

# THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

LCG.org

September-October 2024

## He Turned Many to Righteousness

*Dear Brethren,*

It is never easy to say goodbye to a loved one, no matter how well you know that the day will come. Such is the case with our dear brother in Christ, Mr. Richard Ames, who was for many years our elder statesman in the Living Church of God. Whenever he spoke up on the Council of Elders or in an Executive Luncheon, the rest of us listened—as more than one minister has observed. Even though I was his boss in these later years, I looked up to Mr. Ames with deference as my superior in many ways. He was not a “yes man” and always spoke his mind, but when the baton was passed to me by Dr. Meredith, there was no greater positive influence in that transition. He always showed me the greatest respect and was a great source of encouragement.

As a grandfather figure, Mr. Ames exhorted the ministry and the Church to always look to Headquarters and to the Presiding Evangelist, whoever might be in that position. And it was never a matter of flattery—it was his sincere desire to help us all understand that *Christ* is the true Head of the Church. He understood how God’s government works, and he knew how important it is for all of us to understand this.

Mr. Ames was known for his pithy admonitions. He continually admonished us, in preparing sermons and articles or in discussing various issues, “Don’t overlook the obvious.” The obvious was most often what the Church had already written on the subject. And that is good advice not for the ministry only, but for all members. It would do us all well to prove what we believe by reading and studying what Christ has made available through His Church, rather than researching new doctrines and writing papers to send to Headquarters. Mr. Ames understood that the Church is the pillar and ground—the bulwark—of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

Mr. Ames also understood “that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation [origin], for prophecy never



came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20–21). He often referred to this important point in Hebrews about how God works: The ministry, as with the priesthood in the Old Testament, is not something we

choose for ourselves. “And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was” (Hebrews 5:4). Yes, it is God who chooses and appoints those who are to be our teachers (Titus 1:5).

### **A Man Well Loved**

Many have sent tributes from around the world, appreciating how Mr. Ames influenced their lives. How often we hear that someone remembered him from the *World Tomorrow* telecast during the days of Worldwide—and came back to the Truth upon happening to hear that familiar voice proclaiming the plain truth of Scripture on a *Tomorrow’s World* telecast. His desire to be known as one who turned “many to righteousness”

Volume 26, No. 5



### *Inside This Issue...*

*How Can You Be Right?... p. 3*  
*Characteristics of Kings... p. 6*  
*The Feast of Tabernacles:*  
*Why Activities?... p. 10*  
*With Shouting and the Sound of a Trumpet... p. 14*

*Building Pillars for the Next Generation... p. 17*  
*We Need the Fast Before the Feast... p. 18*  
*Our Vision of God’s Kingdom... p. 20*  
*Local Church News... p. 22*  
*Education for Eternity... p. 24*

was fulfilled (Daniel 12:3), and it will continue to be fulfilled through his telecasts, articles, and booklets.

Let me share a few tributes with you, first from several members of the Council of Elders. Mr. Rod McNair wrote the following:

When I think about memories of Mr. Ames, two things have always stood out to me. One was that he always made an effort to participate in Church activities. There were times when I know he had other responsibilities to take care of and deadlines to meet, but he always put a high priority on showing up at local activities. And expressing enthusiasm for them! It was encouraging to see he valued giving support to whatever was going on in the local Church congregation. Somewhat related, he always had time to talk to young people and was interested in what they had to say. You could tell that he had a curious mind and wanted to know what was going on in their lives. And he had a good memory, following up with people at a later date concerning what he knew was going on in the life of a young person (or anyone, for that matter) he was talking to. Having a keen interest to participate in what was going on in the Church and wanting to know about others made an impact on me, and it's something I'll always remember and appreciate about Mr. Ames.

Mr. Wallace Smith, who worked closely with Mr. Ames in the Editorial Department, remembers:

The power of Mr. Ames' speaking, his passion for Christ's message, and the intensity of his devotion to solid, biblical doctrine has long been inspiring to me. But so, too, was his compassionate nature and the way he truly seemed to personally care about the lives of others. Once at a Feast, more than 20 years ago, my mother-in-law had asked him and Mrs. Ames if they wanted to come over to our condo for dinner with our family. She was disappointed when

she heard they had other plans, but she understood. Then, later, he sought her out and let her know that he and his wife would have a few moments before heading to the airport in the morning and would love to stop by for breakfast. That he remembered her and made it a personal priority to try and have that meal meant a lot to me back then. Getting to work so closely with him since being added to the telecast in 2006 has only endeared him to me further, and the profound impact of his example, instruction, and loving encouragement on my life is something for which I will forever be grateful.

Mr. Rand Millich sent this message: "We were hoping for a different outcome, but trusted God's decision. He ran his race faithfully, as did many others through the years. We will miss his strength and encouragement."

Mr. Dan Hall wrote, "We are saddened by the loss. We have been immensely encouraged by both the Ames' during various ups and downs in the ministry. Mr. Ames will be dearly missed."

And tributes have also come in from around the world. From the far-off South Pacific, Mr. Jerry Sam, Sr., our minister in Vanuatu, wrote, "Every one of us in Vanuatu are sad to hear of the loss of one of our great leaders in the Living Church of God.... We hope to meet him again soon at the last trump."

Mr. Elly Osumba, an elder in Africa, took the opportunity "on behalf of Kendu Bay, Kenya to send our heartfelt condolences to the Richard Ames family for his death during this final age when courage is required to speak and preach the truth to this ungodly world as he used to do. I believe that when the Trumpet shall be sounded our brother will be risen to be crowned to reign with Christ's soon coming Kingdom."

Closer to home, Mr. Glen Harrison wrote the following to me:

Truly we are saddened by the death of Mr. Ames, and I know it is also your great loss of a dear friend

**HE TURNED MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS** continues on page 9

**Editor in Chief:** | Gerald E. Weston  
**Editorial Director:** | Richard F. Ames  
**Executive Editor:** | Wallace G. Smith  
**Managing Editor:** | John Robinson  
**Senior Editor:** | William Bowmer  
**Regional Editors:** | Robert Tyler (Australasia)  
 | Stuart Wachowicz (Canada)  
 | Peter G. Nathan (Europe and Africa)  
**Editorial Assistants:** | William Williams • Thomas White  
**Asst. Copy Editors:** | Sandy Davis • Genie Ogwyn • Linda Orban  
**Business Manager:** | Dexter B. Wakefield

The *Living Church News* is published every two months by the Living Church of God, 2301 Crown Centre Drive, Charlotte, NC 28227. Subscriptions are sent without charge to members of the Living Church of God.

©2024 Living Church of God™. Printed in the USA. All rights reserved. Postage paid at Charlotte, NC.

**Postmaster: Send address changes to  
 The Living Church News • P.O. Box 3810 Charlotte, NC 28227**

The Living Church of God is not responsible for the return of unsolicited articles and photographs. All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version (© 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.). Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Image(s) used under license from Shutterstock.com.



## How Can You Be Right?

**O**ur world's belief systems are based on several major religions with a multitude of factions within them. "Christianity" may be the most diverse, with its Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant forms. And, within each—especially Protestantism—there is a plethora of diverse denominations. There are also those factions that do not fit into the Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox categories, such as Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-Day Adventists, and, of course, the Church of God, to which we belong.

The next largest belief system is Islam, which has two major divisions, Shia and Sunni. After that, we have Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Sikhism, and more—and an increasing number who profess no religion or even atheism. It would be difficult to categorize the never-ending proliferation of belief systems in our world of more than eight billion human beings. For any thinking person, no matter what faith he subscribes to, a question must arise: *How do I know that what I believe is correct and that those who do not believe the same are in error?*

This is not a question from which we should shrink. When I counsel people for baptism, especially those who grew up in the Church, I challenge them with some difficult scriptures. They must not simply believe that they have the truth based on the ideas they grew up with. They must think through, study, and conclusively prove to themselves that God has given His Church the one and only Truth that He is revealing to mankind.

### **Prove God Exists**

This begins with proving that God exists, for if there is not an all-powerful, all-knowing Creator of matter and life, there is no need to go further—but if the preponderance of evidence demands a great, intelligent Creator being, then it behooves us to seek to know Him and what He expects of us.

The evidence of God is all around us. Why is the moon 1/400th the size of the sun, but at the exact distance to allow for a total solar eclipse? Quite a "coincidence"! Why is 70 percent of this planet bathed in water, which brings a multitude of benefits—some obvious, some not so obvious, and some of which we are still discovering? Why is water the only substance that commonly exists on earth as a liquid, solid, and gas? And why does freezing water, defying the norm, expand rather than contract, allowing ice to float rather than sink?

When we look at the perfection that abounds in creatures great and small, we recognize design, functionality, and beauty. Did vegetarian, mammalian animals like hippopotamuses and egg-laying, carnivorous animals like crocodiles truly evolve from a common ancestor millions of years ago, as evolutionists assert? Why is it that these common ancestors, so vital to evolutionary theory, only exist in artists' imaginations and not in the fossil record?

Then there is the whole subject of microbiology and the study of proteins, the building blocks of life. How did DNA—the most sophisticated code known to man—evolve? Bill Gates needed intelligent humans to write code, but all code writers together cannot match the sophistication, precision, and conciseness of DNA. And how could evolution occur when DNA needs proteins, yet proteins do not exist apart from DNA? Which came first, and how did one survive while waiting for the other to evolve? In living cells, proteins are assembled by little "machines," which themselves are made of proteins. Again, which came first, the assembly line or the proteins that make up the assembly line?

Mathematically, it is impossible to believe that life could have spontaneously arisen from non-living material apart from intelligent intention. It is clear that matter came into existence at a point in time, and there has not been enough time since then for what we see to have evolved. The hand-waving answer from evolutionists is, *We are here, so it happened*. Of course, that is a red herring, diverting attention from the relevant question. Our existence is not in question. The real question is, *how* did we get here?

The mind of man is vastly different from that of animals, even though there are animals with larger brains. Why is it that man can invent and build intricate machines to solve problems, but animals cannot? No doubt, animals can do many marvelous things. Birds build intricate nests, but each species has its own nest design. Chimpanzees may use a stick as a simple tool that they push into a termite tunnel, but it is hardly a well-designed monkey wrench. Scientists and anthropologists attempt to put animals on the same plane as man, but let's get real—the only animals that have gone into space are those that man has *sent* into space with sophisticated, man-made rockets.

The evidence of God's existence is easy to see for anyone with an open mind. This is why David rightly



declared, “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God” (Psalm 14:1). And this is why Paul wrote that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the

It could be said that history is mostly a chronicle of wars. It may be tempting to believe that war is a thing of the past, but the last few years have challenged the idea that civilized “first-world” nations will cease fighting over territory and selfish ambition. **Human nature has not changed, and any truly thinking person must recognize that wars of unimaginable proportions are in our future.**

world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made... so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:18–20).

There are endless numbers of ways we can truly prove the existence of God to ourselves, but if we want to know whether what we believe is true, we must put effort into finding out. Our booklets *Evolution and Creation: What Both Sides Miss* and *The Real God: Proofs and Promises* are good primers and should be read carefully.

### Prove the Bible Is True

Then, if God exists—and you can prove that He does—what is His plan and purpose for you and me? How, if at all, has He revealed Himself to us? Are we, who are so marvelously and wonderfully made, left to fend for ourselves with no revealed purpose for being? Or has our Creator given us a means by which His purpose is revealed?

The Bible is like no other “holy book” ever written. An honest look at the Koran or the Hindu scriptures shows that they simply do not match the Bible. No other book has so accurately and clearly foretold events that have taken place and events that are currently taking place. Right before our eyes, we see Genesis 49:8–9 being fulfilled: “Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; *your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies*; your father’s children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion’s whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. *He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him?*” Consider how small the Israeli state is at the very time of the end (see Genesis 49:1) and how great are its enemies. It is surrounded on every side, yet the

Israelis have their hand on the neck of their enemies and are not to be trifled with.

Consider also Zechariah 12 and 14, where we find it written that, after thousands of years, at the time of the Day of the Lord, Jerusalem would be within a Jewish state and would be a troublesome stone to the whole world. Consider the nearly instant worldwide communication—the kind only possible in recent decades—that is necessary to fulfill the prophecies of the two witnesses at the end (Revelation 11:3, 8–11). Our booklet *The Bible: Fact or Fiction?* is a good primer that should be reviewed, but proving that the Bible is fact, not fiction, should be an *ongoing* pursuit for any who want to know whether what they believe is God’s truth.

These two pillars—knowing that God exists and that the Bible is His revelation to mankind—prepare the way for the third pillar that gives us certainty that we have the truth, something that eludes so much of humanity. If God exists, and if the Bible is His revelation to mankind, what does that book actually say? What is its message?

### Prove God’s Plan

Finding the truth of Scripture is not nearly as difficult as some think. However, it *is* dependent on God opening a person’s mind and on that person’s obedience to the Truth he now knows. For instance, there is abundant proof from both testaments that the Ten Commandments must be kept. Catholics and Protestants observe Sunday in an implicit recognition that God has commanded one day in seven as a day of rest and worship. However, the Sabbath command does not allow the individual—or any group of individuals—to decide on a day to replace the only one God set aside. God tells us that it is He who set apart the seventh day at creation (Exodus 20:2, 8–11; Genesis 2:2–3). Not once do we find any other day than the seventh set aside as the Sabbath, and Jesus tells us that He is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28; Matthew 12:8; Luke 6:5).

Understanding this singular truth—the seventh-day Sabbath—narrows the territory we need to search for where the God of the Bible is working. However, there is another significant doctrine that separates us from the masses of humanity—the Bible’s annual Holy Days. Just as the seventh-day Sabbath is a sign between God and His people (Exodus 31:13–17), so the annual Holy Days separate us from this world’s false Christianity. These too are a sign indicating where God is working (Exodus 13:3–9). While apostate Christianity keeps days built on the foundation of paganism and heathen-

ism, God gives His people “signs and seasons” that reveal His remarkable plan for mankind (Genesis 1:14).

Do we understand how significant these annual Sabbaths are? It is easy to take this knowledge for granted. Perhaps now is a good time to think back on how thrilled you were when you first learned of these remarkable truths. Our booklet on the subject is well-named: *The Holy Days: God’s Master Plan*. These Festivals and Holy Days give us the big picture of what God is doing here on earth, as no other religious festivals do. But are we able to recognize the importance of these annual commanded Festivals?

As I’m sure you know, the annual cycle of God’s Feasts begins with Passover, which reminds us of the reason our Savior had to die—sin. Sin is a problem addressed by most religions. Prayer wheels, memorized prayers repeated endlessly, penance, flagellation, animal and even human sacrifices—all are attempts to expiate the shortcomings of our human behavior. The Days of Unleavened Bread remind us that we must respond to Christ, our Passover, by ceasing the behaviors that cause so much trouble on earth. While we focus on our own sins and our need to overcome them, the Days of Unleavened Bread teach us that the result of sin is bondage, otherwise known as *slavery*, and they depict the way out of that bondage: obediently following God.

Pentecost is rich with meaning on several levels. It explains the covenantal relationship that God has with Israel and Judah. It also explains why so few are called during this present age and how such a small number of people can know God’s Truth while the remainder of the world lives under deception (Luke 12:32; Revelation 12:9). But our understanding is not a reason for any of us to become puffed up. We are not smarter or inherently more righteous than our neighbors. We recognize that it is by the grace of God that our minds have been opened, giving us the potential to become firstfruits in the first resurrection.

It could be said that history is mostly a chronicle of wars. It may be tempting to believe that war is a thing of the past, but the last few years have challenged the idea that civilized “first-world” nations will cease fighting over territory and selfish ambition. Human nature has not changed, and any truly thinking person must recognize that wars of unimaginable proportions are in our future.

The Feast of Trumpets reveals intense trouble on the horizon when the first six angels sound their trumpets, but also reveals that the seventh trumpet gives hope for world survival upon the return of its only true Savior. Then the Day of Atonement cuts to the heart of evil, reminding us that Satan is the current “prince of the power of the air,” directing the course of our world (Ephesians 2:2)—that he rebelled against his Creator (Isaiah 14:12–14), deceived Eve, and tempted Adam into doing what he knew was wrong (1 Tim-

thy 2:14). The evidence of Satan’s existence is all around us in confusion, suffering, and death. Thank God that he will soon be removed!

The thousand-year reign of Christ, who will be assisted by His firstfruits, appears to be only a few years away. Scripture describes that at the end of this age Jerusalem will be a troublesome stone in the midst of a Jewish state (Zechariah 12:2–3). We see the nations lining up against the Jews (14:2). We know the prophecies given through Jacob for the end of the age, foretelling that the Jews would have their hand on the neck of their enemies (Genesis 49:2, 8–9). However, we also recognize that they will come under such severe attack that the Messiah will have to return to save them. Only then will the world come to realize the special relationship God has with Israel and Judah. And only then will He command *all nations* to come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16–19).

One of the great questions that should be asked by those claiming to be followers of Christ is what happens to those billions who have never accepted Christ, many of whom never even heard of Him. It is shocking to realize how some professing Christians seem eager to watch them writhe in an ever-burning torture pit—and it is shocking to see how angry they become when the Truth is shown to them. However, the Last Great Day gives the only biblical answer to the question of how God is working out His plan for these billions.

Can we not see how these Festivals go well beyond bedtime stories, explaining the world in which we live and giving us the answers to so many questions? How different they are from the paganism-based days of Christmas, Easter, Valentine’s Day, and Halloween. In no way do those supposedly Christian holidays picture God’s master plan. In no way do they explain our world and provide hope for the future. How thankful we ought to be for the big picture that God’s Holy Days give us!

Proving that God exists is the first step of any journey to knowing whether our beliefs are correct in a world of confusion and discord. Proving that the Bible is God’s revelation and that it explains God’s purpose for humanity is the second step. Both steps are needed in order to find the meaning of life—but, as we understand, it is not a matter of superior intellect or human righteousness, but rather of God’s merciful selection. Our part is to *respond* to that calling.

When our minds are opened and we read the Bible with an obedient, humble, and reverent attitude (Isaiah 66:2), we will know that we truly know the plan of God. It is the only plan that makes sense in this world of confusion. The true, seventh-day Sabbath and the annual Festivals—along with so many other clear doctrines found in the Bible—set us apart from the billions who are deceived by Satan the Devil. Yes, we *can* know that what we believe is the Truth. (LM)

# Characteristics of Kings



By **Richard F. Ames**

**Editor's Note:** Mr. Ames asked that we publish this article, adapted from his sermon of the same name. Sadly, though he saw an early draft, he died before he could do his final review of the adaptation. Nevertheless, we hope you will spiritually profit from this last article he sought to publish.

**D**uring the Millennium, which the Feast of Tabernacles pictures for us each year, today's firstfruits will have been born into the Family of God. Each of us will be in two different dimensions—in the timeless dimension of God's spiritual existence, but also manifesting ourselves as kings on planet Earth, ruling under the King of kings, Jesus Christ. It will be the time matching the description the Apostle John recorded: "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Revelation 11:15). Indeed, He will always be King. While the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment will see Him reigning for around 1,100 years on this present earth, we know that beyond those years, "of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:33).

God promised the Israelites, "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine" (Exodus 19:5). Do you think of yourself as a special treasure? I gave a sermon titled "True Treasures" (DVE 1074) that you might want to review. In the book of Malachi, God calls His people "My jewels" (Malachi 3:17), and we as Christians today are His spiritual Israel.

God calls us His treasure, and we should be thankful for that. One reason we are His treasure is that He has a very special calling for us. "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" (1 Corinthians 6:2). We are training to become kings, priests, and judges. Ancient Israel consistently failed in those areas, though there were some righteous rulers like King David who made Israel a light to the world.

Paul wrote those words to the Corinthian brethren at a time when they were having problems judging among themselves. And Paul reminded those brethren that "if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:31).

We are called to be priests, but there's even more. We are called to be "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). We will not just be priests, but kings as well. Priests, of course, are teachers, and we will teach the way of God—His laws and His statutes—to the world. But we will also administer His law, as kings serving under the King of kings, Jesus Christ.

Of course, some of our preparation can only be completed when we are born into the Family of God at the resurrection. But we need to be living our lives *now* in a way that prepares us for what is to come. So, we should consider—what are the characteristics of kings that we need to develop as Christians?

## Godly Kings Have Vision

The Apostle Peter had a literal vision, along with James and John. Christ said He was going to show them the Kingdom to come. "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (Matthew 16:28). We do not receive such visions today, but we ought to *visualize* what the Kingdom will be like. We read:

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Matthew 17:1-4).

Later on, as they came down from the mountain, Jesus said, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead" (v. 9). So, they were given a vision, but what was the vision of? They saw a glimpse of the Kingdom of God, of Christ glorified and two major rulers in the Kingdom: Moses and Elijah.

We look forward to the Kingdom of God. I'm sure that some of you have thought about talking to various patriarchs and luminaries of the Bible. Maybe you'd like to talk to King David and ask him a question, or maybe you want to ask Jo-



seph the son of Jacob how he saved the wheat for those seven years in Egypt to save all the world.

We thank God for the vision that He's giving us, and Moses and Elijah are shown as being in the Kingdom. Who else is going to be in the Kingdom, as we visualize it? We read here of Abraham:

For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (Romans 4:13–16).

We often use the term “father of the faithful” to describe Abraham. That exact wording isn't in the Bible, but we read that he is “the father of us all” and the exemplar of faith. And we know that Abraham was a type of God the Father in being willing to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22).

### Godly Kings Have Responsibilities

We know that God will bring His wonderful government to planet Earth. The solution to all of this world's problems is the government of God, administered by the Family of God. How should we think about our responsibilities toward that Kingdom? “Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Therefore He said: ‘A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, “Do business till I come”’” (Luke 19:11–13).

Now, notice the reward of those who were given the minas. “Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a *very little*, have authority over ten cities’” (vv. 16–17).

By the measure of our future responsibilities, our efforts today are small, yet we must learn to be faithful in the little things so we can be faithful in the big ones. We must all be overcomers. We have to fight the good fight of faith. We have to discipline ourselves and have the spiritual gift of self-control. The Days of Unleavened Bread teach us that lesson—that we have to put out the leaven of malice and wickedness and grow in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, replacing human nature with God's divine nature. God will help us to do

that. He says that if we are faithful over very little, He will give us great authority.

Some people are going to be over ten cities. But maybe you are a woman and thinking, *I don't know if I'll be over ten cities*. Remember that when we are born into the Family of God, we will be neither male nor female: “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven” (Matthew 22:30). And, even in our present world, you can think of women such as Queen Elizabeth and Indira Gandhi—there are and will continue to be world leaders who are women. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong personally met Golda Meir, Prime Minister of Israel. Women can absolutely be leaders—and true servants in their leadership.

*You* may not exactly know, but God knows what you're going to be doing in His Kingdom. And, no matter what, as you're thinking about the characteristics of kings and priests, know that you're going to be part of a royal priesthood, a holy nation. We're going to be kings, priests, and judges with God. Godly kings in training have vital responsibilities.

### Godly Kings Care for Their Subjects

Scripture instructs us, “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (James 5:16). We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We pray for one another. I have a prayer list that I look at occasionally, but I probably pray for the majority of the people on it without a written list, just the list in my mind. The Apostle Paul said, “I make *mention* of you always in my prayers” (Romans 1:9). In passing, he mentioned several individuals just in the last chapter of the book of Romans. He was probably praying for them by name.

He understood that we “pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours” (James 5:16–17). Elijah had the same human nature. He fled in timidity and fear when Jezebel said she was going to kill him. Yet, on the other hand, he was very courageous in his battle against the prophets of Baal, “and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit” (James 5:17–18). James shows us that Elijah was just as human as we are, yet God answered his prayers dramatically. God can answer *your* prayers dramatically. We pray for one another. We care for one another. This is a characteristic of kings.

And every Feast of Tabernacles, we can be sure to hear these words of Isaiah: “For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. And though the LORD gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not

be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers” (Isaiah 30:19–20).

We will teach our subjects in the Kingdom. One of the jobs of a priest is to teach God’s way of life—to teach God’s law, which is the law of the Kingdom of God. God will have us, as Spirit-beings, teaching and ruling over physical human beings. Although we will be Spirit, we will be able to manifest ourselves physically the same way Jesus did after His resurrection. And remember—He had gone to the throne of God in heaven and come back to the Sea of Galilee with His disciples, and it says He ate fish when He came back. He manifested Himself as a physical human being with His disciples after He’d been resurrected from the dead.

So, we will be able to manifest ourselves as physical human beings. Our students will see their teachers. “Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left” (Isaiah 30:21). We look forward to that time when we will be caring for those whom we rule. We’re going to teach them God’s very way of life.

### Godly Kings Exercise Godly Judgment

We read, “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?” (1 Corinthians 6:2). We are in training today to become kings, priests, and judges. Solomon had to judge, of course, as did all the kings in ancient Israel. He prayed not for riches, but for wise judgment to rule his people. God gave him that wise judgment. But for most of us today, our main duty is not to judge others. “For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged” (1 Corinthians 11:31). Matthew said the same. “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged” (Matthew 7:1–2). You’ve heard the saying that whenever you point a finger at someone else, you have three fingers pointing back at you.

We must judge ourselves honestly. And what are our judgments based upon? The Ten Commandments. David cried out, “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97). And he reminds us, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments” (Psalm 111:10). The basis for good judgment is God’s Ten Commandments. We must meditate on them, on God’s law. We need to continually evaluate what is right and what is wrong.

When we look at world news, we see the actions of governments, statesmen, scientists, and businessmen. And we need to make sure that we are not too quick to judge, especially when we know we don’t have all the facts. But at the same time, when something is a blatant transgression of God’s law—among, as He says, those things that are abominations—we should make a righteous judgment based on what *God* says. We understand the laws of God, so we need to have that wisdom that begins with a fear of the Lord. You

know these memorization verses: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7), and “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10). We read that we’re to learn the fear of the Eternal during the Feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 14:23). For those seeking righteousness, that fear isn’t terror. It is deep awe, accepting the greatest reality—that God controls and rules the universe.

And we must judge what to say and what not to say. “Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth” (Psalm 141:3). I hope you pray to set a guard at your mouth. I even pray about what not to say when giving a sermon: *Help me in what to say, but also help me in what not to say*. That takes wisdom and discretion—proper godly judgment.

### Godly Kings Grow in Godly Character

Scripture exhorts us to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever” (2 Peter 3:18). That should be a memory verse for each of us. The *Contemporary English Version* puts that verse this way: “Let the gift of undeserved grace and the understanding that come from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ help you keep on growing. Praise Jesus now and forever!”

What kinds of choices do we make? The very essence of character development is bound to those choices and decisions. Are we choosing under the umbrella of God’s commandments and judgments? Remember these words:

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them (Deuteronomy 30:19–20).

God tells us to choose life. We are free moral agents. And we pray that God will lead us by His Spirit. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Romans 8:14). That applies to His daughters, as well. Do you pray daily to be led by God’s Spirit? When I ask Him, *What do I need to do today, Lord?* He often brings to my mind some things I’ve forgotten.

As God’s Spirit leads us, we develop more and more of God’s holy and righteous character, the fruit of the Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22–23). Each of us needs to be radiating the fruits of God’s Holy Spirit as we develop godly character.



What is the greatest marvel that God is developing? Certainly, we are in awe of the vast universe, with wonders almost beyond our comprehension. But what is His greatest creation? “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). The Greek word translated as “workmanship” in here is *poiéma*. It can also be translated “masterpiece” or “work of art.” You and I are God’s work of art when we cooperate with Him in developing His character within us.

### Godly Kings Know Their Mission

Jesus Christ, our Savior, gave us the Great Commission: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20).

Furthermore, He ordered us, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). So, we know that our mission as God’s Church is to go to all the world and preach the Gospel. And we should have that same passion, the passion to witness to the world, because we know that “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). So, let’s have the same attitude that Jesus had as we

grow in the characteristics of kings—that of truly knowing our mission. As Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34).

In this article, we have considered five characteristics of godly kings. They have vision. They care for their subjects. They exercise godly judgment. They grow in godly character. And they know their mission. Before we are resurrected, we will not have those characteristics in full, but this should not discourage us. We should be growing continually in these characteristics: “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me” (Philippians 3:12). And “I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you” (vv. 14–15). With the mind of Christ, we can continue to grow in preparation for our destiny as future kings and priests.

Finally, we should remember Paul’s exhortation to the Philippian brethren: “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4). The Feast of Tabernacles is a time of rejoicing, and it is also a time of preparation. So, take time to pray. Take time to review your notes. Take time to serve. And take time to rejoice in the calling God has given you. Use every opportunity to develop in your character the characteristics of kings! <sup>(LN)</sup>

### HE TURNED MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS continued from page 2

and close colleague, and someone you could always count on. I remember Mr. Ames from WCG back in the 1970s, and not many men could have a track record like he did. He and Mrs. Ames came down for a TWP years ago, and spent several days with us, and Pat and I cherished their visit. We, the living, must carry on, but I do look forward to our reunion at that last trumpet blast.

### A Race Well Run

Mr. Ames thought the best of others, and he tried to bring out the best in them. I remember well how he corrected me in my use of the word “becuz.” I still struggle with that word from time to time, and I jokingly say—and there is truth in

this—that I need to concentrate so much on saying “because” instead of “becuz” that I forget the rest of the sentence.

Anyone who was corrected by Mr. Ames realized that he used the Spokesman Club approach of first pointing out something positive, then addressing what could be an improvement, and finally sharing something encouraging. His correction came out of love, and he did not expect anything more of others than he expected of himself. Many remember how he mentioned that he would ask his wife Kathryn, in the days leading up to Passover, for one area in which he could improve. He humorously followed that with, *Just one—not two, three, and four!*

The Church has lost a tremendous resource of knowledge and skill in writing and speaking. Others will need to

step up and fill the void. Nevertheless, we do not despair. As Christ said, “God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones” (Luke 3:8). We will miss Mr. Ames immensely, but as he so well understood, Christ is the Head of His Church, and He will provide.

The loss of Mr. Ames will provide opportunities for others to “step up to the plate.” That is the way of human existence—one generation passes and another grows up to take its place. No one is irreplaceable, but no one is a clone of another. Each has his own God-given talents—and Mr. Ames was certainly one of a kind. His next waking moment will be at the sound of the seventh trumpet. He ran his race well. We must do the same.



# The Feast of Tabernacles: Why Activities?



By **Rod McNair**

**A**s the Feast draws closer, we all anticipate this highlight of the year. Festival Site Coordinators all over the world have been hard at work since last year's Feast to prepare for this annual foretaste of the peace and harmony that will permeate planet Earth after Christ's return. One of the tasks of each coordinator is to plan activities for the brethren at the site he oversees. Have you ever wondered what goes into activity planning? It may sound like a simple task, but a lot of thought goes into it—long before brethren walk through the door on Opening Night. So, perhaps it's worthwhile to ask, "Why do we have Feast activities at all?"

The focus of the Feast of Tabernacles is on worshipping God. Biblical prophecy tells us that after Christ returns, "Everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16). When we go to the Feast, we spend eight days reflecting and meditating on God's power, mercy, and wonderful plan of salvation. We are surrounded by an environment meant to help us focus on how God will soon change the entire world. We are reminded that God the Father will set up His Kingdom on earth, ruled in person by Jesus Christ. That is a powerful truth to contemplate! We gain a deeper appreciation for God's plan as we gather to worship Him with sincere praise and thankfulness.

Not only are we worshipping God at the Feast—we are also immersing ourselves in an active learning environment. God expects us to save our second tithe faithfully throughout the year so that we can eat before Him, "that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always" (Deuteronomy 14:23). Notice that the focus is on learning.

The Feast is, in one sense, an educational exercise. We attend daily services to listen, learn, read the Bible, and sing hymns together. We learn the value and experience the joy of serving one another. Everything is done "decently and in order," organized to avoid chaos or confusion, as we spend eight days in an environment that teaches us how God's government works (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40).

As we worship our Father and learn more about His way of life, we grow as a spiritual family. We grow in bonds of brotherhood. We gather together—young, old, parents, children, single, married, from all races and all backgrounds—in a commanded assembly. As Moses instructed the Israelites, "Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 31:12). We share meals together and get to know one another. We are told, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared" (Nehemiah 8:10). We are at the Feast to fellowship and grow together.

Which brings us back to the point of this article. What is the purpose of Church-organized Feast activities? This may sound like a simple question, but on deeper examination it requires some careful thought.

From a big-picture perspective, Church-sponsored activities at the Feast are meant to do the following things:

- Support our worship of God the Father and His Son, our Elder Brother
- Create an environment that encourages further education in God's way of life
- Strengthen the Church, the Body of Christ, by building bonds of brotherhood together

These guiding principles create a framework of "best practices" as we organize activities for our brethren. As we plan activities, asking how an activity supports these priorities is an important first step toward success.

## **God's Way Is Fun**

Let's understand: God's way is good. And, quite often, it really is a lot of *fun*. And it is important that our young people—and, indeed, all of us—see and understand this important truth. Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). God's way is the abundant life! While we need to learn this lesson all year long, the Feast does represent a very special time to see this truth all the more clearly.

But, as Mr. Gerald Weston often points out, there is *much more* than fun behind God's way. God's way supports His laws and biblical principles so that what is "fun today is fun tomorrow." There are no regrets afterwards. The fruits are good. And activities that reflect God's way help us prepare a little bit more for the coming Kingdom of God—which is precisely why we are at the Feast in the first place.

The Church makes judgment calls about activities that will involve all or most of those attending each site. But we must each make personal judgment calls about the individual or family activities we will plan or take part in during the Feast. We must be careful to make those judgments based on God's word, using His Spirit and asking for His wisdom. Doing this is part of the Christian growth process (Hebrews 5:14).

The Church must be extremely careful before putting its "stamp of approval" on events involving the majority of attendees at a Feast site. So, for the remainder of this article, we'll consider a series of questions to be asked and answered as we organize Feast activities.

### **Do the Activities Uphold the Values We Profess?**

If we are not careful, an activity intended to uphold our Christian values may actually end up undermining those values. For instance, consider the use of alcohol. Over the years, some have misunderstood the instructions in Deuteronomy 14:26 and have therefore run into trouble. God tells us, "And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires." Those are God's words. But do those words mean that getting drunk at the Feast is fine? Of course not; drunkards will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:10).

This understanding carries over into how we plan Feast events. Must every activity include alcohol? The answer is an obvious "No." If we are of age, enjoying alcohol in moderation at the Feast is perfectly fine—but it is not the central focus of why we are there. And we must also recognize that we live in a world where too many are tempted to overindulge in alcoholic beverages. So, in the United States, the Festival Office has set a general policy that the Church will not serve alcohol at Church-organized functions.

Consider that, from a legal and organizational perspective, those who plan an activity with alcohol are taking on the responsibility of how that alcohol is used—or potentially misused—during or even after the event. This is one reason why, when alcohol is available at a banquet or similar Feast event, it is provided by an outside vendor who is appropriately licensed to serve alcohol to those who pay the vendor directly. This puts the legal responsibility and liability in the hands of those who have been duly certified and trained for that purpose.

As in so many things, the key is moderation. The Feast gives us a foretaste of God's Kingdom. Drunkenness will cer-

tainly not be part of God's Kingdom—and Christ will not participate in getting His subjects drunk.

This principle applies to other aspects of the Feast, like recreational activities the Church organizes for the brethren. Some have asked why we do not organize large group "paintball" or "laser tag" events at local venues. Often, they enjoy the activity as a family and believe an organized churchwide event would be fun. The Church chooses not to sponsor or organize such activities because they would be hard to reconcile with what we are trying to picture during the Feast: a time when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4). Like many choices, engaging in such activities on a private basis is a personal decision to be made within one's own family—though, of course, we are always responsible for our attitudes and should seek to "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17). But when it comes to activities the Church sponsors and encourages all Feast-goers to consider attending and participating in together, weighing such considerations is a vital task Church leadership takes seriously.

Even in activities that the Church does sponsor, seeking to "do all" in Christ's name should guide our personal choices. For example, at Feast sites that have beach activities, the Church teaches that swimwear should be modest and in good taste. We are guided by the two great commandments—to love God and love our neighbor (Matthew 22:37–39; Mark 12:29–31). Accordingly, following our Church policy, ladies' beachwear at the Feast should be a modest one-piece or a modest tankini (covering the mid-section), and men's beachwear should not involve Speedo-type suits (except in countries where pool facility rules require them). The Church encourages fathers and husbands to take seriously their responsibility to be leaders in their families—to teach and guide regarding what is appropriate and what is not (Ezekiel 22:26).

What about dances? Some years ago, one man running a Feast dance told me that his practice was to, about halfway through the dance, "crank up the music" so the younger people could have more fun—the livelier, louder music surely helped usher the elderly on their way out. I'm sure you can see the principles this approach breaks. Isn't the Feast about the old and young celebrating together? If we structure our dances to chase off the elderly, how is that supporting our reason for being at the Feast? We read of the future time when "the virgin [will] rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old, together" (Jeremiah 31:13). Dances can teach valuable social graces in a fun and enjoyable way, if they are conducted in a manner that supports true values. Loud music and dim lights are not only a challenge for the elderly—they also make fellowship around the dance floor difficult for people of any age. Such atmospheres imitate the "club" atmosphere of the world, intended to lower inhibitions and encourage inappropriate



behavior, including lewd and suggestive dance styles that are inappropriate regardless of the time, place, or atmosphere.

These are just a few examples of how the Festival Office strives to apply biblical principles in relation to group activities at the Feast. We don't want to create a list of "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not." Rather, we strive to apply wisdom in judging which group activities support our goals at the Feast and which do not.

### **Do the Activities Unify the Body or Separate Brethren?**

Another consideration regarding Feast activities is whether they are unifying or not. Some activities, such as going to a theme park, are fine when enjoyed as a family activity, or by a group of families on their own time. But is a trip to a theme park likely to be the optimal type of Church-organized activity at the Feast? Think of what usually happens when a group goes to a theme park: Before too long, the larger group splits up according to who wants to go on this ride or who wants to go to that show. You wind up spending your time not in a group activity, but with only a handful of people. That's not really building unity and pulling the brethren together.

Instead, the focus of most of our Feast activities is to bring larger groups of people together, especially those who may not know each other. Good examples can be picnics (when weather permits them) or group gatherings in a rented "all-purpose" room where the whole congregation can move among a variety of activities in which all can share. Feast Coordinators have successfully organized game nights featuring games like bingo, bunko, or Bible charades, or fun shows where young and old can participate together. Another favorite group activity is a "progressive fellowship meal" where multiple hosts provide different courses of a meal as the guests travel from one host home to another—meeting new people each time.

Depending on the venue and the geographic location, the rising costs of goods and services can present varying challenges at the Feast. Even so, our Coordinators try very hard to keep prices reasonable to encourage as many people as possible to participate in most activities. Feast sites are often blessed with generous donations by brethren who are doing better financially. If you are in that category and would like to offer a donation so those who have less can participate, the Festival Office greatly appreciates such generosity. You can make arrangements with your Festival Coordinator, or you can even make an anonymous donation. Those who do so are making it possible for those who have less to participate in the more expensive activities.

Some activities vary among Feast sites, depending on demographic patterns of those who attend. If there are many teens or young adults at a Feast site, the Coordinator may choose to hold a mixer for them, usually early in the Feast so they can meet

one another. In some cases, a Deacons/Elders Luncheon and a Seniors Luncheon are done separately, and in other cases the two events may be combined. Sometimes the Seniors Luncheon includes others who serve by performing music or by joining the seniors for conversation and fellowship. At other times, the seniors may be honored by having something special take place during another, more general group activity or banquet.

Yet, while there are some exceptions, the Festival Office tries to keep these types of activities to a minimum. If we aren't careful, we might quickly find that nearly every activity at the Feast is for some limited, segmented demographic group in which others are not included—and woe to you if you don't fit into *any* of those groups. Instead, years of experience have shown that it is much more uplifting to structure the bulk of Feast activities so as to bring the whole Church family together. God loves family, He created family, and He is making us one family. We are all preparing to bear His name, as the Apostle Paul wrote: "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:14–15).

So, as a general practice, Festival Coordinators try not to segment and subdivide the congregation by means of Feast activities. Instead, they strive to serve everyone well, and most of the time this means we have activities that include the whole Church family.

### **Are the Activities Simply "Filler?"**

Our Feast Coordinators also strive to leave some "white space," unplanned time, on the activity schedule. Doing so makes sure that our whole Feast is not taken up rushing from one activity to another, so much so that we come to the end of the Last Great Day exhausted. A little extra "down time" during the Feast gives everyone more time to be with their own families, to fellowship with those who may be at the Feast alone, and to meditate on what they are learning at the Feast.

With this in mind, we all need to be careful about committing to local attractions or excursions that may make undue demands on our time during the Feast. Some may be tempted to miss services to make it easier to enjoy a special activity in the community where we are keeping the Feast, but we should never give in to that temptation. In rare and special cases when a special activity is best shared by all, a Coordinator may move the time of services to accommodate a special need, but we must always remember that we are at the Feast to worship God first. Amusements are of secondary interest.

Years ago, I heard a talk given by Mr. Jonathan McNair on leadership—on what the responsibilities of a pastor are and are not. One concept he brought out was, "The pastor is not a cruise ship director!" The job of a pastor is not to fill the social calendar of those he serves. Yet, if we're not careful, we can fall into thinking that our social calendar should be filled at



the Feast—and that it is our Festival Coordinator’s responsibility to keep us entertained, non-stop, in order to make sure we have a great time.

Can we see how wrong that is? None of us would likely word it exactly that way, but let’s be honest with ourselves: When choosing a Feast site, how much of “What is there to do there?” enters into our thought process? No, there is nothing wrong with enjoying the surroundings and taking in the various local attractions when we attend the Feast—God wants us to celebrate! But when we stop and think about it, do we see that we might, without even recognizing it at first, be slipping into a Laodicean mindset about attending the Feast?

We are living at the end of this age—when the Laodicean spirit is predominant in the Church at large. So, it shouldn’t be surprising if many of us are affected and infected by that spirit more than we should be. To have a Laodicean mindset, when it comes to the Feast, is to be overly concerned and wrapped up in the physical aspects of our experience. Notice what Jesus Christ said:

Because you say, “I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing”—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed... Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me (Revelation 3:17–20).

Are we so keen on “having a good time” at the Feast that we forget to answer the knock at the door to let Jesus Christ

dine with us? Ultimately, it is He and the Father with whom we predominantly fellowship at the Feast (see Deuteronomy 14:23–26). If They are not involved in our fellowshiping, we’re going to be off-base and will leave the Feast unfulfilled, however packed our schedule might be. As the Apostle John wrote, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). If we forget that—and forget the ultimate purpose of activities—

we’re going to miss the whole point of being at the Feast of Tabernacles.

We go to the Feast to fulfill God’s command: “You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress.... Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands” (Deuteronomy 16:13, 15). And God has certainly blessed us immensely—by forgiving our sins, by lifting Satan’s veil of deception from our eyes, and by calling us into His Church. God has blessed us richly, beyond imagination, to have a part in His Work in the end-time and to have the destiny of being firstfruits in His Family forever.

Activities at the Feast can be “hands-on” opportunities for all members to see how God’s theoretical principles can be put to work in practical ways. Activities are also opportunities to have fun, and there’s nothing wrong with having fun within the bounds of God’s good law. Well-designed activities at the Feast give the members an opportunity to fellowship together and build bonds with others in the Body of Christ, without making anyone feel unwanted or unwelcome. And activities at the Feast can teach us that there are viable alternatives to this world’s often-destructive forms of entertainment—a lesson that is especially important for our young people, but one that the not-so-young among us need to learn, as well.

When we go to the Feast this year, let’s make sure we have the right perspective regarding group activities. Let’s understand their purpose. And let’s let them be a vehicle through which we build stronger bonds of brotherhood, learn together, and worship God as we prepare to rule in the Millennium that the Feast pictures. (LN)



# With Shouting and the Sound of a Trumpet

By **Peter G. Nathan**

**T**hough the Feast of Trumpets is not mentioned by that name in the New Testament, the New Testament abounds with imagery derived from an understanding of the Hebrew name for that day. Hence, understanding the Hebrew name for this Festival—and the way in which it is used throughout Scripture—helps us appreciate the importance of the day in God’s plan, just as the early Church did.

Critics who reject the keeping of the Holy Days draw the mistaken conclusion that Jesus Christ’s followers today are not required to observe that Feast because we do not find it mentioned by name in the New Testament. However, the allusions and images the Apostles were inspired to include in their writings reveal a very powerful connection to this Feast—and, properly understood, become a powerful witness that the early Church of God clearly understood the place and purpose of the Feast of Trumpets in God’s plan, as we do today. Many of the Trumpets-related sermons we have listened to over the years rely on New Testament allusions and imagery regarding the events that we rightly understand are associated with that Holy Day.

Jesus Christ described His return accompanied by an angelic host and the sound of a trumpet, to which the dead in Christ will respond at the first resurrection (Matthew 24:31). Paul described the same event when he wrote that “the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Both Jesus and Paul speak of two elements in that event—the angelic involvement and the sound of a trumpet. Paul added more detail in describing the angelic host being led by an archangel. These elements are essential to the day of Trumpets. Surprisingly, the source of these comments hearkens to a scripture we reference every time we celebrate this Feast: Leviticus 23:24. A careful reading of this verse highlights something upon which we seldom focus. In some modern translations, the word “trumpets” is written in italics, indicating that the term was either added for understanding or is used as an alternative to the original word or phrase. The Jewish Publica-

tion Society’s translation renders the verse most closely when it records that “you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts” (Leviticus 23:24).

The Hebrew term translated as “blowing of trumpets” in the *New King James Version* is the term *teruah*, which most appropriately refers to a loud shout, created either by human voices or by trumpets. The *Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)*, noted for its literal wordings, reads that “you are to have a day of complete rest, commemoration, and joyful shouting—a sacred assembly.” *Young’s Literal Translation (YLT)*, from the 19th century, provides this reading: “ye have a sabbath, a memorial of shouting, a holy convocation.” The *New English Translation (NET)* provides a note to the verse, stating: “the term for ‘horn’ does not occur here, allowing for the possibility that vocal ‘shouts’ of acclamation are envisioned.”

It is fascinating to study how this term *teruah* is used within the Scriptures and the association those usages have with the understanding of the Feast of Trumpets provided by the New Testament. We know that trumpets were to be sounded on this day. Two silver trumpets were made for the priests for this purpose (Numbers 10:1–10). But merely having two trumpeters does not fulfill the term’s apparent meaning in the context of the Holy Day. Trumpets alone could create *teruah*, as in proclaiming the Jubilee year (1 Chronicles 13:12), but in most cases *teruah* relates to the human shout as well as trumpet blasts. The description given in Leviticus suggests that the shouting and noise went beyond what just two trumpets could accomplish. Numbers 29:1, the companion scripture relating to this day, uses the same Hebrew term, which is translated as “a day of sounding an alarm” (*Jubilee Bible 2000*), or “a day of joyful shouting” (*HCSB*).

Usages of the Hebrew *teruah* cover shouting as either a joyful expression or one of alarm. The word is frequently coupled with the blowing of trumpets. What is most instructive is the use of this word in Scripture and the way the New Testament writers, although writing in Greek rather than Hebrew, were inspired to build on that imagery to relate to the return of Jesus Christ as Lord of lords and King of kings. It is at times used as a war cry—either joyfully or in a state of alarm—while in its singularly joyful applications it relates to the coming of a king, the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant, salvation, and the confirmation of the oath relating to the Covenant.



We can learn much by looking at each of these usages in turn to see how the Apostles in writing the New Testament used this relationship.

### War Cry

The first use we will examine is the shout that the children of Israel were to give on the seventh day of marching around the city of Jericho: “When you hear the sound of the trumpet... all the people shall shout with a *great shout*; then the wall of the city will fall down flat” (Joshua 6:5, see also verse 20). Coupled with the trumpet blasts, the shouting—*teruah*—was the cue for the walls of the city to collapse, enabling Israel to destroy the city and begin inheriting the land. Jericho pictured the destruction of this world’s systems for the Kingdom of God to be established in all its glory.

Zephaniah was inspired to couple the destruction of the fortified cities of this world with the trumpet and the battle cry, *teruah*, when speaking of the Day of the Lord (Zephaniah 1:14–16). Jeremiah likewise couples these two sounds—the trumpet and the alarm of war—with the necessity to speak out against the sins of his people (Jeremiah 4:19; 49:2).

The Apostle John used the trumpet and shouting in relation to the kingdoms of this world becoming the property of Jesus Christ at His return in lines that have become widely known through Handel’s oratorio, *Messiah*. “Then the seventh angel sounded [a trumpet]: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”” (Revelation 11:15).

Having revealed the seventh seal of Revelation—the coming of the Day of the Lord—with seven angels “given seven trumpets” (Revelation 8:1–2), John subsequently describes this event coming with the “loud voice of a great multitude” (Revelation 19:1–6).

### Jubilation for the King

Balaam, prophesying about Israel to Balak, the king of Moab, noted that “the shout [*teruah*] of a King is among them” (Numbers 23:21). Israel had no human king at that point. Rather, the Eternal—who became Jesus Christ—was their King. Balaam seemed to glimpse that reality, perhaps more so than the Israelites did.

The Psalmist appreciated the role of the Eternal God of Israel. Addressing a scene that we can understand as also relating to the return of Jesus Christ as the Lord, Ethan the Ezrahite blessed those “who know the joyful sound”—*teruah*. The result was that those people walked in the light of the Eternal’s countenance (Psalm 89:15–16).

Speaking prophetically of the establishment of the Kingdom of God over all the earth, the Psalmist notes that “God has gone up with a shout [*teruah*],” while, by the use of a par-

allel, the next line celebrates the Lord with a trumpet (Psalm 47:5–6). On another occasion, the Psalmist speaks of the enthronement of the King—the Eternal once again the focus—with voices, instruments, and timbrels (Psalm 68:24–25; see also Psalm 150, especially v. 5).

Consider again the usage of shouting and trumpets in both Matthew’s and Paul’s accounts of the return of Jesus Christ. The triumphant tones of Revelation 11:15 once again use the combination of trumpets and shouting—proclaiming that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of Jesus Christ, as does Revelation 19:6. The Kingdom of God is to be established over all humanity and this earth. In light of this, consider as well the actions of the people when they saw Jesus coming into Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Matthew 21:5–6, 9).

### Ark of the Covenant

King David’s bringing of the Ark of the Covenant up to the City of David yields another usage of the term *teruah*—shouting, coupled with the blowing of trumpets (2 Samuel 6:15; 1 Chronicles 15:28). Before David’s time, when Eli was High Priest, the Israelites took the Ark onto the battlefield against the Philistines and the army shouted for joy over its arrival and presence among them. Yet their joy became sadness due to the sins of the nation when the Philistines captured the Ark (1 Samuel 4:5–11).

Notice how John describes the revealing of the Ark of the Covenant following the sounding of the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:19). On this occasion it appears that the natural forces in the universe will provide the shouting and acclamation when the reign of Jesus Christ begins.

### Foundation Stone of the Temple

As *teruah* was used in relation to the Ark of the Covenant, it is only appropriate that it also be used in relation to the building that would be God’s earthly “dwelling place.” Hence, we find that when the Jews who returned from Babylon laid the foundation stone for the rebuilding of the temple, they shouted—*teruah*—for joy. In fact, the root word *teruah* is used four times in the three verses to describe the jubilant shouting of the people in seeing the foundation stone laid, despite the sadness of those who had seen the temple in its previous glory (Ezra 3:11–13).

While no apparent mention is made of the foundation stone of the temple in the imagery of the Feast of Trumpets, we are all aware that Jesus Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone of the spiritual temple. As the cornerstone, Jesus Christ is the Being around whom that temple is presently being constructed and from Whom it takes its form and shape (Ephesians 2:20–21). That itself is cause for great joy. His return enables the completion of that temple, a cause for enormous rejoicing.

## Salvation

The ultimate purpose of God's plan and of Christ's return is the salvation of humanity as the pinnacle of the God Family's creation. Hence, it is not surprising that the term we have been examining is used in relation to this wonderful event. Elihu spoke to Job and his three companions about the wonders of the salvation offered to humanity. He talked about the state of joy that exists, once again *teruah*, when a person is made right before his Creator (Job 33:26). David, as the Psalmist, also understood the way in which his God offered salvation, to whom the recipient offers songs of joy (*teruah*) in return (Psalm 27:5–6). Note as well that this same idea is expressed in Psalm 33:1–3, where *teruah* is once again translated as joy.

The account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is instructive here as well. As Jesus entered Jerusalem immediately prior to the Passover in AD 31, the throngs of people were inspired to recognize that something very special was happening. The New Testament writers record that the people were shouting "*Hosanna*"—a Hebrew expression not translated for us. The word is a plea or prayer that means, "Please save us" (see Matthew 21:9). Whether or not any of these people truly understood the role of Jesus Christ, they were inspired—for whatever reason—to acknowledge with a shout His role as

While it is technically correct to say that the Feast of Trumpets is not exactly specified or named in the New Testament in such a direct way as some of the other Holy Days are, we can see clearly from Scripture that **the early Christians did indeed have a deep understanding of the day and of its application to the Church.**

Savior of humanity. The Pharisees were so embarrassed by the show of support for Jesus that they demanded that He rebuke His followers. Jesus retorted that, if His followers were silent, the very stones would cry out (Luke 19:39–40).

John later recorded another vision of a great multitude before the throne of God, made up of people who were "crying out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Revelation 7:10). The return of Jesus Christ, with the binding of Satan following shortly thereafter, is when salvation will be made available to humanity on a broader scale than today, and when the transformation of this earth can occur to the glory of God the Father.

## Taking an Oath

The last usage of the Hebrew term *teruah* we will examine is in relation to taking an oath before the Eternal, literally entering into a covenant relationship with Him. We find an example of this in the time of Asa, king of Judah. In the 15th year of his reign, he purged Jerusalem of its idols and called the nation together in the third month—most likely at the Feast of Pentecost. They entered into a covenant with the Eternal by taking an oath coupled with shouting, trumpets, and rams' horns (2 Chronicles 15:10–14).

Oaths and covenants are essential to one other area associated with Jesus Christ's return—the marriage of the Lamb to His bride. Once again, John provides the imagery for this event, describing the exultation in the heavenly court as "the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!'" (Revelation 19:6). This rejoicing introduces a covenant relationship—the marriage of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7–9).

The Hebrew word *teruah* is used in the Old Testament on several occasions associated prophetically with the triumphant and glorious return of Jesus Christ. The noise level achieved at that time—by the shouting that the people were to do on this day, combined with the trumpets sounding—will be greater than that achieved at any other event in human history, as on this occasion the shouting will also be performed by the throngs of heavenly angels who, like us, anticipate with eagerness the return of Jesus Christ. And so it should be! The "last trumpet" (1 Corinthians 15:52) signals the great and glorious resurrection at which the saints, having received their salvation, will meet Christ "in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

So, while in one sense it is technically correct to say that the Feast of Trumpets is not exactly specified or named in the New Testament in such a direct way as some of the other Holy Days are, we can see clearly from Scripture that the early Christians *did indeed* have a deep understanding of the day and of its application to the Church. The Holy Spirit inspired the New Testament writers to address this Holy Day—not by name, but rather by its *function* within God's plan. As such, it would be a mistake to claim that the Feast of Trumpets is "not mentioned" in the New Testament.

As we approach the Fall Holy Days, let us do so with a renewed sense of purpose and reverence, mindful of the profound implications that the Feast of Trumpets holds for God's plan. In understanding the rich symbolism of this day, we align ourselves with the faithful who have long anticipated the triumphant return of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and the establishment of His everlasting Kingdom. (LN)



# Living for Tomorrow: Building Pillars for the Next Generation

By **Jonathan McNair**

**F**or as long as I can remember, there have been “singles activities” in God’s Church. As a teenager in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, during the days of the Worldwide Church of God, I’d hear announcements about the “*Gemütlichkeit* Weekend” each year. *Gemütlichkeit* is a German word that conveys a sense of friendliness, warmth, and contentment—and this singles activity from the days of my youth lived up to that word, providing friendly fellowship for all who participated. Over the years, singles activities in the Church have sought to provide fellowship in various formats, giving our non-married brethren the opportunity to meet and become acquainted with other singles.

The Living for Tomorrow (L4T) program is also intended for singles in God’s Church, but it is far more than a singles activity. Much like the Living Education–Charlotte program, L4T is focused on the vital need to develop our young adults as pillars within the Church for the coming years. “L4T Blowing Rock” over the Memorial Day weekend this past spring was the latest example of how this program works.

Participants arrived in time for a Friday-evening meal. With approximately 40 young adults attending, the activity

then began in earnest with an interactive session identifying and analyzing the challenges facing young adults trying to live a godly life in an ungodly world. We held services in the morning on the Sabbath. Then, after lunch, the afternoon was dedicated to reviewing current Church booklets, with teams of four reviewing their selected booklet and summarizing their findings in a presentation to the whole group. After each team’s presentation, the larger group asked questions about the material that had been presented, followed by further discussion. After the Sabbath, everyone enjoyed a dance and a hymn-sing, and “Evening Reflection” closed out the day.

On Sunday morning, Mr. Josh Lyons, Mr. Rod McNair, and I each presented short lectures for the group before concluding the program with lunch. Some of the participants spent the afternoon sightseeing in the area, while others who had farther to travel headed directly home.

While we don’t know the exact challenges the next generation in the Church will face, we can be sure that the road will not be easy. Preparing our young adults to take up the baton with knowledge, understanding, and conviction may be one of the most important jobs that we’re doing today. The L4T program is part of our effort to fulfill that need and goal. (LM)







# We Need the Fast Before the Feast

By **Wallace G. Smith**

**A**s the Feast of Tabernacles draws closer, we can feel our anticipation rising, can't we? We look forward to enjoying eight days of fellowship and activities, spending time with loved ones, and making new friends in God's earthly family. Our imaginations and conversations anticipate our spending time in tomorrow's world—where the Savior reigns with His glorified brethren to bring peace, joy, and fulfillment to a needy world and to shepherd all its people toward the purpose of their very existence.

We'll hear of the healings, happiness, and hope that will grow to fill that beautified world over the course of a thousand years, and of how it will be followed by the resurrection of all who have died before their opportunity for salvation. That beautiful reminder—that our loved ones who have gone before us in sorrowful ignorance will stand before our eyes once again, finally ready to learn the truth that has been concealed from them—will close out our experience on the Last Great Day. And, as the days of the Feast come to an end, we will be further reminded that the “conclusion” of God's plan is really the *beginning* of an eternity of joy, vitality, and renewed life on a plane of existence we can hardly understand today.

Yet none of the joy, none of the accomplishment, and none of the transformation of humanity pictured by those two Festivals would be possible were it not for the momentous event pictured by the day that precedes them: the Day of Atonement.

While the Feast naturally earns our focus with the brightness and attractiveness of its promises, the Day of Atonement—with its fasting and attendant hunger pains—can sometimes seem like a day to be endured rather than an exciting part of the broader picture of future joys. Nevertheless, the putting away of Satan the Devil for the duration of the Millennium (Revelation 20:1–3) provides an essential foundation for those future joys. “At-one-ment” with God is the greatest need mankind possesses, yet it would not be achievable if the corrupter, liar, and murderer who has reigned over the kingdoms of the world were allowed to

remain on his throne. The rift between humanity and its Creator must be healed before the beautiful world of the Millennium can proceed.

In short, the Fast must precede the Feast. So, let's take some time to remind ourselves of why it is so crucial that the Devil be removed from this world before the beginning of Christ's reign—and of the difference his absence will make.

## “The Wicked One”

Eight times in the New Testament, Satan the Devil is called “the wicked one” (e.g., 1 John 5:18–19). The word “wicked” refers to what is evil, vile, harmful, or diseased, and it is a fitting word to attach to the Devil.

Jesus Christ calls Satan “the ruler of this world” (John 14:30) and the Apostle Paul describes him as “the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4). In such a position of influence from the beginning of mankind because of the choices made by our forefather Adam—and, frankly, our individual choices ever since then—the Devil has ensured that our world is a place of corruption and degradation.

Satan's touch corrupts, and nothing of this age has escaped that corrupting touch. Our educational institutions and philosophies, our forms of government, our sciences, our entertainment, our religions, our approaches to health and healing—even our approaches to life and love—all bear his fingerprint and the stain of his corruption. “For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:16).

Yet that world is doomed to pass into the proverbial dustbin of history—and to take its corruption with it (v. 17). It will be replaced in tomorrow's world, under the reign of Christ, by the things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, virtue, and praiseworthiness (Philippians 4:8)—the focus of true Christians' lives today.

No, the Millennium cannot proceed if the wicked one is free to corrupt all he touches.

## “A Liar and the Father of It”

Even something as basic as information is corrupted under the wicked one's influence. Jesus says that the Devil “is a

liar and the father of it,” noting that Satan “does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him” (John 8:44). The Devil has lied from the very beginning of mankind’s existence, sometimes blatantly, but often with great subtlety. Indeed, Scripture’s first description of him, in his guise as the serpent in the Garden of Eden, is that “the serpent was more cunning”—or, in the old *King James Version* of the Bible, *more subtle*—“than any beast of the field” (Genesis 3:1).

By contrast, the Eternal is a “God of truth” (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 31:5; Isaiah 65:16). One of the Ten Commandments, revealing His very nature, is a command not to bear false witness—a command to represent reality as it truly is (Exodus 20:16).

Today’s world reflects its demonic director. It is filled with lies and disinformation. Even those who believe they have discovered their foes’ disinformation tend only to trade the lies they once believed for new lies that seem more convincing. The “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2) continues to broadcast, and there are few channels not grievously corrupted by his transmission.

Jesus Christ will not establish the new world to come on a foundation of lies, nor will He allow the confusing winds of deception to sweep through the streets of the new cities He will build. He says that, once He has returned and taken up occupancy in Jerusalem as His world capital, “Jerusalem shall be called the *City of Truth*” (Zechariah 8:3).

The Millennium cannot take place in an atmosphere that subjects the people of the world to disinformation and lies. The father of lies must be removed.

### “A Murderer from the Beginning”

When Jesus said that Satan “was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44), He was being plain about the Devil’s “hopes and dreams” for mankind. There is only malice in Satan’s intent. Satan hates the very purpose of God’s plan—to glorify mankind in the Family of God. Mankind’s destruction is the Devil’s goal, and he has pursued it at every opportunity for six millennia.

Man thinks he is at the top of the food chain as an apex predator. But he is not. The Apostle Peter warns us that the Devil is “a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Under the coming reign of the Kingdom of God, mankind will be governed at every level by powers and authorities that have only its *good* at heart. The world was created specifically to be a habitation for man (Isaiah 45:18), and the Garden of Eden reflected the Creator’s loving intent. With the Son of Man ruling in power from His throne in Jerusalem, alongside His glorified brethren who spent their lives before His return learning to live according to the “way of give,” the very gears of Creation will be configured to benefit humanity. Under

Christ’s benevolent rule, human beings will not be mere passive recipients of divine care, like pets. Rather, they will learn to practice what they are experiencing—the way of “give” and self-sacrifice.

Even the nature of the animal kingdom will be changed to reflect this shift, as carnivores will learn to eat grass (Isaiah 11:7) and the people of the world will experience such a profound peace that they will call their Ruler the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

The Millennium cannot commence with the world’s most ancient predator running loose. So, Jesus Christ will ensure that this predator is chained and caged, removed to a place where not a soul will be within reach of his claws.

### No Feast Without the Fast

As we approach the very doorstep of the Fall Holy Days, we find ourselves filled with anticipation. Even apart from the profound meaning of those days, the season is exciting. The Feast of Tabernacles promises for many of us an opportunity to fellowship with people we’ve not seen in a long time, to meet people we’ve never seen before, perhaps to travel to places we’ve never been, and to enjoy activities and experiences that are not only fun and uplifting, but also designed to edify us and contribute to God’s purpose for us. Our anticipation of such days ahead is thrilling—and rightly so.

The Day of Atonement—with its 24 hours of fasting—rarely inspires such anticipation. Yet, when we consider the meaning of God’s ancient and sacred Festivals, we can see how the incredible future pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles would be impossible without the event pictured by the Day of Atonement.

Were the Devil allowed to continue as the ruler of this world, there would be no Millennial experience on earth. There would be no worldwide peace. There would be no transformation of nature. There would simply be carnal competition, envy, and strife. In essence, tomorrow’s world would be an echo of today’s.

Instead, once the world on a global scale knows the joy that we as Christians have been able to experience individually—the joy of seeing the Devil removed from his throne and replaced by the Son of God—a great door will suddenly swing open, and a vast world of possibilities will become accessible in a way it never was before.

The joys that will flourish in God’s Kingdom are real. They *will* be realized on the earth beneath our feet. And all human beings will finally know what it means to experience their loving Savior and Creator ruling for the good of all—and building a world with them in mind. But that time will not come until the current ruler of this world is removed. As we have seen, it would not even be possible otherwise.

There is no Feast without the Fast. (LW)



# Our Vision of God's Kingdom

By **Wayne Tlumak**

**O**n September 11, 2001, I was inspecting a waterfront training facility in Brooklyn that I managed while working for the New York City Housing Authority. It was early morning, and the facility had been broken into the night before. As I was dialing the number of the local police station, I heard sirens that seemed to be coming from everywhere. While I was speaking to the officer on the phone, I heard a lot of commotion in the background. Then someone came into my office and said a plane had just crashed into one of the World Trade Center buildings. I asked the officer if that was true, and he told me it was—and that every police officer in the city was being dispatched to the scene.

I hung up the phone and stepped outside, where I could clearly see one of the towers on fire. I decided to go to the roof of the training facility so I could get a better view, and when I got there the second plane had just crashed into the other tower. Both towers were now burning.

When I was young, my father would often load all the kids in the neighborhood in his station wagon and drive to the construction site where the towers were being built. It was really exciting for all of us to watch these buildings being constructed—the largest in the United States at the time. Now I was watching them burn, knowing that the people who were alive above the floors where the planes had struck would probably not be alive much longer. As I watched, these incredible images were being burned into my mind—and, even now, I can remember them so clearly.

A few minutes later, I went down to my office and dropped to my knees to pray, wondering if this would be the beginning of end-time events. When I finished, I joined my fellow workers in watching the events unfold on television, watching both towers finally collapse into a pile of rubble. My eyes were glued to the screen—I was unable to pull myself away. Even when I returned home, the first thing I did was turn on the TV, continuing to watch the recovery, hoping that some would be found alive. After a while, I turned the TV off, only to turn it back on again a minute or two later. I couldn't stop watching what was happening—the images were just

too incredible, too shocking to turn away from. Many of you shared a similar experience.

A few days later, I had the opportunity to visit the World Trade Center site while the recovery was still going on, and what I saw when I arrived there was almost indescribable. Everything was covered with gray powder, the ash from the burning buildings and the construction material. The area was devastated, and there was nothing but destruction everywhere I looked. All the rescue workers had looks on their faces of complete despair and hopelessness. The smoke in the air was so thick that you could taste it. I couldn't help but think that this was a foretaste of the Great Tribulation soon to come.

## **Strength Through Vision**

I gave a sermonette on the Feast of Trumpets that year, comparing those powerful images to the vision that God wants us to have. Our ability to create and maintain vision is important—in fact, developing the right vision and maintaining that vision will be crucial for our spiritual survival in the days ahead.

The Feast of Trumpets pictures the time ahead of us when events will unfold that make what happened on September 11, 2001, seem like a picnic. And when they happen, what will our vision be? Will we be carried away in the moment, focused on the things that are happening before us, seeing nothing but despair? Or will we be focused on another vision, a vision of hope? This was my challenge 23 years ago, as I stood there and saw nothing but pain, destruction, and hopelessness.

Creating a vision of the Kingdom, using our imagination—an incredible gift God has given us—is hugely important. Abraham was an individual who had that kind of vision, and he was able to stay focused on that vision despite what he was seeing and hearing. “By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:9–10).

Abraham had the vision of the coming New Jerusalem that we read about in Revelation 21, and he kept that vision



burning in his mind. He thought about that city—he envisioned how it would look. He likely talked to his family about it. It was real to him, perhaps more real to him than anything he saw or experienced. That vision fostered his faith, and it got him through the most difficult and challenging moments in his life.

How important it is for us to have and maintain the right kind of vision! The whole of Hebrews 11 is a testimony of faithful men and women who had that vision and maintained that vision in spite of what they saw right in front of them, no matter how intense it was. “And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them” (v. 15–16). They were willing to sacrifice, to endure hardship and challenges, because they had the right kind of vision—a vision of hope—and they were able to maintain that vision.

### Hope Through Vision

What should our vision be? You know the verse: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). Our vision needs to be of the coming Kingdom of God. God has given each of us the wonderful gift of imagination to help us see and maintain that vision. He’s given us His Spirit to help that vision become clearer, more real to each and every one of us. Our vision of the Kingdom of God *must* be real and powerful to us, particularly when we face the incredible challenges that lie ahead. Having the right vision gives us hope, no matter what we face.



One way to strengthen that vision is by studying God’s word, reading about the coming Kingdom through which Jesus Christ will reestablish the government of God on this earth. We can also pray about it, asking God to open our minds, to inspire our imagination so we can see the reality of the coming Millennium more clearly. And perhaps the most important way in which we can foster and develop a more powerful vision of the Kingdom of God is by attending the Feast of Tabernacles. One of the reasons God gave us this Feast is to help us strengthen our vision of His Kingdom.

During the Feast, we’ll hear sermonettes and sermons describing what that time will be like when the world today becomes the world tomorrow. Those messages are designed to stretch our imagination and to help us burn that image, that vision, deeper into our minds. And if we go to the Feast with a will to take advantage of everything that the Feast has to offer us, then we can become active participants in “the Millennium experience” as we fellowship, develop friendships, and serve one another—getting a small taste of what it will be like when the Kingdom of God rules on earth. This experience helps us foster and develop the spiritual vision that we need to survive the days that lie ahead and the ultimate fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets.

Twenty-three years ago, I was challenged as I thought about the powerful images of the events before me. I asked myself an important question: *Is what I am seeing more powerful and more real to me than my vision of the coming Kingdom of God ruling on earth?* And what will we think in the coming days—when all around us the earth-shaking events the Feast of Trumpets pictures begin to unfold? What vision will be

the most powerful to us, the most impactful?

There’s only one vision that will help us get through those dark times. For Abraham and all the other heroes of Hebrews 11, their vision of the Kingdom of God was real and powerful, and it helped them to remain faithful through the intense challenges that they faced. And it can be so for us, too—if we take full advantage of the opportunity God has given us to develop and foster the vision of the coming Kingdom of God. If we do, nothing we see and nothing we experience, no matter how intense those images and challenges may be, will be as powerful to us as the reality of the coming Kingdom of God. (LH)

## Births

Mr. and Mrs. Javid (Christina) Khan are happy to announce a new addition to their family and the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation. **Gabriel Khan** was born June 28th. He weighed nine pounds and was 21 inches long. Both mom and baby are doing well.

Mr. and Mrs. Matt (Sharon) Stone are excited to announce the birth of their

third child, **Isaac Matthew Stone**. Isaac was born on February 29 and shares his great-great grandfather's date of birth. He weighed seven pounds and nine ounces. Big sisters Riley and Evelyn are overjoyed at his arrival. The Stone family attends the Tulsa, Oklahoma, congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Damian (Yonnette) Weekes are happy to welcome their

third daughter, **Sophie Ann**, to the family. She weighed 7.12 pounds and measured 20.5 inches in length when she arrived on July 4. Mommy and baby are doing well. Sophie's older brothers and sisters have been diligent in helping to care for her. The Weekes family attends the Chaguanas, Trinidad and Tobago, congregation.

## Ordinations

**Mr. Daniel Hunter** was ordained a deacon on Pentecost by Pastor Adam West and elder John Hunter. Mr. Hunter serves in the Albany, New York, congregation.

**Mrs. Ethel Lambright** was ordained a deaconess on July 21 by Pastor Glen Harrison and elder Keith Wheelahan. Mrs. Lambright serves in the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, congregation.

**Mr. Eric O'Carroll** was ordained a deacon on Pentecost by Pastor Scott Winnail. Mr. O'Carroll serves in the Dublin, Ireland, congregation.

**Mr. Harold Roberson** was ordained a deacon on July 8 by Pastor Glen Harrison and elders Chip Wheelahan and Ray Joffrion. Mr. Roberson serves in the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, congregation.

## Weddings & Anniversaries

**Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Wayne (Marilyn June) Wyatt** celebrated their **61st wedding anniversary** on July 4 at their home in Russellville, Kentucky. They attend the Clarksville, Tennessee, congregation.

## In Loving Memory

**Mr. Richard Franklin Ames, 88**, longtime evangelist and television presenter in God's Church, died on July 4 after several weeks of ill health. Born on June 8, 1936, in New London, Connecticut, the only son of George Franklin Ames and Alice May (Hayes) Ames, the young Richard Ames attended public schools in New London and then in Meriden, Connecticut, where he was an accomplished athlete, playing several sports and serving as co-captain of his high school varsity football

team. He began his broadcast media career during his high school years, taking an after-school job as an announcer for a Meriden radio station. He was also active in student government, serving as Senior Class President. His classmates awarded him the distinctions of "Most Personable" and "Most Versatile" of the men in his senior class.

After earning his B.C.E. from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1959, Mr. Ames completed a year-long Yale Uni-

versity graduate program in traffic and transportation engineering, then served as a transportation engineer at the Southeastern Virginia Regional Planning Commission in Norfolk, Virginia, before enrolling as a student at Ambassador College in 1962. While there, he served as Student Body President, and it was there that he met Kathryn Lind Meredith, whom he married in August 1964 and who survives him.

Ordained as a minister of Jesus Christ in 1965, a pastor in 1969, and an evangelist in 1984, Mr. Ames oversaw congregations in seven U.S. states while serving as a pastor. He served in various capacities at Ambassador College over the years; from 1967–77 he taught theology, speech, and broadcasting at the Ambassador campus in Big Sandy, Texas, and after earning his M.A. in Communications from Stephen F. Austin State University in 1977 he went on to serve from 1980–90 as Director of Admissions at the Ambassador campus in Pasadena, California, where he also taught courses in theology and communications and served as Registrar (1988–90).

From 1986 to 1994, Mr. Ames served as a presenter on the weekly television program *The World Tomorrow*, which at its peak was the most-viewed religious program in the United States. On-location television filming took him to Israel, Egypt, Great Britain, and Germany, as well as to many locales throughout the U.S. After the Worldwide Church of God fell into apostasy, he joined the Global Church of God, pastoring several congregations in Texas from 1996–98. From 1999 he served as Director of Media Operations for the Living Church of God and as a presenter on the *Tomorrow's World* telecast.

Despite his training as an engineer—and well-known for his skill as a chess player, his prodigious memory, and his attention to fine detail—Mr. Ames also had an artistic and creative side that led him to find joy in composing poetry, playing the piano, and taking photographs. Having grown up in a household filled with music, he took special delight in his wife Kathryn's expertise at playing the violin.

Though Mr. Ames had a variety of favorite scriptures that he took as themes for his life and service, one stands out in particular in remembering him: "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3). Mr. Ames lived to help others shine, and in doing so his own star shone brightly.

He was predeceased by his sister Beverly Lorraine Machnik, and though he had no children of his own he is survived by many nieces and nephews. In loving memory of this pillar in God's Church, Presiding Evangelist Gerald E. Weston has shared his reflections on Mr. Ames' life in his "Dear Brethren" letter on page 1 of this issue.

**Mr. Richard "Rich" Barnard, 84**, died on March 19, in Elko, Nevada. His battles with various medical conditions in

recent years displayed his courage in facing life's challenges with a smile. Mr. Barnard worked in construction while going to school to become a plumber. Baptized in 1977, he was steadfast in Sabbath observance, Bible study, and his love for the Truth. He also enjoyed ranching, farming, fishing, hunting, camping, dirt biking, and playing with fast cars. He is survived by his lovely wife, Lonna; their two children, ten grandchildren, and many great grandchildren; and his two sisters and one brother. He is deeply missed by all who knew him.

**Mr. Lucius "Sonny" Benjamin Blocker, 77**, died peacefully on June 12 at his home with his wife and family near. He was a loving and caring husband for over 55 years to his wife, Doris. He was also the father of two sons and a proud grandfather of two young ladies. Mr. Blocker had a fulfilling career in warehouse management before his retirement in 2013. Though he came into God's Church late in life, he embraced his calling and loved God's people. Mr. Blocker found joy in his morning Bible studies as well as traveling with his wife, fishing, antiquing, and working in his award-winning yard. The Columbia, South Carolina, congregation will miss him.

**Mr. Siegfredo Borrromeo, 88**, died on April 14. An engineer and teacher by profession, Mr. Borrromeo read widely. He loved reading the Bible and searching the Scriptures for answers. He was subscribed to *The Plain Truth* magazine, but when he saw a member of the Living Church of God reading *Tomorrow's World* and read it himself, he became interested in God's Church and began attending in 2015. He was baptized in 2016, late in his life, but he loved the Truth and remained faithful to the end. Mr. Borrromeo was a member in the Puerto Princessa City congregation in the Philippines.

**Mrs. Betty Joyce Gray, 84**, was born September 14, 1939, in Mississippi and died December 1, 2023, in Little Rock, Arkansas. Mrs. Gray is survived by her husband of 68 years, Mr. J. E. "Bill" Gray, as well as by one grandson, one brother, and one sister. She was predeceased by three sons. Mr. and Mrs. Gray were baptized into God's Church more than 60 years ago. In recent years and until she became homebound because of failing health, she and her husband attended the Little Rock congregation. Pastor Phil West and elder Davy Crockett officiated at her graveside service on December 7.

**Mrs. Herminia Laconsay, 92**, died peacefully in her sleep on March 8. She was baptized in 1968 and served as a deaconess in God's Church for many years. She loved serving and entertaining the brethren and was loved and well respected by them. Mrs. Laconsay attended the Baguio congregation in the Philippines.



## Electronic Service Requested

## Education for Eternity

While countless parents are watching with anticipation as their children begin another year of schooling, let us take a moment to consider God's perspective on education. He commands parents to diligently and properly train their children, and He reminds children to heed instruction from their parents (Proverbs 22:6). He also instructs us, "Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old" (Proverbs 23:22).

Moses received the best education the Egyptian royal courts could provide. He became mighty in words and deeds, educated to become a prince of the great Egyptian empire (Acts 7:22). Likewise, Isaiah was highly educated and became the political and religious counselor of his nation, serving several Judean monarchs (2 Chronicles 26:22; 32:32). Luke was not only an educated physician, but also an accomplished historian (Colossians 4:14). The Apostle Paul is famous as one of the brightest young students of the law (Galatians 1:14).

Yet worldly education was only a precursor to the true education these men would receive in God's way. Without proper grounding in God's way, even the finest worldly education is but vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

During the Millennium, even when children may study outside the home, we can be sure that they will not be shipped off to overcrowded, dangerous, morally adrift, or underperforming schools. Rather, they will be under the care of talented, dedicated, God-fearing teachers and administrators. Then, the entire educational system—and the entire society—will be guided by Christ and the resurrected saints according to God's righteous law. "And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not

be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:20–21).

In our free booklet *The World Ahead: What Will It Be Like?* Dr. Roderick C. Meredith described the beautiful future of education:

During the Millennium, teachers will know that their students are, with only the rarest exceptions, being trained well at home by both parents. So, teachers will be confident in playing a role of supplementing what parents have done. There will be close communication and cooperation between parents and teachers, and between teachers and students.... For they will live in a society based upon the principles of the Creator, which will bring a depth of *peace*, prosperity, and productiveness beyond anything man has ever known (p. 25).

God expects parents to provide for the education of their children, exposing them to the spiritual and physical topics they will need for success in life. And He expects children and young adults to diligently pursue their own education. Pursuing right education prepares us to serve Him more fully. And, most importantly, Christians must always remember that true education begins with the acknowledgment that there is a great Creator God, the Almighty, who is the source of all knowledge and all wisdom (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10).

—Wyatt Ciesielka