



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

The Official Newspaper of the Church of God International

Vol. 36, No. 2

"Put on the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:13)

Summer-2015

Required Immediately: A Spiritual Conditioning Plan! (Just Do It!)

"In a world that's constantly changing, how can I be sure..." So went the lyrics of a popular song performed by the Rascals in the 1960s, which in today's social environment has become particularly more cogent for all Christians today.
by Bill Watson



Bill Watson

Just about four years ago (May of 2011), the Presbyterian Church ratified homosexuals to be ordained as ministers. They are now part of a growing list of Christian and Jewish denominations which are compromising Scripturally based understandings in favor of the more acceptable "convenient" Christian approach gripping our Western society today, which now includes allowing homosexuals to be ordained and serve in their organization as clergy, while openly admitting they are *active homosexuals*—regardless of the Scriptural prohibition. See Sidebar, page 5.

Subsequently, just a few months ago, the Presbyterian Church has *redefined* what they consider to be an *acceptable* Christian marriage. Yes, they too have now decided to

recognize homosexual marriages as *legitimate* Christian unions. They have officially voted to delete their former constitutional requirement, which demanded those considered for the clergy remain "in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness." This was deleted in favor of the new language of their amendment, affording same-sex unions to be allowed *equal recognition* as a Christian marriage!

And now, with the most recent acceptance of redefining what a Christian marriage is, Presbyterian church policy will allow homosexual clergy to perform "Christian" marriages for same-sex, transgender, and transsexual couples—in other words, homosexual weddings. The world we're living in has certainly changed—accepting enormous revisions of what is considered biblically moral, a type of "Christian Convenient-ism," mutilating biblical definitions, attempting to separate morality from the faith, and refashioning those meanings through "moral relativism"! As this article prepares to go to print, the Supreme Court is debating some major issue about same-sex unions and whether they are, or are not, constitutional. (Request our free booklet, *What Does The Bible Say About Same-Sex Unions?*)

Undoubtedly, some will clearly consider this as being socially positive, with this kind of progressive trend illustrating a step in the right direction for the continuation of building a more tolerant and accepting culture, affording human beings the right to not be deprived of "loving" anyone they'd like to "love." Should this be a surprise to any of us who see through this secular *malignancy*?

Some may think that's a harsh term to use, but you must admit, it's a very subtle deterioration that grows *incrementally*—growing undercover over time, as the malignancy of secularism continues to influence our societies throughout the world, and in particular, North America. We have marginalized God in our Western culture, resulting in an enormous amount of humanism that's encroaching on our logic and rationale—resulting in a completely *redefined* direction of what is considered right and wrong. It's becoming more obvious that this tolerance is infecting our judgment, and has led to compromise!

In the book of Isaiah we read, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD has spoken ...The ox knoweth his owner, the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers,

children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward...the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint [Judgment and national will would degrade]. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is not soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores; [corruption is prominent]... Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: [there is unrest and violence in the cities] your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers [foreigners would take advantage of the country and our policies; and foreigners will become our leaders]...Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah. Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah [homosexuality would become so prominent that the land would be considered like unto Sodom and Gomorrah]. ...Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed ...Come now, and let us reason together [reason with God, not "moral relativism"], saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow... If ye be willing and obedient [to God, not as society, or culture defines obedience], ye shall eat the good of the land [consider your ways and repent]: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword [God will allow the land to

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Supreme Court Gay Marriage Decision

Open Church Policy

The Church of God International is an open church. We have many people attending who are new in the faith. Some will not always keep each of God's laws as they should, and some will not believe everything we teach. We pray that they may be strengthened through the services we render and the examples we set as they come to a closer walk with their God. We request that you be neither judgmental nor base your standard for obedience on what you see your brother do. Christ is our standard, not weak and sinful men. Always remember that you will be judged for what *you* do, not what others do. Your job is to pray for them, set the right example, and please the Father in all that you do. □

God's Holydays 2015

New Testament Passover

April 2, 2015 (Observed at sundown)

Feast of Unleavened Bread

April 4–10, 2015

Pentecost

May 24, 2015

Feast of Trumpets

September 14, 2015

Day of Atonement

September 23, 2015

Feast of Tabernacles

September 28–October 4, 2015

Last Great Day

October 5, 2015

Holydays are observed beginning sundown the previous evening and end at sundown on the days listed. Passover is observed at sundown on the day listed.

Download the *Holy Day Calendar 2015–2017*
<http://cgi.org/holy-days/>

Notice!

- It is the desire of the staff to publish *The International News* quarterly. We can do this only if *you*, the reader, help by submitting timely articles, reports, and pictures.
- With few exceptions, submissions should be from 800–1000 words in either .doc, docx, rtf, or .txt format.
- Submissions may be sent either to vancestinson.org or lloyd Cary@gmail.com or, preferably, to *both*.



DEADLINE for the next issue is August 15th 2015.

We look forward to seeing you soon... *in print!*

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Help spread the Gospel:
Send a link to a friend.**

Watch Sabbath Services Live On Your Computer!

You are invited to attend church services in Tyler, Texas via the Internet. We invite you to tune in Saturdays:

**11:00 AM Central Standard Time
at www.cgi.org**

Simply go to the website, choose "Media," then click on the link for "Weekly Webcast." Best results are achieved with a high-speed Internet connection. *Please be patient and be prepared to retry the link until you connect.*

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NOTICE: *The International News* welcomes submissions of articles, features, church news, pictures, or manuscripts. However, it cannot be responsible for the return of unsolicited materials. Materials submitted can sent through the postal service, but electronic submissions are preferred.

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be invaded]: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it" (Isaiah 1:2–20).

Our nation is currently sick and in jeopardy, as was the nation of Israel before it was devastated, conquered, and exiled into captivity from its homeland by the ancient Assyrians. It's obvious by the historical legacy of Israel, nations that have *adopted* the God of Israel as their guiding source of morality, judgment, and liberty have been held *accountable* for their abandonment of those statutes, judgments, and laws. And clearly, the result was horrifically catastrophic for both Israel and Judah! Today, a similar condition is developing for the nations carrying the name of Israel and the present Jewish Israeli nation of Palestine—and the warning message from God, through the voice of Isaiah the prophet, stands as a clarion *indictment* that if the nations don't repent, then be prepared for the *consequences*, you proponents of convenience—because the Lord has spoken it!

How Is This Personally Affecting Us?

Undoubtedly, for some of us, it's quite disturbing to see some of these changes and effects now beginning to affect our lifestyles. Even our language has been mandated, in some cases by legislation, to be more sensitive and accepting toward those circumstances and conditions that were at one time considered wrong, or illegal, but now are acceptable and something to embrace. *Political correctness* is growing exponentially, causing those not in agreement with these progressive changes to be viewed as narrow-minded, discriminatory, bigoted, or just simply mean-spirited and irrational. Since the language of the debate has changed due to many of the "alternatives" being normalized and legalized, it becomes increasingly difficult to discuss these issues from what would be considered the premises that *formerly* governed our understandings. A good example of this is the recent legalization of marijuana for recreational use in two states with 12 additional states in line to follow Colorado and Washington's lead. Another, perhaps, is the florist who is being sued by the state of Washington for refusing to provide floral settings for a homosexual wedding. As they say, *The genie is out of the bottle!* or *That horse left the barn!*

Make no mistake: This is taking its toll on many Christian people who find themselves faced with contesting these "progressive changes." And don't think for a minute the Christian way of life and belief system isn't under attack outside of the cultural wars in the West—*because it is!* Anything resembling Christianity is being assaulted in *many areas* of the world today. Whether you look to the Middle East, Southeast Asia, or Africa—so-called Christianity—the *name of Jesus Christ*—is viewed as a "danger, or threat" to the homeland cultures of these areas, primarily due to the *perceived peril* (which is not a peril at all) it poses for Communist regimes and those radical Muslims aggressively executing jihad on many traditional Christians throughout the world. Literally thousands every day are being kidnapped, tortured, raped, or killed in extremely gruesome ways! And sadly, these macabre acts of terror are closing in on North America; and it appears it may be arriving sooner rather than later, as reflected recently in Garland, Texas, which was designed to be a mass murder scene by two jihadists, but thankfully was avoided.



Gay Family Ties

Christianity has been targeted because it presents values of *certitude* that are based on *Jesus Christ*, the Savior, that most will not agree with, or concede to. This is no surprise, since the Bible is very clear on this fact: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7).

Resulting from this, we see a lack of moral fortitude and character. This plays out in a variety of ways like divorce, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, stealing, embezzling, deceiving, abortion, subterfuge, and corruption in general—and yes, even cold blooded jihad; all of this goes to illustrate the lack of respect for human life and the deficiency of personal character running rampant throughout our world today. It's disturbing for many of us who have to function in these global societies. It makes it very hard to trust, or concede to depend on others for services or goods that are agreed upon. It can become very challenging to navigate through life without getting hurt, violated, or suffering loss in some

way, personally, or nationally, especially as the hazard of violence continues to increase. Sadly, something as simple as shopping at a mall can now become risky.

Today, women have to be vigilant as they travel, whether in a car at night, a walk in the park, or working late at the office. Carrying mace, a knife, or a small gun in their purse isn't uncommon for some who find themselves occasionally in circumstances that may be threatening, or present some kind of jeopardy. Our children must be vigilant also about their own safety since so many perils lurk in the shadows of the neighborhoods we live in. Leaving young children outside to play by themselves, even if you live in the suburbs, can be risky and dangerous to their safety and well-being. Something so simple as going to the store, a sports event, show, or school can now endanger your very life to varying degrees depending on the neighborhood you live in!

There are so many perils to guard against to assure that someone or something we're facing won't victimize us in some way. Whether in business, relationships, education, or just the general interaction of living our daily lives, being watchful and keenly aware of what we're getting involved with, or surrounded by, is critical to our safety, peace of mind, and sometimes our very survival.

How Can We Strengthen Our Spiritual Faith?

There are no short cuts to strengthening our faith. Just like conditioning for a marathon, triathlon, a cross-country bike ride, or an extended swim—conditioning is required, and it clearly takes time and effort on one's part with a level of commitment that will produce the consistent dedication that will generate the results one is looking for—and frankly, that's not always easy to do!

However, that doesn't dismiss the fact that conditioning is required. When conditioning is required, a conditioning program is a helpful tool to use for guiding, maintaining, and measuring the progress you are making toward achieving the improved results you have set as your goals.

No matter what it is—making money, accomplishing a career or educational goal, improving or developing a relationship, enhancing your awareness about your health, your children, politics, or religion—whatever it may be, a conditioning program is key, with a degree of commitment that will motivate you to persevere with the required effort to accomplish the objective you're aspiring to.

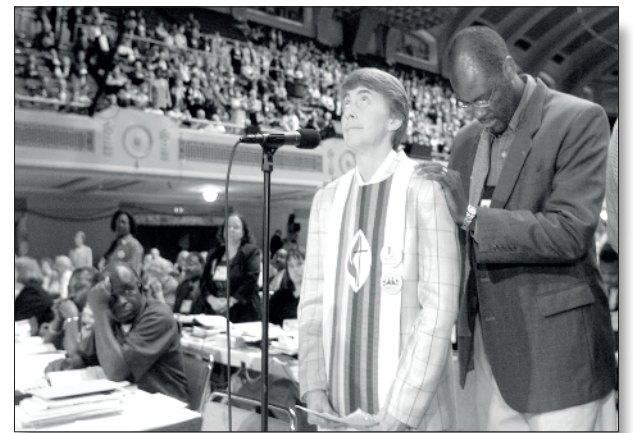
In doing this, it becomes important that a clear format is kept in mind, and a continued effort to maintain the formatted plan is conducted. It becomes a discipline! There will be challenges along the way; *you can count on it!* Distractions, interruptions, even concerted efforts by circumstances beyond your control will all attempt to derail you in the course of your journey from persevering with your conditioning plan. However, if you can *prioritize* these circumstances and conditions that are challenging your plan with a degree of determination that won't allow you to become distracted, detoured, or quit the plan—then you will succeed and be guaranteed; you will be better for it in the long run!

Before I explain the conditioning plan, let me caution all of us on something. We are living in some very challenging, confusing, and violent times; and those of us who are not grounded in our beliefs, knowing exactly who and what we are, will unquestionably have some difficulty navigating through all the information, tension, and revision that surrounds us. We live in a world where everyone has an idea, opinion, or comment and point of view they believe is worth listening to, or hearing about—but the truth of the matter is, so much of it is contrary to the Word of God, and at the end of the day, is nothing more than drivel and blather.

The apostle Paul warns us: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). In the scriptures preceding this, he tells us how to avoid being spoiled: "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in him [be like Him]: Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:6–7).



Gay Priest



Gay Ordination

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Pro-Gay Marriage Demonstration

According to Paul, the simple solution to understanding how to correctly maintain the balance in life that provides a healthy relationship with both God and your fellow man is to resist being spoiled by vain philosophies, deceit, man's traditions, and rudiments, or elements of the world (*kosmos*, meaning society, culture, the moral relativism, or "convenientism")—this is key to avoiding spiritual spoilage. We must learn not to compromise the values we know to be unquestionably right. However, that won't happen without a conditioning plan! All of us will need some very well defined and solid spiritual muscle as we go forward in this "culture war" we are contending with—and there is no shortcut to any conditioning plan that is worthwhile. You must be willing to work and sacrifice for it.

Defining the Spiritual Conditioning Plan

With every conditioning plan there is a cost associated with it, whether it's money, time, or effort. There is a cost. And usually, that cost includes some degree of *sacrifice*. It's this sacrifice that often presents the problem for many of us, that it's just too high priced to pay. But is it really?—especially since we are living in a world that is constantly changing? If you want to be sure of yourself and the things you believe in, an ongoing conditioning plan must be implemented in your life to insure it will provide the assurance of a balanced, correct, and righteous lifestyle. After all, life is a quest for balance—and a good spiritual conditioning plan will provide that balance for you with both God and your interpersonal relationships.

With that said, a good plan must have a means by which you can gain knowledge, insight, and the awareness of how to apply the information you learn for your personal life. Each one of us is different. Each one of us requires a different approach. The obvious reason for this is that our circumstances are unique to ourselves—we are unique. Many of us differ in the hours we keep, based on the demands of time in our lives. The amount of time we spend devoting to the acquisition of knowledge may vary, but it doesn't dismiss the fact that we need time to devote to **Bible study**—*JUST DO IT!*

Secondly, we need a means to internalize the information we acquire. It must become "organic" within us. Remember, the knowledge we are studying is for the purpose of spiritually affecting us—if it doesn't, we're missing the point. Notice what Paul says: "And that from a child you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 perfect [mature], thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:15–17).

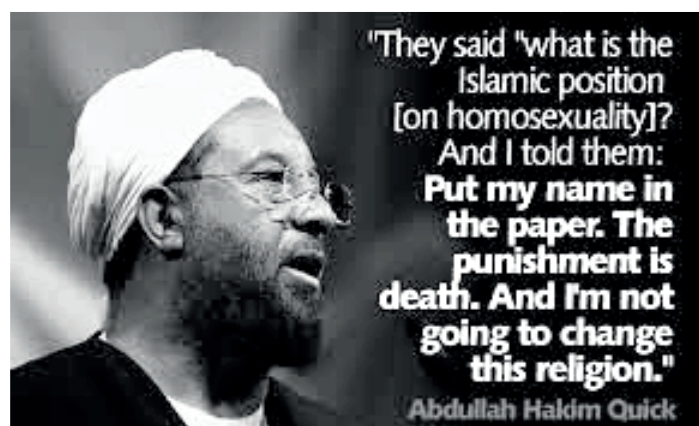
With this in mind, our intent is to digest this knowledge that should have at least a few effects on us as stated. But that's not going to happen unless we take some time to think deeply and seriously about what we're studying, thereby allowing this knowledge to resonate with us—giving us time to comprehend how to apply these ideas of change into our behavior, our personalities. That's where **meditation** comes in—*JUST DO IT!*

As mentioned, you can count on the fact that distractions will come along in the course of your journey, designed to get you off your habit of Bible study and meditation, but here's where you must sometimes become assertive in your lifestyle. Remember, Jesus mentioned those who make it into God's Kingdom would take it by force—they would be challenged on all sides. That the Kingdom of God is taking on violence and though it has been pressing forward with difficulty and those who really want it, must act with assertion, determination, and without hesitation (Matthew 11:12, Luke 16:16). This may require that you occasionally demand and exact of yourself additional time for study and reflection (meditation). This means downtime for fasting—time spent in total dedication, isolated in obtaining more knowledge and time to comprehend that information for enhancing your know-how to apply it in your lifestyle. Don't underestimate the value of taking time to **fast** periodically—it does indeed provide a deeper sense of supernatural connection—*JUST DO IT!*

This brings us to the last, but certainly not the least, point we want to consider as part of our conditioning plan—**prayer**! This is enormously important, since we are talking about a spiritual conditioning plan. We are warned that "...we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness [or spirits] in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

In other words, if we're not careful, we can find ourselves under spiritual attack with circumstances beyond our control. So, it's important we include God in our lives with strong and regular communications. This is really the only way we can be assured of a healthy spiritual relationship with God and our fellow man. As human beings, we are vulnerable to the "spirit of disobedience." It's our nature to be consumed with physical and material attractions of many things that can realistically waste a lot of time, and deflect our efforts and attention into counter-productive directions that will only serve to prevent us from accomplishing what God wants us to achieve in our lives for Him, our families, and ourselves (Ephesians 2:1–3).

The pressures we face in our society today are only going to get worse. Notice: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:1–5). We must include a good amount of **prayer** mixed in with our **Bible study**, **meditation**, and **fasting** to protect ourselves from the growing effects of a hedonistic environment that is so self-absorbed in their own narcissistic affairs and becoming more godless every day—so *JUST DO IT!*



In summary, this is the *Spiritual Conditioning Plan*:

1. Bible Study
2. Meditation
3. Fasting
4. Prayer

Developing a regular habit of these activities in our personal lives and with our families as Christians, if maintained and cultivated into a habit, will assuredly result in strong spiritual muscle to help defend our faith, which will clear the way to increase and grow in knowledge and grace for the glory of God. Please Lord, just do it—*increase our faith for Your glory!* Ω

What Does the Bible Say About Same-Sex Unions?

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|--------------------|
| • Leviticus 18:22 | See the following verses in your own Bible. | • Matthew 19:4–6 |
| • Leviticus 20:13 | | • Matthew 19:11–12 |
| • 1 Timothy 1:9–10 | | • 2 Timothy 4:3 |
| • Deuteronomy 22:5 | | • Jude 1:18 |
| • 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 | | • Genesis 2:24 |
| • Romans 1:26–27 | | • Mark 10:6–9 |



Unofficial List of Christian Denominations and Denominational Welcoming Church Programs Around the World

You can find additional resources on Wikipedia at [LGBT-affirming Christian Denominations and Christian Denominational Positions on Homosexuality](#).

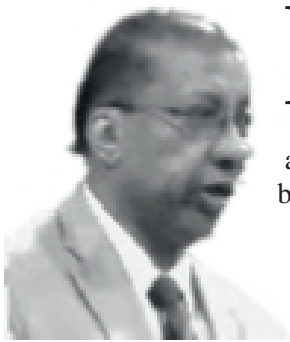
The Pew Research Center also has good information available on their website.

(Information taken from www.gaychurch.org)

- **Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble (United Church of Canada)** - <http://www.affirmunited.ca>
- **Affirming Pentecostal International (Pentecostal)** - <http://www.myapci.com>
- **Alliance of Baptists (Baptist)** - <http://www.allianceofbaptists.org>
- **American Catholic Church (Catholic)** - <http://www.accus.us>
- **Anthem Network (Anthem Network)** - <http://www.TogetherAnthem.com>
- **Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists (Baptist)** - <http://www.wabaptists.org>
- **Baptists Peace Fellowship (Baptist)** - <http://www.bpfna.org>
- **Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (Mennonite Church)** - <http://www.bmclgbt.org/>
- **Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (Church of the Brethren)** - <http://www.bmclgbt.org/>
- **Catholic Apostolic Church in North America (Catholic)** - <http://www.cacina.org>
- **Changing Attitude (Anglican)** - <http://www.changingattitude.org.uk>
- **Christ Catholic Church (Catholic)** - <http://free-catholic.org>
- **Covenant Network (Covenant Network)** - <http://thecovenantnetwork.com/>
- **Covenant Network of Presbyterians (Presbyterian - PCUSA)** - <http://www.covnetpres.org>
- **Dignity USA (Catholic)** - <http://www.dignityusa.org>
- **Ecumenical Catholic Communion (Catholic)** - <http://www.ecumenical-catholic-communion.org>
- **Evangelical Anglican Church in America (Anglican)** - <http://eaca.org>
- **Evangelical Catholic Church (Catholic)** - <http://www.evangelicalcatholicchurch.org>
- **Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns (Quaker)** - <http://flgbtqc.quaker.org>
- **GALA: Gay and Lesbian Acceptance (Community of Christ)** - <http://galaweb.org>
- **GLAD Alliance (Disciples of Christ)** - <http://www.gladalliance.org/>
- **Global Alliance of Apostolic Pentecostals (Pentecostal)** - <http://www.gaaap.net>
- **Independent Catholic Christian Church (Catholic)** - <http://www.inclusivecatholics.com>
- **Independent Greek Orthodox Church of the United States (Greek Orthodox)** - <http://orthopraxis.org>
- **Integrity (Episcopal)** - <http://www.integrityusa.org>
- **Integrity in Canada (Anglican)** - <http://integritycanada.org>
- **International Christian Community Churches (Charismatic)** - <http://www.icccnow.com>
- **Liberal Catholic Church (Catholic)** - <http://www.liberalcatholics.co.uk>
- **Lutherans Concerned/North America (Lutheran - ELCA)** - <http://www.lcna.org>
- **Metropolitan Community Churches (Metropolitan Community Church)** - <http://www.mcccchurch.org>
- **More Light Presbyterian (Presbyterian - PCUSA)** - <http://www.mlp.org>
- **Proud Anglicans of Canada (Anglican)** - <http://www.proudanglicans.ca>
- **Reconciling Ministries Network (United Methodist Church)** - <http://www.rmnetwork.org/>
- **Reconciling Pentecostals International (Pentecostal)** - <http://www.rpifellowship.com>
- **Reformed Catholic Church (Catholic)** - <http://www.reformedcatholicchurch.org>
- **Room for All (Reformed Church in America)** - <http://www.roomforall.com/>
- **The Evangelical Network (TEN) (Charismatic)** - <http://t-e-n.org>
- **The National Catholic Church of America (Catholic)** - <http://www.nationalcatholicchurch.org>
- **UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns (United Church of Christ)** - <http://www.ucccoalition.org>
- **Unitarian Universalist Association (Unitarian)** - <http://www.uua.org>
- **United Catholic Church (Catholic)** - <http://www.united-catholic-church.org>
- **United Church of Christ (United Church of Christ)** - <http://www.ucc.org>
- **United Ecumenical Catholic Church Australia (Catholic)** - <http://eccaustralia.org>
- **Welcoming Community Network (Community of Christ)** - <http://welcomingcommunitynetwork.org/>

What is a Prophet?

by Bill Russ



Bill Russ

It would take a lifetime to analyze all the opinions on what an apostle is (or is not). But what about a *prophet*? We could put together a list of the names of persons who many believe are (or were) prophets, though the majority of them belong under the category of “false prophets.”

There are four or more benchmarks we need to examine before declaring someone a false prophet:

1. Does he claim to prophesy in God’s name or in the name of a false god?
2. Do his prophecies come to pass? This only comes into play when he is foretelling some futuristic event.
3. Does he do signs and wonders? Not all true prophets of God displayed the ability to do signs and wonders. Scripture assigns no miracles to John the Baptist.
4. Does he teach the truth based on God’s Word? Far too many times a minister will mix lies with the undisputed truth of God, making all that he has said insignificant or at least questionable.

There may be more, but these four are more than enough to weed out all who are false prophets according to the Word of God. But some standards for identifying who is not a false prophet are false. One such “standard” is as follows: a person who does not claim to be a prophet cannot be a false prophet no matter how many erroneous predictions he (or she) may have made.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God says, “The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who prophesy in My name, whom I did not send, and who say, ‘Sword and famine shall not be in this land’—‘By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed! And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; they will have no one to bury them—they nor their wives, their sons nor their daughters—for I will pour their wickedness on them’” (Jeremiah 14:14–16, NKJV throughout, except as noted).

These are harsh punishments for both the prophet and the people to whom he prophesies falsely.

John writes, “Dear friends, don’t believe everyone who claims to have the Spirit of God. Test them all to find out if they really do come from God. Many false prophets have already gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1, *Contemporary English Version*).

How are we to “test the spirits”? Is it all right to use secular books to do our research to see if a man speaks according to the Word of God, or should we use the Word of God, the Holy Bible? Along with 1 John 4:1, we need to remember Matthew 7:22–23.

According to Jeremiah chapter 14, a false prophet is anyone who prophesies falsely in the name of God. He does not have to declare to the people, “I am a prophet” before he can rightly be called a false prophet. He is a false prophet when he speaks lies while trying to convince his listeners that God gave him the inspiration—not claiming to have found the “prophecy” in a box of Cracker Jacks.

Perhaps many do not think of John the Baptist as a prophet, but Jesus Christ says he was a prophet. Speaking to the multitudes concerning John, Jesus said, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings’ courts. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’ For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a *greater*

prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he” (Luke 7:24–28).

I can find no descriptions of John declaring some future event, but Jesus Christ called him the greatest prophet. One does not have to declare future events to be a prophet.

Luke 10:1–2 states, “After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.”

Were the 70 others apostles? Notice the italicized words in the following scriptures:

Philippians 2:25–27: “Yet I considered it necessary to *send* to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your *messenger* and the one who ministered to my need; since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.”

Second Corinthians 8:23–24: “If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are *messengers* of the churches, the glory of Christ.”

John 13:16–17: “Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is *sent* greater than he who *sent* him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”

The italicized words are translated “apostle(s)” in many other passages. The apostle is one who is sent to do a task for a certain length of time, or it could be a lifetime endeavor.

An example of an “apostleship” of only a short time in duration can be found in three of the four Gospels. In Matthew 28:5, Mark 16:6, and John 20:17, the women were *sent* with a message to tell Christ’s disciples that He had risen just like He said He would. The women were short-term “apostles,” for they were sent to carry a specific message to the disciples.

We should know by now that the 70 were apostles sent by Jesus Christ to go before Him in the cities that He would enter into.

Were the 70 also prophets? That’s the question that demands an answer. We are led to believe by Scripture that they preached the Word of God, and that their preaching was in accord with 2 Timothy 2:15: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” They proved to be true prophets according to benchmark number four.

Let’s also examine benchmark number three.

Luke 10:17–20 states, “Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’ And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.’”

By the authority given to them by Jesus Christ, they could cast out demons and nothing would be able to hurt them until their test was completed. Throughout that period, they functioned as prophets.

When we stand in pulpits around the world, we are not only ministers of the Most High God, but we are also prophets. We must be very careful of what we say to God’s people and to the people of the world, for, as prophets of the Most High God, we are responsible for what we say. This position is most precious, and we need to walk in the examples and instructions provided to us by the Holy Scriptures, where Jesus Himself gave us an example that we should follow.

The prophet—the one who speaks the things of God to others—must not deviate from the path set forth in scriptures such as Proverbs 3:5–6: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.” Ω



Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

If There is a God, Why Does He Allow...?

by Lloyd W. Cary



Lloyd W. Cary

A favorite argument of atheists and believers alike is, *If there is a God, why does He allow suffering, wars, sickness, poverty, and tragedy?*

One of the most haunting questions we face concerns the problem of evil. *Why* is there evil in the world *if* there is a God? *Why* isn't He *doing* something about it? Many assume that the existence of evil *disproves* the existence of God.

The atheist argues, if *I* were God. I would end wars, disease, and tragedy; so I do not believe there is a merciful God who would *allow* such things. *Why* does He allow innocent people to suffer? If there is a God, He must be a sadist who delights in the suffering of men. Surely, they reason, He would not be a God of love, mercy and forgiveness. IF He has the power to *stop* all these things, why doesn't He? What does the non-believer *not* understand?

You see, there is a whole missing dimension of reasoning that mankind has not considered. It is a result of *cause* and *effect*.

The Scriptures make it plain that God did *not* create the world in the state in which it is now, but evil came as a result of the sins, mistakes, and selfishness of *man*.

By analogy, if you see a destroyed car at an automobile accident, would you ask, "Why would Ford create such a wreck of a car?" Or, "Why doesn't General Motors make a car that is "accident-proof"? The truth is, Ford did not *create* the wreck, and GM can't *prevent* people from doing foolish things.

In fact when the automobile companies try to *enforce* safety regulations, people *resist* and carp and complain, "But we don't *want* to wear seat belts!" "All these safety measures just jack up the price of a car," and, "We don't *want* the government to prevent us from texting and talking on our cell phones while driving. It infringes upon our rights to free speech!"

We wonder, "Why do bad things happen to good people... like *us*?" Hardly a day goes by when we don't come across suffering. Devastation caused by earthquakes and tsunamis—millions living in poverty—children being abused—family breakdowns—bullying—people suffering. We *do* suffer. So it seems right to say to God: "God, if You're there, why don't You *do* something about it?"

Well, let's imagine we could actually tell God what to do. Where would you suggest He *start*? How about God gets rid of the terrorists and the murderers. That would mean a lot less suffering for many people—but suffering hasn't been eradicated yet. How about God dealing with the pedophiles and the drug dealers and the thieves? We can see the world's getting to be a much better place, but it's still not perfect.

How about if God gets rid of the unkind, the gossips, the liars, the stupid, the selfish—oh, but (gulp!) that's actually *me*!

You see, when we ask God to get rid of suffering, we're actually asking him to get rid of *us*! We do suffer, but we actually *cause* loads of suffering ourselves. That time when we lost our temper with someone—road rage, when we trod on someone to get to where we wanted to go—when we ignored our kids because we were just too tired or busy—when we gossiped about a work colleague, or a brother, when we were just plain nasty to someone. We, individually, cause much suffering.

So if we demand that God "does away" with all suffering and evil, we're actually demanding that He disposes of *us*, too! "For *all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

God has granted us free moral agency, FREE WILL. We can sin, if we want to. We have FREE CHOICE. But what if God took that free moral agency

away from us? What if He made us a race of automatons, or "yellow pencils," incapable of sin?

So, let's ask the question again: *What if* God were to step into our dimension and absolutely prevent all mankind from ever sinning? Imagine the utter *frustration*—and the *anger*—if God actually DID intervene in our lives to prevent us from sinning?

- What if, for example, you were a heavy smoker and God prevented you from getting that cigarette to your lips? What if there were some force—an *invisible shield*—that stopped you from lighting it? Fight it as you will, what if you just *couldn't* smoke that cigarette?
- What if you wanted that extra drink, and your arm froze so you couldn't get it to your mouth? Struggle as you may, but your will is overruled.
- Or what if you were listening to an off-color story and God struck you deaf?
- What if you were watching pornography and God struck you blind?
- What if you were gossiping and suddenly your tongue stuck to the roof of your mouth?

You see the problem: People don't really *want* God to interfere in their lives. They don't even want to *hear* the Ten Commandments! "The law is done away," many argue. The "bad news" for many is that Christ is coming again to set things right, but even then, people will not want anyone—even God—telling them what to do.



That's the answer—but what about *now*? If you're suffering now, you need a *time extension*. What we need now, is HOPE! The Bible says, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life" (Proverbs 13:12). I need to know that I'm going to get *through* this suffering, and I need to know that there's something *beyond* this suffering.

The amazing thing is that God *knows* what you're going through when you suffer—because He Himself suffered. Christ lived on earth as

a man, and suffered and died in agony on a *stauros*. And He promises to be *with* those who trust in Him, comforting them and helping them through their suffering.

But even more amazing than that promise, is that God promises that one day He will put an *end* to all suffering. Those guilty of *causing* suffering will one day have to answer to Him, and justice will be done. He promises that He'll make a perfect world, a world of "no more death or mourning or crying or pain," for those things will be gone forever.

Mankind needs to realize there is a *penalty* for sin—and Christ, our Maker, died to pay your penalty *for* you, in your stead. Being our High Priest, whatever *we* are suffering, *He* has suffered.

If There Isn't a God...

It's worth stating by *turning the question around* a bit. Clearly, there is suffering (even though some Eastern religions say it isn't actually real). It certainly *feels* real when it happens to *us*. Let's imagine for a moment that we decide that since there IS suffering, there is no God.

Firstly, that would mean there's *NO JUSTICE*. "Every man did what was right in his *own* eyes" (Judges 21:25; Proverbs; 12:15; 16:6; 21:2).

Often, people who cause great suffering get away with it in this life; perhaps they're never caught, or perhaps they commit suicide. *If* there's no God, then they never face justice. Wickedness wins. The "survival of the fittest" wins.

Secondly, that would mean there's *NO FUTURE*. In a world without God, "all go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return" (Ecclesiastes 3:20). Life may well be miserable, and death is the end. If

Why, Continued on page 8

Why, Continued from page 7

you're unlucky enough to be born into a life of poverty, or abuse, well, that's all there is. In a world without God, there's no hope.

Thirdly, that would mean *SUFFERING ITSELF DOESN'T MATTER*. If there's no God, we're all just animals; evolution reigns supreme. In fact, we're all just collections of atoms. A child being shot is of no more importance than a gazelle being taken down by a lion, or a plant being trampled on. Human life is worth no more than any other life. Suffering would *only* matter if it happened to *us*.

The whole idea of "suffering" being "wrong" only works if there is a God—then we have Someone to *blame*!

Suffering, the Intruder

The Bible says that's exactly what suffering is: an intruder—an outsider—Satan, the devil, who seduced our first parents into disobeying God. When God made this world, it was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). There was nothing wrong with it, no suffering. Humans were not intended to suffer pain or death.

So *why* is there suffering *now*? Well, the Bible's *answer* is that man's rebellion against God caused suffering to enter the world. And each day, even after all this time, mankind, as a whole, still rebels against God and is *SUFFERING THE CONSEQUENCES*! It's a matter of CAUSE and EFFECT. When you break God's Laws, God's Laws break YOU! It's *automatic*!

We also read that *time and chance* happens to all (Ecclesiastes 9:11); if we do something stupid, we may have to smart for it!

And that's the world we live in! It's beautiful, but broken. It's fantastic, but flawed. No relationship is perfect. No life is without pain. We see the world not working perfectly in earthquakes, tsunamis and so on. And the blunt statistic of *life* is that *one* out of every *one* person dies.

Suffering is our problem; but as we look around, we can see that it's actually *our fault*, too. What about *you*? Have *you* ever caused someone to anguish, to pain, or to suffer because of something you've said or done? Then we are part of the problem.

The Bible says that even natural disasters are caused by human rejection of God. "The earth *mourneth* and fadeth away, the world *languisheth* and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish" (Isaiah 24:4).

There's little we can do about suffering. We can try to make *laws* to dissuade people from causing it, and we can try to limit its effects. But we can't put an *end* to it.

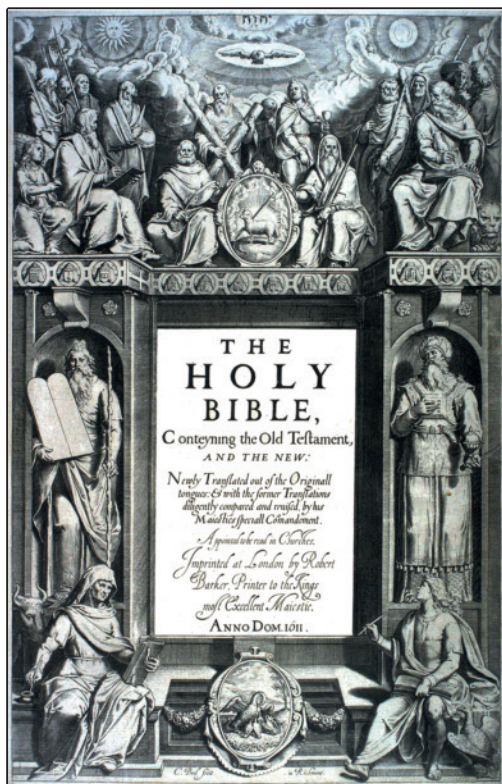
God Gets Involved

God *can*, though. And Revelation 21:4 promises that one day this will be a world where God *will* intervene, Satan is put away, and our minds are swept clean from all his influences. "And *God* shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." That's an amazing future!

It's a future *secured* by what God has already done through Jesus, God the Son. He's already *taken* the punishment we deserve for rejecting God, causing suffering, and messing up His world. He did that when He suffered the ultimate pain of dying on a cross and being separated from God the Father, whom He'd loved for all eternity.

Isaiah 53:5 tells us, "But he was wounded for *our* transgressions, he was bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of *our* peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

Jesus' death makes it possible for anyone who stops rejecting God, and turns back to Him, to know that they're headed for life in that perfect world, a life without pain, suffering, or death. And Jesus' resurrection proves that His death really has opened up that future for all mankind.



"Thy Word is Truth" (John 17:17)

So, *if there's no God*, this is a world WITHOUT JUSTICE, WITHOUT A FUTURE, and where *SUFFERING* isn't something we should be bothered about (unless it happens to *us*, personally). It seems to me that's *not* the world we experience; and it's certainly not the world we *want*.

If the God of the Bible is *real*, however, justice *will* be done; there is a perfect future on order; and suffering is the Satanic intruder which will one day be banished forever.

How Do We Deal With Suffering?

So when we hear of suffering, how does the Bible suggest we might like to respond?

When Jesus was alive on earth, a tower collapsed, killing dozens. How did Jesus respond? "Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye *repent*, ye shall all likewise *perish*" (Luke 13:4-5).

The existence of suffering is a *reminder* that all is *not* well with this world, or with *us*, and that one way or another, we will all one day die; and so we need to turn back to the One who can give perfect life beyond our death—to Jesus, God Himself. You see, Jesus had the honesty and the courage to take His own medicine. He has kept His own rules and played fairly. Although He was our Creator, all the sins of mankind were laid upon Him.

Although evil is here and it is *real*, it is also *temporary*. Evil will eventually be destroyed. This is the blessed *hope* the believer has. There is a new world coming in which there will be no more tears or pain because all things will be made new (Revelation 21:5). Paradise lost will be paradise regained. God will right every wrong and put away evil once for all, *in His time*.

Instead of asking, "*If* there is a God, *why* would He allow all these tragedies?" we should say, "Thank God that Christ is soon coming to *end* all these tragedies!"

May God haste that day!

Ω

The Biblical Origins of The British Commonwealth and U.S.A.

Throughout history, optimists have cried, "It can't happen here," or "Our country is different," or even, "We are a godly, Christian nation." Yet history has demonstrated the average life expectancy of the great civilizations down through time is approximately 200 years. Nearly all the great civilizations of the world have passed through this series of graduating steps or stages from birth to decline, and ultimately to their demise. A very few nations, such as the British Empire, have exceeded this average, while other countries, such as the United States, are now approaching the average age in this rise and fall of nations cycle. Some historians have listed these in ten stages as follows:

1. From Bondage to Spiritual Faith
2. From Spiritual Faith to Great Courage
3. From Great Courage to Liberty
4. From Liberty to Abundance
5. From Abundance to Excess and Selfishness
6. From Selfishness to Complacency
7. From Complacency to Apathy
8. From Apathy to (Sexual) Moral Decay
9. From (Sexual) Moral Decay to Dependence
10. Finally, from Dependence to Bondage

The most important question of our day is, where are we *now* in the scenario of Bible prophecy—and can anything be done to break this vicious cycle?

To understand where we came from, where we are headed, and what we must do now to avoid national calamity, be sure to request our special CD series, *The Biblical Origins of The British Commonwealth and U.S.A.* They come with an accompanying easy-to-understand brochure. Request yours *now*.

Ω

Questions & Answers

by Vance Stinson

Did Paul tell the Galatians the holydays were not for them?

QUESTION: Paul's epistle to the Galatians addresses the false teachings of the Judaizers, who were trying to convince the Christians at Galatia to keep Old Testament laws such as circumcision and the Feast days. Paul wrote, "You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain" (Galatians 4:10–11). Since the false teachers were Judaizers, this passage must refer to holydays, new moons, Festival seasons, and sabbatical years—the sacred times of the Old Testament law. We conclude from this that the Feasts and holydays were not meant for Christians. Is this not clear from the text? (Paraphrased)

Ontario, Canada

REPLY: The problem in Galatia was that certain false teachers were telling believers that justification was not possible for Gentiles until they became Jews through adoption. To put oneself "under the law" was to attempt to put oneself under the Old Covenant. That's what Paul was referring to when he wrote, "And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:3–4). Paul knew that if a person *could* put himself under the Old Covenant—no one can actually do that, since that covenant no longer exists (Hebrews 8:13)—he would be required to fulfill all the requirements of that Covenant, including the Covenant-specific features that do not, never have, and never will pertain to peoples not under that covenant.

The issue here is not whether this law or that law is still in force; it revolves around the question, "Who are the people of God?" The Judaizers apparently believed the Jews were the "chosen people"—the seed of Abraham, the people of the Covenant, recipients of the Law and the promises. After all, God made the Sinai Covenant with their ancestors and promised a "New Covenant" with the "House of Israel" and the "House of Judah," not with other nations. Thus, to receive the full benefits of the New Covenant promised to the Jews, one must *be* a Jew. Gentiles therefore must become Jews by adoption. The rite of entry to the Covenant is circumcision, hence Paul's emphasis on this rite.

So it is clear that the heretics who were troubling the Galatians were Judaizers. The Galatians had not yet succumbed to the heretics' deceptive teaching, but apparently a significant number of them were being lured by it and were close to embracing it fully. Paul, knowing that the heretics' "gospel" amounted to accepting something other than (or in addition to) Christ as the means of justification and regeneration, sternly warned the Galatians to renounce the heresy before it had a chance to take root.

Given this background, it is easy to see how some draw the conclusion that Paul was referring to Hebrew sacred times—Sabbaths, Festivals, new moons, and sabbatical years—when he wrote, "You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain" (Galatians 4:10–11).

But before accepting this seemingly plausible explanation, let's read these verses in their immediate context:

"But then, indeed, when you [Gentiles] did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you [Gentiles] have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain" (4:8–11).

Notice that these Gentile converts were turning back to the "weak and beggarly elements" they had formerly been enslaved to. The Jews did not serve pagan idols, so how does this statement fit the context, which is about embracing some form of Judaism in order to have and maintain a right standing with God? Since (1) the false teachers were pushing some form of Judaism, and since (2) the Galatians were going back to something that had enslaved them before they became Christians, the real question before us is this: *What "weak and beggarly elements" did Judaism and paganism have in common?*

According to Daniel G. Reid, associate editor of *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (InterVarsity Press, 1993), "A number of interpreters, perhaps even the majority, have concluded that *ta stoicheia tou kosmou* ["elements of the world"] refers to spiritual powers of some sort. The options, broadly defined, range from star deities, to demons, to angels of the nations or local tribal and national deities....

"The notion that stars and constellations in some sense control the cosmos and human destiny has an ancient lineage, traceable at least as far back as the celestial divination of Old Babylon in the second millennium B.C.... In time the stars were associated with spiritual powers and then identified as spiritual powers themselves....

"From Second Temple Judaism there comes ample evidence of speculation about the universe and how the heavenly bodies were related to angels. *The Book of the Heavenly Luminaries in 1 Enoch* 72–82, a work dating from perhaps the first century B.C., testifies to Jewish astrological ideas and the association of an angel, Uriel, with the stars. This is set within a context in which particular attention is paid to times and seasons.... It is of some significance that Josephus could say that the woven veil separating the 'holy place' from the outer vestibule of the Herodian Temple was 'a kind of image of the universe.' Its four colors symbolized fire, earth, air and sea, and embroidered upon it was 'a panorama of the heavens,' excepting 'the signs of the zodiac.' The latter, however, were represented by the twelve loaves upon the table while the seven lamps represented the seven planets (Josephus *J.W.* 5.5.4–5 §§212–18). Thus even at the heart of the Jerusalem Temple cultus there were symbols which suggest a necessity of penetrating the heavens in order to reach the throne of God in the Holy of Holies.

"The earliest extant extrabiblical Jewish evidence for the word *stoicheia* being associated with both spirits and stars is later than the first century (second and third centuries A.D.), but it is well attested and may very well represent beliefs contemporaneous with Paul..." (pp. 231–232).

Douglas R. de Lacey, commenting on Galatians 4:9–10, writes, "The 'observance' might be 'studying' such times (as the inclusion of 'years' might suggest) rather than 'performing' them; and it is clear that astrology was widely pervasive and deeply influential in Greco-Roman (and Jewish) daily life.... The 'elements' are likely to be either those of earth, air, fire and water (as generally in ancient cosmology) or the heavenly bodies (which controlled fate in ancient astrology). Either way they are closely linked to the sun, moon and seasons" (ibid., p. 403).

So what "weak and beggarly elements," or "elements of the world," did Judaism and paganism have in common? **ASTROLOGY!** It appears, then, that the Galatians, having to some extent fallen under the influence of the Judaizers, had gone back to their old custom of observing the *astrological signs*, which were connected with days and months and seasons and years and were apparently observed by the Judaizing heretics.

Notice that Paul does not say, "You *keep* days...." He says, "You *observe* days and months and seasons and years." Scholars have pointed out that the term translated "observe" suggests a *scrupulous* observance, which possibly suggests a *superstitious* observance of some kind. **THIS HAS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH CELEBRATING GOD'S UNFOLDING PLAN FOR HUMAN-KIND THROUGH KEEPING THE FESTIVALS AND HOLYDAYS OF LEVITICUS 23;** it's about the *superstitious studying* ("observance") of astrological signs associated with "days and months and seasons and years," a practice that Jews and pagans had in common.

The weekly and annual Sabbaths and Festivals are rich in New Covenant meaning. In fact, they have more New Covenant than Old Covenant meaning! It seems terribly unlikely that Paul, who clearly recognized the Christological and New Covenant significance of the Festivals (as seen in 1 Corinthians 5:7–8, for example), would chastise the Galatians for keeping them, even going so far as to say, "I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain." It is clear that Paul is not talking about celebrating the redemptive work of Christ and the unfolding plan of God for humankind through keeping Festivals and holydays. He obviously has something else in mind. And based on what we know about the "weak and beggarly elements" Jews and pagans had in common, we have a pretty good idea as to what that "something else" was.

Mississauga Outreach Attracts 80 New Visitors

More than 80 new visitors attended the early spring Evangelism Outreach hosted by the Burlington, Kitchener, and Toronto congregations at the Sandman Hotel in Mississauga, Ontario on March 28, 2015. The campaign, which was titled *Blood Moons—Signs of the Times? What Does It Mean?* sought to explain the phenomenal event of two blood red moons and a dark solar eclipse set to occur in April, September, and October on the high holydays of Unleavened Bread, Trumpets, and Tabernacles commanded to be observed by God in Leviticus 23. Even more surprising, these are the only lunar and solar eclipses that will occur in 2015—and *all of them* will fall on God's holydays. The all-day event, which was attended by some 220 persons, was addressed in the morning by Bill Watson, host of the *Armor of God* television program, and in the afternoon by George Ramocan, associate pastor of the CGI Toronto congregation and National Evangelism Coordinator for Canada.

Blood Moons and Prophecy

In clarifying the blood moons of 2014–2015 and their particular relationship with biblical prophecy, Mr. Watson made it clear these are *not* the blood moons of Joel 2 and Revelation 6 that will occur at the time of the coming of Christ. Unfortunately, the advancement of prognostications like blood moons can entrap some well-meaning Christians into a “snare of expectations” that could easily set them up for some major disappointments. This type of “hyperbole” does nothing for building one's relationship with God or, for that matter, the reputation of the Christian faith. So as we're confronted with different predictions, or interpretations of certain events that may or may not occur, we should always keep in mind the timeline that God is working and steering. We certainly don't want to be guilty of adding to or taking away from the Word of God (Revelation 22:18–19).

As we approach the lunar tetrad of 2015, let's keep in mind that it is a rare occasion for a lunar tetrad to fall on the holydays of Israel—this will be only the eighth time in 2,000 years. Does this have any significance? Will something terrible happen to the Jewish nation-state of Israel, or some place else in the world? Frankly, *we just don't know!* Can we say, based on the historical pattern of the previous seven holyday tetrads, that there is a good chance something will happen? I suppose you could come to that conclusion. But here's the real question: Are these four consecutive lunar eclipses—the eighth holyday tetrad in 2,000 years—the blood moons of Joel 2:30–32 or Revelation 6:12? The conclusive answer to that is: *Absolutely not!* The blood moons of your Bible are totally different, and are indeed the harbingers of far more significant disasters that will tragically result in the death of billions of people and the destruction of the worldwide geopolitical structure of nations, as we know it today. It will culminate with Jesus Christ landing on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:1–9).

Biblical Significance of Blood Moons

Mr. Ramocan explained the biblical significance of the appearance of these heavenly signs on God's holydays and their meaning for God's people today. He said that God, in Genesis 1:14, clarifies for us there is a relationship between the sun and the moon as signs of heavenly warning and seasonal timing for His holydays.

He explained that the word “seasons” in Genesis 1:14 translated from the Hebrew word *mo'ed* is defined by *Strong's Concordance* as: *sacred season, set feast, appointed sign or signal, and Congregation*. Various Bible translations such as the *Good News Bible* use the words “religious festivals” instead of the word “seasons.” There is an important reason these blood moons and solar eclipses are occurring on God's holydays. Man *needs to be reminded* that at the very beginning, God established times of worship, which should be annually celebrated to His glory. Instead, man has *ignored* the sacred festivals, which God has established in favor of the man made traditions of Easter, Christmas, and Sunday.

1. God's times of worship are listed in Leviticus 23. He says, “These are the feasts (mo'ed) of the Lord, the sacred

assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times.” The Feast days belong to God and they are all about Jesus Christ.

2. The Sabbath celebrates Christ as Creator of the heavens and the earth.
3. The Passover proclaims the death of Christ until He comes.
4. The Feast of Unleavened Bread celebrates Christ, the Bread of Life that came down from Heaven.
5. The Feast of Pentecost celebrates Christ and His Father dwelling in us through His Holy Spirit. “If you hath not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of His.”
6. The Feast of Trumpets proclaims the return of Christ when the trumpet shall sound.
7. The Feast of Atonement proclaims Christ our High Priest, who makes intercession.
8. The Feast of Tabernacles proclaims Christ as King of kings Who will reign over the nations in the Kingdom of God.

The disastrous consequences of ignoring God's festivals are written in Zechariah 14. In this narrative, the prophet says every nation will be required to keep God's Feast of Tabernacles after Jesus returns, and if they don't, they will be punished with plagues like the ones God sent upon Egypt (Zechariah 14:16–21). The book of Exodus tells us God poured out pestilences including the killing of the firstborn of Egypt after Pharaoh refused to release God's people to keep His Feast.

The display of these heavenly signs on God's holydays sends a clear warning to mankind that we have abandoned God's Feast days for our own traditions. Christ says of those who use man-made traditions to replace God's commandments, “...in vain they do worship me...” (Mark 7:7). The display of this phenomenon for man to see and behold upon God's Feast days bears witness to the world that these Feast days are not abolished as many think He said.

The outreach was followed up with a Bible Study the following day, titled *How the Passover Was Changed to Easter*. Overall, it was a beneficial day for all attendees. A lot of information was distributed, questions were answered, and many added their names to CGI Canada's data base for future notification of additional events and new material as it becomes available.

We thank all of the brethren and guests who contributed to the success of this event, and we look forward to future opportunities to spread the Gospel of truth. God be praised. Ω

Submitted by George Ramocan

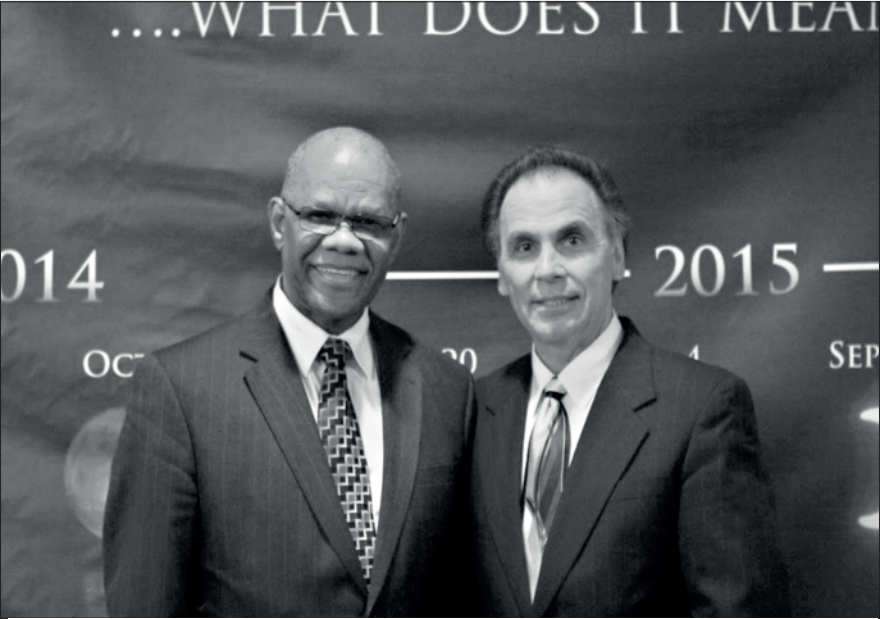


For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. Therefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Ephesians 6:12-13)

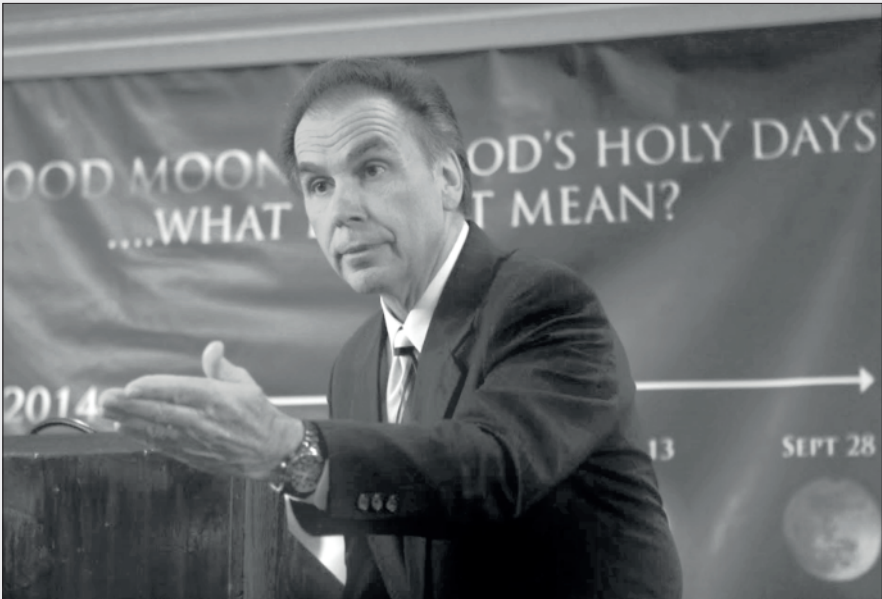
See our updated web site at: www.cgi.org.



The Ontario, Canada Blood Moons Campaign held in late March



George Ramocan and Bill Watson



Bill Watson in presentation



George Ramocan prays for God's guidance.



George Ramocan and Bill Watson explain the Blood Moons phenomena in great detail.

Prophecy Campaign Comes to Lakeland, Florida

On the Sabbath of May 2nd, about 70 people attended dual presentations provided by George Ramocan and Bill Watson. It was an exciting event for all who attended. There were about 25 new people who visited over the two sessions.

The Auburndale and Clearwater *Church of God International* (CGI) congregations came together to sponsor this event, designed to provide prophetic biblical relevance for the attendees regarding the tumultuous times we find ourselves contending with.

Those in attendance set up the hall with a display of materials that were relevant to the presentations and consumed by many of the attendees. These articles and booklets were very helpful as supplemental information to the topics that were presented. A lot of data was acquired for future contact of the attendees with Internet ads and other “pop-up” notifications of new products such as sermons, web-chats, Biblical News Updates and Commentary, YouTube presentations, articles, booklets, and Bible and history topics that bring the Bible alive.

Mr. Ramocan opened up the session with a presentation on the significance of the modern Jewish Israeli nation state, located presently in Palestine. He made the connection with the prophetic fact that in the end times there will be a nation of Jews; and then connected up with the prophetic statement of Christ in Matthew 24 about the fig tree. He proceeded to show how this “bud” on the fig tree would be a notable sign of the return of the Messiah, and that once this would occur, there would be a generation which would be alive to witness those apocalyptic events culminating in the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Savior of the world!

Mr. Watson followed up by building on Mr. Ramocan’s presentation in going back to the Old Testament prophets and explaining their prophetic statements in light of our modern times, confirming and validating with history, the visions of Daniel in chapters seven and eight and overlaying them onto Revelation 13 and 17, clearly illustrating there are still some major events of development yet ahead. He continued to emphasize how the European Union is not what the Bible describes in Revelation 17 as the latter day socialistic coalition of 10 kings combining their power with the Beast for a short time. Instead, he warned those in attendance to remain open for major and probable violent changes that are yet to occur, which will result in bringing this “autocratic system” to fruition, thereby taking its destined role as the power of the anti-Christ that will resist and ruthlessly confront Jesus Christ upon His return (Revelation 17:14).

The *Church of God International* continues to forge ahead, preaching the Gospel with power, witnessing and warning to all who will hear that the world is heading into a major storm which ultimately will bring much heartache and destruction for all the people of the earth, but especially those of the Christian faith. The message was clear by both of these men—*repent* of your sins, and *accept* Christ as your Savior, and begin modeling your life after *His example*—for now is a day of salvation, and it is indeed the only real assurance of abundant life beyond our present physical lives. Ω

Submitted by Bill Watson



George Ramocan addressing audience in Lakeland, Florida campaign



George Ramocan in Lakeland, Florida campaign

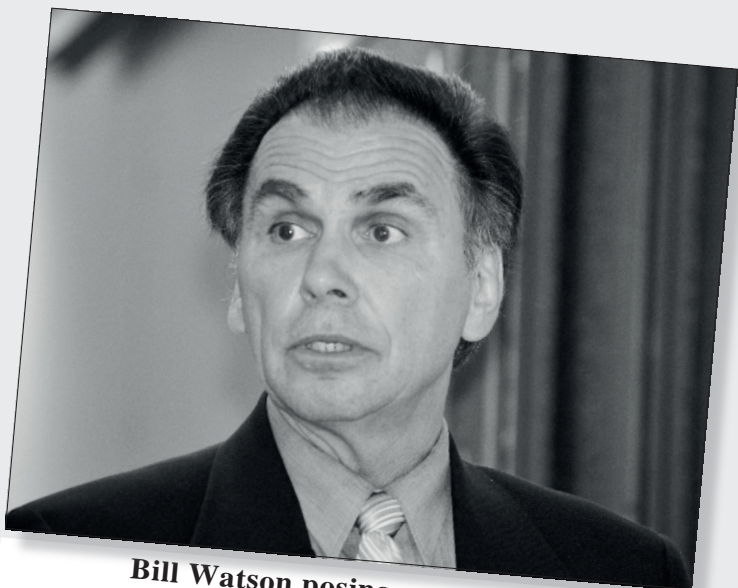


Administration table—Brenda Pinkerman (forefront) and Angie Wendle (with pen in hand)

“Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19–20).



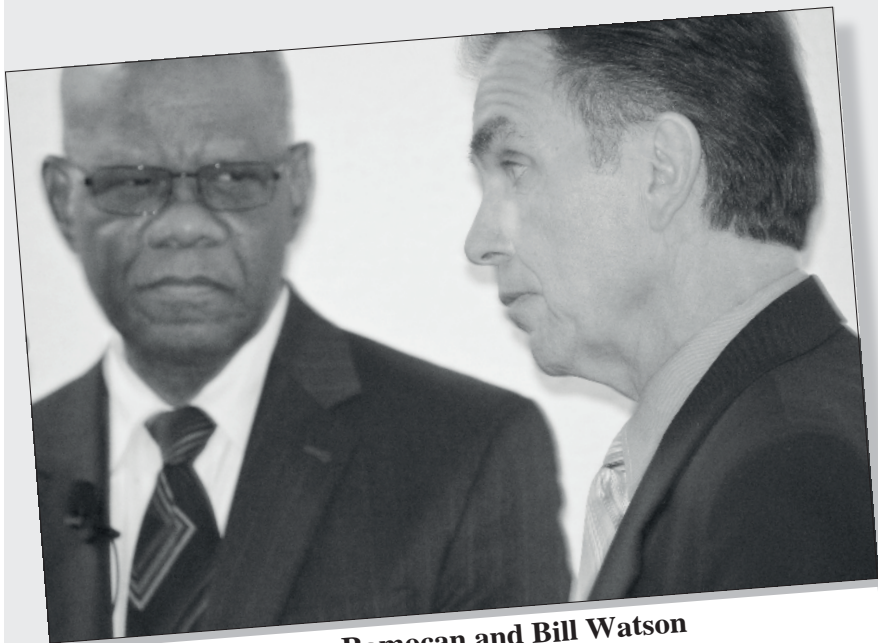
George Ramocan chatting with veteran church member Marty Kerns from southern Florida



Bill Watson posing a question in Lakeland, Florida campaign



Some of the attendees at the campaign



George Ramocan and Bill Watson taking questions from the audience



Administration table with Ray and Angie Wendle Ray was the moderator of the meeting.

From the Mouths of Babes

by Dianne Prather-Tuskes



Dianne Prather-Tuskes

Mummy, how is this man with red clothes, fat tummy, and long white beard supposed to fit down a chimney, and how would he stay clean like all those pictures show? And how does he fit in with Jesus and His birthday? And why do my friends still celebrate Christmas when they are old enough to know this Santa stuff is not real?

Well, with another awkward grin and shoulders shrugging, I tried my best to explain again the irrationality of it all. My son, then nine and knowing only God's holydays and commandments, looked perplexed and somewhat frustrated. The world's views and

justifications washed thin with his understanding, and he reasoned more maturely at his young age than most adults did over such notions and concepts befalling the world.

The upbringing and morals my husband and I had so far instilled in our son about God's truth were shining through, and for all those awkward times that friends and family questioned us about our beliefs, made it all worthwhile at that very moment. He could see quite clearly the stupidity of it all.

You guessed it, the "silly season" had just passed and we survived another onslaught of brainwashing jingle bells and mindless advertising rituals and scams trying to entice victims to dig deep and show just how much they cared for their loved ones. "Oh, it's all for the children"—so we are told.

"Why not just tell them the truth?" my son continued.

"Oh, that would be too logical," I chuckled; but looking at my son's face, cynicism was not what he asked for, and not what I really wanted to instill into his young psyche. It is a weakness adults too often adopt because of frustration.

That was a few years ago; our son will soon be 13, and I have turned 50. I have so many questions about *why* the world is the way it is. I still search for the answers. At times it seems the hardest thing is to be a parent, not wanting to make a mistake in case of repercussions. But the joy you get watching your child grow seems to balance out all those fears. If our son stops asking questions, I will know we have failed, but if he continues to challenge and question the world because of his beliefs, I will know we have done what any God-fearing parent should hope for, and that is giving him a sound foundation.

I recall another time, some years ago, when our son was in grade three. I watched him from afar running down the stairs leading from his classroom to the ground level below. I was working at the school at that time, and was coming out from another class. It was recess, and I watched from a short distance behind him as the children rushed off to lunch and teachers and aides hurried to the sanctuary of the staff room to gather their thoughts and grab a bite to eat. As he dodged his classmates and other children jostling down the stairs, he appeared to be on a mission to reach his teacher before she escaped to her child free refuge.

"Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Smith, but do they have..." his voice muffled with the loud squall of excited children sprawling around heading off to their lunch areas.

"Oh, it's OK. Why are you always fretting? It will be alright," I heard his teacher say in a somewhat loud and flabbergasted voice.

In the lunchroom I caught up with her; she gave a somewhat exhausted laugh and said, "Oh, I thought I made it quite clear to your son that the cookies we are baking today would be OK for him to eat—no nuts, no eggs" (both of which he is allergic to). With a grin she continued, "But then he comes at me with 'Do they have leavening in them?' What's that got to do with anything?" she huffed.

Now, with a little chuckle from myself, I explained to her my son's question was with reason, as it was the "Days of Unleavened Bread." The expression on her face showed she was a little taken back. "But, isn't that Jewish or something?" was her response. "How is it an issue?"

And so began our family's quest in dishing out little snippets of what we believed. Chunks of gold, more like it. It was challenging at times with the questioning looks we got from other staff members (and even students). "What, you don't do Christmas or Easter—but you're Christians, aren't you?" The school and the area is *very* multicultural, a mixture of many

nationalities, cultures, and religions, with English predominantly a second language for most. With all the diversity, it was the issue of Christmas and Easter my fellow colleagues struggled with the most. But as time went by, each year it was accepted that we observed different days. The looks were more approving as long as we didn't tell them what not to do. So, although our son still had to endure the Easter bunnies and Christmas trees his fellow classmates would make during art classes at those times, no more questions circled the room on why he was allowed to draw other animals, trees and flowers, things from God's diverse creation.

Once on a bus trip heading off on an end-of-year school excursion, I sat next to a lovely girl from my son's class. I believe it was the end of grade four. We struck up a conversation about what kind of things we wanted to enjoy during the summer break. Summer here in Australia starts in December, and it's hot, real hot—no white Christmas here! Before too long, the topic of Christmas was bound to pop up.

"Your son told me you have different holidays. He said he doesn't do Christmas. Shouldn't he be sad he misses out on all those presents?" she said.

"Oh no," I replied. "He gets presents too, just at different times of the year." I told her about how our family goes away every year for the Feast of Tabernacles and we meet up with friends in our church every day and get to do fun things together and go to the beach. She thought that was great, more than what she gets to do on her holidays. She was happy to know he wasn't missing out. But still, I pondered how much others were missing due to the secular beliefs they clung to.

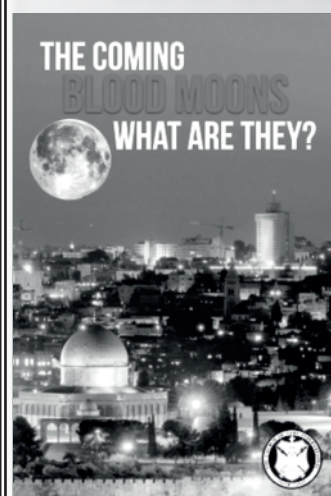
Our son had often told his friends it's not holidays, it's holydays, and they knew he would be absent from school certain times of the year. After a while people got used to us being a little different. "Oh, that's right, you go to church on Saturday," or, "Hey, isn't it coming up to your Feast Days?" they would say.

Little snippets are what I think we can offer to those who don't know God's plan yet. I believe that one day when God calls the people we have met along our journey through life, they will remember those little snippets like gems shining through, and it will help them understand God's true destiny for us all.

Our son, yet only a child, makes more sense out of life and its meaning than most adults do. He questions the ever-growing insanity he sees about him in this world, but holds fast to the principles of God's commands. His youthful enthusiasm and joy for life offers inspiration to me every day and makes me want to be a better parent and person. We can only pray that from the "mouths of babes" others can be woken from their worldly slumber and share in the gift of God's bounty of truth.

Ω

The Coming BLOOD MOONS—What Are They?



Intrigue is building around the anticipation of the Blood Moons' arrival. Some of our modern day Christian prophetic prognosticators claim we should prepare for some major cataclysmic events happening to Israel over the next two years—that these moons are signs of coming calamities.

Are they really?

What are these Blood Moons?

And what significance do the Tetrads have?

Chapter headings include:

- Are Blood Moons Biblical?
- But What About the Tetrads?
- Two Coming Solar Eclipses in 2015
- God Is Working Off a Timeline: There Is a Prophetic Sequence
- The Conclusion of the Matter: Are You Ready?

Send for your free copy today!



The Most Valuable Thing In The World

by Lloyd W. Cary

***Sirens! Flashing lights! A cadre of
fire engines turning down your street!***

Imagine your house is on fire — and everyone in your family (pets included) has made it to safety.

Next, imagine an angel tells you that you may return to the home for one thing—one thing only—and rescue it from the fire, and return to safety with it. What would you choose?



What Would You Choose?

Your Bible? (But surely, you could find a replacement.) Would it be the stash under your mattress? How about your bank book, your prized CD collection, maybe a keepsake, something of sentimental value, a photo album, a family heirloom? What about your favorite dress or suit? How about the car in your attached garage?

What would it be? (Make sure you’ve made a mental image of the most prized possession you’ve chosen before you continue reading. Have you decided? Good. OK, keep reading.)

Now, why did you choose that object? There can be only one reason. It may not be the most expensive thing you own. It may not even be worth anything to someone else. But the fact that you would save that possession instead of anything else, reveals that to you—for whatever reason—that item is the most valuable thing you own.

What Would God Choose?

Now, let’s take our analogy a step further. If God were faced with the same choice, do you know what He would choose? In fact, He has already chosen. Ever since the day sin entered into the world, everything God created in the universe has been marked for destruction. The heavens and earth will be destroyed and replaced with a new, improved version. But God sent His Son to save the most valuable part of His creation—you!

He had to suffer and die to pull it off, but He did it. And do you know why He did it? Because He loves you. He loves you enough to choose you and to suffer for you and to die for you.

Can we tell what God values by what He does?

Christ is our daily Advocate in order to save us!

God inspired the apostle John to write, “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested [revealed] the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him” (John 4:7–9).

Can we tell what God values by what He says?

Can we tell what God values by what He saves?

What did God save? He saved mankind in Noah’s time.

Since God loved you so much, how should you feel about yourself?

Shouldn’t we love what God loves and hate what God hates?

Since God loved you so much, what should you value?

What should you do?

Ecclesiastes 12:13–14 advises, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: FEAR GOD, and KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”

Romans 8:1: reminds us, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Even though God will destroy the heavens and the earth (Revelation 21:1; 2 Peter 3:13) and replace them with something better, there remains yet one thing God cannot do: He cannot stop loving you, His most valuable thing!

Ω

In loving memory...



Ruth Ferrell

Ruth Ferrell was a true example of a woman with great faith in God. The many years she battled with cancer, she never complained or said “Why me?” She would say “Pray about it and forget it.”

During the years she battled cancer, she traveled to several CGI congregations and never missed a Feast. She loved meeting the brethren in God’s church.

In the midst of her own infirmities, she reached out to other families who were in need of help, and was willing to help any way she could. She was always willing to give some good, sound advice

She was a witty, soft-spoken lady, and was fun to be around. She had a lot of experience and knowledge, which helped her and her family establish a very successful embroidery business.

One year she brought t-shirts and caps to the Feast with the church logo on them, which she had prepared. They were very nice, and the people loved them.

Even through she was weak and knew her life was coming to an end soon, she came to Sabbath services every time she could. She was determined to keep the Passover and the First Day of Unleavened Bread with her Indianapolis church family. We all loved her, and will miss her. We are looking forward to seeing her again at the return of our Savior, Jesus the Christ. First Thessalonians 4:13–17—may God hasten the day!

Ω

Written and submitted by Ferrell and Barbara Vincent

Ruth Marie Ferrell, 87, passed away on Monday, May 4, 2015 at her residence in Whiteland, Indiana. She was born on February 24, 1928 in Brown County, Indiana to Paul Trisler and Mattie (Smith) McGaha. She married Paul R. Ferrell on September 3, 1947. He preceded her in passing on September 12, 1997.

Ruth is survived by one son, Scott (Angella) Ferrell of Whiteland; and grandchildren, Kassadra, Justin, and Tyler Ferrell, all of Whiteland. She was preceded in passing by her parents, husband Paul, and brother, Raymond Trisler.

Ruth was a graduate of Trafalgar High School. She was employed by Indiana National Bank in the Consumer Credit Investigation Division, retiring after several years of service. She was a member of the Church of God International in Indianapolis. Ruth was an avid bowler, bowling in the Senior Keglers League in Greenwood for many years.

A celebration of Ruth’s life was held on Friday, May 8, at 1:00 PM at Flinn and Maguire Funeral Home, 2898 North Morton Street (U.S. 31 North) in Franklin. Burial was at Forest Lawn Memory Gardens in Greenwood.

Ω

News article submitted by Ferrell and Barbara Vincent

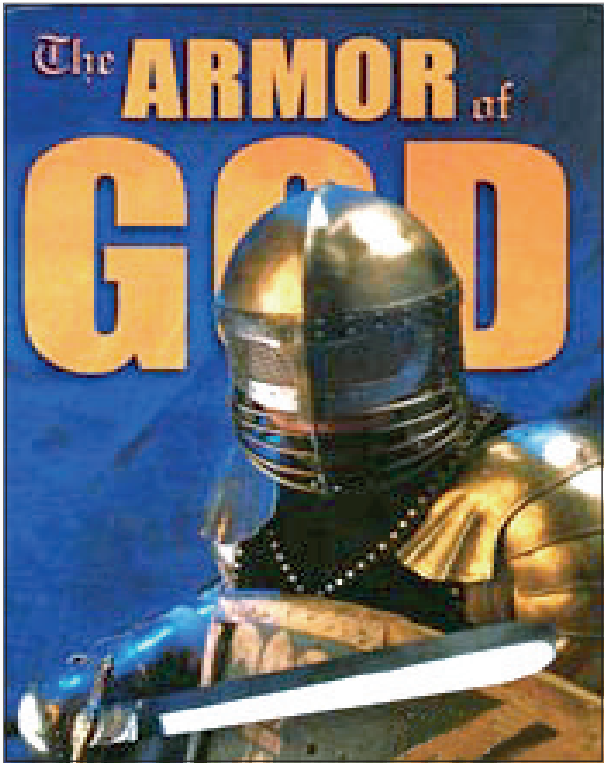
An Amazing Fact: Did you know...

It is estimated that more than 14,500 wars have been fought from 3600 B.C. to the present day—and that number keeps rising. In fact, during the same time period, there have been 5,305 years of war—and only 292 years of peace.

The Bible depicts countless battles. From Genesis to Revelation, its pages reveal there are both physical and spiritual wars raging. Physical wars have dominated history’s attention from the time Cain killed his brother Abel, right down to the present day. This should not surprise us, for Jesus predicted, “And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. ... For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (Matthew 24:6, 7).

However, the primary focus of Scripture is the ongoing conflict between Christ and Satan. Revelation speaks that what began as a cosmic war in heaven will soon end in Armageddon. In this showdown between the forces of good and the powers of evil, truth and light are under constant attack from deception and darkness.

And like it or not, every single one of us is involved. We need to put on...



The Whole Armor of God

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.” (Ephesians 6:10-18, *KJ2000*).

Although our armor and weapons are spiritual, this does not mean they are unreal or ineffective. “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds)” (2 Corinthians 10:3, 4).

To be fully armed, be sure to get your Bible and go to our new, updated **Armor of God** website at www.cgi.org. Ω



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