

THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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An Eternal Life of Service and Action

Dear Brethren,

Mankind does not know how to rule. That is a theme running through the last four Festivals in God's sacred calendar. Think about it.

The *Feast of Trumpets* pictures the Day of the Lord—the one-year period of time (Isaiah 34:8) when seven angelic trumpets are blown as God Himself confronts humanity, climaxing in the declaration that all the kingdoms of the world now belong to Jesus Christ (Revelation 11:15). In the days that follow Christ's inauguration, He will replace the current rulers with His faithful servants—and that means you and me. “Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him” (Daniel 7:27). Many other scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments confirm this, and you will no doubt hear this theme during these Fall Festivals.

The *Day of Atonement* pictures the removal of “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2). Up to this 1,000-year separation from mankind, Satan and his minions have ruled behind the scenes, influencing gullible humanity to fall in line with his tyrannical and self-centered way of treating each other. The main qualification we must develop each day is that of humble service:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let

him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:25–28).

This does not mean that rulers do not have to lead firmly and do not sometimes have to make unpopular and difficult decisions, but humble service according to God's will is at the heart of those who hope to change “the course of this world.”

The *Feast of Tabernacles* shows us that those who overcome during this age will be given a special opportunity to bring peace to this troubled planet for one thousand years.

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4).

There is much that we do not understand, but Scripture guides us to some conclusions. The servants of God, as listed in Hebrews 11, suffered many grievous trials, obeying God “that they might obtain a better resurrection” (v. 35). The first resurrection is a better resurrection in two ways. It is better because it is a resurrection to eternal life, whereas the second is to physical life and the third to doom. Another way the first resurrection is better is that it gives those in it a special opportunity: to make up the bride of Christ (Revelation 19:6–9). Those coming up in the second resurrection are given the opportunity for eternal life in the family of God, but nowhere in

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the Bible does it appear that they will enjoy that special status of the bride of Christ.

The *Last Great Day* is such a wonderful day, representing a time when all those who had been deceived and oppressed by selfish rulers during this age are offered an opportunity to submit to a different kind of oversight. Those who choose to walk in that better way will then be born into the family of God. It would appear that they will become the children, in a way, of the relationship between Christ and His bride, the Church.

Dear brethren, it is important that we keep this vision in mind. The world may see us as delusional, but if the Bible is the word of God, which we know it is, then we are not so crazy. We are following in the footsteps of biblical figures who went before us. We are following the faith of Abraham, the courage of Daniel, and the steadfastness of Noah.

We are not there yet, but this we can know for sure: We are all going to die, and either there is a resurrection or there is not. There is no middle ground. Either the Bible is true, or it is not. Again, no middle ground. We are here because we believe the Bible and we believe there is a resurrection—and we believe that the resurrection is to an eternal life of service and action. There is no great “candy store in the sky” to merely gratify our senses.

Oh yes, life in the family of God involves joy and pleasure, for we read in Psalm 16:11, “In your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” But this is not separate from work, productivity, and service. “Jesus answered them [those who criticized Him for healing on the Sabbath], ‘My Father has been working until now, and I have been working’” (John 5:17). God the Father and Jesus Christ have never retired—and neither will we quit. How wonderful it will be to have bodies that do not break down with age and to live productively in a harmonious eternal family!

We must keep these things in mind as we struggle through daily life, and we must recognize how short this physical life is! We must follow the example of those who paved the way for us:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of

them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them (Hebrews 11:13–16).

We observe the biblical Festivals each year as reminders of God’s master plan for mankind. It is important that those of us called to be firstfruits not only understand this plan, but keep it constantly before our eyes. We must never look back (Luke 9:62). We must never “become dull of hearing” (Hebrews 5:11). We must guard against drifting away (Hebrews 2:1). And, we must not be “like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears” (Hebrews 12:16–17). Some misunderstand that Esau found no place for personal repentance, but a careful reading of Genesis 27:33–38 clearly shows that Esau’s tears came from being unable to reverse what had occurred and the loss of his blessings.

The Parable of the Wedding Feast is found in Matthew 22 and provides a sobering lesson: “For many are called, but few are chosen” (v. 14). Some will wake up some day to “weeping and gnashing of teeth” when they realize what they traded away for the cares of this world. How tragic that will be!

Let us be thankful that God gives us these yearly reminders of the reason for our calling. Let us be thankful that the reward He offers to us is more than a “candy store in the sky.” Let us be thankful that we are called to collectively be the bride of Christ, to rule, and to bring peace to a very troubled world!



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The Master of Misdirection

Every year, it seems the World Cup is the biggest show on earth. Flags from many nations fly from automobiles and porches in multicultural countries such as England and Canada. We all love the country of our heritage, or at least most of us do, but that is changing in the United States. Anarchist professors have made significant inroads in universities and pump into the minds of naïve students the “evils” of the country’s founding principles. Sadly, most cable news networks share the same leftist bent and proclaim America’s “sins” to the world—based, of course, on their editorial boards’ ideas of “sin.” Our politicians do a fine job of that, as well, all on their own.

The United States is not alone in its changing values. Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom are seeing their traditional principles turned upside down, and their people—especially their youth—turned increasingly against their own heritage. However, it would appear that there is still resistance, a cultural war in the United States and the United Kingdom, whereas that conflict appears to be lost in other countries.

Satan is a master of the art of divide and conquer, and he is also a master at stirring up emotions to suit his plans. Americans were deeply affected by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Churches saw a surge in attendance for a few weeks and many prayers were offered, but patriotism quickly proved itself a poor substitute for repentance, and since then America has been deeply divided. On one side are promoters of political correctness, some of whom despise American values. On the other are those who wrap themselves in their patriotism and in the United States Constitution and its founding principles. Many of the latter group seek a country that once again recognizes God, family, and certain standards of behavior. It is an emotional war, and this is where we must be on guard.

Were We Ever a “Christian Nation”?

The devil who directs the course of this world does not care what side we are on as long as he can use this cultural war to stir us up emotionally to “miss the mark.” The founding fathers of the United States were men of faith, as imperfect as they were. They looked to the Bible as a guiding light, and this influenced the way they wrote America’s founding documents. This is a matter

of history, in spite of the way in which many institutions of higher learning, politicians, and pundits wish to rewrite that history. But there is a danger here for those who know the truth of Scripture. While man-made documents may have been influenced to some degree by biblical values, they are not the Bible. The United States Constitution is not found in the Bible—nor is the English Bill of Rights, the Canadian Charter of Rights, or any other national document.

Many biblical principles guided English common law, and that has influenced the kind of nations we find in the English-speaking world, but let us not get caught up in the politics of it all. While founded upon many biblical principles, the United States, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and the other English-speaking nations are not and never have been *Christian* nations in the real sense. Some of America’s leaders were deists, for example, who believed in a higher power but did not believe in a personal God who revealed Himself in the pages of the Bible. Yes, in previous generations many citizens read the Bible daily, but did they really understand it? And did they *truly* obey it as God intended?

Or did they accept a blasphemous Trinitarian god? Did they refuse to embrace the Bible’s clear commands to observe the fourth commandment to remember the seventh-day Sabbath? History shows that a few did, but most did not. Did they sincerely but ignorantly replace these God-given festivals with pagan days filled with heathen practices, contrary to God’s instructions found in Deuteronomy 12:29–32? Most accepted the Catholic and Protestant doctrines of the immortal soul and of heaven and hell. Some subscribed to Luther’s “faith alone” theology and the idea that we need not keep the law, while others believed in penance instead of repentance.

America, as other Israelite countries, wore the façade of Christianity, but maintained the heart of passive rebellion against our Creator. We chose that in which God does not delight (Isaiah 66:1–3). However, in recent years, our Israelite nations have become aggressively and actively *hostile* to our Creator. Shockingly, even some who lobby to preserve monuments containing the Ten Commandments are the first to declare that Jesus “freed” us from having to keep those same commandments!

Misdirected Passion and Misplaced Hope

So, what is the point? We must not allow ourselves to be caught up in the emotions of temporary political events. This is difficult to do. When one side of the culture war raging around us is seemingly on the *wrong* side of every moral (biblical) issue, it is hard to stay neutral—and, in fact, we ought not stay neutral on the issues *themselves*. The Church will continue to speak out against the “politically correct” doctrines being shoved down our throats. Abortion, assisted suicide and the LGBTQA+ movement are not of God. Concerning that last item, while I have left off a number of letters sometimes used in this acronym to describe various perversions, we must not pass over the “A.” It stands for allies—those who may not be personally involved in these behaviors, but who sympathize with and support such individuals in their delusions (Romans 1:18–32).

But there is more to this culture war than biblical morality. Some of our members have allowed themselves to become passionate about various causes that also “miss the mark.” The god of this world loves it when he misdirects our passions.

Some become involved in the politics of this world. The pull is understandable. It’s tempting. It’s easy to do. Without a doubt, judges and politicians do make a difference one way or the other. It is easy to become passionate over who we think will be better for our particular country, but it is interesting that even within the Church of God there are differences of opinion as to who will serve best.

We think we know best, but humans will disappoint us, and we do not know what God knows. He alone knows who will best serve *His* purposes. We are to place our hope in God and His word, not in men or in man-made documents.

American, But Not Biblical

The Constitution of the United States is virtually revered by some citizens. While it is a remarkable document put together by men with great foresight, we must put it in perspective. It is *not* the Bible and it does not always agree with the Bible.

For example, the Bible says nothing about “the right to bear arms.” Nor does it promote “free speech” in the way that right is exercised in America and other Western nations. These political guarantees may or may not be laudable in a carnal world, but they will not be a part of *tomorrow’s* world after Christ returns.

Whether guns will exist for hunting or recreation after Christ’s return is something we could debate from now until He is here, but to what purpose? What we do know is that the intent of the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution had nothing to do with hunting or target practice. According to many scholars, it exists to ensure that the citizenry has the ability to rise up against oppressive rulers. Is this what a true follower of Christ ought to do? Rising up to overthrow the ruler usually does not end well, and it will certainly not be tolerated under the government of God. In tomorrow’s world, guns and other weapons will not be used for personal protection, for war, or for insurrection (Micah 4:3; Isaiah 2:1–4).

We often think of “free speech” as being on the same level as a biblical command, but is it? We know that it is good for those of us who believe the truth found in the Bible. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and similar free-speech views guaranteed in other Western democracies have served us well, and we are grateful for this guarantee in today’s

world. I even wrote an article about its importance for the July-August *Tomorrow’s World* magazine. But free speech is a double-edged sword and is often used for evil. The word of God condemns some expressions of free speech that are protected by the First Amendment—for example: “You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people” (Exodus 22:28). The Apostle Paul understood this as a New Testament command

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in Acts 23:5, where he quoted from Exodus and said, “You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.” Sadly, many of us get caught up in the politics and emotions of this cultural war and are guilty of violating this command.

We also know that there will be no freedom to promote pornography or perverse behaviors. Scripture shows that the promotion of foreign religions and gods is not something the one true God countenances (Leviticus 18:20–22). Individuals will be corrected speedily—probably not for every little mistake, but certainly from going too far astray (Isaiah 30:20–21).

Clearly, the Constitution and the Bible are not the same.

Faithful Ambassadors, Not Partisan Participants

We logically hope and pray for judges who will support our freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and freedom of

The Order of Melchizedek



By **Dexter Wakefield**

If you had the choice, which would you rather be: a king or a priest? Some say that they would rather be a priest, because they can't see themselves ruling even one city, much less several. Others look forward to being a king and exercising the authority of government in righteousness. How about you? Do you have a preference?

The Feast of Tabernacles is filled with exciting meaning about the coming of Christ and the establishment of God's government on this earth, replacing darkness with light. It will be a time of healing and hope—the initiation of an era in which the world is filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters fill the sea (Isaiah 11:9). And if we overcome to the end, each of us will have a great part in this grand picture. In his letter to the Church in Corinth, Greece, the Apostle Paul wrote that “we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet” (1 Corinthians 15:51–52). But after you are changed, *what will you actually do?* The Feast of Tabernacles pictures—among other things—*your* important, vital service. So, it is a big question for each of us personally.

During the Feast of Tabernacles, we meditate on the things that we will do—and be—throughout the first 1,000 years of Jesus Christ's reign.

Revelation 1:6 tells us that Jesus Christ “has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Everyone in God's Kingdom is to be a priest—and is to rule as kings, as well. But how is this possible? Biblically, these roles are generally separate. Prophecy declares that the line of Judah is promised eternal kingship: “The scepter shall

not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet” (Genesis 49:10). And in Israel, only Levites could be priests. So, what about Jesus Christ, our High Priest? He was of Judah, the tribe of the scepter and kingship. He was not of the tribe of Levi.

In the Kingdom of God, how can Christ and the children of God have roles as both kings and priests? Is God inconsistent?

Your Job Description

The Apostle Peter also said that we will be *both* kings and priests. “But you are a chosen generation, *a royal priesthood*, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). Peter is describing a priesthood consisting of kings.

We know that, when Christ is revealed, we will be like Him (1 John 3:2), but does our similarity extend to our future roles, as well? It does! Notice: “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit **with Me on My throne**, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 3:21–22).

Do we both hear *and understand* that? That is your future!

As we approach the Feast, let's look at what it means to be in a *royal priesthood* for 1,000 years. What do you imagine that will be like? What will be your priestly order? *It will not be of Levi.* Today, let's learn some things about your priestly order—**the Order of Melchizedek!**

Jesus Is Melchizedek

Some history of Melchizedek in the rest of the Bible is helpful in understanding His identity. In Genesis 14,

Abram's nephew, Lot, was taken captive when Sodom and Gomorrah fell in a battle (v. 12). Abram went out to free him and did so successfully (vv. 15–16). Then he received a visitor:

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he [Abram] gave him [Melchizedek] a tithe of all (vv. 18–20).

Mainstream Protestant commentaries present Melchizedek as a shadowy, ancient man—a priestly king of some sort—who in some way was a physical type of what Christ would later be. They often see the Father as the angry, harsh God of the Old Testament, while Jesus was His kinder, gentler Son who did away with His Father's harsh old law. For them, Melchizedek must be a metaphor or type. But who is Melchizedek *really*? It's important to know His identity if we're to know who *we* will be.

Melchizedek was "King of Salem," and it is interesting to note that the word translated Salem, which means "peace," is where we get the modern words of *salaam* (Arabic) and *shalom* (modern Hebrew). Where is this Salem that Melchizedek is king of? King David wrote, "In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion" (Psalm 76:1–2). *Salem and Zion are biblically the same.*

This mysterious Melchizedek's name means "King of Righteousness." He is also called King of Salem, or "King of Peace." Who else in the Bible is called such names? **These are names of the Messiah.**

Biblical commentaries confirm that Salem was an ancient name for Jerusalem. In ancient documents called the "Amarna Letters," Uru-salam (Jerusalem) means, "City of Peace." Melchizedek was King of Salem—or King of Peace. That is an exalted title and an exalted location.

The Land of Moriah

Some very important events occurred at a place called **Moriah**. It consists of the three low mountains on which the ancient city of Jerusalem was built. Abraham took Isaac to Mt. Moriah to be sacrificed, to a place located somewhere in what later became Jerusalem.

Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to **the land of Moriah**, and offer him there as a burnt offering on **one of the mountains** of which I shall tell you" (Genesis 22:1–2).

Solomon built the temple on Mt. Moriah, and one of its three hills is known in modern times as the Temple Mount. "Now Solomon began *to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah*, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite" (2 Chronicles 3:1).

So, the Bible tells us of Melchizedek, a mysterious priest who lived during Abraham's time, located at what would later be Jerusalem and dwelling at or near the site where Solomon's Temple would be built. This remarkable place, Moriah, and its environs in Jerusalem, is noted in the Bible for several important events.

- Isaac was offered there
- Jesus Christ was sacrificed there.
- In the present day, it is the most highly contested piece of real estate on earth.
- It is where Christ will return to His temple.
- It is where Christ will rule: the earthly Zion!

Remarkable Names and Attributes

This mysterious Melchizedek's name means "King of Righteousness." He is also called King of Salem, or "King of Peace." Who else in the Bible is called such names? Interestingly, the Messiah is also called "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

Of course, Jesus is the King of Righteousness. In Jeremiah 33, He is called "a Branch of righteousness" (v. 15) and His reign in Jerusalem gives the city the name "The LORD our Righteousness" (v. 16).

The Apostle Paul gives these same names when he describes our High Priest in the book of Hebrews, noting that "the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. For this Melchizedek, *king of Salem*, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated '*king of righteousness*,' and then also king of Salem, meaning '*king of peace*'" (Hebrews 6:20–7:2). And Paul testifies that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham, whom he blessed:

“Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better” (v. 7).

This Melchizedek certainly has an exalted position in the Bible.

- He hails from Jerusalem, where the temple would later be, as well as the future throne of the Kingdom of God.
- He is called the *King of Righteousness* and *King of Peace*—names for Jesus Christ.
- He received tithes from Abraham.
- He heads a priestly order that is superior to Aaron’s.
- God sent Abraham to Moriah, the land of Melchizedek, to sacrifice Isaac as a type of Christ’s own future sacrifice.

Only Jesus is Judge and High Priest. Melchizedek means “King of Righteousness,” and what *man* can be king over God’s law? How could a human priest bear such a name? For a man to do so would be presumptuous and blasphemous. Would Abraham give tithes to an *unrighteous, blasphemous* priest? Of course not.

But this gets even more interesting.

Paul says Melchizedek is “without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually” (Hebrews 7:3). Quoting Psalm 110:4, Paul says of Jesus, “For He testifies: ‘You are a priest **forever** according to the order of Melchizedek’” (v. 17).

Melchizedek is “like unto the Son of God” and is a high priest perpetually, so he cannot be simply “an early king in the region” as some scholars prefer to reason.

The Aaronic priesthood was named for its first High Priest, Aaron, who was the brother of Moses, and those of its order are descended from Aaron. Similarly, Melchizedek, “the King of Righteousness,” would be the first of the Order of Melchizedek. The Apostle Paul told the Hebrews that Melchizedek holds His office “continually.” The Aaronic High Priesthood passed from one man to another as each High Priest died. But our High Priest, Jesus Christ, lives forever and therefore holds His office forever—or “continually.”

Would the Order of Melchizedek have two High Priests, both serving “continually” or “forever”?

The Apostle Paul described the resurrected Christ to Timothy, “He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, *who alone has immortality*, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power” (1 Timothy 6:15–16).

What other biblical figure is described as having “no end of life” and no “beginning of days”? These plain statements do not mean that they couldn’t figure out the date of Melchizedek’s birthday—rather, they mean exactly what

they say. These things can only describe Jesus Christ. When Abraham gave tithes, it was to the One who became Jesus.

Melchizedek is Jesus, the Messiah, the Eternal (YHVH)—the God of the Old Testament. These are different names for the same individual!

Kings or Priests Versus Kings and Priests?

As we noted earlier, the kings of Israel, including the Messiah were to come out of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10). But the Levites’ inheritance was to be the tithe, and they would attend the priesthood: “Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting” (Numbers 18:21). Judah had a tribal land, while the Levites were scattered among the tribes.

So, in Israel, the scepter—meaning kingship—went to Judah, while the priesthood went to Levi. How can Jesus, who is of Judah, be our High Priest? He was not of Levi, so certainly not of the Aaronic priesthood. The Apostle Paul recognized this when he wrote, “For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood” (Hebrews 7:14). Yet, the Bible clearly says that the Messiah is both a king and priest.

This prophecy refers to the Messiah: “Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the LORD; yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, and **shall sit and rule on His throne; so He shall be a priest on His throne**, [note: king *and* priest] and the counsel of peace shall be between them *both*” (Zechariah 6:12–13). The Messiah is both king and priest.

And what about the Church of God? The Church is composed of people of all ethnicities. *How can God’s Church, which is spiritually the Israel of God (Galatians 6:15–16), be both kings and priests?* Asking the right questions can be important, and here are some right questions and right answers:

On whose throne did David and Solomon sit? They sat on a throne belonging to the Eternal, YHVH, the Lord God of Israel: “Then Solomon sat **on the throne of the LORD** as king instead of David his father, and prospered” (1 Chronicles 29:23). And the divine ownership of that throne was well known. The Queen of Sheba visited Solomon and said, “Blessed be the LORD your God, who delighted in you, **setting you on His throne** to be king for the LORD your God! Because your God has loved Israel, to establish them forever, therefore He made you king over them, to do justice and righteousness” (2 Chronicles 9:8).

Who is the Son of David and heir to his throne? Jesus, the Messiah, will sit on David’s throne when He returns (Isaiah

9:7). And, as we've seen, the throne of David is, in fact, Christ's in the first place. Jesus, who currently sits with the Father on His throne (Revelation 3:21), is coming to reclaim His own. And, when He "became flesh" (John 1:14), He was of the seed of David, as the genealogies of Matthew and Luke demonstrate. So, He is also David's heir in that way.

Who will be heirs together with Him? The Bible answers, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:16–17). *This great promise includes everyone in God's Church from all nationalities and ethnicities.*

How will the Church be kings, as well? Concerning the Church, Christ said, "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Revelation 3:21). The Apostle Paul says that those who are Christ's and circumcised in the heart are inwardly Jews, in the Spirit (Romans 2:28–29).

If kings, how then priests? Christ revealed that we have been made "kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10). *The saints will be priests after the Order of Melchizedek.*

The Eternal—YHVH of the Old Testament—gave David His own throne. When Jesus comes again, He, as the Son of David, regains it. The Eternal, who is High Priest of the Order of Melchizedek, also granted the Levites their priesthood. But the Order of Melchizedek remains superior (Hebrews 7:5–10). Christ, as the Eternal, gave Judah the scepter, and His claim to His throne is superior to anyone else of the tribe of Judah. The Eternal, Jesus the Messiah, is *both* king and priest. He is King of kings and High Priest forever. And Christ will give to His saints positions as kings and priests as He chooses.

The fact that Jesus is both a king and high priest can be resolved only in Melchizedek. The fact that the glorified members of the Church of God will serve as both kings and priests can be resolved only in the identity of Melchizedek as Jesus Christ. The Church of God is indeed *a royal priesthood*.

Your Job Description as a Priest

We often mention how the saints, as kings, "shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10), and we should remember that—especially in the fall Holy Day season. But what will we be doing as priests?

For one thing, *we will teach!* As mentioned earlier, Isaiah prophesied, "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" (Isaiah 11:9). How will this

wonderful outcome be accomplished? If the earth is to be full of that knowledge, someone has to put it there. A whole world must be reeducated with right knowledge. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong used to say that we're called to be *teachers* in the kingdom. On Pentecost in 1985, not long before his death, Mr. Armstrong said, "We're not called to just be the first ones to get into the Kingdom of God. We're called for a special mission—to become teachers."

Knowledge will not suddenly happen to a world that has been blinded for 6,000 years. Picture a whole society of people coming out of a cave of darkness, having been there all their lives, emerging now—for the first time—into glorious daylight. How will they react? Perhaps they will squint and shield their eyes at first, but their understanding will no longer be blocked by the Adversary. Imagine a world of a deceived people without a deceiver. They will have a long way to go, and they will need *teachers*. What an opportunity!

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 [the resurrected Church]; 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 2:3).

That is a job description!

We will also counsel and heal. The resurrected and glorified Church will find a world in shock. It will have endured three and one-half years of terror. People will be traumatized, both physically and psychologically. Millions will be filled with grief and hopelessness from what they have endured. There will be countless injuries, and they will need much healing.

Many in the Church have had sore trials in this life, including the loss of loved ones, severe illness or accidents, physical pain, emotional pain, depression and discouragement. *But Christ will help us turn our sufferings into great resources.* "For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18, RSV). It will be the same for the glorified kings and priests serving under Him. **The trials you are having now will be invaluable in your service to others during the Millennium.**

These are just a few of the things that the priests of the Order of Melchizedek will do as members of God's Kingdom.

So why is this priestly Order of Melchizedek so important to each of us, particularly during this Fall Festival season? Because it is *your future* as a part of the Kingdom of God—your priestly order. Sometimes we tend to think we will be **kings or priests** in the Kingdom. *Not so!* We will be **kings and priests** because we will be a kingdom *of* priests. A holy nation. *A royal priesthood—of the Order of Melchizedek!* (L^U)

50 Years an Ordained Servant

An interview with *Rand Millich*

This year, the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles will hold additional meaning for Mr. Rand Millich, Regional Pastor of the U.S. Midwest. He was ordained into the ministry of Jesus Christ on the same Holy Day, fifty Feasts earlier. He and his wife Gloria serve 32 congregations in his region, and he directly pastors congregations in Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa. We asked if he would answer some of our questions about his personal experiences and the lessons he has learned over the last five decades. He was kind enough to indulge us, and this is the resulting interview.

— Editorial Staff

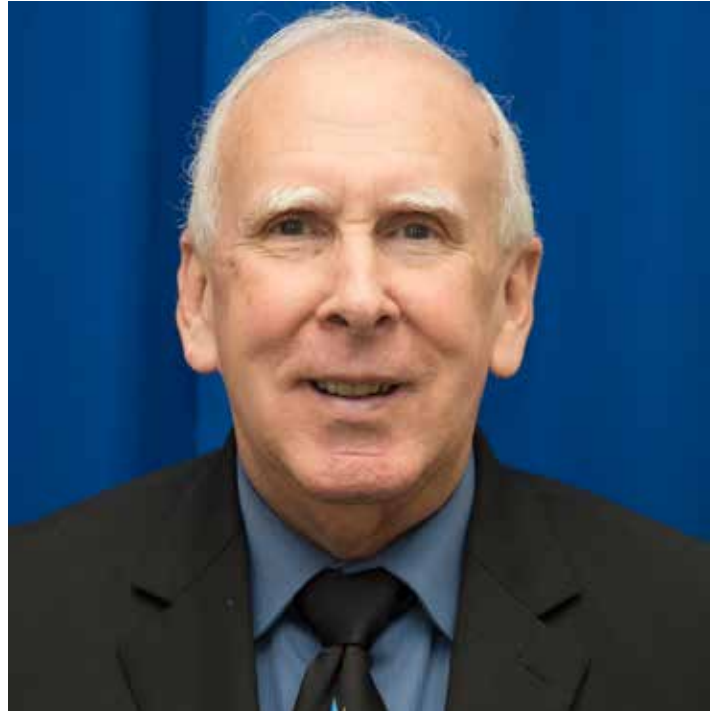
Living Church News: *Where and when were you ordained, and who performed the laying on of hands?*

Mr. Rand Millich: I was ordained an elder on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, September 23. The year was 1968. I remember that year, not only for the ordination, but also for the time that Gloria (Newell) and I became interested in marriage! During that Feast, a fierce storm hit Squaw Valley. Many were camping out in tents and were soaked by the cold rain and sleet. My first anointings took place late that night as many suffered from illnesses due to that terrible weather.

There was a time in which we had different “offices” in the ministry. In several years I was raised in rank to a Preaching Elder, then, at a Feast in Tulsa, Oklahoma, to that of Pastor, by Mr. Richard Ames.

LCN: *Since the beginning of this Feast will be your 50th anniversary in the ministry, are you and your family doing anything special this year?*

Mr. Millich: Each Feast of Tabernacles is special in its own way. Gloria and I will be serving this year at two locations: Hilton Head and Panama City Beach. Part of our family will be with us. We’re anticipating next year as the special occasion for our 50th wedding anniversary, God willing.



LCN: *How did you first encounter the Work and God’s truth?*

Mr. Millich: At 15 years old, I sought out my first “high-tech” gadget—a pocket transistor radio with one ear bud. I read in the radio log about a “science fiction” broadcast called *The World Tomorrow* airing on KGO from San Francisco. The message was powerful. What affected me at the very start was the relevancy of the Bible—prophecy was “headlines written in advance.” It certainly was *not* science fiction!

LCN: *Did any particular doctrines stand out to you in the beginning?*

Mr. Millich: The fact that I could prove God existed and that the Bible was inspired moved me to continue to listen. I began to write in to Pasadena for basic booklets—and eventually the *Bible Correspondence Course*. I wrote down the biblical answers by hand. If you know my handwriting, you

would know that only I could read them! I began to learn about the Sabbath and annual Holy Days, as well as other basic doctrines. My parents were not yet part of the Church, so I tried to do the best I could in an imperfect way to obey God's laws.

LCN: What moved you to go to Ambassador College?

Mr. Millich: I didn't know there was a congregation near me in Sacramento, California. By this time, I was a senior in high school and needed to make decisions about what I would do after graduation. There was a series of articles about Ambassador College in *The Plain Truth* magazine. Imperial School was mentioned. I thought that getting a degree in edu-

The main reason I desired to attend Ambassador was because the stated purpose was to “recapture true values” and that the “word of God was the foundation of knowledge.”

cation would be the best way to go—and assumed that I might end up teaching at some California school in Imperial Valley, California.

Another issue was facing the draft. I wrote in to Ambassador College and asked if I should join the Air Force first (and then apply for college) or apply for college first (and then join the Air Force). The answer came back: “What do you think that Jesus Christ would have you do?” I decided I would apply to Ambassador College first and then join the Air Force!

However, the main reason I desired to attend Ambassador was because the stated purpose was to “recapture true values” and that the “word of God was the foundation of knowledge.” I felt that the college would emphasize character and beauty. I had attended what is now San Joaquin Delta College for the summer for a calculus class. The dorms were trashy and the students seemed very much caught up in selfish pursuits. I felt that Ambassador would be a much better atmosphere at my stage in life.

Now I realize that God was calling me and giving me an opportunity to serve in His Work and Church.

LCN: What was life like for you at the college?

Mr. Millich: Well, I was 17 years old. I had not attended any local church. I had not been visited by any minister. I was accepted “sight unseen.” When my parents dropped me off at the campus, they weren't sure what I was getting into—and

this was my first time away from home. I didn't know anyone. Randall Kobernat was the first student I met. He helped show me around and what to do.

Some of the experiences were quite different! We were served lamb for dinner. I was hoping that this was not a religious requirement for all meals! Although I had read about many teachings of the Bible, I had not fully understood how to practice them. So, virtually everything was new. It took some adjusting to fit in. However, that being said, I found the atmosphere positive and challenging. I truly felt the importance of being a student. I wanted to learn everything I could—and to verify everything from the Bible.

I had the blessing of getting to know older brethren attending Sabbath services. I was able to hear sermons and Bible studies from a variety of ministers. There was always the excitement of hearing Mr. Armstrong announce a new breakthrough in the furthering of the preaching of the Gospel to the world.

The various classes provided a solid Biblical foundation in various aspects of learning and life, and the social opportunities gave us a balanced and cultured way of dealing with various relationships and events.

I was later counseled by Dr. Meredith and was baptized by him on February 24, 1964.

As an “unskilled laborer,” my first job on campus was as a custodian. Next, I ended up in Mail Reading. Later, I had opportunity to help process tithes and offerings sent to the Church. Then I worked in the Church Administration Department. I didn't know that I was being considered for sending out into the field ministry as a ministerial trainee upon graduation. I learned *that* at an assembly meeting when the names of those being assigned were announced.

My experience with Ambassador was very positive with no real regrets.

LCN: Do you have any memories you would like to share of Mr. Herbert Armstrong?

Mr. Millich: I remember Mr. Armstrong being warm and friendly at our first meeting during the student reception. Later, he and his wife, Loma, invited the new students into their home. He discussed many personal aspects of his life in a conversational manner. It revealed that he was an ordinary man, although certainly used by God in an extraordinary way.

One incident stands out in my mind. Mr. Armstrong taught the *Principles of Living* class. During the class on November 22, 1963, the red light indicating a phone call

flashed on and off. Mr. Armstrong answered and all we heard was his end of the conversation: “The President? The governor as well?” He repeated that President John F. Kennedy had been shot. He then led the class in heartfelt prayer that God would be merciful and intervene according to His will. It helped me to realize that we should be concerned with everyone—not just those in the Church of God.

The illness of Loma Armstrong was quite significant. Both Mr. Armstrong and his wife demonstrated their faith and hope in the resurrection. As seniors, we prayed and fasted for God’s healing. Whether Mrs. Armstrong was to be healed or not, both she and her husband had their minds on God’s power and His purpose for their lives. I may not have this statement totally correct, but Mrs. Armstrong told the evangelists who were gathered at her bedside, “Don’t worry, I’ll be all right—go on and do the Work.” Mr. Armstrong felt the same way.

LCN: Out of your 50 years serving in the ministry, could you share some of your favorite memories?

Mr. Millich: Let me say that each assignment, from the beginning of ministerial training to the latest one, has been special in its own way. I can still remember certain names and

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events in each of the areas.

I had the wonderful privilege of being sent to the “mother congregation” (Eugene, Oregon) as a ministerial trainee. I met individuals who knew Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong when they lived in the area, and they were able to recount stories of that time period. I saw many of the locations described in the *Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong*. The congregation was very kind towards me as a single, “wet behind the ears” trainee sent from Headquarters. I learned much from them and continued to be a “learner.” I suffered from a terrible allergy for days when I first arrived. I had never been anointed before. I asked the elder to anoint me, not knowing exactly what to expect. Within a few hours, the allergy was gone and has never returned. This was my first personal experience that God healed. I had met Howard Clark, who was healed in

dramatic fashion before I attended Ambassador. I also knew a member in Utah who was healed of cancer as she was dying. Throughout the years now, I’ve seen many healings—with brethren, as well as in my own family.

It was in Eugene that I asked Gloria to marry me! And as soon as we were married, we were assigned to Idaho—our honeymoon was essentially driving from Pasadena back to Eugene, packing up and moving to Meridian, Idaho. As you can tell, our lives have been entwined with the Church of God and the ministry from the very beginning.

Being sent to Montana proved to be memorable. This assignment was the first time I was truly “let loose” on my own. My wife and I drove many hours over mountain passes, through snow and ice, through gorgeous and rugged areas to visit and strengthen brethren. I learned the importance of teaching sound, basic doctrine. I also learned quickly the importance of delegation, and training individuals to take on responsibilities. It was here that our son, Daral, was born just after the Last Great Day in 1974!

A later move showed that the Church Administration Department had a unique sense of humor. I was sent to Columbia, Missouri, to replace Dick Rand. Bob Dick replaced me in Indiana. So, the way it worked was Bob *Dick* replaced *Rand* Millich who replaced *Dick Rand*. I wonder how long it took to come up with this three-way transfer? By the way, our daughter, Tiffany, was born in 1984, just before we packed up to move to Missouri! What an interesting, stressful, joyful, difficult time!

In Kansas City, I’ve had a special joy in seeing the growth of ministerial trainees and elders coming through the area. They have been a help to me personally in serving the brethren—but also have gained experience in learning the more practical side of the ministry. They have shown particular strengths and talents that have made them capable of further service in the Church. When helping these men with better ways of doing things, I let them try it in their own fashion first. I’ll usually make a comment such as, “That is *one* way of doing it!” I know the brethren have come to love them and appreciate them in a special way.

Through the years, my family and I have encountered serious and near-serious highway accidents on visiting trips. We’ve suffered life-threatening illnesses. We’ve sacrificed time and health in many situations. We’ve dealt with financial challenges and many moves. I would say that this is normal for the ministry. The ministry faces physical and spiritual hazards. Yet, we wouldn’t trade this calling for the world.

LCN: *If you don't mind, could you describe for us some of your experiences when the Worldwide Church of God began to split, and perhaps some of the lessons you learned?*

Mr. Millich: I was serving in Mississippi for a very short time when the troubles in Worldwide made themselves fully known. I was trying to teach sound doctrine, but later realized I should have been far more emphatic in such times. I learned that there are situations in which we are not suffi-

I was sent out into the field ministry when I was 21 years old. I am now 72. In all of those years I have experienced many “twists and turns” of life, and I’ve seen that God has not failed in His promises and goodness. My advice is to remember. **Remember the joy and reality of God when you were first called into the body of Christ, the Church.**

cient in our own strength. We must do what we can do, but leave the results in God’s hands. Another lesson was to have full confidence that what we have proved from the Bible is always true—there is no need to doubt what God’s word plainly teaches. We can trust God in the most painful of situations. God is true no matter what others may say or do. We must step out in faith and let God do His Work and will.

Of course, how could I ever forget the time when God led us to where the Church and Work were continuing under the leadership of Dr. Meredith? What a blessing it was to renew old friendships and to be given the opportunity to serve God’s people again as a pastor. I personally felt that I grew more as a minister under the close relationship I had with Dr. Meredith and being exposed to his spiritual priorities and dedication to the preaching of the Gospel to the world. It is encouraging that God never fails in providing faithful leaders under His direction. I saw that with Mr. Armstrong and with Dr. Meredith—and I’ve seen that with Mr. Weston.

LCN: *What do you find most satisfying about being in the ministry and serving God’s people?*

The most satisfying part of the ministry is observing and helping individuals to grow in the knowledge, love and service of God. Sometimes we enter their lives at the beginning of their calling—but usually well into it. We’re involved in people’s lives in youth and in older age. There is such a great

blessing to see brethren overcoming human problems and weaknesses and growing in spiritual strength and stability. God does the work. My part is to encourage and assist the brethren to look to God the Father and Jesus Christ and to fully trust and follow Them.

LCN: *What are some of the challenges?*

Often, we share in the trials of member’s lives—in life and in death. It is not always easy to know what to do or what to say to help or encourage. Their burdens become our burdens. We have the principles of the Bible. Yet, there are times when we still don’t have all the answers—and realize that we must put the situation in God’s capable hands. There is never a time when we “know it all.” We continually learn from our mistakes, as well as our successes. We understand more and more how important faith and contact with God are in our lives.

LCN: *After 50 years of serving in the ministry, what advice would you give God’s people today?*

I was sent out into the field ministry when I was 21 years old. I am now 72. In all of those years I have experienced many “twists and turns” of life, and I’ve seen that God has not failed in His promises and goodness. My advice is to remember. Remember the joy and reality of God when you were first called into the body of Christ, the Church. Keep in mind the baptism covenant you entered into. Recall that God has been and always will be true to His word. Keep in awareness that the perfect God uses imperfect people to do His Work. Learn from these experiences, but concentrate on how He causes all things to turn out for the fulfillment of His purposes. Remember the joy of your salvation—why you were born! In summary, remember the big picture—to be born into God’s family for eternity!

LCN: *Since it’s Feast season, we’d like to wrap up with a Millennial question. What one thing do you look forward to most about the time after Christ’s return?*

One thing I look forward to is the time when all the earth will be at rest. What I mean is that we will all be in harmony with God, without Satan’s wavelengths stirring up wrong thoughts, actions and attitudes. We will fully know and love God the Father and Jesus Christ and love our brethren with pure hearts and minds. We will be of the same mind in continuing God’s great plan for us! (LM)

The Importance of the Opening Night

By **Stuart Wachowicz**

Soon, we will depart for the locations around the world where we will again observe the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day. Ever since the restoration of the knowledge of observing God's Holy Days in this modern era of the Church, the keeping of the Feast has involved the gathering of the brethren together in large congregations at specified locations around the globe. This is, in fact, a tradition that God initiated when Israel was to gather at Jerusalem for the Feast, and today this is done in a manner that reflects both the spirit and the letter of God's command.

Leviticus 23:39 reads, "Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest."

Because the Sabbath day starts at sundown, as Leviticus 23:32 clearly shows, the Holy Day at the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles commences as the sun sets between the 14th and 15th days of the seventh month. The Holy Scripture tells us we are to observe that time as a Sabbath, and not as the other days of the week. The tradition of the Church is to hold a service as this great Festival of God begins. This is not new. Indeed, this was the same tradition or practice that may have been observed by ancient Israel in the days of the Temple service.

Psalms 120 to 134 are collectively known as the *Psalms of Ascent* for a very specific reason. In the Temple compound, just at the entrance to the courtyard surrounding the Temple itself, was a wide, curved staircase of 15 steps. Some histor-

ical accounts state that, at the opening night of the Feast of Tabernacles, the staircase was lined on both sides by the choir of Levites, and the High Priest would lead a procession that would initiate the Feast of Tabernacles. As the sun began to set, the High Priest would stand on the first step while the choir sang Psalm 120. He would ascend to the second step and wait for the choir to complete Psalm 121. By the time the High Priest stood on the fifteenth step, the sun had set, the great menorahs lighting the courtyard were ablaze, and there on the top step, Psalm 134 was sung:

Behold, bless the LORD, all you servants of the LORD, ***who by night stand in the house of the Lord!*** Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD. The LORD who made heaven and earth bless you from Zion! (Psalm 134:1-3).

Thus, on the opening night there would be a grand service to commence this special eight-day Festival, a time that we understand holds out so much hope for mankind, which is otherwise lost and aimless. The Feast was also a time when Israel was to remember that they were made into a nation, not by their own power, but by the power of the God of Heaven alone, who took them out of slavery in Egypt—a slavery that would have led to their oblivion as a people. We, too, remember that we were called to truth, not by our power, righteousness or intellect, but through the mercy of God alone; otherwise we would be without a future.

Historical accounts depict people of God conducting a special service on the opening night of the Feast in the days of the physical Temple, and God has inspired the Church of God in this modern age to do the same. We do not have a great physical temple, a priesthood of Levites, or the animal sacrifices, but God in this era enjoins us to gather on the opening night to be reminded of the purpose of the Feast and the tremendous vision of hope for humanity it projects.

Thus, if we truly respect our God and honor Him and appreciate His calling, we will all make every effort to be settled into our accommodations before the opening service and to be in attendance for the commencement of this commanded assembly. It is not a time to plan to spend travelling to the Feast, or to complete shopping or other mundane tasks, but a time to respectfully come before God to show our appreciation for the great truth that has been set before us all.

Let us be sure we plan, so that we can all be present on the opening night of the Feast of Tabernacles this year. (LW)



A reconstruction of the Temple as it appeared in Jesus' day.

From Trumpets to Atonement

The last trumpet and the binding of Satan represent the beginning and end of a brief span of ten days. Those few days see momentous events in the flow of prophetic fulfillment—remarkable events that accompany Jesus Christ’s return to this earth to reign. What are those events?

By **Wallace G. Smith**

When the Fall Festivals arrive, many of us reflect on the awesome panorama of prophecy God provides in His word. The days ahead—those leading up to Christ’s return, the events that ensue upon His return, and the beautiful Millennium that follows those events—are laid out in remarkable detail in the pages of the Bible.

But sometimes, we can miss some of the details. God’s Holy Days often remind us of the “milestones,” but He gives us more details than mere milestones. In particular, the Almighty gives us a blow-by-blow account of what occurs during the short, ten-day period that begins with the Feast of Trumpets and ends with the Day of Atonement.

In this article, let’s review that account and familiarize ourselves with the details of our future! They represent some of the most climactic events of all human history, past or future—some of the most tragic and most joyous days we can read about in the pages of Scripture.

A Review of the “Day of the Lord”

Let’s first take the time to remind ourselves of the sequence of prophetic events leading up to the seventh trumpet blast. As we do so, you might also consider reviewing the Church’s publication *Revelation: The Mystery Unveiled!*, which explains these things in great detail and includes an extremely helpful chart.

In the book of Revelation, the Apostle John records details of a vision he was given that included a scroll sealed with seven seals. As each seal was broken by Jesus Christ,

the only One who was found worthy before God to open them, a different element of the prophesied future was revealed. The first four seals concerned the climactic ride of the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse,” followed by the fifth seal, which revealed the martyrdom of the saints and the Great Tribulation.

Then, the sixth seal revealed the coming “heavenly signs”—a dramatic display of God’s power in the heavens and on earth. As Mr. John Ogwyn describes in our booklet on Revelation, these signs “are the prelude to the time of the Creator’s intervention, called throughout Scripture ‘the Day of the Lord’” (p. 27). The announcement that God will now step powerfully into human history to begin confronting mankind directly is accompanied by half an hour of silence in heaven (Revelation 8:1–6).

The seventh and last seal announces the beginning of seven trumpet blasts that are sounded over the course of the Day of the Lord. Mr. Ogwyn summarizes the Church’s understanding of this yearlong period in our booklet:

Remember, Isaiah 34:8 and Isaiah 61:2 equate the Day of the Lord with the year of God’s recompense. This period begins with the first trumpet and concludes with the last, or seventh, trump. When God gave ancient Israel His Holy Days, He ushered in the entire fall festival season by designating the first day of the seventh month as “a memorial of the blowing of trumpets.” Since other of God’s festivals received their fulfillment on the very day (note Christ’s being offered as the Lamb of God on the day of Passover and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost), it seems likely that

the year of God's recompense will begin and end on the Feast of Trumpets (p. 29).

So, with the blowing of the first angelic trumpet on the Feast of Trumpets, a sequence of events is initiated that takes place over a year, climaxing in the seventh trumpet which is blown on the same Feast day, one year later.

And those trumpet blasts are devastating. The first four detail horrific ecological disasters and disorder in the heavens, followed by the fifth and sixth trumpet blasts that accompany horrific military action on the earth. The Beast power unleashes powerful weaponry against its enemies, while the gathering powers of the East retaliate with weapons of mass destruction. The exchange brings death to one-third of humanity. The earth will seem to be in its death throes, as the demonic world is released from restraint in its influence on mankind.

The Seventh Trumpet Sounds!

Then, on the Feast of Trumpets—one year after God's divine intervention began—the seventh and last trumpet blast sounds, signaling that the climax of this age has come!

Until this blast, the kingdoms of the world have officially been under the authority of Satan the Devil. During the temptation of Christ in the desert, he offered those kingdoms to Jesus if only Jesus would bow to him, saying, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish" (Luke 4:6). Jesus did not dispute this fact, but rather simply responded that only God is to be worshipped (v. 8). Indeed, by resisting such temptations, Jesus was serving as the Second Adam who would qualify to replace Satan as ruler of the world, and the seventh trumpet announces that this time has come!

We read of this final trumpet blast in Revelation 11:

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth."

Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail (vv. 15–19).

So many vital things are indicated here! A few of note:

- The kingdoms of the world are now declared to be under Christ's authority, and no longer the Devil's (v. 15).
- Christ takes up His power to reign (v. 17).
- While the year leading up to this has been one of much wrath, there is yet more wrath to come (v. 18).
- The time has come to reward the saints (v. 18).
- The doors to the heavenly temple of God are opened, accompanied by numerous signs and wonders in the air and on earth (v. 19).

Other passages add details concerning this time. The Apostle Paul explains that it is at this trumpet blast, "the last trumpet," the faithful dead are resurrected first, before the rest of the saints are glorified with them. All the saints are granted eternal life and transformed, meeting Christ in the air (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17)! Following in the footsteps of their betrothed Husband (2 Corinthians 11:2), the Church makes the change from mortality to immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53) and, for the first time in history, the Kingdom of God will have more than two members!

Yet, for all that the seventh trumpet signifies, there is still so much to be accomplished before the Millennium can begin. The twenty-four elders mentioned at the trumpet blast that there was yet more wrath to come. The nations have not yet gathered at Megiddo, to then proceed to Jerusalem and fight the armies of Christ. The Marriage of the Lamb has not yet taken place. The Beast and the False Prophet are still alive, their kingdom has not yet been destroyed, and the Devil is not yet locked away for 1,000 years. These events are a part of the return of Jesus Christ, as well. Where are they in the prophetic sequence?

As we can see, there is much yet to do, and the Bible reveals the details.

A Historical Parallel

At this point, an element of Israel's ancient history can be helpful. Many have noted that the reign of King Solomon could be considered, in some ways, to picture—however imperfectly—the Millennium to come under the rule of Jesus Christ.

To be sure, Solomon's devotion to the pure faith was corrupted by his many pagan wives—a mistake that Christ and His one, pure Bride will not make! Yet, it was a time of astonishing prosperity, peace, and rejoicing in Israel (1 Kings

4:20, 24)—a time in which each man “dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree” (v. 25), just as all will in the Millennium (Micah 4:4). Solomon ruled with God-given miraculous wisdom and compassion (1 Kings 4:29–30), and people from the Gentile nations of the earth sent emissaries to Israel and to Jerusalem to learn from the wisdom of the one who reigned there (v. 34), just as nations will do during Jesus’ 1,000-year reign (Zechariah 8:20–23).

Solomon’s kingdom was not immediately so Millennial. In fact, between the moment he was coronated and the beginning of his gift of wisdom and miraculously empowered reign, **there were a number of important things to take care of before his kingdom would ever be at peace.**

Yet, Solomon’s kingdom was not *immediately* so Millennial. In fact, between the moment he was coronated and the beginning of his gift of wisdom and miraculously empowered reign, there were a number of important things to take care of before his kingdom would ever be at peace.

Solomon was declared king by David—and, notably, at the sound of a trumpet, or shofar, and anointed with oil from God’s tabernacle (1 Kings 1:39)—while an unworthy pretender to the throne and his two co-conspirators still lived. His half-brother, Adonijah, had built a network to help him possess the monarchy for himself, and he was supported in this by Joab, commander of the army, and Abiathar, the priest (1 Kings 1:7, 19). These individuals were exposed when Solomon was coronated, but they remained alive after Solomon spared Adonijah the pretender, who pleaded for his life (1 Kings 1:50–53). However, this state of affairs would prove very temporary.

We read in 1 Kings 2 that Adonijah attempted to grab the throne for himself again, which prompted Solomon to remove them from influence once and for all (vv. 22–24). At Solomon’s command, Adonijah the pretender was executed, as was Joab the commander. Abiathar the priest was allowed to live, out of respect for his role as one who had carried the ark of the covenant, but he was banished from ever serving as priest again (vv. 26–34).

Though Solomon had been coronated, there was still business to take care of before his reign could begin in earnest. After this trio of conspirators were dealt with—along with Shimei, who had cursed David during the rebellion of Absalom (vv. 36–46)—we are *then* told, “Thus the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon” (v. 46). And it is after

these things that God visits Solomon in a dream and grants him the wisdom that makes his remarkable reign possible.

Much to Do

Just as Solomon still had a trio of throne-grabbing traitors to deal with even after he was coronated king at the shofar’s sound, so, too, will Jesus Christ have business to take care of. God’s word provides the details of what transpires between the last trumpet—the declaration of Christ as king and the transformation of the Church of God—and the ultimate removal of Satan the Devil and his own co-conspirators, the False Prophet and the Beast. In the same way that Solomon’s inauguration did not end Adonijah’s schemes and plans to have the throne for himself, we find that, just because Christ has been declared king over all the kingdoms of the world (Revelation 11:15), the Devil—the former possessor of that position (Luke 4:6)—does not plan to give up all he has worked for over 6,000 years without a fight.

And since the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement occur so close to each other on God’s calendar—on the first and tenth days of the seventh month—the momentous events that occur between the declaration of Christ’s authority and the putting away of Satan must occur at a breathtaking pace!

Enemies to Punish

Revelation 15 tells us that, after the seventh trumpet is blown, seven plagues are to be released on the earth, in which “the wrath of God is complete” (v. 1). Golden bowls “full of the wrath of God” are given by one of the four “living creatures” that surround God’s throne to seven angels (vv. 6–7), and they are commanded, “Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth” (Revelation 16:1).

Here is a summary of the first six bowls poured out on mankind. They are described in Revelation 16:2–21.

- First Bowl: Terrible sores afflict all those who accepted the mark of the Beast.
- Second Bowl: The sea turns to blood; *all* sea creatures die.
- Third Bowl: Rivers and springs of the earth turn to blood, leaving no source of water to drink.
- Fourth Bowl: Mankind is scorched by the sun, yet they blaspheme God and choose not to repent.
- Fifth Bowl: The Beast’s seat of government is afflicted with pain and darkness.
- Sixth Bowl: The Euphrates River is completely dried up so that the armies of the east might physically travel to gather with all the armies of the world at Armageddon.

From Armageddon, we know that the world’s military—under the command of demonically guided and empow-

ered leadership (Revelation 16:13–14)—will then travel to Jerusalem as one massive force, prepared to battle against the army of the Lord (Zechariah 14:1–2).

Ironically, mankind will finally have fulfilled its lifelong dream: a united humanity. Yet the unifying purpose of this military, composed of all the nations of the world (Revelation 16:14), will be to fight *against* their Savior!

Clearly, these last plagues that cause such suffering after the seventh trumpet blast are devastating on a scale mankind has never before experienced in all of human history. Some elements of the plagues take time to develop, such as the gathering of the armies at Armageddon and their consequent trip to Jerusalem. Yet others could not last longer than a few days—such as having nothing but blood to drink (vv. 4–7)!

The days between the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement could scarcely be any further apart on the calendar than they are, for those days are, indeed, filled with the wrath of the Almighty!

Before we discuss the seventh and final bowl that completes God's wrath (Revelation 15:1), we need to ask: What of the glorified saints during this time? They were resurrected and transformed, given eternal life at the seventh trumpet,

If even the resurrected Jesus Christ was required to ascend to His Father's throne before commencing with His remaining work on earth, **why would we rationally or biblically expect it to be any different for His resurrected brothers and sisters?**

just before the bowl judgments began. Where are they during this period when these six bowls are poured out and the armies of the Beast and the kings of the earth are marching to Armageddon, and then to Jerusalem?

A Bride to Wed and a Pretender to Banish

As the bowl judgments begin, Revelation 15:2–4 describes the newborn members of the Family of God appearing before their Father's throne on a "sea of glass" (cf. Revelation 4:6) and singing "the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."

As always, Jesus Christ set the pattern for us.

At the end of His ministry, after He was resurrected from the grave and glorified, Jesus still had work to do on earth. Acts 1:3 records that He spent forty days on earth before His ultimate ascension, teaching the disciples about "things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Yet *between* His resurrection and His remaining earthly work, the glorified Christ appeared briefly before His Father in heaven to

be accepted by Him, fulfilling the symbolism of the wave sheaf offering that takes place on the first day of the week during the Days of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:11). We see this when we carefully compare John 20:17 ("Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father") and Matthew 28:9 ("they came and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him").

If even the resurrected Jesus Christ was required to ascend to His Father's throne before beginning His remaining work on earth, why would we rationally or biblically expect it to be any different for His resurrected brothers and sisters? God's word shows that the resurrected saints and newly minted Children of God will do just as their Elder Brother did before them.

For Christ is not to reign alone, but with His wife by His side! While the rebellious and unrepentant are experiencing "their just due" (Revelation 16:6), the saints of God are experiencing *their* reward, as well, and the marriage of the Lamb: "And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunders, saying, 'Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage

of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready'" (Revelation 19:6–7). The saints are granted fine, white linen, representing their righteous acts (v. 8; cf. Matthew 22:10–14)—lives lived in submission to the will and law of God, their Father.

After this celebration, the temple in heaven is opened up, and the armies of Jesus Christ, King of Kings (Revelation 19:16), are revealed, ready for battle:

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses (Revelation 19:11–14).

By this time, "the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies" have completed their journey to Jerusalem and are gathered there to resist the coming of the new King and His army (v. 19).

But their efforts are futile. The resulting destruction of these rebellious armies is described in God's word in many

TRUMPETS TO ATONEMENT continues on page 23



Three Keys to a Joyous Feast!

By **Mike DeSimone**

Several years ago, my family and I were having a very difficult time on the way to the Feast. After several hours in the car, the kids were agitated with each other—which, in turn, caused my wife and me to become agitated with them, and eventually with each other. By the time we arrived at the Feast site, we were all “bent out of shape.”

As we unpacked the car, we bickered and were short with one another. We finally made it to the rooms, and they were smaller than we expected. It was less than ideal for the money we were spending.

As we explored our accommodations, my wife and I went out on a bedroom balcony to see the view. Within a couple of minutes, one of the kids closed and accidentally locked the balcony door, and none of them were able to get it back open! Now we were stuck outside on the balcony with no way to get back in!

We yelled through the glass door to tell the kids to try to open the door to their balcony, which was right beside ours. They finally got theirs open. So, several floors up, I carefully made the precarious climb from our balcony to the kids’ balcony, so I could open our door and let my wife back in.

This didn’t help our already stressful situation. By now it was the worst beginning to a Feast we had ever experienced as a family—and the Feast had not even begun! We started out wanting to have a wonderful spiritual Feast, but, little by little, we allowed it to descend into chaos. We had allowed the circumstances to determine our attitudes, and we had allowed wrong attitudes to dominate our interactions.

We left the house with every intention of having a great Feast. God says, “You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days... and you shall **rejoice** in your feast...” (Deuteronomy 16:13–14). The only way to properly keep the Feast is to “rejoice”! But up to this point, we had utterly failed.

After our regrettable beginning, we realized we needed to turn things around. We realized we needed to pray, and repent, and ask God for His help and strength. I don’t remember whether it was before or after the Opening Service, but we all got down on our knees together to ask for forgiveness for sinning in our wrong attitudes, and for God to help us “re-joyce” the way He intends us to!

For the rest of that Feast, and every Feast since, we made a focused effort to put into action three main keys we have heard over and over again, every year at the Feast—three keys to a profitable, wonderful, and joyous Feast of Tabernacles!

“Shut It Down”

The first key we had learned years earlier from a sermonette given at a previous Feast of Tabernacles. The title of the sermonette was, “Shut it Down!” The speaker’s main point was to encourage everyone to get to bed early during the Feast in order to have quality time with God in the morning, and to be alert during the messages the next day. He actually had everyone in the audience shout “Shut it Down!” on his cue. It was a helpful message and has stuck in our minds ever since.

At the Feast, it is so very easy to stay up too late! We want to talk with those we haven’t seen in a long time, or new friends we have just met. But going to bed at a good time can help us keep the focus where it needs to be:

- It gives time to talk about the day as a family before rushing off to bed.
- It gives time for properly closing the evening out with prayer.
- It is easier to get up in the morning for Bible study and prayer.
- We will be more alert during the messages, helping us gain even more from them.
- Getting our sleep helps our attitudes overall.

Paul's dire warning in Ephesians should be a clear and important lesson about managing our rest during the Feast: "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:15–18). Getting to bed at a responsible time can also help keep us out of the sort of trouble that seems to seek people out during late hours, which helps us grow in the Spirit of God. It helps us to make the most of the time we are awake! Being well-rested provides a foundation to rejoice, and it is certainly one of the keys to a wonderful Feast.

Pray, Review, and Meditate in the Morning

The second point we have heard so many times, and we made a concerted effort to implement it that particular year: Make time in the morning for personal prayer, Bible study, and meditation. Making sure the day is started with prayer and Bible study is critical to gaining the most we can from God's Feast of Tabernacles!

One thing that many have found helpful over the years is to review their notes from the previous day's messages. (For instance, read Dr. Scott Winnail's article "Find Joy in the Morning this Feast!" in the September-October 2017 *Living Church News*). Reading your notes and the Bible scriptures used during the message helps paint an even clearer picture of what God was conveying through the speaker. By taking the time to think about the message in the context of the Kingdom of God, many find that they "connect the dots" in a way that they would not have otherwise.

Jesus' example was to rise early and pray before the day began: "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed" (Mark 1:35). This is a key to our spiritual life. How much more should we consider doing this at the Feast?

Prayer and Bible study (reviewing notes) each morning during the Feast not only starts the day right, it can deepen our understanding and widen our vision of the Kingdom of God and our purpose in life! It is one great key to having a joyous and meaningful Feast.

Intentionally Serve Others

Serving others is something we hear about every Feast. It is definitely a key to truly rejoicing. We are there to picture the coming Kingdom of God, a time when we will be serving this world in a special way. Serving others gets our mind off ourselves and onto the needs of others. It helps us grow, it helps us have a good Feast, and it allows us to help *others* have a good Feast!

We can all serve in different ways. Those of us with families must make sure we don't neglect them while we seek to serve others. We must make sure to serve our families and help *them* have a good Feast (cf. 1 Timothy 5:8), but there is still much for everyone to do. Maybe we can serve by taking a widow out and giving her a special time. Maybe we can serve by finding those who are struggling and helping them have an encouraging Feast. Maybe we can serve in the choir, or greeting, or ushering, first aid, the business office, or the information table. Maybe we can serve by actively choosing to be uplifting in our conversations with others. We can even serve by participating in the organized activities at the Feast site alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ. These activities are organized for our enjoyment as well as to bring us together as a Church family.

This embodies the spirit of Christ's words in the gospel of Matthew, when He said that "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:28). We find His disciples following in His footsteps, remembering that He told them, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Jesus Christ lived the perfect example of this, and the Feast is a wonderful opportunity for His followers *today* to put this concept into action. Regardless of how we do so, serving others ensures we are not depending on outside circumstances to determine whether or not we have a joyful Feast. Rather, we are taking action and helping *others* to have a joyful Feast, and—by doing this—we can't help but have a beautiful and jubilant Feast, ourselves!

Worth the Effort

These keys require purposeful effort but are well worth it. Getting enough sleep at a responsible time, praying in the morning and meditating each day on what we've learned and on God's word, and serving others—these efforts make all the difference as to how great our Feast will be. *Doing these things can help us obey the command God gives to rejoice at the Feast.*

Those many years ago, our family started that particular Feast on the wrong foot. But, with God's help, we made a concerted effort to have the joyous Feast God commands—the one we had intended at the beginning. That Feast, as a family, we learned the importance of these three keys. We had heard them so many times throughout the years, but it was only when we purposefully and intentionally put them into action that we did not simply have a great Feast—we actually turned one of our most challenging experiences as a family into one of the best Feasts we ever had! (LN)

In Loving Memory

Mr. Jerry Edward Clevenger, 70, of the Statesville, North Carolina congregation, died at his home on July 24. Mr. Clevenger was a dedicated servant of God and his fellow man, having worked as an addiction therapist for most of his life, before and after retirement, and started the Salisbury Choices Substance Abuse services. He was baptized into God's Church in 1971, and was ordained an Elder in April of 2013.

In addition to his parents, Mr. Clevenger was preceded in death by his three brothers. He is survived by three daughters, five grandchildren, and two sisters.

Mr. Clevenger was known by all to be a true leader in his congregation, a caring man of humble pursuits who will be deeply missed by everyone who knew him.

Mr. Jonathan A. Calkins, 42, of the Traverse City congregation, died on January 8. Despite having a brain tumor for over a decade, Mr. Calkins regularly attended services with a smile on his face, never complaining of his condition or the pain he was enduring. He will be remembered for his love toward others and his positive attitude. On June 30, Area Pastor Bill Long conducted the memorial service with family and Church family present. He will be greatly missed by all who loved him. We look forward to seeing him at the return of Jesus Christ.

Mrs. Margie Case Frazier, 88, of the Asheville, North Carolina congregation, died on April 23. She was a servant and faithful member of God's Church for four decades. Having lived within and tended her own orchard for many years, she was affectionately known as the "Apple Lady." It gave her great pleasure to share apples with others. Until the past year, she dried and sold apples to have funds to attend the Feast. Despite failing health and years of pain, she never complained, but looked for ways to help others. She was an inspiration to all

who knew her and will be sorely missed. Area Pastor Ron Poole and Elder Stan Roper conducted the graveside service.

Mr. Brian Morgan, 82, died on April 11. He was born in Staffordshire, England, and had worked as a senior design engineer. Some of his team's work included designing traction engines used on trains, and designing and building the monorail.

Mr. Morgan was a long-time member of God's Church. He attended with his mother from the late 1960s and spoke richly of the meetings at Brent Town Hall and Bricket Wood. He was baptized into the Worldwide Church of God in 1968, and he served diligently over the years by duplicating and sending out sermon recordings to the isolated members in the Global and Living Churches of God, even whilst in his 70s.

Mr. Morgan was always prepared to "shoulder the burden" in Sabbath services and during the Holy Days. Brian's service with a smile (and often a joke) was hugely appreciated at the Manchester, Chester, Stafford, and Birmingham congregations, and he will be greatly missed.

Mr. William "Bill" Dean, 77, a longtime member of the Atlanta, Georgia congregation, died on July 10. He was known for his hard work, generosity, and faithful devotion to his family and the Church. He pushed himself to serve others even when various health trials often hampered his efforts. He leaves behind his wife Martha of 44 years, one daughter, Rebecca, and one son, Chuck, and other relatives. Regional Pastor Daniel Hall conducted the funeral.

Miss Vera Stevenson, 95, of the Northern Ireland congregation, died peacefully at Lurgan Hospital in the early hours of Sunday morning, August 5. She was buried in the family plot at Belville Churchyard on August 8. The funeral service was conducted by Mr. John Murphy. Miss Stevenson, a long-time steadfast member of God's Church since the early 60s, will be lovingly remembered by Church members, family, and friends.

ORDINATIONS

Mr. and Mrs. John (Barb) Gibbs were ordained deacon and deaconess on the Sabbath of June 9 by Evangelist Gerald Weston, Evangelist Stuart Wachowicz, and Area Pastor Barry Walker. Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs serve in the Kelowna, British Columbia congregation.

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

Weddings & Anniversaries

Congratulations to a beautiful couple, who celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary. **Mr. & Mrs. Edward and Velma Stringer**, of the Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada congregation, were married on June 7, 1963. What a blessing

God provides His children! May God provide many more years according to His will.

Congratulations to **Mr. and Mrs. Harold and Melvina Bussey** of the Springdale, Newfoundland congregation who celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on June 27. They have five children, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Births

VG and Patty Lardé, of the Pontefract, United Kingdom congregation, are pleased to announce the birth of their first child, **Olivier**. He was born on May 14 at 9:00 a.m., weighing precisely 3 kilograms (6.6 pounds). He is a quiet and happy boy, with very expressive eyes.

Lou and Alexandra de Jager, of the Tannersville, Pennsylvania congregation, are pleased to announce the birth of their first child, **James Stephan de Jager**. James was born on the Sabbath of July 7, weighing 8 pounds 9 ounces and measuring 22 inches long. His parents and grandparent are overjoyed at his arrival.

Derek and Mariah Lee, of the Charlotte, North Carolina congregation, are happy to announce

the arrival of **Everest Allen Lee**, born on July 18. He weighed 8 pounds 4 ounces and measured 20.5 inches. The family is all in love, including big brother Avery! Mother and baby are doing well.

JD and Thea (Difley) Jackson are happy to announce the birth of **Harmon Isaiah Jackson** on July 20, 2018 at 9:35 p.m. He weighed 8 pounds 7 ounces and measured 21.5 inches. He was happily greeted by his sister Savannah and brother Jared. They attend the Colorado Springs, Colorado congregation.

Jamie and Veronica Meakin are delighted to announce the birth of their daughter **Liberty Rose Meakin**. She was born at 7:49 a.m. on July 19, weighing 7 pounds and measuring 19 inches long (measured by Dad fighting wriggly feet). Both mum and daughter

are doing well and all the Meakins wish to thank everyone for their prayers and support during this trying pregnancy.

Ray and Suzette Jackson of the San Diego, California congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their grandchild, **Nina Michelle De Marsh**, born to Nic and Natalie De Marsh on July 10. She weighed 5 pounds 11 ounces and measured 18 inches long.

Mr. and Mrs. Christopher and Leah Hine of the Edmonton, Alberta congregation are very pleased to announce the arrival of their second child, **Lilyana Naomi Hine**, on May 24, 2018. She weighed 7 pounds 2 ounces and measured 20.5 inches long. Big brother Isaac will now have a little playmate he can guide, protect and enjoy! The proud grandparents are Harold and Melvina Bussey and Lenard and Esabelle Hine.

West Virginia Whitewater Rafting Adventure!

On August 5, 61 people from various congregations enjoyed a fabulous day of picnicking at beautiful Glenwood State Park in Princeton, West Virginia. We enjoyed activities such as pitching horseshoes, corn-hole, bingo, and a very challenging team-building activity. God provided us with beautiful weather, a fine meal, and warm fellowship among brethren. After the picnic, 27 brethren continued the fellowship as we camped out under the stars at nearby Camp Creek State Park.

On August 6, God again blessed us with a beautiful day to enjoy the highlight of the weekend, a Whitewater Rafting Adventure down the winding New River. Much rain over the previous couple of weeks had the water levels high, and the

water very fast, making for a lot of adrenaline pumping Class III to Class V rapids that tested everyone's stamina. Between the rapids there was enough time to enjoy the beauty of the West Virginia mountains and marvel at God's creation, entrusted to mankind. Our Whitewater Adventure ended directly below the famed New River Gorge bridge, which is the longest arch bridge in the Western Hemisphere and one of the highest in the world.

At the end of our rafting, spirits were high and everyone was ready to go downriver again. The rafting trip was a wonderful adventure, a true test of teamwork, and a wonderful bonding opportunity among brethren. It is certainly an activity that we will look forward to doing again next year.

—Jeff Foster

Saratoga Family Weekend 2018

Forty-two brethren gathered in Saratoga, Wyoming, over the weekend of July 20–22 for three days of fellowship, good food, and spiritual rejuvenation. Friday evening started the weekend with Mrs. Mary-Pat Whitfield's famous antelope chili. Later that evening, Mr. Ray Clore gave a presentation on "Jerusalem: Past, Present and Future" for the Bible Study. His slides supported the biblical record of the Temple Mount and Jerusalem's critical location for many prophecies found in the Bible.

With freshly brewed coffee and mountain air, Sabbath morning awakened the beautiful setting of the meeting hall and flowing river to portray what the Millennium will be like with God's Spirit flowing throughout the world as it brings peace and harmony to mankind. Mr. Shawn McMillin's sermonette on "Trials and Trust" paved the way for Dr. Winnail's sermon on "Why We Are Here!" He covered additional topics on Saturday evening.

Sunday morning continued with fellowship and a special program on Christian leadership, relationships, and resources by Dr. Winnail. We all said our goodbyes, finished packing, and headed to Mr. and Mrs. Alan Williams' for lunch and Mr. Eugene Api's Filipino chicken adobo! We all hope to return to Saratoga next summer for the 21st Saratoga Family Weekend. Stay tuned.

—Ben Whitfield

Big Sandy and Dallas Spokesman Club Ladies Luncheon

The Combined Big Sandy and Dallas Spokesman Club for 2017/2018 drew to an end on August 12 with a stunning Ladies' Luncheon at a premiere location and restaurant in Dallas, Texas, "Maggiano's Little Italy at North Park." The atmosphere is conducive to the high standards and quality God looks for His people to have.

The pastor of the Big Sandy and Dallas Churches and Director of the Club, Mr. Gary Stein, opened the club and turned it over to President, Bill Powers. Topics were directed by Elder Alex Celan and the speech and evaluation portion of the club were directed by Elder Marshall Moluf.

Mr. Stein then announced the three men who would be receiving their beautifully framed Spokesman Club Graduation Certificates for the year: Mr. Robert Boley, Mr. Felipe Torres, and Mr. Joshua Crockett. The Club members and our ladies wholeheartedly congratulated these men on such a wonderful milestone in their lives. The Church will benefit from these men's accomplishments.

Mr. Stein's closing comments: "Club members are here to learn and use the lessons that are in the Club Manual. God is chipping away the old man and building character in the new man (2 Peter 1:5–8)." Mr. Stein complimented the men, saying it was a stellar season, and thanked the ladies for being there and supporting them.

—Rick Collins

Adelaide Fellowship Weekend 2018

The Adelaide Fellowship Weekend consisted of a blend of fine food, fellowship, and powerful Biblical messages. We had around 64 brethren in attendance, with some travelling from Brisbane, Melbourne, across from Perth, and all the way from New Zealand. The theme this year was "Let Your Light Shine," and we heard some very inspiring and helpful Biblical truths associated with this. We also had the pleasant opportunity to have Mr. and Mrs. Rajan Moses join us all the way from Malaysia.

Friday evening, following our very tasty soup meal, Mr. Moses gave some timely truth in his Bible Study entitled "Christ, the Source of our Light" (John 8:12). Our interstate guests included Mr. and Mrs. Zig Svalbe, who joined us from Melbourne. On the Sabbath, Mr. Svalbe gave the sermonette "The Light of God's Word" (Proverbs 6:23), followed by Adelaide Pastor Michael Gill, who spoke on "Turn On the Lights." Mr. Gill explained to us the need to make an impact on this world by being lights.

After the Sabbath, we had an uplifting dinner dance. The hall was transformed into a "starry night" theme and an appetizing meal was served, with elegant candlelit centerpieces. A video of the LYP New Zealand camp gave the brethren an opportunity to see how beneficial the teen camps are and how much value they hold for our youth. It also gave those who were able an opportunity to make a donation to put toward the camp.

Sunday started with two lectures. Australasian Regional Director Robert Tyler gave the first hour-long lecture on "Being Lights in the Family," and Mr. Moses gave the second on "Being Lights in Our Workplace and Our Community." After the lectures, we had a tasty BBQ lunch. Everyone was replete but still eager to participate in various activities, including volleyball, ultimate frisbee, and more basic games for our smaller children.

On Monday, the brethren who were able to stay a little longer met in Hahndorf, a small German town near Adelaide. The magnificent surroundings and exquisite German food in this picturesque town are certainly something to enjoy.

From beginning to end, the Adelaide Fellowship Weekend once again proved to be a success. For the brethren who have not had the opportunity to visit us over this long weekend, I would like to extend an invitation and encourage you to come and enjoy this wonderful time next year.

In this world full of darkness and the influences of Satan all around us, we need the light of Jesus Christ to guide us. Having these Adelaide fellowship weekends not only solidifies friendships in God's Church, but allows us to have a deeper understanding of what God wants from His people in the many aspects mentioned above. We hope to see you next year!

—Adam Jennings

THE MASTER OF MISDIRECTION

continued from page 4

association. It is difficult to see how we can carry out our duties without these freedoms, but does that mean we ought to “get out the vote” to make sure the “right party” stays in power, or comes into power, in order to preserve them? Some see us as foolish not to do so.

Nevertheless, none of us knows exactly *how* God will work out His plan. It may be that the very opposite of what we think is best will be His very means of bringing the Church to prominence to give a final warning message. Proverbs 14:12 warns us, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” Isaiah 55:8–9 instructs us, “‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’” We know that God reveals His ways and thoughts to us through His Spirit that is in us, but He does so as we study and align our thinking with His word

(1 Corinthians 2:9–12; 2 Timothy 2:15, *KJV*). We also know that “the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men” (Daniel 4:17). It will serve us well to remember these principles!

We are called to be ambassadors of the Kingdom of God. An ambassador certainly has an opinion on events taking place in the country in which he serves, but he does not get involved in the politics of that country. We must be faithful ambassadors, fulfilling that role (2 Corinthians 5:20). We are not here to promote American values, Australian values, Canadian values, or any other national values. We are here to promote God’s values! We each appreciate and absorb our own national culture—such as its foods, languages, and arts—but we participate in and promote our culture’s values and principles only to the extent that they agree with *God’s* values and principles. And we do *not* join in worldly politics.

Satan is very clever, and his influence shows up too often in our thinking, as it did in Peter’s. When Jesus

informed His disciples that He would “suffer many things from the chief priests and scribes, and be killed,” Peter took Him aside and protested that he would not allow such a thing (Matthew 16:21–22). Jesus’ response is instructive. “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (v. 23). Such a strong rebuke may seem unwarranted to our fleshly minds—after all, Peter was willing to fight to protect Jesus. The passionate apostle did not, however, understand the greater picture.

Let us never forget that we are to be *in* this world, but not *of* it (John 17:15). Let us learn to evaluate properly the ideas swirling around us every day. And let us remember Paul’s admonition to those at Corinth: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4–5). ^(LN)

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places. Revelation 16:17 says that the seventh angel bearing the final plague on a rebellious mankind simply pours his bowl into the air as a loud voice from God’s throne declares “It is done!” The verses that follow describe the destruction of God’s enemies and the final fall of cities, including Babylon—the “great city” violently rent into three different pieces—as the greatest earthquake in the history of man occurs (vv. 18–20). As Mr. Ogwyn notes in our booklet on Revelation, “Very likely this earthquake is the same one that is described in Zechariah 14:4, when the feet of Jesus Christ finally stand once more upon the Mount of Olives, located just east of Jerusalem” (p. 39).

With the rebellious armies destroyed, the meaning of the Day of Atonement can be fulfilled: The Beast and the False Prophet are thrown into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 19:20), and the now-illegitimate pretender to the throne, Satan the Devil, is locked in a bottomless pit for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:2–3).

A New Beginning

The period from the Feast of Trumpets through the Day of Atonement comprises some of the most harrowing days in human history—tales that likely will be told over and over to those in the Millennium for the lessons they teach. But they are not the end. Rather, they are the beginning.

The Day of Atonement is not just about the putting away of Satan the Devil. It is also about the proclamation of liberty to the captives, and the return of Israelites to their homeland (Leviticus 25:9–10; Ezekiel 20:33–34). Mankind, in his rebellion, will have made ashes of the world, but Jesus Christ and His bride “will give them beauty for ashes” (Isaiah 61:3).

King David rhetorically asked, “If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psalm 11:3). The Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement remind us that Jesus Christ will not build tomorrow’s world on today’s foundations. God will intervene and bring the greatest powers of humanity to nothing—and He will do this so that He can give humanity everything. ^(LN)

COMMENTARY

Where's Your Sense of Humor?

What do you think is funny? Do you like slapstick? Sarcasm? Puns, limericks and other wordplay? Humor plays an important role in human relationships—but how can we use humor to improve our Christian lives?

No matter what we human beings find amusing, our “sense of humor” can be used for good or evil as much as any other faculty of the human mind. The worst part is that all too quickly, we can be blindsided by the evil side of humor—and the better-developed our “sense of humor” is, the more easily we may be blindsided. We need to ask ourselves why this is so.

We humans can take humor one step farther and joke about the ultimate questions of existence. If there is a God who cares for and rules over men, though, then joking about Him is dangerous ground to walk on. But surely it is amusing to those with eyes to see how foolish man can be in his devotion to *false* gods and *false* concepts. In the Bible, Elijah (1 Kings 18:27), Isaiah (Isaiah 44:10–20), Wisdom personified (Proverbs 1:24–27), Paul (2 Corinthians 11:1, 16–18, 21, 23), and even God Himself (Psalm 2:4), all employ different “senses of humor” to challenge false gods and false concepts on their own grounds.

God's servants could do this because our “sense of humor” is rooted in a major “defense mechanism” of the human mind. We can use humor rightly to laugh at our own foibles, and we can use it as a way of defending God's truth. The problem comes when we use humor to *mock or scorn* other human beings, human authorities that God has ordained, or worst of all, God Himself, His law, His grace, and His promises. The Bible

has a long list of warnings and examples against “mocking” and “scorning.”

How then do we get drawn into mockery, or even into accepting the mockery of others without protest? The answer is simple. We let ourselves be conformed to the world, rather than choosing to be transformed by God's Spirit through the renewing of our minds so that we may prove what God's perfect will is (Romans 12:2). And we can become conformed to the world *so quickly and so unawares* through our sense of humor!

Paul wrote to Christians: “[Let there be] neither filthiness [among you], nor foolish talking, nor *coarse jesting*, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks” (Ephesians 5:4). The Greek word behind “coarse jesting” is interesting. Aristotle, in his *Politics*, used it to describe what we might call “college-freshman humor”: as clever and skeptical as it was coarse. It denigrated its targets—it did not build them up. Does this sound familiar? It should. Such humor fills the speech, the “sitcoms” and the movies of our modern world—to say nothing of social media on the Internet!

We can think we have come so far in our Christian growth, only to be caught off guard by this world's “coarse jesting.” When we are, it opens doors to “the world, the flesh and the Devil” that we should not allow to be opened in our minds. It does not matter if we do this unknowingly. The effects on our minds and relationships are exactly the same!

So where is our “sense of humor” directed? Do we use it to help us see how deceitful our own minds are (Jeremiah 17:9), to defend the truth with wisdom, or to dishonor others made in God's image?

—John Wheeler