

# THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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March–April 2016

## Overcome and Grow in Unity!

### Dear Brethren and Friends,

An absolute wave of *enthusiasm* and *joy* was palpable during our recent Family Weekend here in Charlotte, North Carolina. More than 800 people were in physical attendance here, plus another 7,000 or more who heard the Sabbath sermon online. We have had positive and encouraging responses from practically all over the world—from Africa, Asia, Australia, Britain and Europe. So we are very grateful! We hope that this special Internet service will do a lot of good and help people get a closer personal “feeling” for what we are doing in the Living Church of God.

Let us all *pray fervently* that this will help many people around the world! The entire weekend was inspiring and brethren were very vocal about how much the outstanding seminars helped them, along with the special Bible Studies held on Friday night and Sabbath morning, and then the final sermon on Sabbath afternoon. So we have much to be thankful for, but we certainly need to ask *God’s direct blessing* on the “follow through” of this presentation so that people around the world may be moved to act on the Truth—not just hear about it and enjoy it.

However, brethren, a very real Satan the Devil is *fully aware* of what we have been doing. More than most humans, of course, Satan *knows* where God’s Work is being done in a powerful way and where the greatest impact is being felt in His Work around the world. I am sure that he was *not pleased* at what we were doing at the special weekend event. He is *not pleased* that we have been growing through our



increasing impact on the Internet, our outstanding television programs, our large circulation of *Tomorrow’s World* magazine, etc. In his time, Satan will *react* and try to “bring us down” if he possibly can. He always tries to divide and conquer. We know that. So we should all be praying fervently for God’s protection and deliverance from his vengeful attacks against God’s people and God’s Work.

For, as I said in my Internet-broadcasted sermon for the Family Weekend, we all must realize that we are in a *spiritual war*. We are actually *fighting*, not humans, but “wicked spirits in high places.” As the Apostle Paul was inspired to write: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:12–13).

Through the decades I served in God’s Work under Mr. Armstrong—and ever since, as well—I have often noticed how Satan is able to *confuse* people and somehow *divide them* if he possibly can. He will cause many to become upset about basically little things, and yet turn them aside from their part in God’s Work. Satan is *extremely clever* at this!

Throughout the American and British-descended nations, Satan is very busy absolutely *destroying* almost every vestige of true Christianity that he possibly can. We see that all the way from the “same-sex” marriage hysteria to the recent “self-identity” movement where men are able to state

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that they are women and somehow get away with it—even having legal backing wherein they can *sue somebody* who does not recognize that they really are *not* of the gender they claim to be! Our God-rejecting, anti-God society is willing to “swallow” *almost anything*, it seems! All across the British Isles, *millions* of Muslims have moved in and are asserting their control over entire cities and regional areas with increasing impunity. Often, the police do essentially **nothing!** From a recent article in *BreakingIsraelNews.com*, January 3, 2016, we read the following:

“Hospitals across Britain are dealing with at least 15 new cases of female genital mutilation (FGM) every day. Although FGM has been illegal in Britain since 1984, there has not been a single conviction.

At least 1,400 children were sexually exploited between 1997 and 2013 in the town of Rotherham, mostly by Muslim gangs, but police and municipal officials failed to tackle the problem because they feared being branded ‘racist’ or ‘Islamophobic.’

Reverend Giles Goddard, vicar of St John’s in Waterloo, central London, allowed a full Muslim prayer service to be held in his church. He also asked his congregation to praise ‘the God that we love, Allah.’

There has been a 60 percent increase in child sexual abuse reported to the police over the past four years, according to official figures.

British intelligence are monitoring more than 3,000 homegrown Islamist extremists willing to carry out attacks in Britain.”

How much will it take to “wake up” the basically peace-loving Anglo-Saxon peoples in Britain and America? Must the modern descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh have a knife at their *very own throats* in order to be concerned? What will it take? Would any of us need to witness our own

wife being gang-raped before we would take the problem seriously? *What will it take?*

Truly, brethren, a “spirit of blindness” has come over the British and American peoples in regard to their total disregard for God, their increasing heinous sins, which in the past would have been abhorred by the majority of the population, and our complete **turning away** from the entire way of Christianity as described in the Bible!

Yet, we in God’s Church must also “wake up”! We must not be like the lukewarm Laodiceans who just “allow” a gradual deterioration of morals to occur in their churches and in their lives. Remember, Laodiceans are never described as being totally blinded to the Truth. They are never described

**May God grant that all of us wake up while we have plenty of opportunity to give our lives to God with increasing feeling and passion! Brethren, we have the opportunity to have a genuine impact on this whole world and the many millions of people who are “starving” for God’s Truth around the world!**

as being totally wrong doctrinally. The main description, given to them in Revelation, is this: “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*” (Revelation 3:15–16).

Often, God’s people themselves do not fully realize what is happening. Satan is so subtle and sneaks up on us so that we are unaware we are really “boiling” like the proverbial frog in the cooking pot, or “freezing” in the cold away from God—until it is *too late* for us to act. Worse yet, as the Bible points out, many do not choose to go one way or the other, to either dedicate ourselves fully or not at all—they simply become “lukewarm”!

May God grant that all of us **wake up** while we have plenty of opportunity to *give our lives to Him* with increasing feeling and **passion!** Brethren, **we** have the opportunity to have a genuine *impact* on this whole world and the many **millions** of people who are “starving” for God’s Truth around the globe! God is giving us this Truth. We have the opportunity and the obligation to proclaim it powerfully and with heartfelt effort

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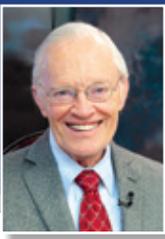
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## Our Passover Attitude

As the Passover season draws nearer, it is vital that we focus on the real *meaning* of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Many times, because the world emphasizes the idea of loving a “little Lord Jesus” in a wrong way, even we in God’s Church may tend to *deemphasize* that aspect of the Gospel that concerns Jesus Christ and His sacrifice. However, as Mr. Armstrong proclaimed a number of times in sermons and in writing, *we must not do that!*

For Christ is the Savior by whom we enter the Kingdom of God. He is the coming King of that very Kingdom. And He must *live His life* within us through the Holy Spirit, or we will **not** be in that Kingdom!

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, “Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the **gospel** of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, **concerning His Son Jesus Christ** our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:1–4). Paul clearly emphasized the *pivotal role* of “Jesus Christ our Lord” in the “Gospel of God.” We must not let any false teachers ever turn us away from the very *foundation* of our message—which cannot be separated from Jesus Christ, His death, His resurrection, His functioning now as our High Priest, and His future as *King* over the coming Kingdom or Government of God.

As we approach the Passover, let us *meditate* on the fact that the One who existed with God the Father from eternity was willing to make Himself “of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant” (Philippians 2:7). He “made Himself of no reputation,” coming into the human flesh to be horribly *beaten* with whips, and was then taken out and *crucified* to pay for our sins. We must constantly recognize that He *was* resurrected, *did* ascend to heaven and *now* sits in glory as our High Priest and coming King. Through Him, we come boldly to God in prayer. Through

the Holy Spirit, He must now **live** His life within us (Galatians 2:20).

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he stated, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:1–2).

### Christ Was Scourged for Our Healing!

*Especially* at Passover time, we should remember—and focus on—the fact that Christ had to be **scourged** just *before* He was crucified! The *purpose* of this scourging, as we understand from Scripture—was to pay the penalty for our *physical* transgressions of the laws of health and laws of nature. In that way, Christ became our *Healer*. The Apostle Peter wrote of Christ “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose **stripes** you were **healed**” (1 Peter 2:24). When the Apostle Paul explained to the Corinthians the meaning of the Passover, he reminded them, “For I received



from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me” (1 Corinthians 11:23–24). As we have explained many times at the Passover service, the *broken bread* is taken *before* the wine. For that bread clearly symbolizes *Christ’s body broken* in payment for our physical transgressions and carelessness in the way we treat our bodies, the temple of God’s Holy Spirit. Next, the red wine is taken—symbolizing Jesus’ **blood**, which was poured out as payment for our *spiritual* sins.

Later in the above passage, Paul declares, “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unwor-

thy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. *For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep*" (vv. 28–30). It should be clear, then, that we must exercise genuine **faith** in Christ's broken body for our healing **if** we expect God to heal us! At Passover time, we must "*discern*" the full meaning of the broken bread and the red wine that are taken as symbols of Christ's sacrifice.

However, because certain leaders crept into the modern Church of God and began to "water down" the entire approach to the Gospel, the knowledge and understanding of Christ's sacrifice was gradually *blotted out* in the minds of many! Instead of looking to God as Healer, many brethren began to forsake totally the practice of looking to God *first* for healing. Rather, they *automatically* took various pills and potions, or went to doctors for drugs and operations *instead of* being anointed first, when possible, and asking God in any case to go *above* and *beyond* what man can or should do!

The entire focus of *faith* in regard to healing was gradually obliterated in the minds of thousands of brethren! We all need to realize this and do everything we can to return to the faith "once for all delivered"—even in regard to divine healing! So please remember, brethren, as you approach the Passover, that Christ paid a *terrible penalty* so that you could be healed. If you come to the Passover *without* this understanding and this faith, many of **you**—like the Corinthians—may become weak or sick and may "sleep"! For Paul continued in the above passage, "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world" (vv. 31–32).

Please go back and **study** those prophetic verses in Isaiah 53:4–5 which clearly indicate what Christ's "scourging" was all about! In verse 4, it states, "He has borne our griefs" or, as the Hebrew is often translated, "sicknesses"! In verse 5 it shows that He was bruised for our iniquities and "by His **stripes** we are **healed**." Clearly, this has *directly* to do with the scourging Jesus suffered just before He was crucified, and with the meaning of the bread we take at the Passover—just *before* we take the wine symbolizing Christ's death for our spiritual sins.

Remember, the Gospel of Matthew clearly points out that when Jesus came and "*healed* all who were sick," it was done "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'He Himself took our infirmities and **bore our sicknesses**'" (Matthew 8:16–17).

A number of passages in the New Testament clearly indicate that spiritual forgiveness and physical healing are inexorably tied together! For when Jesus healed the paralytic, He told the doubting Pharisees, "For which is easier, to say, 'Your

sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"—then He said to the paralytic, 'Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house'" (Matthew 9:5–6). Whenever Jesus went out preaching, He not only taught the forgiveness of sins but He also **healed** the people of sickness and disease: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people" (Matthew 9:35).

### Power To Heal

When He sent out His twelve apostles—still unconverted, for the Holy Spirit was not yet given—He "gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to **heal** all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease" (Matthew 10:1). He instructed, "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:7–8). So the preaching of *physical healing* and the *forgiveness* of spiritual sins were **tied together** when Jesus and the apostles preached the Gospel! This was a **vital part** of the "Gospel message." In Luke 10, we find that even the "seventy others" who were sent out by Jesus apart from the apostles were given the same power and the **same commission** to *preach* and to **heal**! For Jesus told them, "Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'" (Luke 10:8–9).

After His resurrection, Jesus sent out the apostles and told them: "And these **signs** will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:17–18).

Many of us ministers have participated in **healing** the sick and in *casting out demons*. But these events are not experienced nearly as often as they should be!

*Why?*

Because, as Jesus asked, "when the Son of man comes, will He really find **faith** on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). Brethren, *many* scriptures indicate that God's people—at the **end** of this age—will be greatly lacking in faith. We need to realize that *this has affected all of us*! And God Almighty generally **does not heal** nearly as often unless there is an "atmosphere of **faith**!" Please remember that even Jesus Christ Himself—when He came back to His own hometown and relatives, "**could do no mighty work there**, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and

**Remember, the Gospel of Matthew clearly points out that when Jesus came and "healed all who were sick," it was done "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses'" (Matthew 8:16–17).**

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# A Community of Believers

By Gary F. Ehman

Each spring, true Christians start observing anew God's plan of salvation as demonstrated by keeping the Holy Days. For the most part, professing Christianity rejects the biblical Holy Days as pertaining only to the Jews, but to true believers these days are a modern-day magnification of what God revealed to ancient Israel or, as the Apostle Paul stated in the book of Colossians, "shadows of things to come."

There are many scholarly, religious-sounding words that can be used to make a comparison. One is *typology*—which simply means the predictive relationship of the Old and New Testaments. Starting in the spring, with the Passover—other than sharing the same date of Nisan 14—there is surprisingly little to compare the Old with the New. Jesus changed just about every aspect of the observance, while still preserving a form of ceremonial procedure that links the shedding of blood to salvation. Specifically, He substituted His blood and His flesh for that of a lamb.

In the old form, the blood of the lamb or kid sacrificed was smeared on doorways, while the animal was eaten; all of this symbolized Israel's protection from destruction along with the pending deliverance from Egyptian bondage. In the New Testament, however, Jesus said the Christian must do something that would have been unthinkable, even abhorrent to them, in "drinking His blood and eating His flesh" if we are to receive salvation: "Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day'" (John 6:53–54).

This had a distinct chilling effect on His followers at the end of His ministry. Whether they took His words literally, or the spiritual lesson was one that they could not or would not accept, their reaction was decidedly negative: "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more" (v. 66).

## A Communal Entity

The Apostle Paul, in his chiding first letter to the Corinthian brethren, brings up a point that we must understand, directly linked to observing the Passover. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:16–17). The Greek word for

"communion" is *koinōnia* [koy-nohn-ee'-ah], in context meaning the share that one has in anything, and in its participation.

Paul states very clearly that the Church is a communal entity, its bond linked directly back to the Passover communion experience. Whereas the Israelites were a community of slaves in Egypt, Christians in Paul's day and we today, are drawn together as a community through partaking of the body and blood of Jesus.

Before going into the specifics, we need to take a quick overview of what Paul was talking about in regard to Christians, based on Jesus Himself, the center of the process: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth" (John 17:17–19). We understand that Jesus was praying for the soon-to-be established Church.



This is clearly shown as He continues the prayer of unity: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in

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

The word "one" *heis* [hice], which Jesus used repeatedly, means one. While it is numeric, it also means to be included together *as one* unit. Jesus said that knowing and keeping the word of truth—in this regard the altered Passover service—sanctifies us as one body, the Church. His prayer was for the Father to establish this new revelation as a sign of Christian communication. It was, and still is, the intention of the Father and Jesus to fashion a community of believers united in thoughts and actions to act as one body.

Returning to Paul's letter to the Corinthians, note that he expands on this communion concept: "For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17). Through the Passover experience Christians move beyond just fellowship and literally become one. Let's take this apart and see it more clearly. Paul says we are to be partakers—*metechō* [met-ekh'-o]—an important word for us to understand. It means to share or participate; and by implication, because we do so, we belong to one another, because of what

we have done. The word “one” is *heis* [hice]. The word “bread” here is *artos* [ar'-tos], as implied, an unleavened loaf. The word “body” is *sōma* [so'-mah], while meaning fleshly, in context it means symbolically, a unified, social, family group. Paul made this more clear, later in his letter: “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” (1 Corinthians 12:12). The Church represents the body of Christ; those, therefore, in the Church, represent the body of Christ: “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually” (v. 27). Reading the entire chapter shows, plainly, this communal concept.

The apostle sustains this concept throughout his other epistles: “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22–23); “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another” (Romans 12:4–5). Again, it is a community of believers who share in this jointly.

### Old Testament Typology

Why do we keep these days of Unleavened Bread gathered together, as one body, while the whole world lies in utter ignorance of what we are doing? To understand, we need to look at the rich history behind this as an overview. God’s true Church, today, understands its worship of God is based, to some degree, on what God gave to the ancient tribes of Israel, as He rescued them from slavery in Egypt. There are some interesting and significant comparisons between them and the Church today.

In Old Testament typology, Israel was scattered, separated, a nation of slaves: “And the LORD said: ‘I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. . . . Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them’” (Exodus 3:7–9).

God performed some mighty deeds to destroy those that enslaved them and established an annual memorial for them to never forget what He did for them: “Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. . . . And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD’s Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD” (Exodus 12:5–12). The rest of the chapter establishes the Days of Unleavened Bread with all of its symbolism.

In summation, God brought them communally together. In unity they kept the Passover, ate the lambs and kids, while

God protected them under the blood of those animals. They ate in unity and the next day made preparations to leave Egypt, working together to spoil the Egyptians and leaving as a community: “And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them what they requested. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds—a great deal of livestock” (Exodus 12:36–38). God brought them together as a unified community; a nation.

But most importantly, God was always at center in the entire process: “And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people” (Exodus 13:21–22).

The comparison can easily be made. The things they were introduced to, and did, are duplicated in the Christian experience, but from a new perspective. We *were* a scattered group of individuals in bondage to sin. The Apostle Peter affirms this: “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 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).

God looked upon us, called us to understanding, and through the blood of the Lamb made us His. There is a stunning typological comparison: “‘Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel” (Exodus 19:5–6).

Christians, today, keep the Night to be Much Remembered, not from the old perspective, but from the new. Israel came out of Egypt (representing sin) with a high hand, a united new nation. We, today, honor God by entering into a communal relationship with one another in and through Jesus. Why do we unleaven our lives and not eat leavened bread? It is a reminder that we live in the midst of sin. We put leaven off of our property, symbolizing our new Christian lives, free of sin. Each piece of unleavened bread we eat pictures our rejection of the temptation to sin. We keep our minds focused on the sacrifice of Jesus for us—the New Covenant, not the Old.

### Unleavened Christians

There is a crucial element involved here: “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7–8). The Greek phrase; “purge out” is *ekkathairō* [ek-kath-ahēe-ro], meaning to cleanse thoroughly. The word “leaven” is *zumē* [dzoo'-may], to ferment

or that which ferments, causes a boiling up. We are to be a “new lump” *neos* [neh'-os], *phurama* [foo'-ram-ah] new, youthful.

What Paul is saying in verse 7 is something astonishing, something we tend to overlook in our application of God's truth. He said: “since you **are** truly unleavened.” What? Christians **are** already unleavened? The Corinthians were “unleavened” in the sense that Paul had written this letter probably during the Days of Unleavened Bread as they had obviously just observed the Passover and some were “drunken” and others took it without proper faith (1 Corinthians 11:23-30).

Also, many of them were “divided” in their loyalties to Paul and others and not fully converted and trusting in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). In addition, the Corinthians were “judging” between Paul and other apostles—and even false apostles—as Paul indicated in 1 Corinthians 4. Also, beside the one man who was guilty of incest, in 1 Corinthians 5 Paul clearly states that quite a bit of sexual immorality was named among them and was not being dealt with. Also, they were obviously going to law against one another even in the Church (1 Corinthians 6:1-6). Moreover, some were going into the temple of idols and causing a “stumbling block” to be cast before their brethren (1 Corinthians 8).

Shockingly, unless you understand the complete pagan background of these Corinthian brethren, it was really awful that some were literally “drunk” at the Passover (1 Corinthians 11:21). They were misusing the gifts of the Holy Spirit and showing them off, and certainly misusing the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12 and 14). Some among them were even doubting the resurrection from the dead (1 Corinthians 15)! And to make the point very clear, Paul himself says to them, “for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife and divisions among you, are you not carnal in behaving like mere men” (1 Corinthians 3:3). Therefore it is exceedingly clear that the Corinthians as a whole were not deeply converted. They were not “unleavened” in the spiritual sense, but only in the sense that they had put out the physical leaven from their homes. They were neglecting to put sin totally out of their lives, their thoughts and their attitudes. They were even “glorying” in their own righteousness perhaps because of some of the spiritual gifts God allowed them to have.

So it is little wonder that Paul stated: “Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (v. 6)? The word “glorying” is *kauchēma* [kow'-khay-mah], in context, boasting of their “righteousness.”

For the Christian today, the symbolism we observe is a reminder; it is a way of spiritually meditating on physical things that can become a problem. **But the Christian should not become caught up in physical ritual and forget the reality of what needs to be spiritually accomplished.** There should be no hidden sins in us, no sins overlooked because we are so busy employing rigid, Pharisaic practices of using a candle to search out old leaven in attics, garages, in cracks or crevices of our homes. The

Christian is a spiritual creation of God, seeking to discover His will in our lives, rejecting any taint of unrighteousness.

Neither should we be revisiting old, long-repented-of, past sins. God says He has put them away from Him, as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). Paul explains it this way: “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead” (Philippians 3:13). We need not kid ourselves; we know the things we were doing were wrong. We stopped, repented of doing them, and now we need to forget it—to get on with the life God intends for us. That is what these days picture for us. “But now in Christ

**For the Christian today, the symbolism we observe is simply a reminder; it is a way of spiritually meditating on physical things that can become a problem. *But the Christian should not get caught up in physical ritual and forget the reality of what needs to be spiritually accomplished.***

Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13).

### Separate from the World

We are a new community within the old. Our obedience to God separates us from the world (Revelation 18:4). These days remind us of that separation. But we must make a concerted effort to make that separation: “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). The word “communion,” *koinōnia* [koy-nohn-ee'-ah] means partnership, fellowship, but amplified in a sense of participation. It is linked with righteousness and unrighteousness—light and darkness. Truly, we are that new lump.

Paul sums it up: “Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you’” (v. 17). Paul was loosely quoting from the book of Isaiah: “Depart! Depart! Go out from there, touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her, be clean, you who bear the vessels of the LORD. For you shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight; for the LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard” (Isaiah 52:11–12). God wants us to be separate from the world, while we are still in the world—a community of righteous light within a community of unrighteous darkness.

There is no more appropriate place to end this article than with the words Jesus clearly used, that identify Christians as being separate because of what they do, living and practicing the full counsel of God in this confused world today: “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake” (Luke 6:22, KJV).

Have a deeply profound Passover and joyous Feast of Unleavened Bread! ■

# Three Times a Year

By Dexter B. Wakefield

The phrase, “three times a year,” is repeated several times in the Bible, referring to three seasons during the year—one in early spring, one in late spring and one in the autumn. For instance, on each of the annual Holy Days, we read a particular scripture prior to making an offering: “**Three times a year** all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed” (Deuteronomy 16:16). From the example of Leviticus 23:4–8, members of God’s Church today make an offering each time we come before God in each of the seven sacred assemblies that occur during the annual three seasons.

But why did God put His seven sacred assemblies into three groups? He could have said “seven times a year?” Is there a particular meaning to the way He grouped them into three particular seasons? God’s annual Holy Days “are a shadow of things to come” (Colossians 2:17). *Why “three times a year”?*

These three seasons have great meaning for God’s Church, and there is a profound relationship between them.

## The Spring Holy Days: God’s People Made Innocent!

The first season is *Passover* and the Days of *Unleavened Bread*. At that time, what should we be doing and thinking about? As we approach Passover, we will likely hear sermons about putting out leaven from our homes and how that relates to putting the leaven of sin out of our lives. In the Bible, leaven often pictures sin as in Jesus’ admonition, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matthew 16:11). During the time as we approach Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, we are examining ourselves and asking God for true repentance. The apostle Paul instructed the Gentile Church in Corinth, Greece regarding the spirit of keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread, “Therefore let us **keep the feast**, not with

old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:8). We come to Christ in true repentance, which is pictured by putting leaven out of our homes before the Days of Unleavened Bread.

A scripture in the Book of Acts is a good summary of the Holy Days that occur in the spring of the year. It instructs all who would come to Christ to **do** something. The Apostle Peter preached a powerful sermon. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’ 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 2:36–38).

If you succeed in putting out leaven from your home, do you still need to keep the Passover? Of course you do! Does repenting of breaking God’s commandments remove the penalty of your sins? Of course not! True repentance is like that also. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong often said, “Repentance means change!” But repentance can only change what you are going to do. It *cannot change* what you *did already*. Only one thing can remove the guilt of your past sins—the *sacrifice of Christ*—and we remember that each year with a memorial to His death. It is called **the Passover!** The Passover reminds us of the forgiveness we are to seek year-round.

And then we are to lead repentant lives. Sometimes people say, “Well, you can’t keep God’s commandments perfectly,” suggesting that we no longer need to keep them. The answer is “That’s why we need Christ’s sacrifice!”—“All have sinned...” (Romans 3:23), and we still make mistakes. God knows that, so He gives us His Holy Spirit to live in us *to enable us to keep them*. And He also makes provision for our forgiveness when we err and sin.

The Apostle John explained this in his first general epistle. Keep in mind that he was addressing baptized, converted Christians: “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses** [in the present tense, ongoing] **us from all sin**. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we **confess our sins** [in repentance], He is faithful and just to forgive us **our sins** and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us” (1 John 1:7–10).

“My little children, these things I write to you, *so that you may not sin*. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. Now by

this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:1–6).

We need Christ's sacrifice to cover our past sins, and then as we go through life, we continue to put sin out. *We must lead repentant lives!*

Does this sound familiar? *We act this out every year in the season of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread!* In an important sense, the annual Festivals are *a seven-act play* that God has us go through every year so that we do not forget what He is doing. They picture God's plan of salvation, which begins with Christ, our personal Passover: "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). Therefore, we are "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ *for the remission of sins.*"

**De-leavening our homes** pictures repentance and coming to Christ in a repentant state of mind. Keeping leaven out of our homes and diet during the Days of Unleavened Bread pictures our continued repentant life—keeping sin out.

**Passover** pictures the blood of the Lamb of God—our Passover, Jesus Christ—washing away our sins. This *unmerited pardon is by grace*—our repentance does not earn it. As Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong put it, a man who is on death row for murder cannot save his life by being law-abiding in prison. He is guilty for what he already did. He can only live if he is *pardoned*. A person who is so pardoned would indeed be grateful and joyful! After we come to Christ in repentance, we undergo baptism and rise up out of our watery grave, completely cleansed of our sins, guiltless and reconciled with the Father. The Passover that pictures this begins the evening of Nisan 14 (Leviticus 23:5; 1 Corinthians 11:23–66).

The Apostle Paul wrote the Church in Rome, "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin" (Romans 6:3–6).

Once we are cleansed of our sins and reconciled to the Father—in effect made "unleavened" and guiltless in His sight—we go through life striving always to remain "unleavened" and to avoid sin. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (v. 1–2).

## What Does It Mean To Be Cleansed?

It began with having your eyes opened to be able to *see and understand* things you could not understand before. People who are new to the Church often exclaim, "I can understand the Bible for the first time!"

Then, you looked at yourself in the mirror of God's word (James 1:22–25), and you did not like what you saw. But that remorse led to true repentance. After the Apostle Paul had written the Church in Corinth a corrective letter (1 Corinthians), he wrote to them again, noting their change. "Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that *your sorrow led to repentance*. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For *godly sorrow* produces *repentance* leading to *salvation*, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death" (2 Corinthians 7:9–10).

When we realize that we are profaned by the guilt of our sins, it leads to a *strong desire* to be cleansed of the guilt. We come to Christ in a repentant state of mind to be "baptized for the remission of sins" by one of God's true ministers. After baptism, we feel great gratitude to our Father who made all this possible through the sacrifice of His Son who suffered so much for us. We are determined to *never go back* into the bondage of this world's way of life—and there is *great joy* at being freed of it!

**The Days of Unleavened Bread**—Nisan 15 through 21—

picture our unleavened state in Christ and our keeping further leavening by sin out of our lives. God's people lead repentant lives! The Days of Unleavened Bread begin with a *joyful* Holy Day, the

First Day of Unleavened Bread. We begin that day with a *joyful* feast called "The Night to Be Much Observed," and we have a commanded holy convocation during the day portion. The last day (Nisan 21) is also a Holy Day celebrated with a holy convocation.

Just as ancient Israel came out of slavery in Egypt "with a high hand," God's people are also *joyful* at being cleansed, made just and reconciled with the Father. The Spring Holy Days picture... **God's people made innocent!**

*Only after a person has obeyed the spiritual meaning of the first season of the year—repentance and baptism for the remission of sins—is he or she ready to receive the meaning of the second Holy Day season. The meaning of the first season makes the meaning of the second season possible!*

## Pentecost: God's People Made Holy!

Recall that Peter said in Acts 2:38, "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**. That brings us to the second season of the year, and the next great part of the Spring Holy Days—**Pentecost**.

On the Holy Day of Pentecost, God founded His Church by the giving of His Holy Spirit, beginning His Church and setting His people apart—*sanctifying them*. So how are God's people set apart? The Bible mentions God's **Holy Spirit**, God's **truth**,



and **faith** in that truth. Israel was described as a holy nation, but with the giving of the Holy Spirit, the promises were made available to the Gentiles as well. “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 15:16).

**Also, God’s truth sets us apart.** We are in this world, but not of it. Christ said, “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 17:15–18).

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).

**And that living faith 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

**When we say “holy” and “sanctified” what do we mean? “Sanctified” means “set apart,” and something that is holy is set apart for a divine purpose. That purpose may be for His divine presence or for His divine use. It is God who defines holiness—not humankind.**

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 say “holy” and “sanctified” what do we mean? “Sanctified” means “set apart,” and something that is holy is **set apart for a divine purpose.** That purpose may be for His divine presence or for His divine use. It is God who defines holiness—not humankind. For instance, when God said, “Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy,” He sanctified a particular day, the seventh, and human traditions cannot change that.

God’s Spirit in you makes you **holy** to God! Speaking of the Church of God, the Apostle Peter wrote, “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 of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

**The holiness of God’s people is extremely important. It leads to eternal life!** “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*” (Romans 6:22).

How does this work? Consider the verse, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Let’s look at this more closely, because this statement is *literally true*. If you die profaned by your sins, you cannot be in the first resurrection—the resurrection to life. All who are in that resurrection are immortal God-family members—and are *holy*! Those who are still profaned by the guilt of their sins can be resurrected physically, but they will still die. “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me’” (John 14:6). Christ, through His resurrection, is the way—the **only way!**

God commands us to be holy—for a most important reason. “But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for [because] I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:15–16). No profaned person will be in that holy Family and government—God’s holy mountain.

**Pentecost pictures God’s people made holy!** The holiness that God gives His people—as pictured by the Holy Day of Pentecost—is essential if we are to come to the meaning of the next holy season and Holy Days.

### **The Fall Festival Season: God’s People Glorified!**

Put simply, unless you are cleansed of your sins and reconciled with the Father, you cannot receive His Holy Spirit and be made holy. God does not put His Holy Spirit into someone while they are profaned by their sins and not reconciled with the Father—that is why “baptism for the remission of sins” comes before the laying on of hands. And unless you are holy and set apart, God will not resurrect you to immortality into the Holy God Family. But if you are sanctified by His Spirit and remain so... Then when Christ comes, *something very wonderful and very dramatic happens!*

The Apostle Paul explained to the Church in Thessaloniki, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:13–17).

So what will this true life be like? *Glorious!* We will be like Christ in our corporeal nature! “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be *conformed to His glorious body*, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:20–21).

The Apostle John affirmed this promise, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, *we shall be like Him*, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

What is His glorious body like? John described what he saw as, “His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters” (Revelation 1:14–15).

In God’s Kingdom, the righteous will actually *shine like the sun!* Christ Himself taught us, “The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. **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 13:41–43).

*But do we hear what Christ is describing?* He had glory with the Father before the creation of the cosmos. And on the Passover, before He was crucified, He prayed to the Father: “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, *with the glory which I had with You before the world was...* And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, **that they may be one just as We are one...** Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory” (John 17:5, 22, 24).

How are a father and son one? As a family! It is not a question of *whether* there is one God, but *how*. *The oneness of God is the oneness of a divine Family, which we can enter as sons of God!* God’s great plan is to give “...eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for **glory, honor, and immortality**” (Romans 2:7).

One of the things we remember about this third season of the year—the Fall Festival Season—is the exciting truth of what we will become as this day pictures—God’s redeemed, holy children glorified with eternal life—like Jesus Christ, who is the *firstborn of many!*

What will we *do* in this glorified state?

“And have made us **kings and priests** to our God; and we shall **reign on the earth**” (Revelation 5:10). The kings in God’s holy mountain will exercise *righteous government*, and one of the things that priests will do is *teach*:

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days [our time] that the mountain of the LORD’s house [the kingdom and government of His holy Family] shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; **He will teach us His ways**, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning



hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:2–4).

And again:

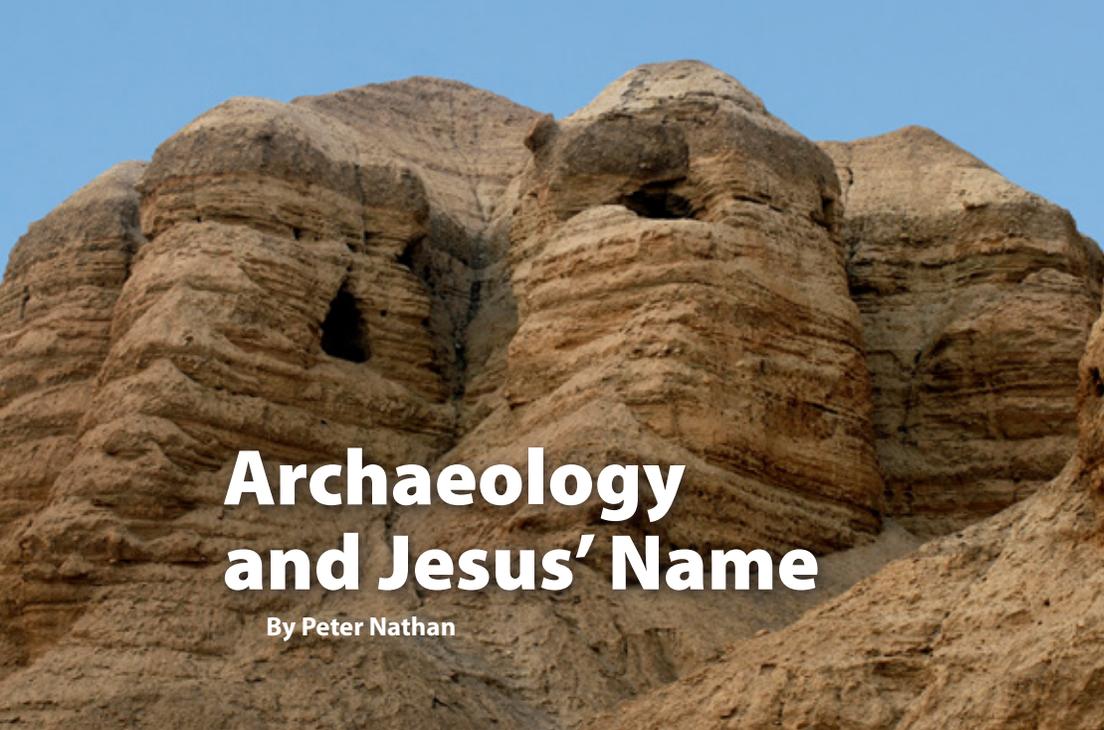
“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, [why?] *for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea*” (Isaiah 11:9).

If you overcome to the end—you will be among those who bring about this great outcome!

“**Three times a year**”—it is a wonderful, extraordinary plan that God has us *act out* in three seasons of the year. You must first go through the meaning of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread in order to take part in the meaning of Pentecost. And Pentecost makes possible the meaning of Trumpets, Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day. *These three seasons are profoundly connected!* And the end of this great plan is... **a new beginning!** As evangelist, Mr. John Ogwyn once described it, God’s Holy Family stands at the **threshold of eternity!**

*God’s glorified family will shine forever!* Daniel prophesied a message for **our time** when he recorded, “At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. *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 12:1–3).

This Passover, all members of God’s Church will “act out” the first part of this great Plan of Salvation! ■



# Archaeology and Jesus' Name

By Peter Nathan

In the early 1950s a group of Bedouin arrived at the Palestine Archaeological Museum, now known as the Rockefeller Museum, in Jerusalem with documents they had discovered in a cave. These were not the original findings of the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran, but from another location between Ein Gedi and Masada. The scrolls contained some biblical texts, one of which is very important for our understanding of Scripture. It was a Scroll of the Minor Prophets, written in Greek.

Details of this scroll were published in the 1950s and it has been a source of study since. This is an important discovery as so much of the Jewish literature recorded in the Greek language—such as Josephus and Philo of Alexandria and the book of Enoch—and especially those Greek language documents that predated the time of Jesus Christ have been preserved by communities of professing Christians rather than by the Jews themselves. As a result, we never know how much “editing” has been done to the texts to support a particular Christian position, or to suit a particular group’s ends.

Most importantly, the text itself—although in Greek—is clearly a Jewish text noted for its closeness to what became known as the Masoretic Text compared with the later Christian renditions of the Greek formalized by Origen at the beginning of the third century. The accepted date for the writing of this text is the end of the first-century BC, in other words, contemporary with the birth of Jesus. The text had been deposited in the cave at Nahal Hever at the end of the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome (135AD) and was hidden in the caves with other biblical writings and correspondence in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.

So why is this important to us in the 21st century?

## Solving a Problem of Names

Because of the time of its writing, this scroll, its Jewish origins and above all the language it is written with enables us to solve a problem of names. People have contended that the name Jesus was a pagan name and that the Son of God would have to have a Hebrew name alone. They contend that it is a matter of breaking the third Commandment to use the term Jesus in the English language, or as it might be translated in any other language. Was the name Jesus—or in Greek IESOUS—an accepted name among the Jews at the time of the early Christian Church?

The Minor Prophets Scroll tells us yes it was. In Zechariah 3:8 we have a High Priest who was purged of his sins and made to stand righteous before the Eternal. He was named in English Joshua. That is the translation of the Hebrew, YEHOSHUA. In Greek, this scroll tells us the name is IESOUS, the term from which we derive Jesus in the English language.

So comes the claim that “[t]he Savior was never called Jesus in His lifetime. In fact, the name ‘Jesus’ did not exist until about 500 years ago, as scholars point out” (DeWitt Smith, “The Heavenly Father’s Great Name”), is proved wrong by this archaeological discovery. Irrespective of the ability to pronounce Jesus in English, the reality is that Jesus in Greek, IESOUS, is not a “pagan name” so to speak but the traditional and acceptable translation of the Hebrew YEHOSHUA, commonly known to English readers as Joshua.

But, the evidence for the name Jesus does not stop there.

As a result of all the archaeology, especially since the 1950s to the present, names recovered from archaeological discoveries have been catalogued. One of these is a lexicon of Jewish names by Israeli scholar Tal Ilan. In her lexicon, Ilan shows the widespread use of this name throughout Palestine during the period from Alexander the Great until the end of the Mishnaic era (200AD) (Tal Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity: Part 1, Palestine 330BCE–200 CE.*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism, 91.

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002. pp. 127–133). Of specific interest is the frequency with which the Greek name IESOUS was discovered carved into *ossuaries*, or stone burial boxes. This was a particularly Jewish form of burial process. Bodies were laid in tombs, as was Jesus Christ's after His crucifixion. But stone-hewn tombs were too precious to use only once. Families intended to bury generations within the family tomb. So after a period of decay—about a year—the bones were placed in a stone box—an ossuary—that could then be placed in a niche within the tomb and the tomb readied for another deceased family member.

One idea put forward as to why ossuaries came into use is that these stone boxes ensured that an individual's bones could

be kept intact awaiting the resurrection, so they would not risk becoming mingled with those of others, thus (they feared) jeopardizing the individuality of the deceased in the resurrection (L. Y. Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem's Customs and Tombs: Part Four," *Biblical Archaeologist*, 1982, p. 111). One of the largest known of these tombs, *The*



*Sanhedra Tombs*, could accommodate 70 bodies at a time and had provision for numerous ossuaries. Ossuaries were then often engraved with the name of the individual whose bones they contained. This practice was only used by the Jews in the vicinity of Jerusalem for a century leading up to the fall of the city in 70AD. It was continued elsewhere in the land for some time after the fall of Jerusalem. So, it gives us an interesting

## The evidences from both the ossuaries and the archaeological discoveries from the caves provide watertight proof of the widespread usage of the Greek name IESOUS, before, during and after the physical life of Christ.

insight into the names used by Jewish families at the time our Savior walked this earth and during the formative years of the early Church.

According to Ilan's listing, the name IESOUS has been found engraved on eleven ossuaries, while an abbreviated form of the Hebrew, YEHOSHUA-YESHUA, is found on twelve other ossuaries found in the precincts of Jerusalem. The abbreviation of the name Joshua is found in Ezra 2:2 and in the books of Nehemiah and 1 Chronicles. The contracted name was the norm after the return from captivity.

## More Evidence

What can we know about the individuals who were interred in caves around Jerusalem and whose remains were placed in ossuaries? Jerusalem was a favored place to be buried, close to the temple in expectation of the resurrection and coming of the Messiah. Families from outside of Jerusalem, even from remote locations such as Cyrene in North Africa, purchased tombs in Jerusalem in which to be buried. Joseph of Arimathea, in whose new tomb the body of Jesus was interred, is an example. So the names engraved on the ossuaries were not pagans, but people who had in some way and to some degree looked for the redemption

of Israel and the resurrection of the dead. These individuals could be likened to the devout Jews, assembled in Jerusalem, who heard Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost in 31AD. Their response to the truth of God's plan helped to lay a strong foundation as among the first "building blocks" of the early New Testament Church.

The other location that provided numerous entries for Ilan's lexicon was the documentary discoveries of the Babatha archive at Nahal Hever, the same location where the Minor Prophets Scroll, discussed at the start of this article, was found. Other documents were to

be found at Muraba'at and Masada, adding to the frequency with which the name IESOUS was found among Jewish people. Of these discoveries, we find the Greek IESOUS some 20 times while the Hebrew YESHUA appears 25 times. Bear in mind that the discoveries of the Babatha letters and the documents from Muraba'at were not just from any Jew who may have been influenced by pagan ideas.

These documents belonged to and described supporters of Simon Bar Kochba, a messianic pretender. So once again these people were looking for a messiah to save them from their enemies and to establish the Kingdom of God.

The evidences from both the ossuaries and the archaeological discoveries from the caves provide watertight proof of the widespread usage of the Greek name IESOUS, before, during and after the physical life of Jesus Christ.

So the idea that the name Jesus was pagan, or that He would not have a Greek name and only a Hebrew or Aramaic name, does not hold up to the evidence. Greek names, which were translations of, or equivalents to, Hebrew names are very well attested. Early Church members were not expected to know Hebrew names as a prerequisite for baptism into the body of Christ. ■

# Woman to Woman

By Faye League

## A BLESSING TO OTHERS

A lady I know received a card of appreciation from a family thanking her for helping them and for some items she had given to them that they were able to share with others. The person who sent the card ended the message by saying, “You have been a true blessing to many.” This lady had never thought of herself as being a blessing to others, but the card was so encouraging and uplifting that she became determined to continue on in this endeavor. So she began to look for other opportunities to be a true blessing to others.

While pondering this, I could think of no finer example for Christian women to emulate than that of the ideal virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10–31, who apparently was a blessing to all who knew her. When we read these verses, we find that the type of virtuous woman depicted in them had many fine attributes of godly character—and one may think that these are such high standards that they are impossible to reach. However, when viewing them as goals and guidelines for which to strive, as we bring these principles over into the twenty-first century, we can then more clearly understand how to fit them into our daily lives.

In seeking to emulate these virtuous attributes, we would need to recognize, in summary of Proverbs 31:10–31, that this virtuous woman was: trustworthy (reliable), industrious (busy and diligent), well organized, responsible, compassionate, kind, wise, family-oriented, God-fearing and that she abounded in good works. “Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates (Proverbs 31:31).

Let us also take a look at a few other ways that we as Christian women can be a true blessing to others.

### Cultivate a Calm Spirit

Uncontrolled emotions can sometimes wreak havoc and cause much pain and suffering—especially in the realm of anger. “Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools” (Ecclesiastes 7:9). Also, “Whoever has

no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls” (Proverbs 25:28).

I once had a neighbor who was a very nice lady except for one thing—she had a “hair-trigger” temper. My family and I would hear her lashing out at her husband and children (she had seven) in the summertime when the windows were raised at night to let in the cool summer breezes. This lady would absolutely “lose it” and rant and rave for five minutes or more—oblivious to the fact that she was disturbing the neighbors and was being a very bad example to her children.

On the other hand, her husband was a very quiet, mild man. I do not recall him ever raising his voice to her at all. I suppose that one reason could have been that he did not think it would be a very wise thing to do, since she was bigger than he was. The fact of the matter is that this family had no lasting peace in their home—due to her fiery temper. “Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman” (Proverbs 21:19).

As we all know, rearing children can be a trying experience at times. However, yelling and screaming at

them is not the answer. Sometimes it may take maximum effort in order to maintain a calm spirit—especially if a child is trying the mother’s patience (they know how to do this). Keeping a calm spirit results in clear thinking—so that the best decisions can be made as to how to handle situations which need attention. In dealing with some situations, sometimes it is wise to take on the role of a peacemaker. “The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts” (Proverbs 17:14). In Matthew 5:9 we read, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

Certain incidents can occur sometimes when least expected—which can threaten peace and can lead to confrontations if not handled properly. For example, in a rare incidence, the aforementioned lady with the fiery temper came to my back door one afternoon with her three-year-old daughter in tow. I could tell that she was “on the verge” of losing her temper. She said to me, “Look what your son [also three years old] did to my daughter—he threw red sand in her



hair and I had just washed it!” I said, “Oh, no!” Then I replied, “However, your daughter does the same thing to my son, and I just have not said anything about it.” This caught her by surprise, and then realizing that this was “a two-way street,” she began to calm down. I said to her, “We both will just have to teach them not to do this (throw sand in each other’s hair) to each other, and be firm about it.” She agreed, calmed down, became more amiable, and then she went back home with peace between us. In her defense, without going into detail, I will have to say that overall she was one of the best neighbors I have ever had and I still remember her with fondness.

### Encourage Others

In Job 14:1 we read, “Man [mankind] who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.” There are times in life when one can become discouraged due to certain events or incidents that may occur. Life is not always a “bed of roses,” as the saying goes. Without encouragement from others, it would be very difficult to carry on at times. Encouragement is a very important aspect of life, especially when it comes along at just the right time.

In times past, my husband and I would never allow ourselves to be “down in the dumps” at the same time. We would always encourage each other out of that type of thinking. I can recall a very unpleasant incident that happened, which caused him to have to struggle with discouragement. I encouraged him as much as I could, and I also prayed for God to encourage him. Shortly thereafter, he received two very positive phone calls, which were immensely encouraging to him and lifted his spirits again. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Proverbs 25:11). “Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones” (Proverbs 16:24). “The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and a good report makes the bones healthy” (Proverbs 15:30). It was such a pleasure to see his eyes light up again.

To know that you have been a blessing to others by encouraging them is very rewarding, especially when the encouragement is given to help them through a trial or test. Some of the most encouraging words in Scripture are: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). Also, “The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (Proverbs 18:10).

Christ assures us in Hebrew 13:5 that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Very encouraging!

In Romans 8:31 the Apostle Paul, after an explanation (from start to finish) of God’s calling (v. 30), spoke these words of encouragement and assurance: “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”

To seek out the nuggets and gems of encouragement which can be found in God’s word and then to meditate on them, can increase godly confidence, trust and faith. All we have to do is to dig (search) for them through diligent Bible study until we find them. Then, as we are encouraged, we will be more thoroughly equipped to be a true blessing to others by encouraging them.

### Let God’s Ministry Be a Blessing to You

One of the first lessons my family and I learned when we came into the Church was—that in order to learn how to rule, one must first learn how to be ruled. We had to learn that there was godly authority in God’s Church and that one should respect it. “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct” (Hebrews 13:7). Also, “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17). This scripture shows that true ministers of God will always have the best interests of each Church member at heart—and will advise accordingly.

Several years ago, a lady who lived with her elderly parents came to my husband for ministerial counseling. She said that she and her parents had a close relative who had become somewhat cold and distant toward them in her demeanor. She said that they did not know what to do—since the lady might be offended in some way. My husband told her to reach out and give the lady a warm phone call and perhaps the situation would turn around, and if an apology was due, to apologize.

This was not exactly what the lady wanted to hear because she was concerned that her phone call would not be received warmly. However, she prayed about the matter and called the relative, who did receive her call warmly and after talking things over, the family invited the relative for dinner the next Friday evening. Afterward, the lady who called the relative related to my husband how pleasant everything turned out and that she was so glad that she followed his advice because fences were mended and bridges repaired in this family relationship.

In our personal lives, our example of highly esteeming and respecting ministerial leadership can be a true blessing to others. “And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13).

There are many ways and opportunities to be a true blessing to others and the ones mentioned here are just a few. However, if we put forth the effort to put these into practice—not only will we be a true blessing to others, but we will be blessed as well. ■



# God, Family, Work and Church

*Setting the right priorities is vital for our success as Christians.  
Yet even some very zealous Christians may be surprised by  
what the Bible really teaches on this subject.*

**A**s God's Spirit-begotten children, we are preparing to enter the Kingdom of God. We are about to graduate and be inducted into God's Family to help rule the world under Jesus Christ. But each of us must *qualify* for a position of rulership. To help us qualify, we need to prioritize our time.

You may have heard of the phenomenon known as the "super-deacon." This is a man who, upon ordination, seems to be in the center of every decision made by his local congregation. Should the floor be mopped before services, or should it be vacuumed? What about after services? Must all the after-services snacks be gluten-free, or is it acceptable to have just one gluten-free offering? What about white sugar in the snacks? Meanwhile, how many parking spaces must be reserved for visitors with special needs? How many parking attendants will be needed? And who is their boss?

Sometimes this super-deacon will even try to influence those matters that are usually the pastor's prerogative—and then he may express hurt or upset if the pastor insists on doing things a different way.

Yes, most of us have seen this phenomenon. And, yes, there is also such a thing as a "super-deaconess"—whether she is a general in the "coffee-pot wars" or whether she simply insists on micromanaging the personal decisions of other ladies when it is not her business to do so.

Thankfully, the vast majority of those serving in the Living Church of God do not fit those stereotypes. We strive to follow Dr. Meredith's frequent admonitions to practice "servant leadership" in all we do. Yet, with so much to accomplish and relatively few workers to carry out the needed tasks, it can be easy for a zealous Church member to become so wrapped up in Church activity that he or she finds that activity cutting into time that would otherwise be spent earning a living or caring for family members.

Surely there can be nothing wrong with going "all-out" to serve—or can there in fact be a hidden danger? What

does Scripture actually teach us? The Apostle Paul knew how important it is to recognize the value of our time: "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed" (Romans 13:11).

The less time we have, the more valuable our time becomes. Dr. Meredith often emphasizes the importance of time management—and has done so as recently as his March-April 2016 *Tomorrow's World* "Personal" which he has titled "Make Every Day Count!" Indeed, since time is running out for every one of us, we must be careful to prioritize and use our time wisely. If we do not understand our Christian priorities, we may find ourselves looking back at a great deal of activity and feeling a great deal of regret over the decisions we made—and failed to make.

So, why should we prioritize? And what should those priorities be?

## **Priority 1: Put God First**

"And God spoke all these words, saying: 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have *no other gods before Me*'" (Exodus 20:1–3).

God thundered those words from Mount Sinai. He further commanded: "You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God..." (vv. 4–5).

God does not want us to worship any other god or to put anything else ahead of Him! God says we are to worship Him, and Him alone. He has to be first in our lives.

Notice further: "And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him [Christ], saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What

is your reading of it?’ So he answered and said, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.’ And He said to him, ‘You have answered rightly; do this and you will live’” (Luke 10:25–28).

Clearly, we must put God *first*—in our minds, our hearts and our lives. But **how** do we put God first? How do we show God that we truly love Him? The Apostle John tells us: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

Day by day we are learning how to love God, and we love Him more and more as we strive to keep His commandments. “...By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:5–6).

The way to walk with Christ is to imitate Him—even in our thinking. This can only be done through *daily Bible study and prayer*.

We need to ask ourselves if we are putting our personal relationship with our Creator *first*. Or do we allow other things in our lives to come before the true God? Are we striving to keep God’s commandments every day with the help of the Holy Spirit?

Now, if we are putting God first through Bible study and prayer, if we are setting our sights on the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33), we will be growing in the character of Almighty God, our heavenly Father. We will be preparing to be born into His Family!

## Priority 2: Put Family Second

We know that “family” is extremely important to God because He is in the process of preparing to expand His divine Family. So it follows that our *physical* families should be priority number two.

Our family relationships begin with our parents. The fifth commandment tells us to “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you” (Exodus 20:12). This applies to all parents, deserving or not. God did not say, “If they are worthy of it.” Some of us have had good relationships with mothers and fathers, and can be grateful for that. Yet even those who have not had good relationships with their parents are still commanded to honor them!

God considers honoring our parents so important that during the Old Testament dispensation, He pronounced the death penalty on any who would strike their fathers or mothers, or even merely curse them (Exodus 21:15, 17). That is how seriously God looks at honoring our parents! We must not lift a hand against them, either physically or psychologically.

For those of us whose parents have died, there is nothing more we can do for them except keep up a right attitude toward them. Our children and their children will still be influenced by the attitudes we display regarding our deceased parents, so we still want to set the best example we can, honoring the memories of our deceased parents, encouraging our nieces, nephews and grandchildren to honor their parents, and so on.

## Love Your Mate

Part of our second priority in life includes love and respect toward our mates. The Apostle Paul instructs husbands and wives, “Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband” (1 Corinthians 7:3).

If we affirmed before God that we were going to take this man or this woman, and God solemnized that service and that wedding, are we going to break our word before God by not loving them, or by putting our mate away? We promised to take our mate until death do us part, through both sickness and good health.

Paul further states, “And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy” (vv. 13–14).

A big problem in marriage is that when a husband and wife come together and live with each other for a while, and the “honeymoon is over,” suddenly one or the other mate realizes that this person is not really the way she, or he, thought they were. Then the mate goes to work in an attempt to change the other.

This is entirely the wrong approach! We must never forget what marriage symbolizes. Two becoming **one**—*one flesh!*

“So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones” (Ephesians 5:28–30).

Devastation occurs within families broken by divorce. Those who have come from divorced homes know the hurt, the pain and suffering they went through as children. How can parents do that to their little innocent babies that come out of their own bodies? Christ Himself acknowledged that there are indeed cases when divorce, awful as it is, is preferable to the suffering caused by one spouse’s deceit or unfaithfulness. All too often, however, in our modern “me first” society, divorce comes about because of *selfishness* when one or both spouses become unwilling to do what it takes to keep the family together any longer! When a husband and wife become “one flesh” and

**If we do not understand our Christian priorities, we may find ourselves looking back at a great deal of activity, and feeling a great deal of regret over the decisions we made—and failed to make.**

produce children from this union, these children belong to both parents. They are part of our physical families, and sometimes our spiritual families, when they are converted.

Children grow up so quickly! We need to love them, frequently picking them up and hugging them. Let them know they are really loved. Let them know you are first in their lives.

Sometimes there has to be a little correction to help channel a child in the way he or she should go. But Paul warns fathers, "...do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (Colossians 3:21).

Do not discourage your children by demanding perfection. When God first called us and we realized He is our heavenly Father, were we able to suddenly be perfect? The answer is a resounding "no"! Rather, we should be patient with our children, just as our heavenly Father is patient with us—His Spirit-begotten children. Again, fathers are told "...do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

Children have an important obligation within the family as well. Notice Paul's instruction directed to them: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (v. 1). Yes, they should obey their parents—"in the Lord." Once again Paul instructs children, "Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth" (vv. 2-3).

### Priority 3: Work Diligently

The Apostle John gave greetings to, "The elder, to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 1-2). God inspired these words. He wants us to prosper. But in order to prosper, we must be diligent in our work.

Solomon said: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going" (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Solomon also added: "He who deals with a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes one rich" (Proverbs 10:4).

"Here is what I have seen," says Solomon. "It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage" (Ecclesiastes 5:18).

The opportunity to work is a gift from God. "As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and *rejoice in his labor*—this is the gift of God, for he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life, because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart" (vv. 19-20).

Yes, we must work. The Apostle Paul famously told the Thessalonian brethren, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Those who cannot work should indeed be the recipients of our love, our mercy and our charity. But those who are able to work should not feel that they can get

away with shirking their work yet still expecting a handout.

This even applies to volunteer work for our brethren and the Church. It is wonderful when brethren make time to serve one another. Yet if you are fired from your job because you skipped work in order to help a friend move to a new apartment, you should not blame your employer. We owe our employers our loyal and faithful service. Paul reminded the Colossian brethren: "Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God" (Colossians 3:22). If you slack off at your work, and you use the excuse of Church service or helping your brethren, then you are not fulfilling your God-given priorities.

Yet the workday does come to an end, and there comes a time when your diligent work has fulfilled your duties and has earned the income to provide for your family. When that time comes, Scripture nowhere counsels us to become "workaholics" whose long hours keep us away from our families or rob us of opportunities to serve our brethren. We work at our jobs because we must provide for our families and help support the Work of the Church. That is a requirement of God, yet it has to be in the *right priority* and in *proper balance*. Jesus Christ Himself worked hard to preach the true Gospel, and pushed His body to the limits of what it could endure (Luke 22:44). Yet He knew the value of rest, for Him and for His disciples (Mark 6:31-32).

This life is our opportunity to develop God's very own holy and righteous character in our own selves. As firstfruits, this is our day of salvation. And that day is running out! So, always remember to put God first, and family next, then exercise due diligence on the job, trusting that God will make up the difference. He promises, "seek the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be *added to you*" (Luke 12:31).

### Priority 4: Serve the Spiritual Family

Service to our *spiritual* brothers and sisters in Christ is our fourth priority. It is important that we pay attention to our relationship to the various members of the spiritual body of Christ—the Church of God.

"Therefore, in all things, He [Jesus Christ] had to be made like His brethren..." (Hebrews 2:17). We are Christ's brothers and sisters because we were all begotten by the same Spirit from the same Father. If the Holy Spirit dwells within you, you are a spiritual brother or sister of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe!

Someone told Christ, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You. But He answered and said to the one who told Him, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?' And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers!'" (Matthew 12:47-49).

As a Christian, your mothers and fathers and your brothers and sisters are all those who believe and obey the truth and have received the same Spirit from God. They are our *spiritual family*, and the tie is much closer than blood ties. "For whoever does

the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother” (v. 50).

As we become more and more attuned to God’s will and follow His commandments, we bond together with others who are doing the same, even if we do not know them, because that bond is through the Holy Spirit.

We love one another, we grow together, we support one another and we aid one another within the body of Christ. God’s Church cannot function without the willing support, labor and love of its members.

### Serving on the Sabbath

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:23–25).

Although the Sabbath gathering is a commanded assembly, a number of brethren do not attend Sabbath services every week. Some are burdened by a physical illness that prevents their attendance. Others may have difficulty with transportation. Many of these brethren would very eagerly attend Sabbath services regularly, if they could.

But what about those who could attend weekly, but frequently choose not to do so? Some few may be unaware of God’s admonitions about assembling together. Others may underestimate the importance of receiving the vital instruction and correction they would gain at services. Perhaps they are not attending regularly because they have an unresolved grievance against the minister or some of the brethren. By staying away, they deprive themselves of opportunities to serve their brothers and sisters in Christ by sharing their fellowship!

It is not that we are necessarily sinning if we cannot attend Sabbath services every week. But if we do not attend faithfully, we should examine our attitudes. Perhaps we live hundreds of miles from the nearest congregation, or perhaps a family member needs constant care and cannot travel long distances. Do we miss services with some regret, because we have no other choice—or are we looking for excuses as to why “it’s really OK” that we stay away, even when we know we could attend?

The Church of God is composed of many members, and we all have various gifts, talents and abilities. We all have something that we can contribute in service to God and to one another on the Sabbath day, even simply by attending services! Paul stated: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1). Each of

us, in coming before God on the Sabbath, is presenting to Him a body, a mind and a heart. If we willfully stay away from our brethren, we are not only disobeying God and depriving ourselves—we are acting selfishly toward those brethren who would benefit from our presence.

So, examine yourself and ask: “Am I doing all I responsibly can to take part in Church services and activities?” God wants to see in us a track record of obedience to Him and love for the brethren—a firm, solid record built on the principles of Jesus Christ and His mind in us—before He will entrust us with the very powers of the universe! It is not too late to start.

### Keeping the Right Order

We have seen that the four imperatives, the four priorities, in order, are: **1) God, 2) family, 3) work and 4) Church**. If you have not set aside the time to nurture your relationship with God, you can be sure that your other priorities will suffer. “I don’t need to pray three times a day, because I’m so busy painting brethren’s houses” is not an excuse that will bear good fruit. Similarly, if you spend so much time serving other brethren that you neglect your own family members, this will not bear good fruit in the long-term. And if you “serve the Church” with such energy that you cannot hold on to a job or a family, Scripture makes it clear that you do not have your priorities in order.

Rather, if we keep these priorities in balance—not neglecting any of them, and not putting them in the wrong order—we can pursue them all with vigor and confidence, looking forward to the time when we will find ourselves standing before Jesus Christ as Spirit beings, glistening in glory, as He returns to earth to bring world peace, happiness and prosperity to all mankind! ■

—LCG Editorial Staff

**Jesus Christ Himself worked hard to preach the true Gospel, and pushed His body to the limits of what it could endure (Luke 22:44). Yet He knew the value of rest, for Him and for His disciples (Matthew 6:31–32).**

**Editor’s Note:** This article was adapted from an excellent original text written several years ago by Living Church of God member Richard H. Sedliacik, who succeeded Dr. C. Paul Meredith as an editor and writer for the *Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course*. Mr. Sedliacik in turn had written his original article after hearing a Living Church of God elder give a sermon on this topic, which was consulted again in the creation of this updated article. All of which is to say that when you, our readers, hear a sermon that especially moves you, please encourage the speaker to contact the Editorial Department at Headquarters ([editorial@lcg.org](mailto:editorial@lcg.org)) to discuss its adaptation into an article.

### Our Passover Attitude Continued from page 4

healed them” (Mark 6:5). It was obviously not because *He* lacked faith, but “He marveled because of *their* unbelief” (v. 6)!

So, we must do everything in our power to **restore** *this aspect* of apostolic Christianity. We must begin, collectively, to **cry out** to God to restore the depth of *understanding* and the depth of **faith** regarding healing and God’s divine intervention in other ways that the original apostles had. We must *pray* about this. We must *fast* about this. We must go on a “campaign,” dear brethren, so that God will begin to supernaturally **heal** more of our friends and loved ones in God’s Church at this time of the end! We know that terrible *disease epidemics* are coming. Because of this, it is *even more imperative* than ever that God’s people learn to have genuine **faith** that God can **heal** us if we turn to Him with all our hearts!

#### In His Way, In His Time

As an aside, let me remind you that the Church has *always* taught that God does not heal people in every case *in this life*—and that He does allow people to die at some point. God heals in *His* way and in *His* time. So, although we were *very hurt* to experience the deaths of Messrs. Dibar Apartian, David Burson, Glen Gilchrist, Fitzroy Greeman, Randy Gregory, Bob League, Carl McNair, John Ogwyn, Carl Ponder, Lynn Torrance, Keith Walden and others in recent years, we realize that these men had proven themselves as faithful servants of Jesus Christ. Some died well into their 60s or 70s, and several were older than I am today. In my case, brethren, I want all of you to *know* and **understand** that God does not “have” to heal me, although I certainly hope that He will. For God has already given me nearly 86 wonderful years of life, with a beautiful first wife and a beauti-

ful second wife, six wonderful children, ten grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, trips around the world and many, many other blessings and opportunities. I have *already* lived about 15 years longer than King David of Israel did 3,000 years ago when God allowed him to die “old and full of days.” I will certainly *deeply appreciate* your prayers that God will grant me several more years to help *finish the Work!* This is my passion and my desire. But you *must not* be shocked, turned aside or in any way lose heart if God allows an 85-year-old man to die. Your *faith* must **always** be in God’s Word, and in what God says He will do. Unless there are *special reasons*, God does often heal us in this lifetime—and many of us have experienced that over and over again. But we *do* need to go **all out** in a genuine crusade—as a Church—to ask God for increased faith and zeal so that our Father in heaven will begin to grant us the **gifts** of the Holy Spirit and begin to pour out these gifts—including *divine healing*—much more than ever, as we cooperate with Christ in creating an “atmosphere of faith” within the Church of God.

In Jesus’ name, I ask all of you to *join me* in urgently *crying out* to our Father in heaven to restore this living faith into His Church! Please ask God to *teach us every lesson*, show us **everything** we need to change and **move** us, collectively, to draw closer to Him so that He will then be able to *bless* us, **empower** us and **use** us to finish the Work of God with the kind of zeal the original apostles had—and *also* be blessed with the “accompanying” signs!

Then, as we approach the Passover, we can more sincerely get down on our knees and ask God—with renewed understanding and zeal—to help us *profoundly* appreciate what Jesus Christ our Savior did when He not only **shed His blood** for our spiritual sins, but gave His body to be broken that we might be **healed**. We must **not** leave out or neglect this vital part of God’s **purpose** for our lives, and for the *full meaning* of the Passover service! ■

## Upcoming TOMORROW'S WORLD Telecasts

March 3–9	Victory Over Death
March 10–16	Easter: The Untold Story
March 17–23	Meet the Antichrist
March 24–30	The Mysterious Day of the Lord
March 31–April 6	The Great Unraveling
April 7–13	Like Sheep to the Slaughter
April 14–20	Can I Really Know God?
April 21–27	Is There a Real Hell?

SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

For stations and times, check the Television Log on page 34 of your *Tomorrow's World* magazine.

**Overcome and Grow in Unity**  
Continued from page 2

so that people can really *understand!* We have the opportunity and *direct charge* from God to **warn** our people of the coming Tribulation while there is time (Ezekiel 33).

Again, we must be true “Christian soldiers” and be willing to **fight** with all our might for the Truth and way of

**Dear brethren, let us fervently pray for one another! Let us do everything we can to forgive each other, to help each other and to build the attitude of love and unity, of which we have experienced so much recently.**

God! We must fully realize that we are “at war” in fighting a spirit battle with “wicked spirits” as I pointed out above. As the Apostle Paul said: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience

always aware that we are not just fighting human beings—as Paul said—but *wicked spirits* and that we are battling “arguments” and “every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God” (v. 5).

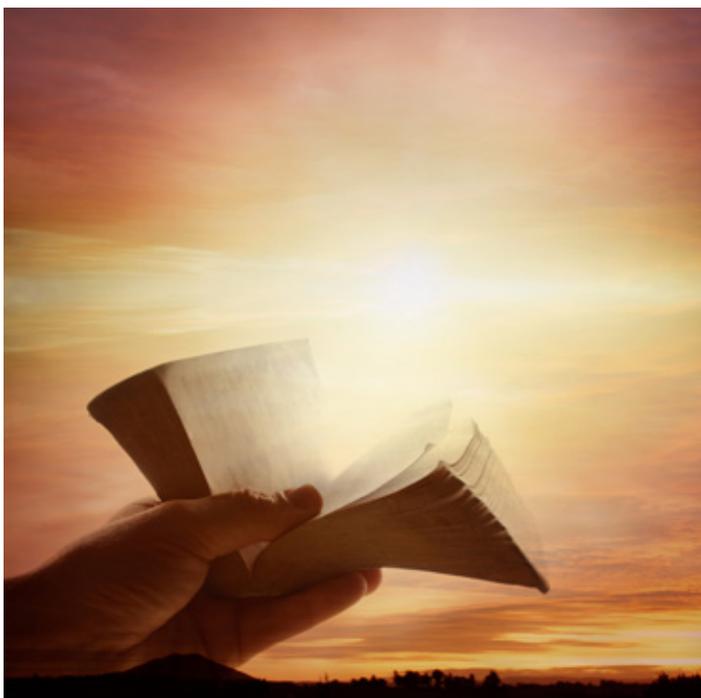
It is not always easy to discern the inherent evil in many of the practices that are taking place throughout our society and that are absolutely ungodly, but if we constantly study God’s word, the Bible, we *will have* the “mind of God.” We will have God’s discernment and be able to perceive how Satan is leading God’s people astray and what we *personally*—and in our own families—must **do** to resist and overcome these wrong “arguments” and “high things” that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God.

Dear brethren, let us fervently **pray** for one another! Let us do everything we can to forgive each other, to help each other and to *build* the attitude of love and unity, of which we have experienced so much recently. Thank God for the wonderful weekend we enjoyed! But, let us also realize that in the months and years just ahead, Satan will do everything he possibly can to **destroy** that attitude of love and unity. He will come after us with clever arguments and demonic capacity so that we will need God’s **direct power** to overcome. So we can overcome. And with God’s help, we **will overcome!**

That is *why*—as I have said—we must be willing to **fight**. We must recognize that we are not just “nice people,” but that we are also “Christian soldiers.” We must ask God for the Spirit, the faith and the courage of the Apostle Paul who wrote at the very end of one of the most traumatic event-filled lives in the history of Christianity: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7–8).

With Christian love,

*Roderick C. Meredith*



is fulfilled” (2 Corinthians 10:3–6).

As your human leader and Presiding Evangelist, pastoring all of you in the Living Church of God, I exhort *every one of you* to “get real.” Be truly **zealous** to prove the real Truth—to appreciate where God’s Work is actually being done and to go all out to do *your part* in proclaiming Christ’s message around this world! Be sure that you recognize that we are in a “*spirit war*.” It is *not easy*. We need to be thoughtful, receptive and

## Ordinations

**Mr. Franz Boehm** was ordained a deacon on November 14, 2015 by Associate Pastor Bill Long. Mr. Boehm serves in the Traverse City, Michigan, congregation.

**Mrs. Sheila Blackburn** was ordained a deaconess on September 26, 2015 by Area Pastors Ed Breaux and Glen Harrison and pastors Davy Crockett and Kenneth Frank. Mrs. Blackburn serves the Pensacola, Florida, congregation.

**Mr. Elmo Benedito da Silva Souza** was ordained a deacon on the Sabbath of December 5, 2015 by Regional Director Rick Stafford and Associate Pastor Damian Weekes. Mr. da Silva Souza serves the brethren in the Moscou, Brazil, congregation and also assists in six congregations in neighboring Guyana.

**Mr. Tony Leman** was ordained an elder on January 2 by Area Pastor Paul Kearns. Mr. Leman serves in the Auckland, New Zealand, congregation.

## Anniversaries

**Mr. and Mrs. Willie (Lillie) Bowens** celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on May 27, 2015. Both are retired schoolteachers attending the Memphis, Tennessee congregation, which honored their milestone with a celebratory reception. All wish them well for years to come.

**Mr. and Mrs. Roger (Linda) Allgeyer** of the Long Island, New York, congregation, celebrated their 55<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on June 26, 2015. They have been members of God's Church for 48 years. Mr. Allgeyer is an elder and Mrs. Allgeyer a deaconess in the Long Island congregation.

**Mr. and Mrs. Robert (Carol) Fisher** celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary

November 4, 2015. Both have been in God's Church for 45 years. They attend the Fort Wayne, Indiana, congregation.

**Mr. and Mrs. Don (Edith) Mobley**, of the Dallas, Texas, congregation, celebrated their 68<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on Sunday, November 8, 2015. Mr. and Mrs. Mobley have three children, 11 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren and a family gathering honored their wonderful milestone.

**Mr. and Mrs. Robert Lohman**, of the St. Joseph, Missouri, congregation, celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary December 4, 2015. They were married in 1955 in Sabetha, Kansas, and were both baptized in 1971. Mr. and Mrs.

Lohman have three children and four grandchildren.

**Mr. and Mrs. Ernest (Carolyn) Whittaker** of the Frederickton, New Brunswick, congregation celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on December 20, 2015. The congregation expressed their love for them with a lovely cake and a beautiful gift on the Sabbath of December 19. Mr. and Mrs. Whittaker started attending God's Church in 1975.

## Weddings

**Justin Hall** and **Stephanie Anderson** of the Washington, DC, congregation were married on Sunday, September 6, 2015. The groom is the son of Mr. and Mrs. George (Cheri) Hall of the Pittsburgh congregation and the bride is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Cary (Christine) Anderson. The outdoor ceremony at the Powel Crosley Estate in Sarasota, Florida, was conducted by Area Pastor Sheldon Monson. There was rain until thirty minutes before the ceremony but then God held it back throughout the following dinner and dancing. When it started again, it continued all the next day. Yes, God truly is in charge of the weather!

On December 19, 2015, **Mr. Marc-Kenzie Nicolas** and **Miss Holanda Jean-Michel** of the l'Asile, Haiti, congregation were united in marriage by Dr. Wilner Pierre, French Caribbean Area Pastor. Many brethren, relatives and friends attended the wedding.

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

## Births

Keith and Caroline Rideau of the Statesville, North Carolina, congregation are very happy to announce the birth of their first child, **Arianwen Tori Rideau**. She was born Tuesday, November 10, 2015, weighed 8 pounds, 5 ounces, and measured 19½ inches long.

Mr. and Mrs. Gurudev Ganeshdath of the Chaguanas, Trinidad, congregation welcomed **Gabrielle Marie Ganeshdath** into their family on December 14, 2015. She weighed 6 pounds, 4 ounces, and is the couple's first child.

## In Loving Memory

**Mr. Noel David** of Maruranau Village, Guyana, died July 29, 2014 at the age of 59. He was baptized in October 1990 and for 24 years he and his family were the only members of the Church of God in their village, setting an example of faithfulness to God's Way. He is survived by his wife, Yvonne, as well as three daughters, five sons and two grandchildren. His family misses him dearly.

**Ms. Gayle-Lynn Brown** of the Glasgow, Scotland, congregation died September 24, 2015, at age 60. She lived in several states in the USA before coming to reside in Scotland about a year ago. She was baptized in 1990. No known relatives survive her. Her readiness to help members and her appealing smile will be both missed and fondly remembered.

**Mr. Donald Howie, Sr.**, of Charleston, Illinois, died September 29, 2015 at the age of 79. Mr. Howie was a long-time member, baptized in 1965, and attended the Terre Haute, Indiana, congregation. He was a loving, kind, gentle man who loved God, his family, and his Church family. He enjoyed playing his guitar, singing, and nature and was a fine example of faith and dedication to the Work of God to all of those who knew him. He is survived by his wife, Cleo, three sons and their wives, seven grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren. He will be greatly missed. His memorial service was conducted by Mr. Mike Grovak.

**Mr. William Barclay Ramage, 84**, a deacon in the Thermopolis, Wyoming, congregation died November 6, 2015. Mr. Ramage lived in the Lysite community his entire life, working on and then managing the family ranch. He was married in 1951 to Margaret Jane Apland and they have six children, nine grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. He is remembered by his family and many friends as a kind,

generous, and intelligent man who left his mark on the community with his warmth and friendship and way of life. He served as the Postmaster, acquired the Lysite Store, and served on several boards over the years. He will be greatly missed by many as he touched the lives of so many. Mr. Ben Whitfield conducted the funeral and burial service on November 13.

**Anastasia Elayne Moore, 81**, of the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation died at her home on Saturday, November 21, 2015. She was born in 1934 in San Antonio, Texas, and was baptized in 1953 by Mr. Herbert Armstrong. She was preceded in death by her parents and one son and she is survived by a son, Chris Moore, of Charlotte. She will be very much missed.

**Mrs. Wilma Heykoop** of the St. Catharines, Canada, congregation died on November 29, 2015, at age 89. She will be greatly missed by her husband Bill of 63 years and their eight children, 34 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren.

**Mrs. Annie P. Durham, 82**, of the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation died on December 14, 2015. She was preceded in death by her husband, Thomas Durham, Jr. and two sons. She is survived by four sons, ten grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren and a host of other relatives and friends. Mrs. Durham was baptized in 1972 and was faithful to the end. She will be greatly missed.

**Mr. Joseph Sanders, 79**, of the Indianapolis, Indiana, congregation died on December 24, 2015 after a long period of declining health. Mr. Sanders was born in Indianapolis in 1936 and at age 14 left home to move to Chicago to work. He was a bricklayer in Texas for many years, but returned to Indianapolis where he was baptized into God's Church in 1986. In 1993 he came to the Global/Living Church of God. He was preceded in death by his son years ago; the Church brethren have been his family.

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# COMMENTARY

## “For in your Easter bonnet...”

In Luke 24, we read of Jesus, after His resurrection, joining two others traveling to a village named Emmaus, which was located some seven miles outside of Jerusalem. Some who adopted the pagan Easter custom went on to base a new tradition on this biblical post-Passover event, taking a public walk after Easter Sunday services. A group of people would walk into the fields, into the forest or wooded areas, and into town. From time to time they would stop to pray and sing Easter songs. The walk was often led by someone carrying a lighted candle. Farmers in Germany and Austria typically adorned their horses with flowers, ribbons and leaves before riding in the Easter procession.

In Poland the processions were called, “Emmaus Walks,” and there were Easter Monday picnics held in “Emmaus Groves.” Some considered it “bad luck” not to wear something new on these occasions. The poorest men would try to have something new—if only a shoestring—and the women would look diligently for a piece of new ribbon to wear in their hair.

One item of clothing received more attention than all the rest combined. That was the “Easter bonnet.” Each year, Easter Sunday was the time to show off your new Easter bonnet. Ladies would save money and even work extra jobs to ensure that enough funds would be available to buy a new hat for Easter. Some bonnets were designed to resemble very large baskets of fruit or flowers and were worn upside down.

Today, this pagan tradition continues—and many cities hold annual Easter parades. There is a popular song played and sung during this society’s Easter season: “put on your Easter bonnet with all the frills upon it, and you’ll be the grandest lady in the Easter parade.”



What does this tradition, with its overt vanity and pride, have to do with Christ’s death and resurrection? Absolutely nothing at all. It is self-aggrandizement, “the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). Some individuals go to church just once a year, on Easter Sunday, and the Easter bonnet is a motivating factor. Once the bonnet is worn it may be discarded, becoming just another hat. Then a mad rush is made the following year to obtain a new eye-catching bonnet.

Jesus Christ very plainly condemns replacing God’s commands with human traditions (Mark 7:6–9). He frequently admonished the Scribes and Pharisees for adding practices to God’s way of life that obscured the intent of His instructions. He also admonished them for their works, which were done to be seen by men (Matthew 23:5–7).

Easter, Easter bonnets, Easter parades, rabbits, dyed eggs—all these have their roots in pagan practices, sanitized to play a part in supposedly “Christian” worship. But God warns those who say they follow Him not to use any pagan practices in His worship (Deuteronomy 12:30–32).

—Harold Way