



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

The Official Newspaper of the Church of God International

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

Fall 2017

Remodeling Our Marriages

Christian marriages and "the family" are under a lot of pressure today. There are a variety of sources feeding the tensions that challenge our relationships with our mates and children. Though remaining vigilant is central to the vitality of any marriage—are there any other "keys" we could consider that would insure our success?

by Bill Watson



Bill Watson

Without a doubt, marriage is the most important "team" of any nation. It goes without saying, what condition the *family* is in, so goes the neighborhood, the national culture, and by extension, the world. Families, secured by the lifelong monogamous commitment it takes to dedicate a *man* and a *woman* to the institution of *marriage*, for better or worse, is the most assured way of developing a

family in the way God originally *intended* and *designed* it to be.

However, especially in today's Western culture, many have forgotten what is fundamental to a successful marriage. This lack of attention to these fundamentals, as for *any* team, is a recipe for disaster! It doesn't matter what sport, activity, game, or relationship you might participate in—forget the fundamentals, and you will *handicap* your ability to accomplish the successful results you're hoping for.

So what are some of the *fundamentals* that are so important to keep in mind when aspiring for a happy and joyful marriage, which are also condu-

cive for creating an environment that results in wholesome, well behaved, and emotionally stable children?

For the sake of this article, we're going to focus on just *four areas* that need watchful attention and require an active and positive approach in attending the demands these areas have. Be forewarned that it doesn't come easily! It often takes hard work, vigilance, and resourcefulness, with a lot of patience that sometimes is inconvenient for the moment—but if we "soldier on," usually we will be better for it, and our relationships become stronger because of it.

The Four Points to Consider

Regardless of the performance mandates, most teams recognize there are *specific behavioral basics* required that are embedded in the mutual understanding of the relationship each has toward the demands of the game and its rules. Marriage is no different. There are requirements that are outgrowths of a few broad foundational points to keep in mind—and if we keep them in mind, our behavioral basics should conform toward supporting and constructing a conducive setting for a blissful marriage.

There are four major foundational points, or concepts, which we should use toward the development of our marital environment that will improve our assurance of success. They are built around four Greek words prominently used throughout the New Testament.

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All Things Are Ready— Come To The Feast!

Ready or not, God's Feast of Tabernacles is just around the corner. But will you be ready?



Lloyd W. Cary

We often sing a beautiful hymn at **God's Feast of Tabernacles:** *All Things Are Ready—Come to the Feast!* But will you be ready?

Despite what some naysayers may say, God's Feast of Tabernacles pictures the Millennium—the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ that begins at His return.

"Speak unto the children of Israel," *God* says in Leviticus 23:2, "and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are *my* feasts." They are *whose* Feasts? Notice, these are not the Feasts of the Jews or any other group; they are the Feasts of the Lord God. God then goes on to enumerate each of His seven annual holydays, which depict, step by step, His plan of salvation for all mankind.

Concerning the great autumn Feast, now fast approaching, God says, "Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by

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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. Ω

God's Holydays 2017

New Testament Passover

April 9, 2017 (Observed at sundown)

Feast of Unleavened Bread

April 11–17, 2017

Pentecost

June 4, 2017

Feast of Trumpets

September 21, 2017

Day of Atonement

September 30, 2017

Feast of Tabernacles

October 5–11, 2017

Last Great Day

October 12, 2017

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*

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@cgi.org or lloyd Cary@gmail.com or, preferably, to *both*.

DEADLINE for the *next* issue is Nov. 15th 2017.

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



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Our Great Commission

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 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).

Visit us at:



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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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Festival Coordinators: It would be well to appoint volunteers who would take notes and pictures for the upcoming FEAST ISSUE of the *International News*.

Marriage, continued from from page 1

They are: *philia*, *agape*, *eros*, and *pisteuo*. Each one goes to underscore what our outlook and intent should be toward our mates.

Taking each one for what they mean will illustrate what should be kept in mind when interacting with our mates. Their meaning presents us with an outlook—a “template”—to work from, which can help us steer our behavior.



For instance, *philia* essentially means **friendship**. **Our mate should be our friend.** With this in mind, we should be able to comprehend that if we intend to maintain a friendship with our mate what our behavior should be—it’s that simple! Obviously, all the basic detailed behavioral

actions on our part should go to serve this ultimate goal. So, if we understand our mate is our friend, our behavior should illustrate and support that objective. Clearly, we need to just keep this in mind: How do you make friends and maintain that friendship? That’s fundamental for what you need to do with your mate!

The next one is *agape*, which essentially means **sacrificial love**, but with **emotional affection**. A common English translation for this Greek word is “charity.” Why do you suppose that is? Very simply: It’s a word indicative of sacrifice—and that isn’t usually done without affection for the one(s) you’re with. Affectionate love and care, with a *willingness to sacrifice*, even when it’s *not convenient*—that is a “point,” if kept in mind, that will go a long way in maintaining the behavioral basics of kindness and selfless service.

Eros is next. Clearly, this is an important point of these four concepts to build a strong and vibrant marriage around. The affection that *agape* portrays is maximized in the erotic and intimate time only the two of you share as enclosed in an exclusive monogamous relationship. This is special, specific to only the two of you. It is the one time “oneness” is revealed in all its glory on the human level and from which children are born. It is the parallel means that God is doing *spiritually*, with the church, through the impregnation of the Holy Spirit via baptism. Yes, the bed is undefiled in marriage (Hebrews 13:4)—don’t minimize its cohesive importance (1 Corinthians 7:3–5) because it’s the very symbol of the *intimate*, picturesque and *personal* relationship God has with His church (Ephesians 5:22–33). It is the ultimate sign of what God’s salvific plan is all about—the reproduction of Himself—thereby adding to His family! Therein lies the reason marriage, on the human level, is a sacred and holy institution defined only by God and His relationship with the church. Anything outside that imagery is not a true definition of marriage.

The last of these fundamental concepts is *pisteuo*. Essentially, this word is all about the level of *commitment* that will allow for the perseverance necessary to accomplish the construction of a helpful ambience for weathering the storms of life. It will also provide the patience to produce the resourcefulness necessary when confronting the challenges that jeopardize the peace and unity of the “family team.” Without this *cohesion*, the cultural character of your family team may not be able to stand unaffected by the disruptions of life that blow your way.

However, if indeed you are friends (*philia*) that embrace sacrificial love (*agape*) by means of the strengthening and cohesion that comes from the intimate time spent together (*eros*) that is secured by a *bond of trust*, which only comes from a boundless commitment (*pisteuo*)—your marriage will stand throughout all the challenges that come your way.

So What’s Next

Obviously, there are a lot of details that need consideration when attempting to identify the metrics associated with the four fundamentals mentioned above. And it’s important we recognize there are behavioral actions, effort, and energy to expend, which are necessary for achieving the right results. As a matter of fact, statistics prove if we are *active participants in our Christian faith*, we have a good chance of reducing the risk of divorce by 25 to 50 percent. This is a stunning statistic!

But, it must not go unnoticed: We must *work* at our marital and parental relationships if we want the yielded benefits for our families. A “well oiled” team is always communicating emotionally, mentally, and spiritually; and in the context of marriage with your mates, sexually. We

must invest in ourselves, and marriage is an *investment* of ourselves with each other for the yielded benefits of our families.

Keep in mind these few points while working toward the implementation of the four fundamentals within our marriages, mentioned previously. They are as follows:



1) *Understand we are all sinners.* All have sinned. So be understanding, empathetic, and patient with each other (1 Peter 3:8). Give each other the benefit of the doubt!

2) *Treat each other with respect and honor* (1 Peter 3:5–7). Recognize each has a role to play, and commit to those roles selflessly—not selfishly—serving toward helping each to maximize the gifts you have for the benefit of the family. The sooner you learn to work within the “manners of love” (1 Corinthians 13:4–13), the sooner you will be able to achieve and maintain the unity and peace so critical for developing the environment all will enjoy as a place that only *home* can be!

3) *Learn to be forgiving* (Hebrews 12:14–15). Recognize arguments and disagreements will occur—no doubt; it comes with the marital territory. You will not be able to avoid it, especially when children are involved. Admittedly, children can be a source of stress and tension, especially as they become teenagers. So, it’s important—get “suited up” and “clothe” yourself with forgiveness, lest you allow a bad situation to become worse (Ephesians 4:31–32; Mark 11:25–26). Learn to be tolerantly patient, but without compromise. Everyone is accountable to each other—that is a key “actualization” everyone in the family needs to accept, understand, and be responsible for, concerning the expectation upon them!

4) *Be helpful and positively reinforcing.* Remember, true love and concern is not about self, but rather the circumstances and condition of the greater whole. This isn’t always easy, since we are basically selfish in nature. But we must learn to value the opinions of others and try to understand their point of view. It’s important we are truthful and honest with each other as we attempt to work through the issues that come our way. Notice Proverbs 10:12 mentions “love covers.” That means to cut each other slack—give some space—don’t negatively obsess about the contentions we face. Instead, look out for each other’s welfare more than self (1 Corinthians 10:24; Philippians 2:3–4). Commit to working toward a solution, rather than obsessing over the contention or conflict.

5) *Make prayer an important habit of your team’s lifestyle.* Remember the old saying, “A family that prays together stays together”? Well, it’s very *true*! Prayer should be a *significant* part of a family team’s diet (1 Peter 3:7; Matthew 18:18–20). Don’t underestimate the value and power of family prayer—it can be a very effective tool in the course of your relationship with each other. Children should be included so they, too, can learn the value and benefit of talking with God and have opportunity to experience the miracles of answered prayer!

The Problem and Solution

There is no question the *family* and *fatherhood* is under attack! There are too many single mother families suffering from the lack of any father figures. Compound this with parents too young to have children—and



we have a volatile situation. This is made worse by the statistical fact there are far too many dysfunctional and abusive family environments having been created by addictions, modern technologies, financial weakness, unemployment, or just the lack of maturity

of being equipped to handle the emotional stresses and educational needs of family life. That, sadly, should be no surprise to any of us. That is what feeds some of the reasons for the family break-ups and marital divorces currently experienced!

Marriage, continued on page 4

Marriage, continued from page 3

We must learn to *cherish our families!* Invest our time and effort, energy and concerns to the success of the family. And if we cherish them, we will take our time picking our mates, considering our compatibility and differences so that we go into these relationships with our eyes “wide open”—well prepared for the life we want to share with this person. After all, picking a mate is the second most important decision we’ll ever make in our lives next to baptism. Why? Because it has *long term* reaching effects on our personal lives that could impact decades of our time and quality of life, health, and peace of mind, not to mention the lives of our children that may come from our marriages. So, pick your mates wisely—take your time. Be sure there is *fundamental agreement* on those things which are important to you, especially when it comes to your relationship with God (2 Corinthians 6:14–18)! Be careful not to underestimate the importance of this, especially when children are involved. The advice Paul provides is a legitimate consideration and not without good reason.



Remember, marriages are the “gardens of our lives,” and they do take effort to maintain the “output and input” quality we get from them. Never undervalue the amount of work and dedicated *mental* and *emotional* effort a marriage requires—because if you do, it is a sure recipe for *failure*. Without a doubt, a marriage that is *well maintained* by figuratively “watering” and “weeding” with a balanced amount of attention that is focused on the four fundamentals, will go a long way to assuring you of many happy years together and, God willing, children that will make you proud they are yours.

Ω

*All Things Are Ready...continued from page 1*

fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein. These are the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations...” [emphasis mine throughout] (Leviticus 23:34–37).

Notice what these verses do not say—they do *not* say we only need to keep the first and last days of the Feast. The Feast of Tabernacles is a complete Feast consisting of seven days, immediately followed by a separate eighth holyday called the Last Great Day. A holy convocation is a commanded assembly—an assembly of God’s people called by Almighty God Himself! In God’s sight, your attendance is not an option! He commands that you attend. You are left with a choice: Will you obey God, or make an excuse?

We are reminded of the excuses men made in Luke 14:16–20 as they bowed out, one by one, from attending the Lord’s marriage supper: “Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.”

Finally, note what the Lord’s response was to those who were bidden to attend the Feast but would not come: “For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper” (Luke 14:24).

Human nature is masterful at making excuses (see Jeremiah 17:9 and Romans 8:7). Some will object that they do not have the finances to go. God’s answer is that you should have been saving your second tithe—10 percent of your income—to attend His commanded assembly. For those who may be on a very fixed income or have come into this knowledge too late in the year to have accumulated adequate funds, start saving up for next year. God does not accept excuses in place of obedience. Some will argue that they cannot get the time off from work. Have you planned ahead, attempting to get your vacation time scheduled for this time of the year? And even if your boss will not give you the time off, you must make a decision: Whom will I obey? God—or man? Acts 5:29 instructs that we ought to obey God rather than man. The truth of the matter is, if you want to attend badly enough—if you commit yourself to obey God with all your heart, mind, and soul—you will find a way!

It is a sad commentary that some undoubtedly treat the Kingdom of God the same way they treat His feast days; they make very little, if any, advance

preparation. They assume that they can “be ready” at the last minute. Just as you cannot possibly develop the needed quality of character and habit of obedience “just before the Lord comes,” so very few will enjoy a rushed, half-prepared Feast of Tabernacles. Why not make your preparations now, while there is still time?



Following are a few tips to assure that you will have the “best Feast ever!”

1) Be sure you save a full 10 percent of your income for God’s Feasts. It is no fun to scrimp and scrape at the Feast of Tabernacles, or miss out on fun-packed activities when those around you are having the time of their lives, worshipping God as He commands. After all, the Feast of Tabernacles pictures that Millennial time period when Christ will be ruling on the earth and all will be green and plush with plenty for everyone. This is not the time for penny pinching, but should be the high point of the year to sustain you through the coming winter doldrums.

2) To the best of your ability, schedule your time off from work or school far enough ahead so that your absence will not be a hardship. Ask your teachers for advance homework assignments, indicating that you really do care about your grades and are not just looking for an excuse to skip school. Instead of thinking negatively—“What will people think?” “Will I lose my job?” “Will I flunk out at school?”—consider what a positive witness you will be for God’s way of life.

3) Make your housing reservations early so you will be more likely to get the type of room or cabin you need.

4) Think ahead about what you will need at the Feast in the way of food, clothing, and accessories. If you take prescription medicines, make sure you will have enough for the time you’re gone from home. Make a “Feast list” far enough ahead of time so you can review it often and adjust it accordingly. Write it out. Do it! You don’t want to forget something important, but you don’t want to overdo it either! Seasoned travelers always travel light.

5) Immediately before the Feast, put a hold on your mail and stop your newspaper. There is no wisdom in “advertising” to would-be burglars that you are not at home. Consider using timers for your lights. Also, be sure to mow your lawn at the last possible moment, or arrange for someone to mow it while you are gone. As an aside, make sure you have your household bills paid up so you won’t have any late fees. Make arrangements for your pets to be taken care of.

6) Make sure your car is in good condition for the trip, or make sure you buy your airline tickets early. Consider a car rental. Nothing puts a damper on the Feast like car trouble or missed flights.

7) And lastly, just before you leave for the Feast, be sure to claim the promise God gave in Exodus 34:23–24: “Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the LORD GOD, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year.”

If you will *do* these things in a willing, heart-felt, godly attitude, you too, will be able to sing out, “All things are ready—I’m coming to the Feast!” Ω



Autumn Beauty

The Road to Maturity

by Murray Palmatier



Murray Palmatier

From time to time, I stumble across passages of Scripture that I've read numerous times, only to have them strike me in a different way. Check out this passage from Hebrews 6:1-3), here in the modern rendering of the *New Living* translation:

So, let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely, we don't need to start again with the

fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds and placing our faith in God. You don't need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding.

As we move forward in our two-fold mission of preaching the Gospel and making disciples, does it strike you as odd why Paul would admonish us to *stop* going over basic doctrines like repentance? This initially sounds counter intuitive to all that we hold true. So, what could it mean? The answer can be found in the closing verses of Hebrews five, as well as the meaning of the word "repent."

The King James Version begins chapter six with the word "Therefore." This is a conjunctive word that *links* chapter six to chapter five. Hebrews 5:11-13 tells these struggling, long time Christians of their need to raise their game and become mature in their faith. Paul's assessment of them, despite their longevity, was one of still being babies in the Word.

After a calling from God, repentance is the key first step in becoming a Christian. The Greek word for "repentance" (Greek 3340—*metanoeó*) means "to change one's mind, to turn back, to return or come back." The NIV interpretation of Acts 3:19 helps show the directional meaning of repent: "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out." We can see this repeated when Paul appeared before King Agrippa in Acts 26:20.

As we note in Acts 2:38, KJV, from Peter's sermon on Pentecost, repentance is paramount and the focal point of the Gospel message ("REPENT, and be baptized.") As we preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God to a dying and lost world, repentance is key. Matthew 4:17 shows us that this was the gist of Christ's message when preaching to the unconverted: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

However, once we repent and are walking with God, rather than continuing in repentance (turning back), we must maintain course. This is where it becomes necessary for a maturing Christian to transition from the message of repentance we heard preached to us before conversion, to learning how to overcome. We see this in how Christ taught His followers. While He *preached* a message of repentance to the unconverted, He *taught* followers (Matthew 5:2). A thorough reading of "The Sermon on the Mount" makes it clear why Christ transitioned from preaching to teaching. He *preached* to the unconverted and *taught* followers how to be more like Him and His Father.

A study of the Churches of Revelation (chapters two and three) show that some members of the congregations got sidetracked in different directions and needed to repent. However, in all cases, the ultimate message to all believers was of the need to overcome. The Greek word for overcoming is equally directional (Greek 3528—*nikao*) meaning "to conquer, to be victorious, to maintain the cause, to hold fast," or to *stay the course*. Becoming Christ-like is a life long process of altering the natural way we think. Previous articles and sermons have taught us that doctrine guides behaviour. We learn how to put on the mind of Christ, but continuing to study and be taught from His Word.

If you are reading this and have yet to give your life to Christ, please heed the preaching you have heard of the need to repent and be baptized. Be assured that there is no other being through whom salvation can be received (Acts 4:12). We will continue to preach this message to those God may be calling.

If you are already a committed follower of Christ, our messages, our studies, and our development should be centered on overcoming the many obstacles that the adversary will place in our way. This takes deep study into the truths of the Bible and is central to the teachings we need on a regular basis. May God give us wisdom, discernment, courage, and truth to overcome! Ω

A Loving Spirit of Excellence

by Adrian Davis



Adrian Davis

As we complete the count to Pentecost, let us reflect on the nature of God's Spirit and our vision for 2025. Two years ago, the Canadian ministry concluded that society would change dramatically in the next decade, and that these changes would place new demands on the ministry and our congregations. We realized it would not be "business as usual." Two years later, it is becoming increasingly evident that these changes may be more rapid and

more intense than we originally thought. Hence the need for us to be even more committed to our vision. Our vision for 2025 is twofold: 1) The Pursuit of Excellence; and 2) The Safest Place.

The Pursuit of Excellence

This is a burden we in the ministry are placing upon ourselves. We realize the world will be a very different place in 2025, and no matter what, we must be effective in preaching the Gospel. The world will need to hear the truth, and we must have the ability to rise above the clamour and pierce through the darkness with the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. We cannot be complacent, and we cannot expect that messages and methods of the past will continue to be effective. Moreover, as time changes and anxiety levels increase, we must become more competent in nourishing and feeding the flock. Christ repeatedly admonishes His ministers to look after His sheep and perfect the saints.

Christ forewarns us to be ready to face the evil that lies ahead:

"And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you" (John 16:3-4 KJV).

We can only fulfil this burden of pursuing excellence in our ministry as we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Safest Place

As the world unravels, people will feel increasing levels of alienation. It is critical that we create environments in our congregations that enable the development of true bonds. This will not only help us to comfort one another, it will also create an environment that will bear witness of the operation of God's love to all who visit us. Christ said that by this, shall all men know that we are His disciples. In His prayer before facing crucifixion, He prayed, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:20-23, KJV).

We don't have a perfect line of sight to the future. As Paul told the Corinthians, we see through a glass darkly. Although we see through a glass darkly, the point is not that the glass is *dark*; the point is that we are looking through it, and we see something!

"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished" (Proverbs 22:3, KJV).

As we count toward this year's Pentecost, and as we count toward the next seven Pentecosts, let us strain to envision the world, and our nation in particular, beyond 2025. Let us think deeply about the demands the coming evil world will place on God's people—ministers and members alike. Let us live our core values of caring, courtesy, and consideration. Let us earnestly pray for one another that God fill us with His Holy Spirit—a Spirit of excellence and a Spirit of gentleness and lovingkindness.

Let us strive this year and every year to reflect on these wonderful attributes of God's nature. Ω

And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end. (Exodus 34:22)

What Do God's Holydays Mean to Us... and to the Rest of the World?

God said, "Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation" (Leviticus 23:24). But why? What do the fall Festivals mean to us—and to the rest of the world?

by Lloyd W. Cary

As we look around at deteriorating world conditions, many wonder, "What on earth is God doing?" From a human perspective, the future has never been more erratic, uncertain, and dangerous! Somewhere in the world, a new "crisis" seems to appear weekly, if not daily. What are God's people to do? What is the next major event for God's people—in fact, for the whole world? God has the answers! And He has "hidden" them in plain sight, right where most of mankind refuses to look—in your own Bible—away from the "wise" and "mighty" of this world (1 Corinthians 1:26–29; Romans 1:21:26). The unfortunate fact is, most people are biblical illiterates, and most who do study their Bibles are blinded because they believe the "keys" to understanding God's plan are "done away." We are talking about God's holydays.

In Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, pivotal prophecy chapters, Christ details the general overall scenario for the world: religious deception, wars, famines, disease epidemics, earthquakes, and so forth. These have been going on in ever-increasing intensity from the beginning. Christ said, however, "All these are the beginning of sorrows," or "birth pangs," of the world (Matthew 24:8). Things were going to get worse! Much worse! World conditions are building up to a grand smash earth-shattering crescendo. Christ warned that at the end of the age, "...there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). "And except that the Lord had shortened those days," Christ prophesied, "no flesh should be saved [alive]: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days" (Mark 13:20, emphasis mine throughout).

God's holydays, or Festivals, as laid out in Leviticus 23, picture God's plan of redemption—what God is doing on the earth—from the Sabbath and Passover on through to the Last Great Day. (If you have not already done so, please send for our free booklet, *God's Seasonal Plan*, which explains each in great detail.) The spring Festivals, Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost, relate mostly to God's church, the firstfruits (James 1:18), and have been fulfilled in history. The rest, the fall Festivals, consisting of the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day, deal with the rest of the world, and lie immediately ahead of us. And what awesome things they portend!

Many pray, "Thy kingdom come," or have said, "I can't wait for the Day of the Lord to come" without realizing what the answer to this prayer will entail! Amos 5:18 declares, "Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! To what end is it for you? The day of the LORD is darkness, and not light." It is often said, correctly, "Be careful what you wish for." Zephaniah 1:14–16 goes even further: "The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and

distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers."



The Feast of Trumpets—What it Means—What Will Happen

Trumpets have been almost universally a signal of war. The Feast of Trumpets that we celebrate reminds us in advance of both the coming "trumpet plagues" (Revelation 8–11) that will be poured out in the terrifying "Day of the Lord," and of our present job of lifting up our voice "like a trumpet" (Isaiah 58:1) to warn the nations of the soon-coming Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21). The Feast of Trumpets will indeed be a day of fear and trepidation for mankind, but a day of rejoicing for the saints!

This is the time when Jesus Christ shall come again in clouds, riding upon a great white horse, descending with a shout, with the voice of the archangel,

and with the trumpet of God (1 Thessalonians 4:14–17). This will be at the last trumpet, "... for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:52)!

What a day this will be! The saints of God will be resurrected to immortal life—metabolically changed into spirit beings, born into the very Family of God—the time of our "spiritual birthday," if you will. At this time, those who will have received everlasting life will be given authority to rule and serve on the earth under Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:6; 2:6; 5:10; 20:6) for a thousand years.

The second coming of Christ is revealed in the book of Revelation as occurring in three sets of seven: the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven last plagues of God. In Revelation 5, we see a seven-sealed scroll or book that only Christ was deemed worthy to open. The seven seals cover the rest of the book. One by one, Christ strips opens the seals, as we see in chapter six, verses 1 through 17. Note that these seven seals are an expanded visionary description of the same series of events Christ described earlier in Matthew 24. The Bible interprets its own symbols, and Christ here reveals what these seals mean in His own words! The seventh seal is and consists of—constitutes—seven trumpets; and in turn, the seventh or last trumpet is and consists of—constitutes—the seven last plagues, which culminate in Christ's second coming.

In Revelation 8:1–2, the time of the opening of the "seventh seal" marks the beginning of the Day of the Lord, the prophesied time of God's wrath. Notice John's description of this momentous event: "And when He had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets."



The lion shall dwell with the lamb

Christ will begin to directly intervene in world affairs at the seventh or last trumpet (Revelation 11:15–19). A trumpet is symbolic of war. The seven trumpets symbolize a series of plagues that are to fall upon the hostile powers that oppose God and oppress God's people. The first four plagues are poured out on the land, the sea, the rivers, and the atmosphere—the basic components of man's life-support system!

Christ Our Warrior-King

When Christ came the first time, He came as the meek and lowly Lamb of God whose mission was to die for the sins of the world. When He comes the second time, He is coming as a Mighty Conqueror—as King of kings, and Lord of lords (Revelation 17:14; 19:16). But before worldwide reconstruction can commence, Christ must deal with His enemies by waging war with the nations opposing Him. He will "destroy them which destroy the earth" (Revelation 11:18).

In Revelation 19:13,16, we see Christ returning as a mighty conquering Warrior-King: "And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God... And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." He will then execute the supernatural seven last plagues, which will ultimately bring rebellious mankind to its knees. We see here another Bible opposite. As shocking as it may seem to those who picture the Lord Jesus Christ as only a sweet, harmless, loving Lord Jesus who would never hurt anyone, the first thing He is going to do at His return is kill multiple millions of people! Revelation 6:17 declares, "... the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

John writes: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and

Holydays, continued on next page

clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Revelation 19:11–15). “And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth” (Zechariah 14:12). Christ will subdue all who resist Him. (See Psalm 110:6; Zechariah 14:3; 12:9; Isaiah 34:1–3; 66:15–16; Revelation 16, and 19:17–21 in your own Bible.)

The Day of Atonement

The next holyday, the Day of Atonement, falling between the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles, is the one day of the year God’s people are commanded to fast, or humble themselves. Most professing Christians know little or nothing of the Day of Atonement, and the vast majority of those who do know of this day usually label it “Jewish,” “done away,” and not for Christians today. They could not be more wrong! Just what does the Day of Atonement picture? How does it fit into God’s plan? How does this day “connect” the Feast of Trumpets to the Feast of Tabernacles?

Christ will make all things right. Satan, the original sinner and our ultimate enemy, will be dealt with. We read, “... the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:9). The Day of Atonement foretells how this enemy of God and mankind will be dealt with, and ultimately, the whole world will be made at “at-one-ment” with God.

“Atonement” [Hebrew *kippur*, from *kaphar*, which means “covering” or “expiation”] as used in Leviticus 23:28, means to make amends for sins and shortcomings. In its broadest sense, it means “to make right.” The Day of Atonement, described in Leviticus 16, was anciently the most important of all the ordinances given to Israel, because on that day, atonement was made for all the sins of the entire congregation. This day also portends tremendous prophetic significance to God’s people.

Notice how the observance is depicted in Leviticus 16:7–10: “And he [the priest] shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat.” Note the difference! “And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD’s lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.” (Emphasis mine.)

Note the fate, the end, of the two goats. First, there were two goats, and only one (not two) was representative of Christ, the one that, like Christ, was sacrificed. The other—the one not for the Lord—represented the azazel, or scapegoat—and was not sacrificed, but after confessing all the sins of Israel upon his head, was sent away “by the hand of a fit man” into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:21).

Now, is there any description in the New Testament of an event that occurs after the return of Christ coinciding with the above? Yes, there is! Letting the Bible interpret its own symbolism, turn to Revelation 20:13: “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

Notice the similarities. Just as a “fit man” takes the scapegoat to the wilderness to let him go “unto a land not inhabited,” an angel (and angels are very “fit”) lays hold on Satan and casts him into the bottomless pit. This could mean nothing else (Cf. Revelation 20:1–2).

Many are confused, even within the culture of God’s church, what the second goat, the azazel goat, represents. Some believe both goats represent different aspects of Christ’s one sacrifice. This theory dates back hundreds of years to the Catholic Church. Others believe the scapegoat represents none other than Satan the Devil. Satan the Devil is ultimately the one responsible for all man’s sins. He was the tempter in the Garden of Eden, the tempter of Christ Himself, and has influenced mankind ever since. The world cannot distinguish the difference between the true Christ and the false Christ—between the true God and the false god. They appear so much alike that man cannot differentiate between them. “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers [yes, Satan has ministers!] also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:14–15).

The day ultimately points to that time when the saints—God’s people from all ages—will become fully and finally at-one with God.

The Millennium Begins



The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fawning together; and a little child shall lead them. (Isaiah 11:6)

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15). Once Christ, the Conquering King, destroys His enemies with the “brightness of His coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8)—once Satan the Devil is put away for a thousand years (Revelation 20:2–3), He will establish world headquarters at Jerusalem, and then proceed to gather the peoples of Israel and Judah into Palestine to repopulate the land (Hosea 1:10; Ezekiel 37:21,22)—thus, Israel will be restored as a nation; the people “shall dwell safely all of them” (Ezekiel 38:8); and “Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls” (Zechariah 2:2–5). “And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Micah 4:2).

The Feast of Tabernacles will be reinstituted and enforced worldwide. Those nations who refuse to keep it will suffer the plague of no rain (Zechariah 14:16–19). At long last, all Israel will be reconciled with God, and will become the model nation she was intended to be.

Christ will, at that time, restore true worship, peace, and harmony in the land. The long-awaited Millennium—the prophesied thousand years of utopian peace, harmony, and global reconstruction—will then begin. “And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3).

“And He [Christ] shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years” (Malachi 3:3–4).

Yes, the time is soon coming when God is going to set His hand to heal our world. In spite of the enormous problems we face today, a happy, prosperous future awaits the inhabitants of planet earth.

In the meantime, we have the responsibility of doing the Work, of submitting to God’s rule now, of looking to and relying on Jesus Christ as Lord and personal Savior, of obeying the ten commandments of God, of keeping His annual Feasts and holydays.

The Eighth Day

The eighth, or Last Great Day, immediately follows the the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:36,39), and what a great day it will be! This is the time of the second, or general, resurrection. The scripture reads, “But the rest of the dead”—those not in the first resurrection that occurs at Christ’s Second Coming—“lived not again until the thousand years were finished” (Revelation 20:5). This day pictures the time of the great “fall harvest,” when all the billions and billions of people who have lived and died who never had the opportunity to hear and accept the only name under heaven by which men might be saved (Acts 4:12) will be resurrected to physical life and have their first opportunity to come to full repentance and receive salvation! Families and loved ones will be reunited. Parents, children, grandparents, and extended families will live again! The earth will be green and plush, having undergone a thousand years of restoration under the government of God. The people will be hungry for knowledge, wondering what has happened since their long dreamless sleep of death, and we who are now called and chosen will be there to guide and teach them. We will have been kings and priests in the Kingdom of God for a thousand years (Revelation 5:10). How much worry and grief about who may or may not be in heaven or hell would be laid to rest if only people understood God’s holydays! But now you know.

What About You?

What about *you*? Are *you* called and chosen? Are you growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18)? Are you longing to keep His holydays just as Jesus and His disciples did? If so, we have great news for you! The *Church of God International* will be observing holyday services in various locations across the United States and around the world—and you are invited to attend! Just bring your smile, your Bible, and be prepared to learn and grow and enjoy God’s Feasts!

Navigating Our CGI Website

by Lloyd W. Cary

Read This!

Yes, read this! I'm talking about our *website* at www.cgi.org.

It has come to our attention that many of our members, readers, viewers—and yes, even some of our ministers—have been overlooking or ignoring the *tens of thousands* of man-hours of work that have gone into materials found on our website. Why is this?

There may be many reasons. It is bewildering how often people today simply *don't read*—or, if they read, they don't concentrate—and therefore do not understand what they read. If continued, neglecting to study can become a habit. As any teacher can tell you, simply reading *words* does not mean you are comprehending those words or understanding what is being communicated. Comprehension takes skill and effort; no matter how clear or strong the writing is, the reader must do his or her part to make an effort to understand it.

It's overly easy in this modern, fast paced world to *skim* over information. We're inundated with blogs, ads, articles, news stories, social media messages, e-mails, tweets, and countless other pieces of information throughout the day. Many are overwhelmed. We like our information simple, clear, and sound-bite short. We glance at headlines and assume we already know what the story says, what it's about. We make split second decisions and reactions about whether a given piece of information is relevant or interesting to us. We sometimes "Like" or "Dislike" Facebook posts within seconds of them being posted, when it's clear we haven't had a chance to actually *read* more than the title or a one sentence abstract; we are supporting not what the piece actually *says*, but instead, what we *assume* it says, or *might* say. We all rush to judgement to some extent, whether we know or admit it or not. Variations of "headline theology" and "click bait" struggle to capture our attention and minds.

Sometimes our readers and, yes, even members, take our own website for granted, because—let's be honest—we may be too tired,

too lazy, or just too lukewarm to "Prove all things" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

But for those whom God is now calling, things should be different. Why? Because through God's grace and mercy, we are putting on the very mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).

God's Word, the Bible, charges us to "STUDY to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). That is not a "suggestion"—that's an order from God!

How to Navigate Our Website

Our updated website is simply amazing! Do not overlook it. Got a question? Need help? Need a lift? Need inspiration? Chances are you will find the answers on our website.

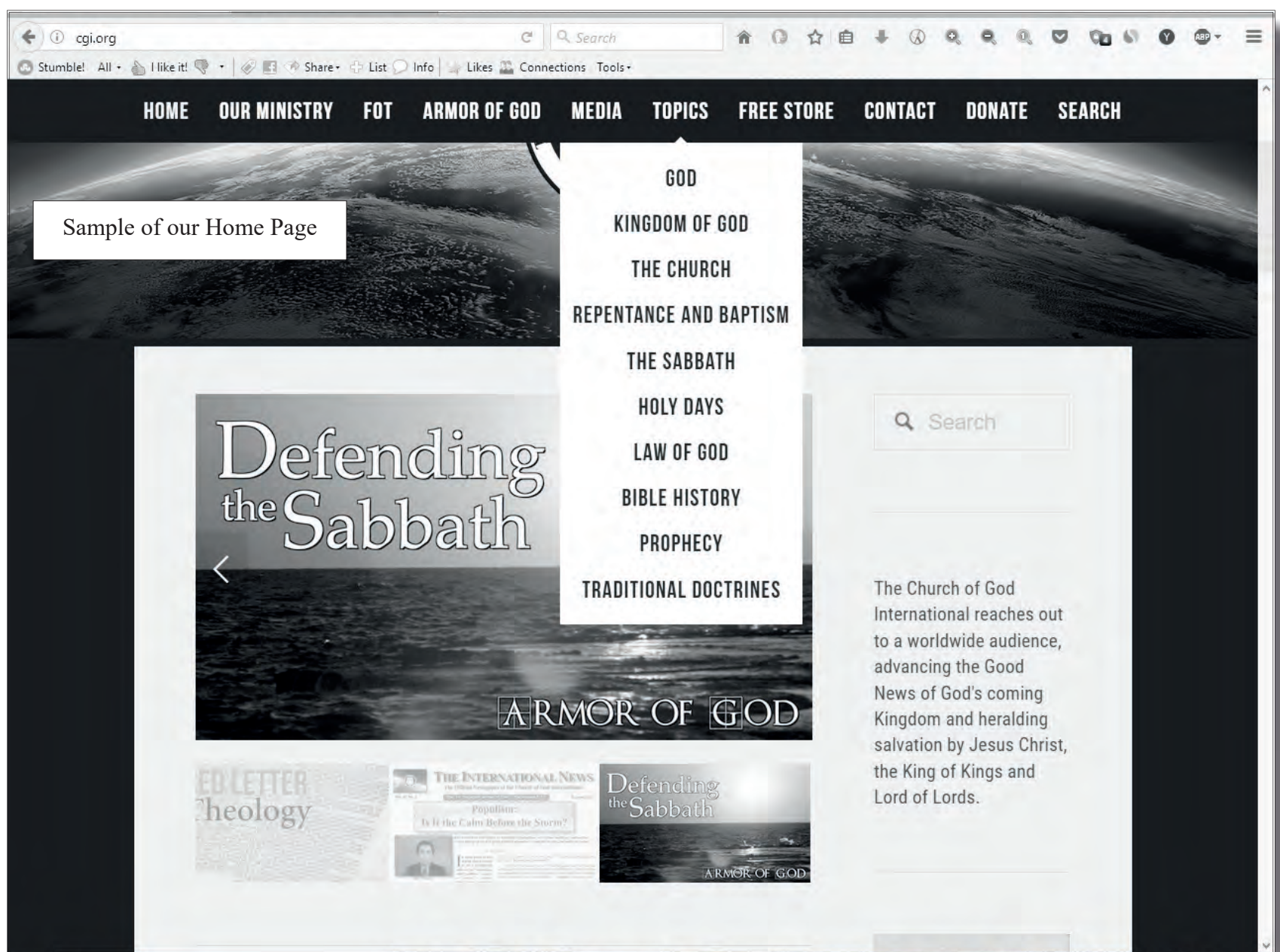
For those not familiar with navigating our website, let's go through a brief orientation. First, type www.cgi.org into the URL (Uniform Resource Locator), colloquially termed a "web address," at the top of your favorite web browser. This will bring you to our Home Page.

Across the top of our screen you will find ten categories or menus: *Home, Our Ministry, FOT* (short for Feast of Tabernacles), *Armor of God, Media, Topics, Free Store, Contact, Donate, and Search*.

When you left-click on the menus across the top of the screen, another list of sub-menus drop down from them showing still other menus of various topics stemming off them. Left-clicking on the sub-menus will take you to that topic, from which you can click on the item listed. Alternately, you can type a few words into the "search" window about the subject you want to view. This will bring you to many more topics based upon your search word(s).

We hope to see you soon... online!

Ω



Continued on next page

Put on the whole f God, that ve may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, butt powers, against the rulers

Sub-menus dropping down off the main menus

HOME

- Our home page can be found at: www.cgi.org.

OUR MINISTRY

- Our Mission and Beliefs
- United States Churches
- International Churches
- Ministry Travel Schedule
- Ministry Partners
- Bible Study Blog
- Infuse
- Holy Day Calendar
- Feast of Tabernacles

FOT

- Current information about our various Feast Sites.

ARMOR OF GOD

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- Armor of God
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MEDIA

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TOPICS

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- Kingdom of God
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- Bible History
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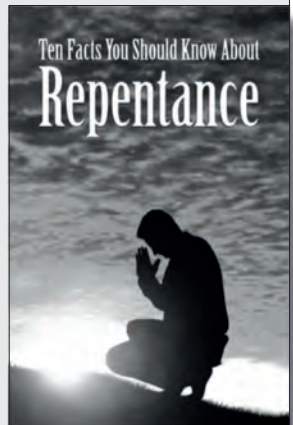
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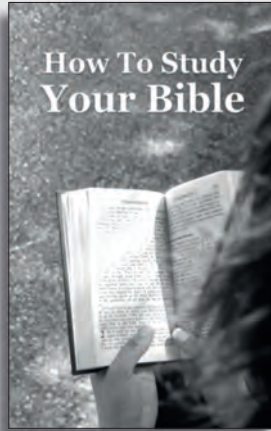
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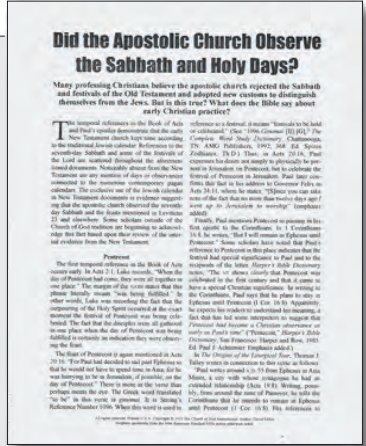
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Did the Apostolic Church Observe the Sabbath and Holy Days?

Did the Apostolic Church Observe the Sabbath and Holy Days? Many professing Christians believe the apostolic church rejected the Sabbath and Festivals of the Old Testament and adopted new customs to distinguish themselves from the Jews. But is this true? What does the Bible say about early Christian practice?

The Bigger Picture

by George Roper

As people are inclined to think and behave differently, these very distinctions can often cause conflict, even in the body of Christ. This can be seen when collaborating with other brethren to coordinate church related functions. In so doing, one may find that their approach to these endeavors is not always in sync. As we address provisions in these projects, we may encounter nuances in outlook. Frustrations can emerge from differences in direction. Much of this agitation can arise over aspects that have secondary relevance in terms of our ultimate goal in our Christian walk. Regrettably, this discord can progress to a severance from fellowship. In the pursuit of putting these affairs into place, we can become so engrossed in dealing with the smaller matters that we can lose sight of the bigger picture.

One recountal that exemplifies seeing the bigger picture is the dichotomy of Thomas Edison and George Westinghouse. In 1879, Thomas Edison developed an incandescent light bulb. In a society where electric light was a novel experience, cities began to embrace Edison's product and sought to implement light bulbs throughout. The light bulbs installed were powered by an electrical system engineered by Edison. Edison's system of generating power had limitations in the magnitude of power that could be generated and the distance that power could travel. Despite pleadings by a colleague, Edison refused to upgrade the means by which his system harnessed power, and instead use a more efficient format. Hence, Edison could only serve those in affluent urban areas, completely excluding those living in a rural locale.

In order to produce an alternative to Edison's system, industrialist George Westinghouse sought to create a power source that would more efficiently power the light bulb. Westinghouse's system was more powerful, could reach greater distances, and was more cost efficient for the municipalities that installed them. Unlike Edison's system, Westinghouse's could reach less populated rural areas, making it more accessible to the general public. Eventually, cities installing Westinghouse's system surpassed those that Edison served. Cities that were already utilizing Edison's system began to convert to Westinghouse's system. From the onset of Westinghouse's system entering the market, Edison had continuously rebuffed overtures by Westinghouse to collaborate with him. Instead of addressing the more relevant issues of providing light and the shortcomings in his own design, Edison concentrated on holding unorthodox press conferences, promoting incendiary propaganda, and filing law suits all aimed at tarnishing Westinghouse. Edison's method of generating electricity soon fell out of favor. Today, the electrical system that is used to power our world is predominantly Westinghouse's system. To his detriment, Edison failed to see the bigger picture.

The prospect of failing to see the bigger picture often arises when collaborating with others. However, limited viewpoints can arise out of our own musings even when acting alone. In the early 1990s, many states in the U.S. instituted bike helmet laws, making it mandatory to be equipped with a helmet when operating a bicycle. A decade later, despite the use of helmets and a decrease in ridership, a rise of 51 percent in bicycle head injuries was seen. One theory related to this increase suggests that cyclists felt assured that they were afforded a degree of protection merely by wearing a helmet and consequently engaged in risky riding behaviors that they otherwise would not have undertaken without a helmet. Donning a helmet is meant to enhance the probability of a cyclist reaching their destination safely. However, abandoning being circumspect negates wearing a helmet at all. These riders failed to see the bigger picture.

Seeing the bigger picture in our Christian lives is also imperative. This is shown in Christ's interaction with Martha and her sister Mary in the book of Luke: "Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, 'Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.' And Jesus answered and said unto her, 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her'" (Luke 10:38-42, KJV). Some may look at Martha's perspective and feel that she was justified. Although the logistics of coordinating a function need to be addressed, our main concern lies in the bigger picture of entering the Kingdom of God.

Seeing the bigger picture notwithstanding, working with others to organize an affair can be challenging. However, perceiving the bigger picture while balancing our own expectations can be equally as crucial. As in the apostle Paul's day, when we collectively come together to hear a message, we individually look forward to the prospect of being moved by the speaker in some fashion—some hope to be inspired, motivated, convicted, edified, or comforted by the speaker's message. In the body of Christ, there may be

occasions where the speaker's delivery is limited by his oratory range. Paul acknowledged his own personal limitations as a speaker. He demonstrated how his listeners critiqued his speaking when he stated, "For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Corinthians 10:10, KJV). Although captivating through his writings, Paul wasn't extraordinarily impressive as a speaker.

Yet, when we view speaking prowess through the scope of the bigger picture, oratory skill set is not a disqualifier in achieving the overall goal in developing the character of God, as a speaker or as a spectator. The apostle Paul commented on this very thing when he spoke, "For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles. Even though *I am* untrained in speech, yet *I am* not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things" (2 Corinthians 11:5-6, NKJV). Paul acknowledged that although he was not a charismatic speaker, when viewed through the perspective of the bigger picture, the knowledge of God that he had to impart was far more relevant than stage presence.

The idiomatic expression "can't see the forest for the trees" promotes that people at large have the tendency to focus so intently on the "trees" or smaller matters, that we become unable to see the "forest" or the bigger picture—the end goal. In the same manner, Edison couldn't see the longevity of an alternate approach, cyclists utilized a helmet but abandoned the technique of prudence, Martha found her preparations to be more relevant than spiritual objectives, and Paul's critics were only able to see the lack of flamboyancy in his speaking style. They all failed to see the bigger picture or the means that they needed to take to reach the ultimate goal. We also should not be limited in seeing the relevance in the situations that we encounter, within the scope of the bigger picture. We need to see that the smaller issues are just that, smaller issues! We need to stay focused on the weightier matters as we contend with various concerns. The effort and energy we expend on activities that are extensions of our Christian life are necessary but relative. They are a means to an end. They are not the end goal itself. We must keep our impressions in perspective and see the bigger picture.

Our continuous objective is to stay committed to pursuing our end goal of entering the Kingdom of God. Viewing our status in this way reminds us of the role that we are to fulfill within the greater scheme of things and how our outlook should be presently. Our individual pursuit of God's character within us and ultimately entering the Kingdom of God should be our greatest and most self-convicting goal, above all other projects. Paul noted that the spiritual resources we have available to us were meant to counter the idiosyncrasies of our reasoning that can bring us to focus on minutiae and that can prevent us from seeing the bigger picture. "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5, KJV). As we engage each other in the process of curating the intricacies of our various church functions, let us prioritize what we place emphasis on as we go about seeking the bigger picture and making ourselves ready for the Kingdom of God. Ω





**Allie B. (Driver) Dart
(1933–2017)**



Allie B. Dart

Funeral services for **Allie B. (Driver) Dart**, 83, of Tyler, Texas, were held Monday, August 14, at Stewart Family Funeral Home in Tyler, with Wesley White officiating. Burial followed at Whitehouse Memorial Cemetery in Whitehouse, Texas.

Allie died peacefully on August 9, 2017, at The Hospice of East Texas.

She was born on November 15, 1933, in Arp, Texas, to James Henry and Mollie Chappell Driver. She married Ronald L. Dart on February 21, 1953.

Allie was preceded in death by her parents, three sisters, five brothers, and husband of 63 years, Ronald L. Dart. She is survived by her sister Helen Douglas, of Virginia, and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

For many years, Allie was a successful real estate agent in Tyler. In 1995, Ron and Allie founded *Christian Educational Ministries* as a service ministry, to share the Gospel with the world, and to evangelize and make disciples for Jesus Christ.

Even after the death of her beloved Ron in 2016, and the partial paralysis of a stroke following cancer surgery earlier this year, Allie strove to keep *Christian Educational Ministries* moving forward to continue the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world. Her greatest wish was for the ministry, including Ron’s sermons, books, and the *Born to Win* radio program, to go forward in love, peace, and unity under Jesus Christ. Ω

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earth” are not presented in symbolic terms. It would seem odd that the Holy Spirit would be presented here as seven spirits. Ω

IN WHAT SENSE IS CHRIST THE “END OF THE LAW”?

QUESTION: Please give me the answer concerning Romans 10:14. What do they mean, Christ is the end of the Law? Ville Platte, LA

REPLY: Romans 10:4 reads, “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Let’s look at this verse in context.

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Romans 10:1–4).

Here, Paul wishes for the salvation of his kinsmen, the Jewish people. He knows their “zeal for God” is misguided, for they fail to recognize that a right standing before God is not “of the law” but is “of faith” (verses 5–6), which means “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (verse 9).

The law is not and never was a means of salvation. Its purpose is to define sin and expose transgressors. In this same epistle, Paul says, “I would not have known sin except through the law. [The law tells us what sin is.] For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire [the law exposed Paul as a sinner]” (7:7–8). The law, then, by defining sin and exposing us as sinners, informs us of our “death” (verses 9–11) and of our need of deliverance. “Therefore,” Paul concludes, “the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (verse 12).

So, now that we see that the law’s purpose is to expose sin, not redeem sinners, in what sense is Christ the “end of the law”? He is the *end result*—the goal, purpose, outcome—of the law, for *He does what the law cannot do*; He is the means whereby we may be declared righteous before God.

The law reveals sin; Christ removes it. Where our right standing before God is concerned, then, “Christ is the end of the law.” Ω

WHAT IS A SIN THAT IS “UNTO DEATH”?

QUESTION: Explain the meaning of 1 John 5:16, [which states] there is a sin which is unto death.” Eagle Rock, VA

REPLY: John writes, “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death” (1 John 5:16–17, KJV).

John is saying that when we see fellow believers sinning, some of them are sinning unto death (meaning that they will go on sinning and will not repent), while others are not sinning unto death (meaning that they are not sinning maliciously and will repent and have their record washed clean).

John is also saying that our prayers will benefit those whose sins are not unto death, but will accomplish nothing for those whose sins are unto death. I don’t believe John is telling his readers not to pray for those who have abandoned the faith. Rather, I think he is telling them they should realize that salvation is conditional; it is granted only to those who repent of their sins. Thus, if our prayers are to be beneficial, the person we’re praying for has to be willing to repent and reform his life. John wants his readers to be aware of that fact.

God forgives sins upon repentance, and He *helps* straying believers come to repentance, but He does not take over their wills; He does not reach into their minds, take hold of the “willer,” and *cause* them to repent. The sinner himself must be a willing participant. The choice is left with him. Ω



Church News

Church of God International UK Launched at Pentecost

Pentecost, June 4, 2017, will become a significant historical date in the calendar of the *Church of God International* as marking the resumption of regular Sabbath services of the CGI in the United Kingdom.

George Ramocan, an elder of the CGI, and his wife Lola, arrived in the UK on December 22, 2016, along with Luzette Ramie, a member of the CGI in Jamaica. The work began in earnest with prayer, and planning is being done within the framework of the CGI's Manual for Field Churches. An assessment of what's being done by other sections of the church here on the ground was carried out. We attended services with the United Church of God and COGWA in Bricket Wood and London. It was difficult to visit with the LCG because of a closed-door policy. Elder Ramocan was invited by the UCG to present the sermon at their Bricket Wood congregation on Sabbath, February 4. A warm brotherly relationship has been established with the leadership of both sections of the church with which we interacted. During this period, work was done to establish the basic outlines of a cgiuk.org website, to do Internet promotion of planned weekly Bible Studies and to identify and secure a suitable place for weekly worship.

Sabbath Bible Studies began on March 4. Attendees ranged from 10 to 20 persons. Presentations were mostly doctrinal, followed by discussions. We also addressed sensitive topics such as "speaking in tongues," as some visitors displayed this trait during prayer. Attendees were allowed to request presentations on topics of interest to them.

Our present attendance consists of 10 core members and upward of 10 floating visitors. We do not promote our services to the members of other COG congregations, and we dissuade members of other congregations from attending with us beyond a mere visit. Weekly Bible Studies have now grown into weekly Sabbath services. Hymnals and taped music have been supplied by Tyler, with the help of Bill Watson. Adrian Davis paid us a visit early in the year while we were still carrying out an assessment. Services begin at 1:00 PM, and sermons are live streamed via Facebook at 2:00 PM, UK time. Please keep this work in your prayers as we all labour till our Master comes. Ω

Toronto CGI Women's Retreat

The Holy Spirit led the women's ministry in the Toronto Church of God International congregation to host a retreat June 11, 2017 with the theme, *Break Every Chain and Walk in Victory*.

As the women assembled in the home of Carla and Alphonso James on the morning of the all day event, traditional Jamaican breakfast items were available in the kitchen as fellowshiping began. Everyone received a folder with the day's agenda, along with extra paper to make notes and a gift bag.

Beverley Smith welcomed the ladies, led the opening prayer, and shared the opening remarks. The host, Carla James, facilitated and gave everyone a chance to open up and share stories with her M&M ice breaking exercise.

Marie Angela Allen was the facilitator for the event, and encouraged everyone to "do something" in the church to be truly part of the working body of Christ. She gave the analogy of physical bags on the shoulders weighing us down, to illustrate how our emotional baggage can tire us out. The atmosphere in the room was one of caring and acceptance, with over 30 people in attendance, including toddlers.

Two young ladies, Samar Smith and Landon McLaughlin, got the discussion rolling with their presentation on overcoming shyness. Many in the room shared their own experiences of shyness and feelings of self doubt and shame over their appearance. Some recommended Toastmasters to overcome fear of public speaking. We were reminded that we are all "created in the image of God" and "beauty is vain" and faith in our God is the true inward beauty that lasts for eternity.

There was so much to share and pray for, that having a lunch break was almost forgotten. After a wonderful potluck meal together, we continued with the spiritual work of leaving behind old baggage so we could "press on toward the mark."

In the afternoon, Kimberly Brathwaite shared her experiences and strategies on *Victory With Difficult People*. Setting boundaries and leaving abusive relationships was discussed.

There was general consensus that *Break Every Chain, Part 2* would be needed to cover all the topics left on the agenda.



This woman's retreat was an excellent opportunity for the women to use spiritual gifts to edify and encourage each other.

Wain-Ann McLaughlin gave the closing remarks, and Bonita Wagler presented Carla with a beautiful plant in appreciation for hosting the event at her home. After Denisha McLaughlin and Alecia Brathwaite led closing prayers, everyone gathered in the yard for a lighthearted photo shoot before heading home with spirits soaring high. Ω



Church News

Auburndale CGI Kicks Off Its Annual Pentecost Weekend

On June 3rd, the Auburndale CGI kicked off its annual Pentecost Weekend by hosting the Church of God, Miami for Sabbath services. Jean Harkins performed special music and Pastor Morgan Pinkerman delivered a sermon on *Pentecost and the Mystery of the Gospel*. We then had a sandwich social, with much fellowship and reconnecting with the brethren from Miami. The next day, Pentecost, our church was filled to capacity with our local congregation, our guests from Miami, and the Church of the Sovereign God. We had special music from Miriam Moreno and the offertory message by the Miami Church of God pastor, Nelson Moreno. Offertory music was provided by Glenda Faulkner, and the main message was given by Pastor Ben Faulkner of the Sovereign Church. The message was entitled *Pentecost, the Church, and the World*. The rest of the afternoon was spent feasting on potluck dishes provided by the group, and camaraderie among the three church groups celebrating Pentecost.

Ω



Nelson Moreno



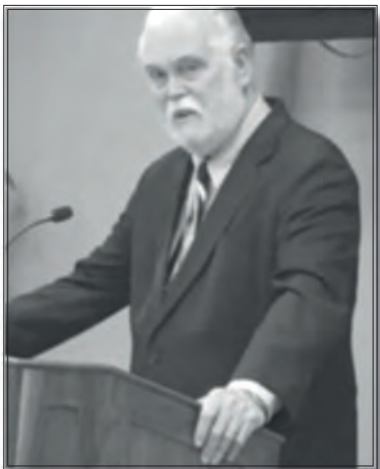
Miriam Moreno



Jean Harkins



Morgan Pinkerman



Ben Faulkner



Glenda Faulkner

Volunteers Needed

Hi, we are looking for volunteers in a number of categories. First, do you have a language skill? Are you fluent in a foreign tongue? If you are, we need to know if you may be interested in translating some of our booklets.

We also need volunteers to create Sabbath School children and teen lessons. We will be looking to transfer these lessons to our main and Infuse websites so anyone in the Church can download them and use them in their local Sabbath School and at our various Feast sites.

If you are interested in helping in either of these two areas, please email Mike James at mhjames6043@yahoo.com or call my cell at 240-304-6798.

Ω

How To Please God

by Will Manares

To be a God-pleaser is a serious obligation. Together with keeping His Commandments, it is the way to receive blessings from above, and is badly needed in order to gain answers to our fervent prayers (1 John 3:22).

The first thing to do is to check ourselves if we have a positive attitude towards the God of heaven and earth and to His representative, Jesus Christ His Son. It is necessary to put God *first* daily to show our proper behavior towards spirituality and righteousness.


Then, we need to develop an unceasing prayer life (1 Thessalonians 5:17). It is impossible to have answers if we don't ask (Matthew 7:7-8). It is very important to show our incapability through petitions and intercessions, knowing that only God can help us in all things and in all situations (Jeremiah 33:3; Psalm 46:1). Praying *every* day is a way of telling God that we allow Him to take control of everything, problems, trials, etc. (1 Peter 5:7). But not only by uttering or crying, "Please God!" We really need to *please* God while we are on our knees. It is a way of giving Him the right to be the King of our lives.

We can add patience to the menu that will surely please God. Being patient is a way of showing our love (1 Corinthians 13:4). Patience must stay and come from the inside of our being. This must be the hardest thing to have and do, but we must remember that it is one of the nine fruits of God's Spirit that we must bear, and there is no law against it (Galatians 5:22-23). Patience is a fruit that must remain.

When we are not in the gathering (ordinary days), the best way to please God is through our holy acts that others can *see* so that they may glorify the Father also (Matthew 5:14-16). We must let our light shine in our homes and in the community. We are the light of the world, a city on the top of the mountain.

Lastly, our physical energy and strength is always needed to do things that are pleasing in God's sight. We must use our whole body to make Him happy (Romans 12:1). We must love God not only with our hearts, souls, and minds; loving Him also requires our strengths (Mark 12:30). Going to our weekly gatherings, working to earn so we can give generously to His work, and even through simply hearing the preaching of His Word. These are some of so many ways to please God through our strength. And remember that when we join *together* in worshipping Him in Spirit and in Truth (Matthew 4:24), we always make God very happy. We can call this "Spiritual Synergy" (Hebrews 10:25).

Ω



www.cgi.org

"Put on the whole *armour of God*, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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 high places" (Ephesians 6:11-12).

Church News

As of now we have a fellowship group in Kenya, one in Rwanda, and another in Ghana.
Sorry, no captions available at time of publication.

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to inform you that I’m back from where I went to meet Mr Samson and his team. I found seven brethren with him collectively and I took with me some booklets, distributed to them.

The sermon I gave was about the “kingdom” alongside “God’s holiday.” Where they asked many questions concerning those topics I also scanned some photos of the same meeting while we were there, and they really send me with a lot of greetings to you, may you receive them.

In the one hope,
Zablon



Happy 100th !

Cleone Parr Celebrates 100th Birthday!

Cleone Parr turned 100 years old on July 4.

She was born to Howard and Nina Simpson in Long Pine, Nebraska. They were farmers, and she learned to work at a very early age.

She married Sterling Allen after meeting him at a box lunch social. They, too, were farmers. They moved from Nebraska to Idaho to farm and had one son, David Allen. They had a happy life together. Unfortunately, when Dave was young, Sterling got cancer and passed away.

She later met Russell Parr at a boat race in Burley, Idaho. They were married within six weeks and raised Dave together. Russ was a truck driver, and Cleone had many jobs to help support their family. She has always enjoyed healthy living by growing a garden, baking her own bread, and canning food (up until just two years ago).

She and Russ moved to Pocatello when Dave was ready to go to college.

Russ and Cleone have two grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. She and Russ had many great experiences while helping to raise their grandchildren.

She and Russ belonged to the Church of God International, and enjoyed traveling to Feast celebrations together.

Dave and Russ have both passed away, and she misses them dearly.



Church News

Ignite Summer Camp 2017

Unity

I just got back from a week-long camp with a bunch of teens. I am so exhausted. Teenagers are full of endless energy. I cannot wait for the day that I will no longer become tired, but alas, I must wait until God’s Kingdom comes for that to happen. However, despite my exhaustion, the camp was an awesome experience. It is always enjoyable to see how the body of Christ moves even within our youth.

Our theme this year was “Never let the fire in your heart go out. Keep it alive. Serve the Lord.” (Romans 12:11, NIRV). The teens this year lived this scripture. Not just in energy, but in working together, also. They helped each other out in a scavenger hunt, and helped other teams find clues. They assisted when someone got hurt. Thankfully, there were no serious injuries. They gave each other moral support when called upon to pray. They encouraged each other and looked out for each other.

One of my favorite things we had this year was the use of I-pads for the kids to develop a video based on any scripture in Romans 12. We separated all of them into four groups. All the videos were unique.

What was really interesting was to watch them work together in unity. Each person brought their own ideas and talents. However, instead of causing contentions and strife, they listened to each other. They treated each other with respect. They worked together as a body, just like we all are to do as Christians. Each teen had their own unique talents to bring to the table. Some were great at coming up with a script, others at acting, others at editing, others at filming, etc.

They listened and communicated well. Not one person did just one thing. The writer would help with editing, the editor would help with brainstorming, and so on. The point is that they worked together, and not one person tried to steal the limelight. It was really neat to have witnessed how well they treated each other. In my opinion, they fulfilled Romans 12:3-6:

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them....

We must strive to make sure we also work together in unity regardless of our different talents and personalities. I hope and pray that all of us never let the fire go out. We need our youth and they need us. So, let us remember to always be “devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor” (Romans 12:10). Ω





Questions and Replies

by Vance A. Stinson



DO THE SEVEN SPIRITS WHO ARE BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD REPRESENT THE HOLY SPIRIT?

QUESTION: Need your help...on that matter of the seven spirits.... I simply can't find a reasonable answer to...what seems like a clear affirmation of the seven spirits being the Holy Spirit.... Help me.... Revelation 5:6...says clearly in my RSV that THE LAMB has "the seven spirits of God sent out in the world." Now I have never seen that text used by those pushing that view, but it seems so clear in my English text. What's your take?
Kingston, Jamaica

REPLY: In Revelation 3:1, Christ holds "the seven spirits of God and the seven stars." The "seven stars" are "the angels of the seven churches" (1:20). In Revelation 4:5, the "seven spirits of God" are "seven torches of fire" burning before the throne. And in Revelation 5:6, the seven-horned Lamb's "seven eyes" are "the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth."

All the above descriptions would be odd representations of the Holy Spirit (even if we assume the Spirit to be a distinct person). Revelation describes all kinds of beings in the heavenly assembly—twenty-four elders, four living creatures, angels grouped in sevens sent into the world with plagues, three angels sent with special messages, etc. From this, it seems most likely that the seven spirits are a part of the heavenly entourage and are in some way especially associated with the Lamb.

If spirit beings (angels) are sent to seal God's servants, pour out plagues upon the wicked, and deliver messages from heaven, why would we assume that the seven spirits of God, which are the Lamb's seven eyes sent out into all the earth (apparently to keep a watch on things and report back to the Lamb), represent the one Holy Spirit? It seems far more likely that "the seven spirits who are before his throne" (1:4) are not unlike (and are perhaps identical to) "the seven angels that stand before God" (8:2).

We could understand the seven spirits as distinct from the seven stars (3:1), but the expression "seven spirits of God and the seven stars" may simply mean that the seven spirits *are* the seven stars, which are the seven

angels of the seven churches. This may explain why each letter begins with "To the angel of the church of..." and, in the concluding remarks, always states, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches." (However, the "Spirit" could be Christ, as all the messages are from Him, or the angel who communicated Christ's message to John (1:1). And it is possible that the "angels" [*angelos* = messengers] of the seven churches are human messengers. The weakness of this view, however, is that all other references to angels in Revelation are to spirit beings, and they're involved in virtually every aspect of God's dealings with man.)

Revelation 1:4 is often considered one of the "triadic" texts (texts that mention Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—Matthew 3:16–17; 28:19; Luke 1:35; 2 Corinthians 13:14; etc.); it mentions God, Christ, and "the seven spirits who are before His throne" as a source of grace and peace. But we find the angels mentioned alongside the Father and the Son in Luke 9:26 and 1 Timothy 5:21. The latter states, "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules...." And the fact that "grace and peace" could in some way come from the seven spirits provides no real support for the "seven-fold Spirit" view, for members of the heavenly entourage are very much involved in carrying out God's will on earth. They hold back plagues and seal God's servants for protection; they proclaim messages from heaven, and they release plagues upon sinners. Grace and peace, as well as death and destruction, come through their agency. As the writer of the book of Hebrews says, the angels are "all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14).

Finally, the text plainly says "seven spirits of God." The "seven eyes" of the Lamb symbolize the "seven spirits of God." Here we have the symbolic representation (seven eyes) and what is represented (seven spirits). Are we to assume that the seven spirits represent something else? Or are they actually seven spirits? The clear indication here is that "the seven spirits of God" are seven spirits (plural), not a seven-fold Spirit (singular). Revelation 1:4–5 supports a literal understanding of "the seven spirits who are before His throne," for the Father ("Him who is and who was and who is to come"—i.e., the One who inhabits eternity) and "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the

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