

Living Church News

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Jesus Christ Is in Charge!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

We recently experienced a wonderful and effective Council of Elders conference here in Charlotte. These dedicated men from various parts of the nation and the world came together for four days of meetings. We deeply enjoyed one another's company, and all of us felt that we were truly experiencing Christ's leadership in the unity and harmony that prevailed during our discussions.

As you know, tens of thousands of God's people were hurt and discouraged by the spiritual malaise that developed during the terrible apostasy that took place after the death of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. People began to be *utterly confused* about the right form of Church government. For they felt that, after Mr. Armstrong's death, Christ somehow "forsook" His Church and let bad things happen. These people lost sight of Jesus Christ as the real **Head** of His Church! They also veered away from many basic truths that the Church of God had held for centuries, including observance of the Sabbath and Holy Days, and the expectation of Christ's literal reign on earth. People were cleverly turned against this *fundamental* truth that Mr. Armstrong had restored to the Church—the hierarchical form of Church government. These brethren felt that Christ had "deserted" the Church during the apostasy, when the leadership of our former association turned completely away from God's Truth.

Often, confused ministers would use catchphrases like "one-man government" to disorient people and turn them against the very *government of God*, which is described consistently throughout the entire Bible! They implied that the mistakes of the human leadership, after Mr. Armstrong's death, gave them an excuse to turn *completely away* from God's teaching on Church government.

It is important to realize that even the *family* is patterned after God's hierarchical form of government. "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:22–23). This *exact same form* of government is clearly indicated as the pattern for tomorrow's world. For Christ Himself will be the "King of kings" (Revelation 19:16). King David will be next in line in governing Israel. He will **not** be "elected" but rather appointed directly by Christ. "I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd" (Ezekiel 34:23). This is stated again in Ezekiel 37:24: "David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them." Under King David, according to

your Bible, will be the Twelve Apostles who have been *appointed* by Christ to rule over the individual tribes of Israel. “And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29–30).

In His fundamental dealings with mankind, God tells us clearly that He does not vary in His approach, for “I am the LORD, I do *not change*” (Malachi 3:6). We find that the same pattern will be taken by the coming King of kings: “Jesus Christ is the *same* yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). So *why* would any converted Christian think that Christ would want us *today* to observe a *totally different* form of Church government? Why would a converted Christian look to a government led by all kinds of committees, where voting or “balloting” is constantly practiced and the individuals involved *do not* really trust Christ to lead His Church in the way He did in ancient Israel, and in Apostolic times—and that He *will* in tomorrow’s world? Sadly, many Church of God groups have *totally forsaken* the teaching that God gave through His servant Mr. Armstrong *for decades*, regarding the form of government that they will *need* to teach and practice in tomorrow’s world! Let me state, in deep love and concern, that it is *vital* important that all of God’s people learn to awaken from this ignorance and begin to practice the exact form of government that they are supposed to teach in a few years, in the first resurrection! We hope everyone will wake up, and be qualified to receive a much higher reward and opportunity to serve in Christ’s government than they would otherwise have.

All of you brethren in the Living Church of God have experienced the warmth and unity that we have here at Headquarters and in virtually all of our local congregations. You brethren know the relaxed faith that we can have in looking to *Christ* to guide His Church through *His* form of government—rather than arguing, quibbling, debating and *voting* on all kinds of issues in a way that *never occurred* in Apostolic times! We in the Living Church of God must believe and practice what the Bible clearly teaches on this subject!

We must certainly learn to *improve our approach* in the way we carry out God’s government—just as we need to “grow” in every other aspect of Christian life! By having the *faith* that Christ really is *in charge*, we are better able to truly walk with Him and practice *His way* in our individual Christian lives and in the Church as a whole. The Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 1:19–23, describes the “mighty power” of God, “which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be *head over all things to the church, which is His body*, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Christ is definitely the “head” over “all things” to the true Church of God! If He becomes more *real* to us, we can trust Him to direct *every single activity* of the Church of God, as well as our lives individually.

In Colossians 1:18, the Apostle continues this theme. “And He is the *head* of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn

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Wait on God

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

Now that our staff has settled in Charlotte, North Carolina, I find myself very impatient to “get things moving.” I hope and pray to see this Work growing faster and faster so we can have a real impact on this sin-sick world. And I know—as I am sure you do also—that this confused world desperately *needs* what we have to give.

Our entire Headquarters staff is working very hard. Our field ministers are truly “stretched” to keep up with the large number of congregations each one of them has to watch over. Most of you members—and faithful co-workers as well—are also praying, giving, serving and doing your level best to help proclaim Christ’s message more powerfully. *Thank you* for your support and your constant loyalty!

So *why* are we not growing even faster?

First of all, we need to be *very grateful* for the solid growth we are experiencing already—even in a time of recession and some of the highest jobless figures in recent years! In spite of all this, the Work’s income is growing at a rate close to 8 percent so far this year. This is *much better* than most religious organizations. And most commercial businesses would be delighted with this kind of growth in a recessionary environment. As we recently announced, we have just started air-

ing the *Tomorrow’s World* program on *three* additional television stations. So more growth is certainly on the way. But really **big** growth is not happening just yet.

As I have thought and prayed about this in recent months, I have come to realize that several factors may be involved. First, as noted above, we *are* already being blessed with a fair amount of growth in the Work and in its income, the television responses and in many other ways. Second, we ought not to expect “explosive” growth, since we are the “remnant” of the Philadelphian Church *living over* into the Laodecian era. By specifically describing the “open door” for the Philadelphia era, Christ showed that it would be the Church era with the *most* “open doors,” and most growth. Yet as the Philadelphian remnant, Christ has *still* given us good growth in this Laodecian era, for which we are thankful.

As the years go by, dear brethren, it is very important that we all grow more and more in spiritual understanding. We are to have the “mind of Christ.” For, from *Christ’s* point of view, “one day is as a thousand years, and *a thousand years as one day*” (2 Peter 3:8). So, although we have many reasons to feel that Christ will return *within this generation*, we must *not* set exact dates and then become discouraged if Christ does not operate on *our timetable*!

God tells us: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. For as

the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9). The Eternal God is working His plan and His purpose in a way that we do not fully understand. In His infinite wisdom and mercy, He may wish to give our beloved peoples 15 to 25 more years to experiment with the *carnal* way of life, and suffer its evils before He intervenes to bring about the Great Tribulation. Then, they would not be able to say: “We were happy and prosperous and everything was just fine until God intervened and punished us!”

On the other hand, God may have had enough of our violence, lusts, sexual perversions, pornography, drunkenness, drug addiction, abortions and other vile practices. He may choose to *intervene powerfully* to chasten the British-descended and American people within the next five to seven years! If we are truly *patient* and humbly seeking His will, God will show us more clearly *His timetable* as world events unfold.

We will still be *far ahead* of the world in understanding what is coming! For we *do* understand the “Big Picture” in a way the world cannot. And prophecy certainly *is* moving ahead according to that scenario. But, since each year seems like a long time to some of us who have already been “waiting on God” for decades, we can become “antsy” and want God to send Jesus

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Building on the Foundation of Jesus Christ

By John H. Ogwyn

In the area of the country where I have lived for many years, there are frequent advertisements for foundation repair. Much of the soil in this area is clay, and it tends to crack and shift over time. This produces structural damage to the buildings themselves. Sometimes this damage is minor, and sometimes it is severe, but no structure can be more solid and substantial than the foundation upon which it is built.

When the foundation of a building shifts, portions of the building also shift. Sometimes this is revealed by hairline cracks in the walls or ceiling. Other times, if the shift is greater, the floors may noticeably slope, and doors may be difficult to open and close. The problems caused by a flawed foundation are many, and can be quite serious.

This does not only hold true for homes and other buildings. It holds true for our lives! What is the foundation upon which *your life* is built? Is it solid? Can it be counted upon *never* to crack? We have known and loved many whose lives have shifted dramatically—and in some cases have even collapsed. How can you ensure that such a thing never happens to you?

Jesus of Nazareth grew up learning the building trade from His stepfather, Joseph. He was very familiar with how to build a strong, substantial structure. From time to time during His ministry, Jesus used analogies from the building trade in His parables. One familiar example is found in Matthew 7:24–27, where He described two men building homes on very different foundations. One built upon sand, while the other built upon a rock. At first, both houses looked fine. But when a severe storm came, one house withstood it, while the other collapsed. Christ used this parable to teach us that a life built upon a solid foundation is based upon *obedience* to His teachings. Obedience to God is the only way to withstand life's storms.

The Bible makes clear that Jesus Christ is to be our foundation. He is the Rock upon which the Church itself is built (cf. Matthew 16:18). This means that the true Church will practice and teach what Christ Himself practiced and taught. Moreover, He should be the *personal* foundation upon which we each build our life. But what exactly does this mean, and how can we put this into practice?

Writing to the Corinthian Church, the Apostle Paul emphasized that he preached “Christ crucified,” which seemed foolishness to the Greeks and was a stumbling block to the Jews (1 Corinthians 1:22–23). The Jews were looking for a miraculous sign from heaven, while the Greeks wanted everything to be logical and to make sense. The Jews stumbled at the thought of a Messiah who suffered and died, because they were expecting a Messiah who would produce “shock and awe” among the Gentiles. To the Greeks, a suffering Savior simply did not make sense. They did not see the logic of it. They all had their own expectations, and God’s divine plan did not meet their preconceived ideas.

Paul’s message had an emphasis very different than what these groups were anticipating. He explained that he had “determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). The entire focus of Paul’s message was Jesus Christ—not simply the *person* of Christ, but also the *example* and the *message* of Christ! Paul told the Corinthians: “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:9–11).

The Apostle Paul stressed that Jesus Christ must be the foundation upon which everything else is built. Is He the foundation of your life? How can you be sure? If He is not, then whatever you build will ultimately crack and crumble because there can be no other sure foundation. Remember, Jesus Himself explained that to build upon the Rock meant not only to listen to what He taught, but also to put it into practice in our lives (Matthew 7:24). What, then, does a life built upon Jesus Christ look like? How can we have one?

A Surrendered Life

First and foremost, a life built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ will be a surrendered life. No life built upon self-will can truly be a spiritual success. Jesus emphasized to His listeners: “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 6:38).

Perhaps the hardest task for any of us is to give up our self-will. Humanly, we all want our own way! Fear often stands in the way of our relying on God instead of self, because we are not exactly sure what God has in mind. As a result, we seek to protect the self from what we perceive to be hurt or loss.

Jesus compared many of the religious leaders of His day to little children playing in the marketplace. They were quite frustrated, first with John the Baptist and later with Jesus Himself, because neither would dance to their tune (cf. Matthew 11:16–19). Though John was the first direct prophet of God to come on the scene in four centuries, and Jesus was the Messiah Himself, neither conformed to the religious leaders' expectations. As a result, most religious leaders rejected God's true servants. The religious leaders of Christ's day were not utterly *surrendered* to God's will; they wanted things done their own way.

This was a very serious matter. When Achan secretly took some gold and some articles of clothing, it brought God's curse upon the entire nation, because Achan was taking for his personal use what God had claimed for Himself.

Jesus Christ regarded His life as totally dedicated to God. John 4 tells of Jesus and His disciples traveling from Judea to Galilee, and stopping in Samaria on their way. While the disciples went on into town to buy food, Jesus waited by the well. By the time the disciples had returned, a crowd had begun to gather around Jesus, who was explaining God's plan and purpose. Anxious to start their meal, the disciples urged Jesus to eat. "I have food to eat that you know nothing about," Jesus told them. Puzzled as to where he had obtained this food, the disciples began to discuss the matter among themselves. Realizing that they had missed His meaning, Jesus explained further: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34).

The Bible makes clear that Jesus Christ is to be our foundation. He is the Rock upon which the Church itself is built (cf. Matthew 16:18). This means that the true Church will practice and teach what Christ Himself practiced and taught.

Perhaps the most powerful story illustrating surrender is the account of Jesus Christ praying to the Father just before His arrest and subsequent crucifixion. The horror of what lay directly in front of Him seemed overwhelming, as He and the disciples arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane soon after finishing their Passover meal. Christ went to a secluded spot a little way beyond the disciples, and poured out His heart in agonizing prayer to the Father. Praying with such intensity that He even sweated blood, Jesus cried out to the Father to "let this cup pass from Me" if there were any other way to accomplish God's plan. "Nevertheless," He declared, "not My will but your will be done" (cf. Matthew 26:36–39, KJV). Jesus Christ completely surrendered all vestiges of self-will, and sought God's will unconditionally. A life that is built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ can only be a surrendered life!

A Consecrated Life

To "consecrate" means to separate for divine service. Consecration was a concept often employed in the Old Testament to describe something that belonged to God or was dedicated to Him. Offerings, tithes and even the tribe of Levi were described as "consecrated," or dedicated to God and to His use. When Israel first entered the Promised Land, the entire city of Jericho—representing the firstfruits of Israel's conquest—was dedicated to God.

For the disciples, life generally revolved around physical matters. Jesus Christ, however, lived His life to please the Father, and to complete the spiritual work He had been given to do. His life was totally dedicated to God and His service. Therefore, a life built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ must be a consecrated life.

What does that mean specifically for us? Christ certainly carried out the normal responsibilities of daily life. He pursued an education as a young person (Luke 2:52), worked as a builder before the beginning of His ministry (Mark 6:3) and found time to attend social occasions (John 2:1–2). Yet for all of that, from a very early age He was deeply conscious of the need to be about His Father's business (Luke 2:49). Jesus Christ *put first* His fulfillment of God's purpose for Him.

A Life of Humility

Pride is a common human failing. As a young man, Benjamin Franklin began a project with the aim of achieving moral perfection. He had a very straightforward plan: he made a list of virtues that he wanted to imbue into his character, then proceeded to work on them one at a time! He planned that after he had made a habit out of one, he would proceed to the next, until he had finally achieved his whole list. Franklin had more trouble with some virtues than with others, and eventually realized the

impossibility of his task. The virtue that he found most challenging was humility. Finally, he declared in frustration: “I am afraid that if I ever became truly humble, then I would be *proud* of it.”

Clearly, humility is not something that comes naturally. Yet on the other hand, the Bible plainly declares: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). If there was ever anyone who was entitled to feel pride, it was certainly Jesus of Nazareth. Yet Jesus declared in Matthew 11:29: “I am meek and lowly in heart” (KJV). Why was that? It was because Jesus was completely focused on the Father rather than on Himself. He readily admitted that of Himself He could do nothing, and that it was the Father who did the works (John 5:30; 14:10). Real humility flows from seeing ourselves in comparison to God and His greatness. Pride comes from a self-absorbed approach to life, and often includes illusions of self-sufficiency. A life built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ will be a life of humility.

A Life of Service

Jesus Christ often talked about the Kingdom of God. His disciples understood that He was talking about a literal kingdom, and that they would someday inherit positions of rulership in that Kingdom. However, their concept of what it meant to be a ruler was greatly colored by the example of the government leaders they saw in the Roman Empire of their day. From time to time, they had arguments about which disciple would be the greatest in that coming Kingdom. Jesus wanted them to understand that true greatness was not based upon having others serve them, but rather upon each of them living a life of service to others. “But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant,” Jesus explained (Matthew 23:11).

On the night of their final Passover together, Jesus shocked His disciples. After they were seated at the table for their meal, He arose from dinner, laid aside His outer coat, took a towel and a pan of water and began to wash the disciples’ feet. This was a task of lowly service, usually reserved for the lowest-ranking servant in the household. As He finished, and prepared to return to the table, Jesus asked His disciples: “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you” (John 13:12–15). Jesus Christ taught that a life well lived ought to be a life of serving others. This is the very opposite of the self-centered life that represents the natural, carnal approach. If we build upon the foun-

ation of Jesus Christ, we will not live a life of selfish indulgence, but rather a life of service to others.

A Life of Love

Self-indulgence and pride flow from the fact that most people are in love with themselves. It comes naturally to be concerned with ourselves. In fact, even when people do things for others, it is possible for them to have a variety of motives. Even acts of self-sacrifice can sometimes be motivated by a desire to exalt the self. Notice what the Apostle Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 13:1–3: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I... understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith... And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.” Doing the “loving” thing *without true love* profits us “nothing!”

Why is love so important? God is building a family, and healthy families have healthy relationships. Every healthy family has its relationships based upon love. Our relationships with one another, and with God Himself, must be based upon true love. This was the underlying foundation of everything that Jesus Christ did. “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). Not only was love the basis of why Christ did what He did, it was also to be the defining characteristic of His true followers: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.... By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34–35). A life built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ will be a life based upon love for God *and* love for others.

An Obedient Life

One of the fundamental characteristics of *real* love toward God is *obedience* to His commandments. As the Apostle John explained in 1 John 5:2–3: “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” Simply put, if obedience is not based upon love, it will not last! The Pharisees prided themselves upon their obedience to God’s law, but their obedience quickly collapsed when they felt personally threatened by Christ’s ministry (cf. John 11:47–48). They became accomplices to bribing false witnesses, and even contrived to bring about the death of someone who was totally inno-

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International Corner...

Venezuela Update

by George Schaubeck

On Monday, April 14, my wife and I boarded a flight from Costa Rica to Mérida, Venezuela. Mérida is situated in a valley amid the very high hills of the Andes Mountains, with altitudes that exceed 17,000 feet.

Gleidys Contreras, the daughter of our dear friend Gladys Guillén who died less than a year ago, met us at the airport. We took a cab to Chiguará, a picturesque town on a rugged Andes Mountain slope. Gleidys' grandmother had invited us to stay in her home for Passover and first day of Unleavened Bread. Her home, built around a central patio and bordered by gardens, is both spacious and historic, dating back to colonial days.

Margoth de Moreno, along with her son Luis and his wife Mary and their two children, traveled six hours from Barquisimeto for this occasion. We took the Passover together, and on the First Day of Unleavened Bread we celebrated the Feast with an attendance of 23, including children.

After this, we left for Barquisimeto. Mr. Moreno preferred that we take the old Andean route: a trip of 10 hours that passes Eagle's Peak at an altitude of 14,000 feet (only suitable for hearts in good shape), descending on a winding road that reminded us of the southern route of Sequoia National Forest in California, before ending at the warm city of Barquisimeto. We enjoyed the beautiful scenery and deserts where the vegetation never exceeds three feet in height due to the altitude and very low temperatures.

On the weekly Sabbath in Barquisimeto, we had 14 in atten-

dance for services, held in a tower apartment (offered by Mrs. de Moreno's daughter) with a nice view of the city.

Mr. Moreno provides television cable service for several towns in the region, and he offered to start broadcasting the program *El Mundo de Mañana* free of charge in at least one of the towns as soon as we have the videos available. We also made plans for a group of Venezuelans to attend the Feast of Tabernacles this year in Colombia, and several have begun their preparation for baptism with the intention of surrendering to Christ during this upcoming Feast.

We returned to Costa Rica on Monday, April 21, our hearts filled with hope and optimism. We are very thankful for having been treated as kings in Venezuela, although we have not yet received this longed-for title, which Jesus Christ will give us when His Kingdom comes.

Philippines Update

by Rod McNair

The "war against terrorism" has certainly affected this Southeast Asian Pacific nation. The Philippines was one of the first countries to publicly vow support for the United States in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks. In February of 2003, the Pentagon reported that it would be sending 3,000 American troops to engage in a major combat offensive against Muslim terrorists in Mindanao. However, it was not long before anti-American pressure forced the Philippine government to scale back the role of incoming American troops to a non-combat mission. Much of the pressure

against foreign troops comes from rebel extremist groups that have recently made tactical alliances to increase terrorist attacks around the country. Some brethren who live in affected areas have missed Sabbath services, because of the danger of traveling. One family had to evacuate its home when Muslim neighbors warned them of impending attacks.

And yet, through the growing danger, God has protected His people—sometimes miraculously. On March 5, a powerful bomb hidden in a backpack exploded at the entrance of Davao International Airport, killing 21 people (including one American missionary) and wounding more than 120. Two planes had just unloaded, and people were streaming through the entrance. Attorney Max Noble, deacon in our Cavite, Metro-Manila congregation, was at the Davao airport when the bomb exploded. Mr. Noble's luggage was slow coming off the airplane, so he had to wait while other passengers were already exiting the airport. It was at that time when the powerful bomb went off. Apparently, those picking up Mr. Noble were also running late—which prevented them from being in the throng gathered outside at the entrance. Certainly God directly intervened to save Mr. Noble and his companions!

Despite the dangers, God has also continued to bless the Work here in 2003. At the end of January, we conducted another yearly round of Philippine ministerial meetings in Manila with three pastors and three elders attending. In the first two months of this year, we received 271 pieces of mail in the Manila office, with 41 responses to the *Tomorrow's World* broadcast. Also during this time,

342 *Bible Study Course* lessons and 94 booklets have been sent out. The current *Tomorrow's World* magazine subscription level stands at 1,484. The income for January and February has also been encouraging—a 31.7 percent increase over 2002. In just the first months of 2003 we had one baptism, with five or six prospective members still counseling. Despite perilous times, God is blessing His Work and His people in the Philippines!

South Africa Update

by Syd Hull

Things are happening in this part of the world! This week, a woman I had baptized while in our former association phoned me to tell me that her husband, a kind and harmless soul, went to the local grocery store to buy a few items. While there, five men walked in and robbed the establishment, and shot this man down in cold blood! This was just one of many such brutal murders, not reported by the local media.

We in the Church are aching for God's Kingdom to come. A few weeks ago, my wife and I made a trip to Cape Town for Pentecost weekend. The Cape is at the southern extremity of the African continent, about 2,100 kilometers from South Africa's northern border. This was our best visit to Cape Town since 1994. It was very gratifying to see the unity and love among the brethren.

The ministry is very excited about the upcoming ministerial conference, set to begin on July 8 in Johannesburg. I plan to emphasize the ministry's responsibility for looking out for the flock, and for developing young men to become leaders in God's Church. We have a great responsibility to prepare for the very hard times ahead, and we must at all times set an example of faith and courage by keeping very close to

God. Mr. Meredith's exhortations in this regard have been very encouraging. We are very thankful for his leadership.

We have already translated the booklet *God's Church Through the Ages* into Afrikaans. It is a very timely booklet.

I recently had a long telephone conversation with one of our subscribers in Port Elizabeth. He has over a period of time been sharing the literature we have been sending him with some fellow-members in his church. He told me that all of his friends are convinced that our booklets and articles are nothing but the truth. He says that their eyes have been opened, and that they now want to be members of the Living Church of God. There are 16 people in this group. I told him that we would help them all we could. Our Feast of Tabernacles total could include another 16 individuals, as Port Elizabeth is very close to our Feast site at Port Alfred. I phoned Mr. Pieter van der Byl about it, and asked him to pray about this matter and to ask God to give us wisdom in working with these people. We have many new people who are very excited about the Truth, but many fall short at this stage of taking the first step toward salvation. It seems that society and morals have deteriorated over the years to the point that many people just do not have the "get up and go" attitude of people in former years.

Caribbean Update

by Jonathan McNair

Trinidad is at the southern end of the West Indies—almost on the coast of South America. The actual title of the nation is "Trinidad and Tobago" since the two islands are considered "sisters." The language that is spoken is English, and tourists have an easy time understanding the local accent. For many

years, we have kept the Feast of Tabernacles in Tobago, which is more of a tourist destination. This year, however, we will be in Trinidad, on the southeast coast. The town of Mayaro sits along a beach that runs for miles—with palm trees swaying in the breeze, just as the Caribbean postcards advertise.

Close to 80 brethren attend services at two different locations, with approximately half of the members living around the Port of Spain area, and the other half near the town of San Fernando in the south. Once a month, both congregations combine for services. This normally has taken place when the associate pastor, Fitzroy Greeman, makes his monthly visit. However, as of May, members no longer need to wait a month to see Mr. Greeman. He and his wife, along with their three daughters, have moved to Trinidad, where Mr. Greeman now serves as a resident associate pastor.

God's Church has a long history in Trinidad. Over the years, God built a membership of almost a thousand members, and the congregation even had its own building for services. After the doctrinal trials of the early '90s, however, only a handful held fast to the truth. Beginning with that small nucleus, God began to rebuild the Church. First, we went on radio with *Tomorrow's World*. After two years of reasonable success, the door opened to television. With that change, the responses continued to grow. Recently, we have had more than 900 responses in a month. Mr. Greeman will definitely have his hands full, working with dozens of new members. Many are familiar with Mr. Armstrong's teachings from years gone by, and see his imprint on our efforts. Others are just beginning to be called to understand the truths of the Bible. It is inspiring to look back at the faithfulness of the members in Trinidad, used by God to lay a foundation for the Work here. LCM

2002 Audit Report:

Involvement and Accountability

By Rodger L. Bardo

In a recent meeting with our auditors, Maginnis Knechtel & McIntyre Certified Public Accountants and Consultants, our conversation turned to the topic of corruption in corporate fiscal markets. The discussion focused on the fiduciary expectations and responsibilities of both donors and nonprofit organizations, as outlined in a December 2002 *Business Week* article titled “The New Face of Philanthropy.”

One key point was that today’s generous givers are “being *involved*” in the entire process of giving. As a result, not-for-profit organizations are being required to “produce measurable results”—to demonstrate *accountability* for what is done with donations received.

A “top donor” who gave more than \$7 million to a mid-sized nonprofit foundation helping disadvantaged children stated: “Maybe I could have [just] written a check to an organization.... but Carol [my wife] and I wanted to be *involved*.... We wanted to see it and feel it.”

The same is true with God’s Church today. More members are “involved,” desiring to actually “see” and “feel” the Work, not just to “write a check.” Involvement in God’s Work means “rolling up our sleeves” with more fervent prayers, regular fasts and volunteer help when needed.

This involvement works hand in hand with *accountability*. As the Work grows and becomes more visible, it is important to have “validation” of our total financial picture, through the use of generally accepted business practices. One way the

Church accomplishes this is with an audit—that is, an “on-paper” statement of what has happened financially throughout the year.

Traditionally, the Church has had an outside auditor review the financial “books” periodically. The audit not only assures that accounting procedures are in accordance with standard practices, it also provides a measure of assurance that God’s tithes and offerings are being used properly, to do the Work.

Additionally, the audit better enables us to do business with car leasing and insurance companies, banks and other vendors that occasionally require such information to validate that we are, indeed, a good risk and are doing what we say we are doing. We could not have purchased our current Headquarters property, done business with a number of firms, or provided insurance coverage for our employees or ministers, without first furnishing an independent audit of our financial condition. Our audit will thus be a blessing for the success of God’s Work both here in the United States and throughout the world.

Notice page 3 of the audit, and the amount spent for “Preaching the Gospel.” This may seem like a lot of money to you and me—and indeed it is—but in today’s expensive media market it is not very much at all. Imagine what would happen if we could double or triple these figures for just radio and television alone? This is an exciting thought! Yet it would also affect every other area of the Work proportionately. More television stations mean more magazines, more booklets and more of

everything as we blanket the world with God’s message. This growth cannot occur without our collective active interest in God’s Work.

On that same page, you will also see our “General and Administration” costs, which are *less than half* of the 20 percent that is the generally accepted national average for many “mainline” nonprofit organizations. This is reassuring, indeed.

Audits are an indispensable tool in our toolbox for doing good Church business, which will help open more doors as we grow larger. A proper audit affords us the element of financial validation. It provides one additional “control” to ensure that expenses are properly tracked and sound business practices are followed within the Work, while not interfering with our ability to do the Work.

Some may need to better understand what an audit actually does. An audit reviews, checks, evaluates, examines, measures, assesses (actually *reassesses*) and *inventories* our financial resources. It provides the mechanism in the system that says: “This is what you have done, this is what you have now and this is what you are poised to accomplish, from a financial standpoint.”

Our auditors, for instance, do not “tell” us how many *Tomorrow’s World* magazines to print, which booklets to publish or what doctrines to teach. Rather, they provide valuable financial insights, confirming that we are indeed complying with our appropriate responsibilities for which purpose the organization exists (Romans 13:1–7). An audit is, in fact, an

actual financial statement that we are doing as we said we would do. Some of us personally could well benefit from this type of individual yearly financial evaluation. In the business world, it is standard operating procedure.


At the same time, the auditors can “preach” their message of avoiding the appearance of any potential “points of corruption.” For more information on this subject, you may wish to review the article “Auditors’ Responsibility for Fraud Detection” in the January 2003 issue of *Journal of Accountancy* magazine. It outlines the need for proper “control points” within an organization, to demonstrate that appropriate care is being taken when processing monies.

This is a level of fiduciary awareness that today has risen to new

heights in the minds of most businessmen because of the recent scandals in the monetary marketplace, and is one reason why many are becoming more “involved” with such matters. As those responsibilities are also foremost on our minds in the Finance Department, we will continue to strive diligently to be good stewards of what God has given us.

These days, individuals in all walks of life are expecting more from those responsible for financial matters. While controls, audits and the like are not “cure-alls” for our world’s problems, they do provide a measure of physical financial assurance in a world otherwise devoid of Christian business principles. Only “tomorrow’s world” will bring an end to this world’s financial woes.

Our 2002 audit is not only a measure of our financial solvency, but also a great business tool to help us plan the future growth of the Work. So as we see the growth of the Work on paper, it encourages all of us to get more “involved.” Involvement produces an awareness of what is happening in the Work, what the urgent needs are and what specifically to pray about.

Accordingly, as the world reels from layoffs, deflation (the reverse of inflation) and other personal and corporate financial challenges, we can be reassured through our 2002 audit that our financial house is in order. We thank all of you for your persistent prayers and sacrifices. Pray that God’s Work will remain resilient during these unsettling economic times—and please continue to be “involved” in God’s Work! 

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD
IN THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA**
(A California Nonprofit
Religious Corporation)

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

December 31, 2002

LIVING CHURCH OF GOD
INDEX TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
AND SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

December 31, 2002

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INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

To the Board of Directors
Living Church of God
San Diego, California

We have audited the accompanying statement of financial position of the Living Church of God in the United States of America (a California nonprofit religious corporation) as of December 31, 2002, and the related statements of activities and changes in net assets, and cash flows for the year then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Church's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Living Church of God in the United States of America as of December 31, 2002, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Maginnis Knechtel & McIntyre

Pasadena, California
February 12, 2003

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**
Statement of Financial Position
December 31, 2002

Assets

Current Assets:

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 1,570,446
Investments (Note 2)	103,456
Receivables (Note 3)	60,880
Prepaid Expenses (Note 4)	337,336
Deposits	<u>31,204</u>

Total Current Assets 2,103,322

Property and Equipment, Net (Note 5) 2,524,163

Other Assets, Net 19,660

Total Assets \$ 4,647,145

Liabilities and Net Assets

Current Liabilities:

Accounts Payable	\$ 189,166
Accrued Liabilities	147,283
Mortgage Payable, Current	<u>21,756</u>

Total Current Liabilities 358,205

Mortgage Payable, Non-Current (Note 6) 1,655,552

Total Liabilities 2,013,757

Commitments (Note 7)

Unrestricted Net Assets 2,633,388

Total Liabilities and Net Assets \$ 4,647,145

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements

LIVING CHURCH OF GOD
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets
For the Year Ended December 31, 2002

Support and Revenue:

Tithes and Contributions	\$ 6,600,335
Holy Day Offerings	1,629,696
Estate Donations and Other Revenue	<u>1,095,504</u>
Total Support and Revenue	<u>9,325,535</u>

Expenses:*Feeding the Flock:*

Support of Local Congregations	3,662,332
Assistance to the Needy	679,158
	<u>4,341,490</u>

Preaching the Gospel:

Television and Radio	1,975,173
Publishing and Editorial	907,122
Mail Processing and Distribution	733,595
	<u>3,615,890</u>

General and Administrative:

Support Services and Other	<u>773,567</u>
Total Expenses	<u>8,730,947</u>

Support and Revenue Over Expenses	594,588
Unrestricted Net Assets, Beginning of Year	<u>2,038,800</u>
Unrestricted Net Assets, End of Year	<u><u>\$ 2,633,388</u></u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements

LIVING CHURCH OF GOD
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Statement of Cash Flows
For the Year Ended December 31, 2002

<i>Cash Flows From Operating Activities:</i>	
Support and Revenue Over Expenses	\$ 594,588
Adjustments to Reconcile Support and Revenue Over Expenses to Net Cash Provided By Operating Activities:	
Depreciation and Amortization	132,271
Loss on Investments	1,063
Loss on Disposal of Equipment	2,388
(Increase) Decrease in:	
Investments	(177)
Receivables	(11,656)
Prepaid Expenses	(67,970)
Deposits	(2,342)
Increase (Decrease) in:	
Accounts Payable	27,365
Accrued Liabilities	16,619
Net Cash Provided By Operating Activities	<u>692,149</u>
<i>Cash Flows From Investing Activities:</i>	
Purchases of Land and Building	(2,287,104)
Purchases of Property and Equipment	(70,823)
Increase in Other Assets	(4,799)
Proceeds from Sale of Equipment	4,600
Net Cash Used In Investing Activities	<u>(2,358,126)</u>
<i>Cash Flows From Financing Activities:</i>	
Proceeds from Mortgage Loan	1,682,000
Payment of Mortgage Loan	(4,692)
Payment of Capital Leases	(20,814)
Net Cash Provided By Financing Activities	<u>1,656,494</u>
<i>Net Increase in Cash and Cash Equivalents</i>	(9,483)
<i>Cash and Cash Equivalents, Beginning of Year</i>	<u>1,579,929</u>
<i>Cash and Cash Equivalents, End of Year</i>	<u>\$ 1,570,446</u>
<i>Supplemental Disclosures of Cash Flow Information:</i>	
Cash Paid During the Year for Interest	<u>\$ 16,704</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements

Audit Page 5

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

*Notes to the Financial Statements
December 31, 2002*

1 Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

A. Organization

The "Living Church of God in the United States of America", a California nonprofit religious corporation (the Church) is involved in preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and providing for the spiritual and material needs of its members, principally in the United States of America (U.S.). The Church is primarily funded by unrestricted tithes and offerings. It maintains its worldwide headquarters in San Diego, California. In November 2002, the Church purchased a building in Charlotte, North Carolina which will be its new worldwide headquarters in March 2003.

B. Basis of Presentation

The accompanying financial statements include the assets, liabilities, net assets and financial activities of the Church in the United States, at the level of administration above the individual congregations. Operations of foreign affiliates are not included.

C. Financial Statement Presentation

These financial statements have been prepared on the accrual basis of accounting.

Contributions are recorded when the funds are constructively received. Cash includes contributions received during the first part of January of the subsequent year, but postmarked prior to January 1. The Church uses no formal pledging activity. Services and publications provided by the Church are free of charge.

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect certain reported amounts and disclosures. Accordingly, actual results could differ from those estimates.

D. Designated or Restricted Funds

Members of the Church practice tithing, the donation of ten percent of one's income for the Church's unrestricted use. These tithes (known as first tithe), plus unrestricted offerings given at each of seven annual Holy Days, comprise the majority of Church support and revenue.

Audit Page 6

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

*Notes to the Financial Statements
December 31, 2002*

1 Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)

D. Designated or Restricted Funds (continued)

In addition to first tithe and offerings, members save a second tithe for personal use to be able to attend the annual Holy Days. Those who are able, give ten percent of this personal second tithe to the Church, to help pay for expenses incurred by the Church to conduct the Holy Days. These contributions are known as tithe of second tithe.

Members, who are financially able, also contribute a third tithe in the third and sixth years of every seven year cycle. These contributions are used first, to assist widows, orphans and the poor; and secondly, for those performing the Church's Work in various ministerial functions.

Restricted donations are received for the purchase of media time, the operation of the Church's summer youth camps and assistance to international offices in need.

Statement of Financial Accounting Standards (SFAS) No. 116, "Accounting for Contributions Received and Contributions Made", dictates that contributions with donor-imposed restrictions be reported as permanently restricted or temporarily restricted. However, SFAS No. 116 also states that "donor-restricted contributions whose restrictions are met in the same reporting period may be reported as unrestricted support provided that an organization reports consistently from period to period and discloses its accounting policy."

In management's opinion, at December 31, 2002, all contributions received for specific purposes had been spent for their intended purposes.

E. Cash

Cash consists of demand deposits in various accounts at commercial banks and money market funds at a securities firm. Due partially to outstanding checks at December 31, 2002, the deposits in the commercial banks were in excess of FDIC insurance limits by \$259,431. To limit its risk, the Church performs regular evaluations of these banks.

Cash equivalents

For purposes of the statement of cash flows, the Church considers all highly liquid debt instruments purchased with a maturity date of three months or less to be cash equivalents.

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**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

*Notes to the Financial Statements
December 31, 2002*

1 Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)

F. Investments

Investments consist of highly liquid debt instruments purchased with a maturity date of more than three months and donated mutual funds stated at fair market value.

G. Receivables

Receivables at December 31, 2002 consisted of amounts due from foreign affiliates, employees and other vendor receivables.

H. Prepaid Expenses and Deposits

Prepaid expenses consist of television time, publications, vehicle leases, Church meeting hall rentals, insurance and other including postage paid in advance. Deposits include funds to secure office space, festival sites and vehicle lease contracts.

Programming costs for television time are billed in advance of the scheduled air date. The expense is recognized in the month that the program is aired.

Prepaid publications are expensed as they are used in mailings to members and prospective members. A physical inventory of the publications is taken at year-end.

Prepaid Church meeting hall rentals are expensed in the month the meeting is held. All of the Church hall rentals are on a month to month basis.

Prepaid vehicle leases are paid at the inception of the lease and amortized over the term of the original lease, usually 12 to 48 months.

I. Property and Equipment

Property and equipment is recorded at cost. Depreciation is computed on a straight-line basis over the estimated useful lives, principally 30 years for buildings and capitalized improvements, over the term of the lease for leasehold improvements and 3 to 5 years for equipment and furniture. Capitalized leases include television production and computer equipment with 3-year terms.

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**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

*Notes to the Financial Statements
December 31, 2002*

1 Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)

J. Other Assets

Other assets include purchased copyrights, trademarks, trade names and all the intangible intellectual property rights of "Global Church of God" and "The World Ahead" and all the tangible embodiments thereof such as printed booklets in inventory, television video tapes and related assets. The intellectual property rights are included in Other Assets and are amortized over 7 years. Amortization expense for the year ended December 31, 2002 amounted to \$10,032.

K. Accrued Liabilities

Accrued liabilities primarily pertain to amounts accrued for compensated absences, salaries and wages.

L. Components of Programs and Support Services

Support of Local Congregations:

Represents the costs incurred by the Church to provide for the spiritual needs of its members. Included are pastoral expenses such as salaries, health care, vehicles and other travel related costs; as well as weekly meeting hall rentals, mailing of video tapes, expenses to conduct the annual Holy Days and other support provided by headquarters.

Assistance to the Needy:

Provides for the material needs of Church members primarily as assistance for widows, orphans and the poor; including assistance to enable some members to attend the annual Holy Days. Assistance to international offices in need, is also included.

Television and Radio:

Primarily represents the cost of purchasing air time to air the Church's weekly television program, Tomorrow's World. Also included are the production costs associated with creating the program and costs for videotape and answering service.

Publishing and Editorial:

Includes editorial and publishing costs of the Church's bi-monthly magazine, Tomorrow's World, and an array of booklets, primarily intended for non-members. Also included are costs of printing all other Church materials.

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**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

*Notes to the Financial Statements
December 31, 2002*

1 Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)

Mail Processing and Distribution:

Represents the costs of fulfilling literature and audiotape requests generated by preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God through television, radio and publishing. Computer support of mailing lists is also included.

Support Services and Other:

Includes administrative expenses not directly attributable to specific programs. This includes the full cost of all finance, accounting, purchasing, human resources and legal support. It also includes general insurance and other miscellaneous expenses.

M. Contributed Services

Contributed services are not recorded for volunteers since it is not practical to calculate the monetary value of the benefits received. Such services might constitute a significant factor in the Church's operations.

O. Income Taxes

The Church is an exempt organization for federal income tax purposes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and is exempt from California Franchise tax.

2 Investments

Investments at December 31, 2002 consist of:

	Cost	Market Value
Certificate of deposit	\$ 99,926	\$ 99,926
Mutual fund	5,000	3,530
	<u>\$104,926</u>	<u>\$103,456</u>

3 Receivables

Receivables at December 31, 2002 are as follows:

Amounts due from foreign affiliates	\$ 35,779
Due from others	19,596
Employee receivables	5,225
Accrued interest receivable	780
	<u>\$ 60,880</u>

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**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

*Notes to the Financial Statements
December 31, 2002*

6 Mortgage Payable (continued)

Maturities of long-term debt are as follows:

2003	\$ 21,756
2004	21,860
2005	24,412
2006	25,859
2007	27,392
Thereafter	<u>1,556,029</u>
Total	<u>\$ 1,677,308</u>

7 Commitments

The Church leases office facilities, fleet vehicles and equipment under various operating leases. For the year ended December 31, 2002 rent expense for the office facilities amounted to \$350,391, lease expense for vehicles amounted to \$221,150 and lease expense for equipment amounted to \$16,786.

Future minimum lease payments under operating leases are as follows:

	Office facilities	Vehicles	Equipment	Total
2003	\$ 124,655	\$ 176,108	\$ 10,357	\$ 311,120
2004	-	88,361	9,826	98,187
2005	-	25,624	9,826	35,450
2006	-	3,696	-	3,696
	<u>\$ 124,655</u>	<u>\$ 293,789</u>	<u>\$ 30,009</u>	<u>\$ 448,453</u>

8 403b Tax-Deferred Annuity Plan and Simplified Employee Pension Plan

The Church has a 403b Tax-Deferred Annuity Plan for all eligible employees. Eligible employees may elect to exclude up to the maximum contribution permitted by the Internal Revenue Code. The Church does not contribute to this Plan.

The Church has a Simplified Employee Pension Plan (SEP) covering all eligible employees. The plan was effective January 1, 2002. The Church's contribution is based on 1% of eligible participants' compensation. The contribution made by the Church for the year ended December 31, 2002 amounted to \$17,351.

Audit Page 10

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

*Notes to the Financial Statements
December 31, 2002*

4 Prepaid Expenses

Prepaid expenses at December 31, 2002 are as follows:

Prepaid publications	\$ 110,800
Prepaid insurance	12,251
Prepaid vehicle leases	43,777
Prepaid church hall rental	22,999
Prepaid television	127,585
Other prepaid expenses	<u>19,924</u>
	<u>\$ 337,336</u>

5 Property and Equipment

Land	\$ 415,000
Building	1,872,104
Equipment, furniture and software	481,906
Automobiles	12,678
Capitalized leases	66,659
Leasehold improvements	<u>74,718</u>
	<u>2,873,065</u>
Less: accumulated depreciation	<u>(348,902)</u>
	<u>\$ 2,524,163</u>

Depreciation expense was \$122,239 for the year ended December 31, 2002.

6 Mortgage Payable

The mortgage payable to the Bank of Stanly is payable over 30 years, with a variable interest rate based on 1% below the Bank of Stanly base rate. The mortgage is collateralized by the Church's new headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina, with principal and interest payable in monthly installments of \$9,839 through October 2032. The final payment of the unpaid principal balance plus accrued interest, if any, is payable in November 2032. The interest rate at December 31, 2002 was 5.60%.

LCG CFO's Comments on Audit:

Page 3: Total expenses increased from estimate shown on the page 13 graph in the March-April *Living Church News* primarily due to accelerated Charlotte moving costs paid in 2002.

Page 5: *Note 1-A.* Though the Church is both domestic and international in scope, this audit addresses primarily its domestic operations. International areas provide separate audits as required.

Note 1-D. Building fund "restricted" donations are also accepted. *Note 1-L* provides further clarification of "Programs and Support Services."

Page 9: *Note 1-M.* There is a substantial volunteer effort in each local Church area, including Charlotte, for which the Church is deeply grateful.

Note 1-O. The Church is also North Carolina property tax-exempt.

Page 10: *Note 6.* Interest rate is *fixed* with a floor of 4 percent and a ceiling of 8.5 percent for 30 years.

—Rodger L. Bardo

The Big Picture:

What Is Your Religion Preparing You For?

By Douglas S. Winnail

Have you ever paused to look back over your life, and asked yourself: “What am I *doing* with my life? Will what I am doing *now* really matter after I am gone?”

Is there a greater purpose for life? Does your life fit into a *bigger picture*?

What does your religion mean to you? For many in the world, religion means little more than being good, being nice to friends and neighbors and hoping to “go to heaven” when they die. They go to church when “the spirit moves them” or when they feel a need to be “more spiritual.” They often join a church to belong to a group or to be with friends. People pray when times are tough, or when they get into trouble. They may talk of “loving God,” but in practice they seem to care more about job, family or the pursuit of pleasure. As for seeing a bigger picture, the concerns of *this life* seem big enough for many people!

However, there is *more* to life than getting a job, raising a family and pursuing personal pleasure. True biblical religion involves *more* than just “giving your heart to the Lord,” going to church and achieving personal salvation. There is more to pray about than our own problems. Sadly, the *bigger picture* has escaped the notice of most people in the world. That big picture has been obscured by ideas that emanate from the major religions of the world—including what many call “Christianity.” We need to ask two crucial questions: “Do we

understand what true biblical religion is about?” and “Do we see the big picture?”

The Story Begins

The pages of the Bible *reveal* the big picture of what life is about, and this theme—which runs through Scripture—is the essence of true biblical religion. When God created our first parents, He explained that human beings were made “in His image” and were intended to “have dominion” over the earth (Genesis 1:26–28). God created us to learn to manage and rule ourselves, and ultimately this earth. He said nothing about going to heaven. When God began to work with Abraham and his wife Sarah, He said that their descendants would become a *great nation*, a *blessing* to the peoples of this world and progenitors of kings (Genesis 12:1–3; 17:15–16). God told Abraham that to achieve that goal he must “walk before Me and be blameless” (Genesis 17:1). Becoming blameless [perfect, upright, without blemish] meant learning to follow a way of life that included obeying God’s commandments, statutes and laws (Genesis 26:5). God also instructed Abraham to teach this way of life to his family and descendants (Genesis 18:17–19). This is how Abraham’s offspring would become a great nation, and *why* they would be a blessing to mankind. This was the big picture

that God revealed to Abraham and his descendants.

When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, He outlined the *same* big picture. At Sinai, God said: “If you will obey My voice and keep My covenant, *then* you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people... a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5–6). Exodus 20–23 lists the laws that they were to obey. Moses later explained that if the Israelites would “keep the commandments of the LORD,” they would stand out in the world as a “great nation” and “a wise and understanding people” (Deuteronomy 4:1–10). God intended to use the nation of Israel to demonstrate that benefits flow from following this way of life—*true* religion. The Israelites were also instructed to teach this way of life to their descendants. Moses also admonished the children of Israel to “be blameless” [become perfect] which meant turning from the ways of this world and learning to fear God, walk in His ways and keep His commandments and statutes (Deuteronomy 18:9–13; 10:12–13). This was the big picture that God revealed to the nation of Israel.

The Story Continues

Contrary to what many believe and teach today, when Jesus Christ came to this earth He did not change the “big picture.” He *maintained the same overall focus*. Jesus told His disciples to “follow Me”

(Matthew 4:19), and He taught that we should live “by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (v. 4). Jesus plainly said that He *did not* come to destroy the law but to fulfill [amplify, magnify] the law (5:17; Isaiah 42:21), and He gave examples to show that we must obey not only the letter of the law but also the *spirit* of the law (Matthew 5:21–30).

Jesus told His disciples to “be perfect” [blameless, upright, full grown, spiritually mature] (Matthew 5:48), just as God had told Abraham, and Moses had told the Israelites. Jesus’ message was about a coming kingdom of God (Mark 1:14–15). He told His disciples that if they repented and learned to obey the laws of God, they would not only gain eternal life, but would be given positions of rulership in the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:16–30). This was the big picture that Jesus emphasized again and again.

The Apostles whom Jesus trained delivered the *same* message. John records Christ’s statement: “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). The Apostle Paul mentions that if we repent, change and grow in our understanding of God’s way of life, we can become “children of God” and “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,” inheriting what Jesus will inherit (Romans 8:14–17). John later reveals that Christ will return as a ruler, and will reward the saints with positions as kings and priests on this earth (Revelation 11:17–18; 5:10). This is the big picture that the New Testament outlines for Christians. It is the same picture that is repeatedly described in the Old Testament. This “big picture” theme that runs through Scripture—learning to live by the laws of God and preparing to rule on this earth in the coming kingdom of God—is *vital* to true biblical religion.

Important Details

Many assume that the goal of biblical religion and the Church is to convert the world in this age—yet this has *never* been part of the “big picture.” The Bible indicates that God is working out a plan. After the Flood, God began to work with one person—Abraham—and his immediate descendants. He continued to work with those descendants when they grew into the nation of Israel. Even within the nation of Israel, God chose to focus on the descendants of Joseph—Ephraim and Manasseh—the American and British-descended peoples of today (Genesis 48:14–22). This is not just a piece of Bible trivia; it is a fundamental aspect of true biblical religion, and it figures predominately in Jesus’ telling His disciples to preach the gospel to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:6–7). Jesus said that this gospel of the kingdom would be preached as a *witness* before the end of the age, but that the world would not understand or be converted (Matthew 24:14, 36–42). Jesus repeatedly stated that He came to call a few (Matthew 13:10–17; John 6:44, 60–66), and that the rest were blinded (Matthew 15:14) because God has allowed Satan to deceive the whole world for a time (Revelation 12:9). The conversion of the world will take place in the future—in the kingdom of God.

While Jesus came to give His life as a sacrifice for sinners (John 3:16), only those *whom God calls now* are having an opportunity to understand the truth, repent and grow in this age. It is this group of individuals [called to be *firstfruits*] with whom God is now working as He prepares for the coming kingdom of God. True biblical religion stresses learning to live by the laws of God because those being called and

trained now, *who overcome and qualify*, will become the leaders and teachers in the kingdom that Jesus will set up on this earth at His return (Isaiah 30:20–21). To be effective leaders and teachers will require learning to exercise the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, patience and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). Individuals who rule with Jesus Christ will teach the world how to worship the real God (Zechariah 14:16–20). They will show the peoples of the world how to live, and the way to peace (Isaiah 2:2–4; 9:6–7). They will help restore the environment and direct the rebuilding of cities, and will begin programs to eliminate disease and promote health on a global scale (Isaiah 35:1–7; 61:4). This is what true biblical religion is about, and these are some of the exciting details that make up the “big picture.”

Getting the Picture

But just how does this concept of teaching and ruling in the kingdom of God relate to Christians today? For many it does not seem real, *until* we understand the big picture! The Bible provides many insights that help bring this picture into focus. Jesus commanded His disciples to “love one another” and to be willing to “lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:12–13). Love is an unselfish, outgoing concern for others. It involves compassion, caring and a willingness to spend time and effort helping others solve problems. Jesus also told His disciples that He was looking for *servant leaders* who can lead by serving others (Matthew 20:25–28). God wants leaders who develop a deep compassion for human beings, and who want to change circumstances that are hurting other people. Such individuals will begin to notice problems that plague society, and prepare them-

selves for the day when they can help solve these problems. The Apostle Paul admonished Christians to study the word of God (2 Timothy 2:15) because the *real solutions* to many of the world's greatest problems are found in the Bible. One of the reasons for going to church is to learn how to apply biblical principles to real life situations. Is that why *you* go to church?

How can biblical principles be applied to solve major human problems? Today, violence, strife and war plague societies around the world, in spite of the universal desire and almost endless search for peace. God said long ago that human beings simply do not know the way to peace (Isaiah 59:8). Yet the Bible *reveals* the way to peace. David wrote: "Great peace have those who *love Your law*" (Psalm 119:165). When people are taught to *obey* the laws of God—not to kill, to forgive, be patient, not lust or covet, and to treat others as they want to be treated—wars and strife will cease. *This will happen* in tomorrow's world, and it will be brought about by those serving in the government of God and ruling on this earth.

Sickness and disease have caused untold suffering down through the ages. Yet many diseases are preventable if basic health principles are followed. God inspired and recorded fundamental laws of health in the Bible, yet there is widespread ignorance of those laws today, and people suffer and die in large numbers around the world as a result. The SARS epidemic has been linked to eating animals that the Bible labels unclean, and that God said should not be eaten (see Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14). The AIDS epidemic has spread through promiscuous and perverted sexual practices that Scripture condemns as evil and sinful. Limiting sex to a faithful marriage would stop the spread of this

tragic disease. Heart disease, one of the major killers of human beings, is linked to a lack of exercise and to high-fat diets, which the Bible discourages (Leviticus 3:17; 7:23–26). The Bible also indicated, 2,000 years ago, that there are benefits for physical activity (1 Timothy 4:8). Diseases and plagues will be eliminated by teaching people to live by the laws of God.

Infidelity and the breakup of marriages inflict painful consequences on adults and children and tear apart the fabric of human societies. These problems are the result of ignoring and violating the fundamental moral guidelines of Scripture, which condemn lust, selfishness, fornication and adultery. Child crime and child abuse are widespread today, yet the Bible instructs children to obey their parents, and advises parents to love their children and "do not provoke your children to wrath" (Ephesians 6:1–4). Malachi 4:6 describes a foretaste of what the *whole world* will experience when, in the kingdom of God, the hearts of parents and children will once again be turned toward each other, and the family will be restored.

These are just some of the sweeping changes that will occur when the laws of God are taught and applied on a global basis by those who *prepare now* and qualify to serve in the government of God. This is what the "times of restoration," of which the Apostles spoke, are about (Acts 3:19–21). When we look at the problems of mankind, and the solutions that are ignored or go unapplied, we can begin to understand why Jesus said that we should pray: "Thy kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10). As we begin to realize the magnitude of the problems, and we begin earnestly to pray and prepare for the coming kingdom of God, we will see the big picture more clear-

ly—and it will become much more real to us. This is why the Church of God is commissioned to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17), so that they can be effective leaders in tomorrow's world.

Avoiding Pitfalls


The *big picture* is truly amazing! The Bible reveals that God is calling and training a select group of people to rule with Jesus Christ when He returns to restore this earth. With Him, they will reorient human civilization on a right path that will lead to real peace and everlasting happiness. Yet the Bible also indicates that even those called to be firstfruits can lose out on this remarkable future. We are admonished to stay focused on the big picture "lest we drift away" and "neglect so great a salvation" (Hebrews 2:1–3). Jesus warned that many false teachers "will come in My name and deceive many" by leading people away from the truth and the big picture (Matthew 24:4–5, 11). Paul mentioned that deceptive teachers, influenced by a different spirit, would promote a different Jesus and a different gospel that would *paint a different picture* of the future (2 Corinthians 11:3–4). We see this today in many so-called Christian churches where people *speak* of loving Jesus but *ignore* the commandments. They speak of going to heaven, and overlook the fact that Christ is going to return and establish a kingdom on this earth, where He and the saints will reign. They observe holidays that originated in paganism instead of the biblical Holy Days, though the Bible clearly instructs us: "Learn not the way of the heathen" (see Jeremiah 10:2, KJV; Deuteronomy 12:29–32). Tragically, these misguided practices lead people *away* from the truth of God. They *substitute a different pic-*

ture and cause people to lose sight of the *real* big picture!

Perhaps the most sobering warning involves those who come to knowledge of the truth of God and actually understand the big picture—and then turn away. In the parable of the sower, Jesus describes several groups of people: some whose attention is diverted from the big picture by Satan’s deceptive activities, some who become bogged down and discouraged by personal trials and persecution, and others who become caught up in the “cares of this world”—the acquisition of wealth and worldly possessions, and the pursuit of pleasure, acceptance and prestige (Matthew 13:18–23).

All these *temporary* physical and material things can cause us to *lose sight* of the big picture, can *rob* us of our reward, and can tempt us to *forget* what true biblical religion is about. This is why Jesus said that we must “endure to the end” if we want to participate in the kingdom of God and help bring about the future restitution of all things.

As we approach the end of this age, we need to remember the big picture that God revealed to Adam and Eve, Abraham, and the nation of Israel, and that Jesus Christ conveyed to His disciples. God created us in His image, to become His sons and daughters and eventually to reign with Jesus Christ on this earth

as members of the Family of God. To achieve that goal, we must learn to live by the laws of God so that we can become effective teachers of that way of life in the coming kingdom of God. If we grow in compassion for our fellow human beings, and develop a sound knowledge of God’s word and skill in applying biblical principles, we will be able to assist Jesus Christ in reorienting this world to the truth of real biblical religion. The lessons we learn now on a personal level will be applied in the future on a global scale, *if* we stay focused and avoid deceptions and pitfalls. This is the big picture for which we are all preparing as firstfruits. Are you looking at the big picture? 

Wait on God

(continued from page 3)

Christ back to earth very soon. God certainly understands this—for even the Apostle Paul apparently felt and hoped that Christ would return within *his* generation.


Yet, on the other hand, we must **not** become “weary with well doing” (Galatians 6:9), and lose our *zeal* for overcoming and for doing the Work of God. Over the centuries, God’s people must have despaired *many times* as they “waited” on God to intervene in terrible situations, or as they waited for Christ’s return. God knew *in advance* that this would occur, and gave us many instructions to show us how we *ought* to feel: “Therefore **be patient**, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also **be patient**. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!” (James 5:7–9).

David had to stay on the run and essentially “hide out” from Saul for about ten years, in caves and crannies all over Israel, before God finally delivered him and gave him the promised kingship! David must have thought, at times: “How long, O Lord?”

In Psalm 37:7–8, David tells us: “Rest in the LORD, and *wait patiently* for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake

wrath; do not fret—it only causes harm.” We must *wait patiently*, realizing that God has some *higher purpose* in seeming to “delay” answers to our prayers. Often, we will come to understand His purpose later on in life. The prophet Daniel underwent an experience like this. In Daniel 10:1–3, we find that Daniel was fasting and crying out to God for three full weeks. Yet apparently *no answer* came! Later, an angel was sent to encourage Daniel, and said to him: “Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and to *humble yourself* before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words” (Daniel 10:12). So God had *already heard*, and “help was on the way.” Yet Daniel did not realize that help was on the way until sometime later. So it is with us.

Our God instructs us through the Apostle Paul: “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through **faith** and **patience** inherit the promises” (Hebrews 6:11–12).

Turning again to Psalm 37, note how King David tells us to “wait on God.” David writes: “**Wait on the LORD**, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you shall see it” (v. 34). In closing this powerful Psalm, David states through God’s inspiration: “But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; He is their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, *because they trust in Him*” (vv. 39–40). 

Building on the Foundation of Jesus Christ

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cent. These acts involved direct disobedience to the Ten Commandments, but that did not stand in their way. Their obedience could not be maintained under stress.

Jesus Christ lived a life of total obedience to the Father. He kept His Father's commandments (John 15:10), and instructed His disciples to follow His example. Contrary to the teachings of mainstream Christianity, Christ made plain that He did *not* come to do away with the law, but rather to fill its meaning up to the full (Matthew 5:17). Acknowledging Jesus Christ as our Lord involves living a life of obedience (Matthew 7:21). To build our lives upon the foundation of Jesus Christ means that we will practice obedience to God's commandments as a way of life.


A Life of Faith

Not only is love necessary for healthy family relationships, but so also is trust. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). If we do not trust God completely, we will not obey Him unconditionally and in every circumstance. We will sometimes take life into our own hands, and seek to solve things our own way. By contrast, the family of God will be able to dwell together in peace and harmony for eternity, because everyone in the family will trust the Father. Members of His family will *believe* His word, and be prepared to follow whatever He instructs.

Real faith flows from a deep personal relationship with God—from truly *knowing* Him. Jesus Christ came to

reveal the Father, and to make Him knowable. He completely trusted the Father in all circumstances, and said that the disciples could as well (John 16:26–27). Right after the transfiguration on the mount, an event took place that gave Jesus Christ an opportunity to teach His disciples more about faith. Shortly after He had arrived from the mountain, a man came to Him with a child deeply in need of healing. This man had already gone to the disciples, who had been unable to help. The man begged Jesus to help, if He could, and to have compassion. “Jesus said to him, ‘If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.’ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, ‘Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!’” (Mark 9:23–24). Christ healed the child. Later, the disciples came to Jesus and asked why they had been unable to work such a miracle themselves. Christ explained to them that prayer and fasting was the key to such miracle-working faith (vv. 28–29).

Jesus walked and talked with the Father all the time. Because He continually nurtured that relationship, it was always fresh and intimate. Flowing from that relationship came a faith and confidence that never wavered or doubted. To the extent that you and I pursue the same kind of relationship, we can have the same kind of faith. If we build our lives upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, then faith will be a vital part of that foundation.

Other than the foundation of Jesus Christ, there is no other foundation upon which we can build that will never shift or crack. He is the only sure foundation of our lives. We need to make sure that we are building on Him in every way. 

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

July 20	The Seven Seals of Revelation
July 27	Ezekiel: A Watchman for Our Time
August 3	Who Will Cause the Great Tribulation?
August 10	When Will Christ Return?
August 17	What Happens When You Die?
August 24	Who Will Invade the Middle East?
August 31	Will Hydrogen Bombs Destroy Our Cities?

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

Jesus Christ Is in Charge!

(continued from page 2)

from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” Jesus Christ told the disciples: “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, *but I chose you and appointed you* that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you” (John 15:15–16). Christ was “in charge.” Today, He is still in charge, directing His Church! For He clearly instructed: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, *I am with you always even to the end of the age*” (Matthew 28:19–20). Jesus will be with those who “observe *all things*” that He commanded—and that certainly includes the *form* of Church government described throughout the New Testament!

The living Jesus Christ continued to lead His Church after His resurrection from the dead. “So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, *the Lord working with them* and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen” (Mark 16:19–20). Christ actively *guided* His ministers and *guided* His Church in the right direction.

We find this same pattern in the book of Acts, where Christ specifically directed the Apostle Paul’s activities. “And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, *concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them*” (Acts 16:9–10). Later, we find that the living Christ guided and encouraged Paul directly in a *powerful vision* during his stay in Corinth: “Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city’” (Acts 18:9–10). Throughout the New Testament, we see many such examples of *Christ directly guiding* the Church, which is *His body*—the very instrument He uses to preach the Gospel and prepare His faithful servants to be the kings and priests in His government in tomorrow’s world. When you think of it this way, it is obvious that it is not just a matter of “preference”—it is *extremely important* that we learn now to trust in Christ to guide and lead us and to practice *His true form* of government so that we

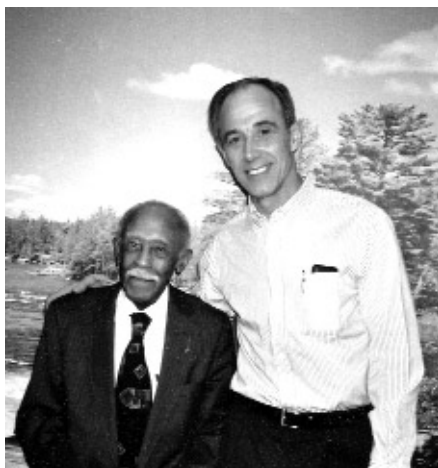
may be prepared to lead in *that same way* in the soon-coming Kingdom of God!

One fundamental example of this matter is given in 1 Corinthians 6:1–6. You will all remember Paul’s statement in verse 2: “Do you not know that the *saints will judge the world*? And if the world will be **judged** by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?” Then Paul continues: “Do you not know that we shall **judge** angels? How much more, things that pertain to *this life*?” (v. 3). Paul then describes how this pattern of government ought to be applied *within the true Church*: “Is it so that there is not a **wise man** among you, not even one, who will be able to **judge** between his brethren?” (v. 5). This matter of *fully trusting in Christ* to lead our lives individually and to truly **lead** His Church through His clearly revealed form of government, is obviously a *vital* doctrine and a *vital* way of life for us to practice. With all of the nitpicking, snide comments and arguments being put forth against God’s form of government, I feel it is necessary for us to review these basic scriptures from time to time, so that we can understand the **plain Truth!** We must **not** ever be ashamed because we do not have a kind of “democracy” as the world has. Rather, we in the true Church must realize that—contrary to the expectations of most people—democracy is **not** going to solve the world’s problems! In fact, over the next several years, we will probably see more and more trouble resulting from democracy! More and more nations will gradually *turn away* from democracy and adopt a hierarchical form of government—but **without Christ in charge**, any form of human government will remain far from perfect.

We in the Living Church of God must think of ourselves as “pioneers”—having the genuine **faith** that Christ is *real*, that He is *all-wise* and that He is truly **in charge** of His Church in an active way. As we individually and collectively “put our hands in Christ’s hands” and learn to faithfully “walk with God,” we will be preparing ourselves to exercise *His* form of government and fully teach *His* way of life in tomorrow’s world. As each year goes by, we will find from the “fruits” that *His* government is by far the best! Those who practice *His government* and are truly doing *His Work* are those who will be protected during the coming Great Tribulation! And it is those who have *this kind of faith* in Christ, and in the Father, who will certainly be given the leading positions in the Kingdom that Christ will soon set up on this earth. So let us go forward with **joy**, with *confidence* that we will truly be **blessed** for genuinely trusting in the living Christ to lead His Church, and to lead our lives individually.



Boston Member Turns 100!



Mr. Cortez with Mr. Paul Shumway

What first catches your attention about Mr. Zeferino (Tony) Cortez is the amazing blue of his sparkling eyes framed above his perpetual smile. In May he reached 100 years of age, but you would never know it by looking at him. He is surprisingly youthful, and has a certain mischievous look in those blue eyes. If you ask him how he accomplished such an incredible combination of age and health, he will say that he does not know. But here is what we know about this man who is a great-great-grandfather:

He was born and reared in Chester, Pennsylvania, on the Delaware River. He says that when his people (the Cherokee Indians) moved to South America because of troubles at home, he met and married his wife from Colombia. His present wife, Deloris, is currently in a rehabilitation center in Boston. Mr. Cortez has lived in Boston for the past 50 years, and it was there that he came into contact with the Church of God. He was baptized in 1980.

We asked him about his diet and exercise, to see if we could learn more about his secret of longevity. He only eats fish and chicken—no fried foods—and he loves all kinds of fresh vegetables, garlic used any of a dozen ways and ginseng. He does all his own cooking, and enjoys preparing food with his prized food chopper, which his son purchased for him. Lately, he says with a laugh, he has been a little lazy about doing his walking. He gets around so well that you would not expect him to be a day over 70. All year round he sleeps with his windows wide open for fresh air.

Mr. Cortez recently received a letter and a personal phone call from President George W. Bush, welcoming him to “the club” of American centenarians. Those blue eyes have seen a lot of life over the past century, and God has certainly granted him length of days. It is a blessing, and so inspiring, to see him at Sabbath services.

— Michelle R. Bottella

Ordinations

On April 23, the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, Mr. Davy Crockett ordained *Messrs. Barry C. Howdeshell* and *Vernon R. Damron* as elders. Mr. Howdeshell will be serving the Little Rock, Arkansas congregation, and Mr. Damron will be serving the Russellville, Arkansas congregation.

On the Sabbath of May 10, Mr. Rand Millich ordained *Mr. Roland Glenn Travis* as an elder. Mr. Travis will be serving the brethren in Rolla, Missouri.

Mr. Syd Hull ordained *Mr. Gerson Hause* as a deacon on the Sabbath of June 7. Mr. Hause will be serving the brethren in Cape Town, South Africa.

In Loving Memory

Jessie Blanche Mach died on June 4, at age 93. She is survived by her sister Elsie Bruder of Lonoke, Arkansas, and by one nephew. Baptized in 1971, she was a faithful member of the Living Church of God. Always young at heart, she loved life, music, dancing and her friends, especially those in her Church family. She was a joy to all who knew her, and set a good example all her days. Mr. Davy Crockett conducted a memorial service in her honor on June 7, attended by many of her friends and brethren.

Commentary

Prophecy Versus the Gospel? *By Richard F. Ames*

Some professing Christians argue that preaching Bible prophecy is irrelevant, or even contrary, to preaching the “gospel message.” Bible prophecy may be an interesting topic, they say, but prophecy is not significant to our salvation. Is this true? Many professing Christians believe that the gospel is only about the person of Christ, and they ignore what He preached. But what exactly did Jesus preach? Did His message *oppose* Bible prophecy? Or could it be that *the gospel itself is prophetic*?

Scripture describes Jesus preaching in Galilee: “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the *gospel of the kingdom*, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people” (Matthew 4:23). Jesus *continued* to preach the gospel of the kingdom: “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the *gospel of the kingdom*, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (9:35).

So, we see the clear historic record of the message Jesus preached—the gospel of the kingdom. Scripture further explains: “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the *kingdom of God*, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14–15).

What is this “gospel of the kingdom of God”? Many biblical references and prophecies show that Jesus Christ *will come again* to establish the kingdom

of God on earth. He said: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again* and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). Yes, the Messiah, Jesus Christ will return to this earth to rule all nations, as Prince of Peace, and as King of kings and Lord of lords (cf. Revelation 11:15).

The gospel of the kingdom is the good news of the coming kingdom of God, and of how we can have a part in that kingdom! The gospel that Jesus preached is *prophetic*! His message is the good news of *the future*. So the charge that preaching Bible prophecy is contrary or irrelevant to the gospel is a *false charge*.

Salvation is a gift that we will *ultimately* receive at the resurrection (cf. 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4). The book of Revelation describes our *ultimate* destiny in the kingdom and the family of God for all eternity. The heavenly Jerusalem—the New Jerusalem—will come down to a renewed earth (cf. Revelation 21). You and I can be a part of that glorious future! The great Creator God tells us: “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son” (v. 7).

We can all be thankful that the living Jesus Christ is now guiding His servants to preach the true gospel. As Jesus said: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). Thank God for the true gospel of salvation, and the coming kingdom that He prophesied!