

Living Church News

Vol. 2, No. 1

January 2000

In This Issue

A Family Spirit	3
Religion 101	4
How Did We Get The Old Testament?	8
We Still Must Preach The Gospel!	12
Disfellowshipping And Marking	15
God Sits on The Mercy Seat	17
News of The Work	20
Trip Announcement	19
Local Church News	21

Establishing Right Priorities

Dear Brethren and Friends,

As we move together into this New Millennium—as designated by the Roman calendar—we need more than ever to prepare for the *real* New Millennium. For Christ will then be here in dramatic REALITY! And EVERYTHING around us will change.

So it is vitally important that each of us establish the *right priorities* for our lives. If you knew that you would die of cancer within one year, *what would your priorities be?* Would you spend more time with God? More time in earnest Bible study and fervent prayer to your Creator? More time loving and encouraging your family? More time SERVING others?

On the other side of the ledger, would you not spend *less* time watching television, *less* time “goofing around” and doing nothing in particular? And would not many of you men and women in business *cut back* on the expenditure of time and energy you dedicate to the corporate world in the pursuit of money and prestige? Would not many of you housewives spend perhaps a little *less* time making sure your home is “perfect”—and perhaps devote more time to serving others?

Jesus Christ said: “But seek FIRST the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). One of the most precious possessions we all have is TIME. And, while we are alive and able and not “six feet under”—we should earnestly put Christ and His Kingdom FIRST in our use of time. Most great men and women—though not yet “called” of God—have learned what a valuable resource time is. They guard it jealously and use it carefully for whatever *they* think is most important in this life. Peter Drucker, considered by many to be the greatest management expert ever, tells us this about how valuable TIME really is:

The supply of time is totally inelastic. No matter how high the demand, the supply will not go up. There is no price for it and no marginal utility curve for it. Moreover, time is totally perishable and cannot be stored. Yesterday’s time is gone forever and will never come back. Time is, therefore, always in exceedingly short supply.

Time is totally irreplaceable. Within limits we can substitute one resource for another, copper for aluminum, for instance. We

can substitute capital for human labor. We can use more knowledge or more brawn. But there is no substitute for time.

Everything requires time. It is the one truly universal condition. All work takes place in time and uses up time. Yet most people take for granted this unique, irreplaceable, and necessary resource. Nothing else, perhaps, distinguishes effective executives as much as their tender loving care of time. (*The Effective Executive*, p. 26).

When the Logos or the “Word”—through whom God created all that is (John 1:1–3)—emptied Himself and became a human being, He set us an *example*. He was, after all, the “Light” that God the Father sent into the world to *show us how to live*.

How did Jesus Christ, the Son of God, use the TIME at His disposal while in the human flesh? First of all, the gospels tell us consistently that Jesus was almost always giving, helping and SERVING others. And when He was not doing that, He was “communing” with the Father and recharging His spiritual batteries so that He could continue to be FILLED with the Holy Spirit. For, while in the flesh, Jesus was *fully human* and was “in all points tempted as we are” (Hebrews 4:15). And even Jesus had to CRY OUT to God again and again for spiritual strength and deliverance.

The book of Hebrews describes the human Jesus: “Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Hebrews 5:7–8). Jesus constantly put forth the TIME and effort to maintain an *extremely close relationship* with the Father. He prayed long and hard and put PASSION into His prayers “with vehement CRIES and TEARS” (v. 7).

Before selecting which of the dozens of young men following Him should become His Apostles, Jesus spent a lot of TIME with the Father: “Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued ALL NIGHT in PRAYER to God” (Luke 6:12).

And He often sought God the first thing in the morning—*before anything else* could interfere: “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed” (Mark 1:35).

Did Jesus—surrounded by His disciples and by huge crowds demanding His constant attention—have TIME to spend with His Father in this way? The answer is that Jesus knew that if He *did not spend* that precious time with God, then EVERYTHING else would be at risk! For, in the human flesh, apart from the Father, He *could* have made serious mistakes, He *could* have slowly surrendered to the pulls of the flesh. That is *why* He spent so much time with the Father and “cried out” for the guidance and strength He needed.

Though Jesus Christ had been with the Father from eternity in transcendent GLORY, in the human flesh He found it useful to

Editor in Chief Roderick C. Meredith
Editorial Director Richard F. Ames
Executive Editor William Bowmer
Managing Editor Gary F. Ehman
Layout Editor Donna Prejean
Circulation Wayne Pyle
Business Manager Fred Dattolo

Regional Offices

UNITED STATES:
P.O. Box 501304
San Diego, CA 92150-1304
Office (858) 673-7470
Fax: (858) 673-0310
<http://www.livingcog.org>

AUSTRALIA:
P.O. Box 772
Canberra, ACT 2601, Australia
Phone: (02) 6231-8166
or freecall: 1800-816-543
Fax: (02) 6231-8061

CANADA:
P.O. Box 27202
Toronto, Ontario, M9W 6L0
Phone: (905) 671-3730
Fax: (905) 671-9599

NEW ZEALAND:
P.O. Box 2767
Auckland, New Zealand
Freephone: 0800-380-584

PHILIPPINES:
MCPO Box 1774
Makati City 1257, Philippines
Phone: 63-2-813-6538
Fax: 63-2-867-1569

SOUTH AFRICA:
P.O. Box 1154, Ferndale 2160
Republic of South Africa
Phone: (27) 11-664-6036

UNITED KINGDOM:
3 Burnside Tower
Motherwell, ML1 2BA Scotland
Phone: 44-1698-263-977
Fax: 44-1698-263-977

The *Living Church News* is published bi-monthly by the Living Church of God. Subscriptions are sent without charge to all members of the Living Church of God and others who may request them. 16935 W. Bernardo Dr., Ste. 260, San Diego, CA, 92127.

Copyright © 2000, Living Church of God. Printed in the USA. All rights reserved. Periodical postage paid at San Diego, CA.

Postmaster: Send address changes to
Living Church News
P.O. Box 501304
San Diego, CA 92150-1304

The *Living Church News* is not responsible for the return of unsolicited articles and photographs. Scriptures are quoted from the *New King James Version* (Copyright 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

A Family Spirit

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

One aspect of restoring Apostolic Christianity that we need to recover is a genuine “family spirit.” A few of our local churches have this. But others do not, and certainly all of us can do better. A warm, close, loving spirit among ALL of our brethren will create a kind of welcoming atmosphere that will help hundreds—hopefully even thousands—of new brethren feel that they have “found a home” when they visit our congregations or start to attend.

Remember the early Christians? As you read the book of Acts carefully, it is obvious that they had this kind of togetherness. Describing the earliest converts, Luke tells us: “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart” (Acts 2:46). Being Jews, they still *worshipped* in the temple. But they ate in each other’s homes regularly. Can you imagine the “Feast of Tabernacles” type of enthusiastic fellowshiping that occurred! These brethren must have been really excited. They had just seen and heard the mighty winds and the tongues of fire, which descended upon them on the day of Pentecost. They had seen the other miracles and healings (v. 43). They felt the power of God’s Spirit in their lives and they *knew* that God was now among His people in a special way.

So they *shared* their joy and excitement with one another. Their hearts were full as they talked about

the healings and blessings they were experiencing. And they must have been deeply encouraged as they shared these things *together*. For they were greatly outnumbered by the other Jews around them—just as we are greatly outnumbered by the professing Christians of this world and by the vast multitudes of other people.

The early Christians clung together like a little “family”—constantly encouraging and praying for each other in the midst of a hostile world. When Peter and John were threatened by the Jewish hierarchy, they came back to their brethren, who “raised their voice to God with one accord” (Acts 4:24). God *heard* them and literally SHOOK the building in which they were meeting! And, in sharing these trials these brethren came to feel so much like a “family” that God inspired Luke to write these words: “Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common” (v. 32).

Later, when Peter was put in prison for the Gospel’s sake, Luke tells us, “CONSTANT PRAYER was offered to God for him by the church” (Acts 12:5). When Peter was supernaturally let out of prison by an angel, we read: “So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying” (v. 12).

Perhaps the outside persecution drove these early Christians closer together than they might otherwise have been. But we see, nevertheless,

that a great deal of closeness was felt even *before* that time. We in God’s Church today must build on the closeness and unity we already have. We must be fully prepared to encourage and comfort one another in the severe trials, *which we know certainly lie ahead!* We, too, must *pray* for each other constantly and unselfishly. We must become increasingly aware that we are “family”—NOT as a flippant slogan, but as a REALITY.

How well I remember the early days of Ambassador College—and the still “pioneering” church of that time. Most of the brethren really appreciated one another. They would have others over regularly after Sabbath services for dinner, for “pot luck” or for a backyard barbecue. This was a *constant thing*—for nearly every Sabbath, at least a few of the leading church families were generously inviting others over for food and fellowship. As a single male student or Ambassador College graduate, I mightily enjoyed those occasions! And so did scores of others who might otherwise have been lonely and with nothing to do on those Saturday evenings.

In those days, brethren were constantly helping each other with babysitting or other needs; they were bringing food and encouragement to those who were sick or to families where the mother had just had another child. Leading men would try to help others gain better employment. Nearly everyone would pitch in with food and money if a tragedy occurred to

A Family Spirit *continues on page 18*

Religion 101

Why do some long-time Church members begin to vacillate and drift away? Have they forgotten basic Biblical truths?

By Douglas S. Winnail

One of the most remarkable developments that has accompanied the fragmentation of the Church of God has been to see individuals, once considered leaders in the work of God or pillars in local congregations, begin to vacillate or change beliefs they once firmly professed. Some have actually returned to beliefs and practices that they once felt God called them out of. Others are caught up in creating their own religion as they pick and choose from various ideas and doctrines. Still others have just drifted away—confused, disillusioned or indifferent to any form of religion. The perplexing question is *how* could this happen? *Why* does this happen? Have we *forgotten* or *overlooked* basic warnings and teachings clearly mentioned in the Scriptures? Are there *lessons* we can learn from these sobering developments?

Nothing New!

Solomon was inspired to write “there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9–10). What we are witnessing today has happened before in the Church of God. The early New Testament church grew quite rapidly at *first*—as God worked powerfully through the Apostles via the Holy Spirit. We read of 3,000 people being baptized on Pentecost and multitudes being added later (Acts 2:41, 5:14, 6:1, 9:31, 13:48). Yet as the first century progressed, persecution developed, false teachers appeared and the church began to fragment (see 1 Corinthians 1:10–13). Twenty years after the founding of the New Testament church Paul laments that “all those in Asia [where Paul focused much of his ministry] have turned away from me” (2 Timothy 1:15). In a letter to the church in Galatia Paul remarks: “I *marvel* that you are *turning away so soon*... to a different gospel” (Galatians 1:6–9). By the end of the first century the apostle John tells the church: “you have *left*

your first love” (Revelation 2:4). John’s admonition indicates that many in the church had drifted (or were pulled) off course! Paul reveals that some “concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck” as a result (1 Timothy 1:19).

The situation in the first century church has many parallels to our situation today. However, instead of blindly repeating the mistakes of history, we need to ask what we can learn from unfortunate choices made by those who have preceded us. We need to seriously consider the *warnings* that God has inspired in His Word. Paul states that the Scriptures “were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Corinthians 10:11). That means us! John advised the drifting church to “remember... from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works” (Revelation 2:5). Essentially, John is saying get back to the basics—get back on track! But just what are the basics we must get back to? What fundamental concepts do we find in Scripture that *do not change*—that we must *remember*?

All Scripture is Inspired

There are many ideas circulating today about the Bible that are *simply misleading*. Such ideas include: the Scriptures do not really mean what they say, they do not apply to us today, Jesus fulfilled the law so we do not need to keep it, the New Covenant eliminated the need to keep the Sabbath, the Holy Days or tithe. These ideas circulate *in spite* of the fact that Jesus Christ, the Apostles and the early New Testament church *did not* teach or practice any of these “new” ideas! Both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant are based on the *same* set of laws—the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20:1–17; Matthew 19:16–19). Jesus kept the Sabbath and the Holy Days as a child and as an adult (Luke 2:41–42, 4:16; John 7:10, 37). He instructed His disciples to “follow” His teachings and example. Years after Christ’s

resurrection, the disciples were still keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days—and teaching others to do the same (Acts 17:2, 18:4, 21; 1 Corinthians 5:7–8).

David wrote of his *love* for God's law, that it was a lamp to his feet and made him wiser than his enemies (Psalm 119:97–105). Paul wrote that the law and commandments were “holy and just and good” and that not the hearers but “the doers of the law will be justified” (Romans 2:13, 7:12). Jesus plainly stated that He *did not* come to do away with the law but to fulfill—complete, magnify, show an even broader application (see Matthew 5:17; Isaiah 42:21). These Scriptures mean *exactly* what they say. Taking a verse out of context to counter clear teachings of the Bible is to *misuse* the word of God (i.e. using Romans 14:5–6 to try to show that we can decide to worship God on a day of our own choosing instead of the Sabbath as the Bible commands). This will lead to wrong conclusions, wrong beliefs and wrong doctrines. Peter clearly warns that some would “twist” Paul's writings in just such a manner as they also do other Scriptures (2 Peter 3:16). This has happened before and is happening today.

The Bible plainly states, “*all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). David wrote, “the *entirety* of Your word is truth” (Psalm 119:160). We cannot just pick and choose what part of Scripture we will obey and discard or discount the rest. This merely gives in to our carnal human nature that *resents* the instructions that God has recorded in His word (Romans 8:7). The challenge that every Christian faces is “*holding fast* the word of life” and to “stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word or our epistle” (Philippians 2:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:15). God is looking for people who “tremble” at His word—who respect and fear to tamper with the meaning of God's inspired word (Isaiah 66:2). When we cease to tremble before God's word, when we feel free to innovate and apply our own interpretation to the meaning of Scripture, we will begin to compromise and divide and drift away from the Truth.

Many Teachers Deceive Many

Jesus repeatedly stated that at the end of the age, “*many* [calling themselves ministers of Christ], will come *in my name*, saying ‘I am the Christ’ and will *deceive many*” (Matthew 24:5, 11, 24). Paul warned the elders in Ephesus that “from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse [misleading, distorted] things, *to draw away* the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:29–30). He warned the church in Colosse to “beware lest anyone cheat you [take you captive] through philosophy and

empty deceit, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8). As human beings we want to achieve recognition by promoting our own ideas to gain a following. It has been incredible to see the number of individuals in recent years who have felt “moved” to start their own churches and ministries. What has also been incredible is the number of people willing to follow self-proclaimed leaders going in so many different directions.

One of the siren songs promulgated today is that the Bible interprets itself and that it can mean different things to different people. Everybody is right and nobody is wrong—regardless of the ideas they hold about the meaning of Scripture. This is simply confusion—which is *not* God's way (1 Corinthians 14:33). In the early church, when there was a difference over doctrine, a conference of leading figures was called (Acts 15:6–21). The issues were discussed and decisions were made that were then applied throughout the church (Acts 15:22–29). This promoted unity. Decisions about doctrine or about prophecy are not matters for personal interpretation (2 Peter 1:20). This is a basic Biblical concept and a fundamental lesson of history. When we ignore or overlook this important principle, we experience divisions and disunity. Disunity breeds disillusionment.

The World is Deceived

The Bible plainly states that Satan has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9). To our modern ears—schooled in politically correct, non-judgmental ways of thinking—this sounds like a terribly biased and bigoted assertion. That everyone except those God has called could be wrong sounds incredibly narrow-minded—yet that is what the Scriptures clearly reveal. Jesus told His disciples that “it has been given *to you* to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, *but to them* [the multitudes] *it has not been given*” (Matthew 13:11–17). He prayed for those God had given Him—he did not pray for the world—at that time (John 17:9). Paul, speaking of his countrymen—who kept the Sabbath, the Holy Days, worshipped God and kept His law in the letter—wrote, “they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” (Romans 10:2). He describes the Jews of his day as “ignorant of God's righteousness” whose hearts were “hardened” [blinded], that “God has given them a spirit of stupor” and “eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear” (Romans 10:3, 11:7–8). Paul even refers to his countrymen as “enemies” of the gospel “...committed to disobedience” until God offers salvation to the Gentiles (Romans 28–32).

We do not read of Jesus or any of the Apostles debating this fundamental point. It is accepted as a given—the

world is deceived, only a few are called now. That is what the Scriptures plainly state. However, with division and fragmentation in the church, what once seemed so clear has now become fuzzy. Just who is called? Who understands? Who is God using to do the work? For some, the issue has become, maybe the world of mainstream Christianity is right and the Church of God has been wrong—maybe we are deceived! After all, how do we know we are right? This was hardly the position of Jesus Christ or the Apostles! Jesus spoke with an authority that astonished his listeners (Matthew 7:28–29). Paul boldly asserted “we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery... which none of the rulers [leaders, thinkers] of this age knew... we have the *mind of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 2:6, 7–8, 16). Paul *knew* the world was deceived. He *knew* he understood the Truth. He plainly states this in his writings—which are part of God’s inspired word. When we lose sight of this basic concept, we will begin to vacillate and entertain all sorts of misleading ideas.

Satan is Real

The Bible clearly warns us about Satan. He is the god of this world who deceives and blinds people to the truth (2 Corinthians 4:4). He influences our thoughts and attitudes (Ephesians 2:2) promoting notions of vanity, lust, anger and division (Galatians 5:19–21). Peter warns that while our “adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour,” we must remain alert and resist his efforts (1 Peter 5:8–9). However, in spite of a multitude of warnings in the scriptures, the notion is prevalent today that we can manage on our own, we can trust our own thoughts, we do not need a church to guide or teach us, and that we are resistant to being deceived or influenced by Satan. This simply ignores what the Bible plainly reveals. Jesus told Peter at one point that his ideas were being influenced by Satan (Matthew 16:23) and on another occasion that the goal of this powerful spirit being was to derail Peter (Luke 22:31). If Peter, both a disciple and an apostle, was subject to Satan’s influence, surely we are not immune. To survive spiritually we must be able to both recognize and resist his subtle and insidious assaults (see 2 Corinthians 2:11; James 4:7). This requires *spiritual discernment*—one of the gifts of God’s Spirit—which is given to those who obey (not reason around) the laws of God (2 Timothy 1:6–7; Acts 5:32). These are fundamental Biblical concepts we cannot afford to forget.

Not Lost Forever!

With the divisions in the church has come the idea that if you are not a member of a particular group you are

lost and will burn in the Lake of Fire. This is similar to the popular Protestant notion that if you do not give your heart to the Lord today, He may come tonight and you will be lost forever! This is simply not true. It is not a scriptural idea. The Bible reveals that only those called into the church are being judged now (1 Peter 4:17). However, judgment involves a *period of time*—the time when we are alive to make decisions. We do not know when Christ will return. His Return will be preceded by a series of recognizable events (Matthew 24). As these events begin to happen, some will repent—so there is time to make, and remake, decisions. Before Christ returns there will also be a three and one-half year period of Tribulation. John reveals that a great multitude will repent during that period of time (Revelation 7:9, 13–14). For those not called now, their time of judgment will be *after* the Millennium during the Second Resurrection when they can make decisions (Revelation 20:11–12).

The point is, God has a plan for working with mankind. Salvation will be offered to all—but at different times. For the church today, that time period is now—while we are alive. It does not end at sundown tonight. But it does not go on forever, either! God is not in a hurry, but He does have a timetable. We do not need to become anxious and begin twisting Scripture to accommodate confused friends and family members, but we do need to remain alert. When we lose sight of this basic concept, we can become anxious and unwittingly begin to embrace ideas that are not solidly based on the Scriptures.

Key to Prophecy

The Bible clearly indicates that God’s Church will “have a more sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19, KJV). This was probably one of the factors that got the attention of many who began attending over the years. A major key to understanding Bible prophecy is the identity of the United States, Britain and other nations. The Church of God has been somewhat unique in understanding and using that key. That concept is soundly based on numerous Scriptures (Genesis 12:1–3, 22:17–18, 35:11, 48:19) and rests on considerable historical evidence. However, in recent years, some have asserted the identity of Israel cannot be known, that it is an idea without foundation in either Scripture or history, that it is not the gospel and its usefulness is uncertain. When the concept is discarded, Bible prophecy becomes metaphorical and watching for real events to develop is irrelevant. This is, however, just the opposite of what Jesus told His disciples (see Matthew 24). Jesus said His Second Coming will take many by surprise, simply because they were unaware of the signifi-

cance of developing world events (Matthew 24:36–39). As the end of this age approaches the keys to understanding prophecy will become more important—not less. We cannot afford to take such vital information lightly—or discard it!

Love Involves Warning!

One of the big issues that is raised today is that we need more love in the Church. After all, Jesus did say we are to love our brothers and sisters (John 15:12–13). However, what is often overlooked is that “whom the Lord loves, He chastens [disciplines, corrects]” (Hebrews 12:6). This is seldom pleasant, but it is for our ultimate good. The Bible instructs parents to use the same kind of love with children (Proverbs 22:15, 29:15). Again, in spite of clear Biblical instructions to the contrary, the popular notion today is that you show love by not correcting, not disciplining and allowing people to just do and believe and teach as they please. Unfortunately, this is a prescription for personal failure and social chaos. A similar philosophy prevailed during the time of the judges in ancient Israel (Judges 21:25). That was a chaotic time of permissiveness, anarchy and civil war. God’s way is to *warn* of the consequences of certain actions—so people can learn and repent before it is too late (Isaiah 58:1; Acts 2:36–40; Revelation 18:4). God does this because He loves us. This, too, is a basic Biblical concept that we seem to be losing sight of today in our society and in the church.

The Commission

Jesus Christ instructed His disciples to “go into all the world and preach the gospel” (Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15). This has long been regarded as the Great Commission of the church. Jesus also told His disciples to “watch” world events that would indicate His return was near (Matthew 24:36–44; Mark 13:32–37). Passages in Ezekiel indicate that God’s servants are to function as “watchmen” to explain the *prophetic significance* of events that develop on the world scene (Ezekiel 3:1–17, 33:1–11). God has *always* provided advance warning before administering correction (Amos 3:7). Noah, as a “preacher [*kerux*, a herald, public crier] of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:15) would have conveyed God’s warnings (Genesis 6:13, 17) to his generation of the impending flood up until the day the rains began (Genesis 7:6, 16). Jeremiah provided a warning to Judah until the day Jerusalem fell (Jeremiah 38, 39). Jesus also told His disciples to “feed the flock” (John 21:15–17). The Scriptures indicate that all three aspects of Christ’s commission to

the church are to be *ongoing*—to the very end of the age (see Matthew 10:23; Revelation 3:10). Jesus explicitly states that when He returns He expects to find the church “so doing,” that is, *doing what it has been instructed to do* (Matthew 24:45–46).

To fulfill the commission given by Christ, the church must determinedly maintain its focus and avoid being pulled off course. We must learn to work together as a team and not give in to individualistic ideas and independent-minded actions. Doctrines and teachings need to be unified, not fragmented. The church must be motivated by outgoing concern—to deliver a message of hope and warning *for mankind*—not just an inward concern about one’s own personal salvation. For decades this has been how the church operated. Only in recent years has the focus of many begun to shift. With the fragmentation of the church, notions have been put forward that the Work is over, that the church just needs to focus on getting its own members ready for Christ’s return, and that individuals can decide for themselves what to believe and how best to worship God. These *self-centered* ideas have actually contributed to the division and chaos that plague the scattered churches today. These “new” ideas are not only in direct contrast to clear instructions of Jesus Christ, but these ideas will not prepare us to function effectively in the world-ruling government Christ will establish on this earth. Anyone who begins to make adjustments to Christ’s commission (choosing to do one part but not other parts), or who loses sight of that commission will soon veer off course! This is simply a fact of history.

The theme of the ‘90s has been that the church needs to change and get rid of old, out-dated ideas, teachings and practices. Yet, God plainly states in the Scriptures: “I am the LORD, *I change not*” (Malachi 3:6). We are also told that “Jesus Christ is *the same* yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). This means God’s laws, and His plan and purpose do not change. The gospel that Christ brought to this earth of His atoning sacrifice and the coming kingdom of God have not changed. His Commission to the church has not changed—nor have the instructions we find throughout the New Testament changed. The consequences for disobedience and disregard for God’s way of life are still in effect. God has not moved in recent years—but many in the church have! If we are to endure to the end, finish the work we have been given to do, and receive our promised reward, *we must not let go of the basics*. We must *remember* the fundamental Biblical truths that comprise Religion 101. This is the *lesson* we can learn from the sobering developments that have affected the Church of God. CCNY

How Did We Get the Old Testament?

By John H. Ogwyn

Where did we get our Old Testament? Who decided which books were holy and deserved to be included as part of the Bible? Did some council of Jewish rabbis define the canon? If not, when was it done and who did it? Also, where did they get the authority to say that certain books belonged in the Bible while others did not?

Many of the commentators argue and dispute who actually wrote the various books of the Old Testament. Is there a way of really knowing? For years, many of the so-called higher critics argued that Moses could not have written the books attributed to him, because the alphabet had not been invented yet. Arguing from an evolutionary model, they tried to decide when various phases of the Hebrew religion evolved. They then assigned the writings reflecting those themes to the time period that they imagined to have been correct. Such circular reasoning led them to give certain Biblical books multiple authors and assign whole books and portions of books to periods that were centuries after the time the books claimed to have been written.

Needless to say, these critics have tended to disparage the worth of the Bible as a historical document. Particularly, they have discounted

the accuracy of accounts set in the times of the patriarchs, the judges, or the earlier kings. Assuming the Biblical record to have been compiled from oral traditions that were written down centuries after the events mentioned, the critics reasoned that such a record could not be considered very reliable.

We should also note that Roman Catholic Bibles contain several books that Protestant editions omit; the books of the Apocrypha. Also, there are various other books, such as Enoch, Jasher, or Jubilees, which some have thought to be lost books of the Bible. Is there a way to be sure that we have ALL the books that are legitimate scripture in our current copies of the Old Testament?

What about it? Does the record of the Bible, together with that of secular history, provide significant evidence about the origin and development of the Old Testament? How did it come to be written, and can we prove that what we have in our possession is truly authoritative?

The Role of Moses

The first five books of the Old Testament are called the books of Moses. What evidence is there to believe that Moses actually wrote the books attributed to him? During

portions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, certain scholars discounted that the alphabet and writing even existed in the 15th century BC, the Biblically stated time of Moses. Modern archaeology has demonstrated the fallacy of such an idea. Notice what Donald Wiseman, Chairman of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq states: "By the time of the entry of the Hebrews into Canaan... they would be confronted, if not already familiar, with at least five different forms of writing systems used for eight or more languages..." (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 319). Examples of written documents dating back to almost 2,000 years before the days of Moses have been found in the Middle East.

Moses, after all, had the best education that was available in the world of his day. He was raised as a prince of Egypt and would have learned not only the Egyptian form of writing, but also the alphabetic form used by Egypt's near neighbors and trading partners. In other words, Moses, who excelled in learning among the Egyptians (cf. Acts 7:22), would have certainly been highly literate.

The Bible records that near the end of his life, Moses delivered to the priesthood the books that he had

written. This official copy of the Book of the Law was then laid up in the Tabernacle by the side of the Ark of the Covenant (Deuteronomy 31:9, 26). This was the basis of other copies that the priesthood made to use for teaching purposes. It was the origin of what we call the canon of scripture.

These books were not to be kept away from the people. Rather, every seventh year during the Feast of Tabernacles, the entire Torah was to be read to the people of Israel. Future kings were to make their own personal handwritten copies from the scrolls laid up in the sanctuary. God, from the very beginning, intended that His word be faithfully preserved and also made available to the people.

As for critics' claims that the first five books of the Bible were written much later than the time of Moses, their ideas were simply based upon circular evolutionary reasoning, not upon any sound basis in fact. For years, for instance, the critics dismissed the story of Sodom and Gomorrah on the basis that there were no secular references to cities of that name. Several years ago, however, that claim was demonstrated to be false by excavations at ancient Ebla, located in Syria. The Ebla tablets date from the time of the patriarchs and mention many cities and place names that had previously been known only from Genesis. The point is, much of the record of antiquity has been lost, but what has been found has inevitably confirmed the Biblical account.

The Next Period of Canonization

About 400 years after the days of Moses, a major reorganization took place in the Israelite worship of God. At the beginning of King David's rule over the twelve tribes, he conquered

the Jebusite citadel at Jerusalem and established his capital there. Later he brought up the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, though the tabernacle of Moses remained at Gibeon for a number of years more. During the latter period of David's reign he began to make plans for the building of a magnificent temple in Jerusalem.

Though God did not allow David personally to build the temple, He nevertheless allowed him to oversee the preparations. In doing this, King David organized the priests and the Levites into 24 courses, which were to rotate their time of service in the temple. He also organized special groups of musicians to sing and provide musical accompaniment. What were they to sing? King David was known as the "sweet psalmist of Israel" and was responsible for much of the book of Psalms. Interestingly, Psalm 72:20 shows that Psalm 72 ends the compilation that King David originally put together. Since there were 24 courses of Levitical singers, David used a multiple of that number ($3 \times 24 = 72$) in originally selecting the psalms that were to be used in temple worship.

Solomon, the son of David, oversaw the completion of the temple that his father had envisioned. In his lifetime he authored numerous songs and proverbs. He was responsible for teaching the people many things pertaining to wise living and conduct (Ecclesiastes 12:9). Interestingly, just as David assembled 72 psalms (24×3) for the Levites to sing in the new temple, Solomon compiled 24 chapters of Proverbs for the Levites to use in teaching the people wise conduct.

At this time the historical writings of Joshua and Samuel were clearly recognized as well. We are told that Samuel caused certain of his writings to be "laid up before the

LORD" (1 Samuel 10:25). This major change in the course of the nation's history, the institution of the monarchy and the construction of a temple, was overseen by God's chosen prophets, Samuel and Nathan. Kings David and Solomon, helped and guided by these men of God, oversaw the expansion of the canon of Scripture.

The Epochs of Hezekiah and Josiah

About three hundred years after the death of King Solomon, his descendant, Hezekiah, came to the throne in Jerusalem. He was responsible for reopening the temple of Solomon, which had been closed for several years, and initiating a time of religious reform and revival in the land. Guided by the prophet Isaiah, he was responsible for adding additional material to the canon of scripture. The last seven chapters of the book of Proverbs were added at this time (cf. Proverbs 25:1). Also, Hezekiah was responsible for adding additional psalms, beginning with the psalms of Asaph, Psalms 73–83 (2 Chronicles 29:30). He also added the fifteen psalms of degrees, Psalms 120–134, prepared at the occasion of his miraculous healing and the addition of fifteen years to his life (Isaiah 38:20). It is likely, most of the two books of Kings were compiled by Isaiah (2 Chronicles 32:32) at this time, along with the prophetic book that bears his name.

Almost 100 years after Hezekiah had come to the throne, another righteous king, his great-grandson Josiah, became king. Josiah, encouraged and helped by the prophet Jeremiah, was responsible for the last major spiritual revival in the nation of Judah prior to its captivity. The temple had been shut by his grandfather Manasseh and had fallen into serious disrepair. Josiah collected

money to finance a cleaning and refurbishing of the temple and launched this ambitious project under the oversight of the priesthood.

Copies of the scriptures were found during this refurbishing and were immediately brought to the attention of the king (2 Chronicles 34:14–18). Undoubtedly secreted away by faithful priests to protect

The Time of Ezra

The Old Testament, as we know it, was completed in the days of Ezra the Priest and Governor Nehemiah. Ezra was allowed by King Artaxerxes to return to Jerusalem with the temple scrolls and other treasures which had been kept in Babylon since the days of Nebuchadnezzar (Ezra 7:14). Ezra came back to teach the scrip-

another [as the Greeks have], but only 22 books... which are justly believed to be divine..." (*Against Apion*, I, 8). Josephus went on to state that the Jewish scriptures had been compiled in their final form in the days of King Artaxerxes, who reigned in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. He emphasized that, while many books had been composed among the Jews since that

The Jews considered the numbering of 22 books of Hebrew scripture significant. This is because it corresponded to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

the scrolls from the minions of evil King Manasseh, these copies of God's word came to light once again, and at the proper time. Regardless of what the enemies of God have sought to do, the Creator has always insured the faithful preservation of His word. In addition to the rediscovery of existing scripture, the writings of Jeremiah, including Lamentations (2 Chronicles 35:25), were completed at this time. These writings, laid up in the temple along with the other sacred writings, were undoubtedly taken to Babylon with the other temple treasures when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Jerusalem temple.

We find that Daniel had access to these writings while in Babylon (Daniel 9:2, 13). Clearly God, in order to insure faithful preservation of His own revealed word, brought Daniel and his three friends into prominent positions in Babylon. In fact, they were the chief of the wise men of Babylon (Daniel 2:48) and as such would have certainly had complete access to the royal library. In this way, the Bible was not only preserved until God's time came to restore true worship in Jerusalem, but His servant Daniel had access to studying and teaching God's word as well.

tures to the people (v. 10) and to institute religious reform for people who were on the verge of losing their very identity and absorbing the syncretistic paganism of their neighbors. A few years after Ezra's return, Nehemiah returned as governor and had the authority to insist that Ezra's reforms be carried out.

During the many decades in Babylon the Jews had adopted a new style of writing the letters of their alphabet. They had also taken to using Babylonian names for the months of their calendar and to using Aramaic, which was the language of Babylon and similar to Hebrew, as the language of their everyday speech.

Ezra caused the temple scriptures to be recopied in the square Babylonian script, which is the script that we commonly think of as Hebrew writing today. He also set the books in the order in which the Jews have faithfully preserved them.

The first century Jewish historian and priest, Flavius Josephus, recorded the history of the Hebrew scriptures and contrasted them to the Greek writings extant in his day. "For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one

time, they were not considered to have divine authority, because there had not been a succession of prophets since the time of Malachi, a late contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Jews considered the numbering of 22 books of Hebrew scripture significant. This is because it corresponded to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. An illustration is found in Psalm 119. In the King James translation, as well as many others, a character of the Hebrew alphabet precedes each section of eight verses in this Psalm. In Hebrew the first eight verses all begin with the letter "a" (aleph), the next eight verses all begin with the letter "b" (beth), and so on. The idea was that when all of the letters had been used, the subject was thoroughly covered and nothing more remained to be said. This was the concept with the Hebrew scriptures. God's revelation in the Hebrew language was deemed complete. After all, the entire alphabet was "used up."

The 22 books, as counted by the Jews, correspond to the books of our Old Testament—normally counted as 39 books in modern translations. The difference in number is because of a difference in the way the books

were counted. The 12 Minor Prophets, for instance, were kept on one scroll in Hebrew, and were counted as simply one book, not as twelve separate ones. There are several other combinations as well. The two books of Samuel and the two books of Kings were counted as one book. Both books of Chronicles were also counted as one. The other two combinations were the books of Joshua–Judges and the books of Ezra–Nehemiah.

Evidence of the Reliability of the Old Testament

Modern critics have continued to cast aspersions on the reliability and accuracy of the Old Testament scriptures. For instance, they have disputed the historicity of Daniel. Why have critics singled out Daniel for special attention? Primarily, because of the specific prophecies that it contains.

It gives, for instance, a detailed picture of history from Daniel's day on through the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman empires that dominated the world scene in future centuries. Daniel also makes clear reference to the Seleucids and Ptolomies as well as to the Maccabees, all of whom flourished three or more centuries after the stated date of the book. Also, Daniel gives a clear chronological prophecy pinpointing the time of the Messiah's first coming. All of this is simply too much for the critics. They are "scholars" who do not believe in a real God who can "declare the end from the beginning."

Now let us look briefly at the kind of claims made by so-called higher critics and see what the real facts are. For instance, a recent book by Peter Lemche, one of Denmark's most noted Biblical scholars, has gotten a lot of attention in "educated" circles. In it, he states that it is impossible to locate historical Israel. He, along with a number of others,

asserts that the Israel of the Old Testament is simply the product of the literary imagination of writers from the late Persian and Hellenistic times.


Ronald Hendel, professor of Hebrew Bible in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of California at Berkeley, exposed the shallowness of Dr. Lemche's thesis in a recent book review. He writes: "We have numerous Hebrew seal inscriptions of people named in the Bible, particularly from the eighth to the sixth centuries BCE, that attest to the existence of these people in the right time and place. How could religious zealots five hundred years later have known these small details? Moreover, the study of historical linguistics of Northwest Semitic languages corresponds neatly to the chronology of the Biblical writings that scholars have deduced *on other grounds*. How could Jews of late Persian and Hellenistic times have accurately reproduced the linguistic features of pre-Exilic Hebrew when these features had been dead for hundreds of years?" (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, Nov.–Dec. 1999, p. 60).

For many years, critics claimed that the Aramaic of the book of Daniel could not have been written prior to 167BC. The discovery and study of the Qumran texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls has shed new light on the Aramaic language of the second century. The text of Daniel is considerably different from the Aramaic of the Qumran scrolls. As Professor William LaSor emphasizes in an article he wrote on the Dead Sea Scrolls for *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, the language of the book of Daniel "...is linguistically closer to the fifth or fourth century BC than to the second or first" (vol. 1, p. 403). Dr. R. K. Harrison, a professor of Old Testament at the University of Toronto, states in a dif-

ferent article in the same commentary: "The Aramaic of Daniel was the kind used in government circles from the seventh century onwards, and thus akin to that of the Elephantine papyri of the fifth century BC and the book of Ezra" (p. 247).

For many years, scholars have scoffingly pointed to what they labeled as historical inaccuracies in Daniel, events such as Nebuchadnezzar's insanity and the reigns of Belshazzar and Darius the Mede. The real facts, however, demonstrate that it has been the scholars, not Daniel, who were inaccurate. Nebuchadnezzar's insanity, for instance, is alluded to in the writings of Berossus, a third century BC Babylonian priest. Another ancient Babylonian chronicler, Abydenus, recorded that Nebuchadnezzar was "possessed by some god or other" and after a startling prophetic outburst disappeared from Babylon.

Several years ago, archaeologists uncovered records that Belshazzar was associated as co-regent with his father Nabonidus, and was the ruler present in Babylon at its fall. Discoveries of the Nabonidus Chronicle at Haran in recent years have shed light on Darius the Mede, long a mystery to historians.

As we can see, in case after case, modern archaeology is serving to confirm the historical accuracy of the Biblical record and to confound the claims of the doubting critics. The Old Testament, preserved by the Jews in the three-fold division of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, has come down to us as the accurate and inspired word of God. It is a trustworthy account of origins and of the Creator's dealings with mankind. Beyond that, it contains prophecies, verifiably written centuries in advance of their fulfillment, which attest to the divine inspiration of this book of books, the Holy Bible. 

We Still Must Preach the Gospel!

By Mark Mendiola

The United States Declaration of Independence makes this classic statement: “We hold these truths to be self-evident...” With every wind of doctrine gusting through God’s Church at this end time, virtually every fundamental truth that has been maintained by the Church of God has come under heavy assault. Truth is not as evident as it should be to many brethren who may have taken fundamental doctrines for granted without proving them. As a result, thousands have fallen as spiritual casualties in recent years.

On the other hand, many of God’s people got up in arms when those doctrines started being systematically changed. Some were jolted awake when divine healing was downplayed or they were told they were “born again” at baptism. Others knew something was dreadfully wrong when they were informed that God is a trinity. The last straw for many brethren came when they were taught the New Covenant does away with the need to keep God’s Sabbath, annual Holy Days, tithing and dietary laws.

Yes, thousands of brethren were righteously indignant that precious truths were watered down or even rejected outright, but there is one truth, that far too many of God’s people consider no longer necessary or of much importance. They have shown little desire to contend earnestly for it as they have done for other truths. In fact, many people seem to think it no longer pertains to us.

Yet, we find Jesus Christ and the early Apostles zealously proclaimed it, adamantly adhered to it and even died for it! The Apostle Paul singled it out as something that was being perverted by false teachers who had infiltrated the Church in his day and age. That truth is the very Gospel message of Jesus Christ—the Good News of the Kingdom of God!

Nowhere in the Bible can you find where Christ rescinds His command to His disciples to publicly preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God or where He

sets conditions for when it no longer needs to be proclaimed. To the contrary, He plainly said it would be preached and proclaimed right to the end of this age before His return.

Notice the message Jesus Christ Himself delivered when He was upon this earth: “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14–15).

A Message to All the World

Christ urged those who heard the Good News of the Kingdom of God to repent and believe that message. Notice how the Book of Mark also concludes: “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents, and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.’ So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs” (Mark 16:15–20).

Repentance and baptism directly result from the proclamation of Christ’s true Gospel message. He said we must repent, believe that message and be baptized. He also said divine healings would be signs confirming that message. Surely, as God’s end-time Church grows ever closer to a full restoration of Apostolic Christianity, we can expect to see an increase in dramatic, miraculous healings as was seen during Jesus Christ’s ministry.

Repeatedly throughout the New Testament, preaching the Gospel and divine healings are directly linked, just as

Christ promised those who would faithfully proclaim the wonderful news of His return as King of kings over all the earth. They go hand in hand.

“Now Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics and paralytics; and He healed them” (Matthew 4:23–24).

“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘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 9:35–38).

In this context of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, Christ instructed His disciples to pray for more laborers, because proclaiming that message is a Work and a harvest. Christ then commissioned His disciples to preach the Gospel and heal those afflicted with sickness and disease. “And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease” (Matthew 10:1).

A Gospel Freely Given

Christ then coupled this power to heal with preaching the Gospel. “But go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give” (vv. 6–8).

The Gospel is to be preached without charge and is not to be a money-making venture. That is why the Living Church of God’s *Tomorrow’s World* magazine, *Living Church News*, booklets, tapes and *Bible Study Course* are given away freely. We are not to sell the truth (Proverbs 23:23). We are not to profit from it. Yet, a price comes when Jesus Christ’s true Gospel is powerfully, boldly preached. Christ and His disciples were determined to go forth and proclaim it to as many people as possible, even if it meant losing their lives!

“And when He had called the people to Him, with His disciples also, He said to them, ‘Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and

follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospel’s will save it” (Mark 8:34–35). Christ said if we follow Him we must be willing to lose everything to proclaim the Gospel, which always has been a very unpopular message.

“So, Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the Gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundred-fold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life’” (Mark 10:29–30).

Persecution often comes with that message. Christ’s disciples did not let even violent opposition stop them from preaching it throughout the Roman Empire, fulfilling His explicit instructions and commission.

“At that time, a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles” (Acts 8:1). “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (v. 4). “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized” (v. 12).

Persecuted for the Truth

Just as Christ said would happen, people believed, repented and were baptized after hearing Christ’s disciples preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, which also was a primary thrust of the Apostle Paul’s ministry. “And (Paul) went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the Kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8). As a result, his preaching brought persecution. Some were hardened and did not believe, speaking evil of that message (v. 9).

All manner of evil will be spoken of those who faithfully preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Paul boldly proclaimed it right to the end of his ministry, even when under house arrest. Notice how the Book of Acts concludes:

“So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning until evening... Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord

Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (Acts 28:23, 30–31).

The Apostle Paul would let no one forbid him to preach about the Kingdom.

In recent years, we have seen deliberate attempts by men to prevent the Gospel of the Kingdom of God from being proclaimed. Satan the devil does not want that message disseminated because it announces the end of his rule on the earth. He will do everything he can to shut the door on that message, even using false ministers to persuade God’s people there is no longer a need to proclaim it! Many are arising to divert God’s tithes to themselves and away from the Gospel.

The Apostle Paul showed that Christ commands only those ministers dedicated to preaching the Gospel are to be sustained by the tithes of God’s people, just as the Levites used the tithes to perform their duties (Numbers 18). Conversely, those ministers who do not preach the Gospel should not be given God’s tithes!

“If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless, we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the Gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the Gospel should live from the Gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:11–14).

“For if I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then? That when [not if] I preach the Gospel, I may present the Gospel without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the Gospel” (v. 16–18).

Another Gospel

The Apostle Paul warned the elders at Ephesus: “from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:30). He also warned the Galatians that men would arise to pervert the true Gospel and many would turn from it (Galatians 1:6–8). He pronounced a double curse on anyone who would dare do so! Paul also warned the Corinthians that deceitful workers would come preaching another gospel (2 Corinthians 11:4).

Yes, the Apostle Paul was engaged in spiritual warfare against those who sought to undermine, thwart and destroy the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. In writing to the

Ephesians, he urged them to have their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15). Many people will remember the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith and the sword of the spirit, but neglect the vital importance of marching forward with Christ’s Gospel message. Yet, Paul includes it as part of the entire armor of God.

By neglecting the Gospel, we go into battle barefoot, exposed like the mythological Greek warrior Achilles who was fatally wounded in his heel because he did not have it protected. If we do not preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, we are leaving an opening for Satan to wound us spiritually. It is fitting that the Apostle Paul links the Gospel to our feet because we must march like Christian soldiers if we are to go into all the world with the Good News, as Christ commissioned.


The Prophet Isaiah makes the same comparison. Feet can be some of the ugliest parts of the body when they are gnarled or have corns, bunions, ingrown toenails or fallen arches. But those feet used to take the wonderful news that Jesus Christ will reign on this earth are beautiful in God’s sight! “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns’” (Isaiah 52:7)!

An Awesome Privilege

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God entails the Good News of peace and salvation Christ will bring with Him when He returns to rule on this earth. And God wants that message proclaimed to mankind. That is why we are involved in a Work. Christ said: “He who endures to the end shall be saved. 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 24:13–14).

What an awesome privilege it is to share with others the precious truth of the true Gospel of the Kingdom of God, a truth that is not self-evident anymore yet was powerfully proclaimed by Jesus Christ and the original Apostles.

How grateful we should be to our predecessors who were willing to sacrifice so we could hear the same message. Should not we be willing to do the same or have we become ashamed of the Gospel of Christ? The Apostle Paul told the Romans he was not ashamed of that message (Romans 1:16).

Jesus Christ still commissions us to go into all the world and preach it to everyone we can reach. And He says He will be with us always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20) That is our commission. That is our calling. Woe unto us if we do not preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God! 

Disfellowshipping and Marking

By Dexter B. Wakefield

In the Church we hear occasionally that someone has been “disfellowshipped” or “marked,” but these practices are not always well understood.

Can a person who is *not* a member of the Living Church of God be disfellowshipped? No. Can a person who is *not* a member of the Living Church of God be “marked?” Yes. So there is a difference in the two. Can you explain what it is?

These are two different ecclesiastical practices in the Church, both taken from the Bible. Let us take a closer look to understand them better.

Paul wrote to the Church in Rome, “Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark** them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them,” (Romans 16:17, KJV). What does this word “mark” mean to you? In *The Scarlet Letter*, a novel set in Puritan New England, an adulteress had to wear a red letter “A” to identify her sin. Is that what Paul meant by “mark?” Even today some groups have the practice of completely “shunning” members they disapprove of. Was Paul instructing us to do that?

“Mark” My Words

The word translated “mark” in the KJV comes from the Greek word *skopeo* and is rendered differently

in most modern translations. Understanding this word better is helpful. Various lexicons define it as:

Consider, take heed, look at (on), mark (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*).

(1) To look at, to observe, to contemplate (2) to mark (3) to fix one’s eyes upon, to direct one’s attention to (anyone) (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

To look at, behold, watch, contemplate (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*).

It is interesting to see how the word *skopeo* is used in some other contexts:

“*Take heed* therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness” (Luke 11:35 KJV).

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; *considering* thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1, KJV).

“*Look* not every man *on* his own things, but every man also *on* the things of others” (Philippians 2:4, KJV).

So we can see why modern translations of the Bible usually render the word *skopeo* a bit differently in Romans 16:17 from the older English in the King James Version:

“I appeal to you, brethren, to **take note of** those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have

been taught; avoid them” (RSV).

“Now I urge you, brethren, **keep your eye on** those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them” (NAS).

“I urge you, brothers, to **watch out for** those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them” (NIV).

We might describe it this way. Let us say in my neighborhood there lived a big dog, which would walk up to people on the street, looking at them expectantly. When someone put out a hand to pat the dog, it would suddenly snap. Ever know a dog like that? What if you and I were walking down the sidewalk and this dog approached us expectantly. When you reached out to pat it, the dog gave you a vicious bite. Then, as you tried to stop the bleeding, I remarked, “Actually, I knew that dog would bite you. It does that to everyone who tries to pat it.” You would probably be very upset with me, and you might say (along with a few other things), “You should have warned me to *mark*, to *note*, to *keep my eye on*, to *watch out for* that dog, and avoid it!” And you would be right.

Paul was saying that the Church has a similar responsibility.

This is why the ministry, after careful consideration, will sometimes announce to a congregation or to the Church as a whole that some-

one may potentially do harm and needs to be “noted” or “marked.” When the word *mark* is used, it’s in the sense of, “Mark my words.” This is done when you need to be warned, and the person taken note of can be anyone who poses a threat of some kind, spiritual or otherwise.

Disfellowshipping

Disfellowshipping is quite different as it always involves a member of our fellowship and the Church may or may not be told about the action. People have been disfellowshipped temporarily for some ongoing sin and have returned weeks or months later without their congregation ever knowing about it. As a church member you may be asked, depending on the circumstances, to avoid social contact with the person for a period, pending repentance. Usually, business contact

ard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person... Therefore ‘put away from yourselves the evil person’” (1 Corinthians 5:2, 11, 13).

However, in the second chapter of 2 Corinthians, we find that being disfellowshipped helped the man. He had repented and was to be accepted again by the Church. Paul wrote: “This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things” (2 Corinthians 2:5–9).

How, then, should we feel towards those who have been noted or disfellowshipped? It is very

love them: “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:44–45).

In Summary

Disfellowshipping:

- involves only someone in our fellowship.
- is generally for sin, pending repentance, or for causing division. The purpose of the practice is to *help* the person spiritually or to *protect* the church spiritually from sin or division.
- The congregation may or may not know about it. How to handle it is a judgment call by the minister who carefully considers what is in the best interest of the individual and the Church.

Noting or marking:

- means to “take note of” or to “watch out for.”
- can involve someone who is not in our fellowship.
- This practice may be used to protect the brethren, when people make themselves adversaries by attacking our faith or the Work. The “noted” people are trying to cause harm and it means, “Beware.”

Marking and disfellowshipping are two different practices, but both are used for the health and protection of the Church. LCM

As a church member you may be asked, depending on the circumstances, to avoid social contact with the person for a period, pending repentance.

is not prohibited. Determining how to handle business contact is the responsibility of the individual member, but seeking counsel from the ministry can help you decide what is most helpful in each individual case.

For example, in 1 Corinthians 5, a man had been committing, on an ongoing basis, a sin which involved having an affair with his stepmother (see Deuteronomy 27:20). Paul wrote them, “And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you... But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunk-

important to remember, when someone is noted or disfellowshipped, that the membership should not bear any ill feelings against the person. These practices have a constructive and protective purpose and should never be construed to encourage feelings of animosity.

Paul instructed the Church, “But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Thessalonians 3:13–15). Even when someone is attacking our faith and practice, Jesus said we should

God Sits on the Mercy Seat

By Donald Roach

There are many references in Scripture to God as a God of mercy, such as Psalm 136. But a term which vividly captures this attribute is that of God sitting on a mercy seat. The Hebrew word used to describe God's seat means lid or covering, but is rendered "mercy seat" in the King James and New King James translations "You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits *shall be* its length and a cubit and a half its width.... And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel" (Exodus 25:17-22). Just think of all the names that God could easily have chosen for His seat—the seat of vengeance, the seat of justice, the seat of law or the seat of punishment.

These are all legitimate names that God could have easily chosen for His seat. After all, God does take vengeance; He is a God of justice and law, who does punish! But of all the dozens of accurate names that God could have chosen for His seat, He chose—the mercy seat. What an unspeakable blessing this is for us! We would not be here today were it not for the fact that God sits on a mercy seat!

King David knew this quite well. He was in trouble again! He had sinned again! This time it was because of numbering Israel. God gave him a choice; fall into the hands of man or fall into God's hands. "And David said to Gad, I am in great distress" (2 Samuel 24:14). Understand this was no joke or something to be taken lightly—it was great distress. But nevertheless, notice the choice: "Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD..." What?

Was David lacking in judgment? Did he not know that our God is a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24), and that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31)? Yes, David knew all of that. That is why he said that he was in great distress. Nevertheless, he said: "Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD..." He then tells us why he made this choice: "...for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man." David

knew God. He knew that our great God sits on a seat called the mercy seat, that He is a God of mercy, compassion and pity.

Did David make a stupid decision? "And when the angel stretched out his hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the destruction, and said to the angel who was destroying the people, 'It is enough; now restrain Your hand'" (2 Samuel 24:16) Yes, David made the right call. God relented. He told the angel to stop. "It is enough." Truly, the great God sits on the mercy seat. He is a God of mercy, compassion and pity.

Look at this example in the book of Judges: "Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD... So the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon" (Judges 10:6-7). "And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, 'We have sinned against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!' So the Lord said to the children of Israel, 'Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines? Also the Sidonians and Amalekites and Maonites oppressed you; and you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hand. Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress.... I will deliver you no more'" (vv. 10-13).

But notice what happened next. "Then the children of Israel said to the LORD, 'We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray'" (v. 15). So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD." In other words, the people repented. God had said, "I will deliver you no more." Will He? "And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel" (v. 16). God is merciful. The people repented and He did deliver them again. Chapter 11 describes the deliverance. God forgives us when we

repent of our sins. He is truly a God of mercy, compassion and pity, sitting on the mercy seat.

There is another example concerning King Hezekiah. “In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, ‘Thus says the LORD: set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live’” (2 Kings 20:1). To make sure that Hezekiah got the point, he said “you shall die, and not live.” Of course if you die you shall not live! But notice what happened next. “Then he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the LORD, saying, ‘Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight.’ And Hezekiah wept bitterly” (v. 2–3). God had already made up His mind, remember? “You shall die and not live.” It sounded so final. What is the use in even praying about it? But, again notice: “Then it happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of my people, thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you....’” (vv. 4–5). God not only healed him, he got 15 more years of life. God, who in the last breath said, “you shall die and not live,” that very God says, in the next breath—before Isaiah even left the building—“surely I will heal you.” Our great God sits on a seat called, of all things, the mercy seat. He is a God of mercy, compassion and pity.

As we saw earlier, God shows mercy to the repentant. He is merciful to the merciful (Matthew 5:7). Those who

show no mercy receive no mercy (James 2:13). God does get angry at sin. He is a jealous God. His name is Jealous (Exodus 34:14). He can be provoked. He has great wrath. He is indeed a consuming fire. To fall into His hands is truly a fearful thing—great distress, as David put it. At times God says that He will show no mercy, no compassion, no pity—for instance, in the coming punishment on Israel. Now does that mean God leaves His mercy seat? Absolutely not! Our great God sits on a seat called the mercy seat! That is why even in our worst trials, were it not for the fact that God sits on His mercy seat, things could always be much worse. Never forget it! No matter how hard a trial may be, it could be a great deal worse, were it not for the fact that our great God is merciful.

Take, for instance, the worst possible nightmare that can befall any human being: the Lake of Fire. No one—in his or her right mind—would desire such a fate. But even in this matter would you believe God, the God of mercy, compassion and pity is sitting on His mercy seat? Just think of what hell could be like. What about being tortured for all eternity, or burning in a lake of fire for all eternity, without being able to die? No, even to His worst enemies, the incorrigibly wicked, those who spit on the precious sacrifice of His Son, those who tell God by their actions “I do not want You or Your Son”—even to such, God is still sitting on His mercy seat. He will burn them up, putting them out of their misery.

We would not be here today were it not for the fact that the great God sits on a seat called the mercy seat. God is truly a God of mercy, compassion and pity! LCN

A Family Spirit

(Continued From page 3)

some family or there was an unusual need.

Did some people take advantage of this? Yes. Did some of the givers become cynical because of this and because of other problems in the Church as a whole? Yes, they certainly did.

But *should* they have become cynical? *Should* they have retreated into their own family or their close circle of friends?

NO!

Because the “way of GIVE” always pays back the giver in the end. God ALWAYS blesses those who give

and help and serve. It is a living LAW. For God tells us: “He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor” (Proverbs 22:9). And the Apostle Paul reminds us of these meaningful words of the Son of God: “It is more blessed to GIVE than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

We live in a *selfish* age. People are constantly seeking SELF-fulfillment and SELF-gratification. So it is going against the grain of modern society to be truly UN-selfish. But we are the begotten sons and daughters of GOD. And we must *surrender* our time, our resources and our lives to be *led by* God’s Holy Spirit. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Romans 8:14).

Through the Apostle Peter, our Father in heaven tells us: “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another FERVENTLY with a pure heart” (1 Peter 1:22). This fervent, out-flowing LOVE—which can come only through God’s Spirit—will make us *truly* “family.” Eventually, we will share ETERNITY with each other in the Kingdom of God—which is a FAMILY. God grant that—through His Spirit—we may build the genuine affection and out-flowing concern among ourselves which will prepare us for that eternal life *together* in the family of our Father. LCN

Priorities (Continued From page 2)

simplify His life. He had very few clothes or material possessions. He did *not* own a home (Matthew 8:20). Certainly He was not distracted by television or Hollywood films, telephones, computers, video games, etc. Out under the clear skies of Galilee, Jesus could look up at the heavens—as David did (Psalm 8)—and contemplate the REASON for human life and the great PURPOSE being worked out here below. He was not constantly distracted from this by all of the “things” around Him.

I am in *no way* suggesting that all our brethren sell their homes or possessions. I am just reminding you how easy it is in our modern society to get caught up in worthless pursuits and therefore FAIL to truly seek *first* the Kingdom of God. Though Jesus undoubtedly appreciated good food and a clean home, even He had to correct Martha—who evidently did not grasp the VITAL importance of hearing *directly* from the Messiah when

she had the opportunity. In perfect love and wisdom, Jesus patiently explained to Martha that—on an occasion such as this—her TIME and energy should be directed to drawing closer to God and learning more of His perfect WAY. As Martha kept “buzzing around”—probably serving food or snacks—Jesus said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But ONE THING is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41–42).

So all of us need to very carefully and prayerfully determine what is *really* important. Then, we need to SEEK FIRST those things which are most important by apportioning more TIME to those things which are truly *vital* to our lives and our relationship with God and others now—and to our opportunity to fully serve in God’s Kingdom FOREVER.



News of the Work

By Gary F. Ehman

"We are in the most important, single activity on the face of the earth... there is no more important activity than the one we are in to prepare for the whole Kingdom of God, when God Himself will come to the earth."

These were concluding comments by Dr. Roderick C. Meredith during his December 2nd meeting with Headquarters staff commemorating the anniversary of the start up of the Living Church of God following the 1998 disruption.

Dr. Meredith briefly gave background on events that led up to the formation of the Living Church of God, but mainly concentrated on what he termed the "amazing" growth the Church and work have made in the past year. "We should be very grateful when we think about it," he said, because at the start, "We didn't have a job, we didn't have an organization, we didn't have offices, all those things. But it did begin to come together very quickly."

He pointed out that the work really got back on track when the *Tomorrow's World* program began airing on super station WGN and VISION. Starting on December 5 a new commercial station KSPR in Springfield, Missouri began airing the program. Response to the new format has been better than for the one used prior to the disruption.

"As of the past week (November 28) we have surpassed the 35,000 mark in responses... and we have not even been on for a full year," he said. The program went back on the air on January 31, 1999. The program draws an average of 810 response each week, with 63 percent of the responses coming from WGN (with over 800 responses on two occasions) 24 percent from VISION and 13 percent from the public access stations.

Dr. Meredith said WGN was up 19 percent from a year ago "about one fifth higher than we had even under Global for the same time," he said. "Even at Global we never reached the 800 call mark, that is on WGN, so this is quite an achievement for the *Tomorrow's World* telecast." VISION in Canada also produced remarkable statistics, 7,698 phone calls, which is 30 percent above last year's figures.

Currently the program is on 76 TV stations, 69 in the United States and Canada, three in Australia, and one

each in New Zealand and the Philippines. The audio track is aired on three international radio stations.

One of the milestones in reestablishing the work within the past year came in the Mail Processing Department, which surpassed the 100,000 mark in mailing pieces of literature. This is in addition to three issues of the *Tomorrow's World* magazine, mailed from Senatobia, Mississippi.

In a breakdown of the HQ mailings, MPD sent out 30,000 booklets, 17,000 audiotapes in response to the *Tomorrow's World* television program, 25,000 sermon audiotapes, and over 12,000 sermon videotapes. There



Dr. and Mrs. Meredith watch a demonstration of the Mail Processing Department's recently purchased sorter, mailing and stuffing equipment. The machine has significantly cut mailing time and costs. Pictured with the Merediths is Mr. John Donaghey of San Diego Postal and Shipping Equipment Company.

has been a huge saving in mailing costs due to the department using recently purchased sorting equipment that cuts mailing time and allows literature to be sent out at the automation postage rate.

In his concluding statements Dr. Meredith said that terrible things are happening all around the world which will affect the work and how we do it. "Things are going to get much, much worse. So we want to realize that. We've got to be strong and go on, and God is going to help us if we stay the course, are faithful, zealous, keep our eye on the big picture and do the Work of God," he said.

Employees presented Dr. Meredith with a plaque commemorating his 50 years in association with the Church and the Work. LCN

Philippines Bible Lectures by Cielo L. Buena

Two *Tomorrow's World* public Bible lectures, titled "After Y2K—What is Next?" were conducted in Metro-Manila, by Philippines Regional Director Rod McNair. The first, in Cavite, was held on November 6, and the second, in Quezon City, on November 13.

"Is Y2K the real big news of the new millennium?" Mr. McNair asked. "No one really knows the exact effect the computer 'millennium bug' will have on our lives. Some predict the 'end of the world,' while others say it will be just a minor disruption. But is the Y2K overshadowing the real big news of the new millennium? Two events, absolutely sure to happen in

the near future, are the rise of the Beast Power in Europe, and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ," Mr. McNair explained.

Mr. McNair said the reality of the coming final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire would bring on the Great Tribulation, and the necessity for Christ to return, to stop the extinction of mankind. "If we are getting ready for Y2K, how much more should we prepare for these awesome events which will pale the Y2K problem into insignificance?" Mr. McNair said.

He gave four points to the attendees on how to prepare for these coming events. (1) Act on what you know,

(2) Live God's way of life, (3) Get involved in the Work, and (4) Come out of Babylon.

Attendance at the Cavite lecture was 65, with three new guests. Sixty-nine attended in Quezon City, including 12 new contacts. Members helped in welcoming the guests, serving snacks after the lectures, and handling literature requests.

A third public Bible lecture was scheduled in the Philippines on November 28, in Cagayan de Oro City, conducted by Mr. Tex Benitez, who oversees Northwestern Mindanao. The lecture was entitled, "Prepare for Christ's Second Coming."

Singles Event

The Los Angeles Living Church of God congregation presents the Singles Event of the Millennium. All LCG singles are invited to join us for dinner and a Bible study on the Beach, hiking and picnicking in the picturesque San Gabriel mountains, and kicking up our heels at the Saturday night Square Dance. Mark your calendars for the first weekend during the Days of Unleavened Bread, Friday, April 21st through Sunday, April 23rd with the option of spending the Night To Be Much Observed and the first Holy Day with the Los Angeles congregation. Second tithes may be used for this activity. For a flyer and information call, write or e-mail Douglas Young.

Douglas Young
268 W. Dryden St. #417
Glendale, CA 91202
(818) 240-6729
e-mail: douglasyo@aol.com

SCHEDULE

April 19th Wednesday

Night to be Much Observed

April 20th Thursday

First Day of Unleavened Bread

April 21st Friday

Arrival into LAX or Burbank (Burbank is more convenient)
6:00 Dinner and Bible Study on the Beach (casual dress)

April 22nd Saturday

10:30 Brunch at Christina Patterson's home and fellowship until services (Sabbath wear)
2:00 Sabbath Services
5:00 Chili Potluck
7:45–10:00 Square Dance in church hall (casual dress)

April 23rd Sunday

10:00–2:00 Monrovia Canyon Hike, fellowship, and picnic lunch (casual dress)
Departures

A Message for Teenagers

Young Heroes for God's Kingdom!

By Gorgonio de Guia

Young heroes are wanted in God's Church, and in the coming Kingdom of God. What is a hero? Who is going to be a hero? You have the opportunity to be young heroes for God's Kingdom.

How do you qualify to rule in the wonderful world to come? *Webster's Dictionary* defines a hero as: "1. A man [or woman] noted for courageous acts or nobility of purpose, especially one who has risked or sacrificed his life; 2. A man [or woman] noted for special achievements in a particular field." Who would not want to be a hero? If you aspire to be a hero, how do you start?

Set the Right Example

We are walking ambassadors of God's way of life. God said, "Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works" (Matthew 5:16). Setting the right example now is the bright light for other people to see. It is the unique example of respect we show toward others—teachers, classmates, and neighbors—that will shine our light towards others. They will be encouraged by the good things we did, the small favors we gave and the simple things that mean a lot. After your teenage years have passed away, your example will live on! Most importantly of all, God will

smile and rejoice, knowing that He has young heroes prepared for the world to come.

Practice God's Way of Life Now

God has given us the choice of following the direction that leads to His Kingdom or following the way of the world that leads to destruction. He knows what is best and good for us. That is why He called your parents to enjoy the abundant life that is challenging and interesting, in spite of the trials that go with it.

Enjoy your youthful years, but do not forget to remember your Creator God (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Make God's way of life a cherished habit. God promises to give us the Holy Spirit to help us overcome. We receive this gift of God when we surrender our lives to Him in baptism. This is a challenge for you, as a young man or woman. It is a courageous decision you will have to make, a very delicate choice you alone can decide.

Follow the Example of God's Heroes in the Bible

A tremendous example of a young hero in the Bible was David, who became known as a "man after God's own heart." David, as a young

boy, was already looking after his father's flock of sheep. When a ferocious bear and a lion attacked the sheep, David defended the flock, risking his own life in the process. He had a close relationship with his God in heaven, probably because of the proper training and education from his parents. He displayed rare courage for a young man his age. He did not trust in his own ability, but had total trust and dependence in the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

When the time came for him to step out in faith in the conflict with Goliath, he had no doubt, nor hesitation. With his sling, he delivered a fatal blow straight to the forehead of the enemy. What a big surprise to everybody! The small stone sank deep into the giant's forehead, and he fell.

Remember to set the right example. Practice God's way of life now. And follow examples of young men and women of courage, who have their great deeds recorded in God's Word. A good future is in your hands! Enjoy your life now, but always remember your Creator God, and follow your destiny to become a "hero for the Kingdom!"

(Mr. de Guia is a minister serving in Metro-Manila, Philippines. This article is reprinted from the July-September 1999 LCG Philippines Newsletter, "Around the Islands").

In Loving Memory

Ivadene Combs, age 78, of Green Bay, Wisconsin, died November 14, 1999 after a lengthy illness. Mrs. Combs was a member of the Menasha, Wisconsin, Living Church of God video group, baptized in the late 1960s. She had 11 children and 22 grandchildren. Mrs. Combs is remembered as a wonderful mother and as one who lived her religion. She had a beautiful singing voice and sang professionally when she was younger. Mr. Randy Gregory conducted the funeral services.

Charles Macfarlane, 79, died of cancer at his home in Monroe, Washington, October 29th 1999. He was born November 16, 1919 in Grants Pass, Oregon. He married Nellie Mae Jenkins on April 19, 1944 in Newport News, Virginia. She survives. Chuck worked for Boeing before World War II. He was disabled overseas and sent home from McCormick General Hospital on September 6, 1947, with a World War II Victory medal, one Bronze Star and the Asiatic Pacific Theater Ribbon. His wife of 55 years was his constant companion and caretaker until he died. Chuck took great pride in all of his achievements. He had a passion for his religious beliefs and took them seriously. His family and friends will miss him. Other survivors are three daughters, one son, five grandchildren and one sister.

Elliot Maxwell Warren, 13, Lisbon Falls, Maine, died November 19, 1999. He was born in Portland on March 10, 1986, the son of Steve and Terri Saucelo Warren. He was educated in Lisbon Falls schools and was attending the Sugg Middle School in Lisbon Falls. He belonged to the Living Church of God with his family. He was a true people person, always caring for people and putting the needs of others always before his own. He always smiled and made many others smile. He enjoyed telling stories, talking with people on the phone and introducing his parents to everyone he knew. He enjoyed giving hugs and also giving wheelchair rides. He was indeed a great exam-

ple to all. He also enjoyed watching movies, especially Jurassic Park and reading his Bible. His family will remember him most for his genuine smile, his concern for others and just being a loving and devoted son, grandson, brother and friend to many. He is survived by his parents, his maternal grandfather and wife, his paternal grandparents, three brothers, and one sister.

John Hix, 14 year old son of Bill and Donna Hix, of Pillager, Minnesota, was killed in a hunting accident November 7, 1999. Mr. Bill Hix is a member of the Minneapolis Living Church of God congregation. Brothers and sisters survive John. Mr. Paul Shumway conducted the funeral service.

Carl A. Knaack, 87, of Merrill, Wisconsin, died at his home on November 22, 1999. He was a member of the Merrill Living Church of God congregation, baptized in July of 1976. His wife, Alice, preceded him in death. Survivors include four sons, two daughters, 11 grandchildren and three sisters. Mr. Knaack worked as a maintenance engineer for an insurance firm until his retirement.

Adam D. Hughes, 14, son of Cleve and Kim Hughes, of Ink, Arkansas, died on November 1, 1999 after a 16-month long battle against leukemia. The Hughes are members of the Mena, Arkansas Living Church of God video group. His parents and one brother, Matt.; a half brother, Michael and his grandparents, survive him. Adam was a Boy Scout and love the out of doors, hunting, fishing, hiking and his dog Ralph. Mr. Davy Crockett conducted the funeral services.

Victor D. Emery, age 64, died of cancer on November 21, 1999 at his home in Wasilla, Alaska. He was born in Brunswick, Maine July 13, 1935 and moved to Alaska in 1961. Mr. Emery was a long-time Church of God member.

Birth Announcements

Alan and Wanda Croyle, Baskerville, Virginia are pleased to announce their latest blessing from God: **Andrew Jude Croyle**, boy, born June 28, 1999. Andrew joins three sisters and two brothers.

Michal Cynthia Farris, girl, born October 15, 1999 to Kristina Farris, Cement, Oklahoma. Michal weighed 7 lbs. 8 oz., and was 21 inches long. Grandparents are Mike and Cindy Young.

Tressie Elisabeth McNair, girl, first child of Rod and Dana McNair, was born September 9, 1999, in Makati City, Philippines. Tressie weighed 7 lb., 2 oz., and 51 cent. long. Grandparents are Carl and Dorothy McNair and Dr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Fall; Tressie is the Falls' first grandchild.

Local Church Listings

A New Format...

Beginning with this issue of the *Living Church News* the Local Church Listings will be presented in a different format.

A twice-a-year insert in the pre-Spring and Fall Holy Days issues will replace the normal listings. The insert will be more comprehensive and will be printed with bigger type for easier reading.

This approach is necessary because of the growing space needed to provide a complete listing. It also will allow the editorial staff to provide expanded articles, include more pictures and develop new features.

Please refer back to past copies of the *LCN* if you have need for ministerial or church location information. You may also contact your area or regional pastor.

Call our San Diego office: (858) 673-7470 or visit our Web Site at <http://www.livingcog.org>. Email queries can be sent to cad@cog.org

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE PAID
SAN DIEGO, CA
PERMIT NO. 3207