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Prepare for the Times Ahead

Dear Brethren and Friends,

Greetings from Charlotte! God is now opening up doors for us here in North Carolina beyond what we have ever experienced in this present Work. We are most thankful for this, and are looking forward to having a genuinely significant impact on the world as time moves along.

But, right now, prophetic events are moving along at a faster rate and in a more broad-based manner than *ever before!* Having been full-time in Christ's ministry for more than 50 years, I hope I can bring some perspective to the situation. Back in the 1950s, we had a serious drought that lasted for seven years. But the nation was *very strong* then and, in fact, was even increasing in strength. By the 1960s, a widespread immorality was seeming to increase more than ever in the United States, as "Elvis the Pelvis" became a sensation, and later the Beatles and other hollering, screaming, gyrating characters came along and generated a sense of hysteria among the young people. Some of the youth used marijuana, or other drugs *far worse!* But the nation *as a whole* was strong, and the U.S. military was the strongest in the world.

After the debacle of Vietnam and the "malaise" of the 70s, the nation still was able to strengthen itself militarily under President Ronald Reagan, and this momentum carried through until the first Gulf War under President George H.W. Bush. Then the Clinton years came along, when America's military was essentially "gutted" and immorality accelerated its rise, encouraged by the horrible example set "at the top." Nevertheless, in His mercy, God allowed no terrible foreign adventures to weaken us, or *any* strong foe to challenge us since the demise of the Soviet Empire, which had already taken place under the watch of the first President Bush.

But now, the situation is definitely deteriorating all over the world as far as America and Britain are concerned. As *many* news analysts and commentators have explained, the general disrespect and even hatred of the U.S.—among hundreds of millions of people in the Middle East, Asia and even Western Europe—is increasing at a *phenomenal* rate. Our current President has not yet had time to rebuild the military in order to face the various challenges that seem to be facing us. Our national debt is exploding, the balance of payments situation seems to be getting worse and

worse for the United States, and the euro has gained a great deal against the dollar. Slowly but surely, Europeans, Asians and others are beginning to withdraw their investments from the United States and place their monies in Europe and elsewhere. Even now, while U.S. forces are massed in Iraq, the dictator in North Korea is threatening the world with an atomic bomb! Also, some of the 1.2 billion Muslims *all over the world* may be stirred to aid in various terrorist attacks and other acts that would undermine the pride and prestige of the United States and its faithful ally, Great Britain. Various “mystery” diseases such as SARS are beginning to show up around the world, earthquakes are growing more powerful and more frequent and occasional *shortages* of food and other items may begin to occur in our stores.

I feel it is incumbent upon me as God’s servant to *warn* all of you brethren to realize this—and to do *your part* to prepare for both the spiritual and physical emergencies that may soon be upon us! I have commented on this before. But now I feel it is time for me to give you *specific* warnings and instructions about this—and at least provide some general ideas and advice about *how* to prepare for these coming emergency situations.

We must always remember the “Big Picture” prophecy of Matthew 24:6–11. In these verses, Christ describes the fact that there will be a number of apparently “little wars” as well as the major conflicts directly predicted in the Bible. He indicates in Luke 21:11 that there will be “fearful sights”—or, as a number of translations have it, “terrors”—which will come upon us, as well as truly “great” earthquakes at the time of the end. Concurrently there will be *famine* and *disease epidemics*.

If we are truly *Bible-believing* Christians, we need to prepare for these situations—including the terrorist attacks which now seem to be imminent. Mr. Herbert Armstrong used to remind us about the old adage: “God helps those who help themselves!” He cited many examples of this in his own experiences, and indicated that—although God will often *intervene supernaturally* to deliver us—He *does expect* us to do our part to protect ourselves, and to use wisdom. Remember the example of Jesus’ stepfather, Joseph. The word of God tells us that, after Jesus was born: “Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, ‘Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him’” (Matthew 2:12–13). Later, God guided Joseph to return from Egypt. Then we read that, once again, God guided Joseph to take what might be called “evasive action” in order to protect the young child Jesus when, “being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee” (v. 22).

We should all remember the example of the *original* Joseph, back in the land of Egypt, who was warned by God to set aside *extra food* for a prophesied famine (Genesis 41:25–57). Obviously, God *could* have said:

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We All Need FAITH!

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

The Apostle Paul made a very interesting observation in Colossians 1:24: “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.” Are there, indeed, a certain number of the “afflictions of Christ” which every true Christian needs to face before entering eternal life? Is a certain amount of trying, testing and even suffering usually necessary to teach us the profound humility, the steadfastness and the total commitment needed before becoming a *glorified spirit being in the very family of God*?

Paul does not directly answer this question.

However, from one end of the Bible to the other, God’s Word is full of examples of His servants going through profound trials. Do we find a wonderful *purpose* for all these trials? In 1 Peter 1:4 we are told of “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away.” Then Peter states: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ”(vv. 6–7). These grievous trials force us to think through what is really important. They force us to cry out to God for help and to more completely commit ourselves to serving Him *no matter what*. They are the crucible through which God is fashioning us to become *His full Sons*!

Recognizing the profound *reason* for these trials can help give us greater peace of mind and greater *faith*, and help us appreciate, as the Apostle Paul wrote, that: “All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). Down through the ages, God fearing men and women have had to look beyond the immediate circumstances and “know” that God was there and that He was alive and in charge, and that He would definitely work out their specific trial for “good” *even if* it required them to give up their physical lives! That is the basis for the radiant *faith* of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. King Nebuchadnezzar was absolutely *furious* at their refusal to worship the gold image he had set up. Here was the greatest monarch on earth being put to shame by three young Jews. *He would have none of it!* Nebuchadnezzar disdainfully challenged these young men: “And who is the God who will deliver you from my hand?” (Daniel 3:15). They answered the king: “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” (vv. 16–18).

Yes, even if God chose **not** to deliver them, the God of Israel was “real” enough to these brave men that they committed their lives to Him regardless!

How about you and me?

Are we prepared to give our lives to Jesus Christ—*no matter what*? Is God so absolutely “real” to us that we

could go through the terrifying shock of beatings, imprisonment or death? Could we go through a long, drawn-out trial as Joseph did? Remember, Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery. For *13 long years* he had to go through trial after trial—being sold into slavery, threatened with death, put in prison, along with many other trials—until he was *finally* exalted to be the second person in charge of the entire Egyptian empire! Thirteen years is a **long time**.

We understand that for approximately *ten years*, King David had to flee from King Saul—hiding out in caves, in the wilderness and in all kinds of dangerous and uncomfortable situations. Yet, David retained his unwavering *faith* in Almighty God, and maintained his deep love and respect for Saul’s office and for Saul himself. Even when David had opportunity to destroy Saul, and was so close to him in a cave that he was able to cut off the corner of his robe, notice the profound humility and respect in David’s heart: “Now it happened afterward that David’s heart troubled him because he had cut Saul’s robe. And he said to his men, ‘The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD’s anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD’” (1 Samuel 24:5–6).

Later, when David and Abishai came and found Saul sleeping, with his spear stuck in the ground by his head, notice what happened: “Then Abishai said to David, ‘God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please, let me strike him at once with the spear, right to the earth; and I will not have to strike him a second time!’ And David said to Abishai, ‘Do not destroy him; for who can

stretch out his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless?" David said furthermore, 'As the LORD lives, the LORD shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish. The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed. But please, take now the spear and the jug of water that are by his head, and let us go'" (1 Samuel 26:8–11).

In a similar way, *all* of us need to look beyond man, and see the purpose of God in the situations that may develop in the years ahead. God will be working with us, fashioning and molding us, teaching us lessons for all eternity. We need to have a deep and lasting *faith* that this is so—and put our faith and trust in God!

Each of us should recognize that the long periods of trying and testing, throughout most of our Christian lives, are for the *specific purpose* of refining us, polishing us and making each of us an absolute “jewel” in God's sight. Therefore, we must understand *this concept* as we read Jesus' instructions to His disciples and to us: “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works” (Matthew 16:24–27).

It is so easy for each of us to desire to “save” our lives. We may want to “live it up” and focus *too much* at times on physical things for ourselves and our families—to devote so much time and energy to material pursuits that we do **not** live the life of sacrificial service to God and man that Jesus Christ requires of us. Who among us does not fall short of this standard? We need to

focus on Jesus' promise that when He returns with the “glory” of His Father, He will definitely reward each of us in a magnificent way. The Apostle Paul was inspired to expand on this: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. 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 8:16–18).


The *glorified body* that God has in mind for us, and the awesome opportunity to interact with Him and with Jesus through all eternity, are beyond our full understanding as weak human beings. But we understand that we are called, *literally*, to fellowship with God and with Christ—as well as with one another (1 John 1:3).

Therefore, by “feeding” on God's Word (John 6:57)—by constantly reading and reminding ourselves of the reality of God and how He has *always* delivered His servants—we can, through His Spirit in us, build a profound **faith** in God which will be absolutely needed in the years just ahead!

Many of us may remember the touching and beautiful example of “Ebed-Melech” the Ethiopian, as set forth in Jeremiah 38. Jeremiah had been thrown into a prison and let down into a pit of mire. Hearing of this, Ebed-Melech, one of the king's eunuchs, told the king and obviously requested the opportunity to help Jeremiah. The king gave him permission. Verse 11 picks up the story: “So Ebed-Melech took the men with him and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took from there old clothes and old rags, and let them down by ropes into the dungeon to Jeremiah. Then Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, ‘Please put these old clothes and rags

under your armpits, under the ropes.’ And Jeremiah did so. So they pulled Jeremiah up with ropes and lifted him out of the dungeon. And Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison” (vv. 11–13).

Ebed-Melech obviously took his life in his hands by opposing the princes who had gained the king's favor in the first instance. But “the rest of the story”—as revealed later on—indicates that Ebed-Melech was looking *beyond* these princes. Though an Ethiopian eunuch in the king's household, he put his faith and trust in the Eternal God of Israel. And God *rewarded* him for this! Many weeks or months later, after the Babylonians had conquered Judah, God's Word came to Jeremiah and told him to contact Ebed-Melech: “Go and speak to Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I will bring My words upon this city for adversity and not for good, and they shall be performed in that day before you. But I will deliver you in that day,’ says the LORD, ‘and you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you are afraid. For I will surely deliver you, and you shall not fall by the sword; but your life shall be as a prize to you, *because you have put your trust in Me,*’ says the LORD” (Jeremiah 39:16–18).

Dear brethren, as we are persecuted and perhaps even thrown in prison for preaching and obeying the Truth—both in our present society and, later, as the modern Babylonians conquer many of our lands—will we look with **faith** to the God of Israel to deliver as did Ebed-Melech? May God grant that each one of us slowly but surely develops the understanding and the radiant **faith** displayed by every one of the outstanding servants of God. And may God deliver each one of us and say to us: “Your life shall be as a prize to you because you have put your **trust** in Me.” 

Faithfulness or Treachery?

A Look at the Covenant Relationship

By John H. Ogwyn

The Day of Pentecost is intimately connected with the covenant relationship between God and man. Historically, this day has been connected with the establishment of the Old Covenant at Sinai, just seven weeks after the Exodus from Egypt. Then, centuries later, on the first Pentecost after Jesus' final Passover, mankind was offered the better promises of the New Covenant—including the indwelling of the Spirit of God, and the ultimate promise of eternal life in the Family of God.

As we look at ancient Israel's covenant relationship with God, we find a story of both faithfulness and treachery. The faithfulness was primarily on God's part, while the treachery was entirely on the part of human beings. The prophets indicted Israel several times for its treacherous betrayal of its covenant relationship with the Almighty, and compared the nation to a faithless wife. These lessons, and the experiences of the Old Testament Church, are recorded in Scripture for our benefit today (1 Corinthians 10:11).

When the ancient Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai after weeks of travel, there was great excitement. Moses ascended the mountain to meet with the Creator, then descended to tell the Israelites that God was inviting them to enter a special relationship with Him. God desired to make them His own special treasure—a kingdom of priests and a holy nation—if they would keep the terms of His covenant (Exodus 19:5–6). Immediately, the people promised: “All that the LORD has spoken we will do” (v. 8).

Most of the rest of the Old Testament is the story of Israel's failure to keep its promises. Why would God allow His people to face an Assyrian invasion, and the subsequent deportation of the northern kingdom? In the eighth century BC, the prophet Hosea explained that Israel had committed harlotry, and was defiled (Hosea 5:3). Hosea went on to assert: “They have dealt *treacherously* with the LORD, for they have begotten pagan children” (v. 7). Further, he stated: “But like men they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt *treacherously* with Me” (6:7).

More than a century later, in the years prior to Babylonian captivity, the prophet Jeremiah delivered God's message to the southern kingdom of Judah. His indictment echoed the same theme of treacherous betrayal of the covenant: “The LORD said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: ‘Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot. And I said, after she had done all these things, “Return to Me.” But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. Then I saw

that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense,’ says the LORD” (Jeremiah 3:6–10). Further developing the comparison, Jeremiah wrote: “Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel,’ says the LORD” (Jeremiah 3:20).

This treacherous betrayal of the covenant relationship led to the captivity and exile of first Israel and then Judah. However, after 70 years of Babylonian exile, a remnant led by Zerubbabel and Joshua was finally allowed to return and rebuild Jerusalem. Yet, as the book of Ezra makes plain, even this remnant did not really remain faithful to the covenant for very long. Several decades after the remnant had returned to Jerusalem, Ezra the priest traveled there from Babylon. A few years later, he was joined there by Nehemiah, the newly appointed governor. The two sought to restore the nation to a proper covenant relationship with God.

Malachi's Message

Malachi's message anticipated the future coming of the Messiah as the “Messenger of the Covenant.” The book of Malachi points to the failure of the Old Testament Church at the end of that period of history, and thereby contains many lessons for us. It also points toward the New Testament, more than four centuries in the future. Because of God's abiding faithfulness, even in the midst of Israel's treachery, a means of redemption would be provided for His erring people.

To understand the historical context of Malachi, we must read the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Encouragingly, the temple had been rebuilt after decades of lying in ruins, and a priesthood was once again functioning in Jerusalem. The people were no longer worshiping idols devoted to Baal and the “Queen of Heaven,” as they had done before the exile. Yet, sadly, the nation was impoverished. Many Israelites believed that they were faithful, that they deserved better, and that God had failed to provide for them as He ought—that He was not really faithful to His promises.

Of course, this perspective was utterly wrong. As Malachi made plain, covenant faithfulness was demon-

strated far more by actions than by the “religion” that people claimed to have. Showing that the people did not see what God saw, the book of Malachi contains seven “What do you mean by that?” statements made by the people in response to God’s declarations. The prophet described God’s faithfulness and the people’s treachery, while the people sought to justify and excuse their behavior.

Malachi 1:2 opens with God’s profound declaration: “I have loved you.” Yet the people disputed God’s love for them and said, in effect: “How do we know that?” Not convinced that God loved them, the people did not love God. They ignored clear evidence of God’s love for His people—His having elected, or chosen, their forefathers centuries earlier. God had chosen Jacob instead of Esau, even though Jacob and Esau were brothers. God chooses whom He will call first, and all who are called should be deeply mindful of, and thankful for, God’s love. If we do not value our calling, and the special relationship with God that it entails, then we will treat that calling cheaply and casually. Obedience that is not based upon love for God will be grudging, temporary and certainly not wholehearted. This is how the Old Testament Church continually treated its relationship with God.

Disrespecting God

Malachi 1:6–7 contains the next two “What do you mean by that?” statements. Everyone in Malachi’s audience would have readily agreed with his point—that a father is to be honored, and a master is to be shown great respect. Yet Malachi declared that God’s priests actually *despised* His name! The people did not see things this way; after all, when the Jews returned from Babylon they were very careful with the use of God’s name. After the exile, in contrast with their earlier practice, the Jews generally avoided even pronouncing the name of YHVH, preferring various substitutions. Eventually, tradition came to dictate that only the High Priest, on the Day of Atonement, was allowed to pronounce the name YHVH. This is why no one today is absolutely sure of the correct pronunciation of this name of God. However, for all of their supposed newfound reverence, the religious leaders showed contempt for the name of their Creator *by their actions*. As Malachi made clear, actions speak louder than words.

Furthermore, the prophet charged the priesthood with defiling God’s altar. Though they could not see how this was so, the fact was that the priests were presenting, as offerings to God, animals that were injured or sick! Animals that needed to be culled from the flock were burned on the altar, while healthy animals were kept for secular use. Malachi asked how the Persian governor would react if such animals were brought to him. Of course, he would have regarded it as an insult. God declared through Malachi that it would have been better to have shut the doors of the temple, and let the altar fires go out,

than to present such a disrespectful offering (v. 10). In contrast, God inspired Malachi to anticipate the future time when people from all nations would lift up God’s name with reverence. This prophecy looked forward to the New Testament Church, which would be made up of people from all nations.

The priests, as the book of Nehemiah makes plain, had treated lightly the covenant that God had established with their ancestors, and were not the example of obedience that they should have been. They even showed favoritism in the way they applied God’s law (Malachi 2:9). This lack of faithful administration of the law was tantamount to treachery, or betrayal of their brethren.

Treachery in the Family

When God created mankind in His own image, He established the “God-plane” relationship of family as the fundamental unit of society. A society can be no stronger than its families. We learn from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah that post-exilic Judah had serious family-related problems. One problem was wrong marriages that should never have been made. Marriages with neighboring peoples had become so common that the very identity of God’s people was threatened: “Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, for Judah has profaned the LORD’s holy institution which He loves; He has married the daughter of a foreign god” (Malachi 2:11). Such marriages would inevitably lead God’s people away from pure worship, and into a hybrid religion that mixed elements of pagan practice with God’s instructions.

Malachi then described another very serious problem: family breakup caused by divorce. God declared that He would not accept people’s worship when the altar was figuratively covered with the tears of those whom the worshipers had wronged. This brings us to the fourth “What do you mean by that?” statement: “Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant” (Malachi 2:14). The prophet went on to declare that God **hates** divorce (v. 16). Those who were wrongly contemplating divorce were told to halt such treachery. Marriage is a covenant relationship, and God proclaims Himself a witness to the covenant. He expects faithfulness and hates treachery. A stable society can only be built on families that are bound by faithfulness, not rent apart by betrayal.

The Coming Messenger

Malachi declared that the people had made God tired by their words (v. 17). This led to the fifth “What do you mean by that?” statement. Seeing that the wicked seemed to prosper, some had become despondent, doubting that there

was a God of justice. Certainly, some pagan nations were prospering while the remnant of Judah was mired in poverty. Some in Judah were “getting ahead” through dishonest business practices, and by taking advantage of the people least able to defend themselves. But did this mean that God was “way off somewhere” or that He was indifferent? No!

God expected faith from His covenant people. Malachi explained that they needed to take a more long-range view—that the God of Israel was going to send a future messenger who would prepare the way for the Lord Himself. It was none other than the Lord who would ultimately come into His temple as the Messenger of the Covenant. He would come for judgment, and would deal with those who had been treacherous in their covenant relationships. This prophecy was fulfilled in part by John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus Christ, who came as the Messenger of the New Covenant. Christ began His public ministry by entering into the temple just before the Passover, and casting out the moneychangers. He went on to demonstrate His divine authority by the miracles that He performed (John 3:1–2). The events of which Malachi spoke also looked even beyond Christ’s first coming, to the time when He will return in power and glory. God’s covenant people must live by faith and look to the future.

Would You Rob God?

Malachi explained that God was absolutely faithful, in contrast to the treachery that Judah had shown, many times over, toward God and the covenant relationship. God did not change, and could therefore be trusted to keep His promises. Malachi called upon the nation to return to God, and thereby reap the benefits that He stood so ready to give. Malachi’s listeners wondered: “How could such a return be accomplished?” The answer was simple, Malachi thundered: Stop robbing your Creator!

Robbery is a very serious charge. Yet Malachi did not simply accuse the people of robbery; he accused them of actually robbing God! This led to their sixth “What do you mean by that?” statement. How could they possibly be accused of stealing from the Creator? The answer of course lay in their failure to properly tithe and give offerings. The people reasoned that they had financial problems, and could not afford to obey God. Surely, they thought, God would want them to get on their feet financially before they began tithing or making sizable offerings to rebuild the temple. That, of course, was a completely backward approach.

One of the clearest principles throughout the Bible is that no one ever really gets ahead by putting God last. You cannot “get your affairs in shape” first, and *then* start tithing. We are dependent upon God’s blessing and help even to meet our needs *at all*. Malachi admonished the


people that if they would step out on faith, and put God first by giving to Him what was His in the first place, then God would bless their efforts and provide their needs.

Our Attitude in Obedience

God is deeply interested in the *attitude* that underlies our actions. Many of those living in fifth-century BC Judah were only grudgingly conforming to the commandments of God. Because their obedience did not come cheerfully and from the heart, they failed to reap many of the blessings that they could have received. Instead of examining their attitudes and where they needed to change, they blamed God and felt sorry for themselves. This led to the seventh and final “What do you mean by that?” statement that Malachi recorded: “Your words have been harsh against Me,’ says the LORD, ‘yet you say, what have we spoken against You?’ You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God; what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance and that we have walked as mourners before the LORD of hosts?’” (Malachi 3:13–14).

Malachi then contrasted this negative attitude with the attitude of those who *truly revered* God—who frequently meditated on the things of God and talked about them to other true believers, seeking to encourage them (vv. 16–17). He observed that God takes note of our conversation, and that when the future time of judgment comes, He will remember those who truly love Him and will “make them My jewels” (v. 17).

Malachi closed with an admonition to remember the Torah, which God gave through Moses and which contains the terms of God’s holy covenant, which they had so treacherously betrayed again and again. Malachi pointed to the Messiah, and to the New Covenant, of which that Messiah would be the Messenger. As a prelude to His coming, Malachi explained, one in the spirit and power of Elijah would come to prepare His way. The Old Testament thus concludes by pointing to the New.

Have we learned the lesson of Israel’s failure to keep the covenant? The Israelites left a legacy of treachery toward their Creator that contrasted sharply with His abiding faithfulness and love toward them. Most fundamentally, the Israelites failed in the covenant relationship because they did not really *love God with all their heart, mind and soul* (Deuteronomy 6:5). They simply did not have the heart to obey (5:29). God has a solution to that problem. His solution involves the redemption pictured by the Passover season, and the new heart made possible by the outpouring of His Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Upon this new heart, softened and changed, God will write His laws through the power of His Spirit (Hebrews 8:8–10). A heart that deeply loves God will be a faithful heart—one that hates treachery, and is deeply loyal to Him and His covenant. 

Ready or Not?

Are you prepared for Christ's return?

By Douglas S. Winnail

Do you remember playing a childhood game called “Hide and Seek”? Everyone would run to find a hiding place, while one player would close his eyes and count to 100, before opening his eyes and yelling: “Ready or not, here I come!”

Remarkable as it may seem, many today are playing a more serious version of the same game, but for much higher stakes! Could you be one of them?

The central event in the plan of God is the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. Many scriptures stress the urgency of *preparing* and *being ready* for this climactic event. However, other scriptures indicate that the majority of human beings will not recognize the signs of Christ's imminent return. Many will not understand or heed the biblical warnings. Others may sense what is coming, but will choose to *hide from reality*, preferring not to think about the future. Only a few will recognize the significance of prophetic events, and will be prepared and ready. Just where do you fall along this spectrum of possibilities?

When Jesus' disciples asked how we would know His return was near, He listed a series of events to watch for, but He also warned that “of that day and hour no one knows... but My Father only... *watch* therefore... *be ready* for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him” (Matthew 24:36–44). In essence, Jesus said that He would

return at the appropriate time determined by God—*whether we were ready or not!* The parable of the ten virgins indicates even those who are called will go to sleep and only a portion will wake up in time. Notice, too, that Jesus did not say He would delay His coming until everyone in the Church was ready! Jesus openly stated His return would take many by surprise—because they did not prepare and were not ready!

God has a plan, and He is preparing for Christ's return. Prophecies concerning John the Baptist indicate part of his mission was “*to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*” (Luke 1:17). Comparing this verse with Malachi 3–4, it becomes obvious that prophecies about John were *dual*—and that someone or some organization will also prepare a people for the second coming of Jesus Christ. This is one of the tasks in which God's true Church will be involved at the end of the age. The Scriptures also reveal that when Christ returns to marry His bride, “His wife [the church] has *made herself ready*” (Revelation 19:7). Those Church members who have not been “foolish virgins” (cf. Matthew 25) will have kept their lamps full of oil, and will be spiritually ready to meet Christ at His return.

Today, as we see world events moving towards a climax, we need to ask some very sobering questions. Are you *ready or not* for the return of Jesus Christ? What do individual

members of the body of Christ need to do to prepare for the return of Jesus Christ? What should the Church of God be doing to prepare a people for Christ's second coming? While many people have different ideas on this subject, the real question that needs to be asked is *what instructions do we find in the Bible* about preparing for the most important event in history?

Watch and Draw Close

Jesus repeatedly admonished His disciples to *stay alert*, to *prayerfully watch* for specific prophesied events, and to carry out our assigned work—that includes being a watchman (Mark 13:32–37). He warned His disciples about becoming lax in our mission and going to sleep on the job (v. 36)! Jesus also said we will not be prepared for His coming if we become *distracted* by temporary pleasures and concerns of our present world—“carousing, drunkenness, and the cares of this life” (Luke 21:34–35). We must each examine what our *real focus* is in life—is it doing God's work, or doing our own thing? Is our time consumed watching entertainment or watching for significant world events and trends that indicate Christ's return is near. *Prayerfully* watching for events that fulfill important Bible prophecies is not merely to satisfy personal curiosity of prophecy buffs nor is it a sign of “prediction addiction.” Jesus repeatedly advised His disciples to

watch for specific developments on the world scene so they could function effectively as watchmen and not be taken by surprise. The fulfillment of prophecy should *motivate* us to take our calling and our mission seriously so we are ready when Christ returns!

Another biblical admonition to consider in the context of the end of the age is “seek the Lord *while* He may be found, call upon Him *while* He is near” (Isaiah 55:6). The prophet Amos refers to a coming “famine... of the hearing of the word of the Lord” (Amos 8:11). Amos describes a time when the work of warning the world and preaching the gospel will be stopped, and Israelite nations will be subjected to a horrible tribulation at the hands of Gentile nations. At that time, people will “run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it” (Amos 8:12). If you have been watching and learning for years, and have avoided making a real commitment to God’s way of life, you will eventually run out of time! Hosea offers an additional warning to proud, pleasure-seeking Israelites who enjoy their paganized form of religion and justify their actions by misguided human reasoning (Hosea 5:1–12). He states that the time is coming when “they shall go to seek the LORD, but they will not find him; He has *withdrawn* Himself from them [because] they have dealt treacherously with the LORD” (v. 6). Isaiah warned that due to our sins a time will come when God states, “I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear” (Isaiah 1:15). Now is the time to draw near to God, to repent and to change those aspects of our lives that need to be brought into harmony with God’s instructions. We do not have *forever* to do this—if we hope to be *ready* for Christ’s return.

Bearing Fruit

Jesus told His disciples that God is glorified when we “bear much fruit” (John 15:8). He explained that God wants us to learn to live by His commandments and truly love one another (John 15:9–17). The Godly love we must develop includes not only keeping the commandments (John 14:15), but also learning to forgive, to show mercy and compassion and to be patient, honest and generous with one another. However, these are not the only fruits that we need to bear in our lives if we are to be ready for Christ’s return. Paul says that if we clean up our own spiri-

called to understand in this age, but we should be able to answer with *conviction* based on knowledge, experience and deep abiding faith. God has used fruits like these as a powerful witness down through the centuries.

Preparing the Way

God does not intervene in our lives and call us out of this world just so we can “be saved.” Notice again the prophecies concerning the mission of John the Baptist and one who would come in the same spirit and manner just before Christ’s return. God told Malachi: “I send My messenger, and he will *prepare*

Now is the time to draw near to God, to repent and to change those aspects of our lives that need to be brought into harmony with God’s instructions. We do not have *forever* to do this—if we hope to be *ready* for Christ’s return.

tual life (eliminating wrong thoughts, lustful desires and foolish actions) we “will be vessels of honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, *prepared for every good work*” (2 Timothy 2:19–23). We need to carefully study and prove what the Bible actually says, so that we will be prepared to teach the Truth of God to others (vv. 16, 24–25; 1 Thessalonians 5:21). We must also be able to recognize false doctrinal teachings and avoid becoming entangled in “foolish and ignorant disputes” that only “generate strife” (2 Timothy 2:23). God also wants us to “be ready to give an answer to everyone that asks you, a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). We may not *convince* others who have not been

the way before Me” (Malachi 3:1). Isaiah states that this messenger will be like “the voice of one crying in the wilderness” saying, “prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God” (Isaiah 40:3). Jesus explained that the messenger who would prepare the way for His coming would “restore all things” (Matthew 17:11). The “restoration” of the laws of God (see Malachi 4; Luke 1:17) in the Church is merely a foretaste of the global restoration of truth that will occur in the Millennium (Acts 3:19–21). We have been called to *prepare* now for this awesome task. Will we be ready? Is the Church that you have chosen to attend holding fast to the doctrinal truths of Scripture—or has it begun to compromise, water-

down, ignore or try to explain away the laws of God?

Doing the Work

Jesus came “preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14–15). He commissioned His disciples to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Jesus said one of the signs of the end of the age will be “this *gospel of the kingdom* will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). The Bible does not indicate that the preaching of the gospel would end with the

death of Mr. Armstrong. In fact, it states just the opposite. Jesus said, “you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes” (Matthew 10:23). Jesus also stated, “Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find him *so doing*” (Matthew 24:46). The Work is not over, though some would like to assume so. If we give up on our mission, and withdraw into a comfortable social group, we will not be doing the work that Christ commissioned His Church to do—and we will not be prepared for His coming. We must also avoid being deceived by a “different spirit” into believing a “different gospel” about a “differ-

ent Jesus” (see 2 Corinthians 11:1–4; Galatians 1:6–9). The real Jesus of Scripture did not come to abolish the laws of God, but to *amplify* those laws to include an even more thorough spiritual application (Matthew 5:17–30); Isaiah 42:21). If we accept the idea that Jesus kept the law so that we no longer need to, we will not be ready to teach the laws of God to the world when Jesus sets up His kingdom on this earth (Isaiah 2:2–4; 30:20–21).

In addition to preaching the true gospel, Jesus told His disciples to watch world events and to *function as a watchman* to warn mankind—and especially Israelite

Developing Courage

Jesus said that only those “who endure to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13). Enduring trials, persecution and tribulation requires courage. Standing up for your beliefs when everyone else is changing, compromising or berating you calls for strength and conviction. We are born with a particular set of qualities, but they can be developed and enhanced. Learning to act bravely—to take certain risks, especially in the face of danger—does not mean that courageous people are without fears. General George Patton once said that “courage is fear holding on another moment.” Mark Twain wrote that “courage is the mastery of fear, not the absence of it.” Courage is important to God, because it is a vital quality of leadership. Anyone who hopes to be ready for the return of Jesus Christ will need to develop courage and conviction.

Moses advised Joshua and the Israelites to “be strong and of good courage” (Deuteronomy 31:1–8). God repeated similar words to Joshua: “Be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law... do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go” (Joshua 1:1–9). Paul encouraged the early Church to “watch, stand fast in the faith, be

strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13). We can develop this kind of strength and courage when we learn what is right, and when we *determine* to obey God (Deuteronomy 30:15–20). Solomon records that “the *righteous* are bold as a lion” (Proverbs 28:1). Righteous people obey the commandments of God (Psalm 119:172). We can develop courage by *trusting* and *believing* God’s promises (see Psalm 27:1–3). David’s courage came from His trust in God (read 1 Samuel 17:37, 45–57). God’s promises can give us courage in times of trial (Romans 8:28; 1 Corinthians 10:13). Jesus instructed His disciples to *ask* for courage and strength in times of need (Matthew 7:7–11), which they received (Acts 4:29–33). Courage and strength of conviction are fruits of God’s Spirit that will grow in our lives if we do our part (2 Timothy 1:6–7). Conviction also comes from taking time to carefully prove what you believe from the Word of God, and not compromising those beliefs (1 Thessalonians 5:21). People who develop courage *do not quit!* They persevere—they endure to the end! Courage is one of the defining qualities of leadership that we must develop to be ready for Christ’s return.

—Douglas S. Winnail

nations—about sobering events that will signal the end of the age and the imminent return of the Messiah (Mark 13:34). The prophet Ezekiel describes this mission more clearly. God told Ezekiel: “I have made you a watchman to the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and *give them a warning from Me*” (Ezekiel 3:17). Yet Ezekiel was among the Jewish captives in Babylon about 100 years after Israel was carried into captivity in Assyria. This was a prophecy of a *future mission* to warn the Israelite peoples. When Jesus Christ returns, He will expect to find His Church actively engaged in this task. If we are not fulfilling this mission, we will not be ready to receive the reward that Christ will bring with Him (see Revelation 11:18).

Prepare To Rule

The Bible reveals that Christians are called to become “kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on this earth” (Revelation 5:10; cf. Daniel 7:27). Those God is calling now are to function as civil and religious leaders in the coming kingdom of God. They will teach the laws of God and God’s way of life to the world (Isaiah 2:2–4; 30:20–21). However, this incredible opportunity will only be given to those who are *prepared* and *make themselves ready!* Notice again the instructions and examples that God provides about leadership. Moses records that leaders must be humble, morally upright, selfless and faithful—and they should make a personal copy of the book of the law, and study it daily, so that they will have the mind of God and be able to rule righteously (Deuteronomy 17:14–20). Are you following these instructions? Are you learning to recognize how the laws of God


can be applied to solve today’s problems?

When Ezra returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity, to teach the laws of God to the Jews, he did not come unprepared. Before leaving Babylon, “Ezra had *prepared his heart* to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10). This obviously required time, study, determination and dedication on Ezra’s part. When he arrived in Jerusalem, “Ezra the priest brought

as they are—as teaching services—rather than appealing more to the emotions or having people engage in “open discussions” so that everyone can express their personal opinions about what a particular passage means. The answer is found in the verses we have just read. Are you preparing to function as a teacher? Are you ready to explain how to apply and live by every word of God? Is the church that you have chosen to attend preparing you to function in this manner?

In addition to preaching the true gospel, Jesus told His disciples to watch world events and to *function as a watchman to warn* mankind—and especially Israelite nations—about sobering events that will signal the end of the age and the imminent return of the Messiah

the Law before the congregation, of men and women and all who could hear with understanding... then he read from it in the open square... and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law... so Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose... and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law... so they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading” (Nehemiah 8:1–12). Ezra and the Levites did not simply read a few verses as a formality and then close the book. They read and *explained the meaning and application* of the Scriptures—and as people began to understand they rejoiced! Are you preparing to function in a similar capacity? Some have wondered why our Church services are struc-

Jesus Christ’s return to establish the kingdom of God on this earth will be a dramatic turning point in the course of human civilization. It will take most of the world by surprise. Many will be totally unprepared. Regrettably, some who knew what was about to happen will not be ready—because they went to sleep, chose to ignore the warnings or became distracted by the pulls and cares of this world. Others who sincerely looked forward to Christ’s return will be surprised to find themselves excluded, because they were deceived and did not prepare properly (see Matthew 7:21–23). The Bible outlines definite signs that will precede the return of Jesus Christ. God also provides definite instructions to help us prepare for this event. The question is: will we heed those instructions—will we be ready, or not? 

Prepare for the Times Ahead

(continued from page 2)

“Don’t worry or take any evasive action, I will just deliver you—no matter what happens!” However, the Bible—which reveals the *mind of God*—indicates that God wanted Joseph and His chosen people to go through the *experience* of setting aside extra foodstuffs and learning to do *their part* in preparing for a future calamity. As the Apostle James wrote: “*faith without works is dead*” (James 2:20).

It is better for us to *learn the lessons* through these situations—and practice exercising caution, wisdom and perseverance—than to have God “deliver” us from every possible catastrophe. For God is training us to be His *full Sons* in His Kingdom and family forever. We must learn to develop an understanding of His will, and the *wisdom* to properly handle many different types of situations. Then we will be better fit and better prepared to be kings and priests ruling, under Christ, in tomorrow’s world.

Our heavenly Father tells us in Proverbs 22:3: “A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.” Obviously, God does not want us to be cowards. But it is also obvious that a wise man or woman should sometimes “hide himself”—take evasive action—or be secretly let down over the city wall and “flee,” as the Apostle Paul did in a dangerous situation (Acts 9:23–26)!

Also, God gives us in Scripture the example of helping one another in emergency situations. “Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:28–30). In the coming years, it may become necessary—and our Christian duty—for us to help our brethren in other parts of the world when severe troubles come upon them. And, lest we here in the United States feel too smug and self-sufficient, let us realize that, just as the “Headquarters” area of the Church had to have help in Apostolic times, so too may we here in the United States need help from other parts of the world in years to come!

Remember, all of us are “bought and paid for” by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ! The inspired word of God tells us: “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body?” (1 Corinthians 12:12–15). And again: “But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually” (vv. 24–27).

At times like this, we *all* need to be genuinely humble—and to listen to instruction from God’s Word, and from our human leaders in the nation and especially in the Church of God. We read: “Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.... The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise” (Proverbs 12:1, 15). Besides listening, we need to *act* on what we are told, as long as we know it is within God’s will. Notice what God inspired in Ecclesiastes 9:10: “Whatever your hand finds to do, *do it with your might*; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.” So I hope that *all* of you brethren, and your loved ones, will *take action* on the things I have just pointed out, and that you will show God that you are willing to do *your part* zealously. Also, to help you think carefully about specific ways to prepare your household physically for tough times ahead, I hope you will read and consider the specific ideas and suggestions in the box accompanying this article.

Of course, above and beyond all that we humanly can do, our ultimate *faith* is in **God Himself!** For His inspired Word tells us: “The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but *deliverance is of the LORD*” (Proverbs 21:31). In this issue’s Editorial, on page 3, I will have more to say about the importance of such faith.



Creating a Disaster Plan

One of the most important steps you can take in preparing for emergencies is to develop a household disaster plan.

- Learn about the natural disasters that could occur in your community from your local emergency management office or American Red Cross chapter. Learn how to prepare for each potential emergency and how to respond.
- Talk with your household about potential emergencies and how to respond to each. Talk about what you would need to do in an evacuation.
- Plan how your household would stay in contact if you were separated. Identify two meeting places: the first should be near your home, perhaps a nearby tree or a telephone pole where you could meet if your home were on fire; the second should be away from your neighborhood in case you cannot return home.
- Pick a friend or relative who lives out of the area for household members to call to say they are okay.
- Draw a floor plan of your home. Mark two escape routes from each room.
- Post emergency telephone numbers by telephones. Teach children how and when to call 911.
- Make sure every member of your household knows how and when to shut off water, gas and electricity at the main switches. Consult with your local utilities if you have any questions.
- Take a first aid and CPR class. Local American Red Cross chapters can provide information. Official certification by the American Red Cross provides “good Samaritan” law protection for those giving first aid.
- Review property insurance policies before disaster strikes—make sure policies are current and be certain they meet your needs (type of coverage, amount of coverage, and hazard covered—flood, earthquake)
- Be certain that all your health insurance policies are current and meet the needs of your household.
- Consider ways to help neighbors who may need special assistance, such as the elderly or the disabled.
- Make arrangements for pets. Pets are not allowed in public shelters, though “service animals”—for those who depend on them—are allowed.

Disaster Supply Kits

Assembling the supplies you might need following a disaster is an important part of your disaster plan. You should prepare emergency supplies for the following situations:

- A disaster supply kit with essential food, water, and supplies for at least three days—this kit should be kept in a designated place and be ready to “grab and go” in case you have to leave your home quickly because of a disaster,

such as a flash flood or major chemical emergency. Make sure all household members know where the kit is kept. *Consider having additional supplies for sheltering or home confinement for up to two weeks.*

- You should also have a disaster supply kit at work. This should be in one container, ready to “grab and go” in case you have to evacuate the building.
- A car kit of emergency supplies, including food and water, to keep stored in your car at all times. This kit would also include flares, jumper cables and seasonal supplies.

The basic items that should be in a disaster supply kit are water, food, first-aid supplies, tools and emergency supplies, clothing and bedding, and specialty items. You will need to change the stored water and food supplies every six months, so be sure to write the date you store it on all containers. You should also re-think your needs every year and update your kit as your household changes. Keep items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire disaster supply kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers such as an unused trashcan, camping backpack or duffel bag.

—Excerpted from *Are You Ready? A Guide to Citizen Preparedness*, Federal Emergency Management Administration, pp. 4–10.

Church Headquarters Moves to Charlotte, North Carolina!

Proclamation— To the City of Charlotte:

Be it resolved on this 10th day of April 2003, that...

The Living Church of God sincerely appreciates the kindness and love shown by everyone here throughout the relocation of our operations, that...

We humbly ask our Father in Heaven for His love to be poured out on the gracious City of Charlotte, in the beautiful state of North Carolina, to continue this great Work, preaching the Gospel message of Jesus Christ to the entire world.

Be it known that the Church looks forward to a long and mutually favorable relationship with Charlotte as a good neighbor, promoting a family atmosphere, that...

We are pleased with our new international headquarters location and that...

We prayerfully ask God's blessing on our community, building, activities, members, employees and ministry!



Relocation Decisions

It was only last July when Dr. & Mrs. Meredith first visited Charlotte, on a trip that took them to several potential Headquarters locations. Yet that visit was just one of many that had taken place over the last few

years, as the Work investigated Tulsa, OK; Austin, TX; St. Louis, MO; Atlanta, GA; Greenville, SC; several cities in California, and other locations that seemed to offer potential advantages in carrying out the Great Commission given by Jesus Christ.

More than 130,000 pounds of Headquarters equipment and supplies made the trip to Charlotte. Several employees chose to drive across country, but 25 vehicles had to be loaded on car carriers for the trip eastward.

Prior to that time, Dr. Meredith and the Council of Elders, seeking God’s guidance regarding any potential relocation,



Dr. Meredith, in his new office, chats with Messrs. Davis and Bardo.

had not seen any clear indication where God wanted the Work to move, until the living Jesus Christ drew attention to Charlotte. As one Council Member put it, the Work would not

move unless God showed a “compelling reason” for the move.

California had come to pose a number of special challenges for non-profit corporations seeking to conduct business in the state. Headquarters ministers, often called upon to travel, also experienced unique challenges because of the Headquarters location at the extreme southwestern corner of the United States.

Yet only when attention was turned to Charlotte, North Carolina, did everyone see doors swinging open, quickly and unmistakably, leading the Council of Elders to concur fully with Dr. Meredith’s assessment that God was leading the Work to Charlotte. Subsequent events showed evidence, again and again, of God’s blessing. The property selection, the financing and the welcome from the local business community all showed God’s generous outpouring of blessings on the Work. One local businessman even commented that he felt “compelled” to do what he could to help the Living Church of God, though he said he “didn’t know why.”

Community Interest

Local media and business publications, along with the Charlotte Chamber (of Commerce) gave the Church a warm welcome and very positive news coverage. On February 13, reporter Doug Smith of the Charlotte Observer ran an article offering a brief profile of the Church and its relocation to Charlotte. ABC-TV affiliate WSOC-TV (Channel 9) sent a camera crew to the office on March 6,

and ran two very favorable news reports on the Church, which were also aired on WSOC’s sister station WAXN (Channel 64). Several Headquarters employees have encountered new neighbors or business contacts who were introduced to the Church by these media reports, and who have a favorable opinion of the Church as a result. The Charlotte Chamber also released the Church’s public relations statement, announcing the relocation, to the local business press.



Making the Move

As anyone who has relocated a household knows, this can be a most difficult project, even locally. Multiply that by more than 25 households, plus an entire office facility—and a move of nearly 2,500 miles, essentially coast to coast—and the scope of the challenge becomes clear.

Mr. & Mrs. Don Davis were the Headquarters “pioneers” who first moved to Charlotte, in November 2002. Mr. Davis coordinated the renovation of the new Headquarters building, and many other move-related details such as furniture installations, acquisition of building permits, installation of alarm systems and coordination of building inspections.

Back in San Diego, employees began, after the Feast of Tabernacles, to “double up” their regular workload in preparation for the month or so of “downtime” that the move would require. By mid-February, the pre-move preparations were in “high gear.” During the week of February 17, everyone was busy packing their office

supplies, preparing to vacate their offices on February 21.

Beginning on February 24, tens of thousands of pounds of Headquarters equipment was loaded on trucks bound for Charlotte. A week later, trucks arrived in Charlotte, unloading box after box, desk after desk, computer after computer, into the warehouse at 2301 Crown Centre Drive.



Finance moves in! Messrs. Bardo and Ruddlesden swing a desk into place.

Throughout the transition, from February 24 to March 14, the Church Headquarters phone numbers (at least four lines, including the main office numbers for San Diego and Charlotte) were transferred to the household of Mr. & Mrs. Gary Ehman in San Diego, California. Mrs. Ehman, who among other duties had answered



Mr. & Mrs. James Alexander celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with Dr. Meredith and the brethren at the Dedication Sabbath.

the phones at the San Diego Headquarters Office, kept the Church furnished with continuing phone service during the transition from San Diego to Charlotte. Maintaining the regular 8:30AM–5:30PM Pacific Time office schedule (though in fact the phones rang at all hours), Mrs. Ehman answered approximately 330 calls. She took literature requests, put callers in touch with the appropriate Church employees or ministers, and made connections for those seeking ministerial visits or anointed cloths.

Dedication Sabbath

On the Sabbath of March 29, the Charlotte congregation hosted visitors from around the U.S., who had gathered at the nearby Mint Hill Masonic Hall for a special “Dedication Sabbath” service commemorating the Church’s relocation to its new Headquarters facility.

More than 260 brethren—from as far away as Vermont, Florida, California and other locations north, west and south—heard Dr. Meredith give a powerful sermon emphasizing thankfulness for God’s blessings upon the Work, in the context of end-time prophetic events. He reminded us that we must radiate God’s love to the people of the world, and that Headquarters had moved to Charlotte for that very reason.

Mr. Don Davis’ sermonette was also greatly appreciated, as he described the recent history of the Work of God, which has brought us to where we are today, and used John 4:34 as a key scripture exhorting us to “finish the Work.”

the phones at the San Diego Headquarters Office, kept the Church furnished with continuing phone service during the transition from San Diego to Charlotte. Maintaining the regular 8:30AM–5:30PM Pacific Time



Mrs. Kathryn Ames performed a beautiful violin piece—“Adoration,” by Felix Borowski—accompanied on piano by Michelle Bryce.

After the service, a sumptuous—and huge—covered-dish meal was served, then nearly 100 brethren visited the Headquarters building, where several employees led tours.

Grand Opening

On April 10, the official “Grand Opening” reception was held at 4 PM. More than 100 guests, many from local businesses, came to Headquarters to meet their new neighbors and acquaint themselves with the Church, its activities and its purpose. At the reception, Mr. Richard F. Ames read the proclamation that began this article, expressing gratitude to the city of Charlotte, its people, the entire Church and ultimately our Father in Heaven, for helping us to “move” through the entire process.



Mr. Richard F. Ames reads the proclamation

The International Headquarters of the Living Church of God has now successfully relocated to its new facility in Charlotte, North Carolina. Employees are settling in to new routines, eager to see the true Gospel of Jesus Christ preached with ever-greater zeal, power and effectiveness.

With the “official” move-in now completed, as we reflect on God’s great blessings, a hearty thanks is in order to all for the tremendous outpouring of help, support and encouragement that the Work has received throughout all phases of the relocation. And most significantly, Headquarters appreciates the loyal support of thousands of brethren around the world, through whose prayers, support and encouragement, God made the move to Charlotte possible.

God speed the day when Jesus Christ will return to this earth. Until then, may God help us all to do our part in finishing His Work, with fervent zeal and dedication, preparing the world and the Church for His return!

—Compiled from reports by Richard F. Ames, Rodger Bardo, William Bowmer and Linda Ehman

Local Church News

Births

Jamie and John Clementson of the Living Church of God congregation in Hammonton, New Jersey, announce the birth of *Pearl Anne Clementson* on February 27, weighing 9 pounds, 2 ounces. Pearl's big sister Hope Clementson is delighted!

Tim and Katy Elertson, of the Living Church of God congregation in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, announce the birth of their daughter *Faith Annabelle Elertson*, on March 30. she weighed 5 pounds, 9 ounces, and was 18.5 inches long.

Ruben and Jennifer Lujan Jr. are happy to announce the birth of their firstborn, *Kiersten Aurora Lujan*. Kiersten was born on March 14. She weighed 7.2 pounds, and was 20.5 inches in length.

Samuel Kelly Ralph Scarborough was born to Patrick and Elizabeth Scarborough on March 5. Mother and baby are doing well.

Tenth Anniversary Celebration

On the Sabbath of March 29, more than 100 brethren from the Living Church of God congregations in Indianapolis, Plymouth and Terre Haute, Indiana, and the congregation in Columbus, Ohio, gathered along with several visitors to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Indianapolis congregation. After a service that included split sermons from Mr. Charles Knowlton and Mr. Lambert Greer, the evening was spent in fellowship with lots of food and fun.

On March 23, 1993, Mr. Knowlton and a small group of brethren who had withdrawn from their former association first gathered together as a congregation. Since then, the group has grown to 48, and is currently pastored by Mr. Greer and local elder Mr. George Dellinger. The hall seats 100, so the brethren there look forward to whatever growth God may give the Church in the area.

—Alvina Dellinger

New Booklet!



Dr. Meredith's semi-annual letter to *Tomorrow's World* subscribers will be mailed in late May. In that letter, he will offer the Living

Church of God's newest booklet, *God's Church Through the Ages*. Every member household will receive this booklet, written by Mr. John H. Ogwyn, approximately a month after receiving the semi-annual letter.

Upcoming **Tomorrow's World** Telecasts

WGN: Sunday, 6:00 AM ET

VISION (Canada): Sunday, 3:30 AM & 5:30 PM ET

Air Date Broadcast Title

June 1	What Is the Great Tribulation?
June 8	Whatever Happened to Sin?
June 15	James, the Brother of Jesus
June 22	Overcoming Your Anxieties
June 29	What's Ahead for the Middle East?

For additional stations and times, check the Television and Radio Log on page 31 of your **Tomorrow's World** magazine.

Ordination

Mr. *Clyde Skeete*, who has been serving as a Living Church of God host in Barbados, was ordained as a deacon on March 29 by Regional Pastor Jonathan McNair. Mr. Skeete will continue to serve the brethren in Christ Church, Barbados.

In Loving Memory

Sarah Pearl Adams, of the Living Church of God congregation in Rolla, Missouri, died on January 30 at age 93. She had suffered from deteriorating health for several years. Baptized in 1962, she loved to read the Bible, and knew many verses by heart. Friendly and outgoing, she always made it a point to seek out new visitors to the congregation, to make them feel welcome. She is survived by a son, a daughter (Aileen Wells) and a daughter-in-law (Johnita Wells), three grandchildren, six great-grandchildren and one great-great grandson.

Clifford B. Powell, of the Living Church of God congregation in Walterboro, South Carolina, died on March 9, at age 77, after a battle with cancer. He is survived by his wife Nancy, who is also an LCG member, and by four children and stepchildren. He will be fondly remembered and greatly missed.

Clarence Teskey, age 79, of Leoville, Saskatchewan, died suddenly on January 25. He had suffered a

stroke several years ago, which had paralyzed him on one side and kept him confined to a wheelchair. He is survived by Esther, his wife of 52 years, and by two sons, a daughter and 11 grandchildren. He was not ashamed of the Truth, and often mentioned how grateful he was for the Living Church of God. Known as a very kind person, he will be missed by his many friends and family. Mr. Eng Monson conducted his funeral service on January 29.

Maria Thoms, age 90, of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, died peacefully on November 26, 2002. Baptized in 1969, her life was a true example of service to her very large family and to her late husband of 66 years. She had a deep respect for God, and was ever thankful for her calling. The Church was a great part of her life, and she missed very few services over the years, in spite of suffering many heart attacks over the past decade. Mr. Eng Monson conducted her funeral service on November 29, 2002, in Prince Albert. She will truly be missed.

LIVING CHURCH OF GOD 2003 FEAST SITES:

United States Sites:

Prescott, Arizona
Eureka Springs, Arkansas
Panama City Beach, Florida
Kauai, Hawaii*
Florence, Oregon
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
New Braunfels, Texas
Jackson Hole, Wyoming

International Sites:

CANADA:

Cranbrook, British Columbia
Cornwall, Ontario
Summerside, Prince Edward Island

AFRICA:

Port Alfred, South Africa

AUSTRALASIA:

Albany, WA, Australia
Bateman's Bay, QLD, Australia
Port Vila, Vanuatu
Taupo, New Zealand

CARIBBEAN:

Runaway Bay, Jamaica
Mayaro, Trinidad & Tobago
Barbados (site not confirmed)
Guyana (site not confirmed)

EUROPE:

Evian, France
North Wales, United Kingdom

SPANISH-SPEAKING:

Oaxtepec, Mexico

The Living Church of God will be keeping the Feast in several additional countries currently experiencing significant internal turmoil, where transfers will be discouraged.

*If you hope to attend the Hawaii site, please do not make your airline or hotel reservations yet. The Festival Office is working to arrange special discount airfares that may save several hundred dollars per traveler. Depending on how many brethren express interest in the Hawaii site when the site attendance survey is taken in local congregations in early June, attendance may be on an "admission-only" basis, since the hall can hold no more than 550. Please be ready to fill out the Hawaii Festival Application that will be included in the upcoming Feast Planner. Please do not make reservations until you have been told that you have been accepted at the Hawaii site.

Wedding

Douglas Young and *Debra Woods* were married in Los Angeles on Saturday night, April 5. Mr. Carl McNair officiated at the ceremony. The couple will reside in San Diego.

Matching Gifts

Many companies are able to match donations made by employees (and retirees) and their spouses. Please check with your employer's personnel office to determine whether your gift qualifies. Your employer may significantly increase or even double your giving to the Living Church of God.

Commentary

“The Sum of All Fears”

By Jeffrey Fall

A recent movie based on Tom Clancy’s book *The Sum of All Fears* sketches a scene of the ultimate terrorist nightmare—an attack at the Super Bowl with a nuclear weapon. Such an attack would cause a horrific death toll, and hysteria far beyond what the United States has ever experienced.

The movie raked in millions of dollars, but how likely would such an attack actually be? According to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, “hundreds of thousands of Americans are potentially at risk of nuclear attack.” National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice further stated that such an event would “make September 11 look like child’s play.”

Stephen Younger, Director of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, recently said: “Extensive searches in Afghanistan showed Al-Qaeda was interested in nuclear technologies. Al-Qaeda leaders may have connections in other countries that already have the technological base for building nuclear weapons. They have the money to make such links.”

Although most experts consider it very unlikely that Al-Qaeda would be able to accomplish a full-fledged nuclear explosion on U.S. soil, another threat is much more likely. As *Newsmax.com* reported: Al-Qaeda is behind “pirate raids on ships carrying radioactive material through the straits (between Indonesia and Malaysia) in a bid to obtain ingredients for a dirty bomb.”

A “dirty bomb” does not produce a nuclear explosion and mushroom cloud. It would consist of conventional explosives combined with radioactive materials. When the conventional explosives were detonated, their explosive force would blast the radioactive material over a wide area. After the initial explosive force, the real danger would be the residual radioactivity that could possibly remain in a city for *years*.

One long-term effect of radioactivity would be an eventual great increase in cancer within a city’s population. Some believe that it might take *years* for the radioactivity level to fall to a safe level. The Federation of American Scientists believes that “the risk of cancer in some contaminated areas would be so high that the government would desert or demolish the area.”

A detonation of a dirty bomb in one of our cities, such as Washington D.C. or New York City, would likely cause tremendous panic—one of the very purposes of terrorism. Some believe that one serious episode of dirty bomb terrorism would cause another nosedive in the economy, which is also one of the goals of terrorism.

How difficult would it be for terrorists to get their hands on enough radioactive material for a dirty bomb? According to a recent article by Carrie Dahlberg in the *Sacramento Bee*: “Despite fears that radioactive material could be shaped into a dirty bomb, hundreds of radioactive products are for sale through catalogs, Web sites and suppliers to anyone with a license to own them... Even nuclear industry workers, who often dismiss fears of radiation as overblown, quietly acknowledge that setting up a front business and buying a license may well be the ‘back door’ to building a dirty bomb. Thousands of private users nationwide are licensed to handle tools, medical equipment and machines containing [radiation] ideal for dirty bombs.”

The time is coming when God will allow the U.S. to be buffeted for its collective national sins—for its collective rejection of the Creator. This will happen to bring the U.S. as a nation to the true God. Terrorism is only one aspect of the traumas that will inflict the U.S. Drought, famine, disease, economic failure, and military challenges will slowly break the “pride of our power.”

Thankfully, as God reveals in His Word, there is also tremendous good news on the horizon as well—a time when all the evils of society, including terrorism, will be a thing of the past.

The above is an adaptation of one of the many commentaries, on key topics facing our world, available at the www.lcg.org and www.tomorrowworld.org Web sites.