

## In This Issue

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Give Your TIME to God!</b> .....                                      | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>The First Feast of Tabernacles</b> .....                              | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Seven Lessons From the Seven Churches</b> .....                       | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>To the Youth: You Can Look Forward to Jesus Christ's Return</b> ..... | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Did Jesus Profane The Sabbath?</b> .....                              | <b>14</b> |
| <b>Report from The Treasurer</b> .....                                   | <b>17</b> |
| <b>News of the Work</b> .....  | <b>21</b> |
| <b>Local Church News</b> .....   | <b>22</b> |
| <b>Commentary</b> .....  | <b>24</b> |

## Build a Relationship with God

Dear Brethren and Friends,

In this open letter, I want to share with all of you some of the thoughts, meditations and prayers that I have been contemplating over the last several weeks. We are certainly drawing close to the very END of this age. Yet we do seem to be in a sort of “transition period”—trying and testing our patience—before things speed up to the grand-smash climax of world events. At this point Satan will probably try to intervene and test the faith and stability of many of us. He will probably try to get us doubting and questioning God, His laws, His promises and many of the basic premises we have understood.

How do we *know* that we can have absolute FAITH in God? There are many factors involved here. God's way of life “works”—as thousands of you know. God DOES intervene and heal His people supernaturally—again, as thousands of you know. But one of the obvious ways we can and should know is that the “big picture” events of prophecy have been, or are now being, *fulfilled* even as I write!

The nations of the modern ten-tribed “house of Israel”—*especially* Ephraim and Manasseh, the “house of Joseph”—are definitely going *down* as God prophesied. The British Empire *is no more!* The power and prestige of the United States is quickly diminishing. The vitally important sea-gates which God gave Britain and America have mainly been taken away already—and a few others will probably be taken away soon! Suez is gone. The Simonstown base controlling the tip of South Africa is gone from British control. The Bab-el-Mandeb—the *southern* entrance to the Red Sea—is also gone from British control. Singapore and the Malacca Straits are gone from British control. America's greatest sea-gate—the Panama Canal—is gone from American control. Two of the other major sea-gates on earth—still critical to world trade and wartime supplies and troop shipments—Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands, are even now subjects of controversy and agitation to remove them from British control. How long until they, too, are GONE?

As Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was virtually *alone* in predicting, the nations of Eastern Europe broke away from Soviet control. This dramatic upheaval back in 1988–89 was sudden and *totally unexpected* by the so-called “experts”! Yet God made it clear to Mr. Armstrong that this had to happen to lay the groundwork for the complete ten-nation European Union which would follow. Remember, *no one else taught this as he did!*

Now, as Mr. Armstrong had long understood would happen, a German-dominated European Empire is *definitely taking shape!* Also, as very few if any

others have understood, Britain will NOT be part of this final union of European nations! Why? Because Britain is “Ephraim” and is prophesied to be the target of devastation *by* this very union in years to come! The so-called “Bible scholars” of this world simply do NOT understand this vital key to Bible prophecy. *We do.*

Although we cannot be sure that we are at the very END, at least the *beginning stages* of the horrifying droughts, FIRES, floods and eventual famines and disease epidemics do seem to be slowly getting under way around vast portions of the earth. The western third of the United States is now experiencing the worst spate of fires in *over 50 years*. And the fire season is *just beginning*. So before this winter comes, we may find that the authorities will say that it is the WORST fire season ever! We are going to have a lot of “worsts” over the next several years in fires, drought alternating with floods, earthquakes and other “natural” catastrophes. *Get ready!* We in God’s Church are virtually *alone* in understanding the details of these MAJOR world events!

**WHY?**

God Himself gives the answer in Psalm 111:10: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who DO *His commandments*. His praise endures forever.” Although we certainly need to draw even closer to God and be more diligent in our commandment-keeping—*through Christ living within us*—we nevertheless have been given wonderful understanding of world events and of the very PURPOSE of human existence.

But, brethren, as we see the Great GOD whom we serve intervening in world events, it should inspire us more than ever to *trust* HIM to back up His inspired Word in *every area* of life. If we want to have greater POWER in the Work, *we need more FAITH!* If we wish to have more healings and miracles in the church, *we need more FAITH!*

In Hebrews 11:6, God tells us, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God *must BELIEVE* that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Certainly the attitude of absolutely *trusting* and *believing* in God, in His *Word*, in His *way* and in His *promises*—is the basic FOUNDATION for *real* Christianity—the kind of Christianity preparing us to live for eternity in the Kingdom of God. As I have said so many times, we must “walk with God” in this attitude of faith and certainty. And to build this kind of faith, we must “feed” on God’s Word as Jesus indicates in John 6:56–57: “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, *so he who FEEDS on Me will live because of Me.*”

Jesus said, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Matthew 7:7–8). As these verses clearly indicate, we have to *keep coming* to God in FAITH in order to get the answers to our prayers. We do not merely just “ask” one time. We CRY OUT to God and keep coming back over and over again as the importunate widow did as described by Jesus Christ in Luke 18:1–5. And in verses 6–8, notice

**Build A Relationship With God**  
*continues on page 18*

- Editor in Chief** . . . . . Roderick C. Meredith
- Editorial Director** . . . . . Richard F. Ames
- Executive Editor** . . . . . William Bowmer
- Managing Editor** . . . . . Gary F. Ehman
- Regional Editors** . . . . . Charles Bryce (Canada)  
Rod McNair (Philippines)  
Bruce Tyler (Australia)
- Layout Editor** . . . . . Donna Prejean
- Circulation** . . . . . Aaron Eagle
- 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:**  
**GPO Box 772**  
**Canberra, ACT 2601, Australia**  
Phone: (07) 3841-8360  
or freecall: 1800-816-543  
Fax: (07) 3841-8325

**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, Kenmare 1745**  
Republic of South Africa  
Phone: (27) 11-664-6036

**UNITED KINGDOM:**  
**P.O. Box 9092**  
**Motherwell, ML1 2YD 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.

# Give Your TIME to God!

## Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

**I**n a recent sermon I brought out a vital key to Christian living that many have not understood. It involves *how* we give our lives to God.

In Romans 12:1–2, the Apostle Paul exhorts us: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

If our *body* is given to God and our *mind* is “renewed,” just HOW do these actions express themselves in our daily lives? Should we watch the same amount of television that our neighbors do? Should we spend the same amount of time “shooting the breeze,” going to ball games, reading novels or just “kicking back”—as the kids say—and doing nothing?

If not, WHY not?

The key element in all of this is the *proper use of your TIME*. When you give your *life* to God you should realize that this means giving your TIME to God! *For your life is composed of just so much time.*

Jesus commanded: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). Obviously, if you “seek first” God’s kingdom and His righteousness, you will use your TIME as is needed to do this. You will have to learn to *disci-*

*pline* yourself in your use of this very precious element in life. Most people are not “time conscious.” They just sort of “wander” through life—letting things happen to them here and there, wasting time and not accomplishing nearly as much as they could.

However, true Christians should be filled with zest, enthusiasm and PURPOSE, as they have a real reason for living. They have genuine goals and projects that they want to accomplish! Zealously converted Christians will want to be sure to take TIME for proper Bible study, for fervent and intensive prayer and for practicing the art of meditation—thinking things through carefully and truly contemplating God’s law and all its ramifications as King David did (Psalm 119:97). And they will set aside time for FASTING regularly, to spend *extra time* in a situation of humility and purpose—*seeking God* intensely.

The true Christian will realize that we are now “in training” to RULE entire cities and perhaps nations in Tomorrow’s World. As the Apostle Paul said: “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?” (1 Corinthians 6:2–3).

In order to be genuine “overcomers” (Revelation 2:26–27) and be prepared to rule in Christ’s soon-coming kingdom, true Christians will want to organize their time, their thoughts and their lives, constantly “growing”

not only in biblical knowledge but in real *understanding*. They will also want to be *taking time* to SERVE others and to do their part in the very Work of God in any way they can. As Christian soldiers “in training” they will want to set aside time to do those things that will genuinely prepare them for the real future which Jesus Christ promises. They will want to be “successes” in their calling as true Christians.

Again, the Apostle Paul tells us: “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, *redeeming the TIME*, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15–16). The Greek word used here for “redeem” means essentially the same as “redeem” in the English language. It means to “buy back” time—just as you would “buy back” your watch from a pawnshop if you have had to borrow money by pawning your watch. Your time will be “taken away” from you unless you take energetic steps to “grab on to it” before it slips away!

Satan the devil has organized this world so that—if you are not VERY careful—you will find yourself watching inane programs on the television, talking aimlessly on the telephone, reading things that do not help you grow toward your Christian goal and doing other things that simply “kill” your time. Satan knows that if he can simply “take your time” then he will end up *taking your very LIFE!* Your life IS your TIME.

So, as the Apostle Paul said, you must “redeem the time”—USE your

**Give Your TIME to God!**

*continues on page 19*

# THE FIRST FEAST OF TABERNACLES

By John H. Ogwyn

**W**e are all familiar with the story of the first Passover. Every year at that season we look back to the events surrounding God's sparing of the Israelite firstborn and His deliverance of His people from Egypt. We reflect on the lessons to be learned from the events connected with the first Passover and Unleavened Bread season. We also look at the New Testament fulfillment of those types by Jesus Christ, with the events of the Last Supper and His subsequent crucifixion and resurrection.

In the same way, at Pentecost, we often look back to events of the first Pentecost after Israel left Egypt. This was the time God gave the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. It marked the institution of the Old Covenant between God and Israel. Additionally, we also focus on the first Pentecost of the New Testament era. This was when God's Spirit was miraculously poured out from heaven upon Christ's disciples. It marked the beginning of God making a New Covenant with those who respond to His calling.

Clearly the inaugural Passover season and Pentecost season are recorded in scripture. Looking back at "firsts" gives us much to reflect on in trying to understand all of the spiritual lessons that God wants us to have. What lessons do we find in the first Feast of Tabernacles? Are the events surrounding the first Feast of Tabernacles recorded in scripture and, if so, what can we learn from them? Let us examine what the Bible reveals about this matter. We may find new insight into this final of the three festival seasons by which God reveals His great plan of salvation.

## **A Look at Israel's First Year**

Exodus 12 makes very clear the events of the first Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. While those dates are clearly named and the events that transpired are described, it is not quite so simple when we come to

Pentecost. However, it is possible, by close examination of scripture, to see the accuracy of the traditional Jewish understanding that the giving of the law came on the first Pentecost. Because Pentecost is derived by counting 50 days beginning with the Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread (the day the wavesheaf was offered), it does not always fall on the same calendar date. It can only vary a few days, however, falling anywhere from Sivan 5 to Sivan 10. Jewish tradition has long held that the first Pentecost occurred on Sivan 6. In the days of Jesus, the temple priesthood properly counted from the Wavesheaf Sunday and always celebrated Pentecost on a Sunday. The Pharisees always sought to celebrate Pentecost on Sivan 6 (this is the practice followed by most Jews today) regardless of the day of the week on which it fell. All of the Bible evidence points to the fact that the first Pentecost was indeed on Sivan 6, because in the year of the Exodus that day fell on a Sunday.

Notice what Exodus 19:1 reveals: "In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the wilderness of Sinai." The Hebrew word for month is *chodesh*, which literally refers to the new moon. The expression "the same day" means the first of the month, the day of the new moon. This would be Sivan 1.

Exodus 19:3–6 tells us that after arriving at Sinai, Moses went up the mount and communed with God, bringing back to the people God's covenant proposal. This would have been Sivan 2. After coming back down the mountain, Moses assembled the people and told them what God had said (vv. 7–8). This was Sivan 3. The following day, Moses went back up the mountain to take the people's response back to God (v. 9). This was Sivan 4. God told Moses that the people were to sanctify themselves "today and tomorrow" and be ready to meet with Him on the third day (vv. 10–11). The expression "today and tomorrow" would have referred to Sivan 4 and 5. The day on which they met with God was Sivan 6, the first Pentecost.

So is it possible to know what happened on the first Feast of Tabernacles—the 15th day of the seventh month in the year that Israel came out of Egypt? We will see that the answer is actually made plain when we compare the accounts in Exodus and Deuteronomy.

To begin, we should note that there are 127 days between Sivan 6 and Tishri 15 (the first holy day of the Feast of Tabernacles). Does the Bible show any significant event occurring 127 days after the first Pentecost? It certainly does!

Notice the timing. After the law was given on Pentecost, Moses and the elders of Israel went part way up Mount Sinai. They partook of a great banquet in the presence of the God of Israel. “Now the glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud” (Exodus 24:16). What happened next? “So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights” (v. 18). During the time that Moses was in the mount, Israel made a golden calf and when he came down from Sinai he found the nation holding an idolatrous orgy.

God was angry, and threatened to destroy the whole nation. Moses spent time in prayer and fasting beseeching God for mercy for the people. Did you ever wonder how long Moses spent down from the mountain interceding with God? Deuteronomy 9:15–21 reveals that this was also for a period of 40 days. After that, Moses went back up the mountain, into God’s presence, where he received a second copy of the Ten Commandments. He was back up the mountain for 40 days once again (Exodus 34:1–4, 28). Add it up. There was a seven-day period following Pentecost before Moses went up into the presence of God, followed by three periods of 40 days each. This adds up to 127 days.

How do we know that there were 127 days between the first Pentecost and the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles? The Hebrew calendar is both lunar and solar. The months are based upon the cycles of the moon. The moon takes approximately 29 and a half days to revolve around the earth. For this reason, Hebrew months alternate in length between 30 days and 29 days. The first, third, fifth and seventh months routinely have 30 days, while the second, fourth and sixth have 29 days. If Pentecost were on Sivan 6, then there would be 24 more days in the third month. Adding to that the 29 days of the fourth month, the 30 of the fifth month, the 29 of the sixth month and the first 15 days of Tishri (the seventh month) brings us to 127 exactly.

It was exactly 127 days after the giving of the law on the first Pentecost that Moses came down Mount

Sinai for the second time! **Moses came down the mountain on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles.** Notice how he came. “Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses’ hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone... and all the children of Israel... were afraid to come near him” (Exodus 34:29–30). Chapter 35 records that he summoned the Israelites and gave them instructions about building a tabernacle to hold the Ark of the Covenant. The pur-

**As Moses approached the Israelite camp at the base of the mountain, those who first saw him did a double take. Unbeknown to Moses, his face was actually emitting glowing light. He shined with a glory that he had absorbed from actually being in the presence of God.**

pose of the tabernacle was that God might dwell among the people of Israel (Exodus 25:8).

Consider the significance. Here we see a ruler coming in glory bringing the law of God in his hand. We also see the God of Israel preparing to tabernacle among the nation. As we examine these three components, we will see that they connect very deeply with the ultimate fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles.

### **Coming in Glory**

As Moses approached the Israelite camp at the base of the mountain, those who first saw him did a double take. Unbeknown to Moses, his face was actually emitting glowing light. He shined with a glory that he had absorbed from actually being in the presence of God. This glory was so frightening to people that Moses put a veil over his face to mask it when he spoke to the people. When he went into the Tent of Meeting to commune with God he took the veil off, but put it back on when he came out before the people (Exodus 34:29–35).

In 2 Corinthians 3 the Apostle Paul tells us that the glory Moses had absorbed from the presence of God gradually faded away. He compares the temporary glory of Moses with the permanent glory of Christ. Paul explains

that just as Moses had to veil his face in speaking to the people, so also the real spiritual intent of his message is veiled from them as well. Isaiah 25:6–7 anticipates the time when, “And in this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of well-refined wines on the lees. And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.” These verses look forward to the time of the Millennium and are often read and commented upon during the Feast of Tabernacles.

In Matthew 16:28, Jesus Christ told His disciples that some of them would see Him coming in His kingdom. About a week later, this was fulfilled for Peter, James and John in one of the most memorable events of their entire lives. Christ took them up into a high mountain and was transfigured before them so that He shone like the sun. Moses and Elijah also appeared with Him in radiant glory (Luke 9:30–31). The connection of this account to the Feast of Tabernacles is strengthened when we examine Peter’s suggestion. He wanted to build three tabernacles so that they might remain right there on the mountain to celebrate the upcoming festival (Matthew 17:4).

After all, Jesus Christ is going to return to this earth in power and great glory to usher in the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles (Matthew 24:30). The saints are going to be raised in glory to rule with Him over the nations. Daniel records that the resurrected saints will shine like the brightness of the stars (Daniel 12:3). Our vile bodies will have been changed at the resurrection to be like Christ’s glorious body (Philippians 3:21). God is bringing **many sons** to glory (Hebrews 2:10).

When Moses came down the mountain from God on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, he radiated glory. This anticipates the time that Jesus Christ and the immortal saints will set foot on this earth, shining in glory, to usher in the time of the rulership of the Kingdom of God over the nations.

## The Law of God

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai on the 15th day of the seventh month, he not only came in glory, he came bringing the law of God in his hands (Exodus 34:29). When Jesus Christ returns to this earth, it will be to rule the nations with God’s law.

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,

to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:2–3). The prophet Isaiah further described the results of what it will be like in tomorrow’s world in Isaiah 11. It will be a time when the Messiah will judge the world in righteousness. It will be a time when, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (v. 9). God’s law will be universally known!

Ezekiel described the future gathering of Israel at the onset of the Millennium. “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel’” (Ezekiel 11:17). Our nations will be brought back from the most horrible captivity imaginable; captivity brought on by our national sins of ignoring God’s law. When Israel is once more brought home, it will be in a state of deep repentance. God inspired Ezekiel to describe that He would, at that time, give Israel a new heart and a new spirit. This will enable the nation to truly walk in God’s statutes and judgments, to be His people and have Him to be their God (Ezekiel 11:19–20).

Jeremiah, in speaking of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit, makes it plain that under the New Covenant the Spirit of God writes His laws in our hearts and minds (Jeremiah 31:33). Peace and prosperity for the whole world will result from the nations of the world living in harmony with the law of God and thereby reaping blessings instead of curses.

The Feast of Tabernacles reminds us of the 1,000-year rule of the Kingdom of God on this earth. Because of the universality of the law of God, it will be a wonderful time. When Moses came from God bringing the tables of stone containing the Ten Commandments on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, it anticipated the time when Jesus Christ is going to return and set up a worldwide government based upon that very law in its full spirit and intent.

## God’s Presence Among Us

Daniel explained in the visions recorded in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 that the time is going to come when the governments of this world will be crushed and swept from the scene. In fact, “the God of Heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44). The King of that kingdom will be none other than the resurrected and glorified Jesus Christ (Revelation 19:11–16). He was the One who was the Rock of Israel (1

## The First Feast of Tabernacles

*continues on page 20*

# SEVEN LESSONS FROM THE SEVEN CHURCHES

By Douglas S. Winnail

**W**e are living in challenging times in the history of the church that Jesus founded. Ideas circulating through the church today are *significant* in ways few realize! The subtle return to mainstream “Christian” doctrines, the fascination with new forms of church government, the desire to dispense with the ministry and move beyond a hierarchy to independence and the preference to debate instead of learn—are *sobering* benchmarks to take note of!

Some wonder, what is happening among God’s people today? Why is there so much division, strife and conflict of opinion? Is this growing diversity a sign of spiritual maturity? Does real Christianity mean learning how to disagree more agreeably? If so, what happened to the unity Jesus prayed for among His disciples (John 17:11)? What became of the doctrinal harmony stressed by the Apostles (1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:1–6, 13–16)? Can you believe whatever feels right to you and still be a true Christian? Does attending the church of your choice make you a Philadelphian Christian—or is there more to the story? Why are these issues so prevalent today?

For some, this flowering of diversity indicates progress, while to others it is a sign of spiritual confusion. For many, leveling the pyramid of church government is a liberating move, but to others it is a prescription for chaos! Some are elated over changes sweeping the churches, but

many are concerned and confused. Some have given up and quit. But what do all these changes mean? Where will they lead? Do we have any guidelines to help us navigate through these turbulent times?

The *answers* we need today are found in Bible prophecies recorded nearly 2,000 years ago in a book that few theologians understand. While the churches are being urged to “repent of prediction addiction,” what we *need* to study and understand are *prophecies* that describe our present age. The first several chapters of the book of Revelation provide valuable insights into the past, present and future of the Church of God. The letters to the seven churches contain not only an outline of the history of the church, but *important lessons* to guide us through these troubled times. Those lessons also *explain* what is happening to the church today. You cannot afford to ignore this vital information.

## The Purpose of Revelation

The book of Revelation is often viewed as a strange book full of mysterious symbols that are difficult or impossible to understand. Yet the Bible states just the opposite! The word “revelation” means “to unveil” or “to explain.” In the very first verse we read that God inspired the book of Revelation “to show His servants things which *must shortly* come to pass” (Revelation 1:1). God further states, “Blessed [privileged, to be

envied] is he that *reads* and those who *hear* the words of this prophecy, and *keep* those things which are written in it; for the time [of fulfillment] is near” (Revelation 1:3). The prophecies of Revelation—including the letters to the seven churches—*were meant to be understood*—especially by Christians today! John wrote about events that would lead up to the end of the age. The *link*—between John’s day and the time of Christ’s return—is the prophetic time period pictured by *seven church eras* outlined in Revelation (chapters 2 and 3).

The letters to the seven churches have a three-fold purpose. The letters describe actual conditions in each of the churches at the end of the 1st century AD. The initial lessons—commendations and admonitions—were intended for the churches at that time. However, the letters are part of a book of prophecy about the future. The seven churches were geographically arranged in sequence on a mail route in western Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Scholars also realize that this sequence portrays *seven eras* of the Church of God from the days of the Apostles to the end of the age. The church conditions described in the letters prophetically describe conditions that would prevail in each successive era—where the same lessons would be applicable. John addressed the book of Revelation “to the seven churches” (1:4), indicating the letters to each church were to be read in all the churches. Thus the third purpose of the letters is to convey

universal lessons that describe and deal with universal human tendencies. This article will focus on what these letters reveal about the eras of the church—especially our modern era—and how the lessons apply to us today.

### **Ephesus: Lost Its First Love**

Ephesus was the leading city of Asia Minor—but it was in a state of decline. The Ephesian Church is symbolic of the Apostolic era of the 1st and 2nd centuries' AD. This church is commended for its works—the preaching, suffering, serving, traveling and writing of the early disciples (Revelation 2:1–3). Even they had to discern between false teachers and true Christian ministers. However, like the fading glory of Ephesus, the church at the end of the 1st century was told “you have left your first love” (Revelation 2:4). God warned that unless they repented He would cease to use them for His purpose (Revelation 2:5).

But what does it mean to *leave or lose* your first love? John's own writings explain. The Apostle equates love with walking in the truth and keeping the commandments (2 John 6). Concerning the effect of false teachers, he warns, “look to yourselves that we *do not lose* those things we worked for” including our reward (2 John 7–8). In 3 John he urges the church to serve the brethren and to “become fellow workers for the truth” (vv. 4–8). While Jesus emphasized humility (Matthew 5:5) and love for neighbor (John 15:12), the church at the end of the 1st century had individuals who *loved preeminence* over others—they loved their position—which the Bible calls evil (3 John 9–11).

The Church of Ephesus—the Apostolic era—had lost its love for God, for the Truth, for doing the Work and for the brethren. In place

of these important fundamentals people were listening to deceptive doctrines (probably of Gnostic origin—see Revelation 2:6). For some, *holding onto a position* was more important than holding onto the Truth. Even today, some are more concerned with holding a position—perhaps serving as an elder or deacon, passing out songbooks or leading a choir—than with doing the Work of God. The lesson of the Ephesian era is clear: **Get back on track—do the Work—preach the gospel with zeal—love the Truth—love each other.**

In a striking parallel to our modern era, we see that the New Testament church, which began in the 30s, was beginning to fragment in the 90s—when John wrote his epistles and the book of Revelation. The Apostle Paul indicates that this diversity of opinion had been present for some time (1 Corinthians 1:10–13) and was causing people to fall away (2 Timothy 1:15). In just over 60 years the church founded by Jesus Christ was riddled with division and doctrinal strife. This should be a sobering lesson for us today!

### **Smyrna: Faithful in Trial**

The church at Smyrna offers another powerful and timeless lesson. Smyrna was a prosperous, bustling, beautifully planned port city, but Christians faced considerable persecution there. The Smyrna era appears to cover the 3rd and 4th centuries AD—a period of intense Roman persecution of the church. While the Smyrna era is commended for its works and being rich in faith (Revelation 2:9), it is urged to be “faithful until death” in order to receive a reward (Revelation 2:10). The Church of Smyrna illustrates the critical importance of **endurance**—of *holding on to your beliefs* during difficult times. Jesus

said, “he who endures to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13). The Apostle Paul writes that only those who *finish* the race will be given a prize (1 Corinthians 9:24–27). Elders are admonished they must be found “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught” (Titus 1:9). If your foundation is solid (Matthew 7:24–29), and you take time to “prove” what the truth is (1 Thessalonians 5:21), you will be prepared to endure when the going gets rough.

Historical sources reveal that Christians of the Smyrna era believed in the millennium—the 1,000-year reign of Christ and the saints on earth. They would have nothing to do with the Roman Saturnalia and Brumalia (sources of modern Christmas customs). They tithed and did not believe in an immortal soul. They kept the Sabbath and the Holy Days, and followed the dietary laws of Scripture (see Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chapter 15). It is no wonder they were persecuted—they did not follow prevailing social and religious customs. Smyrna is one of only two churches to receive *no* correction. The lesson of the Smyrna era is simple, but vital and timeless: **Remain faithful in trials—endure to the end—do not give up—do not quit!** It is a lesson we can never afford to forget!

### **Pergamos: The Compromising Church**

Pergamos was the capital city of Asia Minor with imposing temples to Zeus, Apollo, Athena, Asklepios (the healing cult) and Caesar. The citizens were sophisticated and literate. The church at Pergamos is admonished for permitting false teachers to put “stumbling blocks” in the way of believers (Revelation 2:14). While people may not initially believe false



teachings, *tolerating* the spread of deceptive ideas will eventually lead many to compromise the doctrines of true Apostolic Christianity and to stumble spiritually. The Bible reveals that not only false teachers, but trials, tribulations and persecution (Matthew 13:21) and poor examples (1 Corinthians 8:9) can cause people to stumble. Some will even stumble over the Word of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ (Malachi 2:8; 1 Corinthians 1:23).

The Pergamos era appears to cover the period from about 500 to 1000AD. It was during this time—the Dark Ages when the Roman Church dominated Europe—that Easter, Christmas, Halloween and the philosophical ideas of the trinity and the immortal soul were absorbed into the dominant church from paganism. Intellectual sophistication, human reasoning and the desire to be progressive often leads to abandoning fundamental biblical truth. The lesson of Pergamos is pointed: **Do not tolerate false teachings or those who promote them—compromise causes people to stumble; Christians must stand for the Truth.** This advice is particularly appropriate for the church today!

### **Thyatira: The Corrupt Church**

Thyatira was an inland city located on a major trade route. It was a commercial center with many trade guilds and was the home of a military garrison. Its patron deity was a warrior goddess. To participate in the local economy would have required membership in trade guilds that sponsored idolatrous annual festivals—thus generating pressure to *compromise* to fit in. The Thyatira era appears to stretch from about the 11th century to the 16th century including the Reformation and Counter-Reformation periods when large num-

bers left the established Roman Church. During this time groups of Christians appeared in central and southern Europe who believed in the Sabbath, some of the Holy Days, tithing, adult baptism and the dietary laws, while rejecting doctrines of the trinity, immortal soul, purgatory, and the popularized concepts of heaven and hell. However, *over time* and under the pressure of Counter-Reformation forces, many *drifted back* into prevailing practices by sitting in Sunday services, observing pagan holidays and serving in armies to avoid persecution. Many suffered and died as a result (see *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th ed., “Waldenses”).

The lesson of Thyatira is blunt: **Do not pretend to go along with false teachings for appearances sake—do not compromise the truth—do not go back into ways you have been called out of, or you will suffer tribulation.** Scripture contains very graphic warnings about this (see Deuteronomy 12:29–31; Jeremiah 10:2; 2 Corinthians 6:14–18; 2 Peter 2:18–22). We are specifically told that at the end of the age many professing Christians will be “deluded” into accepting false, but fashionable, religious beliefs because they did not know or were willing to compromise the truth they once knew (2 Thessalonians 2:1–13). Today, with many returning to former beliefs, Paul’s message rings clear, “stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Spiritual compromise leads to spiritual corruption. It happened before—it can happen today if we are not alert!

### **Sardis: The Dead Church**

Only a few comments are made about Sardis, a city *once famous* for arts, crafts and wealth. Sardis appears to correspond to the church

era from about the 16th century to the early 20th century. The main description of the Sardis era is that it was a *dead* church (Revelation 3:1). Although it had a recognizable name and pieces of the Truth, it never did much with that precious information. During this period, there appeared in England, America and other parts of the world, a number of small churches that kept the Sabbath and other doctrines of Apostolic Christianity (some even using the name Church of God or Church of Christ). However, most were, or remain, tiny insignificant groups that people have never heard of. The Sardis church was also urged to be *watchful*—but, as we will see, they did not know what to watch for! They lacked a vital key for understanding Bible prophecy.

The lesson of Sardis is sobering: **Do not let the Truth die—hold onto the Truth you have been given—bear fruit with this precious truth, or be blotted out of the Book of Life!** Unfortunately, in spite of these strong warnings, Bible prophecies indicate at the end of the age believers will “turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Timothy 4:4). Isaiah speaks of a time before Christ returns when “truth is fallen in the street” (Isaiah 59:14). The costs will be high if we let the Truth die—especially if we fail to learn from the lessons of history!

### **Philadelphia: Small but Faithful**

In contrast to the other churches on the mail route, Philadelphia was not a wealthy, sophisticated or influential city. Located on an easily defended hill beside a major highway, it functioned as an outpost for spreading Greek and Roman culture, and later Christianity, to the surrounding region. The city was destroyed several times by earth-

quakes, but each time was rebuilt. It still exists today. The name means “brotherly love.” The Philadelphian era appears to have begun in the 1930s—about the time radio became popular and just before the age of television. In the last 60 years, the Church of God has used mass media to reach millions of people—proclaiming the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God and warning the world to watch for the signs of the end of this age and the return of Jesus Christ. This was the mission Jesus gave to His church (Matthew 4:23; 10:6–7). That message was to be prominent at the end of the age (Matthew 24:14). Understanding the identity of modern Israelite nations—a *key* to understanding Bible prophecy—was restored to the Church of God during the modern Philadelphian era.

God promised to provide the Philadelphian era with an open door—a door that no man could shut—for preaching the gospel. This small church is commended for its *persistence* in fulfilling its mission and for holding onto, and not compromising, the precious Truth of God (Revelation 3:7–8). For faithfully doing a Work and holding onto the Truth—not just attending a church of their choice—Philadelphian Christians are promised protection from the coming Tribulation (Revelation 3:10). The lesson of Philadelphia is simple: **Remain faithful to Truth—do the work of preaching the gospel—love the brethren—let no one take your crown.** We cannot afford to drop the ball at this critical moment of history! Our salvation and our reward are at stake if we do!

### **Laodicea: Lukewarm and Laid-back**

Laodicea is an interesting and instructive case—a study in con-

trasts. From history we learn it was a proud and prosperous city, yet it played only a minor role in the spread of Greek culture. Its imposing fortifications gave the appearance of strength and promoted a feeling of security, yet its valley location and exposed water supply made the city quite vulnerable. Laodicea was a banking center with a strong sense of independence. This independent attitude is reflected in the Greek name Laodicea which means “the people decide” or “the people judge” (see *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*). The Laodicean era describes the condition of the Church of God just before the return of Jesus Christ. It is not a pretty picture. Perhaps that is why some want to deny the idea that these seven churches represent seven historical eras—it makes uncomfortable reading!

The charge against the Laodiceans is their lukewarm attitude (Revelation 3:16). Their wealth and prosperity fosters an attitude of worldliness. They are lukewarm about the Truth, obedience to the commandments and their mission to do a Work. This is as disgusting to God as the “water” in Laodicea was nauseating. They are also very independent and have “need of nothing” (Revelation 3:17). Some Laodiceans feel no need for ministers, government, structure or doctrinal unity—these are considered dispensable! Laodicea had a medical school noted for its eye-salve, yet the Bible describes the people as being *blind* to their own spiritual condition. Their intellectual sophistication prevented them from seeing their own lack of spiritual discernment. Laodicea produced fine black wool clothing, yet the Bible says they were *naked* and needed white garments (Revelation 3:17–18). In a sense naked Laodiceans lack vital pieces of spiritual armor—commitment to truth, fear of the commandments, faith,

love, perseverance—and may be failing to exercise the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 6:10–19). These are necessary to stand firm in times of trial and to preach the gospel with boldness. Their message, though containing the truth, is bland and insipid—like the waters of Laodicea.

The picture of Laodicea is of a sophisticated, self-sufficient church that trusts in its own wealth, numbers and wisdom. It has the appearance of strength, stability and unity yet is internally divided. These independent-minded people may unknowingly reject the leadership of Jesus Christ as they do their own thing! The democratic (people-deciding) aspects of the Laodicean era can relate to decisions about doctrine, organization, governance, mission and methods. This lukewarm attitude is *prophesied to become dominant* in the church at the end of the age. The lesson of Laodicea is urgent: **Wake up before it is too late—ask God to open your eyes to see your own spiritual condition—repent of complacency, compromise, materialism, stubborn independence—respond to the leadership of Jesus Christ—do not lose your reward!**

The letters to the seven churches—and the seven church eras they represent—contain *important* lessons! Those lessons were meant for the churches in the 1st century and for Christians down through the ages. But they are critical for Christians today—individuals living at the end of the age—in the Laodicean era! If we read and heed those lessons we will gain a reward from Jesus Christ. If we discount or fail to learn those vital lessons, that reward may go up in smoke! John advised all seven churches in Revelation, “he who has an ear, let him *hear* what the Spirit says to the churches.” Do we understand how these lessons apply to each of us? ☑

# You Can Look Forward to Jesus Christ's Return

By Phil Sena

One day, when I was 12 years old, I remember staring out of the picture window of our home as I listened to my mother tell me what she knew about Jesus Christ's return. It was 1974, and she had recently become interested in God's Truth. Until then my family was not religious, although we colored Easter eggs and celebrated Christmas.

I vividly remember the utter sadness and despair I felt that day. As my mother talked, I kept telling myself, "I can't believe it." What she thought was exciting meant the opposite to me. All I heard was that the world I knew—the friends I had, the fun I was having, the house we lived in, our dog and cat, the mountains, the trees, my family—all of it—was coming to an end. That was the last thing I wanted to hear at that age! I mean, my life had just begun. I did not want Jesus Christ to return.

Maybe you feel the same when you hear about the soon-coming Kingdom of God. You have so much to look forward to! And perhaps you feel guilty for thinking this way because others seem to be excited about it.

This article is for preteens, teenagers and young adults—those who have their whole lives ahead of them. No matter how old you are, I have come to believe that you can—and should—see the return of Jesus Christ, pictured by the Feast of Trumpets, as a good thing. I want to share with you my experience of "growing up" in the church, along with some lessons learned, to show that you can enjoy your life *and* want Jesus Christ's return.

## Introduction to the Truth

Some months before the occasion at the picture window, my mother began watching *The World Tomorrow* telecast every weekday morning between the time she would see my father off to work and wake me and my brothers up to get ready for school. I vividly remember hearing through the closed doors of my bedroom the opening theme music blaring out a triumphant tune and an announcer stating that the show revealed the mysteries of the Bible and unlocked the prophecies of the soon-coming kingdom of God—or words to that effect.

I could hear the host telling story after story about how bad the world was and that it was getting worse. I thought, "What do you mean? The world isn't bad. I'm having a great time!" I resented the show, and wished Mom would quit watching it.

After that, I would bury my head beneath a pillow as soon as I would hear the dreaded program's music. However, I could not completely shut it out because my mother was becoming convinced of the things she was hearing. Soon she began to share what she was learning with the rest of the family.

Eventually, because of my love for my mother, I allowed her to show me what the Bible said about certain topics—and I had to admit that those things were there. Even though I was quite young, I could plainly see that these were not her ideas; she was getting them from the Bible.

That brings us back to the story at the picture window and the idea of Jesus Christ's return. This was a concept I did my best to reject, because I did not want it to be true. However, she was able to show me from the scriptures that it is going to happen (Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62;

Luke 21:27; Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7). Seeing this for myself in the Bible, I realized that I had to accept it, no matter how hard it was for me to swallow.

That was a major turning point for me, and my whole perspective changed forever. No longer was I just a kid with nothing more to worry about than the pursuit of fun. I saw that life was much more serious than that. I had accepted the idea that there was more to life than just my world. But although I saw the need for Christ's return, I still was not thrilled with the prospect that it could happen soon, while I was young.

### Fast Forward

I now find myself in my late 30s as I write this. A lot has happened in my life in the meantime. I graduated from high school in 1980 at age 17 and then worked a year before going on to college. During my sophomore year, I was baptized. College graduation came at age 24, and I then started my working life. Five years later I met the woman who became my wife and, at 29, we were married. In so many ways it is hard to believe that so much has happened since that incident at the picture window.

I have purposely run through the milestones in my life to illustrate a point—that time goes by quickly! I know that, to a 12-year-old, reaching 16 seems like an eternity. And to an 18-year-old, getting to 21 takes forever. But ask anyone who is over 30, and four or five years seem like a few days. Before you know it, you are getting older and your life is flying by.

This point also relates to the concept of the timing of Jesus Christ's return. When I was a teenager, I believed that time would not go on long enough for me to be baptized, and, therefore, the most I could hope for was the second resurrection. I remember thinking that the first resurrection—which the Bible calls a better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35; Revelation 20:6)—was my mother's resurrection. But now it has been 17 years since I was baptized!

Not only that, but I have now been married eight years, attended 26 Feasts of Tabernacles, and went to my 20th-year high school reunion this year. As you can see, I have enjoyed many events that I thought I would never be able to when I was that young person standing at the picture window.

### It Could Happen to You

It is important to know that you could find yourself in the same situation. You see, there are a lot of things we know about Jesus Christ's return, but we do not know *when* it will be. One of the last statements that Jesus made

to His disciples was, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1:7). This is something that we are not supposed to know, and I believe one of the reasons is so we will continue doing what we should be doing—as individuals and as a church—until that time.

You could find yourself like me; looking back on events that you once thought there would not be enough time to experience. If He does return in five to 15 years,

Be honest—no matter how exciting and fun your life is, there are times when you experience sorrow and despair. These are a part of life. How much of that heartache is caused by you or someone else not living God's way of life? It need not be that way, and you are one of the privileged few to whom God has revealed His way.

add that amount to whatever your age is now. For someone who is 15, that means as old as 30! That is time enough to enjoy many wonderful events in your life.

### Lessons Learned

I would like to share with you three lessons I have learned from my experience:

1) *Live your life as though you will live a long life.* Because of hearing that Jesus Christ is returning soon, there is the tendency to think "What's the use in planning for a long life?" I knew a teenager who stopped brushing his teeth because of this outlook. But remember that God's timing is different from our timing: "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8).

Another attitude that many young people adopt is "Well, if I only have a few years anyway, I'm going to do everything I want to do while I can." This is dangerous thinking, and can lead people to make mistakes that they will live with the rest of their lives (which can be quite long). I have known many people who are now living with the lasting pain of poorly thought-out decisions made impetuously when they were young. These decisions were based on a wrong idea of having "fun." Remember that real fun does not require repentance.

Rather, plan your life as though you are going to live into old age. Do well in school, set goals and plans to achieve them, decide on a career, keep yourself from worthless pursuits and surround yourself with friends

who are positive and are going somewhere. Remember the words of King Solomon who admonished young people to “Rejoice, O young man (or woman), in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh, for childhood and youth *are* vanity [temporary, like a vapor]” (Ecclesiastes 11:9–10).

2) *Do not allow yourself to become cynical.* Cynicism is an attitude of being distrustful, doubtful, skeptical and suspicious. Because of recent events in the Church of God, many—young and old—have allowed themselves to fall victim to this destructive way of thinking. Warnings from the church about the return of Jesus Christ have also become a topic at which many tend to scoff. I have heard some say, “Yeah, I’ve been hearing about the ‘soon-coming’ Kingdom of God for 20 years now and we’ve been wrong the whole time! Everything is the same as it’s always been.”

The Bible warns about this attitude being prevalent in the end times: “knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation’” (2 Peter 3:3–4). Peter goes on to point out that the same Being who by His word created the earth will also destroy all evil by His word (vv. 5–7).

Instead of being cynical, we should be thankful that we have more time to become the kind of people who are worthy of such a patient God: “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (v. 9, NASB). This opportunity is available not only to adults, but also to you as teenagers (1 Corinthians 7:14). By becoming cynical, you effectively tie God’s hands and limit what He can do for you.

3) *Look beyond your world.* It is easy to be caught up in what you and your friends are doing and in the latest fashions, TV shows and music. It is all so exciting and fun with so many things to see and do. As Solomon wrote, you should enjoy your youth. Your youth is a time like no other in your life.

But look around and see the “flip side” of the world. In your own generation, there is the example of the tragedy at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, which was just one incident in a series of school shootings in the United States. What about the atrocities committed in Bosnia, Rwanda and other parts of the world? Look around your own neighborhood. Studies show that one in six women in the U.S. are victims of rape or

attempted rape—and the majority of these are under the age of 18. How many families can you name that have not suffered through a divorce or abuse of some kind?

Try this—keep a tally on your favorite television programs for a few nights, of the number of times there is a murder, a sexual incident outside of marriage, a reference to homosexuality or foul language. Do the same with the music you listen to. Then analyze how you never noticed them before, and you will see how much you have been conditioned to just accept ideas that are clearly against God’s way of life. No, you do not have to look too far to see that this world is sick and needs Jesus Christ to return.

In contrast, here is a description of the world after Jesus returns: “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.... And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away’” (Revelation 21:1, 3–4).

Imagine a world of no more tears or suffering. That is the world you have the opportunity to help usher in. Be honest—no matter how exciting and fun your life is, there are times when you experience sorrow and despair. These are a part of life. How much of that heartache is caused by you or someone else not living God’s way of life? It need not be that way, and you are one of the privileged few to whom God has revealed His way.

### Put It in Perspective

Yes, Jesus Christ will return—it is as sure as any prophecy in the Bible. And He may return in your lifetime. But instead of thinking that this is a bad thing, realize that it is going to be so much better for the billions who have lived empty and directionless lives. Thank God that you have an opportunity, as a young person, that others have never had—to know God and His way of life. And no matter your age, you can support and back up the Work that is getting the message of hope out to those people.

So go ahead and enjoy yourself as a young person. Make plans for a long life and a successful future. Avoid falling into a cynical attitude that comes from not believing God’s Word and His promises. Look beyond your world to see that this present society does need God’s kingdom to make a safe and prosperous world for everyone. Then you can truly look forward to Jesus Christ’s return and pray “Thy kingdom come” with your whole heart. ☐

# Did Jesus Profane the Sabbath?

## Plucking Heads of Grain

By Dexter B. Wakefield

**I**t seemed that everywhere Jesus went, the religious leaders of His day were watching Him to see if some fault could be found. Because they rejected Jesus' teachings as "unorthodox" they were particularly interested in discrediting Him as an opponent of the law.

Ironically, many who today claim to follow Jesus continue to make the scribes' and Pharisees' accusation—that Jesus broke, circumvented or did away with His Father's law. They sometimes point to Mark 2:23–28: "Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. And the Pharisees said to Him, 'Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?'" (vv. 23–24).

A hungry person can get nourishment by picking ripe heads of grain, rubbing them between the hands to remove the husks and eating the grains that remain. This was a common practice in Jesus' time, and if you live in a grain-producing area today you may have done this yourself.

The Pharisees were not accusing the disciples of theft. It was legal for a passer-by to take the grain he could eat on the spot, as long as he did not harvest a quantity for later consumption or sale. "When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your

hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain" (Deuteronomy 23:25).

### Harvesting?

In spite of this passage from Deuteronomy, the Pharisees accused the disciples of harvesting on the Sabbath—at least as they defined harvesting. In the law God gave Moses—called the Torah or Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy)—harvesting on the Sabbath is indeed forbidden. "Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest" (Exodus 34:21). However, minor preparation and serving of food is permitted on the Sabbath.

How, then, did the scribes and Pharisees come to accuse the disciples of harvesting—working—on the Sabbath? After the tribe of Judah returned from the Babylonian captivity around the time of Ezra, the priesthood had an extensive oral tradition that interpreted the Torah. This oral rabbinical tradition—later codified as the Mishna—was regarded as authoritative, and to break a point of this interpretation was considered the same as breaking a specific law stated in the Torah, such as the commandment not to work on the Sabbath. Exodus 20:8–11 states: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep

it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it you shall do no work:* you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."

### Does Tradition Equal Law?

But what is work? The Mishna, which comes from the rabbinical oral tradition of Jesus' day, lists "*forty less one*" tasks that it considers "work"—a violation of the Sabbath—for a Jew.

The list includes the agricultural activities of threshing and winnowing—the removal of husks from heads of grain and separating the resulting chaff from the grains (Mishna, *Shabbath*). Remember that to the scribes and Pharisees, a violation of their *oral tradition about a law* was equivalent to breaking the law itself. Therefore the Pharisees watching Jesus' disciples picking and rubbing a few heads of grain could say, "Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" even though such activity is not specifically proscribed or defined as harvesting in the Pentateuch.

It is interesting that not all ancient Jewish authorities agreed with the Pharisees of Jesus' day. The writers of the Talmud stated that one could pluck and eat on the Sabbath if he only rubbed the grain with his fingertips and not the whole hand. Another authority (Rabbi Judah ben El'ai) said that the same act could be done if a utensil were not involved.

The Pharisees jealously guarded their role as interpreters of the law, and vigorously resisted disagreement. But Jesus—the great Lawgiver in the flesh—knew that their reasoning was sometimes wrong. All of Jesus' clashes with the scribes and Pharisees regarding the Sabbath were over demonstrable mistakes in their oral tradition about the Torah. In each case, Jesus went to Scripture to teach what was actually intended by a particular law, and in doing so affirmed and magnified the Sabbath commandment. *Jesus never said it is permissible to break the law as it was given to Moses, and would never have done so Himself.* Many commentators erroneously assume that Jesus and the Pharisees were disagreeing about the validity of the Sabbath commandment as given in the Torah. But in fact, *they were disagreeing about a portion of the rabbinical oral tradition that became the Mishna.* In showing the Pharisees a correct interpretation of a particular matter regarding the Sabbath, Jesus was not undermining or negating the Sabbath, He was affirming it.

### **An Incorrect Assumption**

The Pharisees who accused the disciples of breaking the Sabbath harvesting law had made an erroneous assumption. Because they saw divine law primarily as a system of limitations, they assumed that the most restrictive interpretation of a law was the most righteous, so they sought ever-finer degrees of limitation, sometimes losing sight of a law's intent.

But a person's life does not consist of what he or she does not do. The Apostle Paul wrote: "...by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20), and Jesus certainly taught repentance from sin (Mark 1:15). He also taught His disciples to live a repentant life, which is a whole way of living—doing what is right in God's sight. The Pharisees needed to understand God's priorities in their Sabbath observance.

When the Pharisees saw the disciples picking heads of grain, they could have interpreted the law mercifully, seeing hungry men preparing and eating. Instead, they chose to see the law in its most limiting sense, forbidding harvesting and winnowing. Was their traditional interpretation what God would have

## **What Is...**

### **The Torah?**

In Hebrew, "*Teaching*" or "*Instruction.*" "In Judaism, in the broadest sense the substance of divine revelation to Israel, the Jewish people: God's revealed teaching or guidance for mankind. The meaning of "Torah" is often restricted to signify the first five books of the Old Testament, also called the Law or the Pentateuch.... Genesis... Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.... The term Torah is also used to designate the entire Hebrew Bible. Since for some Jews the laws and customs passed down through oral traditions are part and parcel of God's revelation to Moses and constitute the "oral Torah," Torah is also understood to include both the Oral Law and the Written Law." (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Torah")

### **The Mishna?**

The *Mishna*, (or *Mishnah*) which in Hebrew means *repeated study* is "...the oldest authoritative post-biblical collection and codification of Jewish oral laws, systematically compiled by numerous scholars (called tannaim) over a period of about two centuries. The codification was given final form early in the 3rd century AD by Judah ha-Nasi. The Mishna supplements the written, or scriptural, laws found in the Pentateuch. It presents various interpretations of selective legal traditions that had been preserved orally since at least the time of Ezra (c. 450 BC)" (op. cit., "Mishna")

### **The Talmud?**

In Hebrew, "*Study*" or "*Learning.*" "Though the Mishnah contained the most comprehensive collection of Jewish laws up to that time, it was not meant to settle issues involving contradictory interpretations. Almost immediately... Jewish scholars in Palestine and Babylonia began to elaborate extensive interpretations of the Mishnah that were called Gemara. When the work was completed several centuries later, the Mishnah and the Gemara, taken together, were called the Talmud" (op. cit., "Halakhah").

wanted? Jesus used a scriptural precedent to show that they were wrong: “But He said to them, ‘Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar [son of Ahimelech] the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat, except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?’ And He said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath’” (Mark 2:24–28).

### Back to David

Many believe that Jesus was asserting His right to break the Sabbath if He wanted to (and that by extension His disciples also could) or that He was somehow doing away with one of the Ten Commandments. But a brief look at the actual scriptural account to which Jesus referred reveals His actual intent.

“Now David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. And Ahimelech was afraid when he met David, and said to him, ‘Why are you alone, and no one is with you?’ So David said to Ahimelech the priest, ‘The king has ordered me on some business, and said to me, “Do not let anyone know anything about the business on which I send you, or what I have commanded you.” And I have directed my young men to such and such a place. Now therefore, what have you on hand? Give me five loaves of bread in my hand, or whatever can be found.’ And the priest answered David and said, ‘There is no common bread on hand; but there is holy bread, if the young men have at least kept themselves from women.’ Then David answered the priest, and said to him, ‘Truly, women have been kept from us

about three days since I came out. And the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in effect common, even though it was sanctified in the vessel this day.’ So the priest gave him holy bread; for there was no bread there but the showbread which had been taken from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread in its place on the day when it was taken away” (1 Samuel 21:1–6).

Jesus acknowledged to the Pharisees that it is unlawful for an unsanctified person to eat of the showbread at the tabernacle of God. And it was true that, normally, only the priests were sanctified and ceremonially fit to eat it. But why did the High Priest ask David whether any of the men had lain with women in the last three days? Only one incident in the Bible connects three days of celibacy with ceremonial sanctification for non-priests. Ahimelech was going all the way back to the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai for a *lawful* way to be merciful to the hungry men. “So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. And he said to the people, ‘Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives...’ And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain” (Exodus 19:14–15, 17).

In this manner, God allowed the congregation to become ceremonially sanctified so that they could come before Him and hear the commandments spoken.

### Not Unlawful

The High Priest did not tell David and his men that they could do something unlawful. He made a *lawful* ruling based on an ancient precedent set by God through Moses, and in doing so exercised mercy on the hungry—perhaps starving—men.

This ruling allowed the men to eat, because they were ceremonially sanctified through their three-day abstinence. Even a priest had to be ceremonially sanctified to eat the showbread lawfully (although this sanctification was done differently). The High Priest could have easily taken the more restrictive view, but he understood that this would not have been the most righteous approach. Notice also that David seems immediately to recognize Ahimelech’s reference, so the possibility arises that the three days of abstinence ruling was an existing oral tradition of which David was aware.

Under other circumstances the actions of David, his men and the High Priest would have been unlawful. But Jesus was pointing out that David’s actions were *not unlawful* in this case. Some say that Jesus justified His disciples’ breaking the law because He thought David broke the law, but in fact, Jesus mentioned the incident with the showbread because the actions of both David and the disciples *were lawful and righteous*.

In the parallel account given in Matthew 12, Jesus quoted Hosea 6:6 and said, “But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:7–8).

Jesus showed the Pharisees that their traditional interpretation of the Torah in this matter was incorrect, and for His ruling He cited David’s High Priest, who cited Moses, who quoted God. Since we know that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament, Jesus was, in effect, citing Himself. He is indeed “the Lord of the Sabbath,” and having made it for mankind, it is His right to interpret it for mankind. In doing so, He magnified and affirmed the Sabbath. LCN



# Report from the Treasurer

By Fred Dattolo

Long ago, in a land that now seems far away, I gave my first sermonette. I was visiting my hometown in Canada. On the Sabbath, the minister asked me to speak. Terrified at the prospect, I told him that I was not qualified. He said, “you work in the Accounting Department [of the church], don’t you? Talk about that.” To my surprise, the brethren were very interested in what I presented. I talked about internal controls (checks and balances). Have you ever wondered how the church accounts for the money it receives? To answer that question, we will go on a journey and follow “Eddie” the envelope through a typical day.

Each morning, two employees together pick up the mail at the post office box. They bring “Eddie” to Ruth and Leona of the Mail Processing Department. There, in a secure room, they both (always at least two people) sort “Eddie” and his friends into bundles of about 50 envelopes. Ruth and Leona each process one bundle at a time, removing money from the envelopes and marking each with the appropriate amounts and codes, according to the contents. Next, they verify each other’s work. Ruth then totals the money extracted from her bundle and separately totals the amounts she wrote on the corresponding envelopes. The money total must match the envelope total. Leona does the same with her bundle. Then they switch their bundles and do the totals again, so that each bundle has four totals that all agree—two for the money and two for the envelopes. When finished, Ruth notifies me of the day’s total dollar amount counted.

Two other employees—who neither pick up nor process mail—take the money to the bank. They return the deposit receipts from the bank (one for each bundle) directly to me. I confirm that the amount deposited matches what Ruth and Leona counted that day. I forward each deposit receipt to Jerry Jr. of the Accounting Department, who records the deposits into the books.

Meanwhile, “Eddie” and his envelope friends go to Janet of the Accounting Department, who uses them to enter the individual donations into our database. Janet checks each bundle total, displayed by the database, against the corresponding deposit receipt to ensure that all envelope amounts were entered into the database correctly. In addition, Jerry Jr. reconciles what he entered into the books with what Janet entered into the database, to make sure the books and the database (from which receipts are generated) are in balance.

Even though we consider everyone involved in donation processing very trustworthy, a separation of duties exists, to avoid even the *appearance* of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22, KJV). Likewise, with *spending* the money. Now note how “Charlie” the check is generated.

First, the appropriate department manager must provide written authorization for any purchase request. Any request over \$500 also requires my approval. I make sure there is enough budget and that cash flow is adequate. Subsequent bills received are also approved by the appropriate department manager, then entered into the accounting system by Sue. Field ministers are *reimbursed* for their business expenses according to

church policies and IRS guidelines regarding accountable reimbursement plans.

Each Tuesday and Thursday morning, I select from a report the bills that are due to be paid, and add up the amounts from that report. Lisa then collects the bills corresponding to my selections and adds them up. My report total must match her bill total. These “check-run” totals ensure that bills were entered correctly and vendors are paid the proper amount.

Only two people—Suzanne and Jennifer—have access to the check stock. Neither is involved in the payment process. One of them gives Jerry Jr. the exact quantity of checks he needs for the check-run, and every check number is recorded in a log. Jerry Jr. generates the checks, but neither I nor anyone in the financial area has check-signing authority. Only Dr. Meredith, and a few others approved by him, who have no other part in the process, may sign checks. Signed checks are returned to me. I review the checks and add them up. This review and third check-run total (which must match the other two check-run totals) ensures that the only checks generated are for properly approved expenditures. I also track all check numbers used and account for each check number. “Charlie” is then ready to be mailed!

Whether it is incoming “Eddie” the envelope or outgoing “Charlie” the check, we take great care, through these and many other controls, in handling God’s tithes and offerings. I hope that this glimpse into some of the financial procedures at church headquarters has been as interesting to you as it was to the brethren who endured my first sermonette! ☐

## Build A Relationship With God

(continued from page 2)

what Jesus tells us: “Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who CRY OUT day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”

In Mark 11:21–24, we read of Peter’s surprise when a fig tree that Jesus had cursed had withered away very quickly. Jesus answers, “Have FAITH in God!” Then He instructs the disciples (and us today), “For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, BELIEVE that you receive them, and you will have them.”

Through constant study, fervent prayer and consciously directing our minds to TRUST in God, we must, as Jesus said, “believe” that we have received what we ask for, *and then we shall receive it!* It is true that you cannot just “work up” faith. But it is *equally true*, my dear brethren, that by *doing your part* as I have just described—fervently *studying* for faith, *praying* for faith and then doing your best—with God’s Spirit—to EXERCISE faith in all types of daily situations both great and small, greater faith *will* be manifested in your life! That is what I mean by telling you from time to time, “We must build an *atmosphere* of faith within the Living Church of God!” Yet, as the Apostle Paul explained, “It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure!” (Philippians 2:13).

Jesus again emphasized the vital key of “*drinking in*” of the Word of God in regard to faith when He instructed us, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you” (John 15:7). For Jesus’ words to “abide in us” we certainly do have to study them over and over, drink in of them, meditate on them and *put them to work* in our lives. Then we will literally *think* like Jesus thinks. We will, more and more, have the *mind* of Jesus Christ and the mind of God. Then, as Jesus said, “You will ask what you desire and it SHALL be done for you.” And then Jesus continued to say, “By this My Father is glorified that you *bear much fruit*, so you will be My disciples” (v. 8). So the faith we receive and the answers to our prayers should all have a part in *accomplishing the very WORK of Christ* which He is doing through us as His human instruments today!

One major obstacle to faith is the attitude of “guilt.” A very helpful biblical passage regarding what we might call this “guilt syndrome” is found in 1 John 3:18–22: “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And *whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.*”

Through the help of Christ *living within us*, each of us MUST “GROW in grace and knowledge” (2 Peter 3:18). We must, year by year, overcome and begin to reflect Jesus Christ more and more in obedience to God’s law, in the attitude of love and out-flowing concern to God and to neighbor, and in literal SERVICE to God and to others in the things we do. Lacking this, of course we will realize that we have “let down” and this will hurt our feeling of closeness to God. We must understand, however, that God does NOT expect us to be perfect, but merely to be “growing” to the best of our ability. Therefore, we read in the above passage in 1 John 3, “God is greater than our heart and knows all things.” But we should be growing *toward* the state described in verse 22 wherein we receive from God powerful answers to prayer—“whatever we ask”—“BECAUSE we *keep His commandments* and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”

Since so many of us are getting older in the faith, we *should*, dear brethren, truly be drawing closer and closer to God in everything we think, say and do. If we, through God’s Spirit, so *discipline ourselves* to do this, and specifically CRY OUT to God for more faith, *He will certainly give us that faith!*

Then, those of us who do this will have a profound peace of mind, a sense of confidence and assuredness in God and in His will for us and we will KNOW that God will DO *what He says*—in His time and His way. This *living FAITH* will enable us to become far more powerful instruments of God and to be truly “ready” to be His instruments when it is His time to pour out the spiritual power and the gifts of His Spirit on His church at the very end of this age. May God help all of us catch this vision and learn to walk with our Father—in FAITH—in the way I have tried to describe to all of you in this letter. May God be with you and help each of you to build this profound relationship with God and with Jesus Christ in your daily lives.



## Give Your TIME to God!

(continued from page 3)

time properly before it slips through your fingers.

Effective managers and top business executives all know the vital importance of the proper use of TIME. Peter Drucker, the world-renowned “dean” of management experts, emphasizes in his writing this aspect of success. Mr. Drucker has been for decades a highly respected consultant to top executives who run multi-billion dollar companies all over the world—as well as to top executives and managers in education and public life. In his outstanding book, *The Effective Executive*, he tells us:

Effective executives know where their time goes. They work systematically at managing the little of their time that can be brought under their control.... Effective executives, in my observation, do not start with their tasks. They start with their time. And they do not start out with planning. They start by finding out where their time actually goes. Then they attempt to manage their time and to cut back unproductive demands on their time. Finally they consolidate their “discretionary” time into the largest possible continuing units. This three-step process: recording time, managing time, and consolidating time is the foundation of executive effectiveness.

Effective executives know that time is the limiting factor. The output limits of any process are set by the scarcest resource. In the process we call “accomplishment,” this is time.

Time is also a unique resource. Of the other major resources, money is actually quite plentiful. We long ago should have learned that it is the demand for capital, rather than the supply thereof, which sets the limit to economic growth and activity. People—the third limiting resource—one can hire, though one can rarely hire

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 (pp. 23–26).

We can appreciate that highly effective *Christians* are also noted for their “tender loving care of time.”

“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.” —Peter Drucker

enough good people. But one cannot rent, hire, buy, or otherwise obtain more time.

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

They learn—in their use of time—to seek FIRST those things that involve the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. For instance, even though the prophet Daniel was apparently second in command of the magnificent Persian Empire—needing to make important political and management decisions daily, with problems coming to him from every direction—he knew that his contact with God must come FIRST, *no matter what!* Even when in danger of his very life for praying to the God of heaven, we read: “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days” (Daniel 6:10).

Daniel’s “custom” was to pray to God *three times a day*. That took TIME. But, though no doubt busier

continues on next page

than most of us in his executive responsibilities, he knew that this use of his time was essential.

Even though Jesus Christ had been very God and had been with the Father from eternity, once He became flesh He knew that He NEEDED to “take time” to pray in order to keep that close fellowship with His Father—the Source of all wisdom, love and power. Mark 1:32–34 describes an occasion when Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons from people brought to Him after the Sabbath. But notice the very next verse: “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He PRAYED” (v. 35).

In order to tap the “source” of His power, Jesus got up a “long while” before daybreak so He would have TIME to

pray to God *before anything else could intervene!* This is a vital lesson for us.

In all of our Christian lives, brethren, we must learn to *think through* our use of TIME. Simple as it sounds, we must be sure that we “take time” to really *study* God’s Word and “feed” upon it, to *pray fervently* and *unhurriedly* to God, to *meditate* and to FAST before our Creator so that we have the spiritual strength that can come *only* from contact with God. Then, we must TAKE TIME to serve one another genuinely and do the things God wants us to do in order to be fully pleasing to Him.

This vital key to the proper use of TIME is something every one of us needs to learn and practice—especially in this confused society where Satan is able to distract us and cause us to “kill” time so quickly and so easily. ☞

## The *First Feast of Tabernacles*

(continued from page 6)

Corinthians 10:4) and therefore the very One who dwelt among the Children of Israel by filling the tabernacle with His glory.

Many centuries later, the One who was the Rock of Israel, who was in the beginning with God and was

returning glorified King of kings and Lord of lords.

Isaiah 32 speaks of a time when a King shall reign in righteousness (v. 1) and people will dwell in peaceable habitations, sure dwellings and quiet resting-places (v. 18). Isaiah 33:20 describes Jerusalem, the city of the great King, as being a tabernacle that will not be

arm shall rule for Him; and His work before Him. He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young” (Isaiah 40:10–11). The Feast of Tabernacles reminds us that Jesus Christ is going to dwell upon this earth among human beings as King of kings in a few short years.

Also at the festival season we look even beyond the Millennium. We anticipate the time beyond the 1,000 years when “the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God” (Revelation 21:3).

As we approach this year’s Feast of Tabernacles, we need to reflect back on lessons inherent in the first Feast of Tabernacles observed by Israel in the wilderness. It was a time when Moses descended from the presence of God radiating glory. He came bringing the law of God in His hands and the plans for a tabernacle so that God might dwell in the midst of His people. These three components of the first Feast of Tabernacles anticipated the final fulfillment that is to come, the ushering in of the rule of the Kingdom of God on this earth! ☞

Also at the festival season we look even beyond the Millennium. We anticipate the time beyond the 1,000 years when “the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God” (Revelation 21:3).

the instrument of creation itself, became flesh and was born as a human being (John 1:1–3, 14). In fact, John tells us that the Word was made flesh and **tabernacled** (literal Greek) among us (v. 14). At the beginning of the first Feast of Tabernacles, Moses instructed Israel about the work of building a tabernacle for God to dwell among them. That anticipated the future time when the God of Israel would tabernacle among His people, first in the human flesh and ultimately as the

taken down. This will be a time when God is recognized as judge, lawgiver, king and savior (v. 22). That future time, when the Lord will dwell among His people and they will see His glory, will be a time when the desert will blossom, the blind will see and the lame will leap (Isaiah 35:1–7).

The millennial reign of the Messiah, pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles, is described as a time when: “Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong hand, and His

# News of the Work

The Living Church of God continues to expand its Internet presence. The church currently operates Web sites in three languages, and several more sites are being developed.

The newest site, [www.weltvonmorgen.org](http://www.weltvonmorgen.org), provides access to German-language booklets and articles. The French site at [www.mondedemain.org](http://www.mondedemain.org) lets French-speakers listen to Mr. Dibar Apartian's radio program and offers French translations of booklets and articles. A Spanish-language site at [www.mundo-manana.org](http://www.mundo-manana.org) is currently under development; it will contain audio of Mr. Mario Hernandez' sermons and radio programs, as well as Spanish-language booklets and articles.

## Sermons and Telecasts Online

The [www.livingcog.org](http://www.livingcog.org) site continues to add a new sermon audio every week; currently more than 70 are available. A complete library of *Tomorrow's World* telecasts is also available in both audio and video formats. At present, over 100 hours of audio and 30 hours of video are available on the church sites.

Since their inception in January 1999, the English-language [www.livingcog.org](http://www.livingcog.org) and [www.tomorrowworld.org](http://www.tomorrowworld.org) sites have recorded in excess of 4 million "hits," a half-million page views and 400,000 user sessions. Of the 70,000 unique users recorded at the sites, more than 13,000 are repeat visitors.

Visitors have downloaded more than 300 gigabytes of material, mostly in the form of RealPlayer files. Of the booklets available in PDF (Adobe Acrobat Reader) format, *What's Ahead for America and Britain?* is the most frequently accessed, with more than 3,100 downloads recorded to date. All Living Church of God booklets published to date are available online in HTML and PDF formats. Back issues of *Tomorrow's World* magazine are also available to browse online or to download.

Those who prefer printed copies of church literature are also being served. Thousands of printed booklets and magazines have been requested through the church Web sites. Through the online Literature Request Form alone, visitors have in the last year submitted approximately 2,400 requests for church publications, requesting nearly 1,600 subscriptions to *Tomorrow's World* magazine and more than 4,500 booklets.

## Scores of Countries Reached

As of August 20 the church Web sites have recorded visits from 95 countries on six of the seven continents. The most frequent visitors are from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, but the sites have also been visited from scores of other countries. Visitors have been recorded from nearly all the European countries, as well as India,

the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Egypt, Israel, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Indonesia, Malaysia and Japan. Several of the former Soviet Republics have been reached, as have Kenya, South Korea, Mauritius, Namibia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Singapore, Thailand and Zambia.

Latin American countries reached include Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela.

## Member Area

Some of the material on [www.livingcog.org](http://www.livingcog.org) is meant for visitors with a Church of God background, rather than for those "brand new" to the Truth. To make this material available, a password-protected Member area has been established. To enter the Member area, click on the site's "Members" button, then type as your user name the word *member* (not your own name, just the word). Then, as the password, type *galatians220* (with no spaces, no capitalization and no punctuation). After entering this user name and password, you will be able to download Dr. Meredith's Member and Co-Worker letters, other Headquarters news such as Mr. Carl McNair's weekly updates, PDF files of *Living Church News* issues, Feast of Tabernacles information, a Holy Day calendar, and other information of interest to Church members.

In the upcoming year, the church is looking toward expanding the foreign-language content of its Web sites, adding more youth-oriented material, adding more video, and increasing the number and frequency of commentaries (including a special series by Dr. Meredith). Please keep the church Web efforts—an increasingly important means of reaching the world and unifying the scattered brethren—in your prayers!  
— William Bowmer



## LYC 2000 A HUGE SUCCESS!

PICKFORD, MI—"I love it!" "Cool. The best camp." "This is a great camp. It is a lot of fun while setting high standards." "I loved camp this year! Of my four years this one was best. If everything stayed the same, I'd still think it was the best camp on earth." "I'm very grateful to all the staff... I'm looking forward to next year." "Everyone here [is] nice and kind, unlike most of the world."

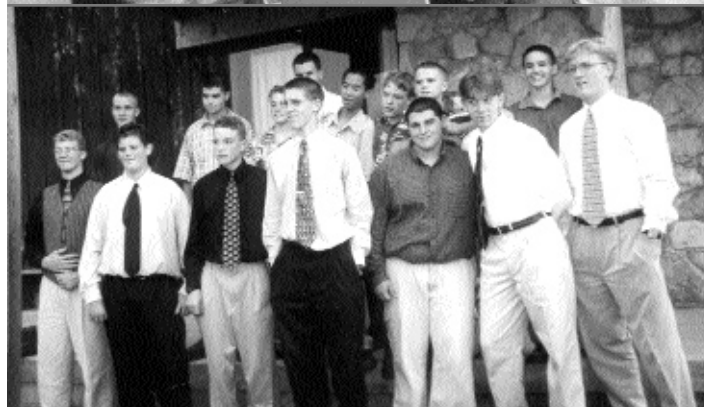
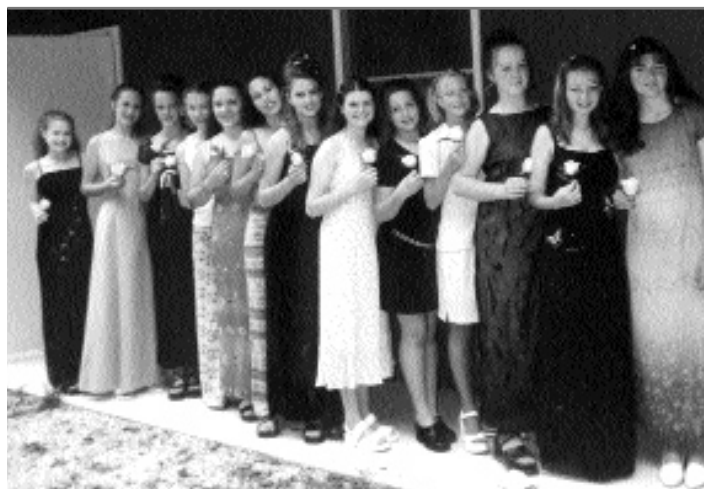
These were a few of the glowing comments written by campers about LYC 2000. From all accounts this year's Living Youth Camp was the most successful since our humble beginning in 1995 at Lake of the Ozarks.

As it has in the past, a theme developed. LYC is more than a two-week social gathering for teens. It is a means to teach and inspire a new generation in God's way of life. This is the way of outgoing concern, of love for the other person, of young men and young women learning to respect and honor one another. These, and other concepts, have not been evident enough in the Churches of God and need to be restored.

Among our accomplishments this year was the remodeling of Dorm 3-B. Campers and staff added 16 feet of space to this previously crowded dorm. LYC 2000 also saw the addition of a hugely successful class in communications. Campers and staff worked hard to produce a book of memories titled *Living Reflections*, and a 12-minute video which was shown during the final evening. They also produced 15 teen Bible studies to be placed on a teen Web site once a week over the next year.

For many campers the highlight was the canoe trip. The Two Hearted, a beautiful trout river that cuts through wilderness, is flanked by high tree-covered sand dunes before emptying into Lake Superior. There our campers set up camp for the night before hiking back to their starting point the next day.

Other camp activities included Fitness for Life, Campus Improvement, Volleyball, Flag Football, Dance, Archery, Christian Living and Teen Life.



## Ordinations

Recent ordinations reflect the continuing growth of the Living Church of God around the world. A new pastor was ordained in the Philippines; three elders, a deacon and three deaconesses were ordained in the United States.

Evangelist Carl McNair raised Mr. Eleno L. Cabahit to pastor rank during his Passover trip to the Philippines. Mr. Cabahit has served as an elder since 1985.

Regional Pastor Lambert Greer ordained Mr. Leonard J. Witt of McKee, Kentucky, and Mr. George Dellinger of Indianapolis, Indiana as elders for their respective congregations on the First Day of Unleavened Bread.

Presiding Evangelist Dr. Roderick C. Meredith, along with Evangelists Richard Ames and Carl McNair and elder Donald Davis ordained Mrs. Ruth Nestor as a deaconess for the San Diego Headquarters church on July 15.

Mr. David Spurgeon and his wife Janice were ordained as deacon and deaconess for the Palm Springs, California congregation on July 29. Mr. Gary Ehman and Mr. Donald Turk conducted the ordinations.

Area pastor Dr. Jeffrey Fall and Mr. Don Davis ordained Dr. Donald Roach as an elder and Mrs. Susan Meredith as a deaconess for the Los Angeles, California, congregation on August 19.

## Birth

Hope Loretta Marie Clementson was born to John and Jamie Clementson of Hebron, Kentucky on January 22, 2000.

## Wedding

Congratulations to Headquarters staff members Jennifer Baughman and Joshua Beattie on their marriage. The two were joined together in holy matrimony on June 25, 2000. The wedding was performed by Dr. Roderick C. Meredith.

## Donations/Gifts

Some have requested information on how to make a future gift to the Living Church of God by way of a will, a trust or other charitable means, or to make a current gift. Those wishing to receive such information should send their requests to Legal Affairs. Please write to:

Living Church of God  
Attn: Legal Affairs  
PO Box 501304  
San Diego, CA 92150

Most of the information will apply only to the United States, as the laws of different countries vary. Even so, Legal Affairs will furnish as much information as possible to help those with questions. You are encouraged to consult with your own financial and legal advisors.

## IN LOVING MEMORY

**June Houston Causby**, age 97, died at his Fletcher, North Carolina home on July 16. He was a member of the Living Church of God, but was unable to attend services. One daughter, Elizabeth Ashwood, survives him. His wife Marion preceded him in death. Area pastor Martin Fannin conducted the funeral.

**William E. Hix**, age 64, of Pillager, Minnesota, died July 8 of a lingering illness. He attended services with the Living Church of God congregation in Minneapolis. Mr. Hix had a strong faith despite personal tragedy that marked much of his life. His first wife and two children were killed in a car accident in 1969. He had recently lost a son in a hunting accident. His wife Donna, three sons, three daughters, 13 grandchildren, three sisters and one brother survive Mr. Hix. Mr. Paul Shumway conducted the funeral service.

**Charlie Henry Warren**, age 87, Lamar, Arkansas, died July 13. He was a long-time member of God's Church, attending the Living Church of God in Arkansas. Dr. Roderick C. Meredith and Raymond F. McNair baptized him in 1951 while they were on a baptizing tour. He was a retired farmer and mill worker. Three daughters, one son, five grandchildren and five great grandchildren survive Mr. Warren. His wife Floy preceded him in death.

**Wesley Winant**, age 81, a long-time member of the Church of God, died August 3 of a massive stroke. He was a member of the Living Church of God congregation at Corpus Christi, Texas. His wife Louise, six children and seven grandchildren survive him. His good nature and humor will be missed.

## “Catastrophe”

By Carl E. McNair

What is the greatest catastrophe that can befall mankind? Volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, droughts and floods are common in today’s news, and all of these events cause destruction, bringing injury, suffering and death where they occur in populated areas. In the aftermath of these disasters, journalists commonly state as they describe the devastation: “The area looks like a war zone!”

Of all the catastrophes that can afflict mankind, war is the greatest—and it is self-inflicted. In 6,000 years of recorded history, only a few years have been free of war. The first war was launched by the super-archangel Satan when he led a third of the angelic host in rebellion against his Creator, as described in Isaiah 14:12–15, Revelation 12:3–4 and Ezekiel 28:12–19.

The first recorded human conflict occurred between two sons of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel. Cain became jealous of his brother Abel. We read in Genesis 4:8 that “Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.”

This first act of violence was likely committed with a simple weapon—the hands using a rock or a club made from wood. Weaponry has “progressed” to the point today that nuclear and biological agents could exterminate all life from the face of our planet. Man has never invented tools of destruction that he has not used. Unless saved from ourselves by a power greater, man’s history indicates self-annihilation! Concerning our day, Jesus said: (Matthew 24:21–22) “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.”

The human family faces a horrendous time of punishment because of disobedience to our Creator. But after a period of great tribulation and intervention by Jesus Christ, there will come a time of unparalleled peace and prosperity to those who willingly come under His loving rule.

The prophet Isaiah proclaimed the good news (Isaiah 2:3–4): “Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

Under Christ’s rule, mankind will finally be free from of his greatest self-inflicted curse—war against himself!

---

*This commentary can be found on the Church Web page, [www.livingcog.org](http://www.livingcog.org), in the Commentary Library, along with many other commentaries on key topics facing our world.*