



# THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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*"Put on the whole armor of God"*

Winter 2020

## What Did Jesus Mean, "You Are Gods"?

*During one of His visits to the Temple, Jesus Christ was confronted by some Jews who asked, "If you be the Christ [the Anointed One] tell us plainly." As the dispute continued, it brought out a very interesting point about humanity's destiny. Have you ever really thought about what this means?*

by Bill Watson



This confrontation with these Jews, outside of the Temple—specifically, on Solomon's porch—was where they posed this question. And, uniquely enough, we find Jesus responding very assertively about His position. He actually appears to be edging them on. He answers, "I told you, and you believe not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me [*in-other-words: yes, I'm the Christ*]. But you believe not, because you are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and [*now watch what He says—He accelerates the tension by claiming...*] I give unto them eternal life; and [*He continues to ramp up the controversy by saying...*] they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which them gave me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. [*And then comes a major and final assertion*] I and the Father are one" (John 10:22–30).

Wow!! As you can imagine, this was just too much for the Jews to take. They couldn't believe, from their perspective, the arrogance this 30-year-old (or thereabouts) young man could make such (in their opinion) outrageous claims. Remember, He declared He could give His followers eternal life—that they would never die—and He and the Father are one! These comments and assertions set the Jews back on their heels. They just couldn't fathom it and decided to pick up stones to stone Him alive.

Now notice how this plays out: "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him" (John 10:31). But, notice how Jesus reacts to this. Remember, He's facing off with an angry mob with stones in their hands that are fully prepared to kill Him. What does He do? Does He cower into conceding and apologizing for making them mad? Does He give any indication of backing off from what He announced He could do and who He declared He was in stating "I and the Father are one"? Does He present any indication of intimidation by the dangers of the circumstances threatening His life? **No! Absolutely not!** Instead, notice how He responds—He shockingly asks them a question.

"Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do you stone me? The Jews answered him saying, For a good work we stone you not; but for blasphemy; and because that you, being a man, make yourself God" (John 10:32–33). Now at this point, you would think this would

be a good time to defuse the situation, make an apology, or perhaps at least rephrase your statement about what you said so it might not be taken so offensively—but not our Lord. Watch what He does. Instead, He shows so much courage in the face of these life-endangering conditions.

"Jesus answered them [*by challenging them with their own scripture and quotes Psalms 82:6*], Is it not written in your law, I said you are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; [*why*] Say you of him, whom the Father has sanctified, and sent into the world, You blasphemers: because I said, I am the son of God?" (John 10:34–36). So, Jesus presents this challenging scriptural revelation to illustrate this shouldn't be controversial, but rather, understood as being scripturally solid and sound. However, notice how in the course of this tense confrontation He identifies an extremely *important revelation and truth*—the potential of our human destiny—**that we are gods!**

Now for most people, this sounds like a very *heady statement* to comprehend. On the surface, it would appear to be over-the-top, extreme, or highly exaggerated. And most of the Christian community would agree; it sounds preposterous! Yet the vast community of Christians today embrace an esoteric teaching borrowed from heathen paganism, which is anchored in the ancient religions of sun worshippers but, stunningly, consider it acceptable—it's called the Trinity!

### What Is the History of the Trinity?

Interestingly enough, the *Trinitarian concept* is not really visible within the doctrines of the Church until, surprisingly, hundreds of years after the original Apostolic Church was established in the first century. We understand, historically, it begins to take on some definition, resulting from the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. Then, in 381 C.E., at the Council of Constantinople, it was determined the Holy Spirit was on the same level as the Father and Christ. And as the centuries passed, it finally became a "dogmatic creed" that God was defined as three eternal, coexistent persons (one God in three persons—this is Trinitarian dogma).

Sadly, this change became possible due to the Roman Empire's adoption of Christianity. However, what most don't recognize is the Universal (*Catholic*) Roman Church actually hijacked the original Church of God and compromised a variety of its doctrines—the nature of God being just one of many!

The very premise of the Trinity is, *it's not to be understood*. As a matter of fact, to understand the Trinity, which is the Catholic (*Universal*) Church's definition of the nature of God, is blasphemy, and the accepted fact is, **you cannot understand it!** Notice this quote from the *Handbook of Christian Truth*, pg 51–52: "The mind of man cannot fully understand the mystery of the Trinity. He who has tried to understand the mystery fully will lose his mind; but he who would deny the Trinity will lose his soul."

In contrast to this, consider what your Bible says: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in



Symbol of the Trinity

them; for God has showed it unto them. [*What did He show?*] For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen [*understandable*], being understood by the things that are made [*the spirit world is understood by understanding the physical world*], even his eternal power and Godhead [*His nature—what God is—is understandable!!*]; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:18–20). The understanding of God's nature is the very reason God is justified in holding mankind accountable for his sins of mass destruction—"they are

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The Council of Nicaea, convened by the Roman Emperor Constantine in AD 325



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without excuse,” according to God’s Word, because they [mankind] should know better!

Contrary to Trinitarian dogma, Paul says *God fully intends to be understood*. Not only His spiritual realm and power, but also His Godhead—His nature! This is an important distinction about God and His biblically based expectations compared to man-made traditions and the rudiments of the world (Colossians 2:4–12).

Unfortunately, the Trinity teaching is a spoiler, and many traditional Christians have been spoiled from understanding the real nature of God because of this predominant doctrine among so many Christian denominations—Protestants included! Yes, that’s right, many Christian Protestant denominations have retained and embraced this Catholic dogma of the Trinity—as it defines this “three person in one God” concept!

Unfortunately, there was such a predominance of “triad god” concepts from so many cultures in the world that it was just a matter of time before the teaching of God’s true nature would be compromised and adopted by this new “State” religion, known as the Holy Roman Catholic Church. Because so many nations and empires, predating Christianity, embraced the idea of a triune god—nations like Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, India, Germany, Italy, and Norway, to mention a few—that it was natural to influence Greek thought. As the centuries passed, philosophers like Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, and so many others advanced the concept, which found its way into the Hellenist movement causing many of Rome’s citizens to embrace it. So Rome was saturated with the influences of Trinitarian teachings, which had an effect on many of its own pagan religions, like Mithraism, Sol Invictus, Isis, and Epona, to mention a few. (Ask for, or download, your free reprint article: “The Trinity—Is It Biblical?”).

What Is the Original Biblical Teaching?

Clearly, the Bible teaches a completely different idea about the nature of God and how His Godhead is to be understood. The concept that God was somehow broken out into three persons, or *hypostases*, but still defined as one was completely foreign to the early first-century Christian church. As a matter of fact, the apostle Paul was already warning the Christians of his day to beware of a “mystery of iniquity” at work within the church. Notice: “For the mystery of iniquity does already work: only he who now lets [restrains] will let [restrain], until he be taken out of the way” (2 Thessalonians 2:7). Paul was alerting the Christians at Thessalonica, putting them on notice, to be vigilant because if you let these compromises into your mind, they have the potential to take you out of the church.

Paul was very concerned about this influx of pagan teachings. Because of this concern, he appealed for Christians at Thessalonica “to stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught” (2 Thessalonians 2:15), and urged Christians at Corinth to “remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances [traditions], as I delivered them to you” (1 Corinthians 11:2). And when you look deeply into this Greek word (translated “traditions” or “ordinances”) that is used in both these scriptures, you’ll discover that it is specifically indicative of the Hebrew traditions.

Now this is interesting, because one of

the biggest changes the orthodoxy that “morphed” into the Roman Catholic Church targeted was changing the Saturday Sabbath to a Sunday Sabbath, and the substitution of sun-worshipping holidays for God’s Holy Days listed in Leviticus 23. The elimination of the observance of these original Holy Days was a *major influence* in successfully obfuscating the meaning of mankind’s ultimate human potential and destiny. It was subtle and took centuries to do, but the effect of dismissing God’s Feast Days was indeed instrumental in mischaracterizing and literally hiding God’s ultimate and original purpose for man!

These seven Holy Days are keys to understanding God’s purpose for mankind. They outline His rescue program and *how He designed a process* to save humanity from extinction. (Request, or download, your free booklet, *God’s Seasonal Plan*.) Your Bible is clear about this redemption program, which includes the promise of a *human metamorphosis*—a transitioning from mortal flesh and blood to an immortal substance termed “spirit,” as was described by Christ when talking to Nicodemus (John 3:6–7). When Jesus said you must be “born again,” He really meant it, but in actuality, to literally—metabolically—put on immortality. Paul said it best when he said there is a natural (physical) body and there is a spiritual body. He also said, as we have borne the earthy image, we will also bear the heavenly (spirit) image (1 Corinthians 15:44–57). This particular teaching is revealed in the Holy Days, alongside giving us a step-by-step description of *how* God is steering the whole salvation process.

And, specifically, this truth about our human potential is lodged in the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles. This is the sixth Holy-Day celebration of the seven, and it lasts for seven days. It’s listed in Leviticus 23:34–36 and is essential in defining an extremely important detail about God’s plan and the role human beings will serve in it. There are so many nuances that are embedded in this particular Holy Day that once you begin to embrace and observe it your mind becomes enlightened by the scriptures highlighting the insight from the biblical narratives that explain this seven-day celebration called the Feast of Tabernacles.

There are multiple meanings and metaphors deeply ensconced in many of these Holy Days; they are just pregnant with spiritual meaning. They are insightful reminders that are rich in tapestry and symbolism, and are to be used for our spiritual enrichment. The Feast of Tabernacles is just one of those sacred festivals, and it is specific to our destiny and purpose for life. Let me explain.

The Feast of Tabernacles Reveals Mankind’s Destiny

As you become familiar with the scriptures concerning the Kingdom of God you begin to realize that it will be on earth, not in heaven (Isaiah 2:1–4; Micah 4:1–5; Zechariah 14:1–9; Matthew 24:29–31; Mark 13:25–27; Luke 21:27; Revelation 19:11–16)! And when you start connecting the dots, the clarity of our human destiny becomes recognizable.

Notice Revelation 1:6: “And has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. amen.” This is a direct statement describing our roles with Him in the future. Notice again: “And has made us unto our God kings and priests; [now listen to what is said] and we shall reign on the

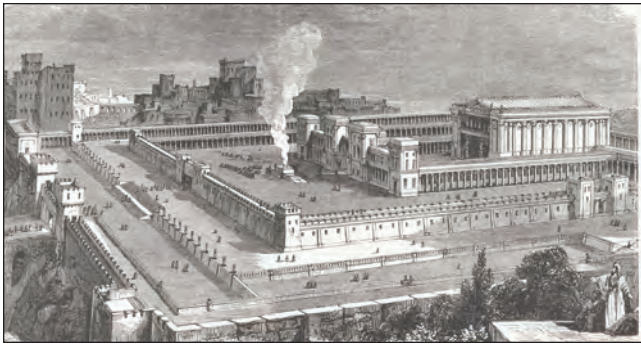
earth” (Revelation 5:10). So, here again, it is explained we will be kings and priests; but additionally, we will be *reigning on the earth* with Christ who, we understand, landed on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:9). From there, we will administer the laws of God throughout the world. And it shall cover the whole earth, as the sea covers the seabeds (Habakkuk 2:14). *The Feast of Tabernacles represents this!*

This will go on for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4). Christ will rule the planet with the help of those He raised from the dead and who met Him in the air (John 5:25–29; 1 Thessalonians 4:15–18). When this happens we shall be changed, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, resulting in us being *transitioned* into *immortal beings*. Notice: “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:52–53). *The Feast of Tabernacles represents this, as well!*

At this time we will be like Him—immortal spirit beings. **This is our destiny!** To be ultimately converted from flesh and blood to this immortal material called spirit. Keep in mind we are told that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50). So we must be made of a different substance to get in. This, we are told, will happen at the resurrection, upon Jesus’ return (1 Corinthians 15:20–23).

Contained within the Feast of Tabernacles are these amazing truths *about why we were born*. But, sadly, this teaching has been substituted with a *skewed teaching—a deception*—about being with God as a disembodied spirit, living with Him forever in heaven. And yet, clearly, this teaching is *not in your Bible!* It is an unfortunate misleading doctrine that camouflages mankind from God’s original purpose, which describes His intent to make us “born” sons of God, co-heirs with Christ. Yes, **we will become family!**

Paul plainly says God has adopted us. “But you have received the Spirit of adop-



The Temple (specifically, Solomon’s Porch), was the place Jesus cited the passage, “You are gods.”

tion.... The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: and if children [*like family*], then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified [*resurrected as spirit beings*] together” (Romans 8:14–17). And at this time we will be like Him. John explains: “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.... Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him [*an embodied spirit being*]; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:1–2).

Yes, when Jesus told the Jews, “*you are gods*,” He knew what He was talking about. He knows that God created mankind in His image *for the purpose of reproducing Himself* so that he could increase His family. “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of whom the *whole family* in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man” (Colossians 3:14–16).

**Yes, God is family, not a Trinity.** He intended from the beginning to add to His family and share all He has with us as He now shares with Jesus Christ, His first-born. This truth has been buried for centuries but is in plain daylight today for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. *God wants you in His family* and desires for you to make a commitment to Him by repenting and embracing Jesus Christ as your Savior and High Priest. Christ is on a count down from heaven to return and take His rightful position as King of kings and Lord of lords. He’s hopeful He’ll be able to call your name upon His return (John 5:28–29)!

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Submissions may be sent to [vancestinson@cgi.org](mailto:vancestinson@cgi.org)

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# Jesus Is Not Michael

by Mike James

Among the various Christian sects and groups, Seventh-Day Adventists and Jehovah Witnesses have a number of beliefs in common with the Church of God groups. All three of us understand the state of the dead and the concept of hell in the same way. There are also many differences. I'd like to focus on the faulty logic Adventists and Witnesses have in understanding who the archangel Michael is.

Both the Adventists and the Witnesses believe Michael is Jesus Christ, but the Adventists also believe Michael is God (Jesus Christ), while the Witnesses do not.

The primary reason the Jehovah's Witnesses believe Jesus is Michael is because they deny Jesus is God. They believe that Jesus can be called a deity or a god, but only in the sense that an angel can be called one. They believe God the Father is God, but they don't believe Jesus Christ is.

The Witnesses believe Jesus is the incarnate name of Michael the archangel. They believe Michael was the first angel created by God and is second in command in God's organization.

The Adventists on the other hand do believe Jesus is God, but they also believe He is Michael. This difference may be due to the fact Ellen G. White taught that Jesus was Michael. Since she is considered a prophet by the Adventists, they can't disregard what she said. They have solved this problem by melding Jesus and Michael into each other.

Let us begin by looking at the five scriptures that address the archangel Michael to see what we can learn. Let's not forget we need to test the spirits to see if they are of the truth (1 John 4:1).

"But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia" (Daniel 10:13).

"But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and *there* is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince" (Daniel 10:21).

"At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands *watch* over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, *even* to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1).

"Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" (Jude 1:9).

"And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought," (Revelation 12:7).

In none of these scriptures is there any identification of Jesus Christ being Michael.

The primary scripture used to explain Jesus is the archangel Michael is 1 Thessalonians 4:16:

"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."

The argument is that Jesus is coming down at His Second Coming with the voice of an archangel so that must be His voice. We could also read this as an archangel will proclaim Jesus' coming as it is occurring. To say the archangel and Jesus are the same seems a forced view. It's like saying the Mayor gave a speech with the voice of a man.



**WAR IN HEAVEN—Artistic depiction of Michael and his angels fighting the dragon and his angels. Michael the archangel and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, are presented in Scripture as two separate beings.**

According to Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, it makes more sense that Paul's statement actually distinguishes the "shout" or "cry of command" as different from the "voice of an archangel." There are three prepositional phrases here, all beginning with the preposition *en* ("in," "with"):

- *en keleusmati*—"with a commanding cry"
- *en phōnē archangelou*—"with the voice of the archangel"
- *en salpingi theou*—"with the trumpet of God"

The most natural way to understand these three phrases is to take them as referring to three distinct sounds: a commanding cry, the voice of an archangel, and the blast of a trumpet of God. The first sound, the "commanding cry," is given by Jesus Christ Himself, and in His cry is joined by the shout of an archangel and the blast of God's trumpet. The "commanding cry" is not given by the archangel at all.

Another problem for the Adventists and Witnesses view is Hebrews 1:6:

"And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." Why would the angels be worshipping another angel. It makes more sense that they are worshipping God (the Son).

Hebrews 1 also makes a distinction between Christ and the angels in verse 8 by calling Christ "the Son" and "God." In Hebrews 1:10 He is also called "Lord."

The problem here is if Jesus was an archangel how could He be worshipping Himself!

Notice Hebrews 1:13: To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." Obviously God did not say this to any angel; He only said it to His Son, Jesus Christ.

Finally, in Hebrews 1:14 further distinction is made between the Son and angels. In verse 14 angels are described as "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation." Angels are sent to serve us because we have the chance for salvation. Now 1 Corinthians 6:3 tells us we will judge angels in the future. If Jesus was just an archangel, would we judge Him also? Of course not; He is the one who saves us through His death. He will always be above us just as we will be above angels in the future. The idea that Jesus was an angel just makes no sense.

We also know Jesus is the Word (John 1:1–3). These verses also tell us all things were made through Jesus Christ. That would obviously include the angels and

archangels. Jesus could not be an archangel because He had to be before the archangels.

Colossians 1:16 agrees with this. Here we read that Jesus created all things. Once again, this would include the archangels, so Jesus cannot be an archangel.

Another distinction between Jesus and Michael can be found when analyzing Matthew 4:10 where Jesus rebukes Satan. In Jude 1:9, Michael does not rebuke Satan, but calls on the Lord to rebuke him. If Michael were Jesus he would rebuke Satan in Jude.

Revelation 12 mentions Christ (as a son and child), Michael, and the dragon (Satan). It's obvious when you read this chapter that Christ and Michael are two different beings. They are not one and the same; they are separate and distinct.

Further proof is the fact that Jesus Christ received worship (Matthew 14:33; 28:9, 17), but angels never receive worship (Revelation 19:10; 22:8–9). Jesus also gets the same praise and worship given to the Father (Revelation 5:13–14). Jesus is also prayed to (Acts 7:59; Acts 9:14; 1 Corinthians 1:2), and nowhere in Scripture are we told to

pray to angels.

Scripture is clear—Jesus is not Michael the archangel. Jesus is our Lord and Savior!

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# Christian Parenting in Today's Electronic Society

by W. Adam Boyd



**W**e live in some distressing times, indeed. The tentacles of sin are divisive and reach far into our daily lives now. We are constantly on the battlefield in our minds and are often overwhelmed with all that's going on in today's society. Parenting in a world that largely rejects God and His principles of living is most challenging, and in recent years, even our own country, which is supposed to be a Christian nation, has made it exceedingly difficult to shelter our children from sinful ways of life and dangerous anti-God ideologies. Children are often confused, depressed, anxious, and psychologically disturbed, and this can have a domino effect on their lives and the lives around them. Even when parents do all the right things, teach all the right things, bring them up in church as a believer, and tirelessly work with their children helping them to discern right from wrong, it's ultimately up to the child to decide how to live. That decision is heavily influenced by the current environment we live in. Tacit influences can sneak in when nobody is looking. As Dana Carvey's SNL character, "The Church Lady" used to say, "Could it be...Satan, Hmmmm?"

lenging, and in recent years, even our own country, which is supposed to be a Christian nation, has made it exceedingly difficult to shelter our children from sinful ways of life and dangerous anti-God ideologies. Children are often confused, depressed, anxious, and psychologically disturbed, and this can have a domino effect on their lives and the lives around them. Even when parents do all the right things, teach all the right things, bring them up in church as a believer, and tirelessly work with their children helping them to discern right from wrong, it's ultimately up to the child to decide how to live. That decision is heavily influenced by the current environment we live in. Tacit influences can sneak in when nobody is looking. As Dana Carvey's SNL character, "The Church Lady" used to say, "Could it be...Satan, Hmmmm?"

## The Electronic World

Many kids now live in false realities and develop scholar's neck—not from reading books, but from constantly and sometimes obsessively looking at their phones! Through the doors of the Internet, cellphone communication, social media, Xbox, PlayStation, and all the like, children are at times inadvertently being programmed or persuaded to believe certain ideas and feel certain emotions. These ideas are peddled to our children without us parents even knowing. We know that our children are very impressionable and need careful guidance and supervision—even electronic supervision if needed. What I mean by that, for example, is perhaps not letting your child have a cellphone at too young of an age. Think about it. Why do they need a cellphone at, say, age 8? Are they running a business? They certainly aren't old or mature enough to be without adult supervision at very young ages. Most adults that would be supervising these children own cellphones if a call is necessary to say another parent or to a friend. Believe it or not, home telephones still exist too! Let's not forget that cellphones are powerful minicomputers with access to ANYTHING at ANY TIME! It can be a great

tool, but it's not without risks. Combine the electronic world to the already difficult to navigate world of peers that children deal with, and you could have a recipe for disaster.

## A Few Electronics Supervision Tips for Christian Parents (or Grandparents/Caretakers)

Many children love their video games. You should consider the following if you have children that play video games:

1. Don't let your young ones play Xbox, Playstation, or use the computer (cellphones included) unattended in their room when the rest of the family is sleeping. There are chatrooms and ways to send pictures and website links. It's a dangerous landscape for young fragile minds that we need to be aware of. We all know about these risks, but we often brush them off and say to ourselves, "That's not going to happen to my kids." Ask yourself, would you be okay sending your child into a room filled with complete strangers, many of which could be child predators? Adults? Unbelievers that try to change your child's mind in regard to belief in God or persuade them to join some group or cause that you know nothing about? Is that likely? In most instances, probably not, but it has happened before, and it is a possibility that must be considered. Now, some of you may say that's a little extreme, but I submit to you that it isn't! We do not know who is on the other end of the faceless chat message or microphone that's talking with our children daily, if you allow it! Am I saying don't allow children to play video games, or to install surveillance cameras in your child's room? Not at all, but there's a balance between letting our children have a little freedom as they explore childhood and the teenage years and taking a stand as parents and saying "No!" I can't tell you what that balance may look like in you and your children's lives as it is likely different in each case, but you should work diligently to find it.
2. Consider setting up a cutoff time on your wireless router/modem that shuts your Wi-Fi off at a certain time. There are also parental controls available on most of them that your Internet service provider's customer service department should be able to walk you through should you need the assistance. Another option is to place and keep computers or video game systems in the family room. This would work well

with younger children, and as they become teenagers, they would likely need computers to work on schoolwork in their own rooms, etc. That would be where setting parental controls and Wi-Fi cutoffs could come in handy.

No doubt, there are several other options that may gel with your parenting and family dynamics. The important point is that you work on being a family together. The ultimate goal is to retain spiritual guidance and direction in our children's lives, and to not let them just do whatever they want to do because that's what all the other kids in school are doing—which is an entire subject in and of itself. Eventually, your children will begin to make decisions themselves including spiritual decisions.

Remember what it says in 1 Corinthians 3:10–11: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Jesus is supposed to be our foundation on which we build. We have to teach our children and guide them while the clay is still moldable so that when it hardens, it cannot be changed so easily—and even if broken, it retains the formula which made it.

The world looks vastly different for young kids in grade school. When I was in grade school, there were no cellphones. There was no social media. There were beepers or pagers in high school. There was Nintendo or Sega, but not everybody had one, and you couldn't chat with anyone in the world or send pictures when using one. Parental supervision seemed more abundant. There didn't seem to be as many psychiatrically troubled youths as there are today. The media weren't pushing extreme agendas and biased opinions; they were reporting news and leaving it up to the viewer to determine what to make of it. People were not going crazy in the streets when a president they didn't like got elected.

All of this was just 20–25 years ago. I wonder what our country and the world will look like in 20 more. One thing's for sure: we can have a great impact on our children and how they live, but we have to be equipped with the proper tools, be in the know about what's going on today in their lives, and be ready to stand up for God and His lifestyle. Teaching our children God's Word is one of the most important marks we can leave on this earth. It is one of the most important jobs we have.

# Pope Francis Endorses Same-Sex Civil Unions

by Mike James



**I**n a new documentary film titled *Francesco*, Pope Francis calls for the creation of civil-union laws, which is his clearest support to date for the rights of same-sex couples. "What we have to create is a civil union law," the Pope says in the film, released on October 21, 2020, in Rome. "That way they are legally covered." Francis goes on to say, "homosexuals have a right

to be part of the family."

"They're children of God and have a right to a family," the Pope says in his interview with the filmmaker, Evgeny Afineevsky. "Nobody should be thrown out, or be made miserable because of it."

The statement by the Pope does nothing to change Catholic doctrine, which does not permit marriage to same-sex couples, but it signifies a massive shift for the largest church in the world that has fought against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual (LGBT) legal rights. We must remember past popes have called same-sex unions inadmissible and deviant.

The Catholic Church officially teaches that homosexual sex acts are "disordered." The previous pope, Benedict XVI, called homosexuality an "intrinsic moral evil." In 2003, under Pope John Paul II, the church issued a document laying out the "problem of homosexual unions." The document issued by the Vatican's doctrinal office, said

that "legal recognition of homosexual unions or placing it on the same level as marriage" would amount to "the approval of deviant behavior." So the statement by Francis is a significant change in attitude for the church.

"This is the first time as pope he's making such a clear statement," said the Reverend James Martin, a prominent Jesuit who has advocated for the church to more openly welcome LGBT members. "I think it's a big step forward. In the past, even civil unions were frowned upon in many quarters of the church. He is putting his weight behind legal recognition of same-sex civil unions."

Roberto de Mattei, president of the conservative Lepanto Foundation in Rome, said that "this is perhaps the first time Pope Francis has publicly taken a stance on a specific point of morality against the church's doctrine."

"There's no doubt this will add to the great confusion already existing in the Catholic world," de Mattei said, "and will be fodder for those who maintain that at least privately, the pope promotes or supports heresy."

Conservatives accuse Francis of muddling the church's



teaching on sexuality. They say he is allowing cultural change to influence what should be unchangeable church rules.

According to a Pew Research Center study from 2019, about 61 percent of Catholics in the United States support

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same-sex marriage, compared with 42 percent ten years before.

Thomas Tobin, the bishop of Providence, Rhode Island, said “the Holy Father’s apparent support for the recognition of civil unions for same-sex couples needs to be clarified.”

“The Pope’s statement clearly contradicts what has been the long-standing teaching of the Church about same-sex unions,” Tobin said. “The Church cannot support the acceptance of objectively immoral relationships. Individuals with same-sex attraction are beloved children of God and must have their personal human rights and civil rights recognized and protected by law. However, the legalization of their civil unions, which seek to simulate holy matrimony, is not admissible.”

The Pope’s statement might be seen by some as moving the church toward marriage equality, but the Catholic Church is far from taking that step, said Patrick Hornbeck, professor of theology at Fordham University.

Hornbeck left the Catholic Church for the Episcopal Church before he married his same-sex partner in 2015. He said Catholics who stay in the church have to do so with open eyes, because he does not think it is likely to change for decades.

The Episcopal Church is the largest US-based church (over 1.9 million members) that allows gay marriage. More and more churches worldwide are allowing homosexual priests and marriages.

The recognition from the Pope, one of the most revered figures in the world, shows the massive shift taking place in public opinion on homosexual rights. Some experts on public opinion say the Pope’s position could help move attitudes toward acceptance in countries where same-sex rights have lagged behind other groups’ rights.

According to Pew Research Center, public opinion on homosexuality remains largely divided by country and region. Western Europe and the Americas are more sup-

portive than places like Eastern Europe, Russia, Ukraine, the Middle East, and sub-Saharan Africa, according to a June 2020 Pew report. People in the Asia-Pacific region are generally split.

Many countries have seen double-digit shifts in acceptance from 2002 to 2019 according to Pew. South Africa saw a 21-point increase in support and South Korean support for homosexuality increased 19 points over this almost 20-year period. In Mexico and Japan in 2002, just about half of the people surveyed said they accepted homosexuality. Now that number is closer to 70 percent.

“He [the Pope] is adapting the church to its people,” said Javier Corrales, chair of Amherst College’s political science department and an expert on the politics of sexuality in Latin America.

Research has found that people are more likely to express support for marriage equality when they have been exposed to that message from an “in-group” leader, like a politician or a pastor. In one experiment, religious people who read a statement in support of gay rights written by a leading religious figure were more likely to agree than if the statement had been written by an anonymous writer.

The Pope’s statement about a homosexual couple’s right to a family is “attacking the most important argument against same-sex unions,” said Gabriele Magni, an assistant professor of political science at Loyola Marymount University. Opposition is often framed as an effort to protect the traditional family unit. “This argument,” Magni said, “is not as strong anymore.”

The Bible is clear on marriage (**Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31; 1 Corinthians 7:2**) it is between a man and a woman. The Bible is also clear on homosexual behavior; it is a sin (**1 Corinthians 6:9; Leviticus 18:22**). When religious leaders who use the Bible as God’s Word speak against that Word, there is a problem. We are supposed to live by every word of God (**Matthew 4:4**). Yes,

I agree we are all sinners, but we can’t promote sin or ignore it. We have to fight against it and overcome it. What the Pope is saying is allowing the door to sin to open up a little.

I don’t believe the Pope’s statement will bring about tremendous change quickly, but it is a sign of the changes that are coming to this world. Fifty years ago the thought that a pope would make a statement like this would seem bizarre and outlandish. Today it is seen as not that big of a deal. This should make us all take notice of the times we are living in and the momentous changes that are on the horizon.

**Daniel 7:25** warns of a ruler or king who will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints. Daniel tells us this ruler will seek to change times and laws. Could these laws pertain to God’s laws? There may be a connection because true saints would speak against someone wanting to change God’s laws. Time will tell. We have not gotten to this point yet in history, but with the Pope making statements like this against God’s marriage law we can see what that future may look like. By saying he is okay with civil unions for homosexuals, the Pope is speaking in opposition to God’s ways.

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# Origins of Our Worship

by George Roper



An origin is a point in time when a construct comes into fruition. Whether those constructs are tangible or abstract, the origin of any apparatus is actually quite relevant. Understanding the origin of a component broadens our scope of objectivity, enabling us to better ascertain the context in which an item or system is utilized. Being ignorant of true origins may leave us with an impression of a situation or circumstance that is not wholly accurate. Thus, being aware of the origins of items that we use, accounts that have been handed down, or systems in which we operate is simply an extension of being circumspect.

We operate in a culture that contains established institutions that carry origins many of us are unacquainted with. Most would be surprised to learn of the true origins of familiar presences that are verifiable upon personal investigation. One such example is that of the pharmaceutical company Bayer.

Bayer is a global pharmaceutical company, based in Germany, founded in 1863. The company is most known for its sale of aspirin. In the late 1800s, Bayer sought to market a cough syrup that would be non-addictive. To that end, Bayer’s pharmacology chemist manufactured a substance called diacytelnorphine. In commercializing the product, Bayer did not wish to sell the item with a name that was convoluted. The company gravitated to a derivative of heroisch, the German word for heroic or strong. In 1898, Bayer released the over the counter drug and placed it on the market under the trademark name of “Heroin.”

Today, heroin is recognized as a highly addictive recreational drug. The destructive ramifications of heroin use have been felt by many a family and their loved ones. For those who are unaware, it could come as a surprise that the origins of this narcotic that has wreaked such havoc could stem from such an established institution.

Another example of unrenowned origins concerns the work of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg. Dr. Kellogg was a medical doctor who graduated from NYU medical school in New York in 1875. Dr. Kellogg went on to become one of the leading physicians at the Battle Creek Sanitarium, a prestigious medical and wellness facility in Battle Creek,

Michigan. Dr. Kellogg held stringent views on sexuality and believed that bland foods would suppress sexual arousal and curb any inclinations towards self-gratification. In the course of his work, he formulated diets according to his dietary tenets.

In 1890, Dr. Kellogg marketed a cereal called “granola,” which had been named as such to avoid confusion with a similar product. In the late 1800s, Dr. Kellogg continued to create other meal plans and introduced a toasted corn cereal called corn flakes.

In the production of his breakfast cereals, Dr. Kellogg worked jointly with his brother, Will Kellogg. Will Kellogg believed that adding sugar to the corn flakes would bring the cereal to sell better. Dr. Kellogg was adamantly opposed to this change. This difference in direction would lead to a divisive split between the two brothers. Thereafter, Will Kellogg separated from his brother and continued to manufacture their cereal under his own company, which came to be known as Kellogg’s.

Dr. Kellogg’s views that diet would stave off sexual desire and prevent self-stimulation were held by other prominent and outspoken individuals as well. Dr. Kellogg had been greatly influenced by the teachings of the Reverend Sylvester Graham, a Presbyterian minister who also taught a correlation between diet and chastity. Rev. Graham introduced a diet in 1829 that was also well-received. Today, we are familiar with his nutrition plan as the Graham cracker.

Although granola, corn flakes, and graham crackers are a food staple for a number of people, the majority are unfamiliar with the sordid origins pertaining to what these foods were meant to originally address. Likewise, many are uninformed that such a prominent pharmaceutical company is behind one of the utmost addictive and destructive drugs in our modern day.

So, too, countless others would be astonished to learn that the origins of many of our customs, holidays, and approaches to God have no affiliation with God whatsoever. In fact, multiple practices widely deemed as Christian were taken from pagan religions and grafted into Christianity, resulting in a structure that carries impressions of God and entails a systemic approach towards God that is not authentic.

As we approach the holiday season, this is evermore

reflective in Christmas. Christmas is recognized as one of the foremost sacred seasons of Christianity. Yet, aplenty of the customs associated with it have pagan origins and were specifically used in the worship of pagan gods. Such as the Christmas tree, the yule log, Christmas wreaths, mistletoe, and the date of December 25 itself.

Christmas falls in the middle of the winter, a period of time called the winter solstice. During the winter solstice, festivals occurred that centered on the worship of the sun. Homage was paid to other gods and various iterations of the sun god. These rituals predated organized Christianity. They were practiced contemporaneously by the surrounding cultures during the time of Israel and the early church.

The Bible is replete with examples of these practices infiltrating the religious behavior of Israel and God’s disdain for it. These customs also seeped into the first-century church decades after Christ’s death and resurrection. Numerous writings of the apostles show them contending with this very issue in the existing congregations that they served. In the time that would follow, the blending of pagan ritual practices with the worship of God would gain in momentum, resulting in a change in the landscape of the initial era of the church.

By the second century, the western hemisphere of the church embraced blending idolatrous rituals with the worship of God. They saw themselves as being inclusive and progressive. Conversely, the eastern hemisphere did not incorporate pagan influences into their practices. They stayed true to adhering to God’s commandments and God’s prescribed days of observation. In time, the western division of the church, having ascribed to a mixing of pagan culture with God’s ways, became more dominant and politically connected. They inherited more clout and began to exert influence over their eastern counterparts.

Years later, in the fourth century, it became politically prudent to have Christian observances fall on the same days as the pagan festivals during the winter solstice. This was a strategic move, by governmental mandate, that would bring those that worshiped other gods into Christianity and incorporate the various beliefs into one religion. Hence, holidays like Christmas became prominent, whereas factions of the eastern church continued to

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live by God’s instructions and observe God’s days of obligation without adulteration. Although many of the eastern churches were scattered or forced into seclusion, they did not compromise in their continuance to follow the commandments of God.

A prevalent number of people are not conscious of the origins of various segments of our everyday culture. In much the same way, many are oblivious to the origins of our holidays and celebrations as they relate to God. Becoming privy to these things may appear to serve as nothing more than an interesting bit of trivia, with no real consequence. However, this awareness and our response to it is important to God.

In the book of John, we find an example where Christ has an eye-opening conversation with a local Samaritan woman.

“The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you *Jews* say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.’

“Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:19–24, NKJV).

The Samaritans were a people that shared the same geographical area with those of the Jewish communities. They worshiped the same God as the Jews. However, their worship comingled pagan practices with the worship of God. When the Samaritan woman recognized the line of work that Christ was in, she posed to him a question, reflective of the criticism that the Samaritans would receive from the Jews. The Samaritans were chastised by the Jews for essentially corrupting the religion with their version of worship, due to their assimilating elements of pagan origins.

Christ explained to her that it was not the “where” that mattered but more so the “how.” He pointed out that God the Father was actively seeking people to worship and recognize Him. This would be performed by way of using His Spirit to empower the ability to relate to God. Furthermore, the data used in forming a relationship with God is to be factual or based in truth. A point the Samaritans failed to realize, as they had incorporated a substantial degree of misinformation into their worship.

This truth requires refraining from bringing pagan influences into our worship as the Samaritans had done. By Christ’s own assessment, the Samaritans were preventing themselves from having a clear understanding of God by allowing an intermixture of the worship of God with the practices of foreign gods.



Many are unaware of the pagan origins of some of our most poplar customs.

God long ago warned the Israelites about merging the way heathen nations worshipped their gods, with the worship of the true God.

“When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’ You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods” (Deuteronomy 12: 29–31b, NKJV).

We by extension are also warned to be conscientious.

God has explicitly stated not to borrow from the ways in which the pagans worshiped their gods and mix it with how we recognize Him. When we do look at the origin of our practices, our reference should be the very words of God Himself, found in the Bible. Paul reminded Timothy to keep that very same fact in mind.

“All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17, NKJV).

We are to dress our behavior according to what is in God’s Word. Adhering to that standard of truth takes effort. Remaining ambivalent to the origin of our practices towards God is unacceptable. In recognizing the missteps of Bayer, we see how a trusted entity released a product for consumption that was detrimental. In the commodities of Kellogg’s, we see how items that we innocently use today were designed with a different purpose in mind.

In like manner, the greater Christian establishment is trusted to provide instruction and guidance to those seeking God. Even so, Christian institutions teach the celebration of Christian holidays embedded with pagan influences, rather than showing such days to be an infraction of God’s instructions. Additionally, it becomes clear how the passing of time can contribute to losing sight of where our customs actually come from. It is no surprise, then, that we can be equally as susceptible to finding ourselves to be incognizant to the origins of our own approaches towards God.

We do ourselves a disservice by continuing to engage in rituals meant for other gods and ascribing it to the true God. All the while, the true God prefers to be approached differently. The responsibility is ours to seek God under the stipulation of truth. It is upon that course of action that we can have a more complete understanding of God and bolster our relationship with Him. Christianity today indeed does reflect a hybrid fusion of God with practices of pagan origin. The onus is upon us to return to and participate in an unadulterated form of worship—a form of worship that was initially delivered to those called into the first century church. Jude, who ministered to the early church advocated this very approach.

“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3, NKJV).

That faith that was once delivered, is not the amalgamation of customs that make up our holidays today. The faith that was once delivered, that was lived out by the early church, were practices of worship that came directly from God’s Word. That faith and worship is intrinsically biblical. We must return to that degree of worship, a worship that will convey a deeper understanding with our Maker, a worship that traces its origins back to God.

# Questions & Answers

by Vance A. Stinson

Any “wiggle room” for not fasting on Atonement?

**QUESTION:** Vance, reading over Atonement, as I do every year, and listening to the sermons, I don’t see any wiggle room for sickness. Is there any? Am I missing something?

Sent by e-mail

**ANSWER:** I am unclear on your meaning when you say you “don’t see any wiggle room for sickness.” Do you mean that you don’t see that sickness is an excuse for not fasting? If that’s your meaning, I would revise the question a bit and ask: Does the requirement to “afflict your soul” mean that one must fast the entire 24-hour period even if doing so means risking the worsening of a health condition? I would further ask: Does “afflict

your soul” necessarily mean a total (dry) fast? Or is the primary objective here to maintain the inner disposition that fasting normatively (and outwardly) expresses? No doubt, the inner disposition is the primary aim (since without it the outward expression is meaningless). I would say, then, that the primary objective can be achieved even by someone who needs to take a little food for his health’s sake. We have here the same principle underlying Jesus’ statement, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” Legitimate human needs take precedence over the letter of the law.

The post-millennial rebellion and the White Throne Judgment—two events, or only one?

**QUESTION:** I hear people in the churches of God saying that Revelation 20:7–10 is speaking of the second resurrection.... Please explain this passage.

L.C., Chicago, Illinois

**ANSWER:** First, let’s look at Revelation 20:7–10 and pay close attention to the details:

“7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea. 9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of

the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. 10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet [were cast]...” (NKJV).

Next, let’s pay close attention to the details of the White Throne Judgment, which is described in verses 11–15:

“11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” (NKJV).

These two passages certainly seem to describe two very different events. The first one begins with Satan’s release and his going out to deceive the nations. The impression one gets is that the nations “in the four corners of the earth” were already there by the time the Millennium ended. The second passage describes the dead being judged according to a record of their works.



The descriptions of Death, Hades, and the sea giving or delivering up the dead and of the dead “standing before God” most likely refers back to verse 5: “But the rest of the dead [the dead who were not in the “first resurrection”] did not live again until the thousand years were finished.”

A cursory reading of verses 10 and 11 leaves the clear impression that the appearance of “the great white throne” and commencement of the judgment of the dead *follows* the fiery destruction of “Gog and Magog.” Those who claim that both 20:7–10 and 20:11–15 describe aspects of the second resurrection and White Throne Judgment period have failed to pay close enough attention to the details of how the wicked meet their end in these two passages. The peoples of “Gog and Magog” are consumed by fire **coming down out of heaven** from God (verse 9). This is contrasted with the devil’s fate, which is described in the very next verse: “The devil...was **cast into the lake of fire and brimstone** where the beast and the false prophet [had been cast a thousand years earlier]” (verse 10). Clearly, fire coming down from heaven is not merely another way of describing being thrown into a lake of fire.

With that in mind, notice the description of the fate of the wicked in the White Throne Judgment: “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was **cast into the lake of fire.**”

To summarize: The rebellion of 10:7–10 ends with the wicked being destroyed by **fire that comes down from heaven**, but the wicked of 10:11–15 are **cast into a lake of fire**, which verses 9–10 show to be two distinct events. Note again the stark contrast: one group is destroyed by fire *from above*; the other group is *thrown into* a lake of fire. One is under Satan’s deceptive influence; the other is judged on the basis of past works. These are clearly two separate events that have two separate purposes.

Are Old Testament laws still in effect?

**QUESTION:** Would you please explain Romans 6:14? Some people say it means God’s laws are no longer in effect.

*Sent by e-mail*

**ANSWER:** Romans 6:14 says, “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” This simply means that, **where justification is concerned**, we are not under law but under grace. If we depended on law *as a means of justification*, we would be doomed, for there is no law that can blot out our record of sins (see Galatians 3:21). We depend, then, on the grace of God for the remission of sins and full reconciliation with God. As Paul goes on to explain in verse 15, this does not mean that once the record of sins has been blotted out we may now sin (break God’s law) with impunity. If we do that, we can put ourselves back under sin’s dominion, which ultimately produces death (Romans 6:23).

What does it mean to be “under the law”?

**QUESTION:** You said that when Paul spoke of the Galatians putting themselves “under the law,” he meant they were attempting to put themselves under the Sinaitic covenant. It was always my understanding that “under the law” means “under the *penalty of the law.*” Do you believe we were wrong in our understanding of this?

*W.S., Tyler, Texas*

**ANSWER:** No, not at all. A Spirit-begotten believer who puts himself under the Sinaitic covenant *in order to be justified, or “righted” with God*, automatically puts himself under the penalty of the law. This is precisely the problem Paul has in view when he writes, “Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you.... You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace” (Galatians 5:2, 4 NRSV).

Circumcision was the rite whereby a non-Jewish man became a proselyte to Judaism. The convert to Judaism, upon circumcision, put himself “under the law”—that is, he bound himself to all the terms of the Sinaitic covenant. The problem in Galatia was that believers

who had already been justified through faith were now being told that they had to be circumcised (become Jews by adoption) *to be* justified. In other words, they were being told that true justification had not yet occurred or that it was in some way incomplete or inadequate, and to correct this they had to become full Jewish proselytes.

The “gospel” of the Judaizers was a “another gospel” (Galatians 1:6), one that amounted to exchanging faith in Christ for salvation to trusting in the law.

Christ’s thrones, interracial marriage, and original sin

**QUESTION:** Please I’m requesting if you could help enlighten me on three points I’ve recently studied.

1. I recently read that Christ, in His second coming, comes first to the throne of David and then later shifts to His own throne in Jerusalem. I find it difficult to distinguish between these two thrones and “the shift” involved.

2. Interracial marriage. I read that, of the three main races (white, black, and yellow), that based on God’s laws, interracial marriage between these are prohibited. Please what actually is the “yellow” race? And secondly, I haven’t yet been able to find Scriptures or biblical principles clearly prohibiting “interracial marriage.”

3. I’ve studied and accepted that the human (sinful) nature is not created by God and neither is sin passed onto the child at conception, but the child after birth is later “infected” with evil from the prince of the power of the air, Satan, the spirit that works disobedience in carnal minds.

My worry is: from the above standpoint, what then could David have meant by his statement in Psalm 51:5: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me”?

*K.F. (sent by e-mail)*

**ANSWER:** I will answer your three questions in the order in which you asked them.

1) I know of no scriptural reason for distinguishing between the throne of David and the throne Christ will sit upon when He reigns from Jerusalem. Scripture says nothing about a “shift” from one throne to another. Moreover, I believe it is a mistake to distinguish between the throne Christ *presently* sits upon and the throne He will sit upon after He returns to reign on the earth. While the seat He occupies in heaven may be materially different from the one He will occupy during the millennial reign, a “throne” is much more than a chair—it is a symbol of the position, power, and honor of the one who sits upon it. Christ *presently* sits at God’s right hand and is sovereign over creation. The risen Lord said to His disciples, “**All authority** has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” So He is already King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and He already sits upon a throne representing “all authority in heaven and on earth.” When He comes to the earth and takes His seat upon the throne of His (earthly) father David, He will exercise the very same authority He was given after His resurrection and presently has as He sits at His Father’s right hand in heaven. So I would suggest that we not concern ourselves with “shifts” between one throne and another, for regardless the material composition or location of the throne He occupies, it symbolizes the authority, honor, and position He has in heaven now.

2) The reason you have not found “scriptures or biblical principles clearly prohibiting ‘interracial marriage’” is because there are none! There is not a single commandment in the Law forbidding interracial marriage, and nothing in the New Testament forbids it. The New Testament Church brought Jews together with Gentiles of all kinds to make up an assembly from “all nations and tongues and tribes and peoples.” If interracial marriage were a sin, Paul would have certainly said so in the lists of sins he included in his epistles. Further, when Israel was in the wilderness after leaving Egypt, God punished Aaron and Miriam for ridiculing their brother Moses because of his marriage to an Ethiopian (black) woman. And, contrary to the teachings of some, God’s disapproval of the Jews marrying “foreign wives” in the time of Ezra was not because their wives were racially different but because they brought their pagan idols with them and would ultimately draw the men of Israel into idolatry if these newly formed relationships continued—and that was one of the sins that got them kicked out of

the Promised Land in the first place. **Interracial marriage is not a sin!** (The word “yellow” has been applied to peoples of East Asia, and it is generally regarded as offensive.)

3) Humans are equipped with an array of emotions and drives. We have the capacity to feel and express anger, love, joy, fear, and jealousy, and we also have life-preserving/perpetuating appetites, such as hunger and thirst and the sex drive, which is associated with the innate desire for companionship with the opposite sex. All of these emotions and drives are good. God created them, and He gave man laws to guide him in how he is to channel and use them for his benefit. But what man does not have is a supreme will. He finds himself tempted to misdirect one or more of these drives and emotions. The problem is made worse by deceptive influences, especially that of the devil and his minions, and the many, ever-present worldly allurements. From this, we can see why sin is so all-pervasive in the world. And that’s just what David was talking about in Psalm 51:5. The verse reads, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” This is clearly a poetic expression and should be understood as hyperbole, not as a scientific analysis of the spiritual condition of the human infant. David writes in the same genre in Psalm 58:3: “The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.” We know that no one goes astray or speaks lies “as soon as they are born.” This is hyperbole. It is a deliberate exaggeration designed to emphasize the enormity and all-pervasiveness of sin and evil.

What about divine omniscience?

**QUESTION:** If God is not constantly and simultaneously present everywhere in this natural world, how can/should we understand God’s omniscience? Do some events happen and God doesn’t instantly know, since, supposedly, His Spirit wasn’t in that scene at the moment? Does God have limited knowledge of the thoughts or deeds of, say, an unconverted person?

*K.F. (sent by e-mail)*

**ANSWER:** Omnipresence means “everywhere present,” but the real question is: *How* is God everywhere present? God is **wholly other than** the created cosmos, so He is not literally *in* the universe. He is “in” every place in the sense that there is no place that’s inaccessible to Him; therefore, there is no event He is unaware of or outside His reach. When Scripture speaks of the Spirit of God coming upon someone or being poured out, it is speaking of the *dynamic presence* of God—or, to put it another way, the power of God, not just *a* power *from* God, but *the* power *of* God, or *God Himself acting powerfully within the world*. He is always aware of all that happens as it happens, but He does not always intervene.

A good (even if imperfect) analogy is as follows:  
Your children are in a large room and have access to toys, games, and other items they can occupy their time with. The room is equipped with multiple cameras, which enable you to keep an eye on them from another room. There is also a screen and speakers in their room, so if you see misbehavior or if a dispute arises you can instantly address it. In one sense, you’re already there, because you’re always watching, and you can instantly “be there” in the sense that at any moment you can appear on the screen and speak directly to your children, though you are not literally in the room.

Similarly, the transcendent God is “in” the world in the sense that no event occurs outside His sphere of awareness or ability to instantly respond to it.

I am in general agreement with the open theists who believe that God has full knowledge of all things present and past, but does not have exhaustive definite *fore*-knowledge—in other words, the future truly is in large measure unsettled. God is omniscient—He knows all things—in the sense that He knows all existing realities as well as all possibilities regarding the future.

However, since I believe that God Himself is open (just as Scripture presents Him)—i.e., is capable of changing His mind in response to human free-will actions—I remain open to the concept that He has self-imposed limitations on His knowledge of the present and past.



# In Loving Memory

## Barbara Kauffung

1940 – 2020



Barbara Kauffung

Barbara Marie Webb Church Kauffung, 80, of Forest Park, Ohio, was born February 5, 1940, in Justell, Kentucky. She passed away August 2, 2020.

Barbara is survived by her husband Thomas Kauffung; her daughter Cathy (Doug) Blackburn; her step-sons Thomas (Cathy) Kauffung and Daniel (Donna) Kauffung; her step-daughter Vivian Rust; her grandsons Jerit and Matthew Blackburn and

Colton and Clayton Church; and her granddaughters Rachelle Church, Amanda Church Kerrick, and Rebecca (Josh) Howell.

She has 8 step-grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren, and 3 step-great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her parents Edward Webb and Blanche Stover Webb; her late husband Jack L. Church; her sister Lula Bell Webb Hall; her brother Ernest “Buddy” Webb; and her sons Jack E. Church and James L Church. She was also preceded in death by her step-daughters Phyllis Kauffung Sizelove and Mary Kauffung; and by her step-sons Donald Kauffung and George Kauffung.

She attended Church of God International. She will be dearly missed by her friends and family. She enjoyed traveling and socializing with her family and friends.

A graveside ceremony was held at Clarmont Memorial Gardens in Winchester, Kentucky, on August 5, 2020.

## Bobby Lee Whitt

1935 – 2020



Bobby & Ann Whitt

Bobby Lee Whitt was born on April 17, 1935, in Amonate, Virginia to Raleigh Graham and Uva Lorene (Sparks) Whitt, parents who were unselfish, caring, and loving.

Bobby made his career as a union roofer. He made his life as a dedicated man of God, ordained minister, son,

husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, and friend. Bobby was proud to be a United States Army Veteran. He was a talented musician and entertainer and a skillful story and joke teller. He was a man of wisdom who knew when to quietly listen and when to boldly speak.

Bobby married the love of his life, Ann Westray Wilson on April 5, 1985, and, together, they built a life they loved.

Bobby deeply cherished his children and grandchildren. He was loved and admired by them. Each one of them is correct in knowing they were his favorite. He is survived by eight children who are proud to call him Dad: Debbie (Rick) Zimmerman, Lynda (Troy) Garrett, Clyde (Susan) Coulter, Tim (Sherry) Coulter, Steve (Laurie) Coulter, Lisa (Mark) Spencer, Marilyn (Jeff) Wehrman, and Jeff Wilson. He is survived by 24 grandchildren who will miss his hugs and corny jokes: Tiffany (Matthew) Eddington, Leesa (Jeff) Browning, Blake Zimmerman, Rebecca (Jared) Pentz, Katie (Jerry) McCarty, Sarah McCarty, Eric (Dianna) Coulter, Kerri (Vadim) Roschin, Josh (Ashley) Coulter, Tim (Simone) Coulter, Amanda (Marvin) Frison, Ben Coulter, Katrina (Jason) Mims, Lauren (Andrew) Freese, James Coulter, Kylie Coulter, Cassandra Coulter, Sean (Kasey) McGillem, Jeremy (Melanie) Wilson, Jordanne (Seth) Vondersaar, Brock Wehrman, Kyle McCord, and Tyler Garrett; and 32 great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by one grandchild, Erin Coulter, and one great-grandchild, Rylee Wood.

Bobby was the eldest of nine children who loved and encouraged one another. He is survived by Jan (Rhudy)

Wright, Billy (Georgia) Whitt, June (Jacce) Rush, and Linda (Fred) Reed. He was preceded in death by his siblings, Jackie Whitt, Pam (Mark) Alltop, Mary (Dan) Lawrence, and Ricky (Caroline) Whitt.

He leaves behind numerous other family members and friends who laughed, loved, and shared music and life with him.

Bobby Lee Whitt, a great man of God, finished his race here on this earth on Saturday, July



Bobby as serviceman and as musician



25, 2020. In his memory, please consider a donation to the Parkinson’s Foundation. Or, do a good deed, sing a good song, or tell a bad joke in his name. And be sure to share the love of God with everyone you meet.

He would have wanted that most of all.

## Jack McPherson

1921 – 2020



Jack McPherson

Jack Kay McPherson passed away at Elmcroft Senior Living Center in Lake Jackson, Texas on August 29, 2020 at the age of 99. He was born in Casper, Wyoming to Martin and Alice McPherson on July 31, 1921. His loving wife of 66 years, Etta Caroline McPherson, preceded him in death in April of 2014.

Jack was preceded in death by his parents; his siblings, Robert McPherson, Shirley Cassidy, and Louise Wohlfort; and his daughter Kathy C. McPherson. Jack is survived by his children, Thomas I. Coffman Jr. and wife Frances, Terry A. McPherson and Candy K. Finley and husband Bill; ten grandchildren and fourteen great-grandchildren, along with numerous nieces and nephews. He had over 20 years of active military service in the U.S. Army. He retired as a Chief Warrant Officer 3 and earned the distinction of being the only Warrant Officer ever to receive two Legion of Merit Awards at that time. He then served another 20+ years of civil service in the NSA, helping to protect our country.

Jack wrote a book about the story of his life called *The Long, Long Journey: From a Sheep Wagon to a Cadillac*, a very interesting story about his life, his military service in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam, and his life around the USA and the world. He believed in living life to the fullest. At times we might be working on projects around the house, and if the CB radio said the fish were biting, we went fishing. He has done so many things. He was an excellent electrician, carpenter, and mechanic. He spent his life traveling and living in different parts of the world. He raced his Sprite in the United Kingdom and Europe in the '60s. During his life he enjoyed boating, abalone div-

ing, hunting, fishing, water skiing, climbing trees, and traveling in his motorhome. During the last few years he enjoyed cruises to the Caribbean with his family. He ran Black Angus cattle in Devine, Texas and a Trout Farm in Yellville, Arkansas. He helped anyone that needed something done—electrical wiring, cars repaired, and anything else that was needed. He was an active member in church wherever he lived, even to the point of writing and presenting sermons when asked. He touched so many lives during his life and will be deeply missed by family and friends.

A service was held at Labby Memorial Funeral Home in Leesville, Louisiana on September 12, 2020, at 11:00 a.m., with Wynn Skelton officiating. Interment was held after the service at Beckom Cemetery in Hornbeck, Louisiana under the direction of Labby Memorial Funeral Home of Leesville.

## Bob & Florence Mikulla

1931 – 2020 / 1933 – 2020



Bob & Florence Mikulla

On August 6, 2020 Florence Mikulla passed away, followed on August 7, 2020 by her husband Bob Mikulla in Chesapeake, Virginia. Bob was born on November 23, 1931 and Flo was born on January 17, 1933.

Bob and Flo were married for 67 years. They joined the Worldwide Church of God in 1970 and attended their first Feast of Tabernacles in the Poconos.

Bob and Florence spent some time with the End Time Assembly, where Bob was ordained an elder. They then were part of the Independent Church of God, Virginia.

Bob and Flo began meeting with the Church of God International in the Portsmouth, Virginia area over the last ten years or so. Bob would provide Bible studies for our group there on a regular basis.

The Mikullas are survived by their son Wayne, daughter-in-law Jacie, and two granddaughters (Taylor and Julia). They are also survived by their daughter Kelly and son-in-law Fred and two grandsons (Daniel and Jonathan) and another granddaughter (Krystal).

## Eve Dean Palmer

1931 – 2020

Eva Dean Ward Palmer was born June 13, 1931 in Ashland, Louisiana to James and Mattie Ward. She died on November 1, 2020 in Minden, Louisiana.

She was a spirited and strong-willed woman who was deeply involved with her church and valued her relationship with God and her family. She led a simple life in the country and was an amazing cook. Her dishes were popular at many a church potluck. She had a passion for crocheting, gardening, canning, and raising cattle. She was a longtime member of the Church of God.

She was preceded in death by her parents James and Mattie Ward, her husband Neil Palmer, and her son Gary Palmer.

She is survived by her two granddaughters, Carmen Smith of Gentry, Arkansas and Maria Palmer of Steamboat Springs, Colorado; and two great-grandchildren, Cheyenne and Laramie Smith of Gentry, Arkansas.



Eva Dean Palmer



Benjamin R. Chapman

1934 – 2020



Ben & Lois Chapman

Benjamin Roy Chapman passed away on November 11, 2020, at the age of 86. Burial was in Gladewater Memorial Park Cemetery in Big Sandy, Texas. Ben was preceded in death by his wife, Lois Lee Armstrong Chapman, who passed away on September 7, 2017. Ben was baptized in 1957, and was ordained a minis-

ter in the Radio Church of God on the Day of Pentecost in 1963. He was with the Church of God International since it was founded in 1978. He was a member of the ministerial council for the first three years of its existence. After a 15-year hiatus, he became a member of the ministerial council again in 1996. Ben was an engineer and specialist in computer technology. He did contract work for various corporations. Ben was a devoted and faithful man of God and carried out his duties as a minister of Jesus Christ for as long as he was able. He will surely be missed.

Lehman Jesse Booher

1933 – 2020

Funeral services for Lehman Jesse Booher, 86, of Lufkin were held Sunday, October 11, 2020 in the Carroway Funeral Home Chapel with Elder Dale Baughman officiating. Graveside services with military honors was held Monday, October 12, 2020 in the Campground Cemetery in Evening Shade, Arkansas. Lehman Jesse Booher, loving husband and father,

passed away on Wednesday, October 7, 2020. He was born to Frank Booher and Jesse Paysinger Booher on December 21, 1933 in Batesville, Arkansas. Lehman served his country in the United States Navy and graduated from the University of Arkansas. He moved to Texas and has resided in Lufkin since 1969. He retired from Lufkin Federal Savings and Loan as Senior Vice President in 1992. He was a civic leader in Lufkin. He served as president of the Lufkin Kiwanis Club and was involved with the Chamber of Commerce and many other organizations. He was very active in his church for many years. He was an avid sportsman, reader, and gardener, and he traveled the world with his wife, Jean, during their retirement years. He is survived by his loving wife, Jean Booher. Their four daughters are Cheryl Jarvis (Mike), Lorenda Sanford (Robby) deceased, Sandra May (David), and Theresa Booher (James) deceased. He was also blessed with five grandchildren, Steven Havard (Michelle), Jeremy Sanford (Shanie), Johnathan Arriola (Laura), Jennifer Sanford (Jerry), and Jessica Gardner (Jerry), and 13 great-grandchildren. He was dearly loved by all of his family and will live forever in our hearts.

A Test of Faith

by Michelle Algarra



In order to understand faith we must carefully read the faith chapter in Hebrews 11. This chapter defines the meaning of faith as well as lists down the important deeds some individuals in the Bible were able to accomplish.

One important detail we need to take into consideration is that the Bible does not provide a comprehensive list of all true Christians who are part of the faith chapter, although the names of great biblical characters are mentioned. Only God has a master list of all true Christians who have manifested faith in their lives in varying degrees. There are untold numbers of Christians who have undergone tremendous persecution and martyrdom in the past, but whose names are unknown to the world and are not listed in this chapter. They are the multitude of unknown “martyrs of God.” Even without having to experience torture, though, faith can be manifested in a multitude of other ways. The love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, delineates this perspective: Without manifesting the traits of *agape* love, the sacrifice of one’s physical body would be a useless exercise of penitence. Many Catholics and even outright pagan religions practice penance and self-immolation as part of their rites of worship. And yet, they are not true Christians and do not practice true faith. It is only the manifestation of *agape* love and the belief that with God all things are possible that real faith can be manifested.

Christians should not constantly worry about the possibility they may have to give their lives in martyrdom as proof of the validity of their faith, like a sword of Damocles over one’s head. It is the hope and trust in the all-powerful God who is in control of all circumstances, and character development that manifests faith, that will determine our future inheritance, not the confident boasting that one is prepared to give up one’s life through physical torture, that manifests faith. If we trust and hope God answers all prayers, including prayers regarding problems with overcoming, that signifies faith. To believe God can help us overcome, and that our lives as members of the true body of Christ will not be in vain because the promise of eternal life is the reward we look forward to and a goal possible to attain despite human weaknesses and failings, is already a determinant of faith.

Scriptural References:

Ephesians 2:8–10: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. 2 Peter 3:9: The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 1 Corinthians 10:13: There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the

temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Romans 2:4: Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 2 John 5:3: This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous. Romans 3:25: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. Romans 18:18–23: For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us, for the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the Sons of God. For the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption. To wit, the redemption of our body. Romans 1:17: For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live by faith. Corinthians 13 (read entire chapter) Hebrews 11:1 (KJV; read entire chapter): Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Hebrews 11 (Moffatt; read entire chapter): Now faith means that we are confident of what we hope for, convinced of what we do not see. It was for this that the men of old won their record. It is by faith that we understand that the world was fashioned by the Word of God, and thus the visible was made out of the invisible.

Cognitive Dissonance

by Michelle Algarra

The medical dictionary defines “Cognitive Dissonance” as a “psychological conflict resulting from simultaneously held incongruous beliefs and attitudes.” There are two meanings behind cognitive dissonance. One is the mental conflict resulting from ambivalent religious belief systems, standards of morality, values, principles, ideologies, etc. The other is the conflict between one’s belief system in the Church of God and its actual practice in one’s behavior and lifestyle. The first meaning or application of the term cognitive dissonance is the mental conflict an individual being called by God goes through during the initial stages of conversion. One has to make a personal assessment of the marked differences between religious beliefs and practices formerly upheld and the new ones one is learning. The more a per-

son being called by God watches the TV programs/broadcasts, reads the Bible and church literature, or attends Bible studies and seminars, the greater the degree of understanding gained until the realization that the religious affiliation one formerly professed is false dawns on the person. There may be some confusion, initially; in extreme cases doubting even the existence of God (considering the falsity of various religious beliefs of traditional Christianity), but through prayer God opens one’s mind and heart and understanding descends on the person. There may be continual cognitive dissonance as the Christian finds there is conflict in major and minor points of doctrine within the body of Christ, and settles for affiliation with a particular Church of God organization one deems most ideal. The other type of cognitive dissonance is the possibili-

ty of ambivalence between exegesis and hermeneutics, which may lead to hypocrisy. One’s belief system as a member of the Church of God and understanding of the Scriptures may not translate into proper Christian behavior. There’s a danger one can have a Pharisaical attitude, continue imbibing spiritual truths without developing Christian character. When a Christian in God’s church realizes this kind of dissonance is present, anxiety or worry over the possibility that salvation may be lost and one’s calling into the church may be in vain or all for naught may occur. The only remedy for this type of conflict is persistent or importunate prayers to God for help in Christian overcoming. The Bible says nothing is impossible with God, and repentance and bearing fruits through the intervention of the Holy Spirit is the realizing factor.



# Should We Venerate Mary and the Saints?

by Mike James

**Editor’s note:** This is part one of a series examining the practice of veneration of Mary and the saints. Once the study is complete, we’ll offer the entire series as a booklet.

## Mary and the Saints in Scripture

The question we will address in this booklet is whether or not the Virgin Mary and the Saints (those humans called saints by the Catholic and Orthodox Church) should be worshipped and/or venerated. For some believers in Mary and the Saints, we could consider what these Christians do as worship. The Catholic and Orthodox Church would use the word *veneration* to distinguish respect and admiration of the Saints from worship of God. Even some Protestants, like the Anglican Church, promote veneration of Mary and a belief in her Immaculate Conception (born without original sin) and Assumption to heaven. In order to address this matter, I want to begin with a focus on any scriptural evidence that would indicate that these individuals should be worshipped or venerated. Our primary focus in the Church of God International is to rely on scriptural evidence for our practices and beliefs. The Catholic and Orthodox Church believe Scripture is equal to their tradition in determining doctrine and belief. Hopefully this booklet will help you make up your mind as to which method makes more sense on this subject.

Let us begin by focusing on the relevant scriptures pertaining to the Virgin Mary. Below I will cite the New Testament scriptures addressing Mary, and we will summarize what each scripture is saying. Please look up the scriptures for yourself to see if you agree with our assessment. We will be looking for any scriptural evidence that supports the concept of worship or veneration being due to Mary. Many Catholics and Orthodox Christians pray to Mary and believe she can answer their prayers. But does Scripture provide evidence for this?

Matthew 1:16–20. Mary is mentioned in reference to her husband Joseph; Mary is mentioned as the mother of Jesus and as being with child through the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 2:11. The Magi visit the young Jesus in His house and worship Him. Mary is just mentioned as being there.

Matthew 12:48–50. Jesus puts no special emphasis on His mother.

Matthew 13:55. Mary is merely mentioned as the mother of Jesus here, and it is also mentioned that Jesus has brothers and sisters.

Mark 3:31–35. Same as Matthew 12:48–50.

Mark 6:3. This scripture is very similar to the preceding scripture in Matthew.

Luke 1:27. Mentions that Mary was a virgin when she was betrothed to marry

Joseph.

Luke 1:30. An angel informs Mary that she has found favor with God (this scripture will be addressed a little later).

Luke 1:34. Mary asks a question of the angel.

Luke 1:38. Mary says she is the Lord’s servant.

Luke 1:39. Mary hurries to a town.

Luke 1:41. Mary greets Elizabeth.

Luke 1:46. Mary says her soul glorifies the Lord.

Luke 1:56. Mary stays with Elizabeth three months.

Luke 2:5. Mary is Joseph’s espoused wife.

Luke 2:16. Shepherds find Mary and Joseph.

Luke 2:19. Mary ponders.

Luke 2:34. Simeon blesses Mary.

Luke 8:19–21. Same as Matthew 12:48–50 and Mark 3:31–35.

Luke 11:27–28. Jesus does not offer Mary any special praise when He had opportunity to do so.

Acts 1:14. Mary prays with the disciples.

Carefully reading each of these scriptures we find no support for the idea that Mary the mother of Jesus has any special power or position. Mary was a righteous woman, for God to choose her, but should we be praying to her? There is no scriptural support for the special veneration or adulation or even worship of Mary by Christians. If the Bible does not support veneration or worship for Mary, how did this practice come to take root within a major part of Christianity? We will now begin to look at historical evidence to find the answer, but let us first turn to any biblical evidence to support veneration or worship of “saints.”

In the Old Testament there are four words translated “saint” or “saints.” The words are *qadowsh*, *qaddiysh*, *qodesh*, and *chaciyd*. These four words are used 38 times in the Old Testament. In none of these 38 occurrences are the saints ever addressed as being prayed to or worshipped. The saints are not mentioned as being aware of anything in death or residing in heaven. When we turn to the New Testament, one word is used for “saint” or “saints” and that word is *hagios* in the Greek. This word is used 62 times in the New Testament, and once again there is no mention of anyone praying to the saints or the saints having any special powers after death to answer prayers.

One scripture that causes some confusion is found in Revelation 6:9–11, which speaks of the souls under the altar in heaven crying out to God. We must remember the book of Revelation is a vision that John is seeing. The book is highly symbolic and most of it is not to be understood literally. Notice in verse 11 these “souls” are told to rest a little while longer. We understand this to mean these souls are asleep awaiting the Second Coming of Christ when they will awaken out of





their graves. Please see a literature and audio recording list at the end of the next section that will provide numerous resources to prove this point.

There is one scripture in Jude 14 which could cause some confusion in regard to where the saints reside. We will show in the next section of this booklet that the dead saints (Peter, Paul, Moses, etc.) are asleep in death. But some believe Jude 14 addresses saints like Peter and Paul coming out of heaven with Jesus. We must remember that *hagios* means “holy ones” in Greek and can refer to true believers in Jesus (Peter, Paul, etc.), or it can also refer to God’s angels. Jude is referring to a prophecy made by Enoch about Jesus returning to the earth with His angels. “Enoch’s ‘holy myriads,’ ten thousands of angels, are found throughout Scripture: Deut. 33:2; Dan. 7:10; Matt. 25:31; II Thess. 1:7.”<sup>1</sup> Holy ones not only refer to “saints” in scripture, but also to “angels.”

Where are Mary and the Saints Now?

Many Christians today are taught that the dead go to heaven to be with God. Many are also taught the wicked people go to hell and burn forever or live in separation from God. Many in the Christian professing world continue to believe these basic teachings. But does the Bible teach this? First, let us begin by looking at the Word of God on what the state of the dead is. This needs to be understood before we begin to look at what the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church teach about prayer to the saints and the Virgin Mary. We will also address how this false teaching infiltrated the Christian Church.

Let us begin by looking at scriptures in the Old Testament dealing with death.

Genesis 2:7. God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

Genesis 3:19. Man is dust and to dust he will return.

Genesis 7:21–22. Animals have the same breath of life that man has.

1 Kings 2:10. Death is likened to sleep.

1 Kings 11:21, 43. Death likened to sleep.

1 Kings 14:20, 31. Death likened to sleep.

2 Kings 8:24. Death likened to sleep.

2 Kings 10:35. Death likened to sleep.

2 Kings 16:20. Death likened to sleep.

2 Kings 24:6. Death likened to sleep.

2 Chronicles 9:31. Death likened to sleep.

2 Chronicles 16:13. Death likened to sleep.

2 Chronicles 21:1. Death likened to sleep.

2 Chronicles 27:9. Death likened to sleep.

2 Chronicles 33:20. Death likened to sleep.

Job 4:17. Man is mortal not immortal.

Ecclesiastes 3:19–20. Men and beasts die alike. A man has no preeminence over a beast when it comes to death. They both return to the dust.

Ecclesiastes 9:5–10. The dead know nothing. They are not aware of anything in death.

Psalms 6:5. There is no remembrance of God in death.

Psalms 115:17. The dead don’t praise God, they are



Pope Francis & statue of Our Lady of Fatima



Nigerian Catholics praying the Rosary at a Marian shrine

silent.

Psalms 146:4. When you die your thoughts perish.

Daniel 12:1–4. The dead will sleep until the time of the end.

Here are some New Testament scriptures that support the contention that in death man is asleep.

1 Timothy 6:15–16. God only has immortality.

1 Timothy 1:17. God is immortal (incorruptible).

1 Corinthians 15:53–54. Man is corruptible and mortal, but he can attain incorruption and immortality (only through God).

1 Corinthians 15:14–18. If Christ did not rise from the grave than all those who have died would have no chance for life.

1 Corinthians 15:23. The resurrection of the righteous dead occurs at Christ’s second coming.

1 Thessalonians 4:16. The dead in Christ don’t wake up until the second coming of Christ.

John 11:11–14. Jesus called death sleep.

1 Corinthians 15:51–53. Death is likened to sleep and we overcome death when we are resurrected.

1 Corinthians 11:30. Death likened to sleep.

Revelation 20:5. The rest of the dead are resurrected at the end of the millennium.

Two major views of human nature are held in Christianity. One is called classical dualism and the other is called biblical wholism. Dualism maintains that human nature consists of a material, mortal body and a spiritual, immortal soul. The soul survives death and goes to heaven, hell, or purgatory. At the resurrection the soul is reunited with the body. The wholistic view holds that body and spirit are part of one indivisible organism. At death man is unaware until a future resurrection when God will reanimate the dead being.

Many scholars are in agreement with the Church of God International’s take on the state of the dead, which is wholistic. Some noted Protestant theologians who counter their own denominations dualistic perspective include Oscar Cullmann, Clark Pinnock, and John R. W. Stott.

Professor Phillip Cary is Professor of Philosophy at Eastern University and Scholar-in-Residence at the Templeton Honors College. He holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy and Religious Studies from Yale University. He says this about the state of the dead: “The Christian hope was not the hope of going to heaven with Jesus, but the hope of Christ coming from heaven to earth to establish the Kingdom of God on earth and restore all things and redeem the world and raise everyone from the dead. The hope was resurrection from the dead.” He goes on to say, “It’s in that interval or interim between death and resurrection that the Christian notion of the immortality of the soul ended up developing. I mentioned that the immortality of the soul is not an idea that turns up in the New Testament...”<sup>2</sup> If the immortality of the soul concept did not come from the Bible, where did it come from?

Cary has this to say about that: “It’s Greek philosophy, and in particular, the great philosopher Plato...of the 4th century B.C. who taught us that human beings are made of body and soul, that body and soul together make us

human. This is rather different, it turns out, from biblical ways of thinking.... It’s Plato who defines death as separation of the body and soul in a treatise called the *Phaedo*.... It’s also Plato who, at great length, argues that the soul is immortal, imperishable, and cannot die.... That is not a doctrine taught anywhere that I know of in the New Testament.”<sup>3</sup>

Finally, Cary has one more thing to say that will be important for us to recognize as we move forward in this booklet: “Another Platonic concept is the notion that good souls ultimately go to heaven. Plato has that picture of souls going up to heaven. It’s a picture that gets into the Western tradition through writers like Cicero, who also wrote philosophical stuff imitating Plato. You’ll never see anywhere in the New Testament or the Old Testament a picture of souls going to heaven.”<sup>4</sup> For further proof on this see our free booklets and CDs at the end of this section. Plato and Cicero helped influence the early Christian thinkers, but these ideas predate even ancient Greece.

We know that the Greeks from very early times believed, as all primitive peoples do, that each man had a soul which inhabited the body as its life-spirit, and that this soul survived the dissolution of the body and either departed to a shadowy realm where it passed a mournful existence or still hovered about the tomb.<sup>5</sup> Many scholars agree the Israelites of the Old Testament did not have this belief until they began to be influenced by the religions around them. The same thing occurred with the early Christians.

Some of you may be in disagreement with the first few pages of this booklet. You may be thinking of scriptures like Lazarus and the rich man or the thief on the cross. We do not have the time or space in this booklet to deal with some scriptures that can appear confusing. But we do have other resources that address these scriptures. We have a number of other booklets on this subject that you can order free of charge. Just go to our website at [cgi.org](http://cgi.org) and order these titles under our literature section or read them online: *Immortality: God’s Gift to the Saints; Hell, You Say?; and The Rich Man and Lazarus: Where Are They?* You can also order these CDs from our website ([cgi.org](http://cgi.org)): “Where Are Enoch and Elijah?” and “What About Heaven?”

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> R.C.H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament: The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 2001), 639.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Cary, *The History of Christian Theology*, (Chantilly: The Teaching Company, 2008), p. 267.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 270-271.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 271.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Woodburn Hyde, *Greek Religion and Its Survivals*, (London/Calcutta/Sydney: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd. 1924), p. 21-22.



# Congregations of CGI-India have wonderful Feast



“I am happy to inform you all that we have had a wonderful Feast of Tabernacles (Feast of Sukkot) and Last Great Day in all the congregations of the CGI registered churches in both ANDHRA PRADESH and TELANGANA”–Sam G. Kumar, Minister, CGI , Bhimavaram congregation.





# Philippine Brethren Celebrate “Best Virtual Feast Ever!”

This year’s Feast observance in the Philippines was an unprecedented one. Due to the existing COVID-19 pandemic, the Philippine brethren were not able to hold an on-site celebration in our various traditional Festival sites. However, we still celebrated it joyfully as commanded by God in **Deuteronomy 16:13-15 (NIV)**: “Celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress. Be joyful at your festival—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites, the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns. For seven days celebrate the festival to the LORD your God at the place the LORD will choose. For the LORD your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.”

The anticipation for and actual celebration of this joyous Feast was palpable even with the current situation. The pandemic did not really stop us from doing what should be done in accordance with God’s command. For the duration of the Feast until the Last Great Day, we did celebrate, aided by the modern wonders of technology!

### Going Virtual

All of the activities for the duration of the Feast were done virtually—from fellowships, services, our traditional *bayanihan* night and talent show night. But, even if we did all of these virtually, we still felt the joyful and warm atmosphere we normally would experience during the Feast. If only for this, we already complied with the command to “be joyful.” This only made the brethren really look forward to the time when we can meet in person and enjoy each other’s company.

### Virtual Services

Our online services were conducted via Zoom. Opening and closing prayers were rendered live by the assigned prayer men. The messages, offertory music, and special music were individually prerecorded and were incorporated with opening hymns and closing hymns into one seamless video presentation. This was then played on Zoom and broadcast simultaneously on Facebook Live and YouTube. Brethren were able to sing the hymns in-place (but with muted Zoom mics), as the lyrics were flashed on-screen and the accompanying music was played.

We still feel blessed that we were able to hold services and hear messages prepared by the speakers and ministers. As is to be expected, the messages were a delight to hear. They reinforce our faith in God, gave great inspiration to move forward towards the Kingdom of God and provided that much needed spiritual lift.

A dominant theme from the messages is the fact that we are all tabernacling in this earthly body waiting for the time when we will have a permanent, eternal tabernacle when God finally comes to dwell among us. In other words, everything that we have now is temporary and we should focus our attention to that which is permanent.

A secondary theme centers on our future role as kings and priests under Christ during the Millennium and how that can be achieved.

We were also blessed to have three ministers from the US deliver wonderful messages to us. Messrs. Wayne Hendrix, Bill Watson, and Mike James certainly gave us a lot of food for thought, good insights, and learnings from the prerecorded messages they gave. It felt we had three visiting ministers.

On the afternoon of the first day of the Feast, Mr. Winston Co conducted a Bible study entitled “In the Millennium.” He took off from the prophecies of Isaiah and elaborated what the world will be like for the thousand-year reign of Christ along with the saints. The Bible indeed paints a beautiful tomorrow we can all definitely look forward to. Questions were fielded after that and were also insightfully answered.

### Virtual Fellowships

An hour before the services, brethren from all over the archipelago joined in on virtual fellowships. On hindsight, this could be counted as a blessing in disguise, because for the first time, we were able to meet brethren from other congregations other than those we normally meet and fellowship with. Hence, it was a great delight for brethren from Malolos, Manila, Alabang, Naga, Masbate, Sagay, Iloilo, Cebu, Leyte, Maranding, and Kiara congregations and those residing in Spain and Australia to meet one another (albeit virtually). After each service, some of the brethren stayed for more fellowship. In some instances, the fellowship turned into mini question-and-answer sessions regarding biblical topics.

### Virtual Bayanihan Night and Talent Show

Our celebration of the Feast would be incomplete without the traditional *bayanihan* night and talent show night. On the evening of the third day of the Feast (October 5), we had our online *bayanihan*. We gathered together virtually and had dinner together. Each family enjoyed what was prepared at home. Where permitted and feasible, some of the brethren invited others within their vicinity to join them in the communal dinner. The evening went by again with fellowship, a lot of smiles and laughter.

On the night of the sixth day of the Feast (October 8), we again gathered virtually to witness a showcase of talents from the different congregations. The acts which included song numbers, instrumental playing (piano, violin), and dance numbers were all prerecorded. These were then creatively sequenced in one magnificent video presentation to follow the theme of faith, hope, and love. One can tell the brethren appreciated the talents so much by the way comments kept popping up in the Zoom chat. The night’s atmosphere became one of fun and enjoyment as a result.

### Baptism

This year’s Feast gave us another reason to rejoice as we welcomed to the body of Christ one individual, Ms. Glory Dee, who has been attending services and fellowshiping with the Naga congregation. On October 9, she decided to accept our Lord Jesus Christ and be immersed in the waters of baptism. And we are sure that the angels are rejoicing with us (Luke 15:7, 10).

### Result of Going Virtual

While the pandemic presented restrictions in the way we celebrated, it also opened doors for the gospel of the Kingdom of God to be preached. In a post-FOT message, Mr. Winston Co shared with the brethren very encouraging statistics for the three media platforms we used.

For those unable to join via Zoom, Facebook presents a viable alternative. We were able to generate 38,765 minutes of viewing for the entire duration of the Feast (from Google search: “Minutes Viewed: Minutes the video was watched from your Page’s post, in posts the video was shared in and in crossposts”). We also had about 2,600 engagements for the period of the Feast. An “engagement” is “the number of people who reacted, commented or shared one of your videos.”

It is an encouraging number for us because that would mean on average, 325 people per day reacting, commenting on, or sharing the video presentation.

Our YouTube channel also gave encouraging statistics. We got 1,257 views for the period of the Feast. On a daily average, that would be about 158 views.

Website statistics for the Feast duration was also analyzed and gave similar encouraging numbers. For the period, we had 133 new visitors (80.6%) while 32 users (19.4%) are returning visitors.

For us, these media platforms give us a good opportunity to reach out to more people and preach the good news of the coming Kingdom of God, to sow the seed of truth. It is our earnest hope that in due time, that seed will sprout and take root in the minds and hearts of

those who were able to hear the message from these platforms and respond accordingly.

### Summing It Up—A Feast to Remember

Looking back and reflecting on what transpired, we can still say that the Feast observance was a great success given the circumstances. Many parts were moving but eventually all fell into place and gave everyone a beautiful Feast experience—one that will be, we are sure, remembered all our days for its unique circumstance.

All of this was made possible by everyone—from the ones giving special music to those who shared their talents, to the speakers, to the generous sponsors, the media and technical team, the Festival coordinators and committees, and to all the members who actively participated in the activities to make this one truly special.

We are already looking forward to next year’s Feast and, God willing, it will be in-person. Until then, we can now declare, this was the best virtual Feast ever!

Ferdie S. Padilla for CGI Philippines

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Watch for more to come!



## Worshippers highlight “Spiritual Temple Building” at Feast in Galveston, TX

The CGI-Houston congregation hosted the Feast of Tabernacles at the Galveston Island Convention center in Galveston, Texas this year.

This year’s Feast was held in accordance with all of the CDC guidelines, local and state guidelines as well. Due to the pandemic we had the entire convention center to ourselves to worship, rejoice, celebrate, and praise our great God.

Over 40 persons attended in person. People traveled from various locations in the US to observe the Feast in person, including New York, Maryland, Tennessee, Texarkana, Oklahoma, and all over Texas, as well as several who joined in via “GoToMeeting.” The uniqueness of this year’s Feast had persons celebrating their very first Feast of Tabernacles to persons celebrating their 57th Feast of Tabernacles.



Opening night featured a prayer and praise service, which began with several men calling the assembly together by blowing the shofar. The Festival theme of “Spiritual Temple Building” was headlined by CGI Houston Pastor Clifton J. Buchanan’s opening-day message, which outlined the case for spiritual temple building. The theme was continued on day two by Deacon Albert Debolt outlining the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. Day three was equally exciting as Pastor Ray Hall from Feastkeepers of New York gave part one of the “Kingdom Within You.” On day four we learned of “The Role of Songs of Praise in the Building of Yahweh’s Temple,” presented by Jacques Russell. On day five Deacon Albert Debolt described in the detail “The Royal Priesthood.” Day



six brought us Part 2 of “The Kingdom Within You” by Pastor Ray Hall. On day seven Deacon George Tanakis presented “God Will Glorify His Name.” This special message was presented via GoToMeeting, proving with technology there are no limitations as George presented his inspirational message from his study in Cavan, Canada. Finally, on the Last Great Day Pastor



Clifton J. Buchanan presented “Judgment Day,” featuring the finality of Satan the incorrigibly wicked enemy of God!

The children would not be left out, as their teachers Rhonda Russell and Katherine Joseph taught them about the Tabernacle in the Wilderness and Solomon’s Temple. The

children, ages ranging from 3 to 14, assembled a model structure of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. (See photo). The children also read us a scripture from the Law each day prior to the sermons. Mykala Buchanan, Katelyn Joseph, and Elijah Williams took turns reading from day two through day seven.



Special music during the Feast was presented by Katherine Joseph and Mykala Buchanan.

Daily seminars were hosted each morning at the same time as the children’s program was being taught. The Seminar PowerPoints were Spiritual Warfare 1 and 2 presented by Pastor Clifton J. Buchanan and Deacon Albert Debolt. Diane Webb gave a PowerPoint presentation updating her work with the Kenyan brethren, widows, and orphans.

On Friday night Pastor Clifton J. Buchanan gave a Bible Study, “State of the Church Prophetically.”

The highlight of the Feast was the spiritual food presented as well as the pot-luck get-together on Thursday evening at the Buchanan’s attended by over 40 persons.

The entire Feast was action-packed with inspirational, thought-provoking, never-before-heard messages, fellowshiping, teaching, and learning, all while focusing on our great, wonderful, awesome God.

In case you missed us we have already rebooked the convention center for next year’s Feast. Make plans to join us. We will see you there.



## Church of God International in the UK holds Feast of Tabernacles in Sussex

This year CGI UK held its first Feast of Tabernacles in the UK for many years. We were blessed to be able to meet together in the county of Sussex. It was a truly edifying Feast and we were so thankful that God provided a place at such short notice that allowed us to keep His Holy Days in person when so many in the wider Church of God were unable to do so.

We are pleased to report that it was a truly uplifting and joyous occasion. The Feast was held in an intimate setting on an old farm that converted its disused Barns into holiday homes. Such was the size of the barns that we were able to hold our church service in one of them.

Attendance on most days was 8 adults, and we peaked once or twice at 9 J, and though most people attending were CGI UK members, we were also delighted to host members from other COG congrega-



tions who filled the gap left by UK members travelling overseas.

Given our small number we still managed to have a live speaker every day bar two. We also conducted a Bible Study evening as we went through the Book of Jude given by Pastor Adrian Davis in a recorded message.

And what a Feast we had!!! Everybody without exception played a vital role for the edification and encouragement of each other. We had special items of music every day, and all men either gave sermons, sermonettes, Scripture readings, prayers, or conducted song-leading.

God even allowed the weather a day off from constant rain, so we took the opportunity to visit the seals at Horsey Gap, followed the next day with an evening barbeque and lots of singing.

It certainly was a Feast to remember.

## Rowan Church of God (Salt Lick, KY) has blessed Feast in spite of pandemic

Such a special time of the year and a special period in God’s plan for His Kingdom! Watching the changing of the seasons and in particular the changing color of the trees is always a reminder to me of the walls around God’s Kingdom. It is beautiful.

No one reading this has a need for me to explain the Feast of Tabernacles to them. So I would like to address our own particular Feast.

Circumstances beyond our control, a pandemic, caused just about everyone to change their plans for the Feast. After much consideration, it was decided we would tabernacle closer to home. All in all we had a wonderful Feast. It had to be my personal best with exception to my first Feast when I was baptized. Every message was

informative, instructive, and interesting. We were able to cater a meal every day and use that time to get to know each attendee better. We also had evening entertainment. Anyone who has visited with us knows that entertainment is never a problem with our congregation. As a family we always have plenty to discuss.

With exception of some illness our whole congregation was present. We had some visitors as well. We also have a new sister in Christ. Yes, we had a baptism at Cave Run Lake. The sun was shining and the temperature was mild. What a blessing. In spite of the pandemic, we have had many blessings for which we are most thankful.

*Alice Edwards Lauria*



# New Dawn for Church of God International in Kenya

by Brother Robert Onsando



When evening came, all the workers were paid the same due, regardless of what time one was called. It is never too late for God to call you. This is time for Kenya and Africa to be hired to work in the vineyard, and we are ready to work in our Father’s vineyard. It is God who appoints His workers.

One fact that we should all be aware of is that God has a plan to redeem His people from the cruel hand of the devil, and that is the good news to humankind, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Mathew 24:14). “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mathew 28:19). It is for this reason that the Kenyan chapter has taken up the command with the support of Church of God International through the overseas coordinator Elder Mike James, that the wheel has started moving in a more coordinated and orderly manner.

Elder Mike and the team in the USA have been receiving many contacts from Kenya and other parts of Africa who have interest in joining the Church of God International. Many of these interested parties did not know each other despite some of them coming from nearby places. As the saying usually goes, God’s timing is always the best. Mike got into contact with Brother Robert Onsando, who had just disembarked from the Church of God Seventh Day (COGSD). The primary reason I left COGSD was due to non-celebration of the Lords feasts as commanded in Leviticus 23. After a series of communications with Brother Robert, for one reason or another Elder Mike was convinced that God has sent a tool to CGI to support work in Kenya and Africa. God will always provide the right tool at the right time.

One step at a time, Elder Mike shared the contacts for both Kenya and Africa with Brother Robert Onsando. Brothers Zablon Anyumba and Benjamin Bett were teamed with me in Kenya to start reaching out to the interested parties. Thank God for the technology! Elder Mike brought all of us on board through “GoToMeeting.” It was wonderful sharing on that platform which we now use every month.

Following a series of meetings and consultations, Kenya finally has formed a leadership council, which has set up a strategic plan with an organized structure that will be a sample guide for other African countries, using the servant leadership model and shared leadership concept. Kenya has now three geographical regions that will help in outreach and easy management due to the topography, language, and cultural backgrounds. South West Region will now be represented by Brother Zablon Anyumba, South East Region represented by Brother Joseph Omooria, while Rift Valley Region is represented by Brother Benjamin Bett. Brother Robert Onsando becomes the National Overseer while adopting the “first among equals” approach with wise advice from Elder Mike James.

Kenya just completed a successful Feast of Tabernacles in three regions of the country. Hundreds of believers attended our three main Feast sites and others in Kenya who could not attend held Feast meetings in their local areas. We recorded good numbers of participants despite

God never hesitates to call His people to work in His vineyard, when the right time comes. Let me draw your attention to Mathew 20, where we find the parable of the workers in the vineyard. And I will paraphrase: Workers were called at different times starting from the third hour, the sixth hour, the ninth hour, and finally the eleventh hour.



Six new members were baptized at Kehancha climaxing the Feast of Tabernacles 2020.

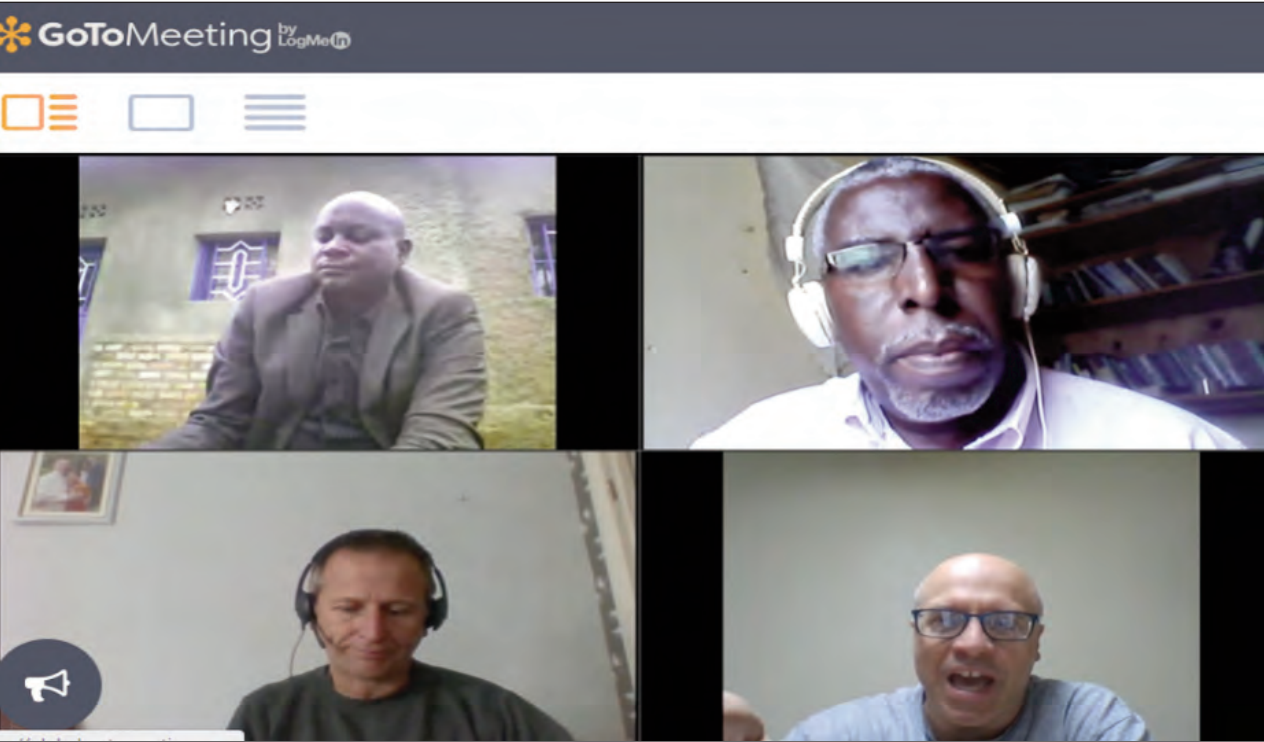
Covid-19. Longisa one of our sites had over 150 members attending, in Kehancha, we recorded over 98, while Got Kochola recorded over 300 participants.

Church of God International, Kenya Chapter, is planning for a three days per month training for 10 months. This will train at least 45 Elders and deacons, among the

topics to be taught shall be the Systematic Theology Project, the *Biblical Eldership* book by Strauch, and many other items. We want to thank Church of God International leadership for the continued support which include financial and moral. Our focus is to make Kenya a hub for spreading the gospel for Africa.



LEADERS OF THE CHURCH OF GOD INTERNATIONAL, KENYA CHAPTER—from left to right: Brother Benjamin Bett, team leader Rift Valley Region; Brother Zablon Anyumba, team leader South West Region; Brother Joel Owuoti, Chair Administration and Finance; Brother Joseph Karani, team leader South East Region; and Brother Robert Onsando, National Overseer.



One of the recent Africa leaders meetings using the new technology GoToMeeting. From top left to right: Brother Jean Claude from Rwanda, Brother Robert Onsando from Kenya, Brother Gary Monks from UK and Brother Mike James from USA.





Members of the Church of God International in Kenya at the 2020 Feast of Tabernacles



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