

# THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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## Our Youth Are Under Attack!

### Dear Brethren and Friends,

Powerful forces of evil are facing our youth more than in any time in modern history! I want to address this problem as strongly and openly as I can. I hope that I will offend none of you by being somewhat plain in describing various situations. The world—and its media—certainly describes these things in detail. So we should **not** be “embarrassed” about discussing this **reality** that is being propagated in our society and which our young people understand far too well—whether some of us older people grasp this or not. Thousands of you older brethren are parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts who have a sincere interest in helping the youth in God’s Church. So **all** of us have a responsibility to help our young people understand what is happening to them *before it is too late!* For many of them will be “lost” to the Church and to the way of God **unless** we take action!

Throughout our supposedly “educated” Western society, millions of young people are being taught perverted attitudes toward sex and toward all aspects of life, beginning even in *primary schools!* Worldly ministers say virtually **nothing** about it! And yet it is “taking over” our entire society and causing people to turn further and further away from God, not only in this but in other areas of life.

Our political leaders are also joining in this. In the recent presidential campaign speeches, a number of leaders have come out indicating that they strongly advocate that the entire society accept the “rights” of “transgender” people, homosexual people and other “confused individuals.” They do not realize that they are propagating the takeover

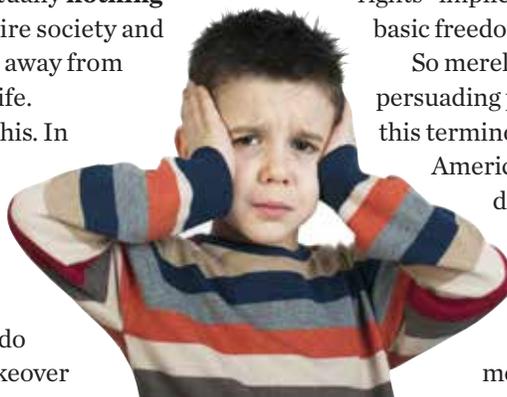
of our society by a “modern Babylon”—yet they call this “progressive.” It is **not** progressive, but is taking us right back to ancient Sodom and Gomorrah! These liberals play various “word games” and have a clever way of misleading people by playing with and perverting the meaning of words and concepts in so many ways.

As I have told you brethren before, one of the most helpful books on this entire subject is the absolutely *outstanding* volume *The Marketing of Evil* by David Kupelian. After much research, he vividly describes how this takeover is happening:

Simple case in point: homosexual activists call their movement “gay rights.” This accomplishes two major objectives: (1) Use of the word *gay* rather than *homosexual* masks the controversial sexual behavior involved and accentuates instead a vague but positive-sounding cultural identity—*gay*, which, after all, once meant “happy”; and (2) describing their battle from the get-go as one over “rights” implies homosexuals are being denied the basic freedoms of citizenship that others enjoy.

So merely by using the term *gay rights*, and persuading politicians and the media to adopt this terminology, activists seeking to transform

America have framed the terms of the debate in their favor almost before the contest begins. (And in public relations warfare, he who frames the *terms* of the debate almost always wins. The abortion rights movement has prevailed in that war



Volume 19, No. 2



### Inside This Issue...

*The “Foot Washing” Way of Life... p. 3*  
*Three Things Nailed to the Cross... P. 5*  
*Did He Rise?... p. 9*  
*Feast on the Bread of Life... p. 13*

*Three Ways to Do Our Part in the Work... p. 16*  
*A Profitable Day... p. 20*  
*Local Church News... p. 22*  
*Commentary... p. 24*

precisely because it succeeded, early on, in framing the debate as a question, not of *abortion*, but of *choice*. The abortion vanguard correctly anticipated that it would be far easier to defend an abstract, positive-sounding idea like *choice* than the unrestricted slaughter of unborn babies.)

Okay, you might be wondering, even granting the movement's cutting-edge marketing savvy, how do you sell middle America on those five hundred sex partners and weird sexual practices? Answer, according to Kirk and Madsen, you don't. Just don't talk about it. Rather, look and act as normal as possible for the camera (pp. 24–25).

Frankly, brethren, I hope many of you will purchase and **study** this book I have recommended: *The Marketing of Evil*. It can be a guide to you in the sense that it will help you understand the real background of this whole perverted movement, which Satan has spawned to propagandize and **deceive** our young people in many important areas of life. For many of them have not had the experience to grasp the *suffering* that is often caused by these perverted behaviors. They do not fully understand that “actions have **consequences**.” They do not realize that many of these behaviors bring premature suffering, anguish and **death**. Yet in “Satan's Alternative Universe” they are vulnerable to becoming *totally deceived* and misled by the media, by the schools and by *our entire society*. Only God's Church can be a true **bulwark** against this absolute “**rubbish**,” which is being palmed off as Truth!

### The Results of Perverse Behavior

Brethren, Satan tries to “blur the lines” between how we are supposed to live and operate as males and females in a decent society. Satan is now going to the extreme of causing the “opinion makers” in Hollywood, in the media in general, and even in politics to go along with the idea that, somehow, men can “decide” to become women, women can “decide” to become men and other kinds of warped ideas. As reported on *CNSnews.com* (June 2, 2015):

Dr. Paul R. McHugh, the former psychiatrist-in-chief for Johns Hopkins Hospital and its current Distinguished Service Professor of Psychiatry, said that transgenderism is a “mental disorder” that merits treatment, that sex change is “biologically impossible,” and that people who promote sexual reassignment surgery are collaborating with and promoting a mental disorder.

Dr. McHugh, the author of six books and at least 125 peer-reviewed medical articles, made his remarks in a recent commentary in the *Wall Street Journal*, where he explained that transgender surgery is not the solution for people who suffer a “disorder of ‘assumption’”—the notion that their maleness or femaleness is different than what nature assigned to them biologically.

He also reported on a new study showing that the suicide rate among transgendered people who had reassignment surgery is 20 times higher than the suicide rate among non-transgender people.

### Think!

Jesus Christ said, “by their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:20). The “fruits”—the **results** of the homosexual lifestyle—are absolutely **awful!**

Virtually all authorities acknowledge that the *death rate* for practicing homosexuals is extremely high. These confused individuals are simply *cutting short* their lifespan by their perverted behavior. Statistics indicate that they have a great many more emotional difficulties than other people. And Dr. McHugh's comment about the death rate for transgender people being **twenty times higher** than the normal average is staggering! Yet, Hollywood, news reporters and even many of America's “leaders” in Washington and elsewhere—all under the influence of Satan the Devil—simply “go along” with this perverted lifestyle and all kinds of other things that bring *suffering, anguish* and premature **death!**

**Why?** Again, it is because of an *invisible force* that they *simply do not understand*. Since they have *rejected* the only true

**YOUTH UNDER ATTACK** continues on page 19

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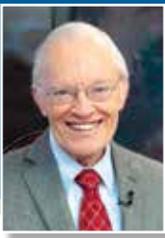
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## The “Foot Washing” Way of Life

**A**t this Passover season, it is helpful to consider *many* of the lessons we should learn from the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. We will all remember the powerful “foot washing” example set by Jesus Christ just before the taking of the new symbols of the Passover.

This remarkable example of Jesus Christ—the God of the Old Testament and Creator of the Universe—kneeling down and doing the job normally performed by the *lowliest servant* of the household shows us a number of things that we must each apply to our own lives. I would like to focus on *one key aspect* of Christ’s example. For the “foot washing” example of Jesus Christ was intended to show *all* of us: “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them” (John 13:14–17).

As Jesus said, we will indeed be happy, or *blessed* as other translations have it, if we follow His example in laying down our lives for one another as our *entire*



*way of life*. Again, Jesus Christ stated: “And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 10:38–39).

Even most true Christians spend far too much energy trying to “find” their lives rather than consciously “losing” their lives in order to serve God and genuinely serve their fellow human beings. We will try to find excuses for doing what *we* want to do. We will use our time and energy in ways that do *not* contribute to building others spiritually or to building the Work of God on earth today. We will often *waste* one of the most precious commodities God has given us—**time**. We *must not* waste this precious commodity, but rather try to make every day of our life really “*count for something*” in serving others and helping *others* grow toward the fullness and the stature of Christ. In that way, we help ourselves at the same time to achieve the same goal.

Often, without fully realizing it, many of us try to become “leaders” by exalting the self at the expense of others. After describing how the rulers of the Gentiles did this, Jesus said, “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26–28).

Are you and I genuinely willing—as Jesus said—to become the “slave” of other human beings and serve them from the heart in order to help *them* attain the Kingdom of God and eternal life? This attitude is indeed *totally contrary* to our normal human nature. It is only *through Christ in us* that we can attain this attitude. Nevertheless, we should all try to “make every second count” and use the precious *time* and *energy* we have to serve others with total outflowing concern. Just as Jesus did, we *must* learn to build the habit of helping others, humbling the self and preparing ourselves for the ultimate job of helping God and Christ **rule** the entire universe in a totally loving and outflowing way!

The religious leaders of Jesus’ day were often “competing” with one another and saving for themselves the “best” of everything along the way. However, Jesus Christ commanded: “But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts

himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23:11–12).

The above verses are genuinely *powerful* if we are willing to fully understand them. We must always try to *abase* the self and do all we can to serve other human beings, as Christ Himself did when He was “made flesh” (John 1:14). Then, and only then, will we be truly “exalted” by *God Himself*.

Dear brethren and friends, I hope every one of you can begin to learn this lesson, as we reflect on the Passover and on the *entire purpose* of God to make us in His image! We have tried to build this attitude within the ministry and leadership of God’s Church as a whole in the Living Church of God. Many of you brethren realize this. In our past association, we had the so-called “super deacons” who would push people around. We would often have ministers who would take care of the *self* and not try to genuinely help and give and serve their brethren with every fiber of their being. Now, near the end of my life, I am grateful to God to report that we have—in my opinion—one of the most solid, dedicated and humble ministries that I have experienced in 67 years in God’s Church.

Though there are *many* very dedicated leaders and ministers in the Living Church of God, I will describe here just those on the U.S. Board of Directors—for they *all* exemplify the spirit of servant leadership we should all be striving to attain. Mr. Richard Ames, with whom all of you are familiar, serves as Director of Media Operations and is one of the most genuinely humble, giving, serving and *loving* human beings I have ever known. He is constantly trying to help others—along with his wife—in many, many different ways. Most of you know the constant attitude of humility and service that he has demonstrated for *decades* in Christ’s ministry.

Dr. Douglas Winnail is one of the finest Directors of Church Administration I have ever known and worked with—including *several* over the years. He is very thoughtful, kind and understanding in working with the ministry, helping decide where each one fits, and being totally loving and supporting and patient with them when they make mistakes or need to be transferred. I deeply appreciate his love, his patience and his spirit of service in helping direct the ministry of the Living Church of God.

Mr. Dexter Wakefield—our Director of Business Operations—is also one of the finest men I have ever known. He gave up a much, *much* larger salary and opportunity to make money in coming with us as our Business Manager, Office Manager, and writer, as well as the many other roles in which he is immersed. He has been a very fine, balanced and helpful counselor to me, and a help to the entire Headquarters Work here in Charlotte.

Mr. Rod McNair serves as Assistant Director of Church Administration and is an *excellent example* and a wonderful part of the legacy of Mr. Carl McNair, his father. He is constant-

ly helping and serving others—while at the same time building and strengthening his own family, including his wife and four children. He has built one of the finest families in the entire Work of God. He sets a superb example in all these ways, and at the same time has attained a spirit of humility, sacrifice and service rather than letting any of this go to his head.

There are many, *many* other leaders that I would like to mention, but I cannot go on forever with this. So, I have limited myself to those ministers who serve on the U.S. Board of Directors. But I definitely want to honor—last but definitely *not least*—the leadership and service of Mr. Gerald Weston, who serves as President, while I remain as Chairman and work directly with him. As I have told you in a number of my letters and articles of recent date, Mr. Weston is not a “new” person to the Work. I first got to know him in my Freshman Bible Class over 51 years ago. He has been *consistently* a fine, dedicated and very capable leader among God’s people. He has served humbly and faithfully over churches all over the United States, Canada, Britain and Europe and now is back in Charlotte to help replace me as the human leader of the Work of God at the time of my departure.

Nearly *everyone* has commented that Mr. Weston has “kept his head on straight” in doing this job. He has been consistently dedicated, humble and cooperative in this entire transition period—*not* trying to “push” himself into this job too soon, and giving me every opportunity to continue being the overall leader in making final decisions and setting the goals for the Work of God. I am very grateful for him and want *all of you*, especially, to *pray for him* and his wife and the great responsibilities they are now entering.

I *deeply appreciate* the above ministers *and their wives*, and I will always be grateful to have had such a wonderful, loving and *loyal* team assisting in building this Work. Many aspects of the Work are now coming together more than ever. It will soon be obvious that we are **moving** ahead in proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God more powerfully than *any other organization* on the face of the earth. Only the *living Christ* is ultimately responsible for this. We know that.

But **if** we can keep the attitude of *humility* and servant leadership—if we can keep the “foot-washing attitude” constantly before us and follow Christ in that way—*He* will continue to lead and empower this Work in a remarkable way. Then, we can all definitely look forward to Jesus’ words: “*Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities*” (Luke 19:17). So whether we are over “ten cities,” ten nations, or perhaps even *ten galaxies*, we will be rewarded *forever* if we learn the lessons of Passover and the foot washing. So, let us learn to genuinely *humble ourselves* and work as a “team” under Jesus Christ to do His Work with love and humility and cooperation until the end of our human lives. (LW)

# THREE THINGS NAILED TO THE CROSS

By **Dexter B. Wakefield**

**I**n 31AD in ancient Judea, the day of the Passover would have been a busy one. It was the first of the year's three Festival seasons, and the Feast of the Passover (Nisan 14) is also the day of preparation for the First Day of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 15), which is a Holy Day. So there was much going on in preparing for the Holy Day, and Jerusalem was filled with people coming and going. But because Judea was a conquered province of Rome, some things were distinctly *not* festive.

If you had been hurrying along a certain road just outside of Jerusalem that Passover day, you would have noticed a fairly common sight for those days in Roman-occupied Judea. Three men were being crucified, each on a cross or a stake (Greek *stauros*).

*What might the scene have looked like to a passerby?*

## **The Place of the Skull**

All four gospel writers mention where Jesus was crucified. "And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center" (John 19:17–18). Today, however, the actual location of Golgotha is not known for sure, and several places have been debated for centuries.

In 2014, my wife and I were privileged to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. While there were many wonderful experiences, there were tense moments as well. Large, noisy demonstrations were common, and even brief riots. And, while we were on the Temple Mount, numerous loud explosions were detonated at the nearby Al Aqsa Mosque, reverberating through the Temple Mount area, adding to the atmosphere of tension and uncertainty. Jerusalem may be called "The City of Peace," but it saw no peace during the Fall Holy Days that year.

While in Jerusalem, we visited one possible location of the crucifixion. It was near a busy highway outside of the wall of

the Old City, where—from one angle—a feature of a rocky hill looked like a skull. A highway was located along the same route in ancient times as well. Our guide mentioned that the Romans preferred to set such torturous executions near roadways so that passersby would see and fear Roman ruthlessness.



*A site in Jerusalem thought by British General Charles Gordon in the 1800s to be the biblical Golgotha, the Place of the Skull.*

## **A Crowd Gathered**

If you had passed by that day, you would have seen people taunting a man who was in agony, being crucified between two thieves. A large crowd was in the area watching the events (Luke 23:27), but a smaller group came close enough to the man to speak to Him: "And *those who passed by* blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.' Likewise, the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He

will have Him; for He said, “I am the Son of God.” Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing” (Matthew 27:39–44). It was perhaps the worst case of “adding insult to injury” ever recorded.

If you had heard what the crowd was saying to the man, you might not have remembered some prophetic verses of Scripture, which say, “But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people. All those who see Me ridicule Me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, ‘He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!’ ... Be not far from Me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help” (Psalm 22:6–8, 11).

As you watched, you would have seen Roman soldiers guarding the scene, making sure that no one rescued the suffering men. And they passed the time bargaining over one man’s garments. The Apostle John observed, “Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, ‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,’ that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: ‘They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.’ Therefore, the soldiers did these things” (John 19:23–24).

If you had been a bystander, could you have perceived the thoughts and intense feelings of the man crucified between the thieves? Centuries *earlier*, as the One who inspired Scripture, He recorded the feelings He would have in that moment by inspiring the psalmist to write, “Many bulls have surrounded Me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. They gape at Me with their mouths, like a raging and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me. My strength

is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. *They pierced My hands and My feet*; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. *They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots*” (Psalm 22:12–18). Centuries before it took place, He had foretold His death and inspired a record describing what He would personally experience in crucifixion.

And you also would have noticed that at least one of those battle-hardened Roman soldiers had a spear—one that you would see him use to end that crucified man’s life (John 19:34)—if you remained and watched.

### An Anguished Conversation

A curious bystander would have to be fairly close to the three crucified men to hear a conversation that took place among them. The gospel of Matthew records that at first, “Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him...” (Matthew 27:44). That means that the two criminals sided with the hostile crowd against the man who claimed to be the Messiah. It must have been a pitiable thing to see. No one would defend or comfort Him.

But then, an interesting thing happened: one of the robbers had a change of heart. While one continued to revile desperately, Luke 23 records that the other thief rebuked his associate in crime and defended the one named Jesus. “Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, ‘If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.’ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said to Jesus, ‘Lord,

## Understanding Colossians 2:14

There is a particular scripture that many read and erroneously conclude that it means that the Ten Commandments are “nailed to the cross” and “done away.” The Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians that Christ has achieved our forgiveness, “having canceled out the *certificate of debt* consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (Colossians 2:14 NASB). The words “certificate of debt” (Greek *cheirógrafon toís dógmasin*) are

translated “handwriting of ordinances” in the *King James Version*, and they mistakenly assume that Greek phrase refers to the Ten Commandments or God’s Law in general.

One Bible commentary explains, “Jewish tradition also portrayed sins as ‘debts’ before God... Paul says the atonement occurred when the debt was nailed to the cross in Christ and thus paid” (Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*). The phrase that Paul uses, “certificate of debt,” is a

reference to the guilt of our sins, not God’s divine Law.

Paul did not contradict his letter to the Colossians when he wrote the Church in Corinth, “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but *keeping the commandments of God is what matters*” (1 Corinthians 7:19).

What was “nailed to the cross” in Colossians 2:14 is the guilt of our sins, and it was nailed there in the body of Jesus Christ who was made to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” (vv. 39–42). Then, in verse 23 the *New King James Version* translation reads (emphasis added), “And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, *today* you will be with Me in Paradise.’”

Some point to this exchange as proving that Jesus was saying that they would both be going to heaven that same day. But Jesus said that He would be in the grave “three days and three nights” and gave that as the *only proof* that He was the Messiah. “But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and *no sign will be given* to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of

If Jesus was going to heaven that same day, how could He be the Messiah that He said He was? The resurrected thief would be with Jesus in the Kingdom of God someday in the future—but not that day. Jesus spent the next three days dead in His grave.

Man be *three days and three nights* in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:39–40). “The heart of the earth” is not “Paradise.”

If Jesus were going to heaven that same day, how could He be the Messiah that He said He was? The answer is that the Greek text that records Jesus’ Aramaic words does not say what the English translators interpreted it to say. Greek has no punctuation, and although commas are usually helpful in reading English, the commas inserted by the *New King James Version* translators *changed the meaning* of the original Greek. Just move one of the commas one word over, and the meaning becomes clear in English. Jesus actually said, “Assuredly, *I say to you today*, you will be with Me in Paradise.” If you had been a bystander, that is what you would have heard Jesus tell the man. The resurrected thief would be with Jesus in the Kingdom of God someday in the future—but not that day. Jesus spent the next three days dead in His grave before He was resurrected to life and appeared to many. And that thief is still in his grave, unconscious, awaiting his resurrection.

### Darkness

For about three hours of the crucifixion, your observation would have been somewhat limited, because there was *darkness in the middle of the day*. The gospel writers recorded that it was dark from about noon to mid-afternoon. “Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness *over all the earth* until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two” (Luke 23:44–45). The darkness could not have been the result of a solar eclipse as some have suggested, since a solar eclipse cannot occur naturally during the days of the full moon around the Passover, the fourteenth

day of the first lunar month. Also, a solar eclipse occurs along a very narrow path, not “*over all the earth*” (v. 44).

When God caused the sun to be darkened for three hours, it must have been an eerie and frightening experience, and those who reported it offered no explanation as to how it was occurring. We are not told what caused the darkness physically. But spiritually, God was showing them the darkness of this age in which “the power of darkness” rules for now. Jesus said, “But this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53). The Apostle John recorded Jesus saying, “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). God gave them a miraculous, dramatic demonstration of their spiritual condition. But as a passerby, that probably would not have occurred to you.

### Three Things Nailed to the Cross

Some say that the Ten Commandments were somehow “nailed to the cross” along with Jesus, but that is not in the Bible. Actually, *three things were nailed to that cross*, and if you had been a passerby that day, you would have seen two of them hanging there—but *one of them you would not have seen*.

*The first thing* you would have seen on that cross was the man who had been nailed to it, hands and feet. His weight was hanging on the nails in His hands or wrists, except to the extent that he could painfully push up on the nail or nails in His feet to help Him get a breath into His distended rib cage. He had been terribly beaten, with His face marred almost beyond recognition (Isaiah 52:14; Matthew 26:67–68; 27:30). His body had been severely flogged by a Roman *lictor* wielding a *flagellum* (or *flagrum*) with force. That instrument of torture was a whip with several leather strands, each weighted with lead balls or pieces of bone. The *flagellum* was designed to lacerate the skin and the tissues underneath. The pain it produced was unimaginable, and its victims often died from the beating.

But you would probably not have known that the man’s terrible beating was prophesied long ago to be *for our benefit* when Isaiah wrote, “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was *wounded* for our transgressions, He was *bruised* for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, *and by His stripes we are healed*” (Isaiah 53:4–5).

The man you would have seen nailed to the cross was in physical and psychological agony. But if you had been nearby, you might have heard Him say, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34).

*Another thing* you would have noticed was a sign nailed to the cross or hanging from it, above Jesus’ head, and each

of the four gospel writers that mention it report slightly different wording. Some critics say that these four different versions are contradictions in the Bible, but that is incorrect. Each report of the sign, bearing an inscription written in three different languages, add together and work as a whole to give a full description of the Man being crucified.

Mark's report gives the simplest description on the sign, providing the central element common to all of the descriptions: "Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the inscription of His accusation was written above: 'THE KING OF THE JEWS'" (Mark 15:25–26). The words for "The King of the Jews" (Greek *HO BASILEUS TŌN IOUDAIŌN*) are found in the Greek biblical text of each of the other three inscriptions

Luke gives more details: "And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: 'THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS'" (Luke 23:38).

Matthew explains, "And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: 'THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS'" (Matthew 27:37), showing that the sign was clear about whom it was addressing.

The gospel of John adds another detail: "Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: 'JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.' Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Therefore, the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, 'Do not write, "The King of the Jews," but, "He said, 'I am the King of the Jews.''" Pilate answered, 'What I have written, I have written'" (John 19:19–22).

Together, the collective witness of the gospel accounts is clear: Whether taken together with all three of the languages, or stated exactly in each—Greek, Latin and Hebrew—the sign told all who saw it: "THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

So you, as a passerby, should have been able to read at least one of the inscriptions above the tortured man who claimed to be the Messiah and the Son of God.

*The third thing nailed to that cross was invisible to a passerby. Placed upon the Man nailed to that cross were the sins of mankind—both yours and mine.*

The Apostle Peter wrote that Jesus "Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). The Apostle Paul put it similarly, "For He made Him who knew no sin *to be sin for us*, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). How could you, as a passerby, have known that while the tortured man you were seeing was very human, in fact, He was the God of Israel "made flesh" (John 1:14 *KJV*) and had already inhabited eternity? And just by looking and listening, could you have discerned that He was innocent and completely without sin? He was "Christ, our Passover... sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7) and "The Lamb of God who



*A close up of the cliff at "Gordon's Calvary" showing what some believe are the "eyes" and "nose" of the "skull" (photos by author)*

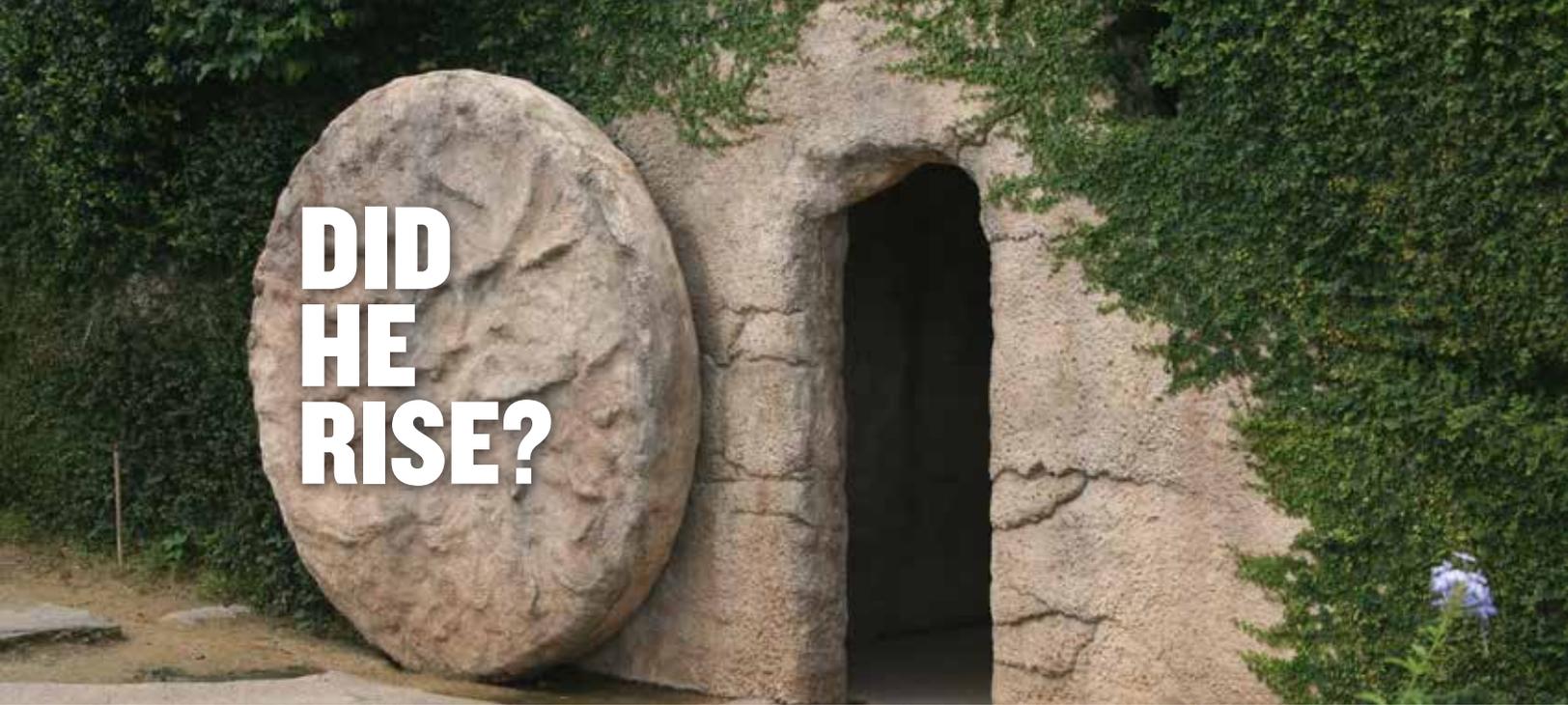
takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). He was Jesus Christ, "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14). As the Eternal Creator of mankind, without sin, He was the only one who could pay that penalty for us. The world was killing its Creator, who was dying willingly for it, shedding blood that could wash away its sins, enabling us to be made just and reconciled. As He was hanging there, He took upon Himself—and bore the weight—of all those sins, *and then He died!* He made it possible for the death penalty of *our* sins to end with *His* death.

But as a simple passerby, you would not have known.

The Apostle Peter summarized it: "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 'Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth'; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; 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*. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:21–25).

A traveler that day would have continued on sadly. But those who know Jesus Christ as both Passover and King can say, "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 1:5–6).

*Are you just a passerby? Hopefully not!* Christ established the Christian Passover as a memorial to the extraordinary events that occurred that Passover in 31AD. This Passover, let's clearly remember what Christ did for us that day. (L<sup>N</sup>)



# DID HE RISE?

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By **Wallace Smith**

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**U**nlike many of the religious faiths and philosophies of the world, Christianity is rooted in fact and history. We proclaim that certain facts of our faith *took place in real history*, seen and heard by real people.

Among these facts, the Bible bears witness to the centrality of one key event: that three days and three nights after He was killed by crucifixion, Jesus of Nazareth was *resurrected from the dead*. Sadly, some “nominal Christians” in the world actually deny the reality of Christ’s resurrection. They write it off as a later legend, myth or metaphor, hoping to strip off miracles and supernatural elements from their faith to make it more credible and less “embarrassing.” God’s Word, however, says quite the opposite. If the resurrection of Jesus Christ did not happen three days and three nights after His death, *our faith is meaningless*.

## **Critical Role of the Resurrection**

Consider the Apostle Paul’s clear statement in 1 Corinthians 15:14–19:

[If] Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

Indeed, Jesus staked the credibility of His Messiahship on the fact that He would rise from the grave, alive once more, after three days and three nights in the tomb (Matthew 12:39–40)!

If Jesus Christ did not rise from death to life again, then there is no forgiveness of sins, there is no future resurrection of the dead, there is no coming Kingdom of God, and there is no Son of God living His life in us, helping us to overcome day by day, building His own character within us and bringing us into increasingly intimate union with our Creator!

Yet if He *did* rise from the grave—just as He said He would—then *everything* changes. He *is* the Son of God. His Word *is* true. His Kingdom *is* coming. And He *does* live within Christians through His Spirit, transforming them throughout their lives to fulfill God’s purpose for them.

Are there reasons to believe such a claim? Does it make sense to believe that this man, Jesus of Nazareth, actually rose again to life three full days after He died?

Yes, there are! And yes, it does!

In a world of growing skepticism, in which the historic claims of Christianity are completely discounted and we are ridiculed for believing in ancient “fairy tales,” it is increasingly vital to *prove the truth of our beliefs for ourselves*. As Dr. Roderick C. Meredith has so frequently stressed, we must know and *know that we know!* And this is certainly true for the one sign Jesus gave for His Messiahship (Matthew 12:38–40), without which Paul says our faith is meaningless: His resurrection from the dead.

Let’s spend some time examining the evidence behind this remarkable claim. You need to prove it for yourself!

## **The Facts to Be Explained**

Because the Bible says the resurrection is a matter of history, not myth or legend, then the claims of the story can be exam-

ined in the same way that the claims of *any* historical account are examined. And, in the case of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there are a number of elements that someone impartially examining the evidence must address.

Whether or not someone believes in the claims of Christianity, these are factual claims about historical events, to be either refuted or accepted and explained. Can they be refuted? Let's look at the evidence for each of these two facts.

### **Fact: The Tomb Was Found Empty**

That Jesus lived, had a ministry in first century Judea and was killed by crucifixion are facts of history beyond any reasonable dispute. The fad of denying that Jesus ever existed seems to be enjoying a small renaissance among those very desperate to remove any traces of Christianity from the world, but the consensus of scholarship—including secular scholarship—accepts these facts. They are mentioned by numerous ancient scholars, such as first century historians Flavius Josephus and Tacitus, Lucius, Pliny the Elder, and Celsius. Even His miracles are mentioned by many ancient secular writers, though they are often dismissed as tricks or “sorceries”—much the same as Jesus’ Jewish detractors did in His day (Matthew 12:24). Claiming He did not exist is a tactic of only the most desperate deniers, reflective of the same spirit as those who deny the Holocaust.

The life and death by crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth is one of the most thoroughly attested facts of ancient history.

But so, too, is His empty tomb!

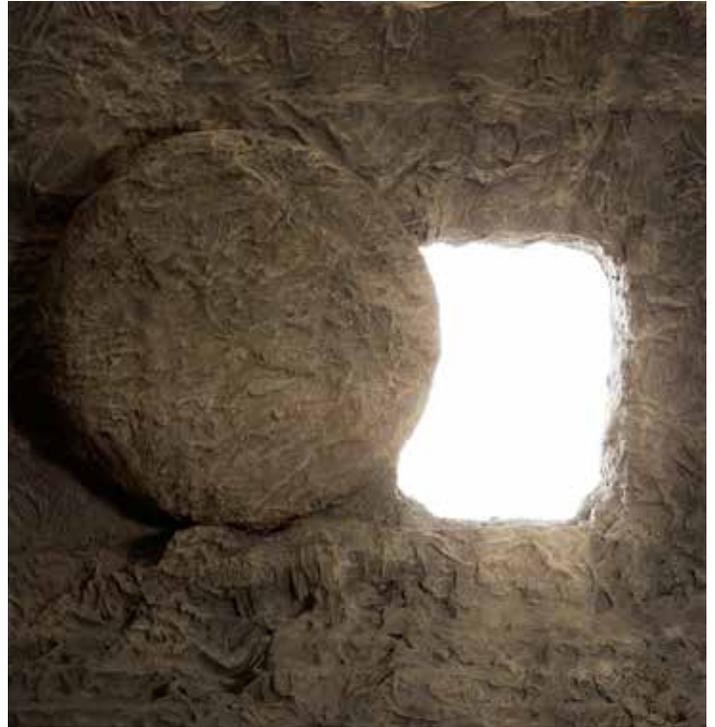
The Bible says the tomb of Jesus was first found empty by female followers of Jesus and later by others, such as Peter and John. If you have proven the Bible to be trustworthy in its every word, then you accept this account completely. But can a case be made for those unfamiliar with the Bible? Would it also be reasonable for a secular, non-Christian to believe that His tomb was found empty? Can the Bible’s claim be supported?

Yes, it can!

The account of the empty tomb has *many* hallmarks of historical authenticity, both within and outside of the Bible. Let's consider them.

For instance, the Bible states in all four historical accounts of Jesus’ ministry that the first people to discover the empty tomb were women (Matthew 28:1–8; Luke 24:1–3; Mark 16:1–8; John 20:1–2). Why is this significant?

It matters to historians because women were not trusted as credible witnesses in first-century Judea. Historians consider the “embarrassment principle” when evaluating historical claims: If a group is fabricating a story for their own benefit, they generally would not include elements that embarrass or hurt their cause. In the case of the empty tomb, given the carnal customs and beliefs of the first-century culture in which Christianity began, it would have been *embarrassing* for the discovery of the empty tomb—a



keystone of the Apostles’ claims to the legitimacy of their message (e.g., Acts 2:32; 10:39–41; 17:31)—if it were first made by women. Yet the writers of the New Testament reported the fact clearly and plainly.

If the resurrection of Jesus and the empty tomb were a fiction that ancient Christians were “making up” to prop up their religion, they would not have chosen women as the first witnesses. The account of the tomb’s discovery passes the historian’s “embarrassment principle” test of authenticity.

Also consider the evidence provided by the earliest *attacks* on Christianity. Had the tomb of Jesus not been empty, then all the enemies of the growing Church had to do was *produce the body!* When the Apostles claimed that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, the Jewish leaders seeking to silence the troublesome movement had merely to point to the tomb and demonstrate that the body of the man Jesus was still present in the tomb and still very dead! Yet, there is no historical record of *any* such claim being ever made by the Jews or anyone else. Quite the opposite! History records that the enemies of the Church tried to explain *why the tomb was empty*. Again, even the enemies of the Apostles *acknowledged* the empty tomb and the absence of a body!

We see evidence of this in the gospels, as well. Matthew 28 relates the tale of the Jewish leadership bribing the guards at Jesus’ tomb and instructing them to say, “Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept’” (v. 13). Matthew then closes by explaining to his readers that “this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day” (v. 15). This is evidence within the Bible itself that the Jewish enemies of the early Church were not arguing that the

tomb was *not* empty—rather, they were trying to *explain the empty tomb away*.

Even many skeptical scholars recognize that the evidence for the fact of the empty tomb is powerful. Jesus died and was buried, but three days and three nights later, His tomb was empty.

### **Fact: Many Disciples Claimed to Have Seen Him Alive Again**

Some secular historical sources, such as Josephus, tell us that the disciples of Jesus reported that they had seen Him alive again after His death by crucifixion.

Concerning biblical evidence—even if we only treat it as a mere *historical* source, and not the fully inspired and inerrant word of God (which we know it to be!)—the account is the same: without doubt, many disciples of Jesus Christ claimed to see Him and interact with Him, alive again after His death. For just one example, let's consider 1 Corinthians 15.

Part of why Paul's account in 1 Corinthians is a powerful one to use with skeptics is because of its broad acceptance as "authentic," even by scholars who are opposed to Christianity. While those of us in the Church of God believe that Paul wrote the letters attributed to him in the New Testament, worldly scholars often debate and argue endlessly about this fact. Yet, when it comes to the book of 1 Corinthians, there is *broad* consensus—even among skeptical scholars—that not only did the Apostle Paul write it, but also that it was written only *20 years or so* after the death of Jesus Christ. So, even for academic and secular purposes, 1 Corinthians represents a powerful *primary source* concerning the beliefs of the first century Church.

For this reason, 1 Corinthians 15:3–8 provides powerful

If the resurrection of Jesus and the empty tomb were a fiction that ancient Christians were "making up" to prop up their religion, **they would not have chosen women as the first witnesses**

evidence that a startling number of the first Christians did, indeed, claim to have seen Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead *with their own eyes*. Here is the passage:

For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by

all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

There is *much* to highlight here!

Notice that this is not a statement about some sort of ghostly "vision." Paul is claiming that a whole host of people saw the previously dead Jesus of Nazareth *alive* again, just as He had predicted He would be (John 2:19; Mark 8:31; et al.).

But he also provides details so that his readers can validate his claims for themselves. He names individuals who can serve as witnesses, such as Peter (whom Paul calls by his Aramaic name, "Cephas") and James, Jesus' brother. Listing James is significant, as the gospel of John records that earlier James did not believe in his brother's Messiahship (John 7:3–5).

Perhaps even more impressively, Paul says that the resurrected Jesus Christ was seen by "over five hundred brethren at once"! And, further still, he explains that while some of those 500 had died in the last 20 years, most of them were *still alive*. That is significant! It means that their testimony could be checked at will by his readers. Had Paul been making up his tale—lying about the claims of those who said they had seen Jesus alive again—his testimony could have been *easily* invalidated. Only a fool would lie about *several hundred people* who were still alive and able to contradict his story!

Rather than discredit him, these facts gave Paul's message power and authenticity, allowing him to proclaim before kings such as Agrippa that these things were true and verifiable by everyone, "since this thing was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26).

Paul's comment here has the hallmarks of history, and, again, even skeptics who do not personally believe in the resurrection *do* believe that the first generation of disciples believed they had seen and interacted with the resurrected Jesus. As skeptical scholar Gerd Lüdemann admits in his book, *What Really Happened to Jesus: A Historical Approach to the Resurrection*, "It may be taken as *historically certain* that Peter and the disciples had experiences after Jesus' death in which Jesus appeared to them as the risen Christ" (emphasis mine). Again, a fact of history.

### **The Crucial Question: How Do We Explain the Facts?**

If these two items—the empty tomb of Jesus and His disciples' sightings of Him alive again after His death—are facts of history, then they cannot be avoided and must be explained. What could that explanation be?

Many secular, "miracle-free" explanations have been provided by unbelieving scholars to explain these facts. Let's review some of them:

**The "Swoon" Theory:** This is the idea that Jesus didn't really die during His crucifixion, but, rather, faked His death

or, perhaps, was only thought to be dead but revived once He was placed in the tomb. Then, the theory contends that He only claimed to be resurrected later.

This is, of course, ridiculous. The Romans knew how to execute and were brutally thorough. They made a living at dealing death. The idea that Jesus could somehow “play dead” and fool centurions whose own lives depended on their success at killing the crucified is highly implausible. Even worse, the suggestion that He somehow survived His torturous beating and agonizing crucifixion in some kind of “coma,” that He simply began to “feel better” in the tomb, that He somehow rolled away the massive stone blocking the tomb in His battered, weakened state, and that He then presented Himself to His disciples in such a way that they would believe He had been miraculously resurrected by God in power and glory should be considered a stretch too far for even the most desperate of unbelievers.

**The Hallucination Theory:** This, too, is a highly implausible explanation, suggesting that all of the individual experiences of a resurrected Jesus Christ were mere hallucinations. Is this rational? Absolutely not. Not only does it fail as a matter of common sense and experience—given the number of witnesses, the individual nature of them, the consistency of the belief, the nature of hallucinations, etc.—but it also fails to explain all of the historical evidence. If the risen Jesus Christ were only an illusion born of hallu-

Was a resurrected Jesus Christ a mere hallucination? Is this rational? **Absolutely not. Not only does it fail as a matter of common sense and experience but it also fails to explain all of the historical evidence.**

ination, the tomb would not be empty, and the enemies of the Church could have easily exposed the hallucination for what it was.

**The Great Lie:** Finally, is it possible that the Apostles and other disciples were simply lying? Is it possible that the first century accusations were true and that the disciples came one night and, with no one watching (ignoring the matter of the guards at the tomb), stole Jesus’ body, hid it somewhere, and then simply *claimed* to have seen Him alive and resurrected?

Not a chance.

History is clear: The Apostles and the early disciples did not merely proclaim their belief in the risen Jesus Christ with their lives; they proved that belief in their deaths. The witness of history concerning *their* witness is that many of them were executed and torturously murdered because they would not stop preaching that they had seen Jesus Christ alive again,

risen from the dead. They reported that He had spoken to them. That they had eaten with Him. That they touched Him. That He wasn’t a “ghost” or “apparition” but that He was really and truly *resurrected from the dead*. And because they had seen Him alive, they knew beyond doubt He *truly was* coming again to establish His Kingdom and that the message they proclaimed was *true*.

They were willing to be tortured to death for that proclamation. History has no record of even *one* of the Apostles recanting or denying what they knew to be true. Not one.

Would they have been willing to be tortured to death for something they knew to be a lie? Would you?

The best explanation of the facts of history is simple: That Jesus Christ was raised to life again by God, three days and three nights after His crucifixion and burial. *He did rise*. And His first disciples *voluntarily* sacrificed their lives to pass that truth on to us, that we might believe on Him through their word (John 17:20).

### **The Power and Hope of a Risen Jesus Christ**

The fact of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead changes everything. *It means that His testimony was true*. The sign He gave for the authenticity of His message was fulfilled.

It means that He really is the Son of God. It means that there really is forgiveness of sins for those who repent and turn obediently to God in His name. It means that He really is going to come back and bring a new world to replace this one. It means that death has been conquered, and the rest of the dead really are going to be raised: “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:20–22).

If the resurrection of Jesus did not happen, then the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is a fantasy. But if it did, then the preaching of the return of the living Christ and the coming of the Kingdom of God is the single most important message the world could ever hear.

It also means that, as we meditate on the lessons of the Days of Unleavened Bread—as we focus on putting sin out of our lives and taking in righteousness, committing ourselves to living God’s way of life—we can take heart that Galatians 2:20 is true. We can truly believe that Jesus Christ is living within those of us who are forgiven and who possess God’s Holy Spirit. We can truly believe that we are never alone. We can truly believe that His promises are true. And we can truly believe that He is coming again.

For He did rise! (LW)

# *Feast on the Bread of Life*

By **John H. Ogwyn** (1949–2005)

**J**esus Christ declared to a great crowd of His listeners, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). These words were spoken at one of the early Passover seasons of Jesus’ ministry (v. 4). They puzzled His hearers then and they have puzzled many others since.

Christ went on to enjoin His followers, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world” (v. 51). As we approach the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, it is very important that we should deeply understand the message that Jesus Christ was conveying.

In Exodus 12, God commanded the Israelites to observe the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread forever. Prior to the Days of Unleavened Bread they were to remove leavening and leavened products from their homes (vv. 15, 19). Throughout this entire seven-day festival they were to avoid eating leavened products (v. 15).

However, this was not the “Feast of No Bread at All.” It was the Feast of *Unleavened* Bread! There was a replacement provided for the leavened bread that was customarily eaten (v. 20). It was a bread made without yeast. Yeast is what causes the giving off of carbon dioxide during the bread-making process that makes the bread dough puff up or expand. The ancient Israelites used sourdough to put yeast into their bread dough. Today we most commonly use packages of dried yeast in baking, or we produce the same result with the use of baking powder or baking soda.

Passover is the fourteenth day of the first month and therefore not one of the seven days of the Unleavened Bread festival (Leviticus 23:5–6; Numbers 28:16–17). Yet at the Passover service, both anciently and today, only unleavened bread is to be used (Exodus 12:8). There is an important reason. At His final Passover supper with His disciples, Jesus Christ explained that the unleavened bread which He blessed and broke was symbolic of His own body (Matthew 26:26). The Passover, centering on the lamb anciently and upon the bread and the wine today, points toward Jesus Christ and His sacrifice.

The Apostle Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 5:7–8 that since Jesus Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us, we are to keep the festival which follows in its true spiritual significance. We are to understand that unleavened bread is illustrative of sincerity and truth. This, of course, points us once more right back to Jesus Christ. After all, He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

As we approach the Passover season, we should not only be focused on getting rid of the leavening in our lives, but also upon the necessity of feasting on the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ. At the Passover service and for the seven-day festival which follows, we are to be reminded of Jesus Christ by the unleavened bread that we put into our mouths.

We must feast on far more than mere physical bread products that are made without leavening agents. We must be spiritually feasting on what it symbolizes, Jesus Christ Himself. Seven is God’s number of completion and perfection. A festival of seven days reminds us that our partaking of Jesus Christ must be complete. This physical practice is to remind us of what must be part of our lives now and forever.

The metaphor of eating the Bread of Life points to the fact that we must become filled with Jesus Christ. How is this possible? A starting point would be to examine some of the purposes for which Jesus Christ said that He came.

## **Introducing His Ministry**

In the fall of the year, about the time of His thirtieth birthday, Jesus Christ came to where John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing (Luke 3:23). This was in an area of the Jordan River about twenty-five miles from Jerusalem. A few weeks after being baptized, Jesus withdrew into the wilderness for forty days of fasting prior to beginning His ministry. At the end of that time, Satan came and tempted Him. Christ resisted Satan’s blandishments.

In the aftermath of this, Jesus continued choosing His disciples. He introduced His public ministry in Jerusalem during the Passover season following His baptism. He taught in the temple, performed miracles, and, most dramatically, cleansed the temple. “And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple... And He said to those who sold doves,

“Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise” (John 2:14–16).

The religious leaders were stunned. Yet Jesus proceeded to perform miracles that they couldn’t gainsay.

One of those very leaders, Nicodemus, came privately to Jesus and acknowledged, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher sent from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him” (John 3:2). After John the Baptist was put in prison in the late spring, Jesus and His disciples returned to Galilee. He began His Galilean ministry on Pentecost in His home synagogue in Nazareth.

Standing up to read, He opened the scroll of Isaiah to the section He wanted and proceeded to read the words, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18). He went on to tell His hearers that scripture was fulfilled that day (v. 21).

This section of scripture sets the tone for the rest of Christ’s ministry. It also sets the tone for today, because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). To be filled with Jesus Christ means to be filled with the same message that He spent His time proclaiming. As we partake of the Bread of Life, we are being nourished by Jesus Christ and those things which He offered His hearers. Let’s briefly examine what Christ announced to the synagogue in Nazareth at the beginning of His ministry.

### The Gospel to the Poor

Fundamentally, Jesus Christ came with a message. That message was the good news of God’s coming Kingdom (cf. Mark 1:14). It was a message of hope in a world where things looked very hopeless. Judea was a province of the mighty Roman Empire. In addition, the despotic Herod family exercised direct rule under the Romans. The people were ground down by oppressive taxes and harsh rulers. There was no relief in sight.

In the midst of poverty and hopelessness, Jesus of Nazareth came with a message of hope. There was coming a world government that would displace the Romans and the Herod family. It was the same Kingdom that was announced by the prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures. The time was at hand for people to

understand what that Kingdom was all about. Jesus explained to His hearers that they could actually **inherit the Kingdom** as children of God, **God’s very heirs**. His message went far beyond anything the religious leaders of the day understood.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explained the kind of character that was required of those who wished to be the heirs of that Kingdom. Throughout the rest of His ministry He expounded those same points over and over in different contexts.

To partake of Jesus Christ means to partake of the hope that He came to proclaim. His whole life was built around the reality of the Kingdom of God. It was the “pearl of great price” whose value far outshone everything else. In fact, He exhorted His listeners that they should be prepared to give up everything in order to achieve an inheritance in the Kingdom of God (Matthew 13:44–45). How real is that Kingdom to us? How brightly does it shine in our mind’s eye?

The Apostle Paul was one who truly feasted on Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life. “But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:8–11).

### An Offer of Healing

Healing was a big part of the ministry of Jesus Christ. It was tangible evidence, not only of God’s power, but also of His grace and compassion. In fact, Christ explained to His disciples at His final Passover meal with them that the bread which He blessed and broke symbolized His body, broken for us (1 Corinthians 11:24). Many years later, the Apostle Peter explained that our healing was made possible by Christ’s sacrifice. His body was broken and beaten in our behalf, “...by whose stripes you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

The miraculous healing of our physical infirmities and ailments is a wonderful blessing. It is, however, a temporary physical benefit, for this physical body is temporary.

In His statement in Nazareth, Christ emphasized a side of healing that we don’t always focus upon. He talked about healing “the brokenhearted.” This term, “brokenhearted,” means literally those who are crushed or bruised in mind or spirit.

## “Feed on Christ” Through His Inspired Word

Obviously, one of the primary ways we must prepare to become full sons of God is to “feed” on Christ by genuinely *studying* and *saturating ourselves* with the very word that He inspired. Many of us in the Church do “a little Bible reading” every day—or at least most days. But how many of us consciously try to carefully read, meditate on and “drink in” the very mind and heart of God and “feed” on Christ by profoundly studying the Bible with heartfelt intensity and accompanying prayer? How many of us cry out to God as we study, “Teach me your ways, O God, and lead me in Your paths”? How many of us try to regularly *meditate* on God’s word, on His law—and on His Plan—and try to truly have the very *mind of Christ* in this way and to *reflect* Christ’s mind in everything we think, say and do? Remember, Jesus inspired the Apostle Paul to write, “Let this **mind** be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

—Dr. Roderick C. Meredith, March/April 2011 *Living Church News*

Jesus Christ came not only to heal the outward ailments that could be seen by others—as He demonstrated throughout His ministry—but also to heal the inward infirmities of the heart and mind. The word for healing in the Hebrew language comes from *shalom*. It carries the connotation of peace and wholeness.

To partake of Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, includes partaking of the release that He offers from the inner hurt and turmoil that debilitates so many of us. We live in a world of fear, sorrow and pain. Significantly, the first place those words are mentioned in the Bible is in Genesis 3, where God explained to Adam and Eve the consequences of sin. Healing, whether physical or emotional and mental, is evidence of God's power to forgive sin and to ameliorate its aftermath.

Many different things in our lives have contributed to the inner hurts and pains that we've all suffered. The good news is that we can have release. Christ announced that one of the reasons for His coming was to heal those who were crushed and bruised in their inner being. To feast on the Bread of Life leads to being filled with the inner peace that confidence in Jesus Christ and His love makes possible. The faith that flows from the deep realization of Christ's love and power is what makes healing of every sort possible.

While pain and sorrow won't be totally and permanently banished from this world until the time of the New Heavens and New Earth spoken of in Revelation 21:4, we can experience a foretaste now. An inner peace that passes understanding (Philippians 4:7) is available to us in this age. The Apostle Paul, though languishing in Roman imprisonment when he wrote Philippians, had come to be filled with that inner peace. He was filled with peace and wholeness because he was first filled with Jesus Christ. His life was one of feasting on the Bread of Life.

### Gaining New Sight

John 9 records one of the most remarkable of Christ's many miracles, the healing of a man who had been blind from birth. This event, which took place on the Last Great Day (cf. John 7:37), symbolized the time when spiritual blindness is going to be removed from all mankind.

Physical sight is very important, but spiritual sight is far more so. It is what enables us to see the truth of God. We live in a world of spiritual darkness, but Jesus Christ came as the Light of the World. It is that Light which makes spiritual sight possible.

To perceive ourselves accurately, as well as to perceive God and His purpose properly, we need the gift of sight. It enables us to properly perceive and make sense of everything around us. Without the gift of spiritual sight, we can't even begin on our spiritual journey which leads to the Kingdom of God. If we are feeding on Jesus Christ, we are being filled with the source of sight and perception. The perfect example of His life and the clarity provided by His teachings combine with His indwelling presence to give the believer guidance in a world that is deceived by the Prince of Darkness.

Recovery of sight is only possible for those who are feasting on the Bread of Life.

### Deliverance and Liberty

Freedom has always had a special allure for human beings. Jesus Christ said that He came to proclaim deliverance to the captives and to set at liberty those who are oppressed. What is the captivity from which we need deliverance? What is it that has oppressed us and robbed us of liberty? In one simple word, the answer is sin!

Deceived theologians often seek to picture God's law as an enslaving shackle. They claim that Christ came to free us from the law, which they picture as a yoke of bondage. Nothing could be further from the truth!

The Apostle Paul deeply understood the deliverance and liberty that Jesus Christ came to offer. Notice his explanation given in Romans 6:16–18: "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves to righteousness."

Clearly, sin is the enslaving factor that has made captives of us all. But Jesus Christ came to triumph over sin and pay the penalty in our stead. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

There is only one way out from under the death penalty exacted by sin. We are reminded of that one way every Passover when we partake of the symbols of our Savior's sacrifice. No amount of future good deeds on our part can ever atone for sin. Only the shed blood of Jesus Christ can do so.

The whole world is held captive by Satan the devil, that wicked spirit who works in the children of disobedience. However, Jesus Christ triumphed over Satan and overcame the world (John 16:33). Through Him, we may experience the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

To feast on the Bread of Life includes partaking of the forgiveness made possible by Christ's sacrifice. He has made it possible for us to be delivered from sin's hold on our lives.

If we are truly feasting on Jesus Christ, then we are being filled with hope, with inner healing, with clarity of vision, and with deliverance and liberty. We are being filled with that which will nourish and sustain us now and forever.

As we partake of the bread which will be offered to us at the Passover service and throughout the seven days of the unleavened bread festival which follows, let's be deeply conscious of what we're picturing. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him," Jesus said. "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me... He who eats this bread will live forever" (John 6:56–58). (LH)

# Three Ways to Do Our Part in the Work

By **Mike DeSimone**

**J**esus Christ is now in heaven at the right hand of God, doing the same work He did on earth, but doing so through His Body, the Church... *which is us*. The degree to which we are participating wholeheartedly in Christ's Work on earth reflects how much we are behind Him and are fulfilling the very purpose for which He has called us out of this world.

We have been called to be a part of a great mission—something much bigger than each of us, individually! Jesus Christ expects more from us than just being “nice Christians” focused on our own little world. He gave His Church a job: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Scripture makes it clear that His followers in the first century took His commission and command very seriously. Further, Jesus tells us that this effort will take place in the end times, as well: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

## **But, What Can I Do?**

At the same time, we can't all be on the telecast! We are not all supposed to be “mouthpieces” preaching the Gospel to the broader public. We are not all supposed to be running a department at Headquarters. We are not all supposed to be ministers. Instead, just like each part of the human body, every one of us plays a different but crucial role in the Work. We are each “members individually,” and all of us, together, make up the entire body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27).

So, what are some ways we *personally* can help fulfill this commission? In addition to our regular tithes and offerings, what are some specific things anyone in God's Church can do to “pitch in” and help the effort to spread the Gospel to the world?

While there may be many different ways we can help in the Work, in this article we are only going to focus on three. These three particular areas involve actions that *all* of us can and *should* take. While they may seem simple, not only will they make a real difference for the Work, but they will also have an impact on our spiritual lives.

## **Set the Right Personal Example**

Truly, one of the most powerful tools we possess to do our part in preaching the Gospel is our personal example. Our example “speaks” more loudly and powerfully than anything we can say! Jesus told us that we are the “lights of the world” (Matthew 5:14–16). And while “lights” do not speak, they are certainly expected to shine!

If we *tell* everyone we know about God's way of life, and yet our example is, let's just say, less than blameless, we are not helping the mission. If we are proclaiming the truth to all we know at every turn, but we are a terrible employee, or cannot be trusted, or drink too much, or work on the Sabbath, then we're actually *hurting and tainting* the message of the Gospel. “A righteous man who falters before the wicked is like a murky spring and a polluted well” (Proverbs 25:26).

Daniel's example of trustworthiness and faithfulness to the Eternal was one reason that God's name was respected in the highest places in the kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius. We're told that “Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him” (Daniel 6:3). It was God's Spirit working in him that made the impact on the rulers with whom he worked. Daniel lived his life according to God's ways, and didn't seem to try to “convert” the kings or their magistrates. He pointed them to God verbally when the opportunity presented itself, but other than that, his humble surrender to His God made a powerful impact.

If we humble ourselves and surrender to God and His laws, then we will be powerfully preaching the truth with our lives. Our actions speak so much louder than our words. If we are trustworthy, humble, hardworking, balanced, honest and faithful to our commitments, then anything with which we're associated—including God's Church and our beliefs—will be considered in the light cast by that example. People who interact with us will be left with a good impression, and that impression will be attached to the things we stand for.

Then, when God opens their minds one day, they can know that this special thing we're involved in is the true Work of God and the true Church of God. Whether that happens in this life or in the Great White Throne Judgment, our actions will affect what others think of God, His Church, and His Truth.

At the same time, while we should not be shoving God's Truth down people's throats, we must be ready to give an answer when the opportunity presents itself! This is a major element of our part to get the message out. Each of us must “always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). If we are faithfully living God's way, it is not unusual for people to ask questions. At such times, they may be more receptive to hear what we have to say. We can take the time to explain what we believe and why. We can even mention the *Tomorrow's World* television program or website—perhaps even give them a booklet on the subject in which they are interested.

But we should also try to discern whether they are truly interested or whether their eyes “glaze over” as we speak, as

if they are not really listening. If they are interested, keep it going; if they are not interested, wrap up politely. If we do this wisely, we can play a powerful part in the Work of God.

The last part of 1 Peter 3:15, however, is vital. We need to explain our beliefs to them, “with meekness and fear.” We should understand we are explaining something that is completely different than what they may have ever heard before. It is something that is contrary to their way of life, and it must be God who “pricks” their hearts and convicts them, not us. We should ask God to use us and put His words in our mouth as we speak with them, and we need to recognize that we would be in the same place they are if God had not mercifully called us or our family out of this world. *If someone is seriously interested in the Truth, take action by talking to your minister about inviting them to services.*

### **Watch the Telecast and Read the Literature**

A second key action that all of us can take to help accomplish the Work is to ensure that we are diligently watching the *Tomorrow's World* telecast, ourselves, and making sure to read each article in the *Tomorrow's World* magazine and the *Living Church News*. By doing so, we are staying current and “in sync” with what Christ is doing in the world. Mr. Richard Ames has called the telecast the “spearhead of the Work.” By watching the telecast every week, we are doing our part to stay current on the effort to preach the Gospel.

Spending time each day studying God's word is of the highest importance. Connection with God's word helps to empower *all* of the actions we are discussing! However, while

It is through exposure to the telecast and to the publications of the Church of God that **He first brought many of us to an understanding of the Truth**

reading the Church's publications is of less importance than reading the Bible itself, it is still a crucial part of helping us to know how the truths and doctrines of the Bible are articulated by the very Church that Jesus Himself founded. Many people all over the world have read the Bible over the centuries, yet without God's Spirit and without being taught (Romans 10:14–17), they never truly understood the scriptures. After all, the Church of God is “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

If you work for a company, you want to be the most effective employee you can be. One of the greatest ways you can be most helpful is by being very familiar with what the company teaches and publishes. The most effective employee will be on top of what the company's goals and missions are and will know and support the company's message and publications.

On the other hand, if an employee is not in the habit of reading what the company publishes, he or she quickly becomes ineffective. The boss notices and remembers when he sees an employee not current in the company's policies and materials and will question his ability to trust that employee to carry on his business in even little things. Yet, if he or she does regularly keep up with the latest information and updates, the boss can begin to rely on that employee to help fulfill the company mission. In our case, we are “working” for Jesus Christ, and He is the “Boss.” He is the one directing and inspiring His ministry to write and publish in our various channels.

Imagine, for a moment, if *none* of us read the literature. The reality is that without instruction every one of us would find it that much easier to drift into a slightly different understanding of Scripture here and there based on our life's circumstances, experience, education, personal biases and general knowledge base—and we would all be right in our own eyes. The Church has, indeed, experienced such among some over the decades. Yet it is through exposure to the telecast and to the publications of the Church of God that He brought many of us to an understanding of the Truth in the first place. It is the God-ordained job of Jesus Christ's organized ministry to protect His people from being “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14), and we need to be willing to embrace God's design for the Church by reading what the ministry publishes. Reading and watching what is produced by the Church also allows us to “all speak the same thing” (1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 13:11). It gives us the opportunity to all be on the same page and have unity in the Body of Christ.

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul established the authority of the leadership, saying, “We have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts” (1 Thessalonians 2:4). Then he commends them, “...when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus” (vv. 13–14). He then went on to make sure his letter was read aloud so that everyone would hear: “I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren” (1 Thessalonians 5:27).

Mr. Ames regularly admonishes us to do our part by watching the telecast and reading the magazines. In an article in the March/April 2009 *Living Church News*—“Self Examination: A Vital Key to Growth”—he writes,

How do we support God's Work? In an important sense, we are all ‘ambassadors for Christ’ (2 Corinthians 5:20), in that the people around us see

us as representing the Church. As a supporter of the Work, are you aware of the times and stations on which the *Tomorrow's World* telecast is shown in your area? Do you watch the telecast, and if people ask you about the Church, do you encourage them to watch the telecast? If not, you should. If you are reading this, we thank you for your example of diligently staying in touch with what the Church is teaching its members and proclaiming to the world. Is every member of your family diligently reading each article in *Tomorrow's World* magazine and the *Living Church News*? Reading Church literature should help you be ready to give an answer when those around you ask about your faith (1 Peter 3:15).

An interesting point of prophecy is that the portion of the Church of God that is actively and intentionally going through the “open doors” provided to preach the Gospel is the one which is holding on to God’s Truth, according to Christ, who praises them, saying they “have kept My word, and have not denied My name” (Revelation 3:8). In other words, the Church of God with the Philadelphian spirit and attitude is going through the open doors and teaching the scriptures in a way that is pleasing to God and is commended by Christ for it!

When we fail to watch the telecast when it is available to us or fail to read the Church’s literature, we risk becoming less effective than we otherwise would be in supporting the Work.

### Pray for the Work and the Leaders

It may seem small, but it is not: praying for God to guide and bless His Work and its leaders is *vital* and is a key means by which we support the preaching of the Gospel. As we’ll see below, it is something we are specifically instructed to do, and it is another powerful way we can participate in the Work of God and grow in fulfilling our calling.

Jesus indicated that the time is now. The harvest is ready now. “Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest” (John 4:35)! Christ explained the urgency and instructed us to pray for more laborers because there is still a lot to do: “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:37–38).

Paul also exhorted the brethren to pray for the leadership. “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit... for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel... that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:18–20). Again, in another place he tells us to pray for the spread of the Gospel and for the leadership: “Continue earnestly in prayer... praying also for

us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak” (Colossians 4:2–4). We should all individually be praying for open doors to preach the Gospel—that is, if we want to fulfill our calling with a Philadelphian attitude (Revelation 3:8).

Praying for the Work and the leadership makes a difference. Just like God has intervened for us personally when people have prayed for us and our situations, the same is true when we pray for the ministry and their efforts to preach the Gospel. By taking these things to our Father in prayer, we each take part in God’s Work in a special and intimate way. As James reminds us, “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16)!

### When We Help the Work, We Help Ourselves

We certainly support the Work with our faithful tithes and generous offerings—and we should! And as individual members of the Body of Christ—placed in it exactly where He wishes to have us (1 Corinthians 12:18)—we may bring individual gifts and talents we can use to support our local congregation and the Work. But these three additional things—dedicating ourselves to being good ambassadors, watching the telecast and reading the literature, and praying for the Work and its leaders—are actions we can **all** take that can have a powerful impact.

The more we do these things, the more our hearts will be involved in the Work and the mission of the Church. In this way, these things help us fulfill our calling and help us grow spiritually in the direction Christ wants us to go.

Much more is expected of us than just living as “nice” Christians, focused solely on our own daily routines. In his January/February 2013 *Living Church News* article, “Do Not Be Laodicean,” Dr. Roderick Meredith exhorted us:

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

Let’s all go forward, growing in our active roles in the greatest mission in the universe. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). (LH)

**YOUTH UNDER ATTACK** continued from page 2

source of ultimate knowledge, the Bible, they are unwilling or unable to understand the fact that there is a **real** perverted spirit being heavily influencing *every aspect* of our present society. For Satan the Devil really is the “god” of this present age!

**We Must ACT**

All of you parents and adults who *truly care* about our young people should help them understand this! You should *carefully review* some of the following scriptures with our young people and help them to begin to genuinely “get it” when they think about what is happening in our society. In Revelation 12:9, God speaks of how “the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, *who deceives the whole world*; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Then in 2 Corinthians 4:3–4 the Apostle Paul was inspired to tell us: “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the *god of this age has blinded*, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”

Again, in Ephesians 2:1–2 the Apostle Paul warned the Ephesians: “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the **prince of the power of the air**; the **spirit who now works** in the sons of disobedience.” Here we find the interesting fact that Satan is the “prince of the power of the air.” Satan’s **media** is broadcast into the minds of our young people over and over through radio, television, the Internet, iPhones and other ways which virtually *bombard them* with Satan’s attitude about life and about what is right and what is wrong.

Our young people often are *not told* or carefully instructed that if humans—cut off from God—are the ultimate arbiters of what is right and what is wrong, then we are going right back to the book of Judges where: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). Throughout the book of Judges—as most of you know—God describes every foul behavior imaginable that men got themselves into by their own “human reason”: men raping men, unrestricted sex and violence, etc. And **this** will be the **result**, once again, if “human reason” is used as the ultimate arbiter of what is right and what is wrong.

Our young people need to be actively guided to genuinely *understand this!* For our present society—in which **they** will have to **suffer far more** than many of us who are older, **if** they live right on through the Great Tribulation—is headed straight back to Sodom and Gomorrah and the **horrifying**

things pictured directly in the book of Revelation. God describes the society soon to come, when men will so misunderstand and “despise” the true God that they will even **fight Christ** at His Second Coming!

Describing the leaders of the soon-coming Beast Power that will take over much of Europe, God states very clearly: “These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:14). It is obviously the fact that **millions** of young men and women in the armies of this coming power will be **so blinded** that they will literally go to battle against **the Creator** Himself, as Jesus returns as King of kings! Notice that as God sends the *seven last plagues*, when the fourth angel pours out his bowl on the sun, “power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they **blasphemed** the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did **not repent** and give Him glory” (Revelation 16:8–9).

By this time, men will have become so *totally cut off* from true **reality** that they cannot think straight. They will have become completely a part of “Satan’s Alternative Universe.” Our young people need to understand that this is the very way our present society is swiftly heading! They **must** be taught the basic facts of right and wrong. They **must** be taught that there is a very **real** God who has the authority to set the standards of what is right and what is wrong. They **must** be taught the awful **results** of sinful behavior: suffering, anguish and premature **death**.

**If** all of us who are adult Christians genuinely “reach out” to our young people—with love and understanding, yet with firm conviction, as well—perhaps they can be helped to understand, and we can thus *save their lives* from the awful suffering that is going to come from those who are cut off from God.

So I ask all of you, in Jesus’ name, to “get involved” in helping and caring for the well-being of our young people. *Take time* to teach your children, your grandchildren, your nieces, nephews and other young people you know and love, to understand *before it is too late!* Using the Bible, using this outstanding book I have mentioned—*The Marketing of Evil*—and using my article on “Satan’s Alternative Universe” and other “tools” which this Work gives you over and over, you **can help** if you will stir yourselves to **take action**. May God help all of us to strengthen our youth at home, through the Church, through our youth programs and in **every way we can** before it is too late!

*Roderic C. Meredith*

Titus 2:3-5

# Woman to Woman

## A PROFITABLE DAY

By **Faye League**

**I**t is quite common today to use the expression “Have a nice day!” when we take our leave of someone. It creates a very encouraging and positive effect. This expression has been around for quite some time now, but it never seems to get old or tiring. It simply means, “I hope you have a profitable day,” and I believe that most people sincerely mean this. It is not just a casual, trivial expression.

Upon rising each morning, I think most of us ladies have good intentions of having a profitable day. And we all know that putting God first in prayer can make a very big difference in our success. However, on some days, no matter how hard we try, things can happen to blur our focus and can knock us off track. In these cases, it may take more prayer for self-control than would normally be the case.

Being a morning person, I also enjoy studying God’s word at that time—when my mind is fresher and more alert. If I am rushed for time—perhaps due to an appointment I have to keep—one of my favorite go-to scriptures is Psalm 15. This psalm has only five verses, but it is chock-full of righteous requirements. In verse one, it asks the question, “LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy

hill?” Then in verse two, it begins to answer: “He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart.” Then it goes on to list other qualities of righteousness, ending with the very encouraging words of the last sentence of verse five: “He who does these things shall never be moved.” Also, its companion scripture is Psalm 24:3-5, “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”

These scriptures help me to remember to walk in a right path and to keep my day profitable.

One thing—some may find—that can mar a day is lingering, doubtful thoughts that keep hanging on. For example, career choices. Most young ladies I have come to know over the years desire to meet the “man of their dreams” and live happily ever after. Believe me, a lot of thought and planning goes into this, but preparation is sometimes lacking. So, with these thoughts in mind, let us return to the original reason Eve was created. In Genesis 2:18 we read, “And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’” Eve was created to be a helpmate for Adam, filling a wifely role as homemaker—which was men-



tioned several times by Mr. Rod McNair in the *Tomorrow's World* Special Report, "The Future of the Family."

This type of marriage relationship has been maligned and disparaged in modern times due to certain aspects of modern thinking. However, to manage a home as a wife and mother can be very rewarding, fulfilling and even empowering, if done properly with love and kindness in a godly manner. Blessings abound to those who embrace this way of giving of the self to others.

The young ladies can succeed in their desires, which I mentioned before, if they are prepared. Some have told me that they were pleasantly surprised to discover talents and skills they did not even know they possessed, until after obtaining a home and family of their own—which can bring about *many* profitable days.

I knew a couple, years ago, who both had corporate jobs. They were very supportive of God's Work. They also had a grown daughter who lived at home. While I was visiting them for dinner one evening, the husband mentioned that his wife had no interest at all in homemaking. This was surprising, since the home looked so well kept. The husband then explained that he had reluctantly assumed the homemaking role since his wife had no interest—none, zilch, nada. Her interest was in her corporate job, and she would not even give homemaking a chance to prove itself a profitable endeavor.

In order to have a profitable day on a regular basis, one must opt to start out with a positive attitude. "Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established" (Proverbs 16:3). Also, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, what-

ever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8). And as we think on these things, let us not forget to maintain the important things that we have *already* achieved—as the Apostle Paul exhorted the Philippians. "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, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind" (Philippians 3:13–16).

And of course, while we are meditating, let us not forget God's promises and how they apply to us as women of faith.

In our quest to have a profitable day, all too often we may find ourselves fretting over small things, most of which, if analyzed properly, "don't amount to a hill of beans" as the saying goes. This type of thinking and fretting can become habitual and worrisome to others. And it may take maximum effort on one's part (with God's help) in order to eradicate it, while realizing that it's a worthless endeavor—useless and unprofitable.

In times past, my husband was very helpful to me in this area. He would just simply say, "Get your mind off of that." I would, because he was actually doing us both a favor, and to this day I still lean to that wise understanding. So, as we can see from the things mentioned above, as long as we seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness first, and do not allow ourselves to be sidetracked, we can look forward to many profitable days to come. (LW)

# TOMORROW'S WORLD Upcoming Telecasts

March 16–22	<b>Four Prophecies for Germany</b>
March 23–29	<b>Ezekiel's Message Unlocked</b>
March 30–April 5	<b>Seven Signs of the Beast</b>
April 6–12	<b>Is There a Real Hell?</b>
April 13–19	<b>Easter: The Untold Story</b>
April 20–26	<b>Descending into Chaos</b>
April 27–May 3	<b>What Happens When You Die?</b>

Schedule subject to change | For stations and times, check the Television Log in your *Tomorrow's World* magazine.

## Births

Javier and Amanda Correa are happy to announce the birth of their first child, **Olivia Jewell Correa**. She was born on January 1, 2017 and weighed 7 pounds 12 ounces. The Correa family attends the Dallas, Texas congregation.

Jesse and Julie MacDonald of the Bonnyville, Alberta congregation are pleased to announce the birth of their second daughter, **Briar Rose MacDonald**, on December 21, 2016. She weighed 8 pounds 10 ounces and measured 19.5 inches long. Zoey is enjoying her little sister!

**Janay Abigail McKenzie** was born December 12, 2016 to Ricardo and Kamisha McKenzie of Beaumont, Alberta. Weighing 7 pounds 4 ounces and measuring 21.6 inches long, she was welcomed home by her older siblings, Iyana and Keyon. Michael and Kathy Barker of the Edmonton, Alberta congregation were delighted to be introduced to their fourth grandchild.

Charles and Cathrine Ogwyn of Charlotte, North Carolina are pleased to announce the arrival of **Charlotte Sophia Ogwyn**, born January 30, 2017. She weighed 9 pounds and was 20 inches long. Big sisters Emily and Amy and big brother Matthew are all delighted with their new baby sister!

Aaron and Desirée Vorel, of the Akron, Ohio congregation are happy to announce the birth of their daughter, **Annika Emmanuelle Vorel**. She arrived June 2, weighing 8 pounds 8 ounces. Her older siblings Bronson (6) and Leila (4) are completely smitten and love to solicit smiles and giggles from their cheerful little sister.

## Centenarian

**Mrs. Gwendoline Scott** of the Glasgow, Scotland congregation reached a notable milestone on December 25,

2016, when she turned 100 years of age. Relatives gathered from the U.S.A., Canada and the U.K. to join in marking this joyful occasion—a celebration that was attended by five generations of her line. Mrs. Scott was born in Norwood, England, the second youngest of nine children. As a young girl, she remembers her father saying that the true Sabbath was Saturday. In 1939 she married Percy Scott and they had two children, Christine (also of the Glasgow congregation) and Douglas. After emigrating to the U.S.A. in 1967 and visiting various churches, they were called into God's Church and she was baptized in 1984. She was widowed in 2000 and later moved to Scotland to be close to family members there. Although now unable to attend services, she remains an inspiration to the congregation, after whom she constantly enquires. Visitors are impressed by her alertness, cheerfulness, sharp memory and informed commentary on life near and far. In wishing her well for the future, we say, "Thank you for your shining example."

—Henry Cooper

## Weddings & Anniversaries

**Mr. and Mrs. Jim (Sue) Meredith** celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary on January 31, 2017. They met at Ambassador College in 1979 and Dr. Roderick Meredith performed their wedding ceremony in 1982 on the Pasadena Ambassador College campus. Mr. Jim Meredith is a minister in the Living Church of God, serving in the Festival Department at Headquarters, while Mrs. Meredith works as the Travel Coordinator for Headquarters.

**Mr. and Mrs. Keith (Jerrie) Powers** celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary on December 19, 2016. They both grew up in God's Church, met at the Feast of Tabernacles in 1979, and were baptized together in April 1982. Mr. and Mrs. Powers attend the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation.

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

# In Loving Memory

**Mr. Benjamin Samson Arendain**, 66, died on November 26, 2016 in his home in Monkayo, Philippines, after a brief illness. Mr. Arendain was baptized in 1971. He had been confined to bed since a stroke two years ago. Mr. Arendain was a kindly, soft-spoken man and always friendly. He is survived by his wife, Cesaria, eight children and fourteen grandchildren. Pastor Felipe Casing and Elder José Arendain conducted his funeral service on December 2.

**Mr. Charles Bauer, 73**, of the Columbus, Ohio congregation died on October 30, 2016 in Traverse City, Michigan. He and his wife were baptized in 1973. He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Bonnie, two daughters, Dr. Annette Bauer and Marie Becksted, and two grandchildren. He was preceded in death by another daughter, Deputy Suzanne Hopper. He enjoyed working on his farm with his dog always by his side, and sharing God's word and way of life with neighbors and friends. The funeral was conducted by Mr. Phil Sena.

**Mr. Desmond Blazey**, 92, of Melbourne, Australia died on October 24, 2016. He began attending services in 2010 and was baptized soon after. He is survived by a daughter, Desda. He was predeceased by his beloved wife, Patricia, who died in 2010. Mr. Blazey had a great sense of humor and his family and friends miss him greatly.

**Mrs. Kathleen Hendrickson** of the Ocala, Florida congregation died on Wednesday, December 28, 2016 at the age of 81. She was a "true Christian soldier of God" and loved very much by the brethren, who miss her greatly.

**Mrs. Anna Himes, 90**, of the Columbus, Ohio congregation died on January 25, 2017. She was preceded in death by her husband, Clarence, and daughter, Donna Olson. All of them were longtime Church of God members. She was one of twelve children and is survived by one son, Clarence, and six grandchildren. The funeral was conducted by Mr. Phil Sena.

**Mr. Frank Johnson**, 68, of the Jackson, Mississippi congregation, died on January 5, 2017. He is survived by his wife, Willie M. Johnson, one son, one daughter, six grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, and a host of other relatives and friends.

**Mr. Antonio Bonales Mendoza**, 70, of the Polomok congregation in the Philippines, died on October 24, 2016. He was baptized into God's Church in 1965. He is survived by six children and three grandchildren, two of whom are in LCG. Mr. Felipe Casing conducted his funeral service on November 2.

**Mr. John Neufeld**, 89, of the Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada congregation, died on November 12, 2016. He and his wife Marion were married in 1952 and they were baptized into the Church of God in 1956. Mr. Neufeld was a gentle and caring man who quietly observed a need and kindly helped out. He loved and worked hard for his family, teaching his children Biblical principles and passing on his sense of values by his actions and convictions. This is a fine legacy. Besides his wife, he is survived by two sons, two daughters, ten grandchildren, eleven great-grandchildren, one sister, and many nieces and nephews. Mr. Marc Arseneault conducted his memorial service on November 21.

**Mr. Joe Picker**, 72, finished his course and died peacefully on January 13, 2017, surrounded by his family. He is remembered for his contagious smile, his generous heart, and his unwavering love of God and His Truth. Mr. Picker was born in South Dakota and moved to Oregon in 1970. In 1973 he met and married Linda, his wife of 43 years. They had two sons. In 1977, the family began attending God's Church. He later became a deacon and was ordained an elder in 2009, serving the brethren in Washington, Oregon, and even Alaska. He worked for the railroad until a serious injury resulted in him taking an early retirement. After that he took college classes, worked in the orchards and on mechanical projects, and started his own construction company, in which his sons joined him. He was a hard worker and put his heart into every endeavor, from his job, to leading and serving his family, to seeking God and studying His word. During his last days in the hospital, he was a light to the staff, quick with a smile, encouraging to all, and always having a positive perspective. One of the doctors mentioned to the family that he had the utmost respect for their father. Mr. Picker's legacy lives on through his family and the brethren, whom he loved and served, and who greatly miss him. He is survived by his wife, Linda, sons Shane (Jaime) and Corey, one granddaughter, three brothers and their wives, and one sister.

**Mrs. Donna Reynolds**, 81, died on November 15, 2016. She had been a member of the Church of God for many years and was attending with the Living Church of God in Akron, Ohio. She was baptized in the 1970s in Worldwide. She is survived by two sons, Gary and Don Sells, who remember her love for God and His way of life. She also had three grandchildren. The funeral was on Tuesday, November 20, 2016.

**Mr. Roy Wilkins**, 88, of Brisbane, Australia, died peacefully on November 7, 2016. He became a member of God's Church in 2004. Mr. Dan Love conducted his funeral.

# COMMENTARY

## By Prayer and Fasting...

Scripture tells us what our Savior did to acquire spiritual strength, in connection with the devil's attack on Him: "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted [or tried] by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry" (Matthew 4:1-2). Notice—He fasted!

We Christians are not to punish ourselves, thinking that this will force God to hear our prayers. God is not interested in penance. That is just as if you or I would take whips and beat each other's backs, saying, "Look at our suffering, God, so hear us." The idea behind our fasting is quite different from that. We seek the invisible God. We fast to humble ourselves—to make ourselves realize how weak we are and that we are little children, saying, in effect, "Father, we are up against a great army, and there are great forces around us. We don't always know what we should do, and we need your help. We need guidance. And we need deliverance. Please help us draw near to You."

Prayer and fasting go together. There was a time when the prophet Daniel really, desperately wanted to know what would happen in the future: "Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes" (Daniel 9:3). Prayer always goes along with fasting.

Daniel went on: "And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, 'O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, we have

sinned...'" (vv. 4-5). Notice he did not say, "Oh, we've been good, and we've done no wrong, and You don't have any right to punish us." Rather, he told God he was sorry, and that "we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments.... Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face" (vv. 5, 7).

Notice the result of Daniel's prayerful fast. An archangel came to him and told him: "At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved" (v. 23). Why was Daniel so greatly loved? Because he humbled himself sincerely before God.

Prayer and fasting are at the center of a true Christian's life! To learn more about that life, read our article, "What Is True Christianity?" or our free booklet, *Your Ultimate Destiny!* As you draw closer to God through prayer and fasting, you will come to know Him far more than you ever imagined possible!

Yet, as we fast, we need to remember James' caution, "do you think that the Scripture says in vain, 'The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously'? But He gives more grace [grace greater than the lust of the human spirit]. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble'" (James 4:5-6). This is a vital point. Then: "Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (vv. 9-10). Brethren, that is God's promise to us! We must humble ourselves, and must not let down in the matter of prayer and fasting!

—Roderick C. Meredith