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The Danger of Laodiceanism

Dear Brethren and Friends,

Mr. Herbert Armstrong from time to time made the observation that the Church of God often reflects the morals and approaches of the surrounding society as a whole. That should be obvious—since we are all human. But Almighty God warns us in His Word that we are *not* to allow our lives to be in any way “watered down” from the zealous Christianity that Jesus Christ proclaimed. Yet in describing the last era of the Church—*our era*—Christ warned directly: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore *be zealous and repent*” (Revelation 3:15–19).

Dear brethren, most of us do *not* want to go through God’s “chastening”! So we need to be aware of the spiritual attitudes God said would dominate our present era and do *everything we can* to be sure to avoid these attitudes. For in this era—probably more than any other throughout history—people are more interested in the world around them than ever. With the constant bombardment of Satan’s influence and attitudes affecting our minds and hearts through television, movies and the Internet—and even invading our homes and bedrooms with iPads and the other various electronic devices—

it is hard to escape Satan’s influence! Satan now has the capacity to virtually pour his approaches and attitudes into human beings regarding illicit sex and same-sex marriage, plus all kinds of “stuff” about “political correctness” more than ever before. This certainly powerfully affects the minds of God’s people—and especially our vulnerable young people!



Almighty God told our forefathers in ancient Israel: “But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you” (Leviticus 26:14–17).

The inspired Word of God tells us clearly: “Even the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times; and the turtledove, the swift, and the swallow observe the time of their coming. But My people do not know the judgment of the LORD. How can you say, ‘We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us’? Look, the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD; so what wisdom do they have? Therefore I will give their wives to others, and their fields to those who will inherit them; because from the least even to the greatest everyone is given to covetousness; from the prophet

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even to the priest everyone deals falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace!’ When there is no peace” (Jeremiah 8:7–11).

Yes, sometimes a sincere “mainstream” minister may succeed at being a “do-gooder” and help “slightly”—Bible scholars say this word actually means “superficially”—in some situations. But their human solutions only scratch the surface. For they do not go back to the root problem: the fact that humans must actually do what the Creator says. They must follow the Bible—not human reason.

As prophetic events begin to speed forward faster than ever, we need to constantly meditate on the reality of God and fill our minds with the fact that He is there—that He is “in charge,” and that He is now intervening to bring about His Kingdom based on His Government and His laws! We need to make sure, as best we can, that all our young people understand this as well—and that they are exposed to this reality more than to Satan’s deceptions. We and our families all need to meditate on the fact that—as our British-descended and American peoples turn away increasingly from the Creator God—He certainly is “breaking” the pride of our power (Leviticus 26:19) more than ever. We seem to be constantly “losing out” all around the world in various troubles which are going on in the Middle East, in the Ukraine, in Africa and China, etc. And we are certainly “losing out” in regard to the constant degradation of people’s morals regarding young people “living together” and especially—at this time—so-called same-sex “marriage” which is one of the most vile things ever foisted on a human society in the history of the world!

At its very beginning, your Bible tells us: “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth’” (Genesis 1:27–28). At first, God created only the man. “And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him’” (Genesis 2:18). So the woman was created

to be a “helper” for the man—to be his companion, to enlarge his horizons physically, mentally and emotionally, and, obviously, when you read the entire Bible, to make possible the creation of the entire family structure. For God Himself calls Himself “Father” in the New Testament. And He intends to build His Family and make us His full sons. We learn this through the institution of the human family. Men and women learn to submit to one another, forgive each other, care for each other, and love each other in a special way. This is God’s will for humanity. Yet, for millions of men and women around us, the idea of obeying God’s law and yielding to His will is the farthest thing from their minds.

In our own lives—and the lives of our family and children—we should try to avoid being “out on the edge” of God’s will and law. Instead, we should focus on the closeness and interaction we

should be having on a regular basis with His people, His Church and His attitudes. We should especially help our young people to understand how the indulgence in too much liquor, illicit drugs and the saturating of one’s mind with television and the Internet will destroy any normal human being who indulges in these things!

Also, our approach should not be just to avoid certain things. But we should strive to be closer to Christ, to His Church, to His Work and to doing His will actively. We should actively prepare in a genuine way for the coming Government of God on this earth of which we will soon be members—if we do our part! We should constantly try to spend more time in reading and really studying the Word of God—“feeding” on Christ (John 6:57) and filling our minds with the attitudes and examples of the leaders God used down through time. We should be constantly striving in every way we can to follow Christ’s command: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). We need to be sure that the interest, the energy and the time we have at our disposal is invested in “seeking” God and His will much more than material things and human interests!

Dear brethren, I have found over the last 65 years of my life in the Church that Satan will try to “take your time” so that

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Editor in Chief: Roderick C. Meredith
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Business Manager: Dexter B. Wakefield

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EDITORIAL By Roderick C. Meredith

WILL YOU DRAW A **RED** LINE?

Dear brethren, we live in an age of compromise, compromise, *compromise*! People do not seem to want to get “too excited” about most *anything*—including *murdering* their own children! They do not want to “cause trouble.” They really *do not want* to “stand” for *anything*!

President Obama has been criticized severely by conservative politicians for his “shifting” of various “red lines” he has drawn. He has more than once “backed down” when faced with challenges from Republicans (and even some Democrats) in the United States Congress, from Russians in the Ukraine, from Syria in the Middle East and even from allies in Europe. But this attitude of compromise is hardly unique to the President. It is a feature of our modern “tolerant” lifestyle for millions. So, ask yourself—are *you* any better?

In truth, most professing Christians actually have virtually *no* “red lines”! Under political and personal pressure, even many professing Christians consistently back down and compromise with almost *anything*: same-sex marriage, use of illegal drugs, “living together” before marriage, accepting and even welcoming abortion, taking up arms in military fights completely against Christ’s instruction—and so much more. But we need to be honest with ourselves and consider: “Are *we* any better?” Almighty God warns us powerfully that, at this time of the end, the basic spirit—even among God’s people—will be “Laodicean”! And God directly and powerfully *condemns* the Laodicean tendency to “take it easy” and to “water things down” and “go along” with the world around us! God states: “So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:16–17).

Indeed, the people who “*think*” they are righteous and have need of nothing are often the ones in the very

greatest need of God’s Spirit and the faith of Christ, which will help them genuinely “stand” for something! Just “going to church on Saturday” is not enough! Just generally *believing* in the main doctrines of God’s Church is *not* enough! Clearly, when you read the entire Bible and point it at *yourself*, you can see God expects each one of us to *totally surrender* to do what He says and live “*by every word of God*” (Luke 4:4). So will *you* cry out to God for the understanding, the faith and the *courage* to actually do that?



For even among God’s own people there is a tendency to be *very careless* in observing the Sabbath! Many take a very “casual” attitude toward watching television on the Sabbath, toward all kinds of thoughts and activities that draw them *away* from the true *worship* and *adoration* of God they should be developing on *His* holy day. They seem to “forget” God’s inspired admonition: “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure,

nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken” (Isaiah 58:13–14).

Brethren, we must ask God for the strength to literally *give ourselves* over to profound Bible *study*, *meditation* on God’s Word and His law, heartfelt profound *prayer*—particularly on God’s seventh-day Sabbath—as we focus on His Kingdom and on things related to Him *far more* than any other interest! Even during the week, we must *not* allow ourselves to watch too much television, to dwell on worldly entertainment, or to absorb our minds in sex or violence or on the constant attitude of “getting ahead” and making more money, having more material goods, and having more “fun”!

If you have been really “converted”—if you have been truly *changed*—then you will focus on Christ

living His life within you through the Holy Spirit. You will *not* be constantly allowing your mind to be focused on things of *this world*. As the Apostle Paul instructed us: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:1–3).

If you have been “raised with Christ,” in true repentance and baptism, you will sincerely *obey* God’s instruction: “The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray” (Proverbs 12:26). If you, personally, surround yourself with people who are living “on the fringe” of true, zealous Christianity even though they are physically “in” God’s Church, you are in danger of being dragged down into worldly, selfish and often divisive attitudes that such people so often display. You should choose those who are genuinely *strong* in the faith—those people who are genuinely trying to “walk with God” in *every* phase of their lives. Then, you will be much more likely to be a *strong member* of God’s true Church and be genuinely training to be a *leader* in Christ’s Kingdom in Tomorrow’s World.

As genuine *outside persecution* begins to come upon us, we will be called upon to be truly *strong* “Christian warriors” for Jesus Christ! We will genuinely need to “stand for something”—even when at times it may put us in danger of *judgment* or *death*! Remember how Daniel had to directly face the most powerful king on the entire earth at his time, Darius. When faced with a choice of immediate *death* if he prayed outwardly and audibly to any “god” except the king for “only thirty days,” Daniel chose to “stand” for his *total submission* to the God of heaven. For Darius the king had signed the decree to “establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions” (Daniel 6:7).

But Daniel knew *exactly* what to do! “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees *three times that day*, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his *custom* since early days” (Daniel 6:10).

So Daniel *got down on his knees* and undoubtedly “cried out” to Almighty God for *strength* to see him through this trial and *deliver him*. God did dramatically do that by *supernaturally* protecting him and delivering him from hungry lions! He was *not* willing to “compromise.”

On the other hand, a man who might normally be considered a reasonable or “nice” king—King Saul of Israel—was willing to

“compromise” in order to please the people. Even though King Saul had been *directly commanded by God*—through His servant Samuel—to *completely destroy* the Amalekites and all of their animals, he chose the way of “compromise.” He did attack the Amalekites and destroy *some* of them. “But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed. Now the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, ‘I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments.’ And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the LORD all night” (1 Samuel 15:9–11).

Saul was able to convince himself that he was “only” compromising a little. But God does *not* want us to “compromise” when it comes to obeying Him and His laws. God’s faithful servant Samuel realized this and was so “grieved” that he *cried out to God all night*. Yet, when confronted, Saul tried to “explain it all away.”

Therefore, Samuel was inspired by God to rebuke him: “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in *obeying* the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king” (vv. 22–23). Dear brethren, when “pressure” comes on *you* and your family to keep your job in a Sabbath-breaking situation or *lose it*, how much will you “compromise”? When you are faced with a difficult situation in your marriage, how much will you “compromise” and leave your mate or be unfaithful to your mate in any way? When faced with the opportunity to make a “lot more money” by doing something unethical, how much will *you* be willing to “compromise”?

Think!

Each one of us must learn to genuinely go “all out” to let Christ live His life within us. For the Apostle Paul was inspired to write: “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). God really does want us to be willing to draw a “red line”—something that we will *not ever* cross in disobedience to our Creator! Will *you* do that? Will *you* make an unswerving commitment to obey God with all your *heart, strength* and *mind*? ■



☐ yes
☐ no

THE **THEME** OF SEPARATION IN THE **FALL** FESTIVAL SEASON

By Dexter B. Wakefield

A story is told of a time long ago when a wise old Native American chieftain wanted to name a successor to rule his tribe. The two candidates for the position were very different men. One was tall, athletic, outgoing and *very popular*—and a good politician among the people. The other was shorter, quieter—maybe a bit overweight—and although not as outgoing, he was *very respected* by the people.

The chief called them together and told them about a high, faraway mountain—one moon's journey away. Travelling there would be a long, arduous and dangerous undertaking, and successful completion of it would require all their survival skills. Their task was to make their way to the mountain while living off the land, to climb the mountain and find, on the bald, granite top, the lone pine tree located there. Each man was to climb the tree and return with a pine branch from it. The chief wanted to see who would be the first to return, after which he would decide whom he would designate as his successor.

A few weeks later, the popular candidate was first to return with his pine branch—none the worse for the journey. Days went by, then weeks passed. Finally, the other man returned. He was tired, thinner... and had *no pine branch*.

In the presence of the whole tribe, the chief asked why he had not brought back what he had been told to obtain. He replied, "*There was no tree on the top of that mountain.*" He was made chief immediately!

The old chief knew that the other man had not been to the mountain at all, because it was necessary to make the entire trip to find out that there was no tree on its top.

Character counts! The old chief devised a way of testing the character of the two candidates to separate the one with true character from the one who tried to conceal a lack of it. And he did so for all to see!

GOD SEPARATES US IN THIS AGE

Separation is a major theme for all of God's Holy Days, and especially for the fall Festival season. God is *calling some out* to be a holy, sanctified, separate people. Sanctified means "set apart." Being separate means that

God's begotten children live *in* this world and age, but they are not *of* it. God's begotten children are a holy people. The fall Festival season teaches us some important lessons about separation.

In its prophetic fulfillment, the Feast of Trumpets is a time of separation. God puts His Spirit in His set-apart, begotten children in this age, as pictured by the Holy Day of Pentecost. Then, however, in the great Holy Day of Trumpets in the future, He completely *separates them* from this profane age in a dramatic fashion. *The fall Festival season is a good time to learn more about this theme of separation as it is presented in God's word—and particularly as it relates to the Feast of Trumpets.*

BEING SET APART REQUIRES MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The Apostle Paul reminded the Church in Corinth, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?

And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' Therefore '*Come out from among them and be separate*, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty'" (2 Corinthians 6:14–18).

Each of us must come out of our own "spiritual Egypt." As God told Moses and Aaron to tell Pharaoh, "I will make a difference between My people and your people" (Exodus 8:23), the same God makes a difference between His *Israel of God* and this world.

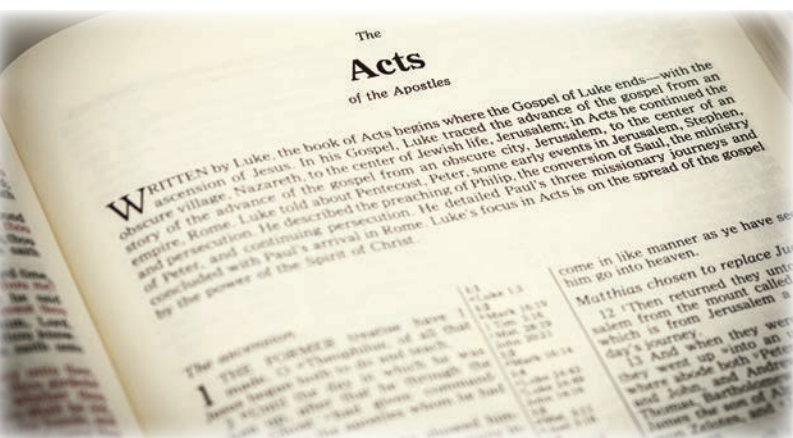
So how are God's people set apart? The Bible mentions God's **truth**, **faith** in that truth, and His **Holy Spirit**.

If you are reading this, you have probably discovered the truth that the Ten Commandments are not "The Nine Suggestions." What did you *do* about it? What happened when you began to obey the one that says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy"? Chances are obeying



that commandment put a difference between you and some others that you knew. Keeping God's Sabbath holy sets us apart from the rest of the world. *God's truth sets us apart.* "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. **Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth**" (John 17:15–17).

Sometimes a mistaken person will say, "Love unites, but doctrine divides." However, God's word teaches us that it is truth



that unites God's people in their sanctification and love for one another, and doctrinal error has a long history of dividing them.

When we hear God's truth, it is essential that we have **faith** in that truth and **act** on it. The Apostle James wrote, "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17). It is this *living faith* that sets us apart. "I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are **sanctified by faith in Me**" (Acts 26:17–18).

When we began to believe what God teaches us in His word, we also wondered what we should do about it. The same thing happened to those who heard a powerful sermon by the Apostle Peter. "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, **what shall we do?**' Then Peter said to them, '*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*'" (Acts 2:37–38). Peter instructed them to do three things.

When we come to Christ, the Bible tells us to do so in **true repentance**. But we *cannot* repent of sin and break God's commandments at the same time. True repentance is more than just a remorseful feeling. It changes what we will *do* in the future. With repentance, we begin to obey God and keep His commandments. Nevertheless, all the repentance—and all the commandment keeping we do *in the future*—cannot change what we *did in the past*. Only one thing can remove the guilt of our past sins—the sacrifice of our Savior, Jesus Christ. So we seek **baptism** for the remission of sins. When we come

up out of that baptismal water, the guilt of our sins is washed completely away! Then we are ready to receive *God's Holy Spirit* by the laying on of hands by one of God's faithful ministers. "Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, **sanctified by the Holy Spirit**" (Romans 15:15–16).

That Spirit of Christ then dwells in us and sanctifies us, and we continue to live a repentant life, remaining unprofaned by sin. We have done what Peter said to those who had faith in the truth he preached, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." **The truth, the faith and the Spirit** set us apart and separate us from this profane age.

God puts a difference between His people and the world—both in ancient Israel and now. He can use those differences to sort His people out of the world.

THE THEME OF SEPARATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

After God puts a difference between His people and the carnal world, they are still in the world, but not of it. First, God's people live and grow together in the world. Then, ultimately, God separates them completely. *First together—then separated.* God always knows just how to do it—like the old chief in the story did.

The theme of separation is repeated many times in the New Testament. Jesus often expressed it in parables.

In the parable of the Ten Virgins, they all seemed alike—doing the same thing together in the same place—but then they were separated because of a difference between them that was made manifest by circumstances beyond their control.

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those



who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming” (Matthew 25:1–13).

God often puts people in situations where they will choose one way or another depending on their priorities and character—in effect, *they self-select*.

John the Baptist spoke of the ultimate separation. “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:11–12). The chaff is with the wheat until it is threshed and winnowed at the final judgment.

Jesus likened this fire to *gehenna* fire. “And be not afraid of those killing the body, and are not able to kill the soul, but fear rather Him who is able both soul and body to destroy in *gehenna*” (Matthew 10:28, *Young’s Literal Translation*). Now that is separation!

Other examples of similar parables would include dividing the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:32) and Christ pruning the vine (John 15:1–6). The wheat and the tares grew together, and then God sorted them out (Matthew 13:36–43).

The Church is in this age but not of it. God puts a difference between His people and the world. We are together for a while in this age and then ultimately separated. God arranges for the separation, often by self-selection.

THE FALL FESTIVAL SEASON PICTURES CHRIST RETURNING AS A WARRIOR

Wars are not an expression of unity, but of division—one side against another. When Christ returns, it will be as a warrior. Revelation presents the setting, which begins this extraordinary, final battle. “Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared... For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to *gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty*... And they *gathered them together* to the place called in Hebrew, *Armageddon*” (Revelation 16:12, 14, 16).

Har Megiddo—rendered as “Armageddon” in the Bible—is a low, fortified mountain about 50 miles north of Jerusalem. Overlooking the wide Plain of Jezreel, it is the perfect place for a massive army to gather together prior to a battle. The biblical name of the great battle is not Armageddon—that is the place where the armies gather. The nations of the world gather at Har Megiddo in order to go *against* Jerusalem. “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples... though all nations of the earth are *gathered against it*” (Zechariah 12:2–3). The actual name of the battle is stated as “the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” It takes place at Jerusalem in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, known in modern times as the Kidron Valley, which lies at Jerusalem between the



Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives. God’s Church will have been resurrected and *separated out* as His holy family. Satan, influencing or possessing “the son of perdition” (destruction), will do what he always did—revolt against God. And he will gather his entire earthly kingdom to fight one last time!

The prophet Joel picks up the prophetic narrative. The name “Jehoshaphat”—the king for whom the valley is named—

means “God judges.” This is exactly what Christ will do to the gathering armies:

“I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land... Proclaim this among the nations: ‘Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, “I am strong.”’ Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O LORD. ‘Let the nations be awakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness is great.’ Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision” (Joel 3:2, 9–14).

It is near because “Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day *His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east*” (Zechariah 14:3–4).

The Temple Mount in Jerusalem, which is part of Mount Moriah, is the site of *an ancient threshing floor*, the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. God had King David purchase

Continued on page 20



A Means of Drawing Near

By Peter Nathan

As we prepare for the Fall Festival season, we should give some thought to the offerings we are commanded to give on the annual Holy Days. We refer to these as Holy Day offerings. Most often, the person introducing the offertory will ask us to turn to Deuteronomy 16:16 where these offerings are commanded. Although the term “offering” is not used in that verse, it is an appropriate word for what we are doing.

Yet the term *offering* is perhaps one of the least understood concepts in the Bible. Most professing Christian commentators assume that the whole sacrificial system, of which offerings were a part, was nullified in the death of Jesus Christ. They read scriptures such as Isaiah 1:11 or Micah 6:6 and wrongly assume that the sacrificial system was even ungodly.

The sacrificial system that was put in place in the tabernacle and temple involved multiple offerings. While in English we attach the word “offering” to all the multiple forms of temple offerings—such as “burnt offering,” “peace offering,” “grain offering,” “sin offering,” “trespass offering”—in Hebrew each of these was expressed in a single word. Our English-language translations affix the word “offering” to provide added clarity of understanding for us. Yet there is a Hebrew term that by itself is translated appropriately as “offering,”—and it is used to represent an offering given outside the categories listed above.

That word is “Corban”—or, more correctly transliterated, *qarban*. We find it used by Jesus Christ on one occasion when correcting the hypocrisy of the people. Mark records Jesus stating:

He said to them, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you

may keep your tradition. For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban—(that is, a gift to God)” (Mark 7:9–11).

Mark’s text in fact gave his readers a translation of the Hebrew “Corban”—“a gift to God.” But we may wonder, “Why does God need gifts from us? All the earth and the heavens are His.” What, then, is the purpose of such a gift? Can it teach us about our relationship with Him?

The term *qarban* is used some 80 times in Scripture, largely in the books of Leviticus and Numbers. It is usually translated as “offering” but occasionally as “sacrifice.” In this context it is used as a general term for a gift as part of the sacrificial system. It comes from a Hebrew word meaning “to draw close”—by implication, to a deity. We find the Psalmist expressing this desire when he wrote:

But it is good for me to **draw near** to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works (Psalm 73:28).

Isaiah also highlighted the hypocrisy of the people, just as we have seen Jesus Christ do in Mark’s Gospel. He records:

Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the

ordinances of justice; they take delight in **approaching** God (Isaiah 58:2).

When Moses was instructed not to “draw near” to the burning bush at Mount Sinai, a form of this same term “Corban” was used (Exodus 3:5).

In commanding offerings, the Eternal wanted His people to draw close to Him—to invest themselves in Him and make Him part of their lives. So, the purpose of an offering—whether of an animal or of another kind—was to serve as a token of the person’s intent to draw close to the God of Israel.

Do we see our offerings on the Holy Days in the same light?

The New Testament reinforces the importance of drawing near to our Father and His Son. Speaking of the better role of Jesus Christ as a High Priest, Paul explained that through the Son we can draw near to our Father (Hebrews 7:19). Later, locating true Christians within the Tabernacle of God, of which Jesus Christ is the High Priest, Paul again writes of us “drawing near” to God:

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us **draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:19–22).

In this last instance, the Greek for “draw near” conveys the purpose of drawing near in the sense of seeking an association with our Father. This ultimately is the foundational reason for our keeping the Holy Days. We long to become associated as part of the very Family of God by being born again.

But how does this understanding relate to Deuteronomy 16:16, when the term for offerings is not used there?

Note that in Deuteronomy 16:16 we are instructed not to appear “empty-handed” before the Eternal. The term used indicates more than the way we might use that expression in the English language. We might invite someone to a meal and tell them that all they need to bring is themselves. They need to make no contribution. Some may feel uncomfortable arriving for a meal in such “empty-handed” manner. But its use in Deuteronomy conveys more than that. It “pertains to being without what is expected in a situation.” In other words, Moses is instructing us that when we appear before

the Eternal, we need to have something in hand—something is expected, the purpose of which is to help us to draw close. When we attend a Feast, something is expected of us—an offering whereby we draw near to our Father and His Son. We should appear with an offering, a *qarban*.

The whole purpose of keeping the Feasts is to draw close—spatially and spiritually. Festival attendance was firstly a spatial experience, both for Israel, and for us as we experience today when we drive or fly to a Feast site. For them, it was a journey, mainly on foot from their homes to the Tabernacle or the Temple. They had to remove themselves from their home environment and travel to Shiloh or Jerusalem. But being in the physical proximity of the structure where the Eternal dwelt was not sufficient. An offering was needed to show the intent of being in the presence of the God of Israel.

Understanding the spatial aspect helps us understand the instructions in Deuteronomy as well. Moses instructed Israel that they were to appear before the Eternal “three times” in a year. Those traveling to Jerusalem would have come for the entire Holy Day period over each of those three times. Staying over was especially needed for the Passover with the following seven days of Unleavened Bread, and then again during the period in the Fall encompassing Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles and the Last

Great Day. It was not possible to travel to Jerusalem and back home again after each holy day as many of us can do today. Unless one lived close to Jerusalem—in a place like Bethany to the south, or Emmaus to the north—then walking to Jerusalem would have involved at least an overnight stay. Traveling from somewhere like Galilee would have been a three-day journey. Hence, people stayed in Jerusalem or its environs throughout the three feast periods.

In those three periods, there were then seven times in which they were summoned to assemble (a convocation) and hence appear before the Eternal (Leviticus 23:4). They needed to have an offering prepared in advance for each of those occasions. Those offerings had to be based on one’s circumstances in life—you were not asked to give what you did not have. Even more so, they were to be an expression of how the God of Israel had blessed their lives.

As we prepare for the Feasts ahead of us, perhaps we ought to take a moment to consider how much we wish to draw near to our Father and His Son in keeping these days. Preparing ahead of time allows us to do that more effectively.

Have a wonderfully enriching Feast! ■



Why Tithe of the Tithe?

When you give a tithe of your second tithe, how is it used? Not only does it help defray the costs of operating your Feast site and ensure that there will be many enjoyable activities; it first and foremost goes to helping the needy who could not otherwise attend the Feast at all.

We have our individual responsibilities to save our tithe for Feast attendance, of course. But Scripture also explains that we have an obligation to provide for “the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow” (Deuteronomy 16:14).

From the earliest days of the Radio Church of God, there were brethren who, for one reason or another, could not afford to attend the Feast. There were also expenses that had to be paid before the Feast to arrange activities and facilities during the Feast. To accommodate these needs, brethren who could afford it were asked to give a tenth of their Festival tithe to the Church, even before giving any “excess second tithe” on the Last Great Day.

To this day, when many brethren finish paying their expenses for the Feast of Tabernacles, they donate as “excess second tithe” whatever remains from the Festival tithe they have faithfully saved for the past year. They are grateful to be able to give that offering, knowing that their generosity has made it possible not only for “the stranger and the fatherless and the widow” to keep the Feast, but for the brethren together to enjoy many wonderful activities.

In recent years, a declining proportion of Feast attendees have found themselves able to donate a “tithe of the tithe” before each year’s Feast of Tabernacles. As a result, the Church has had to dip into the “general fund” to pay for basic Feast site expenses, diverting funds that could otherwise have been used to preach the gospel or feed the flock during the rest of the year. The Feast must go on, even though the total costs associated with the Feast—assistance, halls, ministerial travel and other direct expenses—substantially exceed donations of excess second tithe and “tithe-of-the-tithe.”

Certainly, in the present tough economic times, many brethren have been able to save so little second tithe that they are barely able to attend the Feast at all, and sometimes must spend more than 10 percent of their increase to do so. Brethren in such a circumstance should not give what they cannot. But what about those who have been blessed with enough increase to share their blessings with others? Jesus Himself stated, “For

everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required” (Luke 12:48).

If we look at our Festival savings and realize that we can pay all of our own Festival expenses after giving the Church a tithe of our Festival tithe, we are not only helping to pay direct costs associated with our own presence at the Feast; we are also helping many other brethren who could otherwise not afford to attend the Feast. And we are making possible a range of enjoyable activities at the Feast site we attend. As we do so, we are displaying the outflowing concern that Christ expects us to have for our brethren.

It is important to remember that needy brethren are **not** given Festival assistance out of third-year tithe funds. Festival assistance dollars come from donated second tithe. And it is not just third-tithe recipients who need help to attend the Feast; there are many brethren who do not qualify for third-year tithe but who still need full or partial assistance to attend

the Feast, usually the elderly who live on Social Security or savings and lack the means to attend the Feast without some financial assistance.

Some do not realize the degree to which the Church strives to economize in every way possible in its Feast preparation expenses. For instance, when we are seeking to locate new Feast sites, the Festival Office is able to make the most of local Convention and Visitors Bureau funds, including free hotel “familiarization” trips, which typically pay for hotel stays, and often cover airfare to and from the location, along with various meals during the trip.

Even so, there are still some expenses the Church must incur in Feast planning, and if those expenses are not covered by “tithe of the tithe” and excess second tithe, those expenses must come from the general fund—“first tithe and donation income.” Interestingly, going back to the beginning of the Global Church of God more than 20 years ago, the Church’s total Festival expenses have never exceeded the amount that would have been received if every able attendee had given a tithe of his or her second tithe.

So, brethren, as you remain faithful in saving your second tithe as God commands, please remember that the same God of the Old Testament, the Logos, Jesus Christ, wants us to give as we are able to help others enjoy the Feast. Giving the Church a tithe of your second tithe is a long-established Church tradition, and we hope that many of you will practice it as you are able.

—LCG Festival Office





A Bridge to the Future

By Gary Ehman

Across the ancient world, harvest festivals were common to most of the pagan religions throughout the earth. By the time of Moses, Satan the Devil, who knew intimately of God's plan of salvation, had already imposed his counterfeit festivals on pagan mankind for many generations. Thus, when God revealed *His annual Sabbaths* to ancient Israel at Sinai, the concept of annual "holy days" or religious observances was not new to mankind.

But what, then, is so special about God's Holy Days? Keeping God's Festivals is vital if we are to understand God's desires for His people, Israel. He gave specific instructions about His worship. "And the LORD spoke to Moses saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: "The Feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be 'holy convocations, these are My feasts'"' (Leviticus 23:1-2). He spoke two phrases of enormous significance: "The Feasts of the LORD" and "these are My feasts."

We can imagine any pagans who might have been listening making the comment, "So what else is new? We've been holding feasts to our gods for centuries!" Indeed, the Egyptians had harvest festivals, as did the Canaanites, the Jebusites, the Perizites and all the other "-ites" in the land. Not only the fall harvest festivals; spring festivals to Ishtar, May Day and Summer Solstice festivals were common experiences for worshippers of the pagan gods.

Yet the Feasts of God were not just seasonal observances; they were powerful demonstrations of where God was working. They would show mankind that the God of Israel is the true source of life and success, and that blessings came by following

Him and His laws: "And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?" (Deuteronomy 4:8).

Ancient Israel, as a nation newly emerging after bondage in Egypt, was to become a demonstration of God's power over His creation. The Israelites were to be a *living* and *functioning* "type" of God's Kingdom *at work* here on planet Earth (Exodus 19:6). They were to be an instrument in the destruction of the pagan harvest feasts, while they demonstrated the way of God and His Feasts: "These are the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth. You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place. You shall not worship the LORD your God with such things" (Deuteronomy 12:1-4).

Not only were the Israelites to destroy all pagan worship; they were never to consider the pagan festivals: "When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD

which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it” (vv. 29–32).

But what about Christians, today, as we prepare to celebrate the annual fall Holy Days? The Bible, especially the New Testament, clearly shows that, as members of God’s Church, we must be able to relate to all people (1 Corinthians 9:22). Our lifestyles are to be representative of our beliefs, our words and thoughts fully in harmony with our deeds. We are like glass houses—set upon a high hill—that are to be fully illuminated. When you think about that, it is rather sobering, even scary.

Jesus established this rather formidable description of a Christian: “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14–16).

Jesus is telling us that Christians will be watched; their actions will be watched, and their association with one another will be watched. In fact, these actions—collective and individual—will be keys to Christ’s mission to the world. It is a mission demonstrating that God is God, that God the Father sent Jesus Christ and—because we are Christ’s—God has special love for us. “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me” (John 17:20–23).

Do you find it scary, or at least very sobering, that you are being watched, and that we need to be very careful about how we present ourselves to others? Just what is it we are showing to the people around us, and what are they interpreting when they see us? We can learn much about this from the perspective of keeping the Feast Days, particularly the Feast of Tabernacles. God’s Feasts are not just an opportunity to enjoy ourselves; they reveal and picture the deep and incredibly powerful impact God’s Plan is having on this world now and in the future. They reveal our God-given goal, individually and collectively.

LAMPS OF THE WORLD

In Jewish tradition during Jesus’ time, according to the *Adam Clarke Commentary* and *Gill’s Exposition of the Bible*, the eminent

rabbis were described as *nyir olam*, or “lamps of the world.” They held this title because they positioned themselves as representative of the law, and the law was a “lamp” to provide light to the world. An ever-burning lamp hung in the temple, representing the law. And not only was the law represented by a literal lamp; the rabbis saw that Scripture gave a figurative meaning as well: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105); “For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life” (Proverbs 6:23).

But Jesus said in Matthew 5:14 that Christians are the “light of the world.” He used the Greek phrase *phōs tou κόσμου*, which indicates self-existing light, representing them as being both the light being given to the world, and its source.

There is an important distinction Jesus was making between the Pharisees and Sadducees and the disciples He was addressing.



This light, in the Hebrew is *’ôr* [pronounced “ore”]. Christians are to be *or olam*, “light of the world.” Jesus clearly transfers the title to His own disciples then and to us today. “For I have given to *them* the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. 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” (John 17:8–10).

This theme of Christians being lights is used repeatedly throughout the New Testament. “Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:14–15). The Greek word “shine” is *phainō* [fa’hee-no], meaning to bring forth into the light, cause to shine, shed light to become evident, to be brought forth into the light, come to view, appear. This is what God is accomplishing with our keeping of these Feast days; especially the very publically visible seven-day Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day that follows. A great deal of this visibility centers on us!

Notice Paul says we “shine as lights.” The word “light” is *phōstēr* [foce-tare’] that which gives light, an illuminator as the stars or sun. These sources are radiant, *not* reflective. Christians have Christ living *in* them—a light source established within the very core of their beings through the begetting process of God’s very own “spiritual DNA”: “Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God” (1 John 3:9). The word “born” by context is defined as *gennaō* [ghen-nah’-o] meaning “begotten.”

John states that the “seed,” *sperma*, “remains in him,” the individual Christian. The Greek is complex, but clear; “remains in” is *menō* [men’-o] and the voice of the Greek relates to the time and condition, meaning that once given, the Spirit will not depart unless we reject it—it remains a part of who we are. We are given the direct responsibility to maintain what has been given to us. The Apostle Paul shows this clearly: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30); “Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

This is exactly why Christians radiate the Spirit and why we do not *just* reflect who and what God is. “Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:43)! Jesus used an interesting word in “shine forth”—*eklampō* [ek-lam’-po] meaning to be resplendent, shining as the sun shines. It is apparent that Jesus was quoting from the book of Daniel, speaking of future Christians and their role in the coming kingdom of God: “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever” (Daniel 12:3).

This certainly is relative to why we observe God’s annual festivals and the Feast of Tabernacles. It is somewhat astounding how many times the Scriptures use the word “light” or “lights” in regard to being a Christian, as this subject is linked to our personalities and how we present ourselves publically as we keep the holy days. Our personal conduct is all about light and how it radiates from within us.

It is more than coincidence that lights play such a major role in the darkness of the pagan worship, whether it is decorating the home with Christmas lights, a lit tree, bags with candles, pumpkins with candles, Easter sunrise services, candles—candles, candles everywhere. Most interestingly, nighttime and the dark play a significant role in these festivals. Light is introduced in colorful but distorted ways, highlighting the effect of darkness based on pagan principles.

Our elder brother Jesus condemns these pagan practices and rituals as darkness and warns us “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God” (John 3:18–21).

Why should we keep the festivals and, especially, attend the Feast? Just as God instructed ancient Israel to do, we are going through our own lives tearing down the idols, etc., keeping the Feasts of God, demonstrating with our own lives the redemptive work of God and Jesus Christ. Paul makes it abundantly clear why we anticipate and often yearn for God’s Feasts: “You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness” (1 Thessalonians 5:5). No one else keeps the Feasts of God, as He commands, therefore they do not demonstrate God’s plan of salvation. No pagan festival can.

Israel was commanded to show forth the results of obeying God: “Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act

according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’” (Deuteronomy 4:5–6).

They were to keep the Feasts of the Eternal as part of those laws and statutes and reap the rewards and benefits of doing so as an example to the rest of the nations around them, but they did not. The horrible, wretched story is related later in chapter 20 of the book of Ezekiel. “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the LORD God: “Are you defiling yourselves in the manner of your fathers, and committing harlotry according to their abominations? For when you offer your gifts and make your sons pass through the fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols, even to this day. So shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live,” says the LORD God, “I will not be inquired of by you. What you have in your mind shall never be, when you say, ‘We will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, serving wood and stone.’ As I live,” says the LORD God, “surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you”” (vv. 30–33).

An important comparison must be made at this point. Who are you, as you sit reading this article? And do you realize that you, personally, represent an incredibly important, world-changing function? This comparison is contrasted between the Old and New Testaments: “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 14:2). Israel was chosen to be God’s people, His children, and they failed, miserably.

Now let’s look at something truly amazing concerning the Christian: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out

**Who are you, as you
sit reading this article?
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world-changing function?**

Continued on page 19

Woman to Woman

By Faye League

Normalcy and Balance

I am sure that most of us women have become aware of the attempt of modern society to blur the lines of normalcy into what has become known as the “new normal.”

I find it highly irregular that anything can be construed or conveyed as the “new normal” since things are either *normal* or they *are not*. For example: When *normal* conditions under which one is used to performing certain tasks **do not exist**, due to unforeseen circumstances, then *another way* or approach may have to be implemented **in order to reach a desired result**. However, this does not mean that the new way or approach can in any way be construed as the “new normal” because it is not.

This somehow reminds me of the late comedian, Jackie Gleason, who would say at times, “Don’t confuse me with the facts.” Of course when he said this in just the right way at just the right moment, it would bring a huge response of laughter from the audience. However, facts are facts and truth is truth. When speaking of the facts and the truth of a situation, sometimes the simplest proverbs say it best—“It is what it is.” I love this saying because it lends the proper perspective to a situation—and once the facts and truth of the matter are accepted, one is better able to deal with the situation.

UNUSUAL TRENDS?

Looking back on certain social trends, I can recall several which were highly unusual. A couple of them are in the realm of women’s fashions. As we all know, fashion trends come and go, but a few of them tend to hang around a little too long—popping up and advertising themselves until it seems as if they are going to last forever. Take for instance the somewhat recent style of mixing stripes, checks, circles and diamond shapes, zigzagging into a crazy pattern with a myriad of unmatched color combinations—with the end result that some of the garments are so bizarre in appearance that it is enough to make the eyeballs spin to the point

of dizziness and nausea! Whew! No normalcy and no balance in this sense of fashion.

Also, there are some in the fashion industry who have tried to tweak the concept of classic clothing—calling their tweaks (changes) the “new classics.” These changes are an attempt to make classic clothes more sexually alluring and appealing—usually by revealing more bare skin on a woman’s body.

However, there are others in the fashion industry who know the true value of classic clothing and have not bought into these new ideas and concepts. Classic clothes have classic lines, are lovely, sophisticated and modest. The beautiful fact of classic clothes is that they never go out of style and they endure the test of time.

In the area of modesty, I have been asked this same question quite often over the years by women, young ladies and even the elderly—“Why is it that, even though we women and young ladies have been taught to be modest and to wear modest attire, some ignore and neglect these instructions and continue to push the envelope in these areas, wearing revealing and even seductive clothing?”

This type of dressing can be highly offensive to others, especially at Church services, where we go to worship God. I have even heard some of the men voice their concerns, saying that it makes them very uncomfortable and that they have to avert their eyes from the seductively exposed areas of women who are dressed in this manner. Logically speaking, there is just no benefit to anyone in this type of situation anywhere, anytime.

A HELPFUL CHECKLIST

Here are some helpful questions to ask oneself when shopping and trying on clothes before buying:

1. Is this dress/skirt too short for its intended purpose?
2. Will this dress/skirt ride up to be shorter when sitting or bending over?



3. Is this blouse/dress too low-cut and revealing, especially when bending over or stooping?
4. Is this garment (including slacks and jeans) inappropriately snug and form fitting?
5. Will I draw undue and inappropriate attention to myself if I wear this garment?
6. Is this garment age-appropriate?

If we strive for godly standards in all that we do—including modesty and modest attire—then surely Christ will be well pleased. “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:17). The key is normalcy and balance in everything. One very helpful resource for considering how to find this balance in modest attire can be found in Mr. Rod McNair’s article “Leadership Training and Modesty” in the October 2009 *Living Church News*.

AGING GRACEFULLY?

Something seems to happen to some women when they reach their forties. It suddenly dawns on them that they have passed their youth and that old age looms closer than ever before. This seems to happen for some as soon as a grey hair or a wrinkle appears—panic time! “How can I cope? What can I do to hang on to a more youthful appearance?” These thoughts run through a woman’s mind. Some then resort to overdoing the make-up, dressing in “youthful” fashions (which only makes one look ridiculous) or going overboard with dieting and exercise—and some run as fast as they can to Botox or plastic surgery.

Have you ever talked to someone with an expressionless botoxed face? I believe I have done so several times. Some might say, “To each her own.” But what good is a twinkle in the eye without genuine laughter and crinkles at the corners, or a warm smile to light up the personality? Or what good is a good old fashioned belly laugh if the face cannot join in the fun—due to botoxed paralysis?

As they age from their late thirties into their forties, most women find this to be a difficult time in their lives. I call it the “forties syndrome.” A major problem, of course, is the hormonal changes that a woman experiences due to menopause, as her body tries to adjust to her new situation—the cessation of her childbearing years—which is more

difficult for some than for others. There is no “one size fits all” because each woman is different. However, most women go through this period of time without any severe problems and continue on with their lives.

By the way, it is not a sin to grow old—it is just a fact of life. As long as we have breath, we will be growing older. As that same saying goes, “*It is what it is*”—like it or not.

We can be thankful to have each day of life to live for God and to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18)—instead of being obsessed with youth and physical beauty, as are many women and young girls in today’s society.



Due to modern technology, medical breakthroughs and increased knowledge concerning health, diet and exercise, women are living longer these days—but what good is a longer life without understanding or the maturity that comes with it? We are told in Matthew 6:33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” This is a calling we should be thankful for!

BEAUTY FROM WITHIN

So as we grow older, let us look on it as an opportunity to embrace a more mature beauty, especially from within. “Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (1 Peter 3:3–4). Again, normalcy and balance are the keys.

I believe that any woman who has God’s Holy Spirit has a unique beauty about her, especially if she adheres to God’s laws, concepts, precepts and principles. Then if she also complements her inner beauty with a beautiful but modest outward appearance, she truly is letting her light shine. “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14–16).

There seems to be a trend today to blur the lines of normalcy and to knock balance off-kilter. It is something that we may need to be aware of as we teach our children how to differentiate between what is normal and balanced and what is not.

So as we continue on in our journey toward God’s Kingdom and His righteousness, let us strive to be as normal and balanced as we can possibly be—with God’s help, guidance and direction, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith and salvation. ■

God's Work and Our Calling

By Mike DeSimone

For decades we have heard, “To the degree our hearts are involved in the Work of God is to the degree we grow spiritually.” Dr. Meredith has also said many times that the primary reason we have been called in this age is “to do the Work.” In a March-April 2014 *Living Church News* article, he wrote, “Many of you who are reading this will remember that Mr. Herbert Armstrong stated a number of times that Almighty God did not personally ‘call’ us in this present age just for our personal salvation. Rather, he stated, there are two primary reasons why God chooses to call us **now**—rather than allow us to come up later in the Great White Throne Judgment. The first is to do the Work. The second is to let us prepare ourselves to be kings and priests in Christ’s coming Kingdom” (“The Reason for Our Calling,” *Living Church News*, March-April 2014).

What is our primary calling? What does our calling have to do with the Work that Christ is doing through His Church? Why is it important that we participate in the Work of God? It is because that Work **is our calling**, and it is absolutely critical that we do everything we can to participate in it in order to fulfill that calling. The more actively we are involved in the work Christ is doing, the more we fulfill the reason we have been called.

We are not talking about the potential of humankind—the reason we were born. All of humankind was created to one day inherit eternal life and be given the opportunity to become a part of God’s Family. While Christians in this age will also one day become a part of His Family, **our calling** is different! We are called out of the world now for an entirely different purpose. **We are created for one thing and called for something else.**

In order to fully understand why the Work is the first reason for our calling, we need to answer two main questions: 1) What is the “Work of God?” and 2) How does the “Work of God” relate to our calling? Then we will see why it is so important that we actively participate in the Work.

WHAT IS THE “WORK OF GOD”?

The “Work of God” that we have been called to is what Christ has been doing and is doing through His Church to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, feed the flock, and preach the warnings of end-time prophecies to the world. This is what God and Christ are accomplishing on earth today through the Church. This is the venture God is actively engaged in: God’s “Work.”

Christ was completely focused on this when He came to earth as a human being. He said, “**My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work**” (John 4:34). As soon as His ministry began, He immediately began *setting the pace* and the example for how to do that work. “Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14–15).

From there, His life was completely focused on doing His Father’s work. Very early on, He began training others (v. 16–20) and told them, “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, **because for this purpose I have come forth**” (v. 38).

Once He perceived that His original twelve disciples had enough experience under their belt, He put them to work on the same mission and, “He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick ... So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere” (Luke 9:2–6). After a little more time, *He sent out even more* to do His Work—this time, “seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go” (Luke 10:1).

The New Testament also records several times that Jesus proclaimed the need for even more “laborers” (workers) because of the enormous amount of work that lay ahead of them! “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). Jesus Christ was absolutely on fire and filled with zeal for the work He was doing!

Then after His death, glorification and return to omnipotent and unlimited power, Christ commissioned His Apostles, “saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age’” (Matthew 28:18–20). Mark 16:15–16 also says, “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved.’” The resurrected Jesus Christ made these statements **the day after His resurrection**. This is what was on Jesus’ mind! He now instructed His Apostles, the human leaders of His Church, to continue doing the same work He had been doing, though now without His physical presence. Now, He would work with them in His glorified state and continue to work with them, “even to the end of the age.”

Then, after 40 days of teaching them about the Kingdom of God, the final instructions He gave—**just before He ascended into heaven**—were that, “you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). This is what Christ concentrated on His entire life while on earth and taught and trained His disciples to do. Then, in His final words with them, He tells them to continue! This is clearly the job of the Church that Jesus Christ founded!

The Apostles took Christ’s example and His instruction **very seriously** and they had a strong sense of urgency about it. This is what absorbed them and drove them on for the remainder of their lives. *The entire book of Acts* is a written account of their evangelizing the known world at that time. The Apostles and the entire first-century Church revolved around the mission Jesus gave. They were looking for opportunities—“open doors” to preach the gospel (2 Corinthians 2:12; 1 Corinthians 16:9; Colossians 4:3; Acts 14:27). They were continually busy doing the Work of God!

Christ told His Apostles that He would be with His Church, fulfilling the commission until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). He also told them that before the end would come, “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations” (Matthew 24:14). The only way for this to happen is for His Church to be doing the Work of God at the end of the age. This means that He would actively be fulfilling His mission through His Church in the end time to proclaim the gospel to the entire world!

In Revelation 3:8 we see that, not long before He returns, He will be opening doors for a Church of God characterized by its Philadelphian attitude. That Church will be going through those doors to do the Work, and is praised for hanging on to the Truth and not denying His name. Because this body of believers is diligent **to allow Christ to do His work through**

them, they will be blessed, and will be saved from the “hour of trial” (Revelation 3:10).

So we see that while He was on earth, Jesus Christ was completely focused on doing the Father’s work. He set the example for His disciples and trained them to lead His Church and continue His work. Then we see that He would be working through the Church of God in the end time to accomplish His work until His Second Coming.

HOW DOES THE “WORK OF GOD” RELATE TO OUR CALLING?

God the Father has called us out of this world to be part of accomplishing His Work! He has “drawn” us out of the world to Jesus Christ to become a part of His Church (John 6:44). The Work of God **is** our calling **because** we have been called to His Church and that is the mission of His Church. He ordained it to be so because the Church is, in fact, His very Body and He is the Head! He is now doing the Work through His spiritual Body—the Church!

1 Corinthians 12:12–14 explains: “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body,



being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body... For in fact the body is not one member but many.” Paul is saying that we all make up “the body”—the body of Jesus Christ! “Now **you are the body of Christ** and members individually” (v. 27). We are the body, and, “He is the head of the body” (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22–23).

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). His entire life’s focus was, and still is, “to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34). This was His lifework while on earth and the commission and instruction He gave to His body, the Church, of which He is the head! Just as He was when He was on this earth, He is still intensely focused on the Work of God—He has not changed.

So, God the Father has called us out of this world to Jesus Christ (John 6:44) and we have been baptized into His body

(1 Corinthians 12:13). If we, then, are a part of His spiritual body then we must share His mission and purpose—which is the commission He gave to His Church—His own Body! Therefore, if we want to fulfill the very reason we have been called, we will be focused on what Jesus Christ is focused on and what He charged His own Body to do! We will individually and collectively do the Work of God.

God the Father has chosen us, selected us, named us, conscripted us, elected us—*called* us to work with Him and be a part of His team! This is to be our mission and purpose. To the degree that we make it so, we will be fulfilling the reason we have been called in this age.

Jesus Christ was “all in.” The Apostles were “all in.” Are we “all in”?

WHY IS OUR INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION VITAL?

The Church that Jesus Christ founded—the very Body of Jesus Christ—will be preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God at the very end of the age just before His return. This Church, characterized by its Philadelphian attitude, will be going through open doors provided by Christ Himself. “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name” (Revelation 3:8). So, clearly, there will be a Church of God on earth that will be focused on completing the mission Christ gave before He ascended into heaven.

We can either choose to be a part of that or not and we can choose it to varying degrees. The “Dead Church” and the “Lukewarm Church” will also clearly be around in the end time, but will be minimally focused on going through open doors and may even be focused on other activities they deem more important. We have a choice to fulfill the reason for our calling or not. We have a choice to bear much fruit in regard to our calling or not. Our calling can be compared to the “very little” we have been given to do business with now (Luke 19). How seriously do we take it and what will we do with it? How much fruit are we going to bear?

In any organization, the employees need to be headed in the same direction as the boss, in harmony with the company mission. Jack Welch was CEO of General Electric for over 20 years. In his book *Winning* he explained that, for employees to offer the most to their organization, they must “be an early subscriber of the mission and purpose of the company and the boss” (p. 288). In other words, get behind the mission and the purpose, and be one of the first to do so. How true! The person who helps fulfill the mission is helping the company—and all of its employees—move in the right direction. The boss can trust such a person with greater responsibility. On the other hand, any employee that is not helping to accomplish the company mission becomes a drag on momentum and hurts progress overall. The boss **cannot** trust such a person with greater responsibility.

In the Church, Christ is the Boss and we are His workers (Matthew 9:37–38; John 4:35–38). At the end of this age, He will be focused on the same work as when He was on this earth,

which He commissioned His Church to do. This is what the Boss is engaged in and focused on. We need to be behind the Boss. To the extent we get behind Him, toe the line, and carry our weight in the work He is doing, **the more we are fulfilling the very purpose for which we have been immersed into the Church of God.** We will learn more lessons, learn more to think like God, know God’s will, and develop His character more and more! Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and if we want to be in the middle of His will, we get behind Him. If we are focused on what the Boss is focused on now—even in the smallest matters—He will trust us in greater things! This is profoundly exciting!

God the Father called us to Jesus Christ’s Body, His Church (John 6:44; 1 Corinthians 12:27). This means **He has chosen us and given us a special opportunity** to work on His team. He is actively accomplishing His mission through the Church of God with the Philadelphian Spirit. He has *been* excited about it (John 4:34) and *is* excited about it (Revelation 3:8; Matthew 24:14; Acts 1:8) and **wants us to be excited about it!**

Consider these exhortations from the ministry Christ is using today in the Living Church of God:

“Editorial: Do Not be Laodicean,” by Dr. Roderick Meredith, *Living Church News* January-February, 2013:

“Focusing on the ‘cares of this world’ can easily distract any of us if we are not careful. That is one reason why Philadelphian Christians should spend much of their time, energy and resources in the **crusade** to proclaim Christ’s message to the entire world... The Philadelphians *zealously desire* to have a very active part in proclaiming Christ’s message. They personally work, pray and sacrifice so the magnificent message of Christ’s soon-coming Kingdom may be powerfully proclaimed to *all the nations*.”

“The ‘Fruits’ of the Church,” Dr. Roderick Meredith, *Living Church News* May-June 2015:

“We must look to Him to direct the Work, overall, and focus on doing with faithfulness that which is our *own part*—sincerely trying to support those who may have, at this time, a higher ‘rank’ in the Work of God. As we do this, Christ will see that we are willing to humble ourselves to be faithful in *whatever* position we are given, and He will be able to know that we will be His **loyal** servants throughout all eternity.”

“Self Examination: A Vital Key to Growth,” Richard Ames, *Living Church News* March-April 2009:

“How zealous are you for God’s Work? Our Savior expressed His commitment to fulfilling His mission on the earth: ‘My food is to do the will of Him who

sent Me, and to *finish His work*’ (John 4:34). Are you totally committed to Christ’s mission? We whom God has called have been given His command to preach the Gospel of the soon coming Kingdom of God, to feed the flock and to preach the Ezekiel warning to the modern descendants of ancient Israel... Do you pray regularly for the Work, for open doors to preach the Gospel around the world? Do not underestimate the importance of keeping your heart in the Work.”

Mr. Ames goes on to quote Herbert W. Armstrong:

“And God has given us ‘the WORK’ to do as the VERY MEANS BY WHICH we may grow spiritually, so we may enter His Kingdom at Christ’s coming. In 47 years I have observed that ONLY those whose hearts are fully IN THE WORK continue to overcome and grow SPIRITUALLY, and ENDURE” (*Co-Worker Letter*, November 18, 1974).

Mr. Ames then concludes:

“Ask yourself, ‘How zealous have I been for the Work of God? Have I prayed for its success? Have I supported the mission of God’s Church?’ Every human being is precious in God’s sight. We all need God’s love to fulfill the mission He has given us.”

While we have all been called into the Church of God, we are not all called to be the same part of the Body. We each make

up a different part of the Body. Each of us has something unique to offer the Work. Sometimes it takes searching, studying and praying to know where you can help the most. What is your part? Is it serving the widows? Is it praying for the leadership and for God to open more doors to preach the Gospel? Is it the ability to give powerful offerings in humility? Is it serving your local congregation? Is it being able to support the shepherds and the Church through being a solid pillar in regard to sound doctrine?

Whatever our gifts are, whatever strengths we have, the more we can hone them for the long-term journey of finishing the Church’s phase of God’s Work, and not growing “weary” in doing so (Galatians 6:9), the more we will be storing up treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:19–21) and investing in the Kingdom of God (Luke 19:11–27). For the relatively small efforts we make now we will receive eternal, glorious rewards beyond imagination. This is the best investment deal in the history of the universe, and the return on the investment is unfathomable. The deeper our appreciation for the Work of God and the more we contribute our gifts, the more Christ will be involved in our lives, the more we will learn the lessons God wants us to learn—and the more we will be preparing for our future Millennial reign with Him.

The Work that God is doing is inherently the most important activity being accomplished in the entire universe. Let us be as much of a part of it as we can!

For, “those who turn many to righteousness [will shine] like the stars forever and ever” (Daniel 12:3). Let’s do His business till He comes and be in the middle of His will! Let’s put our lives into the Work that God is doing and make the most of our calling! ■

A Bridge to the Future Continued from page 13

of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:9–10).

We are these people who were once not God’s people, and we keep this Feast, preparing for constructive roles in the Kingdom, when we will go through the process of restoring God’s Feasts during the thousand-year period pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles: “And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come

“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 14:2).

up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zechariah 14:16–19).

We, God’s true Church, represent the success of God’s plan, stepping into the role that was to be Israel’s. They were to be the demonstration of God’s great purpose, His great love for His creation that will be poured out on mankind. But, instead, they chose darkness in the face of light outlined by the plan of salvation demonstrated by God’s Feast days, especially this Feast of Tabernacles season.

We are the “called, the chosen, and faithful,” we are a “bridge to the future;” we are *or olam*: “the light of the world.” ■

The Theme of Separation in the Fall Festival Season Continued from page 7

the area where his son, Solomon, would build the Temple (see 1 Chronicles 21:18–30 and 2 Chronicles 3:1). In the great, cataclysmic event that takes place at the end of this age, there is judgment, decision (threshing the wheat from the chaff) and separation of the Holy Mountain of God—the Kingdom of God—from Satan’s profane kingdom!

The fall Festival season pictures a time of separation of the sons of God from Satan’s profane world. Christ returns as a warrior and separates His wheat from the chaff and gathers in the wheat.

THIS SEPARATION IS ULTIMATELY A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

Nothing profane can enter the Kingdom of God—God’s Holy Mountain. In order to have eternal life as a Spirit-born Son of God, one must be sinless and holy. Things that are holy have been set apart—separated out—for God’s special purpose.

God told the ancient nation of Israel their true condition. “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you *life and death*, blessing and cursing; therefore *choose life*, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

The Danger of Laodiceanism Continued from page 2

he keeps you “busy” doing things that keep you away from the Word of God and the way of God! Your personal “time” is precious. Guard your time and do not let Satan stir you to “use it up” on vain activities that take you away from your reward and Christ’s Kingdom. God’s Word tells us: “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15–16).

Greek scholars tell us that the word “redeem” has the connotation of “buying back.” In this mixed up world, you literally have to “redeem” or “buy back” the time to serve God because the normal course of events always turns out that your time is taken away—unless you literally reach out, grab it and “redeem” the precious time God has given us to serve Him and His people! Please think about that powerful concept. For your life is composed of only so much time. If you allow Satan to distract you and take your time, then your time and your very life are being *wasted*! Each of us should recognize how vitally important it is that we fulfill the purpose of God and make ourselves ready to be members of His very Family—His coming Kingdom. So we must use the time and energy He gives us to develop His very character!

Remember, you and I are in a Spirit War with Satan and his demons. As the end of this present society quickly approaches,

God gives spiritual Israel—the Israel of God—the same choice. “For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to *holiness*, and the end, *everlasting life*. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:20–23). God has *everlasting life* available for His begotten children!

A WONDERFUL SEPARATION!

When Christ descends from heaven with the great blast of a trumpet, God’s Church will undergo a **wonderful separation**. The time of our Father’s great purpose will be at hand—the resurrection and birth of the Children of God! God’s people will be separated out into life eternal. The wheat pictures the substance of God’s holy righteous character and the germ of life in the wheat pictures God’s Holy Spirit in His begotten children.

The Apostle Paul gave us clear instructions for this age—we are to be *in* this world, but not of *it*. As we read earlier, “Therefore ‘Come out from among them and **be separate**, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and **you shall be My sons and daughters**, says the LORD Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:17–18). ■

they will go “all out” to divide, to discourage and to confuse God’s people. Will you be a “casualty” of that coming Spirit War? Or will you be a genuine “overcomer”?

God’s Word warns all of us in Revelation 21:7–8: “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” May God give us the genuine awe and fear of Him that will motivate us to strive above all else, with all our might, to be in His Kingdom. We must not be “cowardly.” We must not be “unbelieving” or any of the other things mentioned in this passage. For our very lives—for all eternity—are at stake!

Yet, with full confidence, you and I must go forward in absolute faith—knowing that God is our Father and that He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5)! And we must know and believe that God will help all of us follow the Apostle Paul when he was inspired to say: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

In Christian love,



In Loving Memory

Mr. David Sandland, age 69, of Coffs Harbour, Australia, died on October 20, 2014, after a long illness. Mr. Sandland was baptized in 1963. Both he and his wife, Lynn, attended Ambassador College at Bricket Wood, graduating and marrying in 1969. They settled in Vancouver, Canada, where Mr. Sandland worked in the Canadian Office. Several years later they moved to New Jersey, and then the family relocated to Australia. David was known for his good humor and positive attitude. He is survived by his wife Lynn, four children, and eight grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his youngest son. He will be greatly missed by his family and the brethren. Regional Director Bruce Tyler, a long-time friend and classmate, conducted the funeral.

Mrs. Evelyn Chaffee, 88, of the Seattle/Tacoma congregation, died Passover night, April 2, surrounded by family in their home. She has finished her course and was a wonderful example of a Christian woman. Mrs. Chaffee was born in a log cabin homestead in Alberta, Canada. She and her husband, Alfred L. Chaffee, were married on June 6, 1948 and baptized in the 1970s. They have four sons, 17 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren, as well as six adopted great-grandchildren. Mrs. Chaffee is survived by her husband and her 46 descendants, as well as

her Church family. Mr. Gary Ullerick and Mr. Terry Graves conducted the memorial service in Tacoma, Washington.

Mr. John Hayka, of the Winnipeg, Manitoba congregation, died peacefully on May 11, at the age of 92. Mr. Hayka was a long-time member, baptized 42 years ago. He is survived by his daughters Maryann Dick and Rose Anne Rempel (George), also of the Winnipeg congregation, a grandson, great-grandchildren, and his beloved Church family, and he will be greatly missed by all who knew him. His memorial service was conducted by Mr. Marc Arseneault.

Mrs. Nancy de Villon of the Scarborough, Ontario, Canada congregation died May 12. She was 68. Mrs. de Villon was baptized in 1986 and dearly loved her family, brethren and friends, and she was much loved in return. She is remembered also for her wonderful positive attitude and is very much missed by all who knew her.

Mr. Delmon Best, of the Omaha, Nebraska congregation, died May 13, the day after the 63rd anniversary of his wedding to his wife, Polly. He was 82. Mr. Best had a wonderful sense of humor and a hearty laugh. His strong faith, knowing he was in God's care during his short final illness, enabled him to be encouraging to both his family and Church family. He is survived by his wife, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and a brother. The memorial service was conducted by a brother, Travis, his son, Bryan, and Mr. Brian Pomictor.

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Adirondack Canoe Trip

On a windy Wednesday evening, with gusty weather whipping up the waters of Raquette Lake in the scenic Adirondack mountains, 36 eager Living Church of God brethren gathered to begin the Upstate New York LCG camping and canoe trip. After a mettle-testing paddle across the lake to Tioga Point (our temporary home-away-from-home), our group settled in with the hard but rewarding work of setting up camp. Although the weather was a bit soggy the first day, the rest of the four-day trip saw pleasant conditions, with temperatures in the 70s and plenty of sunshine.

The Upstate New York LCG brethren did a fine job of planning and hosting the event, which included: canoeing/

swamping activities, outdoor survival skills and leadership training, great “camptastic” cooking, games and fellowship, nightly hymn singing and reflection, and a wonderful Sabbath. Sobering and timely messages about the importance of being ready and coming out of/surviving in a physically and spiritually dangerous world were topped off on Independence Day with some “natural fireworks”—a July 4 late-day thunderstorm over the lake—at the close of the Sabbath. Campers appreciated the hard-working brethren of the northeast USA LCG congregations whose friendship, intrepidity and dedicated effort made the trip such a pleasure for all who attended!

—William L. Williams

Family Weekend in Kenya



Twenty-six brethren and children gathered for fellowship and a project at the home of Mr. and Mrs. David Mwanzia in Kajaido. After a prayer and a traditional breakfast, the men built a clothesline, the ladies did some cooking, children played and explored the surrounding area. Elder Simon Muthama discussed the purpose of Family Weekends and how to build stronger relationships. The trip to Kajaido was an opportunity to learn about other places in the country, as many had never been to this location before. The activities also provided an opportunity to work together and interact with others and develop servant leadership skills that will be important in the Kingdom of God. The time together helped adults and children to bond together and enabled young people to meet and make new friends.

Exemption from Jury Service

Living Church of God adherents who are summoned for jury service may wish to make use of the Jury Service Exemption Request form and documentation provided by the Office of Legal Affairs & Risk Management. Your local minister should be able to give you copies of the form, which includes legal precedents as well as a ministerial affirmation that you adhere to the doctrines of the Living Church of God, and have a sincerely held religious objection to jury service. If your request for excusal is denied, please send a copy of your original jury summons, the signed first page of the executed Jury Service Exemption Request form, and the denial, to the Office of Legal Affairs & Risk Management by fax at (704) 844-1976, or by e-mail at legal@lcg.org (ref. *Steps in Seeking Jury Service Exemption, How the Church Is Prepared to Help You*, available through your local minister).

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

Wedding

Mr. Romel Augustin and **Miss Kimberly Stewart** were married on Sunday, February 15 in Kingston, Jamaica at the picturesque Mona Visitor's Lodge on the campus of the University of the West Indies. Mr. Lascelles Fraser officiated at the ceremony. Family and friends from France, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Trinidad, the UK and the United States came to celebrate the occasion and rejoice together at the reception and dance that followed the ceremony. Mr. and Mrs. Augustin attend the London, UK, congregation, which honored the newlyweds with a reception after the Sabbath on February 28.

Anniversaries

Mr. and Mrs. Colin (Patricia) McIntyre celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on April 3. They have two children and six grandchildren. Their son and his family live in Perth Australia, and their daughter and her family live nearby in Glasgow. Mr. and Mrs. McIntyre became part of God's Church in the early 1970s and for several years have been deacon and deaconess, serving the brethren in the Glasgow area with warm-hearted support, unfailing kindness and good cheer. Many have been the beneficiaries of their hospitality over the years. They appreciated the cards, flowers, and gifts that loving and grateful brethren in the UK and Ireland and the UK office gave them in recognition of this great milestone in their lives.

Mr. and Mrs. Steven Mooney, of the Pensacola, Florida congregation, celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary on June 7. Family and friends are also grateful for and congratulate them on this milestone of life.

Ordinations

Mrs. Debbie Feller was ordained a deaconess on September 14, 2014, by Area Pastor Rodger Bardo and elders Joe Lozano, Ruben Lujan and Jim Nork. Mrs. Feller serves in the Prescott, Arizona, congregation.

Mr. Joe Bueno was ordained a deacon on the first Holy Day of Unleavened Bread by Area Pastor Phil Sena. Mr. Bueno serves in the Corpus Christi, Texas, congregation.

Mr. Lonnie Burchette was ordained a deacon on Pentecost by Area Pastor Gary Ehman and elders Robert Riggan and Jerry Clevenger. Mr. Burchette serves in the Statesville, North Carolina, congregation.

Mr. Lawrence Taylor was ordained a deacon on Pentecost by Area Pastor Anthony Stroud and elder Audie Driver. Mr. Taylor serves in the Birmingham, Alabama, congregation.

Births

Jerry and Collette Sam, of Orap Village, Malekula, Vanuatu, are delighted to announce the arrival of their fourth child, **Benjamin Sam**. He was born January 24, weighing 3.6 kilograms and measuring 51 centimeters. He is welcomed by twin sisters Lolette and Linette, and brother Jerry Junior.

Tony and Faith Leman are delighted to announce the birth of their daughter **Aveila Ruth Leman**. She was born February 24, weighed 7 pounds, 10 ounces, and was 55 centimeters long.

Ryan and Sarah (Ross) Nicholson are delighted to announce the arrival of a new member of their family: **Sofia Ann Nicholson** was born on Saturday, March 28, weighing just over 7 pounds. Both mother and baby are doing well.

Don and Collette (Greeman) Bethelmie, of the Chaguanas, Trinidad congregation, are pleased to announce the arrival of their first child, **Jadon Mikkel Bethelmie**, who was born April 1. He weighed 7 pounds, 2 ounces and measured 20.87 inches long.

Richard and Mandy Roth, from Homer, Alaska, are happy to announce the birth of their first baby, **Stephanie Ruth Rena Roth**. She was born on the Night To Be Much Observed, April 3. Stephanie weighed 8 pounds and was 21 inches long.

Brandon and Lynette Fall, from Tacoma, Washington, are happy to announce the newest addition to their family, **Levi David Fall**, born on April 7. Levi is their fourth child and weighed 8 pounds, 3 ounces and was 20 inches long.

Kyle and Rebecca Thieme, from Lynnwood, Washington, were delighted to safely receive their first baby, **Lucas Kyle Thieme**, on May 28. Lucas was born prematurely at just over 4 pounds and was 16 inches long. He came through a number of issues and is doing well now. The hospital staff nicknamed him, "Over-Achiever." The family has greatly appreciated the support and prayers of the brethren.

Jennifer and Reynaldo Colón are excited to announce the arrival of their third child, **Jacob Nathaniel Colón**, born on June 29. He weighed 6 pounds, 13 ounces and was 19.5 inches long. Jacob Nathaniel is the grandson of Regional Pastor Dan Hall of Atlanta, Georgia and of Area Pastor Raúl (Annie) Colón of Cidra, Puerto Rico

Josh and Jenny Penman of Charlotte, North Carolina are delighted to announce the birth of their fourth child, **Molli Rachel Penman**, on July 21. The happy grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Kinnear (Carolyn) Penman of Manila, Philippines and Mr. and Mrs. Laurence (Diana) Marshall of Helena, Montana.

COMMENTARY

How Will Same-Sex “Marriage” Affect You?

Marriage is the foundation of the family. As such, it forms the most fundamental unit of all society. It is the first human relationship Almighty God instituted for mankind (Genesis 2:21–25) and it lies at the very bedrock of civilization itself. To believe that human beings can change marriage in such a completely foundational way yet not experience radical consequences is arrogance of staggering proportions. Indeed, the facts already show that many claims made by homosexual activists during their march to acceptance are, in the end, lies—whether born of unintended or willful ignorance, confused delusion or practiced deceit.

Artists and craftspeople who serve couples at their weddings—cake decorators, planners and photographers—are already facing lawsuits and financially devastating fines when they exercise their religious convictions and choose not to help celebrate a same-sex “marriage.”

Ministers who run wedding chapel businesses are finding that they must be willing to “marry” same-sex couples or perhaps face fines and even jail time. Local pizza makers who say they cannot in good conscience cater a “gay wedding” have experienced threats to their business. State laws guaranteeing religious freedom are increasingly under attack, out of concern that individuals may use them to express their religious conscience in support of traditional marriage. Millions of Americans are feeling as if

their vaunted First Amendment freedom of religion is giving way to the mandate, “Thou shalt embrace gay marriage.”

And many observers, religious and secular, see that this is only the beginning. An April 2015 article in the *Christian Post* put it well: “Dear Churches in America: Prepare to Be Treated Like 1st Century Christians in Rome.”

The Court’s decision on same-sex marriage is no small matter. It puts a legal stamp of approval—at the highest levels of secular power in the land—on a radical redefinition of society’s most fundamental unit of civilization. Those who still think it will not affect them will soon enough be surprised. Those who expect to “live and let live” will soon be disappointed. And those who do not see how this will accelerate deep and profound rifts and transformations in our culture will soon have their illusions torn away.

And yet, this society-changing decision is just one more of the many ways in which “one nation under God,” as stated in the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance, is showing itself to be nothing of the sort. Sadly, a nation that seems so passionately determined to create as much distance as it can between itself and God—the God who loves its people and has sustained them for so long—will, to its horror, find its will in this matter fulfilled, and God absent in its coming time of need.

—Wallace G. Smith

