

Living Church News

Vol. 3, No. 6

November–December 2001

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Prophetic Events Speed Up

Dear Brethren and Friends,

I hope all of you had an *excellent* Feast of Tabernacles! The overwhelming number of reports coming into San Diego indicate that most people were very inspired and encouraged by the Feast, and that the Living Church of God brethren were more “settled” and stabilized than ever before. Also, most were more “motivated” to do the Work because of recent events.

We are moving ahead here at Headquarters and increasing the power of God’s Work. Plans are underway to go on more stations, to increase the subscription list of *Tomorrow’s World* and to reach out even more powerfully in our use of the Internet and by other means. Please *pray with us* about all of this! As prophetic events speed up, we really need to increase our **impact** on this sin-sick world while we have the opportunity.

There are so many things to think about and pray about regarding the ongoing *terrorist attacks* that have struck the United States and other nations. In view of that, there are several issues to be aware of and to be praying about.

This Work—probably more than any other—has *directly predicted* that this type of terrorism would soon occur! Following are some direct quotes from my co-worker letters during the past two years:

- **December 24, 1999:** “Even as I write, Americans are being warned of potential *terrorist attacks* right here in the United States. A powerful European Empire is in the making—soon to **replace** America as the world’s leading power.”
- **February 24, 2000:** “God predicts that alternate drought and floods, fires and famine, disease epidemics and increasing earthquakes will come upon us, plus many kinds of ‘terrors’—probably including terrorist threats and attacks.”
- **October 26, 2000:** “Greetings from San Diego! A ‘holy war’ coming up in the Middle East? American ships and troops being involved? An escalation of anti-American hatred throughout the Arab world? A cut-off of Arab oil and terrorist attacks *right here on American soil*? All of these things and more are now distinct possibilities!”
- **March 12, 2001:** “Also, the Arab terrorist organization ‘ Hamas ’ has proclaimed that they are going to ‘welcome’ new Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon with a wave of **terrorist attacks**. So these

could begin soon—and will eventually involve terrorism not only in the Middle East but in Great Britain and right here in the United States.”

Terrorism will undoubtedly **not** be solved by bombing or invading Afghanistan or any other nation. God’s Word shows us in a number of places that some of the people in the Middle East have a “perpetual hatred” (KJV) against Israel and that they have rejoiced over the troubles of Israel many times (Ezekiel 35:5, 15). Undoubtedly, as a number of religious authorities recognize, many of the Palestinians, Iraqis and others in that part of the world are descendants of the Edomites and even of the Amalekites! The undying hatred they seem to bear against Jacob is not going to be “solved” by any “quick fix,” or war or political maneuvering. Always bear that in mind.

Also, in modern times, because America has backed the state of Israel, because America has exemplified absolute hedonism and total pursuit of a lifestyle diametrically contrary to the teachings of fundamental Islam, certain Islamic scholars and leaders have concluded that either *they* will become extinct as a religion or *we*, America and its western allies, will have to be overthrown and crushed. This kind of reasoning may seem wild, but a number of recent articles written by Middle East experts bear this out. In addition, because they tie it right in with their religion, these people are not afraid to die as martyrs. In fact many of the young men are promised that they will go to a perpetual paradise with 72 virgins each *if* they die the death of an Islamic martyr! While our western minds cannot fully comprehend this kind of thinking, we had better be aware that it exists!

All of this will give rise to the “King of the South” prophesied in Daniel 11. Remember, as we have explained in years past, in the first fulfillment of these prophecies the King of the North was the Roman Empire and the King of the South was Egypt. We do not know if Egypt will be the dominant player in putting together the King of the South at the time of the end. But prophecy certainly indicates that it will be a certain number of Arab nations which will come together and “provoke” the King of the North—the final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire (Daniel 11:40–45). With his overwhelming technological superiority, the King of the North will swoop down on these Arab nations, get control of the *vast oil resources* which they possess and then, apparently, make his move against America and Britain.

The present situation lends itself to a move to bring together the Arab nations in a remarkable unity they have not achieved for centuries. In fact, many Arabs are looking for a type of “Mahdi”—a type of religio-political figure who will help them conquer the world. While Osama bin Laden would probably *like* to be this Mahdi, he probably will *not* be because of his involvement in this super-violence that is already taking place and making himself a “marked man” before the American military and intelligence forces. But, within the next several years, someone undoubtedly *will* come along to bring

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

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

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Persecution Is Coming!

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

I hope all of our brethren are fully aware of what lies ahead. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, has told us: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26–27).

At baptism, each of us should have made a “covenant with our Creator” to give our lives to Him. We normally do this by giving our lives as a “living sacrifice” as Paul instructs in Romans 12:1. But, always, we must be willing to suffer and even to die in our service to the Christ who died for us. As the Apostle Paul put it so eloquently, he hoped that “with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:20–21).

We are called to tell the people of this world and the entire House of Israel its **sins**. God speaks to us through Isaiah: “Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their **sins**” (Isaiah 58:1). But people do not like to be told about their sins! Many in our hedonistic society *deeply resent* any minister or any person who reminds them of how far off they are in their behavior from the standards

of their Creator. And if we tell them that their **sin** against God is the *primary reason* America and the British-descended peoples are suffering and *will continue to suffer enormously* from terrorist attacks and from drought, famine, disease epidemics, earthquakes and other catastrophes—these people will **hate** us for this!

Remember, brethren, when the prophet Jeremiah warned Judah of

pestilences, Jesus said: “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be **hated** by **all nations** for My name’s sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another” (Matthew 24:9–10).

People do not “like” to be told about their sins. But that is a *vital part* of our commission!

On the editorial page of the *San Diego Union-Tribune* of October 4,

Many in our hedonistic society *deeply resent* any minister or any person who reminds them of how far off they are in their behavior from the standards of their Creator.

its impending Babylonian captivity, some of the leaders seized Jeremiah and said: “You are defecting to the Chaldeans!” (Jeremiah 37:13). Jeremiah was later put in a dungeon and lowered by ropes into a slime pit (Jeremiah 38:6). Did this make him give up? Of course not. For Jeremiah had **faith** in the living God!

Finally, one God-fearing man among the king’s eunuchs had mercy on Jeremiah and obtained the king’s permission to lift him out of the mire before he might have died there (Jeremiah 38:7–13). Eventually, Jeremiah outlived the wicked king Zedekiah and was used mightily by God to warn His people of many impending troubles.

But it was **not** all “wine and roses,” as we say. When describing the **end-time** wars, famines and

2001, a striking cartoon appeared. It showed a black-hooded monster dubbed “Intolerance” with its hands resting approvingly on the shoulders of Osama bin Laden, Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell! Because of their statements that Americans’ **sins** were the reason for the horrific events of September 11, these men were lumped in with a murderous terrorist who has been linked to some of the greatest crimes against humanity during the last ten or 15 years!

Just below that cartoon were printed a number of “Letters to the Editor” condemning Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell for their remarks. Some of the comments in these letters are wild and almost unbeliev-

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IS THERE A “PLAN OF GOD”?

Can you prove it from Scripture?

By Douglas S. Winnail

Have you ever stepped back to look at your life and world events and asked: “What is really going on? What does all this mean?” Hundreds of different religious groups teach different ideas, yet claim to believe in the same God. Nations and peoples fight each other, yet most people just want to be left alone in peace. Millions seek money and leisure, only to find these goals unsatisfying. We spend a lifetime striving to acquire fame and material things, only to die, be forgotten and have others dispose of our treasures. Many wonder about the meaning of life but never find the answer.

Is there a reason that life seems so empty and confusing? If there is a God, does He know what is going on—or even care? Does God have a plan or purpose He is working out on earth, or are we alone in the universe, endlessly evolving as we watch a struggle for the survival of the fittest? The Bible contains answers to these perplexing questions—and for decades the Church of God has proclaimed those answers! But through the millennia—as today—these biblical answers have been challenged and ridiculed by individuals proclaiming a different gospel. You need to *know* the truth about what is revealed in the Scriptures!

Background Issues

For decades, the Church of God has proclaimed in publications, radio broadcasts and television programs that God is working out a great plan and purpose on this earth. We have referred to a 7,000-year plan being worked out on this planet. We have stated openly that the Holy Days picture God’s plan of salvation for mankind. Where did the Church get these ideas? Is there evidence to back up such proclamations? Can you prove these doctrines for yourself?

In recent years some apostates have declared: “There is no plan.” They have taught that the Holy Days are no longer required observances for Christians, and have said that the Church of God has promoted doctrinal errors as

the gospel. Instead, they have taught, we can be innovative in our approach to religion as long as we “love” the Lord. Many have accepted these ideas without carefully examining the arguments or asking *why* such claims are made.

It should be noted that Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians generally do not talk about a “plan of God.” Instead, they speak of coming to “know the Lord” or “believe in Jesus” or “be saved” or “accept” that God loves you and Jesus died for you. But their approach does not answer many questions. Why does life seem so empty for so many people? Why does God allow evil things to happen? So-called “mainstream” theologians have no satisfactory answers to these questions.

Most professing Christians believe that Christians are no longer required to keep the biblical Holy Days, which they consider “legalistic” practices supposedly abolished by the New Covenant. Instead, they are invited to observe Christmas in honor of Christ’s birth and Easter as a memorial of Christ’s resurrection, even though these festivals originated in ancient pagan religions and are plainly condemned in Scripture (see Deuteronomy 12:29–32; Jeremiah 10:1–5)! If one’s goal is to be *accepted* into the mainstream of modern professing Christianity, it makes sense to discard biblical truths that have been preached by the Church of God, and to promote popular doctrinal ideas even if those ideas originated from pagan sources. Yet mainstream Christianity has lost sight of the plan of God, and lost an understanding of the meaning of the Holy Days, because it has ceased to observe God’s commanded Holy Days. This will also happen to any who choose to follow the same path.

Old Testament Scriptures Reveal a Plan

But does the Bible contain evidence that God is working out a plan on this earth? Many passages of Scripture make it absolutely clear that He is! When God began to work with Abraham, He made an interesting statement: “Shall I hide from Abraham *what I am doing*?” (Genesis 18:17–19). The immediate context was the coming pun-

ishment of wicked Sodom and Gomorrah. However, the book of Genesis shows that God revealed to Abraham the blessing He was going to bestow on Abraham's offspring because of his obedience. God *planned* to make Abraham the father of many nations (Genesis 17:5), to cause Abraham's offspring to be a blessing to mankind (Genesis 18:18), and to have them multiply as the sand of the sea and gain possession of the gates of their enemies (Genesis 22:15–18). Scripture reveals that God was working out a *plan and purpose* through Abraham and his descendents.

The prophet Isaiah was inspired to record details of God's plan to eliminate Satan's influence—the cause of this world's evils—and to humble the proud nation of Assyria (see Isaiah 14:12–25). God told Isaiah: “This is *the purpose* that is purposed against the whole earth... for the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it?” (Isaiah 14:26–27). Isaiah records additional details about God's plan for His chosen people of Israel: “But you, Israel, are My *servant*, Jacob, whom I have *chosen*, the descendants of Abraham, My friend” (Isaiah 41:8). The Church of God has not been alone in proclaiming that God chose the Israelite nations for a special purpose. Winston Churchill once stated: “He indeed has a blind soul who does not see a *great purpose* being worked out here below, of which we [the British-descended and American peoples] have the honor to be faithful servants.”

God outlined future aspects of His plan to Daniel. Daniel records that “there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets... what will be in the latter days... in the days of these kings [symbolized by the ten toes of the image] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:28, 44–45; see also Daniel 7; 9; 11). Revealing specific prophetic events would have been pointless unless God had a plan. Prophecy reveals that God does indeed have a plan that He is working out on this earth.

New Testament Scriptures Reveal a Plan

While some who profess to believe in Christ deny that God has a plan, both Scripture and the very words of Jesus indicate otherwise. Matthew records that Jesus came into this world to “save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Before His crucifixion, Jesus stated that “for *this purpose* I came to this hour” (John 12:27). As a lad of 12, Jesus stated to His parents: “Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?” (Luke 2:49). Jesus knew that He came to this earth for a purpose. He had a job to do and a plan to follow. Jesus told His disciples: “My food [mission, goal] is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34). Before He died on the cross, Jesus prayed to God: “I have finished the work which You have given me to do” (John

17:4). Jesus accomplished His mission. He fulfilled His part in the plan of God. He proclaimed the gospel of the coming kingdom of God (Mark 1:14–15), called and trained the disciples (Matthew 10:1–26) and died for our sins. From heaven, He directed the next phase of God's plan through the power of the Holy Spirit, raising up the New Testament Church (Acts 2).

The Apostles clearly understood that God was working out a plan and purpose on earth—a plan hidden from most in the world. Paul wrote that “we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery... which none of the rulers of this age knew... but God has revealed them [these things] to us through His Spirit” (1 Corinthians 2:7–10). The “mystery” of which Paul wrote is the understanding of the purpose of life, the plan of salvation, the gospel of the kingdom of God and the understanding of prophecy—all of which *remain* mysteries to most people today, even most professing Christians.

In a letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul explained that God “chose us in Him [Jesus Christ] before the foundation of the earth... having predestined us to adoption as sons” (Ephesians 1:3–5). Paul meant that God has a *predetermined plan* which includes calling some first to be trained to be leaders in His coming kingdom, who will then be used to educate others as that kingdom expands to cover the whole earth (see Isaiah 2:2–4; 11:9). Yet, although God's plan is a mystery to most people, Paul wrote that this is according to “*the purpose* of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:9–12). Although the plan of God has been hidden from the world, this precious truth is to “be made known by the church... according to the *eternal purpose*” which God accomplished through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:8–11). The Bible indicates that God even uses misguided individuals and nations to accomplish parts of His plan. The ten kings who give their power to an end-time beast will turn on and devastate a great false religion, “for God has put it into their hearts to *fulfill His purpose*” (Revelation 17:12–17).

Scripture clearly indicates that God has a plan and purpose, which He is working out on earth. The Church of God has taught this for decades. Those who claim “there is no plan” or purpose are simply *wrong* and are not speaking according to the word of God (Isaiah 8:20). They are teaching lies that mislead people, as we see that Scripture proves.

A 7,000–Year Plan?

Over the years, the Church of God has explained that God has a 7,000–year plan. While this is not specifically stated in Scripture, it is understood through history and

scriptural analogy. In the first two chapters of Genesis, we read that during the “creation week” God created the earth and all things in six days—and that He rested on the seventh day. The Apostle Peter, citing Psalm 90:4, drew the analogy that “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8). The Apostle Paul drew a spiritual analogy comparing God’s rest on the seventh day of the creation week, our rest on the Sabbath and the ultimate rest for Christians in the Millennium (Hebrews 4:1–11). During the millennial rest, the saints will rule with Christ for 1,000 years when the kingdom of God is set up on this earth (Revelation 20:4–6). The implication of this analogy is that God’s plan has allotted 6,000 years for man to attempt to rule this earth, followed by the 1,000-year reign of Christ and the saints.

The idea of a 7,000-year plan is hardly the exclusive property of the Church of God. Historian Edward Gibbon mentions: “The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ. As the works of creation had been fashioned in six days, their duration in their present state, *according to a tradition which was attributed to the prophet Elijah* was fixed at six thousand years. By the same analogy it was inferred that this long period of labour and contention [our present age], which was now almost elapsed, would be succeeded by a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years; and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon the earth till the time appointed for the last and general resurrection” (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chapter 15).

The Holy Days

Do the biblical Holy Days picture the plan of God, as the Church of God has taught? Just what is the truth? Looking briefly at each of the Holy Days, we will see what Scripture reveals. The Holy Days are described in Leviticus 23. They are *not* referred to as “Mosaic customs” or “Jewish traditions” but as “the Feasts of the LORD” (Leviticus 23:2). They are called “holy convocations” (commanded assemblies) that were to be “a statute forever”—not temporary observances until the coming of Christ (Leviticus 23:14, 21, 31, 41). On the Passover, a lamb without blemish was to be killed, and God would deliver the nation of Israel from the sinful land of Egypt (Exodus 12:1–14). This lamb symbolized Christ’s death for our sins (John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:19). John revealed that the sacrificial death of Jesus *was planned from the beginning of creation* (Revelation 13:8). The Passover is to be observed forever as a memorial of that amazing sacrifice.

The Days of Unleavened Bread are observed annually by putting leaven out of our diets and homes for seven days (Leviticus 23:6). Leaven is a “type” of sin, which even the early New Testament church understood must be eliminated from the lives of Christians (1 Corinthians 5:1–8). This is why Jesus and the Apostles preached about the need to repent of and overcome sin (Mark 1:14–15; Acts 2:38). Repentance and overcoming our tendency to sin is an essential part of God’s plan of salvation for mankind. Observing the Days of Unleavened Bread keeps us mindful of this challenge. We are not saved just by believing that Jesus was born of a virgin, died and was resurrected. We have to grow and change as we learn to obey the commandments of God (John 14:15). The belief that Jesus did everything for us is simply not true. The idea of faith *without works* becomes attractive when we lose sight of the meaning of the Holy Days—especially the Days of Unleavened Bread—but this is an erroneous concept (see James 2:14–26).

The festival of Pentecost is also termed the feast of “firstfruits” (Exodus 23:16; 34:22). Christians called in this age, before the establishment of the kingdom of God, are known as “firstfruits” (James 1:18; Revelation 14:4). They comprise a small harvest God is gathering to be teachers and leaders in the coming kingdom. The Holy Spirit was given, and the New Testament church begun, on Pentecost (Acts 2). The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God’s instructions. If the disciples had failed to follow Jesus’ instructions, and had not obeyed the commandment to keep the Day of Pentecost, the momentous events of that day would not have occurred. Pentecost is a memorial of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit—the power God makes available to help us overcome.

The Festival of Trumpets included a blowing of trumpets, but the Old Testament gives no reason and explains no meaning for this practice (Leviticus 23:24). The book of Revelation supplies the missing details. Prior to Christ’s return, seven trumpets will sound to announce earth-shaking events that precede His coming (see Revelation 8; 9). Jesus Christ will return at the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:15–19). The commanded annual observance of this festival is meant to keep us mindful of this most important event in the history of the universe—the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. When this festival is rejected or ignored, important details surrounding this awesome event are obscured and forgotten.

The Day of Atonement involved a ceremony with two goats. The one offered as a sacrifice for the sins of the people pictured the sacrifice of Christ (Leviticus 16:9–19). The

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Relate to God Rightly with Head and Heart

By John H. Ogwyn

Human beings are complex creatures. We have minds that set us far apart from the animal realm. Our minds are not only able to catalogue and analyze facts, but are also able to feel a wide range of emotions. From this combination of thinking and feeling, we all make choices and take actions. We relate to God, and to one another, with both head and heart.

Though all human beings represent a combination of feelings and intellect, it seems that some are primarily led by their emotions while others are more guided by the analytical side of their nature. Is one of these bad and the other good? Which should be your primary guide in life? How does a mature person handle the combination of feelings and intellect?

Regarding maturity, why did Jesus Christ say that those who will inherit the Kingdom of God must become like little children (Mark 10:15)? Did the Apostle Paul contradict this by declaring that he had become a man and put away childish things (1 Corinthians 13:11)? Is there a difference between being *childlike* and being *childish*? Only by understanding the answer to these questions can we truly recognize how God wants us to conduct ourselves. In doing so, we can more deeply understand why God made us creatures that have both head and heart—intellect and feelings.

Your Heart Can Get You in Trouble

There are clearly individuals who go through life seeming to fol-

low their heart. Judges 13–16 gives the story of one such man, Samson. As you read the story, you see a man who generally followed his feelings and emotions. As a result, he had a lifetime of grief and hard lessons.

Early on, we read that young Samson became infatuated with a Philistine girl. His parents knew that this was not good, and tried to dissuade him. They asked him why he never showed interest in a girl of his own people. Notice Samson's response. "And Samson said to his father, 'Get her for me, for she pleases me well'" (Judges 14:3). It is interesting to note that the Hebrew term translated "she pleases me well" is literally "she is right in my eyes." This approach—doing what is right in one's own eyes—is a recurring theme throughout the entire book of Judges.

His marriage scarcely lasted a week! Samson's bride cajoled from him the answer to a riddle, and revealed it to some young men with whom he had made a wager. Samson left in a rage, and soon she married someone else.

Most well known in Samson's life, of course, is his infatuation with Delilah. Again, this is a story of Samson following his feelings and not doing much thinking. While Samson was sure that he and Delilah were "in love," she was actually in the employ of the Philistine rulers for the purpose of discovering the secret of Samson's great strength. Over time, she wheedled and cajoled him to reveal his secret. Several times he made up stories to tell her, which she immediately tried out to see if they would really deprive him of his great strength.

When she found that he had tricked her, she would cry and would accuse him of not loving and trusting her. Finally, Samson told her the truth: that his great strength was connected with a Nazarite vow and that his uncut hair was a symbol of that vow.

You know the rest of the story. She got him to sleep, shaved his hair, and the Philistine soldiers captured him and put his eyes out. Clearly Samson was led by his heart, not his head. It certainly should not have taken much thinking and analysis on his part to have seen where the situation with Delilah was headed, but Samson acted on his feelings and emotions and gave little serious thought to the matter.

Because Samson followed his emotions instead of following God, he had much unnecessary heartache and trouble. Finally, as a blind prisoner who spent his days walking around in a circle grinding grain like a draft animal, he had time to reflect on a wasted life and to seek another chance from God to fulfill the destiny for which he had been born—delivering Israel from Philistine domination. This he accomplished in his death.

The story of Samson is a clear illustration of the proverb: "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool" (Proverbs 28:26). To simply follow our feelings and emotions can easily wreck our lives. It leads to impulsive choices that often appear quite foolish in retrospect.

The prophet Jeremiah emphasized: "O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Why not trust the heart to guide us? Because the natural human heart is both

deceitful and wicked (Jeremiah 17:9)! When we are emotionally involved in an issue, it is very easy to fool ourselves about everything connected with it. We can even fool ourselves about our own motives and intentions. Going through life following our emotions and feelings can certainly lead to much trouble!

Your Head Can Also Get You in Trouble

Following our emotions is not the only choice that can lead to trouble in life. Those who rely on their intellect and their ability to analyze a situation and weigh the facts can also wind up in serious difficulty. While Samson is an example of a man who was led by his heart, Jeroboam the son of Nebat was a man led by his head. As a young man, Jeroboam's competence and capacity were recognized by King Solomon, who made him governor over the tribes of Joseph, the wealthiest of the northern tribes (1 Kings 11:28). As he was leaving Jerusalem one day, the prophet Ahijah accosted him and revealed that God was going to make him king of the northern ten tribes of Israel after Solomon's death. Some rumor of this prophecy may have reached King Solomon, for soon afterward Jeroboam had to flee Israel and live as an exile in Egypt until Solomon's death.

Following Solomon's death, and the accession of his son, Rehoboam, Jeroboam's great opportunity finally came. When the leaders of the ten tribes were displeased by the new king's arrogance in addressing their request for lower taxes, they elected to withdraw from the united monarchy and to set up their own independent kingdom. They chose Jeroboam as their new king. He rose from political exile to king in a matter of weeks.

As the euphoria of the moment settled, Jeroboam began to engage in some serious reflection. He was evidently a thoughtful and analytical

man. Undoubtedly that very strength had helped bring him to King Solomon's attention, and had contributed to his success as an administrator. Jeroboam realized that the people's initial excitement at achieving independence and choosing a new king would gradually fade. While his popularity was quite high, he was intelligent enough to realize what many politicians forget: popularity does not last forever. He foresaw a scenario in which, after a few years, people would begin finding fault with some of his decisions, and would be going to Jerusalem each year to celebrate the festivals, where King Rehoboam would be serving as host to welcome the pilgrims. Jeroboam thought that, in time, nostalgia for the "good old days" when everyone was together would surely set in. The more he analyzed the situation, the more he was convinced that it was just a matter of time before he would be forced out as king and the nation reunited under King Rehoboam (cf. 1 Kings 12).

Jeroboam sought counsel and devised a plan. He did not forbid the people to go to Jerusalem to celebrate God's festivals, but rather he offered them an easier alternative. He moved the fall festival back a month, to a time evidently a little more convenient for many. Jeroboam offered the people two sites instead of one for pilgrimage: one in the north at Dan and one in the south at Bethel. He also brought in the use of golden calves in worship, and hired new priests who would preach what he paid them to preach. Why did he make these changes? They made "business" sense to Jeroboam and his advisors. His concerns and his conclusions were logical and understandable. Jeroboam's fault lay not in the failure of his logic, but rather in the failure of his faith. He left God out of the equation!

While Scripture enjoins the use of wisdom and foresight in planning, we also learn that wisdom begins with

the fear of the Eternal (Proverbs 9:10). Human wisdom has very distinct limits. Wise King Solomon exhorts us to: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes: fear the LORD and depart from evil" (Proverbs 3:5–7). At best, human logic and reasoning represent flawed guides for life's choices. After all: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12). To rely on your head to guide you through life may lead you to calculate the cost and benefit of every choice and to do the *expedient* thing rather than the *right* thing. God's word is given to illuminate the proper path through life (Psalm 119:105) and is to give guidance to both our thoughts and our feelings. Any other approach is fatally flawed.

Both the head and the heart should play an important role in life. However, we must ensure that both are subservient to the instructions of God's word. Regardless of the logic or the feelings involved, God's law must take precedence. Our Creator has endowed us with both logic and feeling, and desires that we properly develop both. Jesus Christ told the woman at the well in Samaria that God desires to be worshiped in spirit and in truth—with both heart and head (John 4:23–24). How do we develop an approach in both head and heart that is pleasing in God's sight?

Developing a Mature Mind

In 1 Corinthians 13:11, the Apostle Paul explained: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Clearly, a childish and immature approach to life should be left behind. What does that entail? Scripture explains that an immature

person requires supervision—“a child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (Proverbs 29:15). A person who is mature-minded has the wisdom and self-discipline to make proper choices even when no one in authority is watching.

Notice some other aspects of being mature minded. Such a person sees the *big* picture and is not deceived by lesser distractions (1 Corinthians 13:1–3). Paul upbraided the Corinthians for their childishness, and cited as evidence the quarrels and factions that existed there (1 Corinthians 1:10–19; 3:1–5).

Another aspect of a mature mind is explained in Ephesians 4:11–15. Here Paul shows that Jesus Christ is the perfect example of maturity, and that we are to grow up to be like Him—that is, a “perfect” or fully developed and mature person. In this passage, he shows that one attribute of immature thinking is *being unstable*—being thrown to and fro with every wind of doctrine. A mature mind is capable of carefully building, point by point, an understanding of the truth (cf. Isaiah 28:9–11), and will not easily be shaken. Mature thinking involves thoughtful analysis and understanding that runs deep. Someone who only has a shallow, superficial understanding of the truth, even if he has great emotional fervor, will lack staying power over the long haul, and will probably crumble when serious difficulties arise.

How can we develop a mature, sound-minded approach in life? Paul provided the key in Hebrews 5:12–14, by drawing an analogy to physical maturity and the human digestive system. A tiny baby has an immature digestive system, and can only derive nourishment from the most easily digested foods, normally the mother’s milk. As a person matures, the digestive system eventually can break down meat and use the body-building protein it contains. Spiritually speak-

ing, an immature Christian is unskilled in properly applying Scripture and in deriving the right principles to apply to situations. How does a person develop a spiritually mature mind? “But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, **those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil**” (v. 14). We develop mature mindedness by combining Bible study with real life situations. This involves not only reading God’s word, but also meditating or thinking about its application in daily life. Learning to worship God in truth—using our heads—is vital. As the years pass, we should understand the principles of Scripture—not only well enough to apply them in our own life, but also to explain them to others.

Having a Childlike Heart

A mature-minded, sensible approach to the truth is very important, but it alone is not enough. While Christians are exhorted to be mature and go beyond a childish approach to living, Christ Himself also teaches us the necessity of becoming like little children. How is being childlike different from being childish?

When young parents tried to bring their little children to Jesus for His blessing, the disciples sought to shoo them away. “Jesus is too important and too busy to be bothered by a bunch of little kids,” they reasoned. When Christ realized what they were doing, He was very displeased. He stopped, took each of those little children in His arms, and invoked God’s blessing. Further, He proclaimed to the startled onlookers that unless they became like little children, they would never even enter the Kingdom (Mark 10:13–16). What qualities did Jesus see in those little children that He wanted His disciples to emulate? Certain outstanding traits come to mind right away. Young children are


naturally trusting, wholehearted and teachable. Faith and zeal are very childlike attributes!

Notice what Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 14:20. He exhorted his readers to be mature in understanding, while being “babes”—not practiced—in malice or holding grudges. God wants us to be, like little children, very quick to forgive and to extend love.

The Apostle Peter declared in 1 Peter 2:1–3: “Therefore laying aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” Anyone who has ever seen a little baby anxiously trying to get to his dinner can easily form a mental image of the attitude that God wants us to have regarding His word, our spiritual food. A baby can be eagerness and zeal personified in the quest for his next meal! That childlike zest and eagerness is a quality of the heart that God Himself desires that we never lose.

We live in a sophisticated, technological age, with a culture that has bred skepticism and cynicism. In the midst of such a society, we are asked to exemplify childlike trust and devotion to our Father in Heaven. In other words, we must become like little children!

God has given each of us a head and a heart. Neither one alone is sufficient; each is important and must be developed properly. We need the ability to rationally understand and apply God’s word in our daily life, and we also need the trusting, loving and zealous characteristics of a childlike heart. We must learn to worship God, relate to others and handle all aspects of life with both heart and head.

What does God *really* want from us? The answer is very simple. He wants our mature mind and childlike heart both to be directed by the Spirit of the Living God! 

Lessons from September 11, 2001

By Rod Reynolds

On September 11, 2001, a group of terrorists perpetrated an unspeakably heinous and evil attack on the United States. They hijacked commercial jets and deliberately crashed them into the World Trade Center towers in New York City and into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., killing thousands of people who were simply living their lives, going about their own business.

The shock and grief over these events has affected the entire nation. The government has promised retribution upon the perpetrators. It has been observed repeatedly that we live in a new age—at least for those of us in the United States—of uncertainty, and of fear that terror on a massive scale may strike unexpectedly at any moment.

Many have awakened to a realization that America has determined enemies who hate the nation passionately, and who have the capability of inflicting enormous suffering. People in the U.S. and elsewhere have expressed unbelief, sorrow, anger and vengeance. What are some of the spiritual lessons we can and should learn from this horrible tragedy?

In God's sight, hate toward others is tantamount to murder

Hate in human hearts led directly to the deaths of these thousands of people, as with untold millions who have been slain by their fellow human beings through the ages. Another among many examples that could be cited is the hate that led Germany, in a previous era, to ruthlessly persecute and destroy the lives of six million European Jews. In a definitive study, Daniel Goldhagen wrote of those who directly participated in the genocidal crime, that “these were internally motivated killers, moved by a boundless hatred of Jews” (*Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 403).

“He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes” (1 John 2:10–11). All over the world there are innumerable masses who claim to be “in the light”—claiming to serve God (as they conceive of God), but whose hearts seethe with hatred for others. All human beings are our “brothers” in the sense that we all share a common origin and a common God-given destiny.

Most who engage in terrorism and murder have excuses and reasons for their hatred. But for a Christian there is *no* excuse or justification for hatred directed at

other human beings. “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15). Some, like the Al-Qaida terrorists, think that acting in hatred toward their fellow man will merit reward from God in a “paradise” of some sort beyond death. But in truth, the only reward murderers can expect from the true God is to be denied eternal life altogether—unless they deeply repent and are converted.

We must purge hatred toward other human beings from our hearts

Without hate, terrorism and similar evils would be impossible. “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also” (1 John 4:20–21). A true Christian has no option except to love his brother, which includes every human being.

Even on the cross, as He was dying, Jesus expressed love and forgiveness for those who were murdering Him (Luke 23:34). Christians have a special obligation to exhibit love among themselves (John 13:34–35; 15:12–13). But beyond that most basic obligation, we must follow Jesus’ example and command in loving even our enemies (Matthew 5:42–48).

Scripture exhorts us to “love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:35–36). This is a major test of a real Christian, because it is so contrary to the inclinations of the natural human mind. By nature we tend to hate and despise those we perceive as enemies. But we must, with the help of the Holy Spirit, suppress any such hatred that wells up in our hearts, and replace it with the love that characterizes God’s divine nature.

That means, for those of us in the United States, and others who may be affected by similar outrages, that we must love even those who perpetrate crimes like the recent terrorist attacks. That does not mean measures should not be taken to keep them from committing similar crimes in the future. Executing justice and maintaining order and public safety is a legitimate function of civil government (Romans 13:3–4). But for us to cry out for vengeance in a

spirit of hate is simply wrong. We must abhor their actions, but must also pray that they will ultimately repent, and will no longer perpetrate evil (Luke 6:27–28; Psalm 94). God desires salvation for all men, and we should pray and act accordingly (1 Timothy 2:1–7).

There certainly is no justification for hate toward any racial, national, religious or ethnic group. Following on the heels of the attacks on New York and Washington, some haters in the United States have shamefully vented their own blind rage. Arab-Americans or others perceived to be of Middle Eastern origin have been victims of scattered incidents of arson, assault, vandalism and—in two cases as of this writing—murder. Such acts are inspired by the same kind of hate that is at the root of the terrorist attacks, and are worthy of utmost contempt and condemnation.

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). Events such as the attack on the World Trade Center not only expose the worst in human nature, but sometimes bring out the best in humanity as well. More than 300 firemen and police gave their lives while working to save the lives of others. Some of the passengers on one of the hijacked airplanes apparently struggled with the hijackers, successfully preventing a further attempt to fly a plane into a building. But these heroes, too, lost their lives while seeking to save the lives of others. These acts of courage, duty and self-sacrificing concern for others are exemplary, and stand in stark contrast to the hate that motivated the murderous malefactors.

God allows tragedies for a purpose

People commonly tend to push any thoughts of God to the back of their minds until disaster strikes. Then the first question asked is “Why would God allow this?” as though God has some obligation to do otherwise. It was not God who hijacked airplanes and flew them into buildings, but human beings who, of their own volition, brought death and destruction upon other human beings.

From the beginning of human existence, God has always given mankind a choice. And mankind has also, from the beginning—consistently, with relatively few exceptions—rejected God and chosen the way of death. Adam and Eve knew God, and spoke with Him face to face in the Garden of Eden. But they rejected Him; Paul tells us that “although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were they thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Romans 1:21). God spoke to the Israelites with His own voice from Mount Sinai, but they, too, turned aside. Except for a small number of outcasts, this has been the story of every generation of human beings up to the present time.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’” (Luke 13:34–35). Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem applies in a more general sense to all of mankind. A theme repeated throughout the Bible is that God has wanted to gather mankind under His protective wing, but mankind has not been willing.

“Many are called,” said Jesus, “but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14). In the centuries leading up to the former captivities of Israel and Judah, God sent prophet after prophet to call the nations to repentance. “And the LORD has sent to you all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear. They said, ‘Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers forever and ever. Do not go after other gods to serve them and worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands; and I will not harm you.’ ‘Yet you have not listened to Me,’ says the LORD, ‘that you might provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt’” (Jeremiah 25:4–7).

As in former times, God has sent faithful ministers in the modern age to preach the true gospel of the Kingdom of God, to the world, primarily as a “witness” (Matthew 24:14). Out of the many millions to whom the message has been broadcast, only a handful have believed, and acted on their belief, and thus become chosen (2 Thessalonians 2:13). Though God now commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30), most simply ignore His command and its accompanying warnings. “So,” says God, “will I choose their delusions, and bring their fears on them; because, when I called, no one answered, when I spoke they did not hear; but they did evil before My eyes, and chose that in which I do not delight” (Isaiah 66:4).

When individuals—or a people or a whole world—defiantly reject the counsel of God, why should they be surprised that He leaves them to their own devices and they suffer the consequences? What is amazing is that God has mercifully intervened as often as He has, despite mankind’s contrary nature. The desolation and evil we see in the world is not what God wants for us, but what mankind is reaping as a consequence of its own stubbornness and rebellion.

The words of Hosea fit our modern age perfectly. “I have written for him the great things of my law, but they were considered a strange thing” (Hosea 8:12). Yes, though many give lip service to the Ten Commandments, anyone insisting that they actually be kept—all ten of them—is considered “strange” in today’s world. In the

same context, the prophet writes: “Israel has cast off the good; the enemy will pursue him,” and: “They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind” (Hosea 8:3, 7). It is not realistic to think that God will always intervene for us when we are so defiant toward Him, any more than a teenager choosing to “sow his wild oats” in rebellion against his parents should expect their protection against the calamities likely to result.

The “god” that this world has chosen to serve is, in fact, Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 12:9). Satan is a violent and hate-filled renegade against the true God (Isaiah 14:12–14; Ezekiel 28:12–16). “He was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44). With his oppressive system of deception and misrule, he has “struck the people with a continual stroke,” and has “ruled the nations in anger” (Isaiah 14:6). He is behind the deception, hate, violence and bloodshed permeating the world. And because that is what mankind is choosing, God will increasingly let Satan play his hand.

Repentance is required for continued blessings

In the last two centuries, the United States and the British-descended nations have been blessed as have no other peoples in all of history. For most of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, Great Britain ruled an empire unparalleled in human history, encompassing the world’s oceans and a quarter of its land surface, and the United States blossomed into a giant, spanning the North American continent. During that time, first Britain and then the United States became the world’s wealthiest and most powerful nations, and together the two nations proved invincible to their enemies.

These nations grew to ascendancy in a time characterized by relatively high standards of morality, based on a respect for the Ten Commandments. Even so, it was not because of worthiness or superior righteousness that God blessed these nations, for even at their best their understanding of God’s laws has been seriously flawed. God’s blessings have been poured out in these end times primarily because of His promises to these nations’ forefathers: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 22:17–18; Deuteronomy 7:7–8; 10:14–22). Nevertheless, those standards of morality have long since vanished, and are now an object of ridicule. Our society is now characterized by moral anarchy, accompanied by widespread criminality, drug addiction, and many other social ills.

Our plunge into moral decadence continues to accelerate. Television and other mainstream media accept and even encourage homosexuality. Those who protest are vil-


ified and ostracized. News reports show that for the first time in history, fully one-third of babies born in the U.S. are born out of wedlock. Abortion claims the lives of more than a million each year in the United States alone.

Should we be surprised that God is slowly but surely withdrawing His protection and blessings, just as we have been warned? (Leviticus 26:14–39). Jesus warned us that this will only continue, unless we repent (Luke 13:1–5). Those who have suffered and died are as a group no better or worse than the general population as a whole. Their untimely deaths have not robbed them of the chance to be called, chosen and faithful to God and His ways. Yet if only our nations would repent, God would spare us from such tragedies (Deuteronomy 28:1–14).

God will solve these problems and put an end to such evils

God has given mankind free moral agency. Under Satan’s influence, mankind has chosen to reject God’s rule and His laws. For 6,000 years, God has allowed mankind to write in tears and blood the lesson of sin’s consequences. The world is lurching toward the brink of ultimate disaster at the close of this age, when all life will be threatened with extinction. “Unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved” (Matthew 24:22). Jesus Christ promises that He will intervene in time to avert the complete destruction of life, toward which man’s ways are leading him. “For the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.”

With the ear-piercing blast of a heavenly trumpet, Jesus Christ will return to this earth. “The kingdoms of this world” will “become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Revelation 11:15). The modern-day descendants of Israel, including the United States and the British-descended peoples, will have been conquered and scattered into other countries, as many prophecies warn (e.g., Deuteronomy 28:63–68; Ezekiel 5:12; 6:1–8).

The peoples of Israel who remain will then be ready to respond to God’s call in a positive way, and will be led out of their captivity by a merciful God (Isaiah 27:13; Zechariah 10:6–10). God will put His Spirit in the repentant Israelites and they will begin to willingly keep His laws (Ezekiel 36:24–27). Soon all nations will learn to live in peace God’s way, and mankind will finally rest from hate, war and bloodshed. “He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4). God speed that day! 

Calling the “Second Generation”

By Jeffrey Fall

Every young person who has grown up in the Church of God has probably wondered at some point in time: “How do I know if God is calling me? And if God is calling me, how do I respond?” For some, this “calling of God” has been mysterious and hard to grasp. God does not communicate by “handwriting on the wall” in this age, or by e-mail. Is a “calling” an overpowering “feeling” from God, like some powerful spiritual magnet that supernaturally pulls you to do what is right? Or is it something that you can choose to respond to or ignore?

First, we need to realize that to be “called by God” simply means to have received an invitation. Sometimes, an invitation to a party or wedding is sent with an R.S.V.P.—which means that you are asked to respond to the invitation. If you intend to come, you must let the host know your intentions so a place will be saved for you.

Christ taught that the Kingdom of Heaven is like an invitation to a wedding: “The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to **call** those who were **invited** to the wedding; and they were not willing to come” (Matthew 22:2–3). As with any invitation, some individuals accept, and some do not even bother to respond. The English words “call” and “invited” (v. 3) are translated from the same Greek word. To be “called” by God and to be “invited” by God are the same.

The key question is: are all children or young adults reared by a

converted parent invited (called) by God, or is the invitation **only** given to a select few of these young people? Peter answered this question when he stated, on the day of Pentecost, that those who have truly repented and been baptized would “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Peter anticipated the question of concerned parents when he said: “For the promise is to **you** and to **your children**, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (v. 39).

Some years later, Paul reminded the Corinthians that children of even one converted parent are not “unclean”—they are not spiritually separated or cut off from God (1 Corinthians 7:14). In fact, they are “holy”—which means that they are unique in God’s sight and have direct access to Him. In other words, they have an open invitation or calling from God.

So, for those reared in the Church, the real question becomes: are you willing to **respond** (R.S.V.P.) to God’s invitation? God has already given you an invitation, and now it is up to you. The ball is in your court. Do not expect a “bolt out of the blue” from God, or some kind of “supernatural” religious feeling. God is not going to suddenly call your name in the middle of the night and say “I want you; this is your calling.”

At some point you realize that you are a sinner, and are headed for death unless God intervenes. You see the contrast between the curses of disobedience, and the blessings

God’s way brings—including a stable marriage with the right converted person. You want God to help you make all the major decisions in your life, including selecting your career. You also want the blessing of relative freedom from fear in the difficult years ahead, as society spins apart before the end of the age. And you understand that it is not all about “getting”—it is also about “giving.” You want to support God’s Work, so that others may hear His warnings and may share in the blessings that He has given you. You know that God will protect you, and bless and guide you, if you choose to respond (R.S.V.P.) to His invitation.

You also come to see not only that you want all the blessings and stability and peace and joy that God’s Way has to offer in this life, but also that you want to be a part of the magnificent future in His kingdom. This awesome future, as part of the Family of God, will enable you to enjoy life beyond what any physical human being has ever experienced. During the Millennium, you will be a representative of the ruling Family of God. You will have honor, position and wealth—and yet, much more importantly, you will have a totally fulfilling job helping other human beings reach their full potential!

At what age do you begin responding to God’s calling? You begin this process by beginning to seek the great God, **right now!** You do not wait until you are old enough to be baptized. You begin to seek God **now** so that, when you are old

enough, you will already want, and appreciate the value of what God has to offer (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Then, typically in your late teens or early twenties, as you begin to draw closer to God, you will experience the truth of His promise to draw closer to you (James 4:8). Notice that since God has already invited or called you, the first move is up to you. He promises to draw closer to you and bless you if you respond to His call by drawing closer to Him. How do you draw closer to God? By talking to Him daily; by

not committed adultery or fornication. But according to Christ, when we lust after another, we commit adultery or fornication in the mind—and we have also decreased our chance of happiness in marriage, as we have created a basis for comparison and may not be able to value our future mate as we should.

For every one of the Ten Commandments, there is the “letter of the law” (the physical act) and the “spirit of the law” (what we think in our mind). Even those reared in the Church, if they examine themselves

totally measure up to God’s perfection in this life. God’s Word tells us that He rewards “those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). After repentance and baptism, God will give the gift of His Spirit to anyone whom He has called (invited) who “diligently” seek Him. The key is diligently (or aggressively) seeking God, not reaching near-perfection before receiving God’s Spirit.

When you, as a young person in the Church, realize that you really do need God in your life and you *know* that you need the power of

In time we all must see, as part of our conversion process, that we are basically self-centered and selfish by nature. Conversion—the change in direction leading to eventual membership in the God Family—is changing direction from this self-centered way of life to God’s Way of life: genuine outgoing concern for others.

praying and pouring out your mind and heart to this Supreme Being who wants to share the universe with you. You also draw closer to God by daily reading and studying His written word, so you can better find answers to life’s questions, learn God’s way of life and actually, in time, begin to think like God.

If you really begin to obey God, you will find, in time, that God will lead you to initial repentance and conversion. Many may initially wonder: “What do I have to repent of? After all, I have basically lived by God’s Ten Commandments, so what is there to repent of? I haven’t committed fornication or murdered anyone” (cf. Matthew 19:20). But repentance—willingness to change—comes by realizing the difference in one’s life between the “letter” of the law and the “spirit” of the law. You may not have murdered anyone, but almost everyone has expressed hate and anger toward others. Most have

honestly, will almost certainly have to admit that they have totally broken the spirit of God’s law. It is simply human nature to do so.

In time we all must see, as part of our conversion process, that we are basically self-centered and selfish by nature. Conversion—the change in direction leading to eventual membership in the God Family—is changing direction from this self-centered way of life to God’s Way of life: genuine outgoing concern for others.

It is not unusual for young adults reared in the Church to conclude that they are simply not yet righteous enough to be baptized. They may feel a need to be “next to perfect” before God will accept them. They may think that they should have read through the Bible many times and memorized vast passages of Scripture. This is part of a clever deception by Satan, who knows that none of us will ever

God’s Spirit to transform your life, it is time to begin counseling for baptism. An ordained minister will not be looking for a personal confession, nor expect you to list your sins, but will simply help guide you in the process of seeking God. You may be asked to read and study God’s Word and various Church publications as you “count the cost” of unconditional surrender to the God of the universe.

What does “counting the cost” mean (Luke 14:28–30)? You count the cost of unconditional surrender and obedience to God by carefully analyzing what God expects of you, and deciding whether what God offers is something to which you can make a total lifelong commitment. God offers us a contract (new covenant) with terms and conditions. God provides us with His Spirit, promises to provide all our needs in this life (Matthew 6:33), offers us eternal life as a future “God

Being” in His family and promises to provide us an important and fulfilling position in the Kingdom of God, ruling over the earth. In turn, we promise to fully obey God in His way of life—without any reservations—and to put Him first in our life, ahead of everything else (Luke 14:26–27).


To accelerate this process, you should begin to ask God to help you see what you need to change in your life. When God begins to grant repentance, you will begin to see that repentance is far more than an awareness of what you have done wrong—specific sins in your life—but it is also a desire to change what you are, and a desire to overcome your self-centered and selfish nature.

Occasional fasting will also bring you closer to God, and will be strong evidence to Him that you truly are serious. As you move closer to God,

be sure to ask Him to grant you repentance (cf. Acts 5:31; 11:18), and ask Him to reveal to you that you have truly repented. Simply “joining” the Church—perhaps because you want to please your parents, or you feel you are old enough, or you want to marry someone who is a member of the Church—is not repentance! Real repentance is of the heart as well as the mind. With repentance, you want more than anything else on earth to acquire the very mind of God and to live His way of life. You want to surrender unconditionally to the Supreme God of the universe and to His fantastic plan for your life, which extends out into eternity.

Those reared by converted parents have a monumental choice to make! God has offered you an open invitation to rule with Him over this earth and, later, the entire universe!

Will you ignore your Creator, and assume that you can get more out of this life if you let the “god of this world” convince you to put off your calling and run the risk of losing your way in the world, losing your chance to be in the first resurrection (Hebrews 11:35)? Or will you accept God’s invitation to bless you in this life, and to train you to become a firstfruit—a member of His family in the Kingdom of God?

God’s invitation to you carries an R.S.V.P. He states it this way: “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days” (Deuteronomy 30:19–20). God has offered you a clear choice. Now it is your move. 

Persecution Is Coming!

(continued from page 3)


able. But they show how worldly people react when the sins of our nation are pointed out. One man wrote: “Why do you report statements made by Pat Robertson and his ilk? This guy and his buddy have already made themselves worse than the enemies of the country by their stupid outbursts in the past few weeks.”

Even though Robertson’s remarks may have been ill timed and poorly stated under the unusual circumstances, is he “worse” than Osama bin Laden and his murderous henchmen who have destroyed the lives, the hopes and dreams of hundreds of Americans—and brought untold anguish and frustration upon millions of others by their continuing terrorism?

So how are people going to view us as we faithfully preach God’s message to the world—including the powerful “Ezekiel warning” to the entire House of Israel? These people will lash out at us with a *fury* that will startle and frighten many of you brethren—especially if you are not really studying your Bible and praying so you may have God’s perspective on all of this!

In a prophetic commission to His servants which obviously extends to our time, Jesus told His disciples: “Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against par-

ents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes” (Matthew 10:21–23). And later Jesus stated: “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (vv. 28–31).

May God grant that each of us understand the true “cost” of being a true disciple of Jesus Christ! May He give us the understanding, the faith and the courage to “hang in there” even in the face of furious persecution—which will eventually come. We do not want persecution. We will try to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” We will try to avoid unnecessarily “stirring up” persecution. But, if we faithfully preach God’s Truth, it is going to come. So let us understand. And let us believe the inspired words of the Apostle Paul: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). 



International Corner...

European Report

— By Douglas Winnail

The Work in Europe is moving forward. Bank accounts have been established in the UK, Ireland, France and Holland for the receipt of tithes and offerings. Advertising in Irish publications is expanding and ads will begin running in the UK in January 2002. Advertising programs are also underway in France and the Channel Islands. The Fall Holy Day offerings have provided a financial base that will enable us to explore more avenues for preaching the gospel in Europe.

Literature is being prepared to reach the different language groups in European countries. In addition to English publications prepared in the U.S., booklets, reprints and copies of the *Tomorrow's World Bible Study Course* are being translated into French, Dutch, German and Czech. Most of the translation is being done on a volunteer basis by Church brethren. Several Web sites are also being developed that will feed into the main Church site. In September, we generated the first Web site commentary from Europe.

During the year 2001, we began building a European mailing list. We are beginning to see individuals from that mailing list request information about church attendance. We are also beginning to see individuals coming to the Living Church of God who have found their way through other groups. They are attracted by the messages, the tone of publications, the doctrinal clarity and the focus and sense of commitment they see in the Living Church of God.

In September, I made a second trip to the continent to spend the Sabbath with brethren and visitors in Holland. On Sunday I traveled with our hosts in Holland, Franz and Sabine Peeters, to Maastricht, Holland, and Aachen, Germany. We visited several cathedral treasuries where the relics of saints are housed in ornate containers of gold and silver studded with precious gems. Prayers of intercession are made to these relics (a splinter of the cross, a tuft of John the Baptist's hair, Christ's belt, etc). The prominence of a particular cathedral was often related to the significance of the relics in its possession. The worship of relics was one of the practices rejected by the Protestant Reformation.

From Aachen I traveled by train to Trier, Germany. Located on a bend in the Moselle River, Trier is reputed to be the oldest town in Germany. Trier has one of the most extensive collections of Roman ruins north of the Alps. It was one of the four capitals of the Empire and was the residence of Constantine for more than a decade. Local legends (mentioned freely in tourist literature available in Trier) assert that the city was founded 1,200 years before the founding of Rome, by Trebeta, an Assyrian prince and son of Semiramis. One purpose of my visit was to explore the origin of those legends.

On my return trip, while eating breakfast in a Belgium hotel, I learned of the terrorist attack in America. I was particularly moved by the way numerous European countries stood by the U.S. In Ireland, where all shops closed on Friday, September 14 as a day of mourning for the victims, one headline read: "The 51st State Mourns." The specter of a common

enemy is already serving as a stimulus for European countries to cooperate ever more closely together. The beast in Europe is being assembled as the U.S. moves into Afghanistan—a rugged and desolate area of the world where the armies of Britain and Russia have met humiliating defeats.

Philippines Report Ministerial Conference

—By Felipe Casing

Five ministers from the Visayas and Mindanao arrived in Manila on Friday, August 31, to take part in the Philippines Ministerial Conference along with ministers from Luzon and the U.S. In attendance were Messrs. Carl McNair and Rod McNair from the U.S., Messrs. Tex Benitez, Gideon Benitez, Felipe Casing and Benito Parbo from Mindanao, Mr. Eleno Cabahit from the Visayas and Mr. Gorgonio de Guia from Luzon. All were excited to learn about growth and progress in the Work, especially what is happening at the regional office in Makati City and at Church Headquarters in San Diego.

On Saturday, September 1, brethren from all over Luzon came over on this special day where they could meet the ministers, and together worship God.

The opening song service was very inspiring, with the brethren singing from their hearts, and for certain the rousing songs were pleasing to God. Our Regional Director, Mr. Rod McNair, gave the sermonette: "Update on the Work in the Philippines." During the announcement period there was a special occasion, as he asked all the ministers to

come up to participate in the ordination of Mr. Simeon Gonzales, long-time member of the Quezon City congregation, as a deacon. Following the announcements, Mr. Carl McNair gave the main message. He said that we are all sons and daughters of mother Eve—hence, one blood.

On Sunday, September 2, Regional Director Rod McNair opened the meetings, welcoming the ministers warmly. The introductory message was an audiotape of an address given by Dr. Meredith at the March 2001 ministerial conference held in San Diego, in which he outlined the seven major goals and themes of the Church and the Work.

After some snacks, the pastors gave their regional reports. In the afternoon, Mr. Carl McNair, Director of Church Administration, discussed the standards and qualifications of a minister.

An update on the Work followed, as our Regional Director presented statistics showing the income and expenses over the past several years.

On Monday, September 3, Mr. Carl McNair opened with the words: "Wherever I have been, I never felt like a stranger." He cited the Apostle Paul as an Apostle with a purpose, a prisoner with a cause who labored intensely, even more than the others. Mr. McNair said that despite problems we may have from time to time, we must persevere in the ministry, to carefully serve in the ways God has commissioned us to do. Before he left for the airport, he closed with these words: "It's hard to depart, but if we do the work, we will be together again, maybe next year or in God's Kingdom!" After the palatable meal together, we bid adieu to Mr. Carl McNair with handshake, hugging and uplifting words to strengthen our spirit.

The conference continued with an audiotape message on "Fundamentals of Prophecy," given by Mr. Richard Ames. The conference closed with a final taped

lecture by Dr. Meredith, titled: "Bondslaves of Christ." He reminded us of our responsibility and opportunity to serve God in helping restore Apostolic Christianity through servant leadership. It was a fitting capstone to an inspiring and productive Philippines Ministerial Conference, 2001.

Paama Island, Vanuatu

—By Namol Simone

On June 8, the Lopevi volcano had a big eruption, which caused a great disaster in all of Paama Island. The volcano eruption created an ash cloud that covered the whole island. All the sources of water were contaminated, and the water could not be used for drinking or cooking. A ship from Australia supplied us with water for a week, and after that we had to use spring water to help our families survive for the next three weeks. We have received some rain, but not enough to remove the ashes. We hope that everything will go well in the next months, and give thanks to the Lord who has kept us and has protected us during this disaster.

South Africa Report

—By Syd Hull

Sabbath services are held each Sabbath in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Pretoria and Pietermaritzburg. The Free State brethren meet once a month for services in Bloemfontein and once a month for services in Virginia. The Pretoria Church combines with Johannesburg on Holy Days.

Video groups also regularly meet in Nelspruit, George, Kimberley, Bloemfontein and Virginia.

The office is still receiving new requests for booklets and articles on a regular basis, due to *Tomorrow's*

World radio broadcasts in the Western Cape as well as previous advertising campaigns.

More than 60,000 postal articles, some of which included as many as five booklets or reprint articles, were sent out during the past year in South Africa despite the fact that postal costs have increased by an average of 60 percent per year for the last four years. It is also interesting to note that all this mailing, as well as all the other work, is being done from Mr. & Mrs. Syd Hull's home in Johannesburg.

In September, Mr. Hull held a *Tomorrow's World* lecture for all our readers in Pretoria as well as surrounding areas, following the pattern of a very successful lecture held in Cape Town earlier this year. He also held a *Tomorrow's World* lecture in George during the Feast of Tabernacles for all our readers in that area.

Papua New Guinea Report

—By Kinnear Penman

In September, at the request of Regional Director Mr. Bruce Tyler, I visited the scattered brethren in Papua New Guinea. In two years, they had had just one minister visit them—Mr. Irv Woelfle, who had been with them for last year's Feast of Tabernacles.

Papua New Guinea is a rugged and tropical country, occupying the eastern end of the island of New Guinea. New Guinea is a large island, twice the size of California and larger than Texas. It sits just south of the Equator. Travel is made very difficult by the high mountain ranges that fill most of the interior. In pre-colonial times, the isolation caused by travel difficulties led to the development of several hundred separate languages. Villagers on opposite sides of a mountain may speak different languages, but English is also widely spoken.

There are roads in coastal areas, and one central highway, but much travel is still by canoe or walking track.

In the northern town of Wewak lives deacon Peter Devis. He cares for the business of the Church, mailing out literature and organizing the Feast of Tabernacles. Because we are not yet registered as a church in PNG, there are legal limits to what we can do in preaching the gospel, but the example of members and word-of-mouth does cause interest in our message. I had the chance to counsel a man who said he knows that we are teaching God's Truth, and that the priests of his former church never answer deep questions or explain that church's teachings.

One difficulty we will face, even when we are registered, is a mindset people have towards churches. Many think that it is not a real church unless there is a church building to relate to, not understanding that God's Church is comprised of called-out people and is not a man-made building.

In Port Moresby I met a woman who had "coincidentally" asked for a visit just days before I left for Papua New Guinea. She is very supportive of our message and has started to keep the Sabbath, is avoiding unclean meats and wants to tithe and to start keeping Holy Days. We will provide her with audiotapes of *Tomorrow's World* programs and, in time, some of her inter-

ested friends and acquaintances may begin to meet with her each Sabbath.

I also met with the Genora family, who are the sole members in the city of Lae, Bennay Gitbaken (whom Mr. Tyler baptized a couple of years ago) and Florian Asu, who is profoundly deaf. All are faithful and dedicated to God's Truth. I also had the opportunity to make contact with a man with a Church of God background who wants, once again, to be fully involved in God's Work.

Please remember God's people in Papua New Guinea in your prayers. They live in hard, sometimes dangerous, conditions. They are our brothers and sisters, each striving towards the same goal as we are. LCN

Is There a "Plan of God"?

(continued from page 6)

other goat, called the *azazel*, bore the sins of the nation and was banished to the wilderness by a suitable man (Leviticus 16:21–22). Jewish tradition labels the *azazel* as the "prince of the fallen angels" (Satan; see Ezekiel 28:13–19). The Day of Atonement is a constant reminder that Satan—the real author of this world's problems (Ephesians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 4:4)—will eventually be banished (Isaiah 14:16–17; Ezekiel 28:19; Revelation 20:1–3). This is a crucial part of God's plan to eliminate the cause of evil.

The Feast of Tabernacles, coming after the pictured return of Jesus Christ and the binding of Satan, depicts a time of rejoicing—a time of peace and plenty (Leviticus 23:33–40; Deuteronomy 16:13–15) when the saints will rule with Christ for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:4). It comes at the main fall harvest, and is also called the Feast of Ingathering (Exodus 23:16; 34:22). This is a prophesied period in God's plan when the law will go forth from Jerusalem to all the world (Isaiah 2:2–4), when nations will learn the way to peace, cities will be rebuilt (Isaiah 61:4), diseases healed and the environment restored (Isaiah 35:5–7). All nations will be taught to observe this great festival (Zechariah 14:16–21). Thus it is hardly surprising that Jesus urged His own disciples to keep the Feast, following His example (John 7:1–14). The Feast of Tabernacles offers an annual foretaste and reminder of this exciting time, so it is not forgotten.

The last day of the Feast is a separate festival (see Leviticus 23:39; John 7:37) picturing the culmination of God's plan of salvation for mankind. An understanding of

Revelation 20 shows that after the 1,000-year period, a great judgment will occur (Revelation 20:11–12) during which everyone who had lived, but had no chance to really know God, will be resurrected (Revelation 20:5). God, in His great mercy, intends that all people should have an opportunity for salvation (2 Peter 3:9). Those who had lived, but had not been called or had not received a chance to hear and understand the gospel, will have their opportunity during this time. This will not be a resurrection to immediate condemnation or reward, but will involve a time (probably 100 years—see Isaiah 65:20) in which to learn the truth and decide to live it. In the plan of God, judgment is not an arbitrary sentencing, but a process (1 Peter 4:17) that involves learning to make right decisions (Deuteronomy 30:15–20). The Last Great Day is an annual reminder that those not called now *are not lost*. This is a remarkable provision of the plan of God that reveals His sense of justice and mercy.

While critics may assert that the Holy Days need no longer be kept, and that there is no great "plan of God" or purpose being worked out on earth, Scripture and common sense indicate otherwise! Life seems empty and confusing, even to many professing Christians, because mainstream Christianity has stopped keeping the Holy Days and has lost sight of the great plan of God. This is why many search in vain for the meaning of life but simply never find it. If your mind has been opened to understand this precious truth, do not let it slip away. Do not be deceived by clever arguments. Prove what you know to be true. Make sure you understand what Scripture clearly teaches. Let God use you to help proclaim this glorious gospel to the world. This is why you have been allowed to see God's great plan and understand the purpose of human life. LCN

Prophetic Events Speed Up

(continued from page 2)

together the Arab nations in a powerful union based upon their religious and political fervor.

All of America's and Britain's expenditures in money, military equipment and hardware and other resources will tend to drain us and thus help further "break" our pride of power (Leviticus 26:19), even if we win some limited victories against the Afghanis, Iraqis or other nations in the Middle East. This will, in turn, make it *much easier* for the coming European Empire to conquer us when that time comes!

This "war on terrorism" could be used by Satan to distract America and Britain from the really **huge** threat brought about by the revived Holy Roman Empire! As we become totally absorbed in the "war against terrorism," we may forget to analyze or realize the **enormous** threat posed by a coming German-dominated Roman Empire rising in Europe even as I write!

Behind the scenes, the Europeans are quietly putting together one of the most powerful military and political unions in history. They have already begun to vote on laws and regulations to bind the peoples of Europe together in a type of Roman Catholic-dominated society that is abhorrent to many of American and British descent. But because of our distractions—including the current "war on terrorism"—most American and British political leaders are not remotely aware of the danger that is rising in central Europe.

Therefore, we—as true Christians—need quietly to obey God, *trust* in God and *do* the Work of God—preparing the way for Christ's coming which is the **only** solution to the horrible mess the world is becoming. God needs to become more of an absolute *reality* in our thinking. But we also need to develop real *patience*. For, although many would like to think that the present calamities mean Christ's return will be within the next three or four years, we need to remember that even though we are having some very upsetting threats to our peaceable way of life, the Jewish people in Israel have had to endure this kind of threat for *decades*—and it is still going on!

And we also need to realize that there is still—at this writing—no "Beast," no human dictator over a European Empire; there is still no "great false prophet" performing miracles and fully bringing together the great false church; and there is still a great deal of power and "fight" left in the British-descended and American peoples. Before the final end of this age and the Great Tribulation, all of this will change. God will certainly deal with us as a nation, *humble* us as we have never been humbled and bring our peoples to the point that they will finally be ready to "listen" to His Truth.

A powerful prophecy for the "House of Israel" is spoken of in Ezekiel 6:11, and continues right on through Ezekiel 7, where God tells our peoples, in what is truly an end-time prophecy: "Disaster will come upon disaster, and rumor will be upon rumor. Then they will seek a vision from a prophet; but the law

will perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders" (v. 26). So a *continuing series* of disasters, upsets, "rumors" about coming attacks or "anthrax poisoning" or other types of disasters will sweep our society—probably from now on. We need to be fully aware of this!

Brethren, as Sir Winston Churchill said during some of the darkest days of World War II: "If it is to be a war of nerves, *let's make sure our nerves are strong!*" Let us always remember that if we will truly "walk with God" and serve Him faithfully, He has promised to protect us and work all things for good. God tells the true Philadelphians: "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" (Revelation 3:10). So we do need to be patient and to **persevere**. Then, we will be protected from this "hour of trial"—the Great Tribulation to come upon the whole world. And, as I have reminded you before, please be encouraged always by Jesus' words describing our times in Luke 21:28: "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." So as these prophetic events speed up, we know that Christ's coming is just *that much closer!*

Meanwhile, we have a tremendous opportunity and responsibility to be the "spear point" of the Work of God in these end times. Let us go "all out" in a zealous and sacrificial manner to show God that our hearts are truly in His Work and in preparing for His soon-coming Kingdom.

Roderic Meredith

2001 Feast of Tabernacles Review

The year 2001 was a year of spiritual and physical growth for the Living Church of God. Feast attendance around the world increased by more than 8 percent over 2000. Attendance in the United States and Canada was up by more than 6 percent, while some smaller regions saw even more spectacular growth, such as Mexico, which saw its Feast attendance increase by 60 percent over last year. Other regions experiencing substantial growth included Australasia, up 40 percent over last year—including an 89 percent increase in Australia alone—and Kenya, up by more than 70 percent.

Shortly before the annual fall Feast season, the U.S. was attacked on September 11 by terrorists, and many of its citizens are still feeling much anxiety. Yet God's people moved ahead, in honor and obedience to Him, and kept His annual Feasts. Those who traveled have almost universally reported that the people they met have been supportive, expressing their upset at what has happened and their desire for a more peaceful world. In this environment, it is members of God's Church who came to towns around the globe as "ambassadors" of the peaceful world to come, the Kingdom of God on the earth.

Living Church of God brethren gathered in 40 sites and 24 countries to keep the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. The following accounts, from many of those sites, are meant to share a small taste of the joy and peace they experienced.

Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Beautiful fall colors greeted Feastgoers in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. This was the first time that this city of 55,000 had played host to the Feast of Tabernacles, and the community greeted us warmly. Services were conducted at the Quality Inn Conference Center, with most of the brethren lodging in the same facility. Approximately 250 attended the Feast, with the maximum attendance being 241.

People came from both coasts of Canada, the southern U.S., the Midwest and Alaska.

The messages were timely and inspiring. Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ames began the Feast in Eau Claire, where Mr. Ames gave two sermons: "Visualize the Kingdom" and "Remember Who We Are." Mr. and Mrs. Carl McNair concluded the Feast in Eau Claire; Mr. McNair's messages were: "Servants in the Kingdom of God" and "Hope of Mankind: Last Great Day." Other sermon topics were: "Worship in Tomorrow's World," "The Increase of His Government"; "When Mankind Will Listen to God"; "Kings and Priests" and "Strangers Here Below."

The singles enjoyed hiking and biking along the scenic Red Cedar Trail on Wednesday afternoon and ate dinner together that evening with Mr. and Mrs. Ames in attendance. The following afternoon the teens and pre-teens ate pizza and skated. Contests at the youth activity included limbo on skates, a hillbilly race and speed races. Thursday evening was the Family Dance. A hula-hoop competition, tug of war, mummy wrap, moonwalk, soda guzzle, and turtle slides were intermixed with dancing to add variety to an enjoyable evening. On Friday at the Seniors' Luncheon, Mr. Davy Crockett, pastor from Arkansas, gave an inspiring and humorous message tailored for the "seasoned" citizens. On Saturday evening, many brethren gathered for a movie at the conference center with snacks and fellowship during the intermission.

Sunday afternoon was Family Day at Carson Park, where the Merrill, Wisconsin, congregation provided a genuine Wisconsin-style cookout, with games and activities on a beautiful fall afternoon. At the elders, hosts and deacons luncheon on the Last Great Day, Mr. McNair spoke about the importance of enduring and not giving up. It was a memo-



rable Feast with God's spirit evident in acts of service, attentive audiences and loving fellowship.

Florence, Oregon

In a friendly town of 7,000 on the central Oregon coast, more than 230 gathered this year to keep the Feast in a warm and hospitable setting. Temperatures were pleasant throughout the Feast, and rain fell rarely—never disrupting activities.

Feastgoers heard sermons from Mr. Don Davis, Dr. Jeff Fall, Mr. Terence Graves, Mr. Mike Norris, Mr. Gary Ullerick and Mr. Harold Way. Mr. Graves not only spoke; he also served as Choir Director and ably led approximately 20 brethren taking part in the Festival Choir. Services were made especially pleasant and convenient by the Florence Events Center, with its comfortable theater, large stage and ample room for social activities.

On Thursday afternoon, brethren gathered for Family Day in nearby Woahink State Park, feasting on hot dogs, hamburgers and picnic fixings and enjoying homemade blackberry pies for dessert. Brethren spent hours fellowshiping, and many of the younger attendees flew kites and played games on the park's expansive grassy fields.

Sunday evening featured the Family Fun Night, where brethren showed their talents—some singing and some playing piano, while others' talents ranged from sleight-of-hand to acrobatics.

Many enjoyed sightseeing at nearby attractions such as the sea lion caves, the lighthouse and the sand dunes (where dune buggy rides were available), and exploring Florence's "Old Town" with its variety of small shops and boutiques. Throughout the Feast, a paddle-wheel boat took enthusiastic brethren on cruises, where they were treated to lunch or dinner as they traveled along the scenic Oregon coastline.

Glen Rose, Texas

More than 200 brethren descended upon the small, sleepy town of Glen Rose, Texas for this year's Feast of Tabernacles. Accommodations for many of the brethren were within walking distance of the Expo Center where services were held. The days were sunny and warm, with temperatures ranging from the high 70s to low 80s.

Inspiring sermonettes and sermons reminded us of how close Christ's return is, and how important it is for us to be committed to God's Work and be true watchmen.

On Thursday, the Expo Center was the focal point for Family Day. It was transformed into a "carnival" atmosphere. There were booths, balloons, carnival games, face painting and lots of prizes to go around. For supper everyone enjoyed a lip-smacking Texas barbecue, while entertainment was provided by a Church-member bluegrass band. Other entertainment later that evening included a talent show.

In recognition of our senior citizens, a luncheon was held at the Potter's Cover Restaurant, which just happened to be at a senior citizen's retirement center. All were treated to dessert.



On Sunday, there was a Church cookout at the Dinosaur Valley State Park. Glen Rose is famous for dinosaur fossils and the state park is renowned for its dinosaur footprints.

The Last Great Day service ended with a resounding rendition of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" by the 15-member choir, directed by Mr. Carl Hubble.

Jackson, Wyoming

Approximately 175 service-oriented brethren gathered at Jackson Hole, Wyoming to Feast in the shadow of the Grand Tetons, rising to 13,770 feet—more than 7,500 feet above us. Crisp mornings, warm afternoons, spectacular fall foliage, flowing streams, abundant wildlife and magnificent mountains continually reminded us of the awesome Creator God. The exceptional Walk Festival Hall, with its marvelous acoustics, proved a splendid, spacious setting for us to feed on the Word of God. Exceptionally high quality, convenient housing provided comfortable "booths" to refresh and sustain us.

Inspired speakers expanded our vision, deepened our knowledge and broadened our understanding of the wonderful world tomorrow. We were exhorted to redouble our efforts as we strive to restore Apostolic Christianity. The depth and breadth of the sermons was breathtaking.

One hundred fifty-three of us were able to spend a delightful afternoon together on the banks of clear, cold Fish Creek for an old fashioned "Jackson" barbecue on family day. All this combined to produce a cozy, family environment where we could all bask in God's Love. This marvelous experience is perhaps best summed up by the words of one of our brothers, "in 40 years of Feasting, I've never experienced such a loving, warm environment as this." Truly, this was an inspiring experience in every sense of the word. Perhaps it may just have been the best Feast yet.

Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri

More than 550 enthusiastic brethren and visitors attended the Feast at Lake of the Ozarks. Activities included a paddle boat dinner cruise for singles of all ages, family night, a teen and young adult dance, a nature excursion, an afternoon of testing skills on the go-cart track and a delicious luncheon for seniors.

Brethren enjoyed many planned activities, but the teens and young adults especially enjoyed one unplanned activity. The second day of the Feast featured plenty of sun, a blue sky dotted with beautiful clouds, and a perfect 75-degree temperature. One might think that everyone would be out on one of the many golf courses surrounding the lake, or out in a boat, but that is not where guest speaker Mr. John Ogywn found himself on Wednesday afternoon. Instead, approximately 45



young adults and older teens surrounded him, querying him about doctrinal, prophetic and Christian-living topics.

These spontaneous Bible studies that took place here

(as did similar studies at Panama City) show the yearning our 17- to 25-year-olds have for recapturing knowledge that has largely been lost to their generation; knowledge often taken for granted by their parents and elders. This encouraging attitude was shared by all ages, as the focus here was definitely on the powerful messages given by Mr. Ogwyn and by the other guest speakers: Dr. Meredith and Mr. Carl McNair.

Ocean City, Maryland

God has smiled upon our first-ever Feast of Tabernacles in Ocean City, Maryland. Not only did He provide summer-like weather the first few days, but He also blessed the site with traditional autumn temperatures the remainder of the Festival. It was warm enough for swimming early in the Feast and several did enjoy a late season dip in the Atlantic Ocean and sunbathing on the beach.

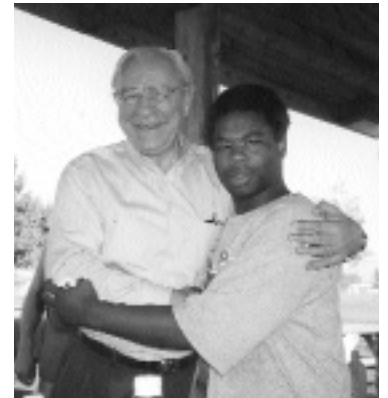
For natural wonders, God treated Feastgoers to sunrises and moonrises out of the ocean, schools of swimming dolphins off the coast, migrating monarch butterflies and wild ponies at a nearby national park. For nostalgic automobile-philes, there were parades of classic cars on the boardwalk.

More than 330 attended the Feast here, where they were blessed not only by Dr. and Mrs. Meredith's visit at the

start of the Feast, but also by a visit from our other telecast presenter, Mr. Ames, and his wife Kathryn who performed violin special music. Sermonettes and sermons together showed how to "visualize the Kingdom."

Activities included a speedboat cruise and beach sports for teens, dinner and stage show for singles, outdoor family day, blessing of the little children, seniors' luncheon, dinner-dance and leaders' luncheon.

Brethren from the U.S., Canada and Europe joined together to celebrate a foretaste of the Millennium in harmony and joy.



Panama City, Florida

Basking in picture postcard perfect weather, listening to inspiring messages, and enjoying fantastic fellowship, nearly 1,000 brethren and family gathered at the Marina Civic Center on the Gulf of Mexico in Panama City.

On the opening night, Dr. Meredith's video set the tone for the Feast. On the morning of the first day of the Feast, site coordinator Mr. Benjamin Faulkner, expounding on Deuteronomy 14, urged brethren to use opportunities at the Feast to learn how to fear God. Sermons by Messrs. Rand Millich, Don Haney, and Lambert Greer fed the congregation with strong spiritual food describing our future, our challenges, our opportunities and our rewards.

Dr. Meredith spoke on Friday and Sabbath, and addressed more than 150 senior citizens at a luncheon on Friday afternoon. Mr. Faulkner asked the assembled guests, "What Is a Senior Citizen?" At a luncheon on Sabbath afternoon, Dr. Meredith spoke to approximately 100 elders, deacons, deaconesses, hosts and Festival department heads.

As usual, the Children's Choir was a smash hit! The site was blessed with splendid special music all during the Feast. In a slight break from tradition, Mr. Faulkner asked the Festival Chorale to sing "A Closing Prayer" before the final congregational hymn.

A highlight of the Feast was the blessing of the little children on Sunday morning. Twenty-eight children were involved in this special ceremony. Other activities included the annual teen dance, Family Day on the beach, a bowling party and a singles dance. Each morning many teens took advantage of the opportunity to mingle with others in the Teen Room before services. Without much advance notice, but with enthusiastic practice, an all-

teen chorale presented special music on Monday. A teen Bible Study presented by Mr. Randy Kobernat was well attended. Everything about the festival caused many people to remark that this was, indeed, the best Feast ever!

Pigeon Forge, Tennessee

Nearly 600 brethren convened this year in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee at the Smoky Mountain Convention Center. Out of the midst of fear from terrorism, sorrow, and hopelessness of this present evil world, God called His people to a Feast of peace, joy, and life-changing hope. “We are preparing for Jesus Christ’s return!” stated Dr. Meredith in his opening video message. In his second sermon, he exhorted, “We are in a final phase of God’s Work!” He explained that if we are found worthy, God will use us to do great exploits—fulfilling the prophecies found in the book of Daniel and in Revelation 3—regarding the Philadelphian Church and end-time Work of God. Throughout the Feast, the brethren were inspired to remember their awesome calling and future extraordinary responsibilities in God’s Family! “This Feast, God wanted us to think big and keep the big picture in mind,” commented Mr. Steven Smith, member from Columbus, Ohio. Many of God’s people expressed that every message seemed spiritually motivating and riveting—especially in light of the horrific terrorist attacks on September 11. Though sobered by these events, the brethren seemed at peace, joyful and filled with hope for the future.

Highlighting this eight-day annual observance were a variety of activities geared toward the family. Our senior citizens savored a delightful banquet of delicious food, fellowship, and light entertainment. In addition, all local hosts, deacons, department heads, families, and ministers savored a dinner banquet capped off by encouraging words from Mr. Ames.

The singles were able to enjoy several opportunities for fellowship and excitement including a luncheon scheduled early in the Feast. The teens made new friends and renewed old friendships, while participating at laser tag, go-carting and arcades. In addition, they also enjoyed a breakfast of doughnuts and hot chocolate, followed by an insightful Bible study. However, the highlight of all the activities was the Family Dance. Brethren enjoyed a relaxing evening of fellowship, and fun, dancing to a variety of music.

The peace and joy remained constant throughout the Feast. The song services were joyously enthusiastic, as

God’s people lifted their voices in thanksgiving and praise to God. The efforts and coordination of Feast music by Val and Elaine Burgett were simply inspirational.

Feast 2001 is now the benchmark of inspiration—the “best Feast ever.” The big picture has been indelibly etched in our minds once again! Though the world lives in anxiety and fear of what may happen, God’s people have been supercharged and strengthened to reach forward toward the glorious calling of the sons of God!



Tucson, Arizona

More than 380 brethren gathered this year to keep the Feast in Tucson, Arizona, where they were blessed with great weather throughout the Feast. Temperatures stayed in the mid-80s, with beautiful blue skies and just the right number of puffy clouds. Messages were well received, and the atmosphere was one of unity, warmth and peace. There were plenty of opportunities for fellowship, and activities were well-attended.

The brethren had a full spiritual “plate” and plenty of variety with messages from Mr. Carl McNair, Mr. David Burson, Mr. Glen Gilchrist, Mr. John Ogwyn, Mr. Gerald Shoquist, Mr. Len Carper, Mr. Ron Wheeler, Mr. Bill Schutz and Mr. Gaylyn Bonjour.



Everyone enjoyed the music, directed by Mr. Dave Polosky. The Children’s Choir, directed by Miss Debbie Woods, had 31 participants and, as usual, “stole the show.”

Cranbrook, British Columbia, Canada

Brethren in Cranbrook enjoyed an uplifting and inspiring eight days of encouraging messages and fellowship. Feastgoers came from as far away as New Zealand to keep the Feast among the 180 brethren gathered in this truly millennial site, with perfect weather—no rain or snow, and temperatures ranging from the 40s to the 70s Fahrenheit—good food and affordable prices. Approximately one-third of those attending came from the U.S.

Dr. Jeff Fall was the guest speaker early in the Feast; Mr. Charles Bryce, Director of the Canadian Work, visited for a few days in the middle of the Feast. Mr. Dennis Chornomaz came up from New Jersey and helped with the speaking assignments, while his wife Evelyn served in first aid.

Many commented that they really enjoyed the Evening Family Social. People played their choice of numerous board games, and soft music was provided for those who wanted to dance. Other Festival activities included volleyball and swimming, and a Family Day at Fort Steele that revealed how the earlier settlers had lived. The many hiking trails, the hot springs and the majestic mountains nearby gave everyone the option to explore and enjoy. With friendly people, affordable prices and millennial environment, this was a site appreciated by all.

Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada

Keeping the Feast of Tabernacles on Prince Edward Island was the desire of nearly every one of God's people living in Atlantic Canada. Its location is central to the people of the state of Maine, and the provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

The weather on the island is mild during October. Daytime temperatures are usually around 70 degrees, with nighttime temperatures between 50 and 60 Fahrenheit, allowing a good night's sleep.

The people of the Island and the administration of St. Jean's Private School, where we met, treat Church members well and continue to ask us back. Since work is not plentiful and income is low for brethren in this area, they would have to struggle to attend the Feast in other countries. Even going to Montreal is too costly for many in Atlantic Canada, so they prefer to remain in the Maritimes. The monetary exchange rate favors foreign visitors, especially Americans, encouraging transfers from overseas who want to take advantage of their money going further.



Saint-Sauveur, Quebec, Canada

One hundred and seventy-one happy brethren assembled in the small hamlet of Saint Sauveur Quebec, Canada, to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. Warm temperatures prevailed as Feastgoers experienced the beauty of the "changing of the leaves" on the

slopes of the magnificent Laurentian Mountains. Some snow fell but, alas, not enough for the ski enthusiasts.

Highlights of the Feast were powerful sermons by Dr. Meredith, Canadian Regional Pastor Mr. Charles E. Bryce and visiting speaker Mr. Paul Shumway. Everyone who attended the Feast in Saint Sauveur agreed that there was an atmosphere of warmth and friendship that seemed to grow as the Feast progressed. Many commented that this was definitely their "best Feast ever."

More than half of those who attended in St. Sauveur have been attending with the Church of God for more than 20 years. Of the 41 seniors who attended the senior luncheon, 39 had been part of God's Church for more than 17 years.

Arklow, Ireland

The first Living Church of God Feast in Ireland was held in Arklow, a small oceanside town about 40 miles south of Dublin. One hundred thirty brethren from Ireland, the UK, France, Sweden, Germany, the U.S. and Australia gathered at the Feast site nestled between the scenic Wicklow Hills and the Irish Sea.

Stirring messages focused on the Kingdom of God; warm and stimulating fellowship of like-minded brethren and inspiring music were the high points of the Feast. Activities included a banquet and Irish Family Night, a concert by the Arklow Silver Band and bus trips to points of historical and cultural significance—Hill of Tara, Trim Castle, the mountain lakes of Glendalough and the Waterford Crystal Factory.

Port d'Albret, France

One hundred twenty-three brethren enjoyed Le Fete des Tabernacles in the beauty of southwestern France at the resort of Port d'Albret, which is near Soustons and Vieux Boucau just west of the Pyrenees Mountains and the Spanish border. Evangelist Dibar Aparian presided over the joyful occasion attended by brethren from many countries including France, Switzerland, Germany, The Netherlands, Spain, Britain, Ireland, Belgium, Denmark, Canada, Canary Islands and U.S. How good and how pleasant it was to see brethren dwelling together in such unity!

Meaty sermons and sermonettes were supplemented by excellent provincial food and the fine local wines of the Landais region of France. The brethren dined together and enjoyed multiple courses, followed by a service of delicious cheeses and fruits, prepared by the resort's chef.

On a typical day, lunch consisted of *Avocat au Thon*, *Agneau Grille aux Herbes*, *Gratin Dauphinois*, *Assiette des*



Fromages, and *Corbeille de Fruits*. That evening the brethren enjoyed *Tarte aux Poireaux*, *Caille aux Raisons*, *Pommes Duchesse*, *Farandole de Poivrons*, *Salade Verte*, *Fromage* and *Eclair au Cafe*. Both meals were served with the fine wines of the region. The French certainly showed that they know how to dine!

After services, brethren enjoyed the beautiful French countryside, perhaps with a leisurely walk to the broad beaches to view the thunderous North Atlantic surf. Other afternoons included a bus tour of the St. Emilion wine-growing region near Bordeaux and a sightseeing and shopping tour of the town of St. Jean de Luz. Brethren also visited the ancient Chateau d'Urbie and were treated to a tour by the Viscount himself, whose family has been involved in the history of the chateau for centuries.

The warm days were followed by cool evenings featuring good fellowship and time for study and reflection in the idyllic setting.

Tugan, Queensland, Australia

The Giver of every good and perfect gift gave us a Feast to remember—spiritually and physically—by the sun-drenched sands of this Pacific paradise on the Gold Coast in southeast Queensland. In perfect weather, brethren enjoyed the vast stretches of beach and surf each day and admired the beauty of the nearby mountain terrain formed by a massive pre-historic volcanic rim. The real gold on this Gold Coast was found in the Tugan Community building where “veins of gold” were opened to our understanding as brethren listened to sermons from God’s ministry. “Meat in due season” was given by the Australasian Regional Director, Bruce Tyler; visiting speaker from the

U.S., Mr. Ben Whitfield, and Festival coordinator Mr. Dayrell Tanner. All members were especially inspired by the special video sermons from Dr. Meredith on the first and last days of the Feast. The 145 in attendance came from Canada, Ireland, the U.S., New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia. For about a dozen people, this foretaste of the coming Kingdom of God was their very first Feast of Tabernacles. Others were attending their 43rd Feast. Activities included a Family night of challenging games organized by the Melbourne brethren; a talent show, revealing the musical, artistic and comic ability of many of God’s people; a peaceful cruise for the seniors through the nearby canals and waterways; a spit-roast feast, appreciated by all for the mid-day meal on the first day of the Feast and the Last Great Day and visits to the bird sanctuary and animal park with its exotic Australian wildlife.

Surely this is a foretaste of what the Millennium will be like, when all the families of the earth celebrate the Feast together. In this age of terrorism, God blessed us with His perfect peace and safety, beauty and harmony, good health and happiness—truly an outstanding Feast—the best ever!

Middleton Beach, Australia

Albany, a delightful historical town on the south coast of Western Australia was the site for the west Aussie brethren to keep the Feast of Tabernacles this year. The actual area where God placed His name was Middleton Beach, a suburb of Albany, at a French-oriented Restaurant and Conference facility. Thirty brethren enjoyed the well-appointed setting, the inspiring sermons, good weather, fine dining, and many interesting outdoor activities. The Kalgan River boat trip, with a running commentary on the history of the area, was memorable and to walk at a height of 40 meters on a shaky treetop walk through the Valley of the Giants is a good way to acquire a bird’s-eye view of God’s creation.



The rugged south coast provides many inspiring views which cannot all be seen during one Feast, but are something to look forward to at future Feasts. One highlight this year was the visit by Mr. and Mrs. Ben Whitfield from the U.S. After serving in Ngongataha in New Zealand and Tugan in Queensland, Australia, they spent the last day of the Feast and the Last Great Day at Middleton Beach.

Ngongataha, New Zealand

There were 14 in attendance for the Feast in Ngongataha, a small resort town just outside of Rotorua, New Zealand. Affordable Willowhaven was the festival location this year for the brethren in New Zealand. The site offered a small conference center with accommodations for everyone desiring to stay there. It was peaceful and idyllic. Every morning one would wake up to the sound of birds, and the sight of ducks and geese swimming on the lake. Every night, brethren could see the constellations in the night sky, along with the full moon that shone brightly.

This was one of the more intimate Feast sites, and all the brethren were very committed to being involved in God's Work. Many of those attending were new to LCG this year, and are excited about the Work of God and what is being done through the Living Church of God under Dr. Meredith's leadership.

Port Vila, Vanuatu

This year God's people again met in the capital of Vanuatu, Port Vila. Attendance averaged approximately 30, with some attending the Feast for the very first time. Travel from outlying islands is difficult and expensive but members had made a real effort to save their second tithe faithfully.

Services were held in a government-owned building which provided excellent facilities, and which may become a place for regular Sabbath services. For the first part of the Feast, Mr. Kinnear Penman delivered two sermons on the meaning of the Feast. On the first Holy Day and Last Great Day, members enjoyed catered meals together.

One evening, the Tahireve family organized a meal during which brethren were entertained by one of Vanuatu's top cabaret artists. This young lady sang a variety of uplifting secular and gospel songs. Her final song was about the value of friendship, and Church members responded by singing an impromptu performance of "We Are Family Now and Forever." An afternoon picnic at a local beach and an evening talent show rounded out the family-based fellowship that members shared.

Sierra de la Ventana, Argentina

Sierra de la Ventana, a beautiful location near Bahía Blanca, a province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, was the site where Church members from Argentina and Chile gathered to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Twenty-five brethren, some traveling for 27 hours, came together to observe the Feast in a beautiful family environment.

Brethren enjoyed such activities as Bible studies, games, a talent show, a dance, and a traditional Argentinian beef grill. The activities enhanced the spirit of unity, warmth and joy, and deepened the bonds of friendship among the brethren.

During the first half of the Feast, Mr. Mario Hernandez provided great spiritual food. His messages were complemented every day with sermonettes given by the hosts from Chile and Argentina. During the second half of the Feast, powerful and inspiring messages continued, thanks to the pre-recorded sermon videos. Plans are already underway to keep the Feast in Chile next year, and the Chilean brethren are already working on the arrangements!

Barbosa, Colombia

Brethren kept the Feast this year in Barbosa, 30 minutes north of Medellin. This comfortable country site is located at the base of a big mountain, facing a river-crossed valley. The weather was exceptional, allowing Feastgoers to engage in many different activities.

High attendance was 52, including visitors from North America, Venezuela and Puerto Rico. Activities for young and old alike included an ecological walk, a visit to the water park, a delicious grill and several sports mornings.

This Feast was characterized by brotherly love. Everyone was filled with joy and united in the same spirit. There was great enthusiasm for Mr. Mario Hernandez's sermons, which had great prophetic content and exhorted both youngsters and adults to gain more spiritual maturity.

We had the joy of sharing two new baptisms during the Feast: Mrs. Gloria Ortiz of the Medellin congregation, who is a living example of God's healing intervention; and Mrs. Ana Lilia from Cali.

This year's Feast in Colombia will be remembered as a one of spiritual growth and brotherly love in spite of the difficulties and trials that brethren face in this troubled country.

Huhuetaenango, Guatemala

This year, brethren celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day at a comfortable hotel in the skirts of the Cuchumatanes mountain range, very close to the city of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, bordered to the north and west by the Mexican state of Chiapas.

The main messages during the Feast were given by Dr. Meredith (dubbed videotapes interpreted by Mr. Mario Hernandez, Director of the Spanish Work) and by Mr. Hernandez, who sent his Feast video sermons. Elder Jorge Schaubeck gave five sermons during the Feast as well.

This location turned out to be excellent for all the outdoor activities. The children were able to enjoy ample space for their games and for the special Children's Day.



Brethren enjoyed wonderful weather that the Eternal, in His mercy, had the kindness to grant.

During the Feast, the

Guatemala church had its first baptism since the Living Church of God started. Miss Audy Patricia Cardona Ramírez, age 22, from Colomba, Quetzaltenango, surrendered to Jesus Christ and was baptized in the waters of Selegua River.

After the Feast, everyone returned to their homes, satisfied with the joy of having experienced fraternal union for eight days, strengthened by the spiritual food received and recharged with goals for next year.

Georgetown, Guyana

The Feast of Tabernacles 2001 was held at the Oceanview International Hotel, situated about three miles outside central Georgetown, along the east coast of Demerara. From this location, one could look right over the sea wall into the Atlantic Ocean. Services were held in three locations on different days of the Feast. For some days, one of two air-conditioned rooms was used, while on other days brethren were accommodated in the natural outdoor setting by the poolside, where they found the breeze of the southeast trade winds, coming from across the Atlantic Ocean, very refreshing.

Sermons on the first and second days of the Feast, and on the Last Great Day, were given by Mr. Fitzroy Greeman. On the fourth and fifth days, messages were given by Mr. Hugh Wilson. Videotaped sermons supplemented these live sermons throughout the rest of the Feast.

Brethren enjoyed a family fun day, family lunch and barbecue, senior citizens' luncheon, children's party, singles' fun and games day and a cultural presentation.



Because of the enjoyable time shared by all, farewells were especially hard for some, who did not want it to come to an end.

Martinique

This year the brethren in Martinique celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in their own country. A total of 26 in attendance had a wonderful Feast. They were blessed with good weather when they visited a forest.

The brethren listened to recorded sermons by Dr. Meredith and Mr. Apartian. The Martinique brethren hope to travel to France next year to keep the Feast.

Negril, Jamaica

Amidst lush vegetation at Negril Cabins Resort, Negril, Jamaica, 112 brethren rejoiced at the Feast of Tabernacles—75 local and 37 from overseas.

Brethren enjoyed activities including Jamaica Night, senior's luncheon and Family Fun Day. The Youth Day activities had to be cancelled because of the threat of Hurricane Iris on Sunday, October 7, when brethren met instead for Bible studies at their various hotels.

The messages were inspiring and uplifting and had the brethren very upbeat about what lies ahead. The message for the Last Great Day was very encouraging and everyone left the Feast with renewed vision.

Oaxtepec, Mexico

In the land where the emperors went to take their vacations, brethren gathered to hear about how to become kings and priests in the coming Kingdom of God. More than 110 gathered for the Feast in Oaxtepec, Mexico, near Mexico City.

For the last four years, Mexico has been the combined Feast site for Church members in Costa Rica, Puerto Rico and, of course, Mexico. As always happens, some adventurous brethren from the U.S. decided to cross the border and try out their Spanish dictionaries for real. Happily, 12 this year did just that, and none of

them were missing at the end of the Feast. They are either very smart or they stayed close to their dictionaries all the time (or both).

This year saw an increase of 100 percent in Feast attendance compared to last year! This is the result of the *Tomorrow's World* radio program that is going to the most

populous city on the earth—Mexico City. Thanks to God and the efforts of Mr. Mario Hernandez, the program is producing material for the Kingdom. There was one bap-



tism during the Feast, and others want to be baptized in the near future.

The people of Mexico have a special warmth, difficult to find in the world today, and this is one characteristic that makes this Feast site so enjoyable. Brethren all stayed in the same vacation center with no traffic, no cars to the meeting place and no red lights—just a big park with huge, flamboyant trees. Everyone even fit perfectly in the same Feast picture! May our Father grant a year of spiritual growth for all of us, and make us fit into His family forever.

Tobago

Sixty-two brethren journeyed from Trinidad by ferry or air to Tobago for the Feast. They were joined by 14 brethren from Barbados and one from the U.S. Services were held at the beautiful Tropikist Hotel at Store Bay, in a newly built conference room, overlooking the blue Caribbean Sea.

One highlight of the Feast was the blessing of having two local elders, Mr. Hugh Wilson from Jamaica, and Mr. Fitzroy Greeman from Guyana, to share most of the sermons. Brethren were told that we will know when Christ is about to return, that we are special to God even if we are not high achievers according to this world, that God should be number one in our lives, that we should seek godly peace and stay with the truth. Videotaped sermon, including Dr. Meredith's messages and other sermons on building the fear of God and qualities of Christian leadership, completed a full millennial diet.

Activities included a picnic on a secluded private beach, a trip on a glass-bottom boat to a coral reef and bird sanctuary on a small island, and a dinner/dance. A tropical storm was forecast during the dinner/dance but God's intervention was seen in causing the storm to bypass the island. The ferry that many brethren use to return to their homes broke down during the Feast but, significantly, resumed service in time for brethren to leave.

Brethren were sobered by the strong meat received, and inspired by the experience of being in God's presence and having a foretaste of His future kingdom.

Bamburi Beach, Kenya

Some 94 enthusiastic local brethren, speaking two languages, descended on the beautiful Ocean View Beach Hotel, at Bamburi Beach, north of Mombasa, to keep this year's Feast of Tabernacles in Kenya. The mainly local Feastgoers came from southwestern, eastern, central and coastal Kenya; brethren from the western region had to travel

approximately 1,200 miles round trip.

Even though English was the main language spoken, simultaneous translations were provided in Luo (a local dialect spoken by the majority of the Church here) by Mr. Lukas Ogada from Ndhiwa. Everyone was inspired by live messages by Mr. Ernest Owino and taped messages from Dr. Meredith, Mr. Ames, Mr. Carl McNair, Mr. Apartian, Mr. John Ogwyn and Mr. Martin Fannin.

The cooperation, love and teamwork extant among the brethren was impressive to behold. The Ndhiwa video group choir entertained the brethren throughout the Feast. On an almost daily basis, they filled in the "Special Music" session.



The blessing of little children took place on the third day of the Feast, when Mr. Owino blessed 12 children, ages four and below. On the same day, the senior citizens were treated to a luncheon at the hotel's restaurant. That evening, the local Festival administration organized a brunch for children—mostly ten years and under—in the conference hall. The second day of the Feast, during the free afternoon, saw men and women, adults and children, joining in to play football, volleyball and net ball. The activity combined with the coast's high humidity, caused many to finish the games panting like fat sheep in hot sun!

The Ocean View Beach Hotel was the center of activities. On Family Day, a relaxed, long walk on the sandy

beaches was organized, as well as volleyball, swimming and other such activities. Some members even rode on a camel, their experience being that riding up on a camel is more enjoyable than riding in a car!

The seventh day of the Feast culminated in a baptism. Mr. Meshack Otieno Awino took his memorable plunge at 4:45 p.m. on October 8.

George, South Africa

Africa is home to several of the big cats, including the cheetah. This member of the feline family is sleek, delicate in build and is the fastest animal on earth. As Africa



has been home to the cheetah, George has been home to God's Church for many Feasts. Our Creator Host once again provided us with a welcome rest in the form of the soothing beauty of the majestic Outeniqua Mountains as well as the powerful beauty of the Indian Ocean. However, during the Feast, the tranquility of these surroundings was regularly shattered by the enthusiastic and energetic fellowshiping of brethren forging new friendships and cementing old ones. Those unable to share the Feast with us due to illness, or other circumstances, were fondly remembered in conversations, and cards were sent to them.

Vigorous and interesting discussions at activities such as the seniors' lunch and Family Day, and at the many social gatherings, contributed greatly to the unity and warmth already evident among Feastgoers. Inspiring and encouraging messages by God's faithful and dedicated ministry in South Africa explained practical principles for living now, and our responsibilities in and to the future world. A highlight of the Feast was a public lecture to *Tomorrow's World* subscribers in the area by our Regional Director, Mr. Sydney Hull. The encouraging response to the invitations came to almost 6 percent.

Throughout the past year, culminating with the Feast messages, God has been getting His Church in South Africa ready for that final burst of speed and power of a cheetah charging—fulfilling the end-time Commission given us by God.

Penang, Malaysia

The Feast of Tabernacles 2001 was held in The Pearl of the Orient, Penang, for the third time in a row since 1999, coordinated by local elder Mr. Rajan Moses. Although it rained on some days during the Feast, this did not dampen the spirits of our brethren. Turnout was most encouraging, with a total of 57 adults and 8 children—including six overseas visitors (five Australians and one Filipino).

The overall atmosphere was warm, with family games on the second day, filled with plenty of fun. There was no age limit, and it was most encouraging to see the teamwork of the young and the senior citizens. Many activities were planned for the Church youth. A Bible quiz was organized (with questions from the book of Proverbs) to challenge the Bible knowledge of our youth. In the well-participated Youth Club, Feastgoers heard the youth presenting their thoughts on the topic "When Jesus Christ Returns," followed by pointers by Australian visitor Mr. Jim Hughes. The Church is indeed grooming its

younger generation to assume future leadership positions. On the third night, Feastgoers enjoyed a barbecue dinner at the hotel poolside, followed by a sing-along session. A highlight of the Feast was the talent show, featuring songs, dances, fashion show and voice impersonations. The brethren were thrilled to see these perfor-



mances which some had taken two months to prepare. Their hard work was well paid with hearty applause.

There was great rejoicing as God blessed the Church with the baptism of five new members. The Church welcomed Mrs. Emelia Moses, Mr. Jason Babu, Mr. Jerry Isaac, Mr. Michael and Ms. Patricia Palanny into the family of God. Many brethren witnessed this joyous event, performed by Mr. Moses at the beach just behind the hotel. It was indeed a very sad affair when it was time to bid farewell to the brethren as everyone headed home.

Philippines

This year the Philippines once again had five Feast sites, situated strategically around the country to enable the brethren the opportunity to “go up to the Feast,” as the Bible commands. The sites were: Baguio (Luzon), Tacloban City (Leyte), Davao (Mindanao), Maranding (Mindanao), and Don Carlos (Mindanao).

In Baguio City the Feast was held in “Teacher’s Camp”—a beautiful, park-like camp with cottages and meeting halls built specifically to house conferences of teachers from around the country. We had new people attending, with a record attendance this year—153 on the Last Great Day, up from 144 last year. Pastor and site coordinator Gorgonio de Guia reported fine weather, with occasional rain showers. One sobering note: long-time blind member Mrs. Marcelo Caballero of Dagupan City died on October 1, just before the Feast. She had not been able to go to the Feast for many years, as a result of her infirmity. But the Dagupan video group met in her house from its inception, and was the recipient of her loving hospitality. Mr. de Guia and several other members travelled to Dagupan during the Feast for the funeral, which was attended by several hundred people.

Tacloban City was again the Feast site representing the Visayas. Pastor and site coordinator Eleno Cabahit reported that 50 people attended God’s Feast, held at the Cawaksi Training Center, about three kilometers from the airport and a kilometer from the beach. Some visitors, including a mother and daughter, came all the way from Mindanao for the Feast in Tacloban. Everyone enjoyed feasting together, as all the food was prepared and eaten together. There were several anointings, including one member who was complaining of hardly being able to move her body, and also suffering a severe headache. After the anointing, her pain and discomfort were gone, which made her very happy! Activities included a Family Day and fun show, youth and children’s activities, senior’s and talent show, beach outing and cocktail party.

Davao City served as the site for southeastern Mindanao, coordinated by Pastor Felipe Casing. The highest attendance was 117, an increase over last year. The Feast was held at Victorio’s Beach resort, a seaside facility where most of the brethren stayed in cottages, just walking distance from the open-air meeting hall. Most, if not all, of the brethren enjoyed a dip in the sea almost every day. Some brethren donated toys for the children on sports day, and ice cream for all ages. The messages were encouraging and the brethren enjoyed good health, peace and harmony.

Another site in the Philippines was Don Carlos, situated in the Central Mindanao highlands, in the province of Bukidnon. In this province, where 108 brethren came to observe the Feast, sugar cane plantations abound. On a sad

note, on October 1, the day before the Feast, Mrs. Rosita Francisco died. Four days later, her husband, Mr. Lucio Francisco, had a severe stroke and was asking for prayers for difficulty breathing. On the following day he died as well. Both of the Franciscos were mourned by the Church during the Feast, and will not be forgotten. Despite the deaths, the members in Don Carlos had an inspiring Feast, from messages that met the needs of the brethren for the whole eight days. Brethren enjoyed eating together, having picnics, holding sporting activities, and other functions such as a Bible study and a Comedy Night. As a final inspiring note, four individuals requested baptism at the Feast. The Don Carlos site was organized by elder Gideon Benitez.


The fifth Feast site in the Philippines was held in Maranding, where 130 faithful brethren gathered to follow God’s command to keep the Feast. Maranding is situated in the verdant rice fields of the Kapatagan Valley, in Northwestern Mindanao, and was coordinated by Pastor Tex Benitez. Activities gave everyone opportunities to enjoy a whole-day picnic, a variety show including beautiful Filipino folk dances, and lots of fun and jokes in the evenings. Inspiring and exhortative sermons were the spiritual meat of the Feast, highlighted by the Last Great Day taped sermon by Dr. Meredith.

Sri Lanka

Approximately 31 adults and six children kept the Feast in a four-star hotel along the southern coast of Sri Lanka. The brethren were very excited to have a live speaker for the first time since 1996. Mr. Irv Woelfle from Peoria, Illinois gave the sermon and sermonette for six of the eight days. The spiritual food, as well physical blessings, were most welcome in these times of trouble.

The location helped the feast to be family-oriented. Seniors, young adults and children took part in a family day activity that brought out the child in everyone. We also had one baptism, which was a highlight of the Feast.

Everyone greatly appreciated all the planning and the help that went into making this Feast such a great experience. We look forward to next year’s Feast with anticipation, “one year closer to God’s Kingdom.”

—Compiled from reports by: Dibar Apartian, Jim Arnaldo, Frank Best, Gaylyn Bonjour, William Bowmer, Sergio Carvajal, Raul Colon, Patti Forsness, Ken Frank, Lascelles Fraser, Dana Glatz, Fitzroy Greeman, Randy Gregory, Dan Hall, Charles Haughee, Mario Hernandez, Ken MacLeod, Rod McNair, Eng Monson, Rajan Moses, Ernest Owino, Kinnear Penman, Ro Pereira, Barbara Ann Schaer, Jorge Schauback, Ramsumair Sookram, Ronelle Vermaak, Keith Walden, Gerald Weston, Ben Whitfield and Douglas Winnail. 

Local Church News

LCG Web Site Milestone

As of November 1, 2001, the official Living Church of God Web sites—www.livingcog.org and www.tomorrowworld.org—have

transferred more than a terabyte (a trillion bytes) of data since their inception in 1999. The sites have received visitors from at least 139

countries around the globe, from Albania to Zimbabwe, with Botswana the country most recently added to this list.

Ordination

Mr. Josef Felber has been ordained as a deacon, serving the brethren in Switzerland. The ceremony took place on October 6, 2001, during the Feast of Tabernacles at Port d'Albret, France. Mr. Felber was baptized in 1984; he and his wife attended the Global Church of God since 1995, and have been with the Living Church of God since its inception. Fluent in German, English and French, Mr. Felber has been serving the brethren in Switzerland, and occasionally conducting services in Geneva. A graduate of the University of Zurich, Switzerland, he completed studies in Strasbourg, France, to obtain his degree as a European patent attorney, and he has had his own law firm in Zurich since 1989. He and his wife Beatrice have two teenage daughters, Damaris and Larissa.

IN LOVING MEMORY

Mr. Asa A. Emerson, of the Hartford, Connecticut congregation, died on October 20, 2001. A life-long resident of Springfield, Massachusetts, he served in the U.S. Army during World War II, serving in the battles and campaigns of northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes and Central Europe. He was married for 54 years to the former Annette E. Bergin, and was the father of Eileen M. Beltz of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Anne Marie Massarella of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and Ronald J. Emerson of Springfield, and was the grandfather of ten and great-grandfather of one. He will be missed by all who knew him.

New Booklet

Dr. Meredith will be offering a new booklet to *Tomorrow's World* subscribers in his upcoming semi-annual letter, scheduled to be mailed in November. The booklet, titled *Who or What Is the Antichrist?*, will be mailed automatically to all Church households. Members do not need to send in the return card from the semi-annual letter in order to receive the booklet.

Upcoming *Tomorrow's World* Telecasts

Every Sunday, 6:00 AM E.T., on WGN

WGN AIR DATE	BROADCAST TITLE
December 2	Law or Grace?
December 9	What Is a True Christian?
December 16	Does God Exist?
December 23	Who Was Jesus?
December 30	What's Ahead for 2002?

Commentary

Terrorist Attacks: European Perspective

By Douglas S. Winnail

For years, the Church of God has warned, based on Bible prophecy, that sudden tragic events would strike America and her European cousins. However, it is still sobering to see these horrific events actually happen. The suddenness of such a spectacle, with people jumping to their deaths and buildings bursting into flame and imploding—all captured on live television—stunned America and sent shock waves around the world. In a matter of hours, the whole world changed.

In Europe, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder condemned the terrorist attacks as a “declaration of war against the entire civilized world.” European Union foreign ministers met in special session. In Belgium, flights were cancelled over Brussels, the home of NATO. The Frankfurt stock exchange was evacuated, as were several important buildings in London. In France, military personnel were posted to airports, railway terminals and other public buildings. Europol, based in The Hague, established a 24-hour crisis center to coordinate antiterrorist information in the EU. European leaders realize they are much more vulnerable to terrorist attack than the United States—and even less prepared to mount a response.

In the months ahead, it will be instructive to observe what happens in America and in Europe in light of Bible prophecies. Prayers for peace will be offered, yet the Bible states that God will turn a deaf ear to prayers from people who claim to worship Him but ignore His divine instructions (cf. Isaiah 1:15). God plainly reveals that, because of our disobedience to His laws and commandments, we will begin to experience increasing national punishments at the hands of foreign nations and evil men. As a result of our national sins, God states that “an adversary shall be all around the land; he shall sap your strength from you, and your palaces shall be plundered” (Amos 3:11). The Bible states that God will use “the worst of the Gentiles” to accomplish His purpose of humbling our proud, independent, yet beneficent people (Ezekiel 7:23–27).

As a result of the terrorist attacks in America, events in Europe could move ahead even more swiftly towards the development of a European super-state that the Bible indicates will emerge before the return of Jesus Christ. Calls are being heard for new policies to improve European security, as Europe moves to take a bigger role in the Middle East and other parts of the world. Increased security measures could include the introduction of compulsory identification cards, restricted freedom of movement and the limitation of human freedoms. More personal information will be entered into government computers, and an atmosphere of suspicion could prevail (*The Irish Times*, Sept. 13, 2001, p. 18). All this fits the prophesied scenario of a “beast power” that is to arise in Europe from the ashes of the Roman Empire as the end of the age approaches (Revelation 13; 17). Bible prophecy indicates that there will be logical reasons for implementing policies for social control, but these tools will be put to evil uses. The stage is being set for the ultimate fulfillment of sobering and long-prophesied end time events.

An editorial in Ireland's *Evening Herald* (Sept. 12, 2001, p. 14) got it partly right when it blamed this terrible slaughter of human beings on “the evil at the heart of mankind” and observed that our hope—that the world would become a better place after the fall of communism—was naïve. However, the lesson we are told we should learn from the recent tragedy is to be less cynical of our leaders, to stop running down our political system and to reaffirm our democratic ideals. While this sounds reasonable, it will not solve our problems. The real solution to human problems is the return of Jesus Christ, to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth. This was the ultimate message of the Old Testament prophets. It was a significant part of the gospel that Jesus brought (see Mark 1:14–15). It was a fundamental belief and a driving force in the early Apostolic Church. The Living Church of God proclaims this same message today.

The unabridged version of this commentary can be found on the Church Web page, www.livingcog.org, in the Commentary Library, along with many other commentaries on key topics facing our world