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Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong: 40 Years Later

Dear Brethren,

There are some events in life that ingrain themselves indelibly in your mind: where you were, what you were doing, and who may have been there with you. Such was the case for me when I learned of the death of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong.

His death was not unexpected, but it still came as a blow. He was the one whom God had used to call me, and he had been the greatest human influence on my life over the previous 25 years. It was evident that his death would be a turning point for the Church, but we had no idea of what was ahead. January 16, 2026, marks the 40th anniversary of his death. Those who have come into the Church within the past 40 years have had no personal interaction with the man whom God used to raise up what many of us firmly believe is the Philadelphia era of the Church of God. With the passage of time, few now remain who knew him personally.

How powerfully God used Mr. Armstrong will be the subject of this year's *Behind the Work* video to be shown during the Feast of Tabernacles. Therefore, in this column I will not try to trace all that God did through him but will primarily relate my own experiences with him.

An Abundant Life

I first met Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong in 1965 at the Faculty Reception at Ambassador College in Pasadena. It was a very exciting formal occasion, and it showed from the beginning that Mr. Armstrong had high standards. The vision he had for the college was remarkable—the campus was beautifully landscaped and maintained, and every student worked in some capacity for the college or the Church. I worked for two-and-a-half years on the custodial crew and came to learn excellence

and the importance of details. Anyone who has seen one of the college yearbooks is struck by the beauty of the three Ambassador campuses.

Mr. Armstrong also taught us excellence in character—not that we lived up to it perfectly, as no one ever does. My freshman year was the last time that he fully taught the Principles of Living course. He wanted us to be different from worldly educational institutions, which introduced sex education in a radically different manner with radically different results. He understood that sex was God-given and not a toy to play with outside of marriage. I am eternally grateful for the values we learned about proper dating and proper relationships. Carol and I have been married for 56 years, and we know that what we learned at Ambassador College contributed to that success. The values he instilled in students served us well.

During my college years, I heard him in person giving many sermons, forums, and Bible Studies. In addition to sitting in his class for one year, we were privileged to be one of the first senior classes invited in small groups to formal dinners with him in his home. My wife was one of the young ladies given the opportunity to serve during some of these dinners and to serve in the faculty dining room. Mr. Armstrong understood that we will be kings and rulers in the Kingdom of God, and he wanted us to learn how to conduct ourselves at formal occasions.

Following college, I enjoyed the yearly visits he made to each Festival site, where he would meet with the ministry and give a grandfatherly “kick in the seat of the pants” talk to us. It was on his visit to the Wisconsin Dells in 1974 that he ordained me as a Preaching Elder. One of my most memorable occasions took place in 1983 at the Summer Education Program in Orr,

Volume 28, No. 1



Inside This Issue...

Why the Church?... p. 3
The Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man... p. 6
Biblical Principles for Using A.I.... p. 10
Decisions, Decisions... p. 12

The Subtlety of the Feminist Agenda... p. 14
A Blessed Feast in 2025... p. 16
Local Church News... p. 21
Cities of Tomorrow... p. 24

Minnesota; a half-dozen of us gathered in one of the cabins, where he talked with us off-the-cuff and answered questions for about three hours.

Most people knew Mr. Armstrong from radio and from hearing him address large audiences, as at the Feast of Tabernacles. However, I found him to be most effective when speaking informally to small groups. Whether it was with ministers at the Feast, at his home for an intimate dinner, or in a rustic cabin in Minnesota, what came through was *who he was*. As Jesus said, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34), and Mr. Armstrong came across as deeply sincere, honest, and open. He was focused on the big picture of what God is doing here on earth and on doing the Work God had called him to do. This was no doubt why he was invited to meet with—and became genuine friends with—scores of leaders around the world, including kings, presidents, prime ministers, emperors, and more.

Some criticized Mr. Armstrong for giving gifts of Steuben crystal to heads of state, but he understood proper protocol when visiting these leaders—and his gifts had nothing to do with opening the doors for invitations. But one door did open in 1968, when King Leopold III of Belgium was shown—by chance, under an unusual circumstance—the 1965 college yearbook. Upon seeing it, the King remarked, “I want to meet the man responsible for this.” It was not only the beauty of the Ambassador College campuses, but also the students, that impressed outsiders. We were very different in looks and behavior from the hippies of the ’60s and ’70s. That was the beginning of many state visits, as word of mouth about Mr. Armstrong spread from one leader to another.

Although the big picture and the Work were foremost on his mind, he did enjoy sports and playing cards. One evening, when he had to give up his ticket due to his wife’s illness (which eventually led to her death on April 15, 1967), his son grabbed the first student he ran into and took me to an indoor track meet in Los Angeles. Mr. Armstrong also loved basketball and kept up with the Los Angeles Lakers, occasionally attending a game. His favorite card game was Hearts, and he enjoyed dumping the queen of spades on Mr. Dibar Apatian or another opponent.

An Emissary of Truth

The impact Mr. Armstrong had on religion during his lifetime was immense. You might say that he put Bible prophecy “on the map,” so to speak. It is difficult to know how many professing Christian ministers read his works and listened to his radio programs, but the number must be sizeable. In the 1960s, you could not drive anywhere in North America at night and not hear his voice, or that of his son, over the radio—usually more than once.

Today, we take for granted many doctrines that God revealed through Mr. Armstrong. One is the meaning of life—that we can be born into the Family of God. This is so obvious from the Scriptures that one must wonder why it is not generally understood by all. But the answer is found in another doctrine God revealed through him. It was while Carol and I were at Ambassador College that God began to open Mr. Armstrong’s mind to a “new” doctrine. He knew that the Bible does not teach that man has an immortal soul, but he also realized that man has a capacity for intelligence shared by no other physical creature. It took him several years to come to understand the truth of the spirit in man—but today, as we read 1 Corinthians 2:11 and other passages on the subject, that truth jumps off the page.

There were some things Mr. Armstrong did not like. He did not like flattery. He deeply understood that it was God who opened doors and did the Work through him, and he said on many occasions that God could have called many men smarter and more capable than him. I can still hear him bellowing, “Herbert Armstrong has made hundreds of mistakes!” He disliked celebrity status. He wanted people to remember what he taught rather than the fact that they met him.

I cannot deny that I am immensely grateful to have known the man, but most importantly I am grateful for what God revealed through him—the true values of how to live, the meaning of life, and the way to eternity. These truths, given through this remarkable man of God, are what I remember most, 40 years later.



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EDITORIAL By Gerald E. Weston

Why the Church?

We often do things without asking ourselves an important question: *Why?* Of course, we do ask it of others, as in *Why did you run into my car?* or *Johnny, why did you hit your brother?* And although he used a different W word, Moses asked Aaron a *Why?* question in Exodus 32:21 regarding the golden calf incident: “What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?”

Mr. Herbert Armstrong often began sermons by asking, “*Why are we here?*” It is easy to dismiss this question, but we do so at our peril. Consider the tens of thousands in God’s Church who by their actions demonstrated that they did not know the answer—even though they had heard it multiple times.

Why? is an important question that ought to be asked across all endeavors of our lives. “*Why do I want to marry you?*” Or “*Why did I marry you?*” If we had a good answer to the first question, we can remember it later in life when going through stressful times. We must never forget to ask such questions as *Why keep the Sabbath?*, *Why keep the Feasts?*, or *Why did God create us?*

In this article I am going to address another *why* question: *Why the Church?* What is its purpose? More personally, why are *you* in the Church? And what was Jesus’ purpose for building His Church (Matthew 16:18)?

“Christianity”—falsely so-called—does not know. People go to whatever they call their church—a building with a steeple, cross, or some other identifier—because they think it is the right thing to do, because Heaven is a better alternative than the other place, because they like the singing, because it makes them feel good, or because the preacher is entertaining. They most often attend the denomination into which they were born, but they may attend another if it is near to where they live or if they have a good program for children. Most people put very little thought into why they do what they do. But are any of these the reasons why Jesus said He would build His Church? Few, if any, can answer!

I grew up in a military family where we “went to church” on base, and there were basically three choices: Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish. When we lived in South Dakota, we went to a Protestant denomination in town—I do not know exactly why, but they had activities for children, and perhaps that is the reason my parents chose

that church. Sadly, some who attend the Living Church of God, or other Church of God groups founded after the breakup of the Worldwide Church of God, show by their actions that they do not understand the answer to this important question: *Why the Church?*

I have often asked, “If God is not calling everyone, why is He calling anyone?” For many, the question still stands to be answered. It is, of course, to do the Work, but there is more to it than that, so it is important to go back to the beginning and understand God’s overall plan for mankind.

Why Is Earth Special?

Surprising to many, the beginning of the story is found in the New Testament book of John. There we learn that there were two divine Beings—One referred to as God and the other referred to as the Word (in Greek, *Logos*, meaning Spokesman). We also learn that the one called the Word is also God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, *and the Word was God*. He was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1–2). A simple analogy helps us make sense of this: My name is Weston, and I am the head of my family, but there is another Weston—my wife. We are both Weston, but we are two separate persons. We learn from John 1 that God is composed of two separate Beings, and verse 14 tells us that the Word is the One who became Jesus Christ.

Neither God nor the Word were created. They always existed. The first allusion to Their creative work is found in Job 38:4–7, as God asks, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth... when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” This shows us that the angels were created prior to the physical universe.

But which of the two God beings was it who created the angelic realm and later the universe? The Bible answers this question unequivocally. In reference to the Word, the *Logos* or Spokesman, we read, “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3). But what is included in “all things?” “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16). The One spoken of here is clearly the

one who became Jesus Christ, as the context proves (vv. 15, 17–19). This is also corroborated elsewhere (Ephesians 3:9; Hebrews 1:1–2).

The Bible is as no other book. We are told that those who come to understand it are not just recently “weaned from milk” (Isaiah 28:9). The Bible must be studied as a whole. “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little” (v. 10). And we must rightly divide this word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

So, in order, we find two spirit beings who have always been—God and the Word. Next came the creation of the invisible angelic realm, followed by the creation of the Earth in an immense universe. But what is so special about the Earth? Why is the focus here instead of somewhere else? What is God’s plan that He is carrying out here below? We have no real evidence that there is physical life anywhere else, aside from unfounded speculation.

How Did We Get Here?

Nobel Prize-winning chemist Harold C. Urey boldly stated in *Time* magazine that “life is not a miracle.... It is a natural phenomenon, and can be expected to appear whenever there is a planet whose conditions duplicate those of the earth” (“Science: Life Begins,” November 24, 1952). Much of Urey’s outlook was based on the famous experiments he and fellow chemist Stanley Miller conducted in an attempt to simulate how life could have begun on Earth. As is usually the case, such optimism was short-lived.

I remember a later statement from Urey, which I quoted to my evolutionary biology professor at Ventura College: “All of us who study the origin of life find that the more we look into it, the more we feel it is too complex to have evolved anywhere. We all believe *as an article of faith* that life evolved from dead matter on this planet. It is just that life’s complexity is so great, it is hard for us to imagine that it did” (*Christian Science Monitor*, January 4, 1962, p. 4).

When our planet was created, the angels shouted for joy. Why? The archangel Lucifer (meaning “light-bringer”) had been at the very throne of God. As one of the cherubs whose wings overspread the throne, he was called “the anointed cherub who covers” and the “covering cherub.” But now he was given a throne on this earth, along with a multitude of angels, to administer God’s government. Earth was their abode, but Lucifer “got the big head” and became vain in his thinking.

You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By

the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor (Ezekiel 28:14–17).

Lucifer was not satisfied with his throne on Earth, so he tried to knock God off His throne in Heaven. “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer.... For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, *I will exalt my throne* above the stars of God.... I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, *I will be like the Most High*’” (Isaiah 14:12–14). Lucifer, now Satan the devil, was cast back down to Earth and with him a third of the angels (Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:4). However, God allowed Satan to retain his throne on this planet.

Why Is Man Different?

We next come to Genesis 1, and we read of what amounts to a recreation. We see here a darkened landscape in chaos and confusion when the Spirit of God hovers over the waters, over the destruction resulting from Satan’s rebellion. After bringing light, after separating the waters from the land, and after creating flora and fauna, we read of a new creation. “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion’” (Genesis 1:26).

Why in His image and likeness? Why is man so different from any other life-form? Why was he given rulership over all living creatures? Why was he placed in a beautiful garden and commanded to tend and keep it? Even King David was in awe of this, as we read in Psalm 8. The Apostle Paul quotes David’s question and answers it.

For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren (Hebrews 2:8–11).

How few believe these simple words! “Christianity”—falsely so-called—has no understanding of this, and even many in the Church of God fail to capture the vision of what

God is currently doing and what He has in mind for His chosen ones. The first man, Adam, was placed on Earth to administer government, to restore the government of God that Lucifer had been given and rebelled against. But Adam failed to overcome Satan—instead, Satan overcame him.

The Battle for Control

Almost every student of the Bible is aware of the temptation of our Savior. Matthew 4, Mark 1, and Luke 4 all agree that the struggle between Christ and the devil took place after Jesus' baptism, before He began His work proclaiming the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. We might again ask the *why* question. Why did the baptism come first, the temptation come second, and the proclamation of the coming Kingdom follow?

Jesus did not need His sins forgiven, as He had not sinned. His baptism was done as an example for us, after

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which He was immediately led into the wilderness to be tempted. Why? Clearly, this was a contest between Christ and the devil. Satan threw every trick he had at Jesus but failed to cause Him to sin. Instead, it was Jesus who prevailed and ordered Satan away. It was only after this battle that Jesus proclaimed the coming Kingdom of God.

Here is another *why* question: Why did Paul call Jesus the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45–49)? When Lucifer rebelled against his Creator, he no longer ruled on earth as an obedient servant. Jesus never disputed that the devil was the ruler of Earth (Matthew 4:8–9), but it is evident that he does not rule as God wills. That is why we pray to our heavenly Father, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (6:10).

Adam could have restored godly rule on earth, but he failed the test when the devil tempted him. The second Adam did not fail. Jesus commanded Satan to depart, and the devil obeyed Him (Matthew 4:10–11). At that point, He qualified to replace Satan as the ruler of Earth. The temptations of the

first and second Adams were not insignificant events meant only to fill the pages of the Bible with nice stories. On the contrary—they were momentous!

Once He qualified to replace Satan as ruler over the earth (Zechariah 14:9), Jesus began putting together His “team.” He called twelve men not only to be witnesses of Him, but to prepare for an amazing future. When they asked what was in it for them, He said that they each would be given a throne and would rule over the twelve tribes of Israel.

Of course, over the previous 4,000 years, the Word had already been working on His team of rulers. Abraham and the patriarchs will no doubt have very high positions in the Kingdom of God (Luke 13:28; Romans 4:13, 16). The prophets and Apostles will be part of the very foundation of Christ's government (Ephesians 2:20; Revelation 21:14). It is explicitly stated that King David will rule over the whole of Israel (Jeremiah 30:9), while the Apostles will each rule over one of the twelve tribes.

Just as today, most people in Jesus' day did not understand the big picture. Most thought of the Kingdom of God in terms of a Messiah leading the Jewish nation to overthrow the Roman government. That was why Jesus gave the parable of the ten minas, saying, “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 19:12–13).

Note that the nobleman—the Messiah—had to go to a far country to receive a kingdom and then return. After the crucifixion, Jesus returned to Heaven, where He would be crowned to receive that Kingdom (Daniel 7:13–14). When Christ returns to rule that Kingdom, He will give out rewards—rulership over cities—to His faithful servants. Note, however, that the man who did nothing with what he was given was called a “wicked servant” (Luke 19:22). In the parable of the talents, he is called “wicked and lazy” (Matthew 25:26).

The Answer

God is not calling everyone today. He is not trying to save the world at this time. He has not “saved” us so we can live as pleasant a life as possible, only to die and go to Heaven for eternal retirement. This world's counterfeit Christianity does not understand why God created man, nor why the Church exists. And Mr. Herbert Armstrong used to thunder, “I don't think half of you get it!” Is it any different today?

“**WHY THE CHURCH?**” continues on page 23

The Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man

By **John Robinson**

Isn't it amazing that the entire plan of God, through the inspired Scriptures, can literally fit into our laps? The Bible is filled with deeper and richer meaning than any other document, but its many records, teachings, lessons, and prophecies are given to us in a remarkably concise way. The parables of Jesus Christ form a great example of this—vital truths of God are given in small, compact lessons that, while hard for most to understand, contain profound meaning for those whose eyes God has opened.

The tale of Lazarus and the rich man is perhaps the most often misunderstood of Christ's parables, and it has been used to "prove" some false teachings based on faulty conclusions and assumptions. Many assume that it is a story about one man, a suffering beggar, who died and went to Heaven while another man, who lived his life selfishly, was sentenced to eternal torment in hell. Here's the story, as it appears in Luke 16:19–31:

There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

Then he cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." But Abraham said, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so

that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us."

Then he said, "I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment." Abraham said to him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." And he said, "No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent." But he said to him, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead."

Without the understanding that we in the Church have, it is all too easy to picture Lazarus in Heaven and the rich man either in or on his way to eternal torment in hellfire. How can we move past the common misunderstandings of this parable to gain a greater understanding of the lessons it has for us?

Parsing Out the Parables

A few ground rules can help us as we strive to understand the depths of the parables. Mr. John Ogwyn, in his article "Lessons from the Parables of the Kingdom" (most recently published in the September-October 2013 *Living Church News*) reminds us of what we should keep in mind while learning how to understand Christ's parables:

What exactly is a parable? The Hebrew word that is translated as "parable" in Ezekiel 17:2 is translated as "proverb" in the book of Proverbs. It refers to a comparison used to teach a lesson. In the New Testament, the Greek word *parabole* refers to a symbolism, or a comparison, and is the origin of our English word "parable." In Hebrews 9:9, Paul uses the word *parabole*—translated as "symbolic"—after earlier in the chapter describing the layout and furnishings of the Tabernacle (and later the Temple) which symbolized God's plan of salvation.

As parables are primarily *symbolic*, one rule for understanding them is that each person, thing, or group in a parable represents a different facet of understanding. We'll see that as we dive into the parable of Lazarus and the rich man.

Another rule is that *the audience matters*: Who is Christ addressing with a given parable? Is it tax collectors? Is it His disciples? Is it the Pharisees? Or is it the general public? Knowing the intended audience of the parable adds important understanding.

Third, *what prompted the parable?* What was going on in the background as Christ told it? What made a discussion rise to a level at which Christ knew it was the ideal time to deliver a parable?

Finally, *what is the central theme?* Parables are often linked together. The gospel of Luke, wherein we find the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, has the most parables of any of the four gospel accounts, and these parables are grouped according to their central themes. Those themes may not immediately be obvious, but looking for the common thread between parables can help us understand their meaning. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man is found in Luke 16, which contains multiple parables linked together by a central theme that may initially be difficult to discern.

Audience: The Pharisees

Now that we've laid some ground rules, let's consider Christ's audience for the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. The discourse actually begins a chapter earlier, in Luke 15, where Christ gives three other parables: of the lost sheep, of the lost coin, and of the lost son. Christ's audience as He gives these parables is made very clear: "Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, 'This Man receives sinners and eats with them'" (Luke 15:1).

So, we immediately see that Christ's audience is tax collectors and sinners, as well as the overhearing Pharisees. Tax collectors and sinners generally represent people who understand that they aren't doing very well—they are people whom Christ can expect to be willing to hear Him and to learn from His teachings. The Pharisees, on the other hand, are not.

After finishing these three parables, Jesus immediately begins a fourth as we enter Luke 16: "He also said to His disciples, 'There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods'" (v. 1). At this point, the audience is tax collectors and sinners, the Pharisees and the scribes, and Christ's disciples.

As this fourth parable wraps up, we read that "the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him" (Luke 16:14). Halfway through Luke 16, Christ directly engages the Pharisees, and Luke calls them what they are: lovers of money. That love of money was one of

their core problems. The *Pharisees* are the primary audience of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man.

The Prompt: The Fault of Being Lovers of Money

So, what *prompted* the parable? As we just read, the Pharisees "were lovers of money," and He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves to men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). These are key themes of the whole chapter: The Pharisees, being lovers of money, were not serving the right Master.

"The law and the prophets were until John," Jesus said next. "Since that time the Kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail. Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery" (vv. 16–18). When John the Baptist came onto the scene, the message of the Kingdom of God began to be preached. Yet many who desired to be in the Kingdom resisted what was *required* of those who will be in it. Christ constantly referred to the generation of His day as an evil and adulterous one.

The Central Theme: Serve the Right Master

What is the central theme of the chapter where we find the parable of Lazarus and the rich man? Every section of Luke's gospel has a theme. Chapter 15, where this discussion began, had the theme of finding lost things. Chapter 16 shifts to a theme of how we handle our resources—such as time and our physical possessions—with a specific focus on money management. How do we manage the worldly wealth that we have?

Before mentioning Lazarus or his rich neighbor, Christ first gives the parable of the unjust steward. What do we know about that parable? Caught engaging in criminal activity, the unjust steward is nonetheless commended because he understands that he needs to make a future for himself, for which money is a tool. A theme of Luke 16 is that *you can't serve God and mammon*—that we should be using the bulk of our resources to secure an eternal future.

Picking up the story, we read, "I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home" (Luke 16:9). This is a theme repeated throughout the Bible—that we need to be thinking about what the future holds and making provisions for it. Notice that what Christ says next is still embedded in this central theme:

He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much [we're being watched on how we manage what's under our control]; and he who is unjust in

what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (vv. 10–13).

The greater lesson here is that we all have a choice of whom we're going to serve. Will we be slaves to Christ, or will we be slaves to sin? We *will* serve one or the other. We can use our resources to secure a future for ourselves by sending our tithes in, helping people in our congregations, doing the Work—making Christ our Master. There's no condemnation here of *having* wealth; the focus is on where our priorities are in *using* that wealth.

We ought to use our resources—here, our money—to secure our eternal future. We should not prioritize wealth-building, as the Pharisees did. Their attempts to build wealth were often in direct opposition to what God wants to be done, as they frequently used their religious positions to manipulate people. They even used the temple as a profit-making center.

Finally, as we come around to the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, Christ is telling the Pharisees that they justify themselves rather than take correction—but God knows their hearts.

The Rich Man's Sin

The Kingdom of God is such a vast subject that no one comparison can do it justice. The examples that Jesus used help us understand different aspects of the Kingdom, and each of His parables uses an illustration to teach a specific lesson.

What are the key symbols we should pay attention to as we go through this parable? The rich man represents those who loved money and therefore did not secure an eternal future for themselves. Lazarus represents those who made sacrifices in this life so that they *could* secure for themselves that eternal future.

In his epistle to the Roman brethren, the Apostle Paul describes Abraham as having “the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also” (Romans 4:11).

Abraham was and will be the father of the faithful. And if we're focused in the right direction—if we've accepted our calling, if we've been baptized and received the laying on of hands and have God's Holy Spirit—we're accounted in the category of those “of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us

all” (Romans 4:16). Jesus said that those who are Abraham's children “do the works of Abraham” (John 8:39).

With these scriptures in mind, we can understand the timing of the story. When would Lazarus be taken by the angels to meet Abraham? After his resurrection—at the *first* resurrection. The significance of Lazarus being carried to Abraham's bosom is that it indicates a closeness similar to when John leaned back and laid his head on Christ's bosom during His final supper with His disciples.

We might note the overall state of Lazarus and his rich neighbor. We see that the rich man's attitude was *so* uncaring and *so* dismissive that even dogs had more compassion for Lazarus than the rich man ever had—they at least came over and provided *some* level of comfort by licking his open sores. This *very* wealthy man could easily have helped Lazarus—but he never cared to. Lazarus actually received more compassion and care from dogs on the street than from his fellow man.

The Fiery Judgment

As we come back to the story, the rich man is described as suffering torment “in Hades.” We need to remember that being “in Hades” simply means being in *the grave*. Even Jesus Christ, during the three days and nights between His death and resurrection, was “in Hades” (Acts 2:27, 31). Here, it's helpful to remind ourselves of some basic biblical concepts. We know that “the soul who sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4). We also know, from Jesus Himself, that “he who believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Further, we know that death is likened to sleep, because “the dead know nothing” (Ecclesiastes 9:5), and “there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going” (v. 10).

We see, then, that while the parable describes the rich man suffering torment in Hades, this does not mean that Hades is inherently a place of torment—it is simply the state of being dead. But once he has awakened, he's in torment. He sees the Kingdom of God afar off, where Lazarus is with Abraham. Though the rich man doesn't know it, he's been awakened to the third resurrection. When he was in the grave, there was no sense of time—he has no idea how long he's been there.

And why is he in torment? The Greek word here for “torment” is *basanos*, metaphorically meaning an “instrument of torture by which one is forced to divulge the truth” (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*). In this sense, the rich man is torturing himself, because he's enduring this crucible of judgment. He must have some sense that he has not been found worthy. He's outside the Kingdom of God. He is in torment because he sees judgment approaching, so he pleads, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue—for I am tormented in

this flame” (Luke 16:24). He recognizes Lazarus, even if only as the man he stepped over to get out of his house, somebody he mostly ignored. He can *see* the flame, but he’s not in the flames *yet*, though that’s next. As Mr. Ogburn would bring out, if you were covered in flames, you wouldn’t want a dip of water in your mouth—you’d want a firehose.

What’s being described here is just *pure fear*—the kind of fear that is so overwhelming that one’s mouth goes dry like cotton. The rich man is terrified, and he seems to understand clearly that something dreadful has happened—but that there’s nothing that can be undone. He’s in unavoidable danger of this judgment. Then Abraham replies, “Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things. But now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us” (vv. 25–26).

The rich man’s condition is not going to change. He already made his decision in life, and now it’s time for judgment. At this point in the story, all have had a fair opportunity. Some made the right decision. Those who made the wrong decision wake up in the third resurrection, seeing the Kingdom afar off, with a great gulf fixed, and they can’t get there—they see the eternal judgment of fire approaching. So, the rich man says to Abraham, “I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him [referring to Lazarus] to my house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment” (vv. 27–28). Again, this rich man doesn’t understand that time has passed and that he’s in the third resurrection.

Then Abraham replies, “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead” (v. 31). What’s being described here are individuals who are *incorrigible*. An incorrigible individual cannot be corrected, improved, or reformed. This parable reminds us that there will be people who ultimately refuse to accept God’s way of life. That may seem unfathomable, but there is a mindset that just won’t let go of the way it wants to do things. It doesn’t matter how God tries to reach these people—they will *not* accept His way of life. They will continue to resist. And, if they never repent, they will end up in the third resurrection, facing this judgment.

How Do We Use Our Resources?

This parable is aimed particularly at the Pharisees, whom Christ mentions right before He starts giving it—pointing out that they’re lovers of money and that they justify themselves. And it’s interesting how this is worded—“though one were sent from the dead”—because the Pharisees of Christ’s time knew about *two* people resurrected from the dead: a man named Lazarus and, of course, Jesus Christ.

The Pharisees of Christ’s time were aware of these resurrections. But how did they respond? *Cover it up. Pretend like it never happened. Bribe the soldiers. Bribe whoever you need to. Kill the resurrected Lazarus.* They still wouldn’t accept Christ’s teaching—though He Himself returned from the dead. The story never says that the rich man is a Pharisee, but one does wonder!

In Matthew 21, Christ gives another parable with a similar theme:

There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, “They will respect my son.” But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, “This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.” So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers? They said to Him, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons” (vv. 33–41).

What did the Pharisees say when they decided they had to kill the Christ? That it was better that a man *die* than that they lose their positions. Hebrews 10 gives us a sobering warning: “If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.... It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (vv. 26–31).

The parable of Lazarus and the rich man—though often misunderstood—has a simple but deep lesson, which we can understand because God has revealed it to us through His Spirit: We need to use our current physical time and wealth in a way that shows that the Work of God is important to us. The Pharisees represented those who only used short-term thinking, much like Esau, who sold his whole birthright for a small morsel of food. They used their resources to gain more wealth, power, and prestige for themselves, with no thought to the reality of the coming Kingdom of God.

The rich man represents those who are rich toward human beings, while Lazarus was rich toward God—where it matters the most. Choose wisely. (LH)



Biblical Principles for Using A.I.

By **Mike DeSimone**

Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) is about to explode into something that will affect our lives beyond what we might have imagined. “A new UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report projects the global AI market will soar from \$189 billion in 2023 to \$4.8 trillion by 2033—a 25-fold increase in just a decade” (“AI market projected to hit \$4.8 trillion by 2033, emerging as dominant frontier technology,” *UNCTAD.org*, April 7, 2025). And if we’ve learned anything from the social media and cell-phone companies, those who can profit from this technology will sacrifice whatever and *whoever* they can to make money. We can expect to see increasing negative emotional, psychological, and cultural consequences from the overuse and misuse of A.I.

Certainly, A.I. is a very powerful tool—soon to become even more powerful. We should acknowledge that it can help us in a host of harmless ways, such as helping us with research, allowing us to accomplish various types of work more efficiently, and providing an efficient Internet search engine for finding practical information. Just as calculators and computers have provided effective ways to save time and boost productivity in a multitude of fields, A.I. has been found to be beneficial in the workplace—and in the Work of God.

However, like any tool, A.I. can be misused. As Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong often said, it’s not the thing that is sin—it’s the use of the thing, and the attitude while using it, that may be sin. With that in mind, we ought to consider some biblical principles to help us appropriately moderate our use of large language models (LLMs) with which you may be familiar, such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Grok.

Don’t Ask A.I. Spiritual or Doctrinal Questions

A.I. can only be influenced by the data it consumes. While it is true that this data includes the Bible, A.I. cannot be trusted to accurately handle the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). In the July-September 2023 *Ministerial Bulletin*, Mr. Gerald Weston cautioned us not to offload the preparation of sermons, sermonettes, articles, telecast scripts, or Spokesman Club speeches to A.I., because no A.I. can access God’s Spirit, which

works through the human mind. Like any machine, A.I.’s purpose is to please its user, and as Mr. Weston has warned us, its eagerness to “tell us what we want to hear” will often introduce misinformation in its responses—falsehoods that we might not easily catch because they seem like what we are asking for.

And we may be tempted to believe what A.I. tells us simply because of the allure of having received what seems like an intelligent answer *so easily*. We want to trust what’s convenient—we want to ask whatever question we have *right now* and get an answer. If God Almighty is not real to us, the convenient technological “oracle” of A.I. *will* become more real to us than God Himself. *That is dangerous*. Going to A.I. for help with spiritual issues—which many in the world now do routinely—can easily result in confusion and even idolatry for those who are not close to God.

The book of Isaiah gives us a powerful description of one of mankind’s worst tendencies:

The craftsman stretches out his rule, he marks one out with chalk; he fashions it with a plane, he marks it out with the compass, and makes it like the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, that it may remain in the house.... Indeed he makes a god and worships it; he makes it a carved image, and falls down to it. He burns half of it in the fire; with this half he eats meat; he roasts a roast, and is satisfied. He even warms himself and says, “Ah! I am warm, I have seen the fire.” And the rest of it he makes into a god, his carved image. He falls down before it and worships it, prays to it and says, “Deliver me, for you are my god!”... He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside; and he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?” (Isaiah 44:13–19)

People have made “gods” out of wood and iron—bowing down to them, worshipping them, and expecting help from them—and A.I. is far more powerful and seductive than a block of wood or a hunk of metal. Ultimately, Satan is “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the

sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2), and he will do everything he can to help blur the line in our minds between artificial intelligence and divine understanding.

But asking straightforward technical questions *can* be an appropriate integration of A.I. into our study—if we are careful. For example, we might ask it to provide a list of Bible verses that pertain to a certain topic or contain a specific Hebrew or Greek word, treating it much like a digital concordance. We might ask it to provide historical context to help us better understand ancient cultures that we’re reading about in Scripture. Such uses are typically fine—though it is advisable to ask the A.I. to cite its sources so we can check up on its answers. As A.I. draws from the world’s sources, it has the potential to spread the world’s confusions and misunderstandings if we are not careful in using it.

Whether using A.I. or not, we should *always* be cautious about supplementing our Bible study with extrabiblical sources—the Church of God has long taught that a Bible commentary, for example, should never be considered an infallible source of truth. We should consider every extrabiblical source in the context of God’s inspired word, asking, *Does this align with the Bible and with the established teaching of the Church?* When it comes to God’s truth, we should never learn blindly.

Remain Emotionally Detached from A.I.

We should not talk about our private lives with A.I., nor should we share with it our emotions, worries, or meditations. To do so is to misuse the tool.

It can be all too easy to talk to A.I. about such matters—to place our trust in it. Today’s young people, in particular, are increasingly trusting A.I. with their private lives. More than half of today’s teenagers regularly engage with A.I. “companions,” and a third of these users “have chosen to discuss important or serious matters with AI companions instead of real people” (“Talk, Trust, and Trade-Offs: How and Why Teens Use AI Companions,” *CommonSenseMedia.org*, 2025). But these are topics that Christians are to talk to *God* about. The troubles of our lives are not for A.I. to solve for us. Scripture encourages us to “be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6). God is the one who gives us the answers to serious questions, the one who helps us through our trials and our troubles.

The Apostle Paul asks a poignant question in 1 Corinthians 2:11: “What man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?” Instead of relying on the world’s machines, we should instead talk to parents, ministers, and other trusted members of God’s Church about the challenges of our lives, because we can trust God to work with us through His people.

And A.I. is not a person, no matter how “human” it is programmed to seem. It does not feel, it does not empathize, and it does not care—no matter how much it pretends to. When we engage with A.I. we must remember that, as mentioned earlier, it is designed to please its users—and “faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Proverbs 27:6). A true friend will, with love, tell us the things we *need* to hear that we may not *want* to hear, as will a good spouse or a caring parent. Something that is programmed to please us at almost any cost is, ironically, sure to let us down.

And interacting with something so intent upon making us happy can be addictive, which is why we must not let ourselves become emotionally attached to A.I. It is vital that we keep our guards up against such attachment: “Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls” (Proverbs 25:28). One way to avoid becoming addicted to A.I. is to refrain from sharing with it the private details of our lives and emotions.

Don’t Stop Using Your Brain

Many have realized that “LLMs are no longer passive tools. They are active participants in cognitive processes, summarizing our thoughts, drafting our arguments, even initiating decisions. And because they do it so fluently, so confidently, we let them. The brain, always looking to conserve energy, happily hands over the wheel” (“Dopamine Loops and LLMs: How AI Addiction is Hacking Your Brain,” *AllAboutAI.com*, July 20, 2025).

It can be tempting, when we want to become knowledgeable in a subject, to seek a shortcut—to not read through books or articles, to not think through and synthesize what we’ve read, and to instead have A.I. summarize the content for us. That may be acceptable for subjects we only need to become mildly familiar with—but when it comes to a subject that requires a deep dive, we owe it to ourselves to do research, to make sure we are *thinking* about what we’re learning. The improper use of A.I. encourages intellectual passivity, which can easily occur when we find ourselves giving our thinking over to A.I. We may feel like we’re being more efficient and effective by using A.I., but the result, if we’re not careful and don’t handle it properly, is cognitive laziness—taking a back seat while machines do our thinking for us.

A.I. and LLMs seem to be here to stay, and there can be good reasons to use them. As we do, it is vital that we use them *with care*—wisely and in moderation—as the Church has long taught regarding so many of this world’s inventions. By applying these principles, by being aware of what’s coming and keeping our eyes open as we engage within the world, we can avoid hurt, pain, and degradation—and we can continue to grow as the children of God that He wants us to be. (LN)



Decisions, Decisions

By **Richard Franz**

What should I wear today? What should I have for lunch? Should I check Facebook, Instagram, or my email first? Decisions, decisions—there is a never-ending list of them.

According to researchers, the average adult makes approximately 35,000 decisions per day (“The average adult makes 35,000 decisions a day: Here’s how to avoid ‘choice overload,’ from the authors of ‘Out of Your Mind’,” *CNBC.com*, February 20, 2025). This staggering volume contributes to what psychologists call *decision fatigue*—the mental drain that comes from constant choice-making. It’s why routines, habits, and mental disciplines can be so powerful: They reduce the cognitive load and anchor us in intentionality.

Our choices define who we are. As people to whom God has given His precious calling, we must decide to be faithful in little things as well as big ones. Remember the parable of the minas in Luke 19—each servant had to decide what to do with what his master had given him. One made a decision that led to failure, while another won his master’s approval and rulership over ten cities.

Those servants made choices that would shape their future. And, for us, our values and priorities are what determine the choices we make today—and the consequences we will reap tomorrow. Even the smallest decision has the possibility of moving us closer to or further away from our Savior. We should never fail to ask ourselves, *Will this decision bring me closer to being the person God has called me to be?* A pattern of decisions grounded in God’s truth will shape our character for the better.

Decisions Establish a Pattern

Wise King Solomon gave this invaluable advice: “Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil” (Proverbs 4:26–27). The more we establish a pattern of living rightly, the less we will find ourselves tempted to follow a path that will turn us away from God.

And we are not alone. God has given us His Holy Spirit to guide us. Throughout our trials and daily decisions, we have

a Comforter and a Helper—the very power of God. At first, we may decide to follow God’s lead simply out of our desire to be obedient and honor His commandments, despite our temptations to do otherwise. But as we consistently practice this obedience the Spirit begins to reshape our desires, aligning our will with the will of our Father and our Savior. This ongoing transformation is what Scripture refers to as conversion. Even as our bodies grow older and more fragile, the Spirit works within us. “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16).

The more we are renewed inwardly, the more we genuinely desire what God desires and become able to decide as God would have us decide. As we grow, and as we come to more fully reflect God’s character, delighting in His ways, our Spirit-led decisions will increasingly bear visible fruit in our lives—the unmistakable evidence of God’s Spirit actively working within us. What is that fruit? The Apostle Paul tells us that “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22–25). If we are Christ’s, we are His branches and will bear much fruit (John 15:5).

Even our salvation is a decision—not a mandate. Once we have repented, been baptized, and received God’s Holy Spirit, perfection isn’t a state we reach instantly—it is a destination we travel toward with the decisions we make day by day. Solomon reminds us that “the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble” (Proverbs 4:18–19).

Decisions Bring Consequences

We need only look at Adam and Eve to see the tragic consequences of loving the wrong things and making the wrong decisions as a result. How can we avoid making such mistakes? Notice that one of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control. We must decide to rise above any circumstances that tempt us to walk the wrong path. Just think about the daily aggravations you face. Someone at the store cuts in front of you in a line.

Someone at work is rude or unkind to you. A driver swerves in front of you on the road. A customer service representative treats you poorly. Maybe there's even someone in your local congregation who irritates you to no end.

But to the degree that someone else “makes us” feel angry or upset, that person is the one in control of our lives! And when we have given away that control to someone else, we are no longer exercising self-control. This one fruit is arguably the key that unlocks all the other fruits of the Spirit—without it, we are unable to make the decisions that will lead not just to practical control over our lives, but to the spiritual growth God expects from us. Of course, Scripture does tell us to “be submissive to one another” (1 Peter 5:5). But this command is about service, humility, and the exercise of self-control—not an excuse to blame others for our actions or attitudes.

Self-control is the power to control our tendencies, inclinations, and reactions to what others say and do. Someone else may have said or done something objectively awful, but our mood is our decision—if we have self-control. Without self-control, we are giving up our heart and our peace of mind to others—and then blaming them for a decision that we have made.

The evangelist Timothy received guidance from his mentor, Paul, to “exercise yourself toward godliness” (1 Timothy 4:7)—to bear the fruits of God's Spirit. The Greek word for “exercise” here, *gymnaze*—the source of our English word “gymnasium”—conveys the image of rigorous athletic discipline, underscoring the intentional and daily commitment needed to grow in spiritual maturity. Paul urged Timothy to

Someone else may have said or done something objectively awful, but our mood is our decision—if we have self-control.

cultivate godly character through consistent practice, not just passive belief.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught His audience to choose the first fruit of God's Spirit, which is love! He told us to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who spitefully use and persecute us. Then He gave the rationale behind such a decision: “that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:44–45).

Yes, God decides to power the sun and send the rain. Those are His decisions, and He makes them because of His nature. Our choices, too, come from our nature—so, have we decided to improve the nature of our heart? Christ told us to

pray for our enemies—so, the degree to which we do so is a decision we make and a reflection of our Christian maturity.

Decisions Train Us

How easy it can be to go about our days on “automatic pilot” without giving prayerful thought to our decisions. But as Christians we must be “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). Self-control is not just reactive (refusing to give in to temptation)—it is *proactive training* (shaping our lives toward eternal goals). It's a rhythm of chosen discipline, rooted in love, purpose, and hope (Proverbs 25:28). It's a conscious act of asking ourselves, *What are my choices as I face this decision? What are the consequences?*

Rather than feel trapped by circumstances or other people's behavior, we can decide to take ownership of our responses, to choose the path that aligns our values with God's. And how do we know God's values? Through His word, the Bible, which is a master class in personal responsibility and the transformative power of conscious decision-making. It reminds us that we are not doomed to be only victims of circumstance, but are active agents who shape our world, with the help of God's power in us, through our decisions.

God has given us many decisions to make, but they all boil down to a choice between two contrasting ways of life. “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

What happens to those who decide to go the wrong way? “Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, they would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies” (Proverbs 1:29–31). Wise King Solomon here was writing about people who could have chosen reverence for God, but they did not.

Like those of whom Solomon wrote, we too eat the “fruit” of our own decisions. Our choices ripen into consequences. This is why Paul tells us to decide to walk “circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15–16). We must make our decisions consciously and thoughtfully, living each day with care and self-control—and doing so requires both the knowledge of God's truth and the daily practice of choosing to walk in that truth.

Whatever is most important to us will guide the decisions we make, and those decisions will shape our destiny. So, as faithful Christians, let us decide to be diligent in our prayer, our Bible study, our meditation, and our periodic fasting. The more we do so, the more confident we can be that we will make the right decisions. (LN)

TITUS 2:3-5

Woman to Woman

The Subtlety of the Feminist Agenda

By **Eva Veronese**

One summer evening years ago, I was outside talking with a neighbor as our kids were playing together in our front yards. While we were chatting, our husbands drove in from work, waved to us, and went inside. After a few minutes, my husband poked his head out of the door and said to me, “When you get a second, could you please come in and take care of dinner? I’m starving.” I asked my friend if she would be willing to watch the kids for a few minutes while I stepped in the house to help my husband.

She began laughing hysterically and said, “You’re not *actually* going to go in and serve *his highness* dinner, are you? Tell him that you’re busy and that you’re not his servant.” Despite her remarks, I did go inside at my husband’s request, but my neighbor made fun of my actions for months after that. And while I was more than happy to take care of my husband’s needs at his request, I can honestly say that her ridicule deeply bothered me.

As women who know and understand what the Bible teaches about our roles in the family and in the Church, we undoubtedly do our best to adhere to God’s word on the subject. But have we ever taken the time to examine the subtle ways in which societal feminism has crept into our attitudes and views on the topic of womanhood? Do we—without realizing it—buy into the more subtle aspects of feminist ideals? While it is difficult to be completely unaffected by feminist culture, we can certainly try to become aware of its subtle influence on us and safeguard ourselves against its most subversive tenets.

The Modern Independent Woman

One of the most pervasive aspects of the modern feminist ideology is the idea that a woman’s reliance on a man for physical, financial, or emotional support is a weakness and that women must fight for and value independence as a matter of human right and deserved equality. Admittedly, most of us are not activists lobbying for women’s rights—but, if we are not careful, we can certainly become allured by the false idea that the independent woman is complete on her own and that

she can gain satisfaction through adopting an attitude (even a mild one) of brashness, stubbornness, and entitlement.

Society celebrates these “independent women” for being strong and progressive. But the Bible says that a woman’s honor and value is in “the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (1 Peter 3:4), not in an overbearing presence and insolent demeanor. Further, God says that women are to be honored and cared for by their husbands as the humble, weaker vessel (v. 7), not individuals who are pridefully endeavoring to prove that they have no need to rely on anyone.

We read of Ruth, a widow who decided to journey to a foreign land to serve her mother-in-law, Naomi. She displayed a bit of an independent spirit in making a choice to take on the responsibility of providing for herself and for Naomi without the guarantee of help from others; however, her willingness to attempt survival on her own was not borne of an attitude of stubbornness or arrogance. Ruth was never too proud to submit to the will of her mother-in-law, nor was she ashamed to rely on others for help or charity—characteristics that are quite opposite the modern idea of the independent woman. This becomes evident when she requests to glean the fields of Boaz, essentially asking for charity to survive. Boaz later extends more generosity and even orders his men to leave extra grain for her (Ruth 2:16).

Did Ruth tell Boaz that she didn’t need his charity and that she could take care of herself as a strong, capable woman? Did she feel minimized and weak because he provided for her? Quite the opposite—she fell on her face in humility and gratitude in response to his kindness. Ruth’s humble attitude further contrasts the mindset of the modern independent woman as she later lies at Boaz’s feet, petitioning him to take her as his wife. Throughout the narrative, Ruth never displays pride and willfulness, but acknowledges her role as the weaker vessel and demonstrates with a quiet and humble spirit the willingness and diligence to provide for herself and Naomi.

Women as Decision-Makers

At the forefront of the modern push for female independence is the idea that women should be leaders and have a right to challenge authority figures. While we may not be jockeying to

run for public office or become CEO, it is important to examine whether this belief manifests within us in subtle ways. Are we dominating the decision-making in our families? Do we make decisions against our husbands, bosses, or ministers? Do we oppose, murmur against, or undermine decisions made by those above us in the hierarchies within which we operate? If we do any of these things, we may be subtly succumbing to the societal influence to overstep our roles as women.

In Genesis, we read of Eve doing such a thing when she ate of the forbidden fruit. Before Eve was created, God told Adam, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16–17). God gave this admonition directly to Adam, not to Eve. Adam, consistent with familial hierarchy, was responsible for passing God’s instruction to Eve, directing her not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Later, when Eve made the choice to eat, she allowed Satan to appeal to her desire to be an independent decision-maker, and she took the initiative against the directive given by her husband.

God told Eve—and the women who were to come after her—that “your desire shall be subject to your husband. And he shall rule over you” (Genesis 3:16, *Revised Geneva*

Did Ruth tell Boaz that she didn’t need his charity and that she could take care of herself as a strong, capable woman? Did she feel minimized and weak because he provided for her? **Quite the opposite.**

Translation). This warns that even though a woman may at times be tempted to assert her will in opposition to her husband, God has ordained the husband as the immediate authority over his wife. Coupled with the exhortation that wives submit to their husbands as to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22), we see clearly that God intended us to be assistants to our husbands (Genesis 2:18)—full partners serving as *second* in command. When we accept this role, we uphold the family hierarchy that God ordained for our benefit. Unmarried women must also be willing to submit to fathers, ministers, and bosses (1 Timothy 2:12), in a spirit of willingness to be humble—even though, since it is often contrary to our human will, this is a difficult task that requires prayer and practice to master.

The Modern Career Woman

As opportunities for women to fill traditionally male roles increase in the name of “progress,” the feminist agenda continues to push more aggressively for “equality of the sexes”—or, more accurately, for an eradication of gender roles.

A prominent aspect of this role redefinition is the pressure for the modern woman to work outside the home. While doing so is not necessarily wrong in God’s eyes, the pursuit of a career has become an expectation for women in our culture. Many women feel ashamed to say that they have chosen to become full-time homemakers in lieu of cultivating a career. This is because society views the full-time homemaker as a woman who lacks “real” ambition and intelligence, who is lazily wasting her life because she is not generating income.

But the Proverbs 31 woman would disagree with this viewpoint. Every aspect of the Proverbs 31 woman’s role requires tenacity, skill, intelligence, and dedication. She serves as a true “helpmeet” for her husband and as a hearth-keeper for the family—a most indispensable and prestigious career indeed!

Sadly, however, gender roles have been blurred in society: Women are now made to feel respected only if they are providing a second income, and men are made to feel that they must become co-homemakers. This role-sharing is not aligned with God’s word.

In fact, though it is not wrong for women to work outside the home nor for men to help around the house, God gives us instruction regarding proper gender roles. He says that the obligation to provide for the family falls solely on the man of

the house: “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8). And in addition to Proverbs 31, God says that women are “to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, *homemakers*, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of

God may not be blasphemed” (Titus 2:4–5).

The Bible clearly teaches that providing for the family is an obligation of husbands and homemaking is an obligation of wives, whether or not women work outside the home. So, in the face of pressure to devalue the roles of wife, mother, and homemaker, we need to safeguard ourselves against society’s role-blurring idea that having a career is a requirement for a woman to attain value and respect.

If my former neighbor read these words today, she would probably ridicule me for writing them, because believing and acting contrary to the dominant feminist ideology is extremely unpopular and even shameful in the eyes of most modern women. That is why it is important to honestly evaluate whether we have allowed feminist ideals to quietly creep into our core belief systems. And, throughout this examination process, we must remember that Satan subtly seeks to destroy what makes us distinctly female, while God’s word boldly and unequivocally sets the standard for what defines womanhood. So, sisters in Christ, let’s guard our minds and our attitudes against the subtle tenets of the feminist agenda. (LW)

A Blessed Feast in 2025



By **Rod McNair**

On October 6, 2025, 11,326 Living Church of God brethren and guests gathered to observe the Feast of Tabernacles at 85 sites in 51 countries around the globe. This latest Feast was not without its challenges. On Friday, October 10, the Malaybalay Feast site in the Philippines was hit by a powerful earthquake. On the same day, Tropical Storm Jerry passed close to the Guadeloupe Feast site in the Caribbean. On Sunday, October 12, a “Nor’easter” in the eastern United States caused strong winds and flooding at the New Bern Feast site in North Carolina. Thankfully, no members were hurt by any of these storms, though some brethren did suffer material damage.

The Chin brethren in Myanmar enjoyed a refreshingly peaceful Feast of Tabernacles—only to be shocked when the military moved on their village after the Feast, burning many homes to the ground and causing inhabitants to flee. While many Chin brethren are now safe and accounted for, some as of this writing are still out of contact. Your continued prayers for our brethren in Myanmar are greatly appreciated.

Despite challenging weather events and personal trials, the overwhelming sense of the 2025 Feast of Tabernacles was extremely positive, as detailed in 1,822 Festival surveys, about 60 percent of which came from outside the U.S. Many brethren conveyed their appreciation for inspiring, encouraging messages that were “more sobering and impactful” and “packed with spiritual food.” Others noted that they were grateful for the opportunity to learn some of the new hymns from the upcoming hymnal at the Feast.

Many also expressed appreciation for the well-thought-out and meaningful activities. Clothing exchanges, icebreak-

ers for teens, progressive fellowship meals, game nights, and many, many other activities—all were designed to promote togetherness and build bonds of brotherhood, while still leaving “white space” on the calendar for personal time and reflection.

While this year’s *Behind the Work* film was a bit simpler than recent Feast films have been, some commented that they appreciated getting a “behind-the-scenes” look at the youth camp programs—and the meaningful traditions and policies behind why things are done the way they are done at camp.

The Feast of Tabernacles is not just exciting for “old-timers,” but also—perhaps especially—for newcomers. One site saw 24 brethren attending the Feast for the first time! From a broader perspective, just over half (51 percent) of those surveyed began attending the Feast in the year 2000 or later.

Festival coordinators noted how many brethren visibly served and looked out for one another—fetching groceries, visiting with shut-ins, or helping to pay for meals, for example. Many took seriously what Presiding Evangelist Gerald Weston said in his Opening Night message: “*Give a good Feast!*”

The Feast of Tabernacles is more than just the social highlight of the year—it is an opportunity to show God our obedience to His direction and guidance in our lives. It is an occasion to yield to Him and, in a very practical way, to “learn to fear the LORD your God always” (Deuteronomy 10:20). We hope you enjoy the following photos of your brethren from various Festival sites around the world, as well as comments from attendees who highlighted aspects of the Feast that they found particularly uplifting. Our loving Father blessed the 2025 Feast of Tabernacles—for which we can all be grateful. (L)



Cambridge, New Zealand



Mae Sot, Thailand



Nakhon Sawan, Thailand

“The spiritual highlight was seeing the brethren actively supporting one another in prayer and discussion. The shared reflection on God’s plan for His Kingdom inspired a deep sense of unity and encouragement”

—Comment from Batu, Indonesia

“The atmosphere of love, compassion, and joy prevailed throughout the eight days of the Feast”

—Comment from Orap Village, Vanuatu



Liverpool, Nova Scotia, Canada



Quebec City, Canada

“Seeing the many young teens and preteens escorting the elderly in and out of the hall and to meals was very touching”

—Comment from Russell, Manitoba, Canada



Collingwood, Ontario, Canada



Russell, Manitoba, Canada



Bradenton, Florida, U.S.

“One member lost his father’s heirloom watch. [He] searched for three days and could not find it. Near the end of the Feast, he was transporting a couple of ladies back to their hotel, and he mentioned it to them. One lady mentioned they should pray together, as God knew where it was. Afterwards, a thought came to his mind to go back to the golf course where he [had] played a round of golf. He asked the person behind the golf counter, [who] pulled out his father’s watch from the drawer—answered prayer”

—Comment from Collingwood, Ontario, Canada

“The messages encouraged us to endure and sacrifice our present hardships for a glorious future of hope and rulership in God’s Kingdom. It was a memorable Feast”

—Comment from Stilbaai, South Africa



Batu, Indonesia



Mangalore, India



Kalaymyo, Myanmar



Great Malvern, United Kingdom

“I’m always overwhelmed by the outgoing love and care of the many brethren. Every time I attend the FOT, it just seems to get better and better”
—Comment from Fernandina, Florida, U.S.



Dubuque, Iowa, U.S.



Fernandina, Florida, U.S.

“I was eating alone and was invited to dine and welcomed with open arms [by people I had never met]. Then [I proceeded] to meet a lot of other members through them and I will be forever grateful. This will be my core memory for my first feast even though I have many others”
—Comment from Glens Falls, New York, U.S.



Spokane Valley, Washington, U.S.



Glens Falls, New York, U.S.

“A couple discovered it was our first time attending the Feast. They invited us to lunch, bought our lunch, and lent us a hymnal for the rest of the week”
—Comment from Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, U.S.



Nairobi, Kenya

“A woman who was tent camping had her tent blow over and get wet early into the Feast. This was her first Feast of Tabernacles, and I don’t even think it was her tent. She immediately was offered a car to sleep in for the night and then taken to stay in someone’s spare room for the remainder of the Feast”

—Comment from Cambridge, New Zealand



Kendu Bay, Kenya

“I just really noticed how people went out of their way to include as many people as they could in activities and dinners—just doing all that they could to make sure everyone felt welcome and included”

—Comment from Pebbles Beach, Barbados



Orap Village, Vanuatu

“Our activities were clearly about time being set aside to visit with each other. Face-to-face time was fantastic”

—Comment from Madison, Indiana, U.S.



Imphal, India

“As someone who grew up in the Church, it’s all I’ve ever known. I met a lady who was at the Feast for the first time this year and her story was so inspiring”

—Comment from Forster, New South Wales, Australia

If you would like to learn more about the 2025 Feast of Tabernacles, you can find more highlights by reading “In Their Own Words: Notes from Festival Coordinators in 2025” in the online January-February 2026 Living Church News, available at Members.LCG.org

Weddings & Anniversaries

On June 15, **Chandler Hooley** and **Hannah Jewsbury** were united in marriage in Snoqualmie, Washington, with many friends and family in attendance. Mr. Shannon Christal officiated at the ceremony. Chandler is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Randy Hooley of the Fayetteville, Arkansas, congregation, and Hannah is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mike Jewsbury of the Tacoma, Washington, congregation. Mr. and Mrs. Hooley will attend the Fayetteville congregation. Congratulations to the happy couple!

A few minutes before sunset on August 14, **Kevin Persad** and **Laura Ramlogan** were joined in marriage by Pastor Damian Weekes. Family, friends, and Church members gathered at a beautiful rooftop venue in central Trinidad for the ceremony and reception. The setting sun, with gorgeous hues of yellow, orange, and red, made a beautiful backdrop for the event and photos. The reception included the traditional speeches from the father of the groom, the best man, and the maid of honor.

After a delightful dinner and dessert, the newlyweds and guests enjoyed dancing and fellowship. Mr. and Mrs. Persad attend the Chaguanas, Trinidad, congregation.

On September 18, **Gerardo Roldan** and **Melody Aurora Talbott** were joined together in marriage in Cornelius, North Carolina. The event took place adjacent to Lake Norman, nestled in more than one hundred acres of natural beauty! Mr. John Strain officiated at the ceremony as friends and family joined in support and celebration. The Roldans reside in Charlotte, North Carolina, and attend the Charlotte congregation.

After Sabbath services on August 30, the Minneapolis, Minnesota, congregation surprised **Mr. and Mrs. Errol and Sandra Wade** with cake and refreshments on the occasion of their **60th wedding anniversary**. Mr. Wade is a longtime elder and Mrs. Wade a deaconess serving God's people in Minnesota and Wisconsin. They are a wonderful example to all the members.

Births

The Canary family from Auckland, New Zealand, are excited to announce the safe arrival of their fourth child, **Myka Louise Canary**, who was born on Friday, August 29. She weighed 3.1 kilograms. Both mum and daughter are well. Congratulations to Myka's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jason and Kate Canary, as well as to her brother and sisters!

Mr. and Mrs. Gurudev and Ann-Marie Ganeshdath welcomed their third daughter, **Grace Lyn Ganeshdath**, on September 11. She weighed five pounds, nine ounces, and was joyfully greeted

by older sisters Gabrielle and Lily Rose. Both mommy and baby are doing well. The Ganeshdath family attends the Chaguanas, Trinidad, congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Joe and Kady Marcinelli, of the Knoxville, Tennessee, congregation, are thrilled to announce the birth of their son, **August James Marcinelli**. He was born June 30, weighing seven pounds, four ounces. He is an exciting addition to the family and beloved by his big sister, Morgan.

Mr. and Mrs. Michael and Elizabeth Sheffield, from Hawera, New Zealand,

are overjoyed to announce the safe arrival of their twin daughters, **Eliona and Audrey Sheffield**, who were born on June 17. Older siblings Lawrence and Bethany are elated to have two little sisters!

Mr. and Mrs. Tim and Katelyn Stark joyfully welcomed their third son, **Luke Josiah Stark**, into their family on September 21. He arrived eleven days early and weighed eight pounds, eight ounces. Everyone is healthy and doing well, and so far, Luke is a very hungry boy! The Stark family attend the Traverse City, Michigan, congregation.

In Loving Memory

Mrs. Linda Allgeyer, 86, a beloved mother, grandmother, and friend, finished her race on October 4. Born and raised in Nassau, New York, Mrs. Allgeyer attended Farmingdale State College, where she met and married Roger Allgeyer. In 1965, they began attending the Long Island, New York, congregation of the Worldwide Church of God, where they served for many years. He was a longtime elder and she was a deaconess. Mr. Allgeyer died in 2016. Mrs. Allgeyer later moved to North Carolina, where she became a fixture in the congregation and local community, welcoming many into her home to share in food and fellowship. Mrs. Allgeyer, lovingly referred to as *Oma* by her grandchildren, is survived by her son, eight grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

Mrs. Karen (Martin) Barnsley, 79, died May 24. She was born in West Texas and lived and worked in Texas all her life. Mrs. Barnsley was a registered nurse for more than 30 years. She was baptized in 2019, and she and her husband, Gordon, attended the Lufkin, Texas, congregation. Her survivors also include children, grandchildren, and nieces and nephews. A kind lady who tried to do what is right, she will be greatly missed by all who knew her. Pastor Dan Fritz officiated at her funeral.

Mrs. Martha Caldwell, 94, of Milton-Freewater, Oregon, died July 31. Born in New Mexico, she met her husband, George, in California where he was in the U.S. Airforce. They moved to Oregon and started attending Church in the 1970s. They both were baptized. Mrs. Caldwell was widowed in 2011, and though health problems did not allow her to attend for a number of years, she faithfully connected to livestreamed services from Tacoma every Sabbath.

Mrs. Ina Copeman, 71, died on September 3. She remained steadfast to the end, eagerly looking forward to the resurrection at the sound of the last trumpet. Only days prior to Mrs. Copeman's death, Melbourne Spokesman Club members and other members of the congregation showed their loving support for her by gardening at her home. Mrs. Copeman is survived by her husband, Robert, as well as by their son, John, and their daughter, Carol.

Mr. Sang Hai, 87, died on July 31. He was born in 1938 and baptized in 1977. Mr. Hai worked as a farmer and raised four children, but after he became a member of the Church of God, his wife and their children left. Despite such challenging circumstances, Mr. Hai loved the truth and was a great example

of faithfulness and commitment to God's way of life. He was an active member of the Church in Myanmar and enjoyed serving as chef on Feast days.

Mrs. Dorothy Ann (Everett) Koher, 93, of St. Clairsville, Ohio, died August 18. Born December 1, 1931, in Pennsylvania, she grew up with nine siblings and outlived them all. Mrs. Koher was a bookkeeper in the milling industry before she married William Edward "Ed" Koher in 1954. They were baptized into the Body of Christ in 1962 and had more than 55 years together before he died; then she was a widow for fifteen years. Their home was always open for the brethren—yearly picnics, after-funeral gatherings, meetings, overnight stays, and Sabbath suppers are fondly remembered by many. Their huge garden was shared with all. Mrs. Koher served others physically as long as her health permitted, and then she still served in prayer. She endured the loss of two sons, one at birth and one ten years ago. She is survived by one son in Kentucky and one daughter in Ohio, as well as five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Elder Michael Walsh, serving under Pastor Phil Sena, officiated at her funeral on August 29.

Mr. John Schumacher, 89, of the Richland, Washington, congregation, died on June 21. He was born on June 23, 1935, in Long Beach, California, and he began attending the Living Church of God in December 2006 in Richland. He was baptized in 2008. Mr. Schumacher loved God's word, being with the brethren on the Sabbath, and attending the Feast of Tabernacles. Though his eyesight and hearing became poor in his last few years, that did not stop him from attending services, and he loved calling members around the Northwest during the week, especially those who were sick or shut-ins, to see how they were doing. Mr. Jonathan Bueno officiated at his memorial service on August 24.

Mr. Larry Sherry, 84, a member of the Fayetteville, Arkansas, congregation, died on August 19 after a short illness. Mr. Sherry was baptized in the 1970s and was a faithful member of the Church of God.

Mrs. Devon Staggs, 30, died July 8 after a brief illness. She is survived by her husband, Ryan. Mrs. Staggs was baptized in November 2023. Remembered for her beautiful smile and caring compassion for the brethren, she is greatly missed by her family and the Joplin, Missouri, congregation.

Mr. Charles Sutton, 78, an elder in the Barrie, Peterborough, and Sudbury congregations in Ontario, died August 4. He served the brethren well and will be greatly missed by all. Mr. Sutton originally came from Newfoundland, moving to Ontario in the mid-1960s. He was called into God's Church in 1967 and baptized in 1968, attending his first Feast of Tabernacles that fall in Mount Pocono, Pennsylvania. Mr. Sutton came to the Living Church of God in 2007 and was ordained an elder on March 28, 2015. He will be deeply missed by his wife of 36 years, Lynne, as well as by their children and grandchildren.

Ordinations

Mr. Richard Crook was ordained a deacon on March 16, 2024, by Pastor Michael Brown. Mr. Crook serves in the Brandon, Manitoba, congregation in Canada.

Mrs. Naomi Lyons was ordained a deaconess on August 30 by Pastor Mark Sandor and Elders Errol Wade and Garrett Steagall. Mrs. Lyons serves in the Minneapolis, Minnesota, congregation.

Messrs. Dan and Eric O'Carroll were ordained elders on the Feast of Trumpets by Pastor Scott Winnail, Pastor John Murphy, and Elder James Kingsmore. After his own ordination, Dan O'Carroll participated in the ordination of his son Eric. Both men serve in the Dublin, Ireland, congregation.

Mr. Shane Picker was ordained an elder on September 13 by Pastor Brandon Fall, Pastor Jonathan Bueno, and Elders

Frank Dickinson, Gary Pate, and Everett McNair. Mr. Picker serves in the Tri-Cities, Washington, congregation.

Mr. Alvin Ray was ordained a deacon on September 13 by Pastor Richard Franz and Elder Fred Ziegler. Mr. Ray serves in the Rolla, Missouri, congregation.

Mr. James Simpson was ordained a deacon on April 12 by Evangelist Robert Tyler. Mr. Simpson serves in the Christ-church congregation in New Zealand.

Mr. Riaan Taylor was ordained an elder on August 30 by Evangelist Robert Tyler, Pastor Kinnear Penman, and Elder David Edwards. Mr. Taylor serves in the Perth congregation in Australia.

"WHY THE CHURCH?" continued from page 5

Again, I must ask: If God is not calling everyone, why is He calling anyone? No, those of us called in this age are not called for personal salvation. That is a byproduct of us doing His will.

So, why the Church? Christ is putting together a team to restore the government of God on Earth. Who will be part of that team? The parable of the talents gives the answer: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods" (Matthew 24:45-47).

In other words, those who do the Work of God in this age will be given rulership in the Kingdom.

Failing to do the Work at this vital juncture in human history is a grave error. It is denying the reason for our calling. Claiming that the Work is "getting the bride ready" is an excuse that will lead to disaster. The majority of the bride of Christ is no longer alive. The bride has long been in the process of being prepared, and that preparation is by doing the will of God. We must practice the biblical form of government as it is clearly shown throughout Scripture, wholeheartedly preach the good news of God's soon-coming Kingdom, and strive

to "hold back those stumbling to the slaughter" (Proverbs 24:11).

Acts 3:19-21 is sometimes considered the most important passage in the New Testament, and for good reason. "Repent therefore and be converted," it says, "that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."

Let us understand *why* the Church exists, and let us be about our Father's business! (LN)

Cities of Tomorrow

A little more than 43 years ago, Walt Disney tried to create a place where people could see the future with their own eyes. The EPCOT (Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow) Center was meant to be a window into mankind's fantastical future. Yet Disney's idea of the "prototype community" was not original; he pulled the concept from 19th-century futurist Ebenezer Howard's "garden cities of tomorrow."

The idea was that to plan a city most efficiently, it was necessary to lay out a circular design with a series of rings. The innermost ring would be the municipal and commercial center, with greenbelts between it and the residential ring. The thought was that the greenbelt would provide the sustainability and tranquility necessary for the ideal society—a revolutionary and unprecedented statement in city planning. This would have been a genuine spark of genius on Howard's part, but—whether he realized it or not—he did not originate this revolutionary concept.

Blueprints for the "cities of tomorrow" have been in existence for millennia. The book of Numbers contains a set of instructions for constructing a very special type of city, including pastures extending 1,000 cubits outside the city walls, approximately the equivalent of one-third of a mile (Numbers 35:4–5).

These pastures would serve to feed livestock for the city's sustenance, and a city one mile across would have more than 1,500 acres of pastureland surrounding it. These cities were to be centers for guidance, governing and education—not large by today's standard, but their impact was to be felt throughout Israel; they were meant primarily to develop and advance people, not to multiply distractions and preoccupations. God's

"cities of tomorrow" will focus on people's development into the likeness of God, rather than being concrete jungles where they live on top of one another.

Soon, God will use these ancient blueprints to create a beautiful future for mankind. He has been extending invitations to some in this present age to help fulfill instrumental roles in building that future—a future that brings a tangible hope! As God used the Levites as priests to the physical nation of Israel, He will soon use those He is calling now to be leaders ruling over cities in His Kingdom in sustainable, just, and ethical ways as members of His Family.

The prophet Daniel assures us that "the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.... Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High" (Daniel 7:18, 27). Likewise, the Apostle John recorded testimony from Heaven that those saints will be "kings and priests to our God" and "shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:8–10). Having proven their devotion to Christ in this lifetime, they will hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:14–30).

The future most likely will not bring hovercars, humankind may not colonize Mars before Christ's return, and we may never end up outsourcing all our chores to robots. The cities of tomorrow may not have a lot of gadgets and "things," but they will bring tranquility, peace, and joy to those who dwell within them.

—Ryan Dawson