Greek. "But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out" (John 19:33-34).

By reading John's account, one might assume wrongly that when the soldiers came to Christ on the stake they stabbed Him with the spear to see if He was alive. That is not what the Scripture says. Verse 33 says when they came to break His legs, they "**saw** that He was **already** dead." It would have been pointless to spear Him in the side. Had they seen He was not dead, they would have broken His legs, not speared Him. A soldier **had already** thrust his spear into Him.

Comparing all the Scriptures together, and understanding that the *KJV* was not properly translated from the Greek, reveals the complete story. How should John's account be rendered? "But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers [had already] pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out." That is what caused Him to cry out with a loud voice and die (Matthew 27:50).

Just as the original Passover lambs were sacrificed by the shedding of all their blood—thereby sparing the Israelites—Christ, our Passover Lamb, died by the shedding of all His blood for the remission of all our sins (Isaiah 53:7). Isaiah's prophecy continues in v. 8: "He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken." The Hebrew word used for "stricken" is: *nega* a stroke or wound.

Jesus Christ did not die of a broken heart. His death was caused by the stroke of a spear, opening up a gaping wound, slicing through his bladder, arteries and muscles causing massive hemorrhaging. Without that shed blood, we have no Savior.

If there is any further help we can give, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

Self-Examination: “These Things Became Our Examples”

By Wyatt Ciesielka

Sincere Christians regularly pray and examine themselves *throughout the year* to ensure that they are “walking worthy of the Lord” (cf. Colossians 1:9–10). But no matter how sincere we are, as mortal flesh we occasionally fall short and sin (Romans 3:23; 7:17–21). This is one of the lessons of the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread—times of extra and intense, prayerful self-examination, repentantly acknowledging that we *need* Jesus Christ as our Passover and our High Priest and that we also *need* to continue to draw closer and closer to Him.

This concept of self-examination is nothing new for those called and faithful. But, leading up to each annual Passover—that time when baptized, repentant Christians *intensify* our self-examination—do we really examine ourselves with increased diligence, zeal, yearning, and *craving* to better understand where we fall short, where we need to grow, and where we can draw closer to our Lord and

Savior? As Hebrews 11:6 explains, we must “diligently” seek Him. “Diligently” here is the Greek word *ekzēteō* meaning “to crave,” “to beg for,” “to demand” and to “diligently seek for as for something very important.” So we do not approach the Passover lackadaisically. Instead, we approach the Passover diligently seeking Him, and diligently examining ourselves, knowing that our High Priest is a *rewarder* of those who *diligently* seek Him. “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

The purpose of this diligent self-examination is for us to fulfill our part in becoming God’s holy people. As Dr. Roderick Meredith wrote, “The New Testament reveals that God is now forming, within the people He calls holy, His righteous and perfect spiritual character as a prerequisite to the precious gift of eternal life in His kingdom. The basis of that perfect character is absolute yieldedness to obey God’s perfect spiritual law—revealed by the Ten Commandments and spiritually magnified in the New Testament” (“You Need Salvation!,” *Tomorrow’s World*, May-June 2007). This is foundational to the salvation process.

Salvation begins with God calling us, our answering in faith, and our repentance, baptism and willingness to follow Christ. We show our willingness to follow Christ in many ways. One of those ways is in keeping God’s Law, keeping His Sabbath holy, and keeping His annual Holy Days. Another way we show Him that we are willing to follow Him is by taking seriously this command to examine ourselves. Since self-examination is so important, we know we can look to Scripture for tools and examples to help us.

FIVE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

Before discussing five specific things God has given us as examples, let us remember that self-examination is intimately connected to preparing for the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. The Passover pictures the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the “Lamb of God” who was with God and was God from

eternity (John 1:1–3). His sacrifice made Him the Lamb and Savior for us and the entire world (John 1:29–36). His purpose was established before the world was formed (Revelation 5:6; 13:8). The Being who instituted the Old Testament ritual of the Passover is the same Being who became Jesus to live in the flesh 2,000 years ago and establish the New Testament Passover with the symbols of bread, wine and footwashing (1 Corinthians 11:23–26; John 13:3–10).

The Passover is immediately followed by the seven Days of Unleavened Bread; of which the first and seventh days are Sabbath days of holy convocations (Exodus 12:16). The Days of Unleavened Bread picture us purging the leaven of malice, pride and wickedness out of our lives and partaking of God’s nature, which is symbolized as the “unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:6–13). During the seven days of Unleavened Bread we are to eat nothing leavened (Exodus 12:20), no leavening is to be found on our premises (Exodus 12:15), and we are to eat unleavened bread daily (Exodus 12:15–18), symbolic of putting on Christ’s righteousness.

In 1 Corinthians 10, God uses Paul to remind us that He “was not well pleased” with our ancestors, the nation of Israel,



and thus “their bodies were scattered in the wilderness” (v. 5). Then, in verse 6, God begins to give us examples from which we should learn: “Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.”

These “things” we are given as examples can help us examine ourselves as we prepare for the Passover. They are exhortations not to lust after evil things, not to practice idolatry, not to commit sexual immorality, not to tempt Christ and not to murmur.

I. NOT TO LUST AFTER EVIL THINGS

As Mr. Richard Ames wrote in a *Tomorrow's World* article, “Instead of coveting, be thankful for all the blessings God has given you. After all, God promises to provide all your godly needs. That promise is in Philippians 4:19. We need to understand that covetousness is a form of idolatry. We can desire a person, position or possession so strongly that it becomes an idol to us. Remember this admonition: “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5)” (“Seven Satanic Deceptions,” November–December 2006). We sin if we set our desires on *anything* above our desires for God or godly things. It is entirely good and appropriate to desire good things as long as that desire does not turn to covetousness, but it is never good or appropriate to desire “evil things.”

True Christians “walk in the Spirit,” meaning that they do not lust or covet (Galatians 5:16) and true Christians well understand that Satan is the prince of the power of the air who tries to entice us by lusts—broadcasting his thoughts not only spiritually, but also through media including television, the Internet, music, movies, books and other means. Is Satan’s broadcasting a danger to Christians? What about “mature Christians” or those of us who have been “in the Church a long time”? From 2 Peter 2:18 we understand that if we are not diligent in seeking God daily, we can be drawn back into lust.

There are lusts or desires that are clearly evil and sinful, such as the “works of the flesh” listed in Galatians 5:19–21, including “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like...” but there is also a danger of desire turning to covetousness where even if what we desire is not evil *per se*, we may still sin if we put our desire for it above God and His righteousness. James warns that Christians can fall victim to lusting for what we do not have (James 4:2) and Paul gives the

famous example of the danger of lusting for money (1 Timothy 6:10).

II. NOT TO PRACTICE IDOLATRY

Idolatry—a practice common to both Old Testament and New Testament times—is plainly prohibited by the **First Commandment**, which forbade the Israelites from worshiping any god other than the LORD (Exodus 20:3). Even before the prohibition against worshiping graven images, the First Commandment forbade worship of any false gods *in any form*. The Second Commandment then forbids worshiping the LORD God of Israel in any material form, such as an idol or picture

or image (Exodus 20:4–6). Idolatry was a chronic problem in Israel, against which God intervened time and time again (cf. Deuteronomy 7:25–26). Speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God asked: “To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him?... Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He who sits above the circle of the earth and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them

out like a tent to dwell in” (Isaiah 40:18–22). It is easy to look down on ancient Israel’s tendency to worship little pagan idols and statues, but how many billions of people—some professing Christians, as well as Hindus, Buddhists and others—have fallen into this *same* sin even in modern times?

The New Testament continues the same prohibitions against idolatry. Romans 1:22–23 calls people “fools” who attempt to change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image of a man, animal or creeping thing. But especially in the New Testament we see an added aspect to idolatry. Ephesians 5:5 compares idolatry to covetousness and decrees that no “covetous man, who is an idolater” will inherit the Kingdom of God. Here we see that coveting is another form of the idolatry that God hates. So, if we ever consider anything more important than God, then according to Ephesians 5:5 we are committing idolatry and are spiritually no different than ancient Israelites secretly worshiping a little idol in their tent. Let us learn from this second example, and if we ever find ourselves tempted to covet, “which is idolatry,” then let us understand what a serious sin that is and *put that temptation to death* (cf. Colossians 3:5).

III. NOT TO COMMIT SEXUALLY IMMORAL ACTS

Whether the physical act or the lust of the mind, sexual immorality is sin. In the world, fornication and adultery... and increasingly homosexuality and other sexual deviances



are not only tolerated, but they are even taught in the public schools, upheld in the courts, and those who brazenly practice such things are often esteemed as the movie and entertainment “stars” that people should supposedly idolize. However, none of this reflects God’s attitude on sexual immorality.

1 Corinthians 6:9 warns that we are not to let ourselves be deceived regarding those who will inherit the Kingdom of God. Those who commit various kinds of fornication and adultery and do not come to true repentance of those sins will inherit eternal death (Romans 1:26) The sexually immoral will not be granted entrance into eternal life (Revelation 22:15).

In another *Tomorrow’s World* article, Mr. Ames writes: “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge’ (Hebrews 13:4). Marriage is a blessing, and sex is God’s great gift within marriage. Yet how many millions will receive God’s judgment for their fornication and adultery? If you are engaging in sexual immorality, you need to repent. You need to confess your sin before God, then change your behavior and quit sinning! God will forgive you, if you truly repent and accept Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for your sins! When ancient King David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan convicted David of his sin. David did not try to justify his sin; he confessed it, and prayed: ‘Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin’ (Psalm 51:1–2). Too many men and women today are not seeking God to help free them from the temptations of sexual immorality” (“America’s Moral Meltdown,” July–August 2006).

Modern society should heed the example of Sodom and Gomorrah. Jude reminds us that these cities were destroyed as an example for us, because of their people’s sexual sins (Jude 7). And even if we do not commit the overt acts, Jesus Christ made it clear that to entertain sexually immoral thoughts is also sin (Matthew 5:28). Dr. Jeffrey Fall wrote about the dangers of what he termed “visual immorality” in a January 6, 2005 commentary at *TomorrowsWorld.org*, quoting Matthew 5:28: “But I say to you that whoever looks after a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Dr. Fall explains that one of the consequences of “visual immorality” is that, “Almost inevitably, one level of visual immorality leads to another level. As a person fulfills one level of lust, they become used to the initial ‘rush’ or ‘high’ and in time need a greater level of stimulation just simply to maintain the same ‘high.’ Initially, the level of visual immorality may be simply looking at others in revealing clothing. That thrill or lust only lasts so long, and then it is on to the next step: adult movies, adult magazines, adult bookstores and even adult nightclubs.”

Those struggling with sexual immorality of *any* type need to heed this *third* lesson given to us as our example, and can take courage that Jesus Christ will give them strength to overcome. In the “model prayer” our Savior taught us to pray in His name to the Father, “do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6:13). We must heed this example.

IV. NOT TO TEMPT CHRIST

Paul’s *fourth* example of what not to do is to try to tempt Christ. Scripture is unambiguous that God *cannot* be tempted to sin (James 1:13), so what does this warning mean? James explains that there are actual progressive *steps* that lead one to sin. *First*, one is drawn away from his or her relationship with God (James 1:14). That separation from God is caused by one’s own sinful desires and carnality (v. 14). *Second*, the sinful desire takes root and gives birth to sin (v. 15). And *third*, sin grows and brings forth death (v. 15).

We know that Jesus was subject to temptation by people and by Satan—but *not* to the point of sin. He was in all points tempted (or tested) but “without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus was able to withstand the most severe testing because He remained continuously close to God. Herein is the key: the more intimate our relationship with God the better we prevent temptation from taking root. *The more intimate our relationship with God the more we resist sin.* Thus we may be tested... *but not tempted to sin.*

God will test us. Abraham’s faith was tested by God (Hebrews 11:17). Peter says that God will test our faith to prove it (1 Peter 1:3–8). But *God will not cause us to sin.* So what is the answer? Why did Paul write that we are to learn from the example to not “tempt Christ”? How could we even attempt this? The answer involves understanding Hebrews 13:5.

As we examine our minds and our conduct, we believe, in faith, the *promise* found in Hebrews 13:5 that our Lord has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Our Savior and High Priest will *never* forsake us. But, if we become unrepentant, hardened and lawless, then we can become unworthy, defiling our conscience, becoming reprobate (Titus 1:15–16), and then becoming “defiled” (Hebrews 12:14–15) *quench the Holy Spirit in us* (1 Thessalonians 5:19). This hardened, unrepentant attitude will lead to rejection of the Holy Spirit and will not be forgiven (Mark 3:28–29). This attitude will drive us away from God. If we fall into this attitude then *we depart from Christ* because Christ will not dwell with one who becomes blasphemous regarding the overcoming and saving power of God and His Spirit.

When we are tempted, we at least momentarily desire to yield to the sin—there is at least a momentary inclination or desire toward that sin. This was **not** the case with Jesus Christ. He did not progress toward sin, was not inclined toward sin,

If you are engaging in sexual immorality, you need to repent. You need to confess your sin before God, then change your behavior and quit sinning! God will forgive you, if you truly repent and accept Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for your sins!

and as such, He triumphed over sin and is then equipped, qualified and has the understanding to be “able to aid those who are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18). Satan is the prince of the power of the air and he works in the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2). How wonderful it is to know that through our High Priest we *can* overcome Satan and *any* temptation to sin because, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

V. NOT TO MURMUR

Israel’s murmuring against God was incessant. Psalm 106:23–25 records that Israel’s complaining became so commonplace that they even murmured and complained against God privately “in their tents.” In the New Testament we are warned not to “grumble” against the brethren lest we be condemned and, “Behold the Judge is standing at the door!” (James 5:9). Jesus Christ, our High Priest and our Judge, is well aware of our thoughts and our words. He hears us when we murmur against the brethren, against the Church or against Him. Jesus Christ condemns hardheaded stubbornness and murmuring as “rebellion” and as the “sin of witchcraft.” As 1 Samuel 15:23 records, “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and *stubbornness* (Hebrew *patsar*: insolence or arrogance or presumption) is as iniquity and idolatry...”

It is all too easy to fall victim to murmuring. As Mr. Dibar Aparian wrote, “Here is a challenge for you: Make up your mind that for twelve consecutive hours, you will not complain. Do not allow any gripes or murmurs to enter your words or your thoughts, no matter what happens. Say to yourself, ‘All things work together for my good.’ You may be surprised at the result and the sudden wonderful change in your life. In all probability, you may find this challenge rather hard to meet, because complaining could very well be a part of your daily life—a routine you follow, whether consciously or not. But try it—force yourself to try it. Set your mind, your eyes and your thoughts on the ultimate goal—on the purpose of your existence, and on the opportunities you will have in God’s Kingdom to help and serve” (“The Most Common Sin: Are You Guilty?,” *Living Church News*, May–June 2009, p. 13).

Neither God nor His Church teach us to be “blind followers,” nor that we cannot express our opinions respectfully and in love. Murmuring is different. It involves how we express ourselves—often imputing motive and judging others, not practicing Matthew 18:15 and other tools to seek reconciliation and a right resolution—and it displays an underlying lack of *faith*. We may put up a façade to fool others and we may justify our murmuring... *but God knows our hearts* (Jeremiah 17:10; Romans 8:27) and our motives. And regardless of how long we

have been in the faith or what we think we know about doctrine or people or situations, God requires us to build and demonstrate faith to trust Him to lead us, provide for us (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:6), and to direct His Church (Ephesians 4:11–13). Faith is the “gold” that all of God’s people must “buy” (1 Peter 1:7), and is what our Lord criticizes Laodicea for lacking (Revelation 3:18). Indeed, we demonstrate a *lack* of faith when we murmur, contrary to this fifth example Paul has given for us.

THE FAITH OF CHRIST TO OVERCOME!

Let us examine ourselves, having confidence and peace, knowing that God will guard our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus and that we *can* overcome (Philippians 4:4–7)! In 1 Corinthians 10, God reminds us through Paul that ancient Israel followed the same Rock that we worship and obey today. That Rock was Christ (vv. 1–4). Christ was not pleased with ancient Israel because of its many sins. The Israelites continuously lusted after evil things, practiced idolatry, committed sexual immorality, tempted Christ and murmured. God then instructs us to look at these examples to *learn* from them (v. 6). As we examine ourselves

throughout the year, and especially as we approach Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, it is crucial that we learn from these examples, but also that we have confidence and peace knowing that through the faith of Christ we can overcome!

As Dr. Meredith has reminded us many times, God has called us to be overcomers. As he not long ago wrote, “Together—if we are truly overcomers—we will become those kings and priests who will assist Christ in ruling this entire world within the next few decades (Revelation 1:6; 5:10)” (“Our Church Family,” *Living Church News*, November–December 2013). Yes, we can be overcomers. We can prevail through having the very faith of Christ living in us (Galatians 2:20)!

Converted Christians self-examine in faith and with diligence, zeal, yearning and craving—knowing that our High Priest is a *rewarder* of those who *diligently* (*ekzēteō*) seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). Converted Christians are confident because they know that Christ *lives in them*. Converted Christians strive to obey God’s law, because in doing so we show God that we love Him and belong to Him (1 John 5:2–3). Converted Christians understand that while they are not saved or justified by works, they can do great things through Christ in them, and that it is the living faith of Christ in them by which they are justified (Galatians 2:16). As we examine ourselves and strive to live up to the examples God has given us in His Word, let us be thankful beyond measure for the “redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24) our Passover and the Lamb of God. ■



Update and “Thank You” from the Business Office

God provided very generously for His work in 2014! The Church’s regular income for the year increased about 5 percent over what was received in 2013. We thank God for the special blessings He has abundantly poured out on us to accomplish His work!

GRATEFUL FOR GROWTH

In the last two years, we have been able to employ additional ministers in the field, add new equipment and personnel for the television studio, upgrade our computer software with more efficient programs and air the *Tomorrow’s World* telecast on additional stations in the United States and abroad. *Tomorrow’s World* magazine circulation is approaching 500,000. We are particularly thankful to be able to assist a number of our international congregations and media programs with grants for their activities and growth. Church Administration is working to train and employ additional ministers throughout God’s Work. There is a great need for additional laborers in God’s fields. Christ said, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Luke 10:2).

Those who labor in the fields of the Lord of the harvest include not only those who pastor congregations; this also includes those who provide the financial resources for God’s Work. It is a great blessing to be used by God to support what He is doing in the last days of this age! So we wanted to take a moment, even ahead of the regular annual publication of our outside audit (scheduled to be conducted in late March or early April this year), to thank the brethren for their faithfulness and generosity in giving.

ESTATES AND ACCOUNTING

In the last couple of years, God’s Work has been particularly blessed by the estate donations it has received. Those who can make such donations are indeed leaving a lasting legacy that can do great good for those whom God calls and to whom He wants to send a message of witness. So we are very grateful for these donations as they come. Of course, this brings some accounting challenges, as those of you familiar with generally accepted accounting principles

will recognize. For instance, our auditors last year required that some estate donations that were made in 2013, but not yet received in full until 2014 or even 2015, would be booked as “income” for 2013, because they were considered to be “receivables.” As a result (as you may remember from the article accompanying the 2013 audit, published in the September-October 2014 *Living Church News*, p. 20), this had the effect of “overstating” our 2013 income. Also, some estate receipts in 2013 were held over so the funds could be spread out for additional TV stations in 2014 and 2015. This had the effect of increasing our stated 2014 expenses and creating an operating deficit for that year. So, even though we were blessed in 2014 with about a 5 percent real increase in regular income over 2013, the auditors’ statement for 2014 will show

a paper decrease in income of about 9.1 percent in total income, largely because of these generous estate donations. The good news is that the reported income decrease and operating deficit will be due largely to established accounting rules.

STEWARDSHIP

Of course, we must continue to be good stewards of the tithes and offerings God provides. As always, we keep a close eye on expenses and are constantly looking for ways to save. For example, by taking advantage of changes in paper and mailing options, each 36-page *Tomorrow’s World* magazine costs less to print and

mail today than the 32-page editions cost in 2013! Similarly, we strive for productivity in our television outreach, pruning unproductive television stations like unfruitful branches. And we continue to identify additional cost-savings.

People often include charitable giving in their estate planning, and the estate donations received by the Church in 2013–14 were a particular blessing for God’s Work. Those special donations enabled us—among other things—to establish a dedicated fund to expand the *Tomorrow’s World* telecast onto a few additional stations as long as the special donations would allow. The ability, for instance, to air on BET for a while was a blessing, and we are confident that God will open new doors for the telecast. Please join us in praying that God will provide a way for us to keep preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God on all of our current stations, and even more as He wills!

—LCG Business Office

Will You Walk with God?
Continued from page 2

My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me” (John 6:56–57).

We will learn the powerful understanding gained by sincere *meditation*—thinking deeply and consistently upon God’s way and **how it applies** to our lives. As King David, the “man after God’s own heart” expressed it, “I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word” (Psalm 119:15–16). And again David spoke: “My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on Your statutes” (Psalm 119:48).

Every one of us, dear brethren, needs to take time each week and perhaps each day to sit down and to **meditate** on how far we have come in our Christian life, what mistakes we are making, how we can change and do better, etc. Then we can “go deeper” in our understanding of God’s Word and **how** to “walk with God.”

Then we must learn to truly *pour our hearts* into our *prayers*! We should, as I have stated, literally “cry out” to God our Father. We should “talk to Him” and discuss our heart’s desires and dreams, our problems, our needs—as we would to a father. We must constantly commune with Him and pour out our hearts to Him. Please read and **reread** our very comprehensive booklet on *Twelve Keys to Answered Prayer*.

Dear brethren, each of us must also learn to use the “tool” of **fasting**. Remember, Jesus Christ indicated that His disciples *would fast*. Jesus Christ stated: “But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days” (Mark 2:20). Are **you**, personally, learning to **fast** on a regular basis as part of “walking with God” and making God more real in your own life?

Finally, to truly walk with God we must **act** on the Truth that Almighty God reveals to us. Remember the Apostle James’ inspiring warning: “But be **doers** of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22). So to genuinely “walk with God” we must **act** on all the knowledge and all the understanding God gives us. We must *cry out* for God’s help, *pray fervently* for God’s guidance and then be able to say as the Apostle Paul said: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, *KJV*).

Then, as the end of our life approaches, God help us to *seek Him* and **serve Him** that He may be able to say of us—

He did the father of the faithful, Abraham: “for now I **know** that you fear God” (Genesis 22:12). You will have shown God repeatedly by “walking with God” in **every part** of your lives that you have truly **surrendered** to Him through Jesus Christ to live His life within *every part* of your lives. For you will have *demonstrated* this to Him clearly over a period of years by “walking with God.”

Brethren, as we prepare to observe the Days of Unleavened Bread, I want to mention something to you that has come up from time to time during my 62 years in the ministry of God’s Church. Most of you who are reading this know that Jesus Christ came to magnify the law, not to do away with it. He came to fill it to the full. This principle involves how we as Christians keep the Days of Unleavened Bread. We put leaven out of our homes during the Festival. We do not eat leavened bread; rather we eat unleavened bread (Exodus 12:15). Spiritually we strive to avoid vanity and the “leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1).

Some have wondered, “Is it wrong to eat ‘puffy bread’ during the Days of Unleavened Bread if that puffiness came from a source other than yeast?” Please consider that, just as when Paul ruled on eating meat offered to idols, the principle can apply to this question. Why would any of us, during a time when we are called to eat only the unleavened, want to eat items

made deliberately to have the “appearance” of being leavened? We do not need to go off into scientific debates over the ways items may become puffed up by agents other than active yeast. The principle we should apply is very simple. Just as we should avoid even the appearance of sin, we should during the Days of Unleavened Bread avoid eating bread products that are “puffed up” so as to resemble an item “puffed up” by the action of yeast.

Though Paul did not call it “sin” for the Corinthians to eat meat offered to idols, he counseled against it when it would be a source of controversy among the brethren. Indeed, even beyond the clear principle of shunning what is leavened, eating unleavened baked products that “appear” to be leavened would fall into the category of what Paul calls “lawful but unwise” (ref. 1 Corinthians 6:12), as doing so can take our attention away from the meaning of these days, as well as tempting brethren to judge (and misjudge) each other. This is not about examining every baked item and judging whether it is “too thick” or “too soft” to appear to be truly unleavened. It is about upholding a positive principle. During the upcoming Festival days, we are to eat the simple, flat, unleavened bread commanded by God, and in doing so we draw closer to our Savior as we are reminded to put sin entirely out of our lives.

Dear brethren, this problem of “what is leavened and what isn’t?” has kept coming up for decades. I was in a number of

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meetings back in the 1950s and 1960s discussing this question along with Mr. Armstrong and other leading ministers. Over the decades people keep having “technical” questions about this matter—often contradicting each other as well as the Church with their ideas. But Almighty God tells us in His Word that we are to follow the “traditions” which God’s true ministers have instituted in His Church under the leadership of the living Jesus Christ. For Christ is the “true Head” of His Church (Ephesians 1:22–23). These “traditions” are definitely not some new set of commandments or laws, but guidelines to help God’s Church be unified in carrying out the laws and ways of God taught in the Bible. Since Christ is the Head, He is responsible for guiding His true ministry in setting these true “traditions” in the right way.

Notice Paul’s inspired instructions on this: “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). So I call upon all of you—in the name of Jesus Christ—to understand and be loyal to the leadership Christ has put in His Church at this time.

Let us be together, brethren. Not always arguing and reasoning around on every technical point as though each one of us is qualified to set up our “own ways,” rather than working together under the leadership of Christ and His ministry in these matters. So I trust that all of you—as loyal members of the

Church of God—will respond loyally to this tradition and be unified in the way we carry out God’s instruction to put leaven out of our lives during the Days of Unleavened Bread. May God guide and bless you all who want to be fully cooperative as a member of the “team” which Christ is preparing to be those kings and priests in Tomorrow’s World. Let us learn now to “walk with God” even in this part of our lives as Christ’s Kingdom swiftly approaches.

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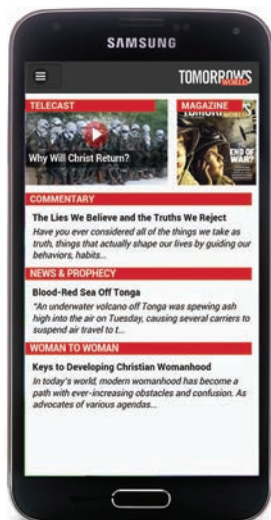
As this confused age comes ever closer to its close, may God grant more of His Spirit to us as we learn to truly “seek Him” with all our hearts. As all of us grow older—and have gone through more trials and tests and have demonstrated our loyalty to God and His government—I pray that God will continue to strengthen us and encourage us and **inspire** us by pouring out more of His Spirit that we can truly have an **impact** on this very sick world. So let us do all that we can to show God that we *mean* it by

serving Him with genuine love and loyalty through the rest of our lives. Then, as God promises, our lives will continue *forever* in the soon-coming Kingdom of God to be set up under the living Jesus Christ.

In Christian love,




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Ordinations

Mr. Dan Dever was ordained an elder and *Mr. Wes Metzler* was ordained a deacon on the Feast of Trumpets by Evangelist Richard Ames, Pastor Richard Stafford, and elder Ron McGowen. Mr. Dever and Mr. Metzler serve in the Houston, Texas congregation.

Mr. Michael Aviles was ordained a deacon on October 15, 2014, by Pastor Jonathan McNair and elder Roger Allgeyer. Mr. Aviles serves in the Melville, New York congregation.

Mr. Randall Moran was ordained an elder on October 15, 2014, by Pastor Jonathan McNair and elders James Arnaldo and Roger Allgeyer. Mr. Moran serves in the Rochester, Buffalo, and Corning, New York areas.

ANNIVERSARY

Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Callbeck of Prince Edward Island, Canada, celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on November 11, 2014, with a small family gathering and deeply appreciated the cards and well wishes they received in recognition of this milestone. They were married in 1944 and have two sons and one grandson. Mr. and Mrs. Callbeck began listening to *The World Tomorrow* television program in the 1970s and were baptized into God's Church in 2010.

In Loving Memory...

Mrs. Margaret Ogden, of the Cornwall, UK, congregation, died peacefully on October 1, 2014, aged 94 years. She became a member of God's Church in the late 1960s, along with her husband, Joe, who served as a deacon until his death in 1986. Mrs. Ogden was a faithful member and an inspiration to everyone—even as her own health failed. When she could no longer travel to services, she opened her home to host Sabbath services in her cottage overlooking the sea. Graveside services took place while the brethren were at the Feast and were conducted by her son, Joe, who quoted scriptures of a future peaceful millennium, which his mother firmly believed in. The service began with a piper in full regalia playing the bagpipes, and was attended by family, friends and a few local Church members.

Mrs. Lenora Wiklun of Edmonton, Alberta, died at the age of 72 on October 27, 2014. Mrs. Wiklun was baptized in 1986 and it was her great pleasure to serve the Church in gracious hospitality, sharing her love of gardening, especially roses, and creating special dishes for Church events. She will be greatly missed by Robert, her husband of fifty years, children Wes (Nathalie) and Brenda (Robert), three grandchildren, as well as her Church family. Mr. Stuart Wachowicz conducted the memorial service on October 29.

Mr. Billy "Shorty" Burns, age 45, of the Helena, Montana, congregation, died suddenly on Sunday, November 16, 2014. Mr. Burns was a kind man and all who knew him appreciated his example of willing helpfulness to others. Mr. Burns was preceded in death by his father and one brother and is survived by his loving wife, Ann; his son, Justin; his mother; a brother and a sister; a nephew and a niece; and many close and special friends. Mr. Sheldon Monson conducted the memorial service.

Mrs. Doris Godwin Florence, age 80, died December 2, 2014 following a brief illness. Mrs. Florence was a member of the Asheboro, North Carolina, congregation. She was a homemaker and is survived by her husband, Robert, one son and two daughters, three grandchildren, and a niece.

Mrs. Alice Ziolkowski, age 82, died January 1 in Idaho Falls, Idaho. She was born and grew up in Illinois, lived her married years in Missouri, and moved to Idaho seven years ago. Her husband died in May 2007. She is also predeceased by her parents and one son. Mrs. Ziolkowski is survived by a son and a daughter, both of Idaho Falls; one brother; two sisters; ten grandchildren; and 20 great-grandchildren. Mr. Bill Oswald conducted the burial in Springfield, Missouri.

Pastor *Bob League*, associate pastor of the Charlotte, North Carolina congregation of the Living Church of God, died January 8 after a short illness. He was 82 years old. He is survived by his wife Faye, daughter Tina Nikolai, son Gary, seven grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren and many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by son Terry a year ago. Baptized along with his wife in 1963, he was ordained as an elder in 1968, and served congregations across the United States, in Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Ohio and Tennessee, as well as in North Carolina. He also served as Regional Director for the Philippines. Before being hired full-time into the Work, he was employed in Huntsville, Alabama, doing procurement for Boeing, a NASA contractor working on Saturn V rockets for the Apollo space program to put a man on the moon. Mr. League was known for his uncanny ability to teach down-to-earth spiritual principles that would reach the heart, convicting and building up God's people, and he lived his faith by sacrificing, serving and setting a fine example. His works follow him (Revelation 14:13).

CHARLOTTE FAMILY WEEKEND 2014, DECEMBER 24-28, 2014



KANSAS CITY REGIONAL FAMILY WEEKEND, JANUARY 2-4, 2015



Church Activity: Family Day in Sultan Hamud, Kenya

On December 14, 2014, a beautiful sunny day, four brethren from Lumuri and seven from Nairobi met to journey south together to Sultan Hamud, to meet and fellowship with the seven brethren there.

About ten minutes before they arrived, one of the Sultan Hamud members met them to direct them to the meeting place, where they were welcomed by seven happy members and five children. After exchanging hugs, kisses and handshakes, all sat down for a short welcome speech from Mr. Simon Muthama, who commented that we will try to have these get-togethers on a regular basis. All the brethren introduced themselves, there was a prayer, and then all shared a lunch of sandwiches, tea/chai, and millet porridge/Uji provided by the Sultan Hamud host group. After the meal, we walked through a newly planted maize field to the dry riverbed of the Muooni River.

We all, ages 6 to 65, started up a small rocky mountain named Masue, with those in the lead occasionally clearing branches out of the path. The climb was good exercise, but challenging for several, especially the trip down. However, those who had difficulty were assisted by others. On the way back down, we met some young women collecting water from holes dug in the dry riverbed. This was very interesting for one of our group, who hadn't seen this done before. Back at the meeting place, Mr. Muthama gave a Bible Study titled,



“Why God Is Building a Family with Us,” explaining God’s purposes and our responsibilities in building godly families, the basis of healthy society now and especially in God’s Kingdom. He also spoke of the coming Passover and our preparation now for it. He discussed the Feast of Tabernacles and how we are to be preparing for it by faithfully tithing both first and second tithes, as well as spiritual preparation.

The Bible Study ended with a prayer and then we all enjoyed a meal of Muthoki and sodas provided by the host congregation, and egg and tomato sandwiches provided by the Nairobi congregation. After we ate and socialized a while longer, we said our good-byes and the Nairobians and Lumurians set out on their more than two-hour trip home, filled with anticipation of joy for our next Family Day.

—Simon Muthama

LYC Guatemala and Mexico

In December 2014, we held two Living Youth Camp events in Latin America. One was held in Guatemala from December 15–19; the other was in Mexico from December 22–26. A total of 36 campers and 18 staff enjoyed five days of adventures, games, classes, sports and Bible Studies, in an atmosphere of union, fellowship and Christian love.

God blessed us with lovely sites for the camps, filled with peace and tranquility, surrounded by streams and forests. We thank God for giving us the opportunity to provide these camps for the youth of God’s Church in Latin America.

—Cristian Orrego



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COMMENTARY

The Reason for the Rear View Mirror

I was traveling down the interstate when a most surprising thing happened. It was in the middle of a snowy day, which is actually not surprising, considering January weather in upstate New York. What was surprising was the cascade of snow, ice, and gravel that landed on our windshield just before we went under a bridge. A snowplow had been traveling along an overpass above us, pushing away a wave of snow. Our paths crossed, in a manner of speaking, and we were in the right place at the wrong time!

As I pulled to the side of the road, I could see that a spider web of cracks now covered the windshield. Thankfully, no other damage had been done to the van—except for the side view mirror, which had been totally smashed.

That brings me to the point of this story. For a small piece of equipment on a car, you might be surprised how much you rely on your side view mirror. When we drive (just as in life in general), we had better be looking out in front of us for most of the time—looking far down the road, then closer, as we scan for potential hazards and keep a focus on where we are going.

If we tried to drive by using only the rear view mirrors, we would have a hard (and unsafe) time driving forward.

But, used together, our rear view mirrors—both the primary mirror in front of us and the side view mirrors on the left and

right—serve an essential purpose. In fact, on that snowy January day, I learned just how vital the side view mirror is. Without it, I had to turn my head around sharply to see what was happening beside me. Without the benefit of that mirror, making a move into the left lane while traveling at 65 miles an hour was a much more difficult undertaking.

The Spring Holy Day time of year is a time for Christians to adjust their focus. We must keep our eyes on the road, seeking God's Kingdom above all. If we lose that focus, we can become discouraged. We can lose our way or wander off the road. We cannot travel down the road of our life navigating only with mirrors that show where we came from. We want to move forward. But, at the same time, we need to take stock occasionally—as we do at Passover time. We need to examine ourselves, as we read in 1 Corinthians. When we examine ourselves, we think about life, what is around us, what potential blind spots we need to consider, and what old habits may be creeping up from behind. We think of the lessons we have learned from the road behind us, and apply them to our life, moving forward.

In some ways, life is like a highway. And there is a reason for the rear view mirror.

—Jonathan McNair

