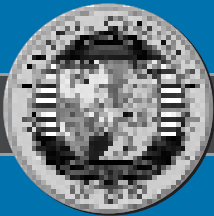


Living Church News

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Satan's Devices

Dear Brethren and Friends,

As God's Work, through the Living Church of God, increases in power and effectiveness, *many* will be offended. For the real Truth does offend people. Yet our great God commands, "*Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins*" (Isaiah 58:1).

We do have the responsibility to heartfully *warn* people of their personal and national sins. We need to help them understand *why* they should repent and turn to the true God and His ways. We need to help God's people *prepare* to be the coming kings and priests in Tomorrow's World. Though far from perfect, we in the Living Church of God *are* doing these things with all our hearts, though many in the general public will be offended. But besides the general public, there is one special personality who positively hates what we are doing. For we are a direct threat to him and to his minions. This foul yet exceedingly powerful personality is Satan the Devil, who has a "kingdom" composed of millions of fallen angels who rebelled with him against God and His ways. Jesus Christ said: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his [Satan's] kingdom stand?" (Matthew 12:25–26).

Christ indicated that there was a type of warfare going on between God's servants and Satan's demons. In Revelation 12:6–14, God reveals to us how, during the Middle Ages, the true Church had to flee from Satan and his followers. Then a "spirit war" (v. 7) will break out at the time of the end. Satan will make one last frantic attempt to overthrow God. At that time, in defeat, Satan is cast back down to earth, "having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time" (v. 12). Finally, very soon after this, the truly horrifying persecution begins on the Church and on the physical peoples of the house of Israel. It is rightly called, the "Great Tribulation" by Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:21–22).

Brethren, since Satan harbors bitter hatred against God and His true Church, do you think he will primarily "come after" the followers of professing "Christianity"—who are already blinded and under his sway? Will Satan come after the "fringe groups" among God's people who believe *parts* of the Truth, but are having little or no effect on the world as a whole? Or will this powerful ex-cherub "zero in" on the very ones among God's people

who are the *greatest threat* to him and to his purpose—the “little flock” that is going through the “open doors” and *powerfully warning* the world of the coming Great Tribulation and of Satan and his devices, teaching those willing to listen *how* to follow and practice God’s true government, *how* to prepare to be the kings and priests under Christ who will soon *replace* Satan and his demons?

The answer is obvious.

Certainly Satan will go after those who are *most effectively* doing the Work. For *they* represent the greatest threat to him and to his demons. The Devil can easily see that these people are *directly* preparing to be the coming kings and priests in God’s kingdom. They are learning and practicing the correct form of Church government and are learning to exercise *living faith* in Christ as their real Leader. They are daily and hourly putting their *trust* in Christ to guide the Church, guide the Work and guide the life of each faithful Christian. It is these people who genuinely *trust in Christ*—these people who will be the Spirit-led kings and priests in Christ’s soon-coming government—against whom Satan will most viciously attack!

Satan is angry at those who fully *believe* Christ, for they will have the great honor of bringing real *peace* and *joy* to this world under Christ. They will be the ones Christ uses to “execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the written judgment—this honor have all His saints” (Psalm 149:7–9).

How Will Satan Attack Us?

Satan, of course, *resents* that we are being prepared to replace him. So he will strike out at us in many ways. We must be *deeply aware* of this—and of the *reality* of Satan and his involvement with the problems we often face. Most of the time, these trials and problems are simply a result of normal human conditions and human nature. However, sometimes—and perhaps *much more often* in years to come—we will sense that the real origin of these problems lies “beyond” mere human conditions.

God’s word tells us that Satan is “the *prince* of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others” (Ephesians 2:2–3). This scripture indicates that Satan is “in charge” of this earth’s atmosphere. *He* is heavily involved in the media, and in the educational and political systems, as well as influencing the world’s religious leaders. Even when we regularly immerse ourselves in seemingly “normal” television programs or motion pictures, we are—perhaps unwittingly—drinking in ideas and images from “Satan’s Broadcasting System.” For that is *exactly* what it usually is! Of course, the evening news programs—and political speeches, sports programs and strictly educational programs on the History Channel or Discovery Channel—are

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Be a Positive Christian

Are you having trouble with your neighbors? Why? This article will show you the reason, and give you a positive plan to guide you in living the happy, abundant and exemplary life that God intended.

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

Enraged at the evangelists, the bloodthirsty mob brought them to the city officials crying, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too” (Acts 17:6).

With these words, the angry Jews at Thessalonica accused the Apostle Paul and his helpers of the same thing of which many of us have been accused. Does true Christianity turn the world “upside down” or right side-up? Does the Holy Spirit inspire a spirit of a peculiar mixture of misguided religious zeal, unreasoning superstition and a rebellious attitude toward custom, society and other people in general? Is this the attitude of a good Christian?

We must face facts! Some of our brethren have been accused of such wrong attitudes and conduct. Sometimes the accusation is clearly false, but sometimes it is based on fact!

How should Christians live to gain the respect of unconverted neighbors and friends? In spite of persecutions, how can we live the joyous, fruitful kind of lives that we should?

God’s Word contains the answers, which those who use sound-minded wisdom can understand.

Are You a “Light”?

Jesus told His disciples, “You are the light of the world.” Later, He said, “Let your light so shine before

men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14, 16). Jesus taught that we are not to put our light under a bushel, but on a candlestick where all can see. But how do we let our light shine before men?

Notice that Jesus said men would see our good works and glorify God (v. 16). He did not say that they would hear our constant chattering about the Bible. Our “good works”—our kindness and thoughtfulness to others, our willingness to sacrifice, our Christian example in daily living—will cause even unconverted people to admire and respect us. Eventually, they will realize that it is God who is helping us live this way. Then they will glorify Him.

For arguing, disputing and trying to convince people they are wrong is nowhere referred to as “good works.” If your friends or relatives are not interested in God’s Church, they will in no way be helped if you constantly plague them with what they regard as “your religion.”

But what type of good works *should* we demonstrate in our daily lives?

Christian Works

In John 14:11, Jesus said, “Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.” He was referring to the miracles that He performed, and said in verse 12 that one who truly believed

on Him would perform even greater works.

Most of Jesus’ miraculous works were acts of kindness to others—healing the sick, feeding the multitudes and casting out unclean spirits. Paul wrote to the Corinthian brethren, “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually” (1 Corinthians 12:27). Today, Jesus is not here to perform good works in person, but God’s true Church comprises His body through which He can and does perform miraculous works. Many times, unconverted friends of our brethren have been moved to glorify God and His power when they have witnessed a genuine, miraculous healing according to God’s promise.

But aside from miraculous works of the ministry, there are many things that we should *all* be doing to glorify God in our lives. If we draw as close to God as we should, through constant study, prayer and fasting, He will grant His Church even more power to do the same miraculous works as the early apostles, and many more will learn to glorify God.

Be a Good Neighbor

One of Jesus’ most beautiful parables—which many of us learned as children but sometimes seem to forget as Christian adults—is the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37). Set upon by thieves, a wounded and suffering man lay by the roadside. A priest passed by, feel-

continues on page 19

Seven Lessons from Seven Churches

By Douglas S. Winnail

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

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

To some, this flowering of diversity indicates progress, while to others it is a sign of spiritual confusion. To many, leveling the pyramid of church government is a liberating move, but to others it is a prescription for chaos! Some are elated over changes sweeping through different churches, but many are concerned and confused. Some have given up and quit. But what do all these changes mean? Where will they lead? Do we have any guidelines to help us navigate through these turbulent times?

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

The Purpose of Revelation

The book of Revelation is often viewed as a strange book full of mysterious symbols that are difficult or

impossible to understand. Yet the Bible states just the opposite! The word “revelation” means “to unveil” or “to explain.” In the very first verse we read that God inspired the book of Revelation “to show His servants things which *must shortly take place*” (Revelation 1:1). God further states, “Blessed is he who *reads* and those who *hear* the words of this prophecy, and *keep* those things which are written in it; for the time [of fulfillment] is near” (Revelation 1:3). The prophecies of Revelation—including the letters to the seven churches—*were meant to be understood*—especially by Christians today! John wrote about events that would lead up to the end of the age. The *link* between John's day and the time of Christ's return is the prophetic time period pictured by *seven Church eras* outlined in Revelation 2–3.

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

Ephesus: Lost Its First Love

Ephesus was the leading city of Asia Minor—but it was in a state of decline. The Ephesian church is symbolic of the Apostolic era of the first and second centuries AD. This church is commended for its works—the preaching, suffering, serving, traveling and writing of the early disciples (Revelation 2:1–3). Even they had to discern between false teachers and true Christian ministers. However, like the fading glory of Ephesus, the Church at

the end of the first century was told that “you have left your first love” (Revelation 2:4). God warned that, unless they repented, He would cease to use them for His purpose (Revelation 2:5).

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

The church of Ephesus (the Apostolic era) had lost its love—for God, for the Truth, for doing the Work and for

able persecution. The Smyrna era appears to cover the third and fourth centuries AD, a period of intense Roman persecution of the Church. While the Smyrna era is commended for its works and being rich in faith (Revelation 2:9), it is urged to be “faithful until death” in order to receive a reward (Revelation 2:10). The church of Smyrna illustrates the vital importance of **endurance**—of *holding on to your beliefs* during difficult times. Jesus said that “he who endures to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13). The Apostle Paul wrote that only those who *finish* the race will be given a prize (1 Corinthians 9:24–27). Elders are admonished that they must be found “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught” (Titus 1:9). If your foundation is solid (Matthew 7:24–29), and you take time to “prove” what the truth is (1 Thessalonians 5:21, KJV), you will be prepared to endure when the going becomes rough.

Historical sources reveal that Christians of the Smyrna Era believed in the Millennium—the thousand-year reign of Christ and the saints on earth. They would

Though Jesus had emphasized humility (Matthew 5:5) and love for neighbor (John 15:12), the Church at the end of the first century contained individuals who loved preeminence over others. They loved their positions—an attitude the Bible calls evil (3 John 9–11).

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

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

Smyrna: Faithful in Trial

The church at Smyrna offers another powerful and timeless lesson. Smyrna was a prosperous, bustling, beautifully planned port city, but Christians there faced consider-

able persecution. The Smyrna era appears to cover the third and fourth centuries AD, a period of intense Roman persecution of the Church. While the Smyrna era is commended for its works and being rich in faith (Revelation 2:9), it is urged to be “faithful until death” in order to receive a reward (Revelation 2:10). The church of Smyrna illustrates the vital importance of **endurance**—of *holding on to your beliefs* during difficult times. Jesus said that “he who endures to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13). The Apostle Paul wrote that only those who *finish* the race will be given a prize (1 Corinthians 9:24–27). Elders are admonished that they must be found “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught” (Titus 1:9). If your foundation is solid (Matthew 7:24–29), and you take time to “prove” what the truth is (1 Thessalonians 5:21, KJV), you will be prepared to endure when the going becomes rough.

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Pergamos: The Compromising Church

Pergamos was the capital city of Asia Minor, home to imposing temples dedicated to Zeus, Apollo, Athena, Asklepios (the healing cult) and Caesar. Its citizens were sophisticated and literate. The church at Pergamos is admonished for permitting false teachers to put “stumbling blocks” in the way of believers (Revelation 2:14). While people may not initially believe false teachings, *tolerating* the spread of deceptive ideas will eventually lead many to stumble spiritually and compromise the doctrines of true Apostolic Christianity. The Bible reveals that not only can false teachers cause people to stumble; so also can trials, tribulations, perse-

cutions (Matthew 13:21) and poor examples (1 Corinthians 8:9). Some will even stumble over the Word of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ (Malachi 2:8; 1 Corinthians 1:23).

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

Thyatira: The Corrupt Church

Thyatira was an inland city located on a major trade route. It was a commercial center with many trade guilds, and was the home of a military garrison. Its patron deity was a warrior goddess. To participate in the local economy would have required membership in trade guilds that sponsored idolatrous annual festivals—thus putting pressure on Christians to *compromise* to fit in. The Thyatira era appears to stretch from about the 11th century to the 16th century, including the Reformation and Counter-Reformation periods when many left the established Roman Church. During this time, in central and southern Europe, we find groups of Christians who believed in the Sabbath, some of the Holy Days, tithing, adult baptism and the dietary laws, and rejected doctrines of the Trinity, immortal soul, purgatory, and the popularized concepts of heaven and hell. However, *over time* and under the pressure of Counter-Reformation forces, many *drifted back* into prevailing practices by sitting in Sunday services, observing pagan holidays and serving in armies to avoid persecution. Many suffered and died as a result, as we see from the history of the Waldenses.

The lesson of Thyatira is blunt: **Do not pretend to go along with false teachings for appearance’s sake—do not compromise the truth, do not go back into ways you have been called out of, or you will suffer tribulation.** Scripture contains very graphic warnings about this (see Deuteronomy 12:29–31; Jeremiah 10:2; 2 Corinthians 6:14–18; 2 Peter 2:18–22). We are specifically told that at the end of the age, many professing Christians will be “deluded” into accepting false but fashionable religious beliefs, because they did not know the truth, *or were willing to compromise* the truth they once knew (2 Thessalonians 2:1–13). Today, as many who once attended the Church of God are returning to their former beliefs, Paul’s message rings clear, to “stand fast and hold

to the traditions which you were taught” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Spiritual compromise leads to spiritual corruption. It happened before, it is happening *today*—and we need to be alert!

Sardis: The Dead Church

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

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

Philadelphia: Small But Faithful

In contrast to the other churches on the mail route, Philadelphia was not a wealthy, sophisticated or influential city. Located on an easily defended hill beside a major highway, it functioned as an outpost for spreading Greek and Roman culture (and later Christianity) to the surrounding region. The city was destroyed several times by earthquakes, but each time was rebuilt. It still exists today. Its name means “brotherly love.” The Philadelphia era appears to have begun in the 1930s—about the time radio became popular and just before the age of television. In the last 70 years, the Church of God has used mass media to reach millions of people—proclaiming the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God, and warning the world to watch for the signs of the end of

this age and the return of Jesus Christ. This was the mission Jesus gave to His Church (Matthew 4:23; 10:6–7). This message was to be prominent at the end of the age (Matthew 24:14). Understanding the identity of modern Israelite nations—a *key* to understanding Bible prophecy—was restored to the Church of God during the modern Philadelphia era.

God promised to provide the Philadelphia era with an open door—a door no man could shut—for preaching the Gospel. This small church is commended for its *persistence* in fulfilling its mission, and for holding on, without compromise, to the precious truth of God (Revelation 3:7–8). For faithfully doing a Work and holding onto the Truth—not just attending a church of their choice—Philadelphia Christians are promised protection from the coming Tribulation (Revelation 3:10). The lesson of Philadelphia is simple: **Remain faithful to Truth—do the work of preaching the Gospel, love the brethren and let**

and about their mission to do a Work. They are very independent, and have “need of nothing” (Revelation 3:17). Some Laodiceans feel no need for ministers, government, structure or doctrinal unity. Laodicea had a medical school noted for its eye-salve, yet the Bible describes its people as being *blind* to their own spiritual condition. Their intellectual sophistication prevented them from seeing their own lack of spiritual discernment. Laodicea produced fine black wool clothing, yet the Bible calls them *naked*, in need of white garments (Revelation 3:17–18). In a sense, naked Laodiceans lack vital pieces of spiritual armor—faith, love, perseverance, commitment to truth and fear of the commandments. They may be failing to exercise the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 6:10–19) to stand firm in times of trial and to preach the gospel with boldness.

The picture of Laodicea is of a sophisticated and self-sufficient church that trusts in its own wealth, numbers and wisdom. It has the appearance of strength,

Wake up before it is too late, and ask God to open your eyes to see your own spiritual condition—repent of complacency, compromise, materialism and stubborn independence; respond to the leadership of Jesus Christ and do not lose your reward!


no one take your crown. We cannot afford to “drop the ball” at this vital moment of history! Our salvation and our reward are at stake if we do!

Laodicea: Lukewarm and Laid-Back

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

The charge against the Laodiceans is their lukewarm attitude (Revelation 3:16). Their wealth and prosperity fosters an attitude of worldliness. They are lukewarm about the truth, about obedience to the commandments

stability and unity, yet is internally divided. Its independent-minded people unknowingly reject the leadership of Jesus Christ as they do their own thing! The “democratic” (people-deciding) aspects of the Laodicean era can pertain to decisions about doctrine, organization, governance, mission and methods. This lukewarm attitude is *prophesied to become dominant* in the Church of God at the end of the age. The lesson of Laodicea is urgent: **Wake up before it is too late, and ask God to open your eyes to see your own spiritual condition—repent of complacency, compromise, materialism and stubborn independence; respond to the leadership of Jesus Christ and do not lose your reward!**

The letters to the seven churches—and the seven Church eras they represent—contain *important* lessons! Those lessons were meant for the churches in the first century *and* for Christians down through the ages. But they are vital for Christians today—individuals living at the end of the age, in the Laodicean era! If we read and heed these lessons, we will gain a reward from Jesus Christ. If we discount or fail to learn those essential lessons, we may not receive our reward! John advised all seven churches in Revelation: “He who has an ear, let him *hear* what the Spirit says to the churches.” Do we understand how these lessons apply to each of us today? 

PREPARING FOR THE PASSOVER

By Don Davis

After sunset on Nisan 14 (Tuesday, April 11, 2006), members of God's Church will gather for the most solemn event on His sacred calendar—the Passover. Year after year, many of us seem to allow the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread to creep up on us, and may find ourselves both physically and spiritually unprepared to observe them as God intends.

How should we prepare for the Passover? One vital part—often neglected, yet an area in which almost all of us can improve—is this: *Have we forgiven and made peace with everyone who has offended us, and have we asked forgiveness of those against whom we have transgressed?*

Jesus Christ gave us the key to receiving the forgiveness we all so desperately need: “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, *forgive him*, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. *But if you do not forgive*, neither will your Father in heaven forgive you your trespasses” (Mark 11:25–26). Forgiving others is a *prerequisite* to receiving the forgiveness from God that we all so desperately need.

Yet there are baptized members of God's Church, who have been sitting in Sabbath and Holy Day services for years—and taking the bread and wine every Passover—who have continually refused to fellowship with (or, in a few extreme cases, even speak to) one or more of their spiritual brothers or sisters, because of

some real or imagined insult or slight that occurred in the far-distant past.

What does the Bible tell us about the ultimate end awaiting someone with such an attitude, who refuses to repent and put away animosity and bitterness against another? “In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’... Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord [God will retain their sins]. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep” (1 Corinthians 11:25–30). Strife and an unrepentant attitude bring on stress and a bitterness of heart that corrodes the mind, body and spirit. This in turn creates health problems, and can even result in premature physical death.

None of us are “worthy” of or by ourselves. Our “righteousness” disqualifies us because, in God's eyes, it is likened to a pile of filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). That is why we need the Passover and the application of Christ's shed blood for the remission of our sins. We should be examining ourselves all year long—and should do so with particular intensity as the Passover approaches. “For if we would judge ourselves, we would not need to be judged. But when we

are judged [when Christ judges us because we have failed to judge ourselves correctly], we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:31–32).

When we examine ourselves, we must honestly appraise the facts of each negative situation in our lives. We must be ready to examine our deeds and our thoughts, to discern our guilt or innocence, and what we must do to repent and make restitution for the sins we have committed. Christians are not to examine themselves in an attitude of vanity, in order to justify themselves; they must judge by the standards of God's word (James 1:23–25). The Apostle Paul urged the Corinthians (and us) to take stock of our spiritual condition: “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

We are told to examine *ourselves*, not to examine those who may have insulted or injured us. Christ is the one who will be their judge, if they fail to repent of the sins they have committed. Each of us will have to account for *our own* breaking of God's law. “Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Romans 12:17–19).

If, after our self-examination, we find we have an attitude of resentment, distrust or hate toward another, we must first go to our brother or sister in Christ and try to resolve the misunderstanding or dispute by ourselves. Between now and the Passover, each of us should approach those we have wronged, or who have wronged us, and try to work out the matter privately, and come to an understanding that includes forgiveness. Remember Christ's instruction: "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he

in God's eyes? Remember, it is not our prerogative to judge another person's standing before God. However, while we are not to judge another person's conversion, we can and should observe the *fruits* of their actions, and act accordingly. Perhaps we cannot approach the one who has hurt us. But can we allow an attitude of hatred to develop? No! Remember Christ's words: "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer

pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:7-10).

Passover will be here before we know it. *Now* is the time for each of us to begin setting our spiritual houses in order. Christ wants to see how we prepare ourselves before we take the bread and wine this year.

The Apostle Paul gave us a formula that we should be living by year-round, not just before the

REMEMBER, IT IS NOT OUR PREROGATIVE TO JUDGE ANOTHER PERSON'S STANDING BEFORE GOD. HOWEVER, WHILE WE ARE NOT TO JUDGE ANOTHER PERSON'S CONVERSION, WE CAN AND SHOULD OBSERVE THE *FRUITS* OF THEIR ACTIONS, AND ACT ACCORDINGLY.

hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church [the ministry]. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector" (Matthew 18:15-17). If, in a right and humble attitude, we follow the plan laid out for us in Matthew 18, peace will be restored within the body of Christ.

Does the word of God tell us that there are some to whom we should *not* go when an offense has occurred? Indeed, it does. "He who corrects a scoffer gets shame for himself, and he who rebukes a wicked man only harms himself. Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you" (Proverbs 9:7-8). Not everyone is a brother or sister in Christ. If we feel in our heart that someone cannot be approached as a spiritual brother or sister, how should we respond in order to do what is right

the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise" (Luke 6:27-31).

Even if we cannot bring ourselves to go to another person in humility, ready to acknowledge our part in a perceived problem and work it out, we *never* have the option of hatred. We must in these cases forgive, forget and move on with our lives—or grow bitter and face the very real possibility of having our sins retained.

Our heavenly Father is a God of peace and love. There will be no bickering, disputing or bitterness in His family. Those whom He has called will have proved to Him that they can settle disagreements quickly and have unconditional outgoing concern for the welfare of all, before they are made spirit beings and receive eternal life. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the

Passover. "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:17-21).

God's word plainly reveals to us the attitudes and actions we must display to our brethren and to all human beings. He has stated clearly what we must do, if we want our sins to be forgiven. We must forgive others and show genuine love toward them, even if they do not repent of their sins against us. God, who is the perfect judge, will reward each of us according to our deeds.

As Passover approaches, Christ is watching each of us. How will we respond? Will we be ready spiritually to take the Passover? ☐



Feast of Tabernacles 2005 International Reports

Huatusco, Veracruz, Mexico

Ninety-seven brethren from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Argentina and the United States gathered in Huatusco, a beautiful town in the state of Veracruz, Mexico, to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

Spectacular scenery and an atmosphere of joy and fellowship were the setting for several Feast activities. These activities included a “Mexican Night,” featuring delicious regional cuisine and the cheerful rhythms of the marimba veracruzana. Our young people also enjoyed a whitewater rafting adventure on a nearby river, while the less daring toured the port of Veracruz and appreciated its arts, crafts and the famous Veracruz Aquarium.

Three cultural events were organized by the city of Huatusco in honor of those attending the Feast: a classical ballet performance by dancers ranging from four to 20 years of age; a classical guitar concert by renowned local guitarists; and a photography exhibition of the local people and landscapes. Of high quality and in good taste, these events were inspiring and enjoyable.

On the Last Great Day, a very special performance of the children’s choir, dressed as Hebrews from Biblical times, concluded a Feast abounding in happiness, friendship, kindness, peace and learning. What more can we ask from our Lord?

—Noemí Canclini

San Jerónimo, Colombia

This year we once again celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day at a lakeside resort in San Jerónimo de Antioquia, Colombia, about two hours from the city of Medellin. More than 50 brethren enjoyed stimulating and profitable daily services, a Bible Study, and a Christian growth study presented by four young adults who displayed dedication, analysis and knowledge of the subject.



One of our entertainment highlights, involving those of all ages and fitness levels, was an outdoor contest. For three hours, eight teams searched throughout the resort and navigated the lake, solving riddles and answering questions in search of the missing clue that would decide the winning team.

Most of the populated regions in Colombia have become relatively peaceful, and brethren from different areas were able to travel to the Feast site without encountering guerrilla violence. Currently it is possible to travel long distances without the fear of kidnapping, which was not the case before. What a blessing for those attending God’s Feast in Colombia to experience the hospitality, friendship and love of the Colombian brethren.

—Jorge Schaubeck

Valle Grande (San Rafael, Mendoza), Argentina

“Mighty Sound” is the name of the river whose waters flow by the site where we celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in San Rafael, Argentina. We certainly received God’s “mighty sound” from His inspired word throughout all eight days! Brethren from Switzerland, France, Spain, the United States, Mexico, Colombia and Bolivia joined their hosts from Chile and Argentina in the valley of San Rafael, by the Atuel river banks, to celebrate the enriching Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day.

Beautiful weather and the fraternal atmosphere that God provided, in addition to the entertainment and activities, made this an encouraging time that will be cherished by many. We thank God for the opportunity to have had His servant Mr. Mario Hernandez with us during the Feast. He gave us powerful messages on spiritual growth and on family subjects, including the relationship between parents and children.

Our Feast activities included a visit to a vineyard, water rafting, games, regional food presentations, folk-

loric dances performed by the Chilean and Argentinean brethren, and an inspiring Church choir performance of hymns and praises to God the Father and Jesus Christ.



Next year we look forward to celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles at this site once again, far from the city and worldly noises, in an appropriate environment for this solemn festival of God.

We send our warmest greetings from all the brethren that were at the Feast in San Rafael. May God powerfully provide His people around the world the courage and spiritual growth to bring mature fruits to God and Jesus Christ when we come again to the next Holy Day season.

—Sergio Carvajal, Jr.

Antigua, Guatemala

A Feast site in “paradise,” Antigua is located 45 kilometers from Guatemala City—the nation’s capital—and is surrounded by volcanoes (Agua, Fuego and Pacaya) and mountains. With a mild and pleasant climate, Antigua also provides visitors with a variety of ceramic crafts, clothing and a diverse local cuisine.

We were very happy to welcome visitors from Guadalajara and Mexico City (Mexico), and Los Angeles and Florida (United States), during this Feast, along with our visiting minister, Mr. Antonio Mora. Activities included the family fiesta and talent show on Wednesday night, hiking the Cerro de Santa Cruz on Thursday, and a children’s fiesta on Sunday. On the weekly Sabbath we saw the “Behind the Work” video. It was marvelous to see the job that the brethren do at the offices of the Work in Charlotte.

We enjoyed both the video sermons by Mr. Mario Hernandez, and the live sermons by Mr. Antonio Mora. We appreciated the service of Mr. Dan Tenorio, who conducted the children’s choir, and we appreciated the sermonettes given by local brethren and visitors. By the Eternal’s mercy, we had excellent weather every day, adding to our Feast enjoyment. May the Eternal God always give us His happiness, love and peace.

—Ramiro Sanchez

Merced de Chanchamayo, Peru

Gathered to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in Merced de Chanchamayo were brethren from Lima, Cerro de Pasco, Trujillo and Arequipa, along with one visitor from the United States and our minister from Colombia, Armando Orrego. Merced de Chanchamayo, as a completely natural and unspoiled site, was a wonderful setting to express our Christianity. The lack of technology enabled us to truly appreciate God and His creation without distractions.

Several long-time members were present, including Mark Esposito, an American residing in Peru who became very popular during the Feast as we enjoyed his great sense of humor. Mr. Carlos Estrada, and the other members from Lima, Arequipa, Cerro de Pasco, and Trujillo, all contributed greatly to the joy and happiness we experienced at this Feast. We also learned from the humility, generosity, kindness and rich moral culture of the Ashaninkas, the native community at the Feast site.

Only those of us who keep God’s Feasts can know and understand the purpose, knowledge and depth of meaning, and the benefits that result from keeping the Feasts of God!

—Javier Quispe Benites

Martinique

The beautiful hotel Douce Vague (French for “soft wave”) was the site of this year’s Feast of Tabernacles in Ste. Luce, Martinique. Located on a beach site caressed by the trade winds and warmed by the beautiful Caribbean sun, the rainy season did not dampen the Feast atmosphere for our 27 brethren. We started the Feast with Mr. Meredith’s inaugural sermon, translated into French by Mr. Yvon Brochu, and we enjoyed a typical Antillean welcome meal after services.

On the first day we all ate together between services, and ended the day by distributing gifts for the children—a Martinique Feast of Tabernacles tradition that is very appreciated by the little ones!. After the morning service on the following day, we had a family day boat trip on the Caribbean Sea, where we observed multicolored fishes through the boat’s glass floor. Some children’s day activities took place during the afternoon of the third day, with the children playing biblical games and making drawings of three time periods: creation, the present world and Tomorrow’s World.

A Bible Study about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil concluded the fourth day. The children participated in this activity by taking turns reading

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Feast of Tabernacles 2005 USA and Canada Reports

Church Administration final figures show that, around the world, more than 6,900 brethren attended more than 40 Living Church of God Festival sites in 2005. Eight of those sites were in the United States, and three were in Canada. The following brief descriptions are meant to give just a small flavor of the joy, peace, fellowship and unity that were experienced by so many brethren in the United States and Canada this year.

A handful of sites outside the U.S. and Canada were not able to submit their reports in time to be included in the last issue of the *Living Church News*. For news from those sites, please see page 10 of this issue.

Rapid City, South Dakota

Gathering in the heart of the Black Hills at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, 320 enthusiastic Feastgoers enjoyed an excellent Feast of Tabernacles in Rapid City, South Dakota. Brethren were able to enjoy fellowship with family and friends in the midst of beautiful fall weather, with highs in the low 70s and sunshine-filled afternoons. Laced with fishing streams, picturesque lakes, and scenic highways, the pine-covered mountains of the Black Hills are the highest points east of the Rockies. Mt. Rushmore National Memorial and Badlands National Park are two of the five national parks that many were able to enjoy.

Our guest speakers, Mr. Rand Millich and Dr. Jeff Fall, both gave inspiring messages. Mr. Millich gave messages titled "Who Will Dwell in God's Kingdom?" and "The Kingdom of God, A Family Relationship." Dr. Fall presented "The Start of the Millennium" and "The Last Great Day." Messrs. Val Burgett, Gary Ehman, Glen Gilchrist and Arnold Lalum also made valuable contributions, presenting



well-prepared messages.

Mr. Burgett, the assistant site coordinator, gave a moving message to 56 seniors, ministers and their wives at the seniors luncheon, where the teens waited on tables and served the delicious lunch. For the entertainment portion of the afternoon, we had a walk down memory lane with vocal solos performed by Leona Dorothy, Lisa Kreyer and Sharon Rowbal.

Other organized activities included a family activity at the Flags-n-Wheels go-cart/laser tag facility, a singles Bible Study, a teen activity consisting of pizza and games followed by a hike, a catered meal between services for the singles and an elegant dinner for the deacons and elders at the five-star

Enigma restaurant. For the little ones, a structured children's activity hour was offered before services on most days. The children made a lion and lamb, a Holy Day book, temporary dwellings, crowns and a coat of many colors.

The Holiday Inn, Rushmore Plaza played host to our formal "Streets of Gold" dinner dance. This elegant evening of dancing and entertainment took place in the fabulously decorated Dakota Ballroom, where formal attire, delectable food, keepsake photographs and fine fellowship made this a memorable evening. Conversations on the following day indicated that this was one of the highlights of the Feast.

It was apparent throughout the entire Feast that the brethren were truly exhibiting God's way of giving and serving, as we rejoiced in the blessings of abundant spiritual and physical food and protection from above.

—Sheldon Monson

Clearwater, Florida

Approximately 900 brethren celebrated the 2005 Feast of Tabernacles in warm and sunny Clearwater, Florida. For most of the Festival the weather was ideal, and brethren who were in housing directly adjacent to the beaches

were situated to fully enjoy balmy breezes, beautiful views and surf.

Although Hurricane Wilma churned across the Caribbean during the Festival, eventually moving



across south Florida, it had little effect on the Clearwater area, and none of the Church's activities were disrupted. God's hand was evident on the night the storm was moving inland. While about 250 Festivalgoers were on a dinner cruise in the bay, the boat's owner was watching the weather on radar and fearing that the boat would need to be recalled. As he viewed an outer band of severe weather approaching the area, and was about to radio the captain to return to the dock, the band suddenly disappeared from the radar screen! He said it was the first time he had ever seen this happen.

Services were held in the spacious upstairs ballroom area of Clearwater's Harbor View Center, with an escalator and elevator making the meeting area fully accessible to all. Inspiring sermons focused our minds on how the Feast pictures a future age of peace and hope, and how we can be preparing now to serve in Tomorrow's World. Mr. Roderick Meredith in two sermons encouraged the brethren to "learn to serve," and wrapped up the Feast with the final message on the Last Great Day. Mr. Richard Ames explained how we are destined to be "Royal Teachers." Other sermon topics included: "Become a Peacemaker," "Firstfruits of the Kingdom," "Restoration of Respect," "Peace and Success Both Now and in the Millennium," "Such a Time as This" and "A Great Day of Life." The Festival Chorale did a wonderful job, as did other talented performers treating the brethren to delightful and uplifting special music.

Delicious meals for the singles dinner, the seniors luncheon and the deacons and elders luncheon were served in the beautiful Clearwater Room with a splendid panoramic view of Clearwater Bay. On each of these occasions, Mr. Allen McCarty did a masterful job of entertaining

with background music on his keyboard. At the seniors luncheon, Mr. Richard Ames spoke of the value of the relationships we develop as we journey through life. Mr. Meredith thanked those attending the deacons and elders luncheon for their service, and encouraged them to consider the needs of the Work for additional means of outreach, manpower and miracles, that we might be more effective in carrying out the commission of the Church.

Other popular activities included a family day at the beach on Thursday afternoon, and a family dinner dance Saturday evening. In addition, teens and families enjoyed pizza and rides at "Celebration Station" on Monday afternoon. A number of brethren were also able to enjoy Busch Gardens and other area attractions. A spirit of cheerful cooperation and warmth among the brethren was evident, and helped to make this Feast an especially memorable one.

—Rod Reynolds

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Sunshine, smiling faces, and warm temperatures in the 80s greeted more than 760 Feastgoers at the Kingston Plantation properties in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Located on the Atlantic Ocean, Myrtle Beach is a tourist destination for many thousands of vacationers every year.

The sermonettes and sermons this year were especially inspiring and clearly emphasized the coming Kingdom of God on Earth, and our roles in hastening its arrival and rul-

ing in it under Christ when He returns. Some of the ministers who spoke were Mr. Davy Crockett, Mr. Carl Ponder, Mr. Ron Poole and traveling speakers Mr. Rand Millich and Mr. Richard Ames. The special music at this year's Feast was truly special, setting new standards for excellence at the Feast.

One of the highlights of this year's Feast was an afternoon at Huntington Beach State Park, one of the best beaches on the whole Atlantic coast. The park offered a tour of a castle constructed more than 70 years ago by millionaire Archer Milton Huntington, and of

wild animals in their natural habitat, including wading birds and alligators.

On Saturday night, more than 380 brethren danced the night away to the music of the Baton Rouge Band, who came all the way from Louisiana just to play for us. We had a ball! Many remarked

that this was their best Feast ever.

—Carl Ponder

Lake Tahoe, California

Majestic Sierra peaks and a sparkling Lake Tahoe provided the setting for 222 brethren keeping the Feast of Tabernacles in Kings Beach this year. A family atmosphere, inspiring messages and cohesive fellowship highlighted the services and activities.

The North Tahoe Conference Center, located on the shimmering shores of Lake Tahoe and providing spectacular views of the lake was the setting for services. Guest speaker Mr. Gary Ehman urged Feastgoers to please God and understand our value in His plan, and assistant Festival Coordinator Mr. Darrel



Lovelady encouraged the brethren to prepare for the Kingdom with courage and faith. Other messages focused on the Work, bearing God's name, and the physical renewal of the earth and universe under the leadership of Christ and, ultimately, our Father.

Despite the potential for cold mountain weather, days and nights were unseasonably warm. God mercifully provided sunny, blue skies and beautiful weather for all the activities, with temperatures in the high 60s. After the beach games at family day on Sunday, October 23, some of our 81 participants waded in the normally frigid water—which came up to the waist of some of the children!

Varied activities, including a youth bowling day, a lake cruise,



and a Saturday night family dance gave everyone opportunities to meet new friends and spend time with old acquaintances. At the Sunday night fun show, enthusiastic brethren performed vocal and instrumental music, recited poetry, and shared good times in a real family atmosphere.

On Friday, October 21, 36 deacons, elders and their families shared a luncheon at Garwood's restaurant, overlooking an expansive view of the lake. After the meal, Festival Coordinator Mr. Rod McNair spoke about the courage of God's servants around the world and

throughout the ages. Thirty-one seniors shared a catered meal at the Festival hall, on Monday, October 24, and afterwards were encouraged by Mr. McNair to use their experience to provide stability in their congregation.

Twenty brethren lifted up their voices in the Festival choir, and a brass ensemble provided a stirring addition to daily song services. On the Sabbath of October 22, brethren were happy to hear the news of the arrival of a new baby to Feastgoers Darrel and Vicky Monson earlier that morning! It was an unexpected but joyous event for everyone.

For several first-time Feastgoers, the Feast in Kings Beach was an unforgettable experience. One commented: "The services were the most impressive to me, being new in the Church and it being my first Feast—everything was so full of meaning. The fellowship was so loving and made me feel so welcome."

—Rod McNair

Corpus Christi, Texas

Clear skies, warm sea breezes, and a panoramic view of Corpus Christi Bay greeted 220 Feastgoers at the Emerald Beach Holiday Inn. Mr. Richard Ames began the Feast by expounding on our "Vision for the Future" and our calling as "Royal Priests." Other sermons included, "Called for God's Purpose, Called to Win," "God's Way Brings Peace," "Fear God Always," "What We Will Be Like" and "Godly Courage." Mr. Paul Norman, a Church member

from Chattanooga, Tennessee said: "The sermons were my favorite thing. You don't hear this anywhere else but in God's Church. And it was good to see the children. They are our next



generation." Mr. Maximino Noble, a deacon from Makati, Philippines, stated: "The children's choir was wonderful, especially the faces of innocence." Lindsay Maughmer, age 11, and Lindsay Honess, age 12, both commented that it was good "seeing old

friends and meeting new friends"—such as their brothers did when they met each other for the first time.

The variety of activities included a singles horseback ride, a special party for the teens including fishing on a pier, a savory seniors luncheon, an elegant deacons, hosts, and elders banquet and a special banquet and family dance. These activities provided many additional opportunities for fellowship. "Fellowshipping with the truly converted people of God was one of the many highlights of the Feast of Tabernacles. God 'turned it up a notch' during the Feast and His Holy Spirit was evident as we left the world behind us," commented Mr. Fred Critari, a member from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Mr. and Mrs. Clarence McMillan, from the Austin, Texas area summed it up well: "It was one of the most relaxing Feast of Tabernacles with much harmony, no worries, and everyone seemed like family."

—Dan Hall

Taos, New Mexico

God's Truth, fun, fellowship and feasting were the flagships of this year's Feast in Taos, New Mexico. Temperatures ranged

from the low 30s overnight to the high 60s most days. At just over 7,000 ft. elevation, the high desert plateau on which Taos sits might make you want to gasp for a few breaths, but the scenery most certainly will. The adobe dwellings are surrounded by mountain ranges that reach 13,161 ft. and offer great recreational opportunities. The (Kit) Carson National Forest is covered with deep green pine trees and spotted with bright yellow Aspens shimmering in the light breeze. Many of the 370-plus brethren made the trip to the Rio Grande, which has carved a gorge deep into the desert floor.

Mr. Harold Way explained that unlike the world at large, there are no “accidental births” in God’s Family. He is calling specific people for His Family at this time.



Evangelist Charles Bryce gave us a percentage gauge and we were encouraged to keep moving it toward the godly side and away from the worldly side because, to the percentage that we love the world, we hate God. We were cautioned to put God above all else, understanding that we will be tested on the depth of our love for God. Mr. Gene Hilgenberg showed the attributes of a great teacher—passion, conviction and knowledge—attributes we will need in order to teach others in the Kingdom. Mr. Jack Lowe inspired the brethren to “Focus on Christ,”

and Mr. John Turner encouraged the brethren to remember that “Peace Is a Gift of God.”

Other sermon subjects were “Equality in God’s Kingdom,” the “Beginning and End of Sorrows,” “Seeking the Real City,” “Becoming a Beautiful Butterfly from This Humble Caterpillar” and “God’s People Are Ambassadors for Christ.” Mr. Keith Walden explained how Jesus Christ

set a precedent when He allowed the women to bring their small children to Him for blessing. Then, after the Blessing of the Little Children, the older children offered a lively rendition of “Take Your Shoes Off, Moses.”

The family day was enjoyable, as were all of the activities. At the seniors luncheon, Mr. Bryce exhorted the seniors to never give up, and to keep their minds and bodies active. We enjoyed many delights during the Fun Show, including a moose call, a “Who’s On First” skit and Mr. John Wheeler, who enthralled us by singing Psalm 23 in Hebrew and accompanying himself on a Celtic harp. The Feast was a true delight in a wonderful setting.

—Harold Way

Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri

Beautiful fall colors greeted 719 Feastgoers at the Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri. The Lake of the Ozarks has

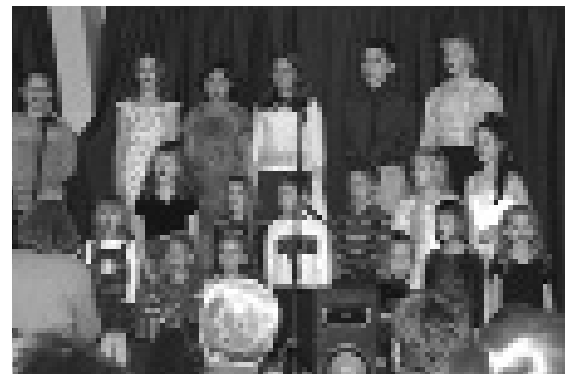
long been a popular Feast site, and this year was no exception with beautiful



weather and warm days filled with sunshine during the first part of the Feast. Later, we had some needed rain, which cooled things off for the remainder of the Feast. Brethren came from all over the U.S. and Canada, with many staying at the Tan-Tar-A resort where we held services.

The messages were timely and inspiring, and we had the opportunity to have Mr. and Mrs. Meredith and Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Fall with us for the first half of the Feast. The other elders that spoke were Messrs. Charles Ogwyn, James Wells, Larry Solomon, John Harbison, Vernon Damron, Brian Pomictter, Glen Travis and Curtis Lambright.

Activities included a family day at Putt’n Stuff Family Fun Center,



which opened its doors just for the Church, allowing brethren young and old to enjoy miniature golf, bumper cars and go-carts. The teens enjoyed a bowling and pizza party, and everyone had a great time at the family dinner and dance. Mr. Meredith spoke at the deacons and

elders luncheon, encouraging everyone to draw close to God so that He can use us to do a mighty work. At the seniors luncheon, Mr. John Harbison spoke on the subject of loyalty, and Mrs. Pat Scarborough and Mr. Ed Smith provided the entertainment. Another popular attraction was the outlet mall, where many of the brethren enjoyed shopping during the Festival.



This was a very memorable Feast, with God's Spirit evident in the messages and the attitudes of all the brethren.

—Larry Solomon

Saratoga Springs, New York

Quaint and historic Saratoga Springs, New York, was the meeting place in the northeastern United States for the 188 brethren who had assembled in response to our Creator's command to attend His Feast of Tabernacles. God has truly blessed this scenic area of gently rolling wooded hills, clear, deep lakes and strikingly colorful fall foliage.

Spiritual meals were served to us daily in sermons, sermonettes, special music and a Sabbath evening Bible Study on the subject of the Wedding Supper. In addition, the variety of palate-pleasing cuisine offered by a myriad of American and international eateries could not fail to appease the most ravenous and discriminating appetite. Events that highlighted the social and activity calendar included a well-attended family dinner dance, a singles drop-in and luncheons for seniors and the deacons and elders. Family outings included a trip to the restored Fort William Henry of *Last of*

the Mohicans fame. The fort is located at the southern tip of Lake George and offered a fascinating tour complete with the thunderous firing of a nine-pound canon mounted on the north rampart overlooking the lake, and a musket-loading demonstration culminating in the weapon's noisy discharge. Reenactors in British "red-coat" uniforms conducted an amazing tour, covering the history of the fort and its surrender to General Mont Calm during the French and Indian war, fought by France and England more than 250 years ago for control of the North American continent.

A scenic lake cruise aboard a modern three-deck ship, with a delicious roast beef buffet and beverages for all those at the Feast who wished to attend, was generously provided at no cost by one of the deacons attending the site. The Feast at Saratoga Springs had something for everyone!

—Don Davis

Canmore, Alberta

The Radisson Hotel and Convention Center this year hosted the first Living Church of God Feast of Tabernacles ever held in Canmore, Alberta.

Situated on the historic and famous Bow Valley Trail, this little town of 15,000 is adjacent to world-renowned Banff National Park, universally acclaimed as the most majestic and picturesque area (and also the most photographed) of the "Blue Canadian Rockies."

Visited by many thousands of tourists from all around the world

each year, recreational opportunities abound in this region. During our sojourn there, deer visited the parking area of the Radisson, while bush rabbits, squirrels, crows and magpies frequented the doorways of lodge units soliciting handouts! On any given day in the surrounding region, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, elk or bear might be spotted from your car as you tour—and the Bow River still has fish in it!

Glistening with early snow, the rugged limestone peaks surrounding the Feast site provided inspiration to all, and no doubt added inspiration to the speaking and the hearing of the seasonally relevant messages. On the first Holy Day, Mr. Frank Best opened with his message "Learning to Honor and Respect God." Mr. Gerald Weston followed with "Rejoicing at the Feast" and an enlightening presentation of how the Holy Days are vividly and dominantly included in every biblical account of the revival and restoration of the true worship of God.

We also heard illuminating messages on the symbolism of olive oil, renewing zeal, character development and ascending the mountain of God. Mr. Lambert Greer closed with a message on the "Spiritual



Aspect of the Feast" and expounded on the meaning of the Last Great Day.

Our highest daily attendance figure was 287, with 187 brethren

sharing the Holy Day Buffet, and approximately 200 participating in



the dinner dance and family fun night. The seniors luncheon had 65 very enthusiastic and vocal participants, with entertainment hosted by Mr. Frank Best. During the deacons and elders dinner, Mr. Gerald Weston commented on aspects of the Work of God and expressed gratitude for those serving in it. The singles, led by Mr. Steve Jokela, enjoyed a “vigorous but not rigorous” hike on Hart Mountain and the family day included a very educational and invigorating “Foot Rally” around town.

As illustrated by many, many sincere personal testimonials, this first Feast of Tabernacles at Canmore was an inspiring, impressive and memorable experience for all who attended, and we all have very much for which to truly thank God.

—Eldon Davis

Mt. Orford, Quebec

The beautiful environment of Mt. Orford, Quebec was enjoyed by 145 of our brethren this year. The site for services—at the foot of the Mt. Orford Ski Center and the Art Center National Park—was a truly millennial location as we listened to the word of God. Temperatures were mild, and while there was some rain, it did not affect our activities. The sunshine was inside us all, provid-

ing great fellowship and rejoicing among our happy group of both French and English-speaking brethren. Snow on the last day gave us a nice picture of the artistic beauty designed by our Father in heaven. What a scene it was!

This year, we heard uplifting messages from two ministers visiting from the United States, Mr. Lambert Greer and Mr. Ken Frank. Mr. Frank spoke to us about the coming millennium as being a “Garden of Eden,” and about our future as children of God, “From Glory to Glory.” Mr. Greer spoke on the purpose of having vision, and on the establishment of God’s government on earth. Mr. Winston Gosse, an elder from Ontario, spoke on the “Better Resurrection” and Mr. Secours from Quebec spoke on Christian unity at the Feast—where God brings us all together for many purposes. Mr. Gerald Weston, director of the Work in Canada, spoke about a “Feast of Restoration,” and gave a Last Great Day sermon about the valley of dry bones. One new feature of the Feast this year was a meal served between services on the Holy Days, which gave us the feeling of eating together as a family, and was enjoyable for all who participated in it.

Mr. Frank hosted the seniors luncheon, and reminded our 34 seniors of their importance in creating a balanced congregation, and how important their prayers for all of us are. The singles and teens activity featured horseback riding, and the great horses and nice trails made it the best ever, according to Mr. Ismael Garay. Ninety brethren participated in our dinner dance at the meeting hall, where an atmosphere of relaxation and friendship, nicely served food and a special musical format made it a well-balanced

evening for all concerned. The family event was held in a sports facility center. It included swimming, tennis, wall-climbing, and more sedate activities such as playing games and cards. Mr. Gerald Weston hosted the luncheon for ministers, deacons and video recipients at a French-style restaurant, and gave us all a “Thank You” note for serving the brethren in such a marvelous way.

Overall, it was a magnificent Feast and the atmosphere was one of love, friendship and concern, which is a foretaste of the coming Kingdom of God on this earth. The Festival survey showed that the brethren really enjoyed both the messages and the excellent fellowship with true Christians.

—Jacques Secours

Summerside, Prince Edward Island

Beautiful Summerside, PEI, colloquially known as “Potatoes Everywhere Island,” was host to nearly 50 brethren this year from Ontario, Atlantic Canada, Newfoundland and the United States. For the third year, services were conducted at the Linkletter Inn and Convention Centre. We enjoyed an atmosphere of unity and were treated like kings and queens by the entire staff—a very fitting complement to the meaning of the Feast. Most brethren stayed on site, as it was economical and convenient; of course, the turkey bacon served by the on-site restaurant did not hurt either!

Many were pleasantly surprised when they learned of our lineup of traveling speakers. Mr. Lambert Greer started us off, giving two sermons: “Vision Needs Light” and “Government in the Kingdom of God.” The inspiration continued as

our second guest speaker, Mr. Gerald Weston, gave sermons titled “Reasons for Rejoicing” and “God’s Feasts: Times of Restoration.” Mr. and Mrs. Ken Frank’s safe arrival, and Mr. Frank’s sermons, “Back to the Garden” and “The Great Beyond” provided a delightful conclusion. It was a spiritually fulfilling Feast!

Our honorary seniors luncheon took place on Thursday, October 20. The assistant coordinator, Mr. Irv Woelfle, gave a presentation in which he commented: “Especially when we are older, time seems to go so fast. All of our lives we look for-

ward to things. Almost before we know it, the anticipated event has come and gone—pointing out that before we know it, Jesus Christ will be here and we will meet Him in the air. Will we at that time think, ‘I wish I had’? To avoid that, we need to seize the moment and do it while we can.” Other activities included a pizza party, and a family day consisting of a dinner dance and the ever-popular “Not-So Newlywed Game.”

The island offers a pace that is laid-back and relaxing. The fall colors are spectacular, the many light-houses come with a rich history, and the red beaches at sunset are mes-

merizing. Many brethren also enjoyed peaceful walks down the long boardwalk and along the Northumberland Strait in Summerside. The Feast here can be summed up by the words of one of the attending brethren: “I love our family atmosphere on PEI. Next year’s Feast seems so far away, and yet we are already making plans for it! So all of you who have been to PEI before, you know what you are missing! And for those of you who have never been there, you need to come and experience it to believe it!”

—Michael Elertson

Feast 2005: International Reports

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aloud the Bible verses quoted during the study. After the weekly Sabbath, we had a theatre play on the Bible story of Samuel as a young boy. At the conclusion of services the following day, we had a lecture on driving safely, given by Mr. Michel Romeo from Guadeloupe, a long-time member of the Paris congregation.

—Marcel Ginier

were the source of many discussions and talks during the whole Feast. Activities such as swimming, outboundings and other outings also provided the fun everyone was looking for.

A special program we call “Living in Harmony” gave the brethren many opportunities to ask questions about the Bible. It is a spiritual and relaxing way to end the day, and it has been our tradition to gather together, share spiritual experiences and ask a lot of Biblical questions!

—Arius Nusantara

Tumpang, Indonesia

The Tumpang Feast site lies on the high land, 15 km from Malang, the city where most of our brethren live. Weather during the Feast ranged from 20 to 23 degrees Celsius, with a few cloudy days at the beginning of the Feast and sunny days occupying the rest, save for a few little showers. Rain or shine, brethren had an unforgettable Feast, enjoying time to relax and chat or gather after the services were over.

It was most encouraging to note that not only were there more in attendance at the Feast this year—there were 18 of us—but also the zeal of the brethren was obviously stronger. Sermonettes, sermons and Bible Studies



Wewak, Papua New Guinea

We had a great time before God at the Feast of Tabernacles in the township of Wewak, located in the eastern part of Papua New Guinea. The brethren traveled in from other centers in the country. Sixty-four were in attendance, including children. We were

reminded of why we kept the Feast with inspiring messages that reminded us of our great calling. We were very grateful to our Lord, who said in Matthew 8:11, “And I say to you that many will come from east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”

—Peter Devis

Be a Positive Christian

(continued from page 3)

ing too holy to be bothered. Yet a compassionate Samaritan was not too “good” to help a man he had never seen before.

Notice Jesus’ instruction: “Go and do likewise.”

Just how good a neighbor are you? This is a vitally important factor in determining your ability to be a light to others—and, incidentally, in determining your own happiness.

You should realize from the outset that carnal-minded friends and neighbors are just naturally going to have a bad opinion of you—a true Christian trying to keep all of God’s commandments, against which their carnal minds rebel. They are going to look upon you as peculiar or fanatical unless you take positive action to counteract this attitude.

Go out of your way to be a really wonderful neighbor. Remember that Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts. 20:35).

The chief attributes of God’s Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace and longsuffering (Galatians 5:22). Put the love of God to work in your life. Try to be understanding, patient and always ready to be of service to others. Cultivate the attitude of joy and peace at all times. Try to make others feel happy in your presence.

God is more willing to give you of His Spirit—His love, joy and peace—than you are to feed your own hungry children (Matthew 7:11). Ask God to help you show more love, to give you His love and to help you be a better neighbor in every way. Upon seeing your good works—your kindness, love and willingness to help in time of need—your neighbors can then come to like and respect you in a way that could never be accomplished by your words alone.

Be Positive

One of the most striking mistakes some new Christians make is their failure to show a positive attitude toward life. Because they have come to realize that much of this world is wrong, they assume a negative attitude toward life in general. They do not take a real interest in their family, their friends or their community. Is this the way to be a light—the kind of example others will admire?

No! Instead of being *against* everything, strive to be *for* something. Have a positive program of developing your personality, your capabilities and your ability to help and influence other people for good.

James asks us, “Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith” (James 2:5)? Many Christians are poor and humble people when God calls them. Some have not had many educational opportunities, and are handicapped in their speech, their writing, their knowledge of this world around them, and in many of the “social graces.”

But does God wish us to remain that way?

First of all, we have to confess that if we had all been highly successful in this world, we would have been too proud to accept God’s truth and be converted. We would have had too much self-confidence to recognize our need for God. But now, that should all be changed. Now our confidence should rest in God, and in what He can do through us if we yield to His Spirit. Now that our confidence about any abilities rests in God—not self—can you see that He *wants* us to develop those abilities?

Jesus said that “you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). We are to strive to become like God in *every* way. Through God’s

help, we will finally achieve this goal when we are born of God in the resurrection.

Jesus was God in the flesh, setting a perfect example for us to follow. Did Jesus use sloppy speech or dress? Did He appear uneducated or uncouth to others?

In Luke 4:22 we find that when Jesus spoke in the synagogue, “all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” People had to admire Jesus’ ability in speech, even though they later condemned what He said and tried to throw Him off a cliff (v. 29).

In reading the gospels, it is easy to discern that Jesus was a natural leader. He was a person whom people would naturally admire, even though those same people felt so much hate for what He taught that they had Him crucified.

Are you developing qualities of personality and of leadership? Are you able to deal with and influence people of all social backgrounds? The Apostle Paul said, “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22).

Each of us should try to do our work the best way possible, keep our homes and yards looking as neat and clean as we can, and dress as well as our means allow. We should study to use language well. We should broaden our interests and our general knowledge, and develop our personalities and abilities in every way. God tells us to develop our talents, to be like Him in every way. As we do this, our neighbors will notice the change for good in our lives, and will be moved to respect us more.

Show Common Sense

Many fail to realize that “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound

mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). Instead of demonstrating these qualities in their lives, too many Christians proceed in a hesitant, apologetic or sometimes a belligerent attitude to try to “talk people into” some of their beliefs.

Humanly, we all tend to do this to some degree, and it is hard to overcome. But God has given us the Spirit of power to do so!


From now on, instead of being “down on the world” in all your talk and actions, why not *show the world by action* that you have found something better? Show your neighbors that your faith works for good, by doing good to them.

Through God’s Spirit within you, *live up to what you believe*

and set a shining example before others. They may not agree with all your beliefs, but they will respect the results you achieve in your life.

Certainly we must try hard not to give others the impression that we are odd or peculiar. Our job is to show those around us the spirit of a sound mind in everything we do. If people do ask you questions concerning your beliefs—which they will, if you are living them—be prepared by diligent study to answer them in a non-argumentative, clear and common sense way. Show them that God’s way makes sense, and is based on a law of love that would prevent war, murder and most of humanity’s troubles, if

it were only taught and obeyed. But only tell people what they ask you about. Do not try to *force* too much new truth upon them all at once. Instead, show them by your words and actions that God’s way is based on common sense and a sound mind.

Even though you will still be persecuted by many, this positive attitude in Christian living can gain you new respect from those around you. You can then be an even greater influence for good. More importantly, this way of living faith and action can give your own life more meaning, interest and joy, and will prepare you to serve more effectively as a king and priest under Christ throughout life eternal. Use it! 

Satan’s Devices

(Continued from page 2)

generally *less* harmful. But even in these programs, the commercial breaks are often *filled* with very worldly images of sex, violence and an appeal to covetousness, appealing to the self and to selfish desires, prodding us to “get” or “show off” or be sexually suggestive.

The *mind of Satan* is strongly evident in the television and film industry, and in most of what people read and hear today. Sometimes it is almost impossible to find a program, or see the cover of a magazine, that is not featuring something about sex or violence. Most of the talk shows and soap operas are *filled* with intimations of fornication, adultery and wife-swapping—and with a stream of “non-judgmental” portrayals of homosexuality, so-called same-sex “marriage” and other perversions.

If Satan can *thoroughly break down* what remains of national “norms” of culture and decency—and then take it several more steps in the wrong direction, he will certainly have succeeded in making our peoples “ripe” for *national destruction* and for the Great Tribulation that will come *most directly* on the American and British-descended peoples. Yet most people in our nations are being systematically brainwashed into believing that all this is “progress!”

Dear brethren, *if* we in God’s own Church fail to grasp the *enormity* of Satan’s participation in the media, in the God-rejecting educational and political systems and in the often-very-immoral approach of this world’s

businesses and industries, we are in terrible trouble. We *must wake up!*

Satan’s Personal Attacks

We all remember the story of Job, a righteous man. Yet Job was at times “*self-righteous*,” and God wanted to help him with this problem. So He allowed Satan to attack Job—and Satan did so with *great glee!*

After God described Job’s righteousness, the Devil answered, “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Then Satan began to describe how Job was hedged about, blessed and protected by God. Satan suggested that if God took some of this away, Job’s response to God would be to “*curse You to Your face!*” (Job 1:8–11).

Notice that God is in *total control*. God *allowed* Satan to strike Job’s possessions and his children. Even Job’s wife turned aside, and urged him to “curse God and die!” (Job 2:9). But Job held on, and had to go through some *terrible humiliations* until he finally realized his weakness in comparison to God. Throughout his trial, Job’s *basic attitude* of acknowledging God and His righteousness remained, so in the end Job was vindicated and doubly blessed (Job 42:10). From time to time, God may allow Satan to strike at some of us, to humble us and to teach us powerful spiritual “lessons” we need to learn for *all eternity*. But we must understand *Satan’s involvement* to fully grasp what is happening. Satan is called the “accuser” of the brethren (Revelation 12:10). He will accuse us to God—and sometimes, without their realiz-

ing it, he even “stirs up” converted brethren to *accuse* one another, to *accuse* the ministry or even to *accuse* God Himself! It is good to realize this, so we can *beware* of Satan and his devices!

As the “prince of the power of the air,” who *greatly influences* the attitudes and thoughts of people in this world, Satan will very often “work on people”—not only to make them upset at God and at one another, but also to make them feel *very discouraged*, hopeless and even “cut off” from God because of their problems and their moods. We must *constantly* guard against this, and must “guard our minds” so that this does not happen to us. We must be aware that when deep feelings—sometimes inexplicable feelings—come over us seemingly without any reason, they may be coming *directly* from Satan the Devil. Satan would like very much to *destroy* you and me, to *destroy* this Work of God and to *destroy* any and all who are preparing to replace him as future leaders in Tomorrow’s World! Almighty God tells us: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you” (1 Peter 5:8–10).

If you have ever seen a *realistic* film about wild lions attacking people, it can fill you with a certain degree of *horror*. Brethren, Satan *really is like this*—and we must be aware. We must *regularly* drink in of God’s Word to fill our minds with *His* thoughts and attitudes. We must *regularly* be on our knees in prayer to our Father, *beseeking* Him for protection against this “wild lion” who is constantly trying to attack us. We must exercise the “tool” of *fasting* to become genuinely humble before God so that our prayers may be heard! In fact, shortly before the above passage about Satan, we read these vital instructions: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time” (vv. 5–6).

One of the *most dangerous* attitudes we can ever get into is that of “bitterness.” As Mr. Herbert Armstrong often said, “bitterness is like heroin! If you allow yourself to be filled with bitterness, it will *kill you* spiritually!” So God tells us, “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane

person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright” (Hebrews 12:14–16). Indeed, a “root of bitterness” will cause you to turn away from God and His Church. It will cause you to lose friends and family. It can lead you to become a truly “profane person” willing to *give up* your entire eternal reward for some cheap, worldly benefit, as did Esau—who for one morsel of food sold his birthright! So, learn to love people. Learn to *forgive* people, even if they have deeply hurt you. Learn to *draw close* to your God continually and, as James wrote, to “submit to God. *Resist the devil* and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

Dear brethren, we truly are in a “spiritual war.” We must constantly be aware of this as a Church, and as individual Christians. For not only will Satan often attack us personally; he will attack the Work in any way he can. If he can *destroy* or *greatly minimize* this powerful effort to reach all the world with the Truth and the purpose of God, he will have achieved his end. In Ephesians 6:10–20, God describes in detail the *spiritual warfare* that every Christian must undertake. Please *study* this passage carefully. Please be sure that you begin to understand the “wiles” of the Devil. Realize that you do, indeed, need to “take up the *whole armor* of God.” And note especially where Paul tells us, “*above all*, taking the *shield of faith* with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one” (v. 16). For if we “drink in” this world’s wretched and carnal attitudes in what we read, watch or hear, and then discuss, we can be powerfully *drawn away* from the *reality* of God, and from God Himself!

We must *focus* our minds on the *reality* of God as our Creator, our Father and the Living Head of the Church of God. By genuinely *studying* His word, constantly *praying* and *communing* with Him, *meditating* on His law, His will and His purpose, and by *fasting* before Him regularly and going all out to truly “seek” Him, we will win the spiritual battle in the end! But we must constantly *build* our genuine *faith* that God is our Father and that His purpose stands! Then, and only then, by this *living faith* we will win the ultimate victory. It is certainly *worth it*, when you consider the *awesome* blessings we will have for all eternity! If we do our part faithfully, we can remember Mr. Armstrong’s encouraging words, “in the *end*, we *win!*”

With Christian love,



Ordinations

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas and Lisa Gossett, of the Knoxville, Tennessee congregation, have been ordained as deacon and deaconess by Mr. Martin Fannin. Mr. Gossett was ordained on the Day of Atonement, October 13, 2005, and Mrs. Gossett was ordained on the Sabbath of November 26. The Gossetts serve the brethren in the Knoxville area.

Mr. Henry Christo Lomas, of the Johannesburg, South Africa congregation, was ordained as an elder on October 18, 2005. Evangelist Syd Hull presided over the ordination, assisted by Messrs. Gaylyn Bonjour and William Oswald. Mr. Lomas serves the brethren in the Johannesburg area.

Mr. James Meredith, of the Los Angeles, California congregation, was ordained as an elder on the Sabbath of November 5, 2005. Dr. Jeff Fall presided over the ordination, assisted by Messrs. Harold Way, Hadden Pace and Don Roach. Mr. Meredith had previously served the Los Angeles brethren for several years as a deacon.

Mrs. Wanda West, of the Houston, Texas congregation, was ordained as a deaconess on the Sabbath of June 12, 2005, by Messrs. Davy Crockett and Ron McGowen. She and her husband (Mr. Vance West, who is a deacon) have served the Church faithfully for many years.

Anniversaries

Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Masters celebrated 50 years of marriage on December 18, 2005. Mrs. Masters, affectionately called "Trudy," is a member of the Church in Jamaica.

Mr. and Mrs. Luis and Ligia Parra, of the Manizales, Colombia congregation, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on November 20, 2005.

Mr. and Mrs. C. J. and Dorothy Wesselski, of the Houston, Texas congregation, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on November 14, 2005.

Births

Mr. and Mrs. Eric and Tricia Boyer of the Paris, France congregation are happy to announce the birth of their fourth son, Zachary Boyer. He was born on November 18, 2005, and weighed 7.5 pounds. Both mother and son are doing well.

Mr. and Mrs. Greg and Tammy Loy of Winchester, VA are happy to announce the birth of their son Caleb Scott Loy, born on November 28, 2005. He weighed 10 pounds, 2 ounces, and was 21.5 inches long. Mother and baby are doing well, as are grandparents Mr. and Mrs. Paul Shumway, who are elated at their new grandson.

Mr. and Mrs. Belibet and Rosy Rosales, members of the Living Church of God congregation in Mexico City, Mexico, are happy to announce the birth of their daughter Aviah Nirel Rosales. She was born on December 27, 2005, weighing 6.4 pounds. The brethren rejoice at this beautiful addition to the congregation.

In Loving Memory

Mrs. Loida Benitez died on November 19, 2005. She was the widow of Mr. Tex Benitez, who had for many years pastored Church congregations in northwestern Mindanao, in the Philippines. The Benitez family came into the Worldwide Church of God from the Church of God Seventh Day in the early 1960s. Mrs. Benitez's son Gideon currently pastors Church congregations in central and northwest Mindanao.

Mr. Melvin Christianson, of Calgary, Canada, died on December 20, 2005. He was 75 years old. Baptized in 1963, he and his wife were among the pioneer Church members in the province of Alberta, together serving the brethren with their musical talents. Mr. Christianson is survived by his wife Marge, children Laurie, Linda, Ken, Lyle, Howard, Darryl and Richard, and 9 grandchildren. Mr. Stuart Wachowicz conducted the memorial service.

Upcoming *Tomorrow's World* Telecasts

WGN: Sunday, 6:00 AM ET

Inspiration: Friday, 10:00 PM PT

VISION (Canada): Sunday, 5:30 PM ET; Monday-Friday, 3:00 AM ET

Air Date	Broadcast Title
February 5	Who Controls the Weather?
February 12	Lessons of History
February 19	Beware of the Antichrist!
February 26	Seven Satanic Deceptions

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

Wedding

Mr. and Mrs. Chad and Sarah (Bryce) Brinkman were married on Sunday, October 2, 2005, at the Chamisa Hills Golf Resort in Rio Rancho, New Mexico. More than 100 guests shared in this joyous occasion. With perfect weather, wonderful fellowship and a tremendous dinner, this special day could not have gone any better.

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

Commentary

“It’s Not ‘Just Us Chickens’”

By Gary F. Ehman

Thanks to the news media, the world can now add chickens to the things we may fear might kill us. To date, 100 million birds with avian flu have been killed, and it is reported 60 of the 100 people infected with the human form of avian flu since 1997 have died.

Meanwhile, millions have died from HIV/AIDS, hundreds of thousands are dying, and millions more—men, women and children—are infected worldwide each year.

Officials in India are growing alarmed at the spread of infection because of “lonely” truckers using prostitutes at truck stops. Reports state that India’s truck drivers are triggering a pandemic within their own families and with the child prostitutes who frequent truck stops across that nation.

Truckers there report an average of 150 to 200 sexual encounters a year with prostitutes. Authorities say 15 to 18 percent of the drivers tested are HIV-positive. The United Nations forecasts that within the next ten years, an estimated 10 million in India will be infected.

Chinese authorities estimate that about 840,000 of their nation’s citizens are HIV-infected, 80,000 having actual AIDS. Illicit sexual contact and recreational drug use are blamed. World AIDS experts believe these estimates are understated. Figures for the rest of the world are equally grim. United Nations agencies report that sub-Saharan Africa has just over 10 percent of the world’s population, but is home to more than 60 percent of all people living with HIV—an estimated 26 million. The UN reports that the

number of people living with HIV in the world today has risen to 40 million, and that three million died of AIDS in 2004 while five million more were infected. Of the new infections, 4.3 million were adults, 700,000 were children.

In the United States, the epidemic has shifted demonstrably during the past decade. An estimated 40,000 people in the U.S. have been infected with HIV in each of the past ten years, and while the epidemic in the U.S. was once confined largely to white homosexual males, it now affects an increasing proportion of women and African-Americans. A potential bird flu pandemic is *scary*, but the AIDS pandemic has proven itself *deadly*. While bad farming practices and greed can be blamed for one, a cascading breakdown of global morals is the reason behind the other. Both could be avoided if man would simply obey the laws of the great God of the universe.

Jesus Christ warned that a time would come when pestilences would roam the earth. “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences [disease epidemics of unprecedented proportions] and earthquakes in various places” (Matthew 24:7).

As *Tomorrow’s World* Editor-in-Chief Roderick C. Meredith wrote, in his article “Seven Reasons Why Christ Must Return”: “We are now at a turning point in human affairs! As traumatic world events begin to speed up and intensify their effects on each other, our Creator must and *will* intervene!”

God speed the day when He does return!

The above is adapted from one of the many commentaries, discussing vital topics facing our world, available at the www.lcg.org and www.tomorrowworld.org Web sites.