



The Observance of the Wave Sheaf Day in the New Testament

by George Ramocan



George Ramocan

It is widely known within God's Church that the waving of the sheaf of first-fruits before the Lord on "the morrow after the Sabbath" (Leviticus 23:9–11), was a portrayal of Christ presenting Himself to His Father following His resurrection (John 20:17). It appears from the Scriptures this "morrow after the Sabbath" in the Old Testament became "the first day of the week," or Wave Sheaf Day in the New Testament. This view is corroborated by the incidence of both "the morrow after

the Sabbath" and "the first day of the week" in both Testaments during the annual Festival of Unleavened Bread.

The Fulfillment of the Wave Sheaf in the New Testament

Following the resurrection of Jesus, early in the morning on the first day of the week (John 20:1), an unusual and significant event occurred; Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene. She supposes Him to be the gardener, but after addressing her by name in that familiar voice she recognized, she attempts to embrace him. However, Jesus resists and says, *"Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your*

God'" (John 20:17). But then, interestingly, later that same day, Jesus met His disciples saying, *"Rejoice! And they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him"* (Matthew 28:9; John 20:19).

Obviously, something happened between these two episodes, because it was now okay for Jesus, *late on the same day*, to allow His disciples to hold onto him (Matthew 28:9). Clearly, Christ being the fulfillment of the Wave Sheaf, obviously in the interval, *ascended to His Father* as He said. Jesus' ascension to His Father on that day fulfilled a unique ceremony in the Old Testament known as the *Wave-Sheaf Offering*. In commanding the observance of this ceremony, God said to Israel: *"When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest. He is to wave the sheaf before the LORD so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath"* (Leviticus 23:10–11). When we come to the New Testament, we find the term "first-fruits" is used to describe the resurrected Christ! 1 Corinthians 15:20 says: *"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep."*

These texts illustrate the ascension of Christ to His Father on the morning following His resurrection from the day before, and refers to Christ presenting Himself to His Father as the first-fruits from the dead on the first day of the week (John 20:17).

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How Does "Death" Pass-Over Us?



Bill Watson

Over the years, I have personally had many opportunities where I've stared at death in the eyes of others. Whether visiting them in their homes or at a healthcare facility, it's always an emotional and moving experience to talk with someone who knows they are facing death in *their immediate future*.

And it's not always an easy conversation to have surrounded by that set of circumstances. And so often those conditions can have a major effect on how the experience may affect our emotions and mental disposition. Clearly, it isn't the kind of experience all of us are equipped to handle.

As you can imagine, the tension, stress, and mental anxiety is a very different situation when facing this experience in the backdrop of a war-torn battlefield, or severe accident, or other disaster. First responders who are dispatched to an accident, or the calamities of natural disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes, or tornados, see many things they wish they didn't have to see. These people, as those who experience combat, are special people, and all of us should be very thankful there are those who can handle the pressures and rigors these horrible sights and conditions present when having to deal with the dangerous hazards, or catastrophic injuries, and death these conditions cause.

In the life of a Christian, many experiences can be quite challenging from time to time; but talking to someone, or comforting those while they're dying right in front of you has to be one of the most emotional circumstances a human being can ever experience. Most combat veterans, first responders, and hospice workers will attest to this.

by Bill Watson

But, whether on the battlefield, or in the midst of a catastrophe, or just simply in the quietness of home or at a healthcare facility, when "death comes knocking," it's just as final—there's no difference comparatively speaking. As a matter of fact, death has *no limitations* as to where and when it will strike—and we are all under bondage to it. It *stings* every time it occurs (1 Corinthians 15:55–56)!

Passover continued on page 3



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— 2019 Holy Day Calendar —

New Testament Passover

April 18, 2019
(Observed at sundown)

Feast of Unleavened Bread

April 20–26, 2019

Pentecost

June 9, 2019

Feast of Trumpets

September 30, 2019

Day of Atonement

October 9, 2019

Feast of Tabernacles

October 14–20, 2019

Last Great Day

October 21, 2019

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

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Editor-In-Chief: Vance A. Stinson

Editor: Lloyd W. Cary

Contributing Writers: Michelle Algarra, Lloyd Cary, Jimmy Meek, Murray Palmatier, George Ramocan, George Roper, Horane Smith, Bill Watson, and to the many contributors who made this publication possible, *thank you*.

• **Production:** Lloyd W. Cary

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OVERSEAS OFFICES:

- Australia: Minister, The Church of God International, PO Box 171, Boonah, Queensland 4310, Australia
- The Church of God International Canada, PO Box 32009–RPO, Northland, London ON N5V 5K4
- Jamaica: The Church of God International, 60 Cairncurran Ave., Western Dist. PO, St Andrew, Kingston, Jamaica
- Philippines: The Church of God International, 7 Opal St., Severina Subdiv, KM 18 South Superhighway,
- Paranaque, Metro Manila, Philippines. Email: rene@cgiphils.org

CGI Website: www.cgi.org
CGI E-mail: info@cgi.org
Phone: 903-939-2929

So, What Is Death?



The short and simple answer to this question is, it's simply the absence of life, a state of being dead. In the realm of our existence as human beings, it's the condition of being unconscious, immobile, and unable to move, or do anything *consciously*—and *consciously* is the operative—you are no longer conscious, or self-aware!

The Bible is very plain about the state of the dead. It doesn't mince words and leaves no room for any confusion about it *if* you take it for what it simply says. Notice, "I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, ...that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; ...as the one dies, so dies the other; yea, they all have one breath; so that a man has no preeminence above a beast; ...All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" (Ecclesiastes 3:18–20).

A few chapters later we're told, "For the living *KNOW* that they shall die; but the dead *KNOW NOT ANY THING* [no longer conscious], neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is *forgotten*. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is *now perished*; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 9:5–6). Solomon continues: "Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of the life of thy vanity which he has given thee under the sun all the days of thy vanity: ...Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might; for there is *NO WORK, NOR DEVICE, NOR KNOWLEDGE, NOR WISDOM*, in the grave [totally immobile], where you go" (Ecclesiastes 9:9–10).

We are told in the book of Psalms, "The dead *praise not* the Lord, neither any that go down into silence" (Psalms 115:17). It also says, "For in death there is *no remembrance* of you [no longer self-aware]: in the grave who shall give you thanks" (Psalms 6:5)? Even the prophet Isaiah says, "For the grave *cannot* praise you, death *cannot* celebrate you: they that go down into the pit [hole, well, grave] *cannot* hope for thy truth" (Isaiah 38:18).

When you understand this definition and begin to let it sink in, you can't help but to realize death is the *great equalizer*. It doesn't matter how much money you have, how much fame, or power you exercise, because as the old saying goes, "You can't take it with you." Death separates everything from you—material possessions, family, friends, and associates—including your *conscious awareness*, according to the Bible!

In the book of James, we're told our lives are but a vapor. So for those of us who claim tomorrow is entitled to us, God has something else for us to consider. He claims through James, those of us who rejoice in our boastings are sadly mistaken. We have nothing to be vain about since everything we accomplish or enjoy will eventually be left upon our departing, once we're in "death's grip" (James 4:13–17).

What we sometimes fail to realize is, as long as we are in this flesh, we are in *bondage to death*. That makes us very vulnerable and short-lived—a type of prisoner in a sort of way—and that should be humbling. Until this *final enemy* is subdued and eliminated, we will never be free in the ultimate sense of what freedom really means—which is the freedom from the "enemy" that takes life. This is why Paul speaks to this issue and *characterizes death as an enemy* to be destroyed! That's when we are really free—when we will never worry about dying anymore. But how is that accomplished? How does death *PASS-OVER*?

There Is Life Beyond Death

There is an important point Paul makes in 1 Corinthians about *how* this enemy called death will finally be destroyed. Notice: "For as in Adam all die [a figure of speech, representing this physical life], even so in Christ shall all be made alive [literally, but in a different form]. But, every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits: afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he has put all enemies under his feet. The *last enemy* that shall be destroyed is *death*" (1 Corinthians 15:22–26).

This characterization speaks to the fact that ultimately, eternal life will be accessible for man to obtain. That humanity's potential supersedes this current state of ours and will extend beyond this natural condition (flesh and blood), which is considered the "first Adam." Instead, it is intended to take on a form that is described as a spiritual body—some kind of "metabolic change" that will result in an image, a material, of the heavenly. This

event, Paul explains, is made possible by the "second man," which is the Lord from heaven—that is, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:42–49).

This change from flesh and blood to something called "spirit" was foreknown in the Old Testament. The ancient patriarch Job knew there was something greater than just this physical life, and opined about this change he was aware God had promised. Notice: "But man dies and wastes away: yea, a man gives up the ghost [breath] and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decays and dries up: So man lies down, and rises not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, not be raised out of their sleep [death]. O that you would hide me in the grave, that you would keep me secret, until your wrath be past, *THAT YOU WOULD APPOINT ME A SET TIME AND REMEMBER ME!* If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time, will I wait, till my *CHANGE COME*" (Job 14:10–14). And there is, in the long term, a change promised to all of mankind that allows death to "pass over" us.

Yes, Job knew there was a *metabolic change* promised to humanity that would result in his being raised up from his sleep (death). This occurrence was made clear by Jesus Christ when He disclosed the Father had given Him authority over death, and this blessing of life would be made possible from a resurrection He would conduct upon His return (John 5:25–29). And this authority was awarded to Jesus Christ by means of His selfless sacrifice.

Remember Christ Is the Means

Consider what the writer of Hebrews has to say regarding this enemy we call death; and don't doubt for a minute it is, indeed, an enemy! It is the antithesis to life! Its origin comes from Satan himself, when he committed the first sin and then later influenced the very first two human beings God created, Adam and Eve, to sin. This condition of *death* is a top priority—a major objective—for *God to eliminate*. He is determined to win this war of death versus life!

In the second chapter of Hebrews, the writer expresses the potential of man and claims God has bequeathed all things to him (mankind), *but not yet*. Instead, "...we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the SUFFERING OF DEATH, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should TASTE [experience] DEATH for every man" (Hebrews 2:9).

He continues: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through DEATH he [Jesus Christ] might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; And deliver [release, remove, free] them [mankind] who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14–15).

The Bible plainly explains, it is *by Christ's incarnation* in flesh and blood that He was able to die and *consequently satisfy the death penalty* that God, justifiably, had on us for our sins against Him (1 John 3:4). He (Jesus) didn't take on the seed of an angel—He wasn't supernatural in that sense—"but he [Jesus] took on the seed of Abraham [that of man—flesh and blood]. Wherefore in all things it behooved him [Christ] to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation [neutralize and reconnect] for the sins of the people. For in that he himself has suffered being tempted [scrutinized, examine, proved], he is able to succour [aid, help, relieve] them that are tempted [scrutinized, examined, proved]" (Hebrews 2:16–18). The *result* of this arrangement is eternal life, where death has no hold or effect on us anymore! *The bondage is removed!*

There is a time that is ultimately coming when the *restitution of all things* will occur. When that happens, death will be destroyed and humanity will be free from its *bondage* to it. It will happen as Paul said, "...when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this MORTAL shall have put on IMMORTALITY, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54–55)?

Ultimately, death and the grave (hell) will be eliminated by the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). It will be a time that will be like no other time. Mankind will finally dwell with God the Father and our Lord and Savior ON EARTH for all eternity, enjoying the *universal inheritance* that we will share with them! Death will forever be *passed over* and for those who *abide in Christ and endure to the end*, they will NEVER DIE! God speed that day as we express our gratitude and thankfulness to our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord, for this priceless benefit of death *passing over!* Ω





This connects with the “pattern” of the waving of the sheaf of first-fruits before the Lord by the priest on the morrow after the Sabbath (Leviticus 23: 10–11). This fulfillment of the Old Testament wave sheaf ceremony in the New Testament confirms “the morrow after the Sabbath” in the Old Testa-

ment *connects with* “the first day of the week” in the New Testament. It also shows “the first day of the week” following the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread in the New Testament, is the “Wave Sheaf Day” for those Christians who recognize this biblical truth—that Jesus Christ is indeed the *living Messiah!*

The First Day of the Week (Wave Sheaf Day) in the New Testament

There are **six texts** in the New Testament mentioning *the first day of the week (Sunday)*, which are *clearly connected* to the Days of Unleavened Bread. They are Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Mark 16:9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1; John 20:19; Acts 20:7; and 1 Corinthians 16:2.

These six texts appear at the time of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Mark 16:9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1; and John 20:19. Unquestionably, we *know* from these six scriptures they occur during the seven-day **Feast of Unleavened Bread**.

For example, as the crucifixion of Christ drew near, we read, “**Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread** drew near, which is called **Passover**. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might **kill Him**” (Luke 22:1–2).

So, we see “**the first day of the week**” mentioned in Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Mark 16:9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1; and John 20:19 all occurred during the Days of Unleavened Bread, because we *absolutely know* Christ was killed on Nisan 14, the day of Passover, which *immediately precedes and is connected to* the Days of Unleavened Bread, commencing on the 15th of Nisan (Leviticus 23:5–6).

So it appears to be very plain that Christ *ascended to the Father* on that **Sunday morning** as the fulfillment of this wave sheaf, originally established in the sacrificial system, representing the harvest of first-fruits.

This connection to the “pattern” of the *Wave Sheaf Offering* appears to have perhaps made a connection for some “annual” *traditional meetings* described to have taken place on the first day of the week. Notice the “trip report” described in Acts. “And we sailed away from Philippi after the **Days of Unleavened Bread**, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days” (Acts 20:6). Luke continues to report a meeting that took place on the first day of the week where they broke bread (had a meal) and Paul preached to them until midnight (Acts 20:7). Clearly this was a first-day-of-the-week meeting that lasted well into the evening.

Now notice another interesting event described in 1 Corinthians: “**Upon the first day of the week** let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1 Corinthians 16:2). But Paul continues: “**But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost**” (1 Corinthians 16:8). Now most won’t make this specific link to this charitable collection, but as surprising as this might be for some, this too is a distant but *direct connection* to referencing the Days of Unleavened Bread—and you may ask how can that be? Simply because the count to Pentecost begins during the Days of Unleavened Bread, and amazingly in particular, commences from Wave Sheaf Sunday as day number one, ending on the 50th day, which is Pentecost Sunday!

So how is that significant, you might ask? Obviously, this narrative Paul describes was during the 50-day period that followed after the Days of Unleavened Bread. And he was notifying everyone he was going to stay at Ephesus until Pentecost. So, it could be just another *plausible consideration* as to why Sunday was selected for this collection of gifts to be taken to Jerusalem *annually* and *not weekly*, in the very way “the morrow after the Sabbath” in Leviticus 23 occurred annually and *not weekly*. Because Christians today do not observe the biblical Feasts, they misunderstand the term “first day of the week” in the New Testament, believing it to be a weekly observance that replaced the weekly Sabbath. And this is unfortunate and not true.

Examples of the Observance of the Wave Sheaf Day in the New Testament

As has been illustrated, the Old Testament observance of the Wave Sheaf Day Offering on the “morrow after the Sabbath” portrays Christ, the first-fruits, to His Father on the “the first day of the week.” But did the early New Testament Church and apostles continue in the tradition of observing the Wave Sheaf Day on “the first day of the week”?

There is an example found in John 20 that describes an early morning meeting on the first day of the week between Christ and Mary Magdalene. It occurs by the empty tomb. After they talked, He sent her to announce His

resurrection to the disciples. In the evening of that same day, as mentioned earlier, all the disciples except Thomas were gathered together (John 20:19–23). Now the Bible describes, “they were gathered for fear of the Jews.” Some interpret this to mean the disciples were in hiding. However, this makes no sense since gathering in one place was the easiest way of drawing attention to themselves, making it easy for the Jews to find them.

Actually, many don’t realize, but the disciples would normally have gathered at the temple on that day for the wave sheaf ceremony, but instead chose to gather elsewhere. This was due to the Jews who crucified Jesus remained hostile toward them; and these particular Jews were at the temple ceremony.

But regardless, the beauty of their gathering afforded Jesus, the *real Wave Sheaf Offering*, to appear among them. Notice, “*Jesus came and stood among them, showed them his hands and side, rejoiced with them, forgave them and breathed the Holy Spirit upon them, simulating what was to come*” (John 20:19–23). This experience of His visitation, validating His success, underscored the opportunity to be reminded the Wave Sheaf Day is to celebrate and *rejoice in the resurrection* of Christ that has now paved the way for mankind to access immortality. In other words, the *Father’s objective of reproducing Himself* was now complete, and the process was now in place!

Unquestionably, this was a *major accomplishment*, and celebrating the resurrection of Christ has been somewhat *marginalized* in our spring Festival observance. Perhaps it would do us well as we commemorate His death on Passover night, to *take some time and consider* the affirmation that comes with the Wave Sheaf Day to be assured the resurrection of Christ, the first of the first-fruits, has now been successfully completed, paving the way for the rest of us (1 Corinthians 15:23).

After all, the resurrection of Christ is the linchpin of the Christian faith, and the event upon which Christian doctrine stands or falls. Buddha is dead, Muhammad is dead, Confucius is dead, Joseph Smith is dead, even Moses is dead, but CHRIST IS *ALIVE!* The apostle Paul says: “*But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is futile and your faith is empty... For if only in this life we have hope in Christ, we should be pitied more than anyone*” (1 Corinthians 15:13–14, 19).

Wave Sheaf Sunday is the Mark For the Count to Pentecost

Another feature of the Wave Sheaf Day in the New Testament marks the beginning of the seven weeks or fifty-day count to Pentecost, much in the same way “the morrow after the Sabbath” was used for this purpose in Leviticus 23:15–16.

An example of counting the Sabbaths is found in Luke 6:1(KJV): “*And it came to pass on the second Sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.*”

This verse makes no sense without understanding the instructions given in Leviticus 23 to count the seven weeks to Pentecost. The word “first” here is an abbreviated expression for the first day of the week, which was also the Wave Sheaf Day. Luke 6:1 is describing the second weekly Sabbath of seven weeks to Pentecost. Also, the reference to cornfields and picking ears of corn dates the timing of this event to the early spring harvest. It is evident the 50 days were also still being counted. Additionally, in reference to the Sunday when Thomas met Jesus, **John 20:26** uses the term “**after eight days.**” Notice, he did not refer to that Sunday as “the first day of the week,” but rather referencing it to “day eight” of the 50 days, keeping within the instructions to count the days in Leviticus 23.

Conclusion

The “Wave Sheaf Day” or “the morrow after the Sabbath” in Leviticus 23 became “the first day of the week.” This was Sunday in the New Testament. The Christians of the early New Testament church continued its observance many years after Christ ascended into Heaven, setting an example for God’s people today.

The purpose of the Wave Sheaf Day in the New Testament was a tradition to celebrate and rejoice in the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection of Christ is the linchpin of the Christian faith, and the event upon which Christian doctrine stands or falls. The Wave Sheaf Day is a distinct day for celebration and there would be nothing wrong with coming together on the first day of the week after the weekly Sabbath ends during the Days of Unleavened Bread *if* an individual or congregation would choose to do so. Well would it be for the people of God to celebrate and recognize the resurrection of Christ on the day of the Wave Sheaf Offering, during the Passover season! Ω



Passover or Easter—Which Is Biblical?

Unquestionably, Jesus Christ was Jewish and observed Passover. Jesus never kept an Easter in His life! So how was this holy day changed? And who changed the day He observed, chose, and instituted as the holy day for taking His sacrificial emblems, representing His body and blood? Where is the biblical record confirming the authority for this replacement?



The Passover Lamb?

by Bill Watson

Which is Biblical?

Or...



The Easter Bunny?

Church history is a fascinating study. There are many angles and approaches one can take when exploring the nuances of the ecclesiastical record. However, the means by which Passover was abandoned and replaced with Easter is fairly straightforward and clearly documented as to “who” and “how” it was done. The *real question* underscoring this issue is: *Did they have the right to do it, and MORE IMPORTANTLY, is that what Jesus wanted?*

Before we go ahead and answer those questions, let’s review the *historical facts* of *how* and *who* made this change so we can put this event into its proper context. Otherwise, we might marginalize the *significance* of the result and overlook the real tragedy of this *UNAUTHORIZED* change.

How Passover Was Abandoned and Replaced

When reviewing the historical record of the Passover/Easter controversy, it is undeniable that the early New Testament Church DID NOT observe Easter. They continued observing Passover, but with a *new significance and understanding*.

Notice: “There is *no indication* of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament, or in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers... The first Christians continued the observance of the Jewish [God’s] festivals, though in a new spirit, as commemorations of events which those festivals had foreshadowed” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th edition, p. 828). In addition, we are informed, “Neither the apostles, therefore, nor the Gospels, have anywhere imposed... Easter... The Savior and His apostles have enjoined us *by no law* to keep this feast [Easter]... And that the observance originated not by legislation [of the apostles], but as a custom the facts themselves indicate” (fourth century scholar, Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book V, chapter 22). The Apostle Paul confirms he maintained the customary observance of Passover, as was given to him by Christ Himself, when he said, “For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus *the same night* in which he was betrayed [*not* Easter Sunday!] took bread” (1 Corinthians 11:23). Keep in mind Jesus Christ was betrayed during the night of Nisan 14 (Luke 22:15–22), which was considered the evening portion of the day of Passover (Exodus 12:6–13). Remember, God begins a new day at evening, commencing at sunset (Genesis 1:5).

With this established fact and connection in mind, how then was it changed from the 14th of Nisan (Passover) to the SUNDAY following the first full moon after the vernal equinox, and then assigned the pagan name Easter (Ishtarte)? Unquestionably, this is no minor change from the original observance that Jesus Christ exemplified (especially since people *died* refusing to obey this change). And furthermore, to supersede the authority of Jesus’ own example is obviously presumptuous at best; and at worst, it is outright heretical! How could such a blatant act of contradiction and disregard for our Lord’s example and commands be allowed to take place? This is a question all of us should seriously ask ourselves!

Assuredly, we must first understand the contention between the Western congregations led by Rome and the Eastern Asiatic congregations. This debate intensified during the second century, and is historically known as the *Quartodeciman Controversy*.

“Quartodeciman” is simply a Latin term indicating “fourteenth.” What the ecclesiastical record of the second century reveals is that there was a controversy over the fourteenth—specifically, *it concerned the change* from the fourteenth of Nisan (Passover) to Easter, with all of its pagan connections, associations, and typologies of fertility and fecundity. This was unequivocally *contested and rejected* by the congregations of the Asiatic East. It came to a head when Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna (who was personally taught by John the apostle), faced off with Anicetus, the preeminent bishop of Rome, in about 150 A.D.

Notice what history tells us from the Catholic Church itself, concerning this second century controversy: “The dioceses of all Asia, as from the *older tradition* [Passover], held that the *fourteenth day of the moon*, on which day the Jews were commanded to sacrifice the lamb, should *always be observed* as the feast of the life-giving Pasch [Passover]... However, it was not the custom of the churches in the rest of the world [primarily the West, represented by Rome] to end it at this point [allegedly a non-biblical based fast ending on Easter Sunday], as they observed the practice, which from apostolic tradition has prevailed to the present time... Synods and assemblies of bishops [*not* Jesus Christ’s example or the Gospel records!] were held on this account and all with one consent through mutual correspondence drew up an ecclesiastical decree [superseding Christ’s personal example as recorded in the Gospels] that the mystery of the resurrection of the Lord should be celebrated on no other day but, the Sunday [Easter] and that we should observe the close of the paschal fast on that day only. A letter of Saint Irenaeus is among the extracts just referred to, and this shows that the diversity of practice regarding Easter had existed at least from the time of Pope Sixtus. Further, Irenaeus states that St. Polycarp [bishop of Smyrna], who like the other Asiatics, kept Easter on the fourteenth day of the moon [which is really the Passover], whatever day of the week that might be, following therein the tradition which he [Polycarp] claimed to have derived FROM ST. JOHN THE APOSTLE, but could not be persuaded by Pope Anicetus to relinquish his Quartodecimen observance. The question thus debated was therefore primarily whether Easter was to be kept on a Sunday, or whether Christians should observe the holyday of the Jews... Those who kept Easter [Passover] with the Jews were called Quartodecimans” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, emphasis mine).

Clearly, the historical record *from the Catholic Church* proves that they themselves (not Jesus Christ) chose to exercise authority to change and sever the connection of Passover. Undoubtedly, there was a long-term agenda to shift and undermine any and all associations connecting Jewish Israeli underpinnings that were foundational to the early Christian Church. Remember, Paul said the household of God (the Church) is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets [*not* Synods, Councils, and bishops], Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20). There was absolutely NO AUTHORIZATION to change the framework of this major point of DOCTRINE, disconnecting from Jesus Christ’s own appearance of worship exemplified by His life, habits, and customs (1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6). It is important we remember: JESUS CHRIST NEVER KEPT AN EASTER IN HIS LIFE! Unequivocally, it is undeniable that Easter has *no* biblical connection, foundation, or authority on the name of Jesus Christ that requires observance or recognition by any who claim Christ as their Savior.

Passover or Easter, continued on page 11

The Covenant with Abraham— a Turning Point for Mankind

by Murray Palmatier

Welcome back! Throughout the course of history, we find many events that could be described as turning points. You probably can look back in your personal lives and reflect on such times. As we continue going through the story of man's history, as told by the Holy Bible, we left off last time with the introduction of a man named Abram, a descendant of Noah's through his son, Shem. We first find Abram living in what would be modern-day Iraq, in a place called Ur. Abram was a wealthy man, married to his wife Sarai. **Genesis 12** details for us a turning point in the life of Abram—which, in retrospect, becomes a major turning point in the story of God's redemption of Man. God's unconditional promise to bless the entire world through Abram's family is short, to the point, but far-reaching in magnitude.

Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:1–3).

When you read the story of Abraham (God changed his name, as He would for several of His servants), take note of the many incidents that reflect his faithfulness in God as a "keeper of covenant." From his settling in the land of Canaan (after allowing his nephew Lot to choose his settlement first), to his rescue of Lot, who was taken captive during a rebellion, we see Abraham's faith played out. After he helped finance and provide fighters to end the warfare, he encountered a High Priest named Melchizedek. Much later in the book of Hebrews, we are told this High Priest was none other than the one who became Jesus Christ—and Who sealed the covenant through sacrifice which likely occurred around the time of year that would later be known as Passover.

However, Abraham and his family were still human beings, subject to sin, fault, and failure like the rest of us. Rather than wait for God to provide a son to him and Sarah (whose name was also changed), they took matters into their own hands. Abraham had a son named Ishmael with Hagar (Sarah's handmaid), but this was not the Son of Promise. Later, God fulfilled His promise by blessing the much older Abraham and Sarah with their long-awaited son, Isaac. Later on, when Isaac was a little older, Abraham was faced with one final test of his faith when God told him to take Isaac into the mountains and sacrifice him. A bewildered but obedient Isaac, while his dad was preparing the sacrifice, asked where the lamb was. Faithfully and prophetically (which you'll see when you get through the entire biblical story), Abraham answered simply that God would provide one. When God watched Abraham raise the knife in the air, that was all He needed to see. God was assured that Abraham would never betray Him, and neither would God betray Abraham. As the story continues to unfold, we'll see that "in your [Abraham's] seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (Genesis 22:18).

The torch of the covenant passes on to Isaac, the Son of Promise. He and his wife, Rebekah, have twin boys named Esau and Jacob. Despite being twins, they could not have been more different. The older and more rugged Esau loved the outdoors, and was closer to his dad, while Jacob, the younger, was closer to his mom. As brothers sometimes do, they became competitive as they grew. This came to a head when one day Jacob caught Esau in a moment of extreme physical weakness and traded a bowl of stew for Esau's prized birthright. For a second generation in a row, a younger brother would receive inheritance blessings that typically go to the eldest. In both cases, history shows that this would lead to millennia of never-ending conflict. Before Isaac died, the transfer of birthright was confirmed with even more deception, as Rebekah helped Jacob trick his dad.

As you are likely coming to see, God is faithful to His plan. He ensures it moves forward, and does so in spite of our human limitations, mistakes, and sins—all to His honor and glory as Creator and Almighty God. We'll continue next time with the account of Jacob's family. The story will pick up the pace, and involve more characters, beginning with Jacob's 12 sons. Until then, keep reading the greatest story ever told—it will not disappoint!

Ω

Prepare Now to Pass the Baton!

by Murray Palmatier

As Jacob neared the end of his life, his son Joseph, on an adaptation of a custom of the day, brought his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to their grandfather so that he could bestow upon them a special blessing. We see this blessing spelled out for us in Genesis 48:15–22. Some Jews today invoke this blessing upon their children at the beginning of each Sabbath. A commentary I recently read in explaining this custom noted that this is a way of declaring to them their identity as part of God's plan to bless the nations of the earth, as promised to Abraham (or least as they understand it to be).

In considering this weekly ritual, I wonder how well we have done, as individual and congregational families, in conveying to our young people the special opportunity they have as sanctified children of the faith (1 Cor 7:14). Are they keenly aware of this extraordinary opportunity they have eventually to answer the call of God to become part of the Firstfruits of God—this unique group of people that will help Christ complete His redemptive work, as spirit Kings and Priests, in the Millennium and beyond? In an age where "identity" is paramount, how well have we conveyed to them THIS special identity?

Leading our youth to God is both a parental and a community initiative that far too many over the course of time, dating all the way back to the times of the patriarchs, have neglected. In our efforts to spread the Gospel, we cannot forget the sanctified group of young people within our midst each and every week. The book of Deuteronomy is centered around the concept of ensuring that the second generation of Israelites do not neglect the teaching of their children as their parents' generation did previously. One example of many in this book alone, instructs:

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:6–7).

These directives are repeated verbatim in Deuteronomy 11:19, so they must be important! Note the command is to teach, and it all starts at home with parents. The Church can supplement. Youth groups can connect our youth with others of like beliefs, and offer some opportunities for good, clean fun. BUT, it starts at home, and we cannot neglect this very important instruction. Consider the forces at play in the lives of our youth as we send them out into this world every day. These clear commands from God to His people are equally important today, and are the only real antidote to stave off the adversary!

In his book, *Man Maker Project*, Chris Bruno points out that to "father is a verb, and fathering is the highest calling of God on men." He goes on to state that it is the duty of fathers "to intentionally usher their sons into godly manhood." This can obviously be extrapolated equally to mothers and daughters, and to the Church at large.

Part of Apostle Paul's mentoring to his protégé Titus included the importance of properly raising our youth. Read Titus 2:1–8 and you'll see how teaching from God's Word, combined with behaving biblically, is what God expects from the entire Body of Christ. This provides the Church with an opportunity to support what is already being diligently taught at home. Our lives are busy, but nothing could be more important than teaching the next generation, both in word and example. We must make time for this.

If you have youth in the congregation, we need your help to spearhead our initiatives to help raise godly young people. These programs (*Sparks*, *Ignite* and *Infuse*) need your support and involvement. We also need the experience and wisdom of our older brethren. We must prepare now to pass the baton on to our young people for service to God. If you can assist, please see your local pastors and volunteer. Nothing could be more important! Ω



by Murray Palmatier



"... let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1)

Left Behind

by Jimmy Meek
Jackson, Tennessee CGI

This article is *not* about the rapture in religious novels and fictional movies. I do not believe in the rapture theory. I am speaking about those lost and left behind in modern technology. I was born in the 1950s. It was a time when the world was simpler and less stressful. The black and white TV set with knobs on the front and the antenna outside worked just fine. In fact, if you don't have cable or Internet service, and you are depending on the indoor Black Box Antenna, the screen freezes and causes the people to chatter with hideous faces. The outside antenna worked much better. It appears that I am not the only one who missed out on technology. Several years ago, I met a lady who told me of her experience with the Internet. She had been with a group of people who were discussing different topics. One of the gentlemen turned to her and asked, are you online? She was clueless and replied, Oh no, you go ahead! There are many people in our nation and some in our church who lived through the depression years. They have seen and experienced many changes during their lifetimes. I recall reading an article about a farm implement salesman who was sent down South to sell rubber air-inflated tires to farmers. The farmers were contented with the iron wheels with cleats. They did not understand why anyone would trade a wheel that would never go flat for a tire that could puncture and leave you stranded. It took a lot of convincing, but the change did come. The iron wheel became obsolete. Life is full of changes. The rapid advancement of science and technology for many older citizens is like being introduced to a new world. We are considered dinosaurs because we carry flip phones and cling to old ways. However, those of us who do not have Facebook, text, tweet, Twitter, or even chirp, are not at a risk of walking directly in front of traffic or falling into public fountains or man holes!

The Internet has become a great advantage to the Church of God. People of all areas can be reached due to global connections. Shut-ins can sit in the comfort of their homes to watch and hear live Sabbath services. Weekly services can conveniently be found by those seeking a congregation to attend. Although the Internet has become a very positive tool for the Church of God, let us keep in mind that the same Internet that works for the church, also teaches people how to build bombs or poison their enemies. Modern technology has brought about many changes in the way the world operates. Increased knowledge shows us approximately where we are according to God's time table. In Daniel, Chapter 12, verse 4, we read: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased." My family and I attended the Feast of Tabernacles this past year. We sang hymns which were shown on a screen for all to read. Also, the ministers delivered their sermons from a computer, where the scriptures were shown on a large screen.

As I sat with my brief case beside me and my Bible in my hand, I began to look around and noticed other traditionalists clutching their old worn out Bibles and following along word for word. I could not help but wonder how long it will be before our local minister says, "Let us click our smart phones to hymn number 164," or "Please click to Matthew, Chapter 24." Facebook, live streaming, and other features of the Internet have become a great asset to the church. However, if society and culture continue to move in the direction it's going—Bibles banned from public schools, references to scriptures removed and banned from public buildings—then it is only a matter of time until Satan attacks the church on the Internet sites. Although the Internet is a benefit for the church at the present time, we must not depend on it for the long term. If the church sites were to be declared a hate inspired organization, which discriminates against gays, lesbians, and other groups representing different beliefs from those we practice, then it would become difficult to get our message out. We would do well to store as much biblical knowledge as possible in our minds and keep our Bibles handy. The Internet is a powerful tool, and I am certain that the church will use it as long as possible; however, the most powerful tool which has been given is the Holy Spirit, which dwells in the members of God's church. The scriptures tell us in Isaiah 58, verse 1: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet and show my people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins." We know that God will provide a way for His church to get the truth out into this world of chaos. In Matthew 10, verse 16, Jesus tells us how to go about doing His work. "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, be you therefore, wise as serpents and harmless as doves." We are told in the scriptures that the Holy Spirit will be given greater power as the last days approach. The work of the church will go forth with an intensity that equals or surpasses the work of the early church. The world has seen many changes and will see many more. The one thing we can rely on is that God never changes. In Malachi 3, verse 6, we read: "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed." Again, in Hebrews 13, verse 8, the scriptures re-affirms the fact that God never changes. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever." People are different. While most change with the times, some like me tend to hold to the old established ways of doing things. While some people click on their smart phones going instantly to Bible scriptures, or Google for biblical answers, a few of us still sit at our desks and rely on tools such as *Strong's Concordance*, *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary*, and other biblical teaching aids. It would be much faster to type our studies on a computer, but we choose to write them by hand. The truth of the matter is that we prefer to stay behind and continue to do things the old way. Modern technology or the old traditional way will both work,

as long as we are growing spiritually. Every member of the church is striving for the same goal. We all want to be in the Kingdom of God. If we overcome ourselves and this worldly system, even as old timers, we will be ready and willing to make the greatest change of our lives, and God will see to it that NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND. Ω

The World Can Let You Down

You may have heard someone say, "I just find it hard to have faith in God." Preachers have said it. You may have said it yourself, not realizing the implications of your words. These are the same people who often accept the daily weather forecast, believe the newspapers, and trust their lives to a pilot they have never seen whenever they board an airplane. We exercise faith every day. We rely on our car's brakes. We trust history books, medical journals, and elevators. Yet elevators can let us down. History books can be wrong. Planes can crash. How much more then should we trust the sure and true promises of Almighty God? He will never let us down... if we trust Him. Cynics often argue, "You can't trust the Bible—it's full of mistakes." It is. The first mistake was when man rejected God, and the Scriptures show men and women making the same tragic mistake again and again. It's also full of what seem to be contradictions. For example, the Scriptures tell us, "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37). There is nothing Almighty God can't do. Yet we are also told that it is "impossible for God to lie" (Hebrews 6:18). So there is something God cannot do! Isn't that an obvious "mistake" in the Bible? No, it isn't. Lying, deception, bearing false witness, etc., is so repulsive to God, so disgusting to Him, so against His holy character, that the Scriptures draw on the strength of the word "impossible" to substantiate the claim. He cannot, could not, and would not lie. That means that in a world where we are continually let down, we can totally rely on, trust in, and count on His promises. They are sure, certain, indisputable, true, trustworthy, reliable, faithful, unfailing, dependable, steadfast, and an anchor for the soul. In other words, you can truly believe them, and because of that, you can throw yourself blindfolded and without reserve into His mighty hands. He will never, ever let you down. In essence, faith is simply believing what God *SAYS* is true, and acting on it. Do you believe that? If you do, you have faith. Ω

QUESTIONS
And
Answers

Why are there contradictions in the Bible? The Bible has many seeming contradictions within its pages. For example, the four Gospels give four differing accounts as to what was written on

the sign that hung on the cross. Matthew said, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (27:37). However, Mark contradicts that with "The King of the Jews" (15:26). Luke says something different: "This is the King of the Jews" (23:38), and John maintains that the sign said "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews" (19:19).

Those who are looking for contradictions or "loose bricks" may therefore say, "See—the Bible is full of mistakes!" and choose to reject it entirely as being untrustworthy. However, those who trust God have no problem harmonizing the Gospels. There is no contradiction if the sign simply said, "This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."

The godly truth-seeking person searches the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11 and John 5:39 "...for in them ye think ye have eternal life". We need to base our confidence and trust n these FOUR BASIC TRUTHS:

- I. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16).
- II. Satan is *deceiving* the whole world (Revelation 12.9).
- III. "And for this cause God shall send them *strong delusion*, that they should believe a lie:"(2 Thessalonians 2:11).
- IV. An elementary rule of Scripture is that God has deliberately included seeming contradictions in His Word to "snare" the proud. He has "...hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes..." (Luke 10:21), purposely choosing foolish things to confound the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27). Ω

Who, What is God?

A Mini-Bible Study



Lloyd W. Cary

The first recorded question in all the Bible was asked by the Adversary in Genesis 3:1 where he asked simply, “Yea, hath God said...?” His purpose was to cast doubt upon God’s WORDS. Today the same adversary continues to cast doubt upon God’s Word, but using more sophisticated means, and through human agents. In modern times he has raised up “scholars” and theologians who “interpret” God’s Word in pedantic nomenclature. God’s Word warns of such infiltrators in 2 Peter 2:12 and Jude 4,17–19. Every trade or profession invents a vocabulary to set it apart from other trades and professions. Doctors, lawyers, scientists, and yes, modern day Pharisees invent words that shut out “outsiders,” who must then come to *them* and pay exorbitant fees for years of time to learn their trade to be accepted into that field. After all, it is reasoned, if a biblical “scholar” uses terminology like hypostasis, replacement theology, the hypostatic union of Christ, or the hypostatic theory of the nature of God, he *must* be “exceedingly godly and knowledgeable,” and one is immediately placed in an immediate psychological disadvantage and is often hard pressed to cope. The natural reaction is to just throw up one’s hands in confusion and reason that such scholarship is too far above him and to close one’s mind down and blindly accept whatever such “scholars” spoon feed them. Hence the phrase, “Just smile and check your brain in at the door and find your seat.” Additionally, there is the peer pressure of “everybody else is going along with it and who am I?” Besides, what will my friends and family think?

And yet 2 Corinthians 11:3, (KJV throughout) cautions us, “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” Do we believe what God says about Himself—or do we have to go to the “egg-sports”?

There is a large body of the Church of God (now renamed, with *God’s* name removed) that has recently completely altered its view of the nature of God. In the May 3, 1994 issue of their widely published newspaper, page 4, in the article entitled “Clearing the Picture About Humans Being Made in God’s Image,” (emphasis mine throughout) it is asked, “WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE MADE IN GOD’S IMAGE? THE QUESTION IS NOT EASY TO ANSWER BECAUSE THE BIBLE DOES NOT DEFINE THE NATURE OF GOD’S IMAGE.” Well, *my* Bible DOES! So does yours! These detractors go on to say that, “THIS VIEW DOES NOT SUGGEST THAT GOD HAS HUMAN FORM, BUT ONLY THAT WE INDIVIDUALLY ARE A BODILY REPRESENTATION OF A BODILESS GOD.” *READ THAT AGAIN!* Are we to believe that such gibberish is “scholarly”? Caution! *Things different are not the same!*

Under the subheading of *Appearances, Anthromorphisms* (a typical jawbreaker catchword to impress others of their supposed superior intelligence) they ask, “NOW WHAT ABOUT THE APPEARANCES OF GOD IN THE BIBLE? AND WHAT ABOUT THE MANY REFERENCES TO GOD’S FACE, EYES, EYELIDS, NOSTRILS, MOUTH, VOICE, ARMS, HAIR, HANDS, PALM, FINGERS, FEET, HEART, BOSOM, AND BOWELS? ARE THEY PROOF THAT GOD HAS BODILY FORM?” To which they blasphemously answer their own question, “NO!” and affirm that such manifestations of God should *not* be taken literally, but emblematically, metaphorically, hyperbole, allegorically, satirically, or symbolically. *Anything* but literally! Any literal descriptions of God are “spiritualized” away. They go on to say in column four that what Moses saw in Exodus 33:19–23 was not God, but a physical *manifestation* of God, not God Himself. Since God cannot lie, who are we to believe (Titus 1:2; Romans 3:4)? What does the Bible say? “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (Romans 1:21).

Under the subheading *God’s Attributes and the Body* they asked such dim-witted questions as:

- “Why would God have a body like the human body?”
- “Could God have eyes?”
- “Does God need a tongue?”
- “If God has ears, what are they for?”

90 Facts About God

God reveals Himself in His Word. But do we *BELIEVE* what He *SAYS*?

by Lloyd W. Cary

- “*Could* God have a nose for smelling, teeth for chewing, legs and feet for walking?”
- “*What* would he *do* with hands and fingers?”
- “*Why* would God have such a body? He certainly doesn’t need one. So is it reasonable to believe he has one?”

Are we to question God? Let the Scriptures speak! “Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hand” (Isaiah 45:9)? See also Romans 1:19–22.

90 Facts About God

Let us set such foolish questions aside (see 2 Timothy 2:23) and hold fast the faithful Word as we have been taught that we may be able by sound doctrine both exhort and convince the gainsayers (Titus 1:9–11). Let us read and believe the Scriptures as they stand! Listed below are *90 Facts About God* listed along with scriptural references, without comment. Ask yourself honestly: Whom do I choose to believe? The pure, unadulterated Word of God—or those who tell us that what we read does not mean what it says? Look up the verses below and get to know God better. Make a real Bible Study of it. *Prove* all things (1 Thessalonians 5:21) You’ll be glad you did!

1. **GOD IS...** A Person (Job 13:8; Hebrews 1:3) and a family, (Ephesians 3:14–15; 1 John 3:2), not a closed off trinity.
2. **GOD HAS...** A spirit body (Daniel 7:9–14; 10:5–19; cp. 1 Corinthians 15:44,49; Philippians 3:21)
 3. Shape (John 5:37)
 4. Form (Philippians 2:5–7; 3:21)
 5. Image and likeness (Genesis 1:26; 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9)
 6. Countenance (Psalm 11:7; 21:6; 42:5; 89:15)
 7. A head and a mind (Revelation 1:14; 14:14; Jeremiah 19:5; 13:5; 1 Corinthians 2:16)
 8. A face (Deuteronomy 34:10; Genesis 33:10; Exodus 33:11)
 9. Hair (Daniel 7:9; Revelation 1:14; Psalm 11:4; 18:24; 33:18)
 10. Eyes (Revelation 1:14; Psalm 11:4; 18:24; 33:18)
 11. Ears (Psalm 18:6; 34:15)
 12. Hands (Psalm 102:25–26; Hebrews. 1:10)
 13. Fingers (Exodus 31:18; Psalm 8:3–6)
 14. Arms (Psalm 44:3; John 12:38)
 15. Loins (Ezekiel 1:26–28; 8:1–4)
 16. Feet (Psalm 18:9; Ezekiel 1:26; 24:10; 1 Corinthians 15:27; Hebrews 2:8; Revelation 1:15; 2:18)
 17. Back parts (Exodus 33:23)
 18. A mouth (Numbers 12:8; Isaiah 1:20)
 19. Lips (Isaiah 11:4; 30:27)
 20. A tongue (Isaiah 30:27)
 21. A voice (Psalm 29:1–9; Hebrews 12:19, 26; Revelation 10; 10:3–4; 14:21, 22)
 22. A heart (Genesis 6:6; Acts 13:22)
 23. Breath (Genesis 2:7; Job 4:9; 33:4)
24. **GOD HAS FEELING AND AFFECTIONS...** such as
 - love (John 3:16)
 - Love and Hate (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8–9, 16; Proverbs 6:16)
 - Pity (Psalm 103:13)
 - Anger (1 Kings 11:9)
 - Repentance (Genesis 6:6)
 - Jealousy (Exodus 20:5; 34:14)
 - Pleasure and delight (Psalm 147:10)
 - Fellowship (1 John 1:1–7)
 - Joy (Nehemiah 8:10; Galatians 5:22)
 - Peace (Galatians 5:22)
 - Longsuffering (Galatians 5:22)

35. Gentleness (Galatians 5:22)
36. Goodness (Galatians 5:22)
37. Faith (Galatians 5:22)
38. Self-control (Galatians 5:22)
39. Spirit (Psalm 143:10; Isaiah 30:1)
40. **GOD HAS SPIRIT FACULTIES...** He has mind (Romans 11:34)
41. Intelligence (Genesis 1:26)
42. Wisdom (1 Timothy 1:17; Psalm 119:130; Psalm 51:6; 1 Corinthians 1:30)
43. Knowledge (Isaiah 11:2; Romans 1:20)
44. Discernment (Hebrews 4:12)
45. Will (Romans 8:27; 9:19)
46. Righteousness (Psalm 45:4)
47. Faith (Romans 4:17; 12:3)
48. Faithfulness (1 Corinthians 10:13)
49. Hope (1 Corinthians 13:3)
50. Truth (Psalm 91:4; John 17:17)
51. Power (Ephesians 1:19; 3:7,20; Hebrews 1:3)
52. Immutability (Hebrews 6:17)
53. **GOD DOES...** sit on a throne (Isaiah 6:1; Dan. 7:9–11; Revelation 3:21)
54. Wear clothes (Daniel 7:7–9; Revelation 1:13)
55. Dwell in a city (John 14:1–3)
56. Walk (Genesis 3:8; 18:1–8)
57. Ride (Psalm 18:19; 68:17; Ezekiel 1)
58. Rest (Genesis 2:1–4; Hebrews 4:4)
59. Eat food (Genesis 18:1–8)
60. Drink wine (Judges 9:13; Matthew 26:29)
61. Hear and answer prayer (Psalm 84:11; Isaiah 45:11; John 16:23; Philippians 4:6; 1 John 5:14–15)
62. **GOD DOES NOT... CHANGE** (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17)
63. **GOD IS...** Good (Matthew 5:25; Romans 2:4; Acts 14:17)
64. Love (John 3:16; Romans 15:30; 1 John 4:8)
65. Truth (Deuteronomy 34:2; John 17:3, 17; 1 John 5:20)
66. Holy (Exodus 15:11; Isaiah 6:3; 1 Peter 1:16)
67. Perfect (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 18:30; Matthew 5:48)
68. Merciful (Romans 12:1–2; 2 Corinthians 1–2; Titus 3:5)
69. Faithful (1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 1:20; Hebrews 6: 18)
70. Provident (Job 38:41)
71. Comforter (Isaiah 51:12; 2 Corinthians 1:4; 7:6)
72. Deliverer (2 Samuel 2:22; Psalm 40:17; 70:5; Romans 11:26)
73. Preserver (Psalm 12:6–7; 30:3; 33:19; 41:2; 12:7)
74. Healer (Psalm 103:3; Exodus 15:26; 23:38; Isaiah 33:24; 35:5–6; James 5:14–15)
75. Helper (Hebrews 13:6; Psalm 37:40; 46:5; Isaiah 50:7,9)
76. Invisible (Colossians 1:15)
77. Immortal (1 Timothy 1:17)
78. Life (Jeremiah 10:10; John 5:26; Hebrews 7:16; Revelation 11:11)
79. Self-existent (Exodus 3:14; 6:3; John 1:4; 5:26)
80. Ever present (1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 139:7–12; Matthew 28:28)
81. All powerful (Matthew 28:18; Revelation 19:6)
82. Eternal (Deuteronomy 33:27; Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 57:15)
83. All knowing (Romans 11:33; Psalm 44:21; 139:1–6; Proverbs 24:12)
84. Omnipresent through His spirit (1 Kings 8:27; Jeremiah 23:24; Psalm 139:7–12; Matthew 28:20)
85. Unsearchable in greatness (Psalm. 145:3)
86. **GOD WILL...** Reign on the earth (Daniel 2:44; 7:13–14, 27; Zechariah 14:9; Revelation 5:10)
87. Regather all Israel (Isaiah 11:11–12; 61:4–6; Amos 9:14–15; Ezekiel 11:17–20)
88. Resurrect the dead (Job 14:14–15; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Thessalonians 4:14–17; Revelation 20:4–6)
89. Judge all (Psalm 7:8; Psalm 82:8; Hebrews 13:4; Psalm 98:9; Ezekiel 33:20; Hebrews 13:4; Revelation 19:11)
90. Fill all the earth with knowledge of Himself (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14)

The list could go on and on. God manifests many other attributes and has bodily presence like other beings. GOD MADE MAN AFTER HIS IMAGE, AFTER HIS LIKENESS (Genesis 1:26). The only distinction is that He is composed of Spirit (John 4:24), while we are composed of physical matter. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, *we shall be like Him*; for we shall see Him *as He is*” (1 John 3:2).

It was not asked in this religious organization if we believe God and His Word as our final authority, but if we accept the doctrinal assumptions and presuppositions of that organization. If one dares to believe the Scriptures as they stand, or to think for himself and to question aloud, he would soon find himself interrogated and, if he did not subject himself to their—not God’s—authority, he would soon find himself “marked” and ostracized (cp. 1 Peter 5:3 and 3 John. 10–11). This, of course, is in accord with the prevailing religious habit of saying that the Scriptures never mean what they say but are capable of some sort of private interpretation disguised as “growing in grace and knowledge” (2 Peter 1:20; 3:18). Actually, they are returning back to the age-old Babylonian Mystery religious system, and when the blind lead the blind they will all fall into the ditch (See Luke 6:39 & 2 Peter 2:1–3). God is making a SEPARATION to see if you will follow Him and His Word—or if you will follow a man and an organization. Christ said, “I am the vine and ye are the branches” (John 15:5). There is no one between you and God, no “middle” man, organization, hierarchy, or intercessor, but Christ. Whom will you choose? If you find yourself compromising with God’s Word and going along with the system, then that is your choice. Are you “so soon removed” (Galatians 1:6–7) from the truth? How much better to choose the Lord, no matter what the cost (Joshua 24:15 and Luke 14:28)!

Woefully, it is true that most heresy begins within the church. Scripture warns, “My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle *not* with them that are given to change” (Proverbs 24:21, Daniel 7: 25). “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 4 and 2 Peter 2:1–2). The apostle warned, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ *unto another gospel*: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Galatians 1:6–7). It is hoped that this short list can provide an impetus to your own Bible study. It should be plain to see that those pseudo-intellectuals who would convince you that God does not have a body or other human-like attributes either do not read their Bible, or hold their own exalted intellect and the desire for a paycheck over the inspired Word of God. We have seen clearly what they have done.

Next, we need to ask ourselves, “Why would anyone want to do that?” Your Bible explains, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3–4). We are warned, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” (2 Peter 2:1–2).

The bottom line is this: some people believe the Book—and some do not! Whom will *you* believe? God repeatedly warns, let no man deceive you (Mat. 24:4–5,11,24; Ephesians 5:6–7). Will *you* heed?

Yea, God *has* revealed Himself and *hath* said! Will you *believe* the so-called “scholars,” or will you believe *Him*? Ω

90 *Facts About God* is an edited copy written by the author as a personal Bible study sometime in June 1994 as he was exiting a large church organization that was steadily apostatizing from the Truth of God’s Word. It is hoped this mini- Bible study can provoke others to “Prove all things” Remember Isaiah 8:20: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to *this word*, it is because there is no light in them)”
the Editor.



The Wall That Was

by George Roper



George Roper

Much attention has been given of late in the United States to the furtherance of a wall or a physical structure to run along the U.S./Mexico border. It has been proposed that erecting such a barrier will deter illegal entry, protect citizens from outside criminal influences, and stifle the transportation of narcotics into the country. The proposition of building a border wall has been met with derision by some. Those opposed to the construction of a wall accuse that the rhetoric in support of it has evolved to carry a degree of disdain towards migrants, immigrants, and the disenfranchised. Still, others challenge the feasibility of the endeavor. The contention continued even to manifest itself onto the national stage. Proponents from both schools of thought continue to debate the pros and cons that a wall will serve. Despite the considerations concerning the necessity, the practicality, or the legality of a wall in the national discussion, there remains a wall of even greater significance for us to recognize.

In the course that mankind has chosen to follow in optimizing life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, however well intentioned, man has figuratively, through his actions, created a wall between themselves and God. In so doing, man has affected his ability to develop a rapport with God. There are those who may be skeptical of God's existence or the need to pursue familiarity with Him. However, in Romans, the apostle Paul points out that even nature would sway one to reason that a God exists who would be deserving of our attention. "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:19–21, KJV). Man has been given ample evidence of God's existence by the intricate workings of creation that should motivate him to be responsive to God.

Once we recognize the magnificence of the order that governs nature, we can also appreciate that there is an order that governs our code of conduct. There is a consensus that there are certain ideals and values that seem to be inherent to our sense of right and wrong. Those same ideals and values are also present and expanded upon in God's law. For example, in organized society, it is commonly held that it is wrong to steal. This principle is also upheld in God's law. As it is written, "Thou shalt not steal." This proclivity to instinctively recognize right from wrong, indicts man for not being responsive to God. Paul spoke of this intuition in addressing his audience. "They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them." (Romans 2:15, NRSV) It is God's law that we should use to lead us in our conduct, and we should seek to become more proficient in doing so.

When we violate the laws of God that govern our code of conduct, that infraction is classified as sin. The apostle John reviewed the definition of sin in his writings. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (John 3:4, KJV). Failing to apply God's law to our lives and committing these infractions is what contributes to the construction of a wall between ourselves and God. The prophet Isaiah warned of the cause and effect of sin. "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2, KJV). Sin erects a barrier between us and God, essentially building a wall of separation that impedes our access to God.

Sin detracts from our well being and ultimately leads to death. Elaborating on the effects of sin, Paul states, "For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23, KJV). God the Father, being on the opposite side of the wall, saw fit to take steps so that obstruction would not remain. It is through the efforts of the Father and Christ, whereby Christ lived a sinless life as a man—He in turn volunteering His life to satisfy the payment of death that we all incurred individually. Christ admitted this to be one of the goals that He sought to accomplish. "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28, NKJV), Christ's sacrifice has paid the debt incurred by our sins and removed the wall that separated us from God. Not only does Christ's sacrifice remove the wall between us and God, it also unites the followers of God, both Jew and Gentile, with a common denominator. Paul expressed this in his writings: "For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation" (Ephesians 2:14, NKJV). As a result of being reconnected to

God, those who are engaged in this process are also connected with each other by way of a shared experience with God, no matter their background.

In having Christ's sacrifice applied to us, there is still some action required on our part to maintain the new status quo of a wall no longer being present and having access to God. In speaking to an individual who had been conducting themselves in a manner contrary to God's law, Christ gave this person specific instructions after they themselves were granted amnesty. "When Jesus had raised himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, 'Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one Lord.' And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; **go and sin no more**'" (John 8:10–11, NKJV). Once we have experienced the benefit of having the wall that separated us from God removed, we are to maintain and foster our relationship with God. One of the means by which we do this is that we cease and desist from sin. John, a disciple of Christ, who received Christ's teachings first hand, passed this understanding on to the listeners of his day. In referring to Christ, John explained, "But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him" (John 3:5–6, NIV). To maintain our harmony with God, it is necessary that we discontinue sinning and apply His laws to how we live our life.

Recent events have shown how the mere concept of a wall can be divisive. Here in the States, the proposal of a wall has been fraught with much turmoil. Whether the impetus of a would-be wall is essential security or political posturing, the implementation of such a wall in our relationship with God can prove to be even more consequential. CHRIST DYING FOR OUR SINS IN OUR STEAD, REMOVED THE WALL THAT SEPARATED US FROM GOD, MAKING A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD POSSIBLE. The effect of sin is a universal condition. As Paul explained, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23, KJV). Conversely, God's counter response will affect how man can reengage with Him. "...For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34, KJV). Let us be evermore thankful that God has seen fit to redeem us and remove the obstacles that separated us. The wall that was there before is now gone! Christ's sacrifice has averted the predicament of sin, giving us access to God, unrestricted by the wall...that was. Ω



"All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:8–9).



Great Jerusalem wall

Passover or Easter, continued from page 5

Yet regardless of these verifiable facts, this trend finally became law in the year 325 A.D. at the Council of Nicaea. Again notice, from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*: “The emperor himself [Constantine] writing to the churches after the council of Nicaea, exhorts, ‘At this meeting the question concerning the most holy day of Easter was discussed, and it was resolved by the united judgment of all present [regardless of the example or commands of Jesus Christ and the original apostolic fathers, Matthew 26:17–30] that this feast ought to be kept by all and in every place on one and the same day [Easter Sunday]... And first of all it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin... for we have received from our Savior a different way [Where, then, is the biblical proof or Christological authorization?] ...and I myself [Constantine] have undertaken that this decision should meet with the approval of your sagacity in the hope that your wisdoms will gladly admit that practice which is observed [Easter Sunday] at once in the city of Rome and in Africa, throughout Italy and Egypt... with entire unity of judgment.’”

And finally, under the article “Councils” in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* again, we read about the purpose of the Council of Nicaea. “The first ecumenical, or council, of Nicaea (325 A.D.) lasted two months and twelve days. Three hundred and eighteen bishops were present. Hosius, bishop of Cordova, assisted as legate of Pope Sylvester. The Emperor, Constantine, was also present. To this council we owe the Creed of Nicaea, defining against Arius the true divinity of the Son of God [Arius challenged the divinity of Jesus Christ], and the fixing of the date for keeping Easter [which opposed the Quartodecimans who observed Passover].”

It was now made “official”—Easter Sunday, the day after the first full moon, after the spring equinox, became the day to celebrate Jesus Christ’s resurrection. This was a serious and critical shift of theology. Critical, because it not only changed the DAY of the observance, but changed the FOCUS, the MEANING of the observance. It now became an observance and celebration of His resurrection, contrary to the biblical admonition of *remembering* His DEATH!

Notice what Paul says, “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew *the Lord’s death* [not His resurrection] till he come” (1 Corinthians 11:26). There is a purposeful point of significance our Lord placed exclusively on Passover *concerning His death*. It’s very fundamental, but crucial to understand; Passover was intended to distinctly address the impeccable FACT that it was by Jesus Christ’s sacrificed life and shed blood that we have access to eternal life. Unfortunately, merging His death and resurrection into one holy day, as Easter describes, blurs the deep profound meaning of both these events by taking away the emphasis that each so richly deserves.

Sadly, on a broader scale, the abandonment of the observance of God’s holy days has contributed to this greatly. Understanding the additional holy days throughout the year, their enriched meanings and sequence they portray, would clarify how each step in the salvation/atonement process is remarkably explained for our understanding and spiritual appreciation. (Ask for our FREE booklet, *God’s Seasonal Plan*.)

Specifically Identifying *Who* Made the Change

After the Council of Nicaea, the Roman government became more entangled with the ecclesiastical matters of the Church, derailing it further from the original intent by multiple means. “Emperor Theodosius (378–398 A.D.) made Christianity the State Religion of the Roman Empire, and made church membership compulsory. This was the worst calamity that has ever befallen the Church. The forced conversion filled the churches with unregenerate people... Christ had designed to conquer by purely spiritual and moral means. Up to this time conversion was voluntary, a genuine change in heart and life. *But now the military spirit of Imperial Rome had entered the Church*. The Church had conquered the Roman Empire. But in reality the Roman Empire had conquered the Church, by making the Church over into the image of the Roman Empire. The Church had changed its nature, had entered its great Apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:1–12), had become a political organization in the Spirit and pattern of Imperial Rome, and took its nose-dive into the millennium of Papal abominations. The Imperial Church of the 4th and 5th centuries had *become an entirely different institution* from the persecuted Church of the first three centuries. In its ambition to rule it lost and forgot

the Spirit of Christ” (*Halley’s Bible Handbook*, “Paganization of the Church,” p. 760).

Regrettably, the combination of Rome’s secular power and the integration of fertility symbols and observances, adopted from many of the existing pagan religions that saturated Rome, took its toll; and by means of forced compliance or persecution, marginalized the true Church, reducing its influence. Notice again, “Conversion of the Barbarians, the Goths, Vandals, and Huns who overthrew the Roman Empire accepted Christianity; but to a large extent their conversion was nominal and this further filled the Church with *pagan practices*.”

“... Even as every generation seeks to interpret Christ in terms of its own thinking, so, no sooner had Christianity made its appearance than it began its process of amalgamation with Greek and Oriental philosophies; and there arose many Sects...” (*Halley’s Bible Handbook*, “Paganization of the Church,” p. 761).

Throughout history, the Christians remaining faithful to the commandments and testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:17) have been comparably small when measured against the traditional Christian community that has emerged and been so heavily influenced by the Hellenistic teachings of Greco-Roman culture. The liberties taken by the Catholic Church and many of the popes, bishops, councils, synods, and emperors to rearrange the theology of Christ’s original teachings is unconscionable. Unfortunately, the hard reality is, much of *traditional Christianity, Protestant and Catholic, IS NOT theologically correct*.

Notice what Jesus says: “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye who work iniquity [lawlessness]” (Matthew 7:22–23).

Seriously, it would do all of us some good to consider this possibility. It is very plausible one can think he is pleasing God when in fact he is not. It’s important to our Lord we worship Him in Spirit and in TRUTH. Love of the truth is *living the truth*. It’s easy to *say* we love and believe the truth, but we must love by *doing* (1 John 3:17–18). The hearers are not justified. Acting on what we know, or *living our faith*, is *key* to justification and pleasing the true God (James 2:15–26). Notice: “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me and heareth my sayings, and *DOETH* them, I will shew you to whom he is like.” Read the remaining verses located in Luke 6:46–49. They are revealing in light of the historical record you just read. We are expected to believe *AND obey*. God expects those who have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them (Romans 8:9) to be an example to others by *living* the Faith.

It is the height of arrogance, vanity, and ego to circumvent God in areas He reserves *exclusive prerogative* to define “what is to be.” The historical record of the Passover/Easter controversy is a prime illustration of how man endeavors to evade God, avoiding His authority. History reveals the combination of the Greco-Roman government, implemented by the ecclesiastical authority of the Popes and Catholic Councils over the centuries, *replaced Passover with Easter*. There is absolutely *no biblical directive or Christ-like example* throughout the WHOLE BIBLE authorizing the institution of Easter as a Christian holy day! It’s simply a man-made tradition, adopted, concocted, and assimilated with ancient pagan fertility rites and symbols that are well connected to the sun-worshipping religions of Babylon that came down to us through the Greco-Macedonian/Roman cultures. Lamentably, over the years, it has simply contributed to misdirecting much of the vast Christian community, causing it to render the laws of God to no effect because of the traditions of men. Even Jesus Christ had to personally deal with this same principle during His ministry and cautioned against it. Notice what He said: “Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own *tradition*” (Mark 7:6–9).

Without a doubt, this being the case, why not consider following the example Jesus Christ left us and begin keeping the Passover instead of Easter, as was originally intended? Because, as was mentioned at the outset, what underscores this issue is not that Passover was replaced; that is an *obvious historical fact*. Instead, what is really at the heart of this issue is, *which laws will you obey—Jesus the Christ’s—or the decrees (traditions) of men?* □

Humility and Faith in the Midst of Trials

by Michelle Algarra

A test of humility is to accept the fact that there are times God, in all His wisdom, refuses to answer “yes” to our major requests/prayers. We cannot fully determine the reasons, but we simply cannot force Him to heal all persistent, incurable ailments, grant miraculous deliverance from financial trials like bankruptcy and the like, intellectual problems from lack of formal education which may also lead to loss of adequate employment opportunities, and the psychological hang-ups which result from past spiritual failures, failed spiritual exams and their resultant psychological repercussions. Horrible mistakes and sins, especially for Christians in God’s church, can be traumatic and require deliverance from the Great Physician, *Jehovah Rophekah* the Healer.

The element of faith requires that even when there are deep doubts regarding one’s calling and disappointment with God because of severe trials and afflictions, one must continually have the hope that God can provide the spiritual gift of discernment that will allow a person to transcend his personal suffering. God did not call Christians so they can live a life free from trouble and hardship, and becoming a Christian does not guarantee success in all of one’s material undertakings.

When Jesus gave up His divinity to live for a brief span of 33 years as a human on earth, He did not choose to be known as a powerful spiritual leader, wealthy merchant, or even as someone with remarkable intellectual prowess, like so-called theologians at the time. He only chose to work as a carpenter, and, though not impoverished, only had middle class background. He never wrote any books, treatises, or dissertations, and in all His wisdom, chose a life of personal suffering and service to others.

However, His Godship or divine nature was evident in His life of prayer and worship, in all His teachings and the miracles He performed. And the supreme test of bravery and self-sacrifice when He gave up His life, going through torture, martyrdom, and crucifixion. Christians in the past and even in the future, may be required by God to go through even greater suffering than the trials and problems and failures we commonly experience—persecution, and we have to accept the reality, martyrdom for some.

But this life is only transient, temporary. No matter our setbacks, we must strive hard to redeem whatever remaining time we have because the days are evil, continually praying that God will help us forget whatever trauma we went through in the past, helping us find solutions to all our insurmountable problems, granting us the Holy Spirit and all the fruits of the spirit, and relying on God for help in all our problems. Especially to be granted wisdom and proper judgment, perseverance, and endurance, and most importantly of all, strength of character. We should ask God for spiritual gifts, for spiritual productivity, looking forward to the coming of our personal friend and future husband, our Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, Jesus Christ.

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you” (2 Corinthians 4:7–12).

“Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Corinthians 6:3–10).

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Galatians 6:7–8).

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13–14).

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8) Ω



The Uniqueness of the Bible

In 1889, a schoolteacher told a ten-year-old boy, “You will never amount to very much.” That boy was Albert Einstein. In 1954, a music manager told a young singer, “You ought to go back to driving a truck.” That singer was Elvis Presley. In 1962, a record company told a group of singers, “We don’t like your sound. Groups with guitars are definitely on their way out.” They said that to the Beatles. Man is prone to make mistakes. The skeptics who reject the Bible should take the time to look at the evidence before they come to a verdict.

1. It is unique in its continuity.

If just 10 people today were picked who were from the same place, born around the same time, spoke the same language, and made about the same amount of money, and were asked to write on just one controversial subject, they would have trouble agreeing with each other. But the Bible stands alone. It was written over a period of 1,600 years by more than 40 writers from all walks of life. Some were fishermen; some were politicians. Others were generals or kings, shepherds or historians. They were from three different continents, and wrote in three different languages. They wrote on hundreds of controversial subjects, yet they wrote with agreement and harmony. They wrote in dungeons, in temples, on beaches, and on hillsides, during peacetime and during war. Yet their words sound like they came from the same source. So even though 10 people today couldn’t write on one controversial subject and agree, God picked 40 different people to write the Bible—and it stands the test of time.

2. It is unique in its circulation.

The invention of the printing press in 1450 made it possible to print books in large quantities. The first book printed was the Bible. Since then, the Bible has been read by more people and printed more times than any other book in history. By 1930, over one billion Bibles had been distributed by Bible societies around the world. By 1977, Bible societies alone were printing over 200 million Bibles each year, and this doesn’t include the rest of the Bible publishing companies. No one who is interested in knowing the truth can ignore such an important book.

3. It is unique in its translation.

Large portions of the Bible have been translated into over 1,400 languages. No other book even comes close.

4. It is unique in its survival.

In ancient times, books were copied by hand onto manuscripts which were made from parchment and would decay over time. Ancient books are available today only because someone made copies of the originals to preserve them. For example, the original writings of Julius Caesar are no longer around. We know what he wrote only by the copies we have. Only 10 copies still exist, and they were made 1,000 years after he died. Only 600 copies of Homer’s *The Iliad* exist, made 1,300 years after the originals were written. No other book has as many copies of the ancient manuscripts as the Bible. In fact, there are over 24,000 copies of New Testament manuscripts, some written within 35 years of the writer’s death.

5. It is unique in withstanding attack.

No other book has been so attacked throughout history as the Bible. In A.D. 300, the Roman emperor Diocletian ordered every Bible burned because he thought that by destroying the Scriptures he could destroy Christianity. Anyone caught with a Bible would be executed. But just 25 years later, the Roman emperor Constantine ordered that 50 perfect copies of the Bible be made at government expense. The French philosopher Voltaire, a skeptic who destroyed the faith of many people, boasted that within 100 years of his death, the Bible would disappear from the face of the earth. Voltaire died in 1728, but the Bible lives on. The irony of history is that 50 years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society moved into his former house and used his printing presses to print thousands of Bibles.

The Bible has also survived criticism. No book has been more attacked for its accuracy. And yet archeologists are proving every year that the Bible’s detailed descriptions of historic events are correct. See Matthew 4:4 and 1 Peter 1:25 footnotes. Ω

Compiled from various sources.



“Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways” (Haggai 1:5).

Sparks/Ignite/Infuse News



Mike James

Hi, I would like to update everyone on what is happening with our Youth programs. *Infuse* is planning for a retreat in Summerville, South Carolina (near Charleston) in early summer. The theme for *Infuse* this year is, “When All Else Fails.”

The point of the theme is, we must rely on God because He is the only thing that will not fail us. *Infuse* is now holding monthly meetings with CGI contacts in the Philippines, Jamaica, and Canada.

The *Ignite* teen program is still ramping up, but we do have a website now up. You can find Ignite at Ignitecgi.org. Ignite focuses on our youth aged 13–19.

Our *Sparks* program is for pre-teen children, and we are looking to brand all our children’s Sabbath School lessons soon and upload them to our *Infuse* and *CGI* websites. From there, CGI members can download lessons for the youth of the Church.

Canada’s *Infuse* and *Ignite* group is looking forward to several opportunities to meet in 2019. Our group is spread over four congregations in Ontario. Our close proximity allows us to gather on holy days, in the summer, and at the Feast. Besides our annual summer camp-outs, we meet at the Canadian Pentecost Weekend, and at the Canadian Feast of Tabernacles site in Collingwood, Ontario. We also try to schedule some fun get-togethers during the year. Last year, the group helped organize the combined Feast of Trumpets for five of the six Canadian congregations, and we hope to be able to do that again this year.

Some of the Philippines (PH) Youth’s recent activities include the following:

1. CGI PH just formed a centralized and organized youth club called *CGI PH Youth Organization* with core leaders from different regions of PH where there’s a local church.
2. CGI Naga church hosted a youth camp last December and held several activities both physical and mental (more details and pictures to follow).
3. Articles for the *Infuse* magazine and website have been submitted by a writer from the PH.
4. Youth leaders commissioned a youth General Assembly, and it will take place every first Sabbath of the month, and will happen after their public Bible Study.
5. *CGI PH Youth Club* have proposed activities in the pipeline that include an outreach program, income generation program, articles written from the youth, team building for the upcoming Feast of Tabernacles, youth camp, and a mini leadership training for the youth.

If you have some feedback, advice, or would like to volunteer your time for our Youth programs, please email me Mhjames6043@yahoo.com.

Submitted by Mike James

Hello everyone, just want to update you on what is happening with our children and young adult programs. The *Infuse* Leadership Team and the *Ignite* and *Sparks* Team held some online and face-to-face meetings to discuss plans for the upcoming year.

The *Sparks* program is still getting established, but we are planning to create a template for all our Sabbath School lessons. These lessons will be transferred to our websites, where they can be downloaded for all our church and fellowship groups to use. We are also working on Feast lessons for the coming year.

The *Ignite* program now has a website that we will be linking to our *Infuse* site and the national church site.

Infuse held their first meeting for the upcoming year in late October. *Infuse* intends on planning another retreat next year and having programs at some of our Feast sites. We are also looking for new volunteers for *Infuse*.

If you can help with any of these programs, please email Mhjames6043@yahoo.com. More details will follow in the next *International News*. Submitted by Mike James Ω

infuse online @
infuse.cgi.org



Visit the Infuse website to:

- read the current issue
- download and search back issues
- participate in discussions and connect with friends in the forum
- find out how you can get involved

Visit today: infuse.cgi.org



“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain... For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:1–2,14).

When God Does Not Make Sense

by Pastor Horane Smith



Horane Smith

One of the questions agnostics and atheists like to pose in their rejection of God is, why does He allow suffering. It is a legitimate question.

You read, watch, and hear of the horror stories of how people suffer on this planet. The gut-wrenching images you see of starving babies and children in Sub Sahara Africa; some digging into the garbage dumps of major cities in search of scraps of food; bloody civil unrests and wars leaving many orphans to fend for themselves; the street children whose bed is the cold ground at night; not to mention the child soldiers and those who are used as labourers for less than 50 cents a day. Where is God in all of these hours, days, weeks, months, and years of misery and despair that plague humanity?

Where was God when those passenger planes came plummeting to the ground or in the cold and choppy waters of our seas and oceans with babies, children, seniors, and others onboard? Where was God on 911 when people were jumping from many stories up at the World Trade Centre to escape the towering inferno?

There is untold suffering on this planet today in many other spheres of human lives. Hopelessness and suffering cripple our world. You hardly meet anyone in life who does not have a problem; when you hear some stories of suffering among even close friends, be it economic, health, marital, or otherwise, many have asked this question. Where is God? To some of them, the existence of an all-loving, all-powerful, all-knowing, omnipresent God does not make any sense whatsoever.

There is no doubt individual trials have forced some people to give up on God or reject Him, as they cannot fathom how could He stand by and watch His creation suffer so much?

What's the best explanation of God appearing not to care about the human condition? The first place to begin would be to answer the question: Who gives and sustains life? Did you create the air you breathe, the food you eat? Did you create yourself?

We know the answer. Although there are some who would deny the Divine, the fact is, if we did not create ourselves, someone must have done that, not out of selfishness, but out of love.

In attempting to find some reasonable answers why the existence of God does not appear to make sense at times, we need to understand a few basic things that our finite minds allow us to know about YAHWEH.

Numbers 23:19 tells us, "God is not a man, that he should lie..." Hosea 11:9, "...for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee..." Isaiah 55:8,9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

God does not think like us, neither is He on the same plane as human beings. He exists in a sphere outside human comprehension, a dimension that differs from our own. Psalm 147:4-5, "He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure."

Psalm 135:6, "The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths."

If we can come to the understanding that God's thoughts are not like ours, and that He's sovereign, cannot lie, is perfect, and all His attributes are true, then it would be much easier for us to comprehend why God allows things to happen, even the dreadful things. Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

God has a plan and purpose for humanity. When things don't happen our way, it does not mean God is not in charge or He doesn't know what He's doing. "For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Unbelievers may want you to believe that, but God is not dead! He's alive and well and knows exactly what He's doing. "It is impossible for God to lie!" Whatever He promises in His word, He will do! God tells His people He will be with us "to the end of the age," or the end of human history. God will carry you through the storms of life. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze" (Isaiah 43:2). Joshua 1:5, "I will not leave you or forsake you."

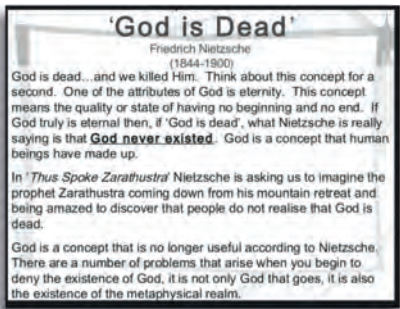
However, we must remember through our very own actions God may appear to be far away from us. Isaiah 59:1, "Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your

iniquities [lawlessness] have built barriers between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. For your hands are stained with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, and your tongue mutters injustice..."

We go through different trials and sufferings for a purpose. Sometimes, we live long enough in this life to see why God allows us to go through such experiences. There are many other experiences, even on an international scope, that we

may not understand now. However, we must believe our Great God is sovereign, and all the sufferings of humanity, the fall-out we pay for sin, will come to an end one day, and only then we will have a better understanding why there are times when it appears that the existence of God does not make sense.

First Peter 1:6-7 says, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." Romans 8:17, "...if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we



"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good" (Psalm 14:1).



Announcements

Caribbean Bible Study

We have just completed the *Gospel According to Luke* in our weekly Caribbean Bible Study. This Sunday, we begin the *Book of Acts*. You can access archived studies [here](#).

If you missed any of our original programs, or you just want to hear them again, you’ve come to the right place. L.I.F.E. 101 Radio On-demand.



If you have any friends in the Caribbean, let them know they can now tune in to the *Book of Acts* every Sunday at 1:00 PM Eastern Time by tuning into <https://life101radio.net/> and clicking the “Listen Live” button.

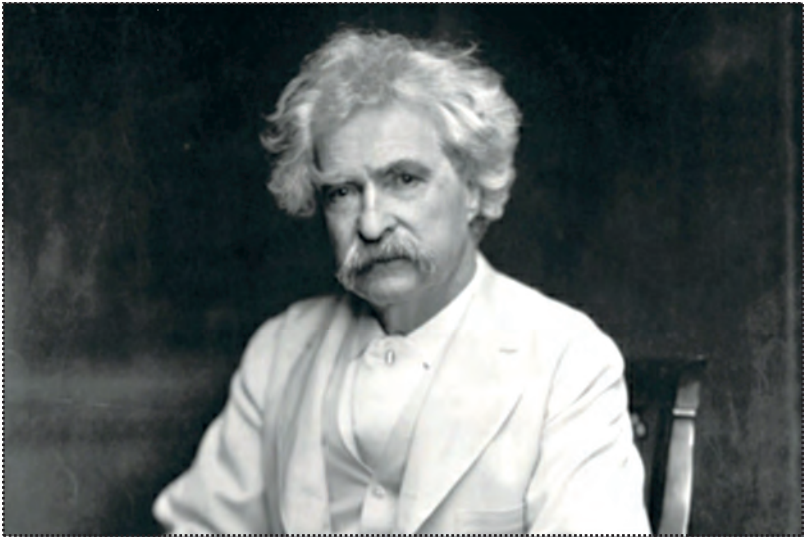
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The Gospel According to Isaiah

As of this writing, we’ve completed chapters 40 to 49 in our line-by-line study of the *Gospel According to Isaiah*. You can join us at <http://cgi.churchonline.org>. We broadcast live every Wednesday night at 7:30 PM Eastern time to a steadily growing audience, with a live chat afterward. If you missed past studies, you can catch them in the archive [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLrLc0wTTWg&list=PLt9QqCyvx6f8FdIVmpurO7ARe7DLmZo5G):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLrLc0wTTWg&list=PLt9QqCyvx6f8FdIVmpurO7ARe7DLmZo5G> Ω

“It ain’t those parts of the Bible that I can’t understand that bother me, it is the parts that I *do* understand.” *Mark Twain*



Mark Twain

Baptisms

“There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15:7).

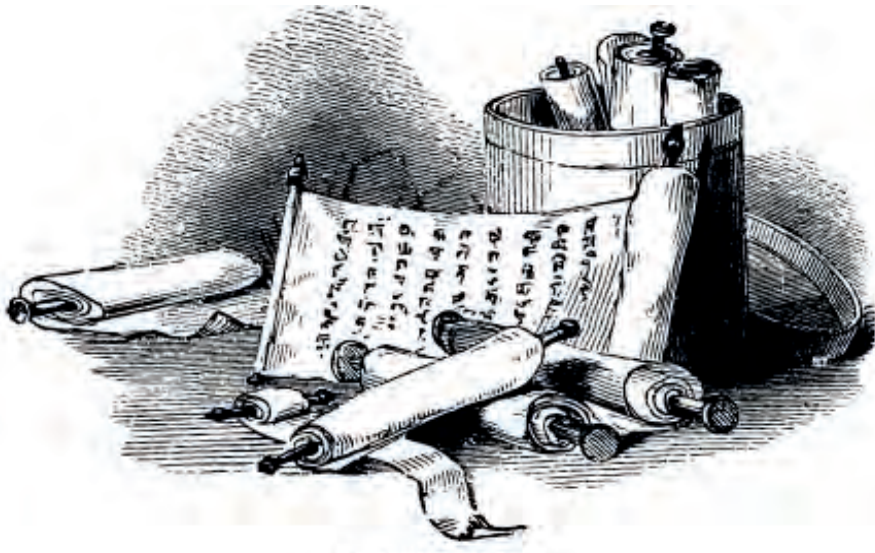
On Saturday evening, January 12, 2019, CGI Toronto welcomed two new members into the Body of Christ. The ceremony was held at Ebenezer Holiness Church of God. In the presence of over 60 brethren, family, and friends, Sherina Chin and Bridgette Edwards dedicate their lives to Christ and were baptized. It was a wonderful and emotional event for both ladies. It was very special to witness Sherina making this tremendous decision, as she is only a few months from turning 18 years old. This is a great encouragement and a wonderful example set for the other young persons in the congregation. We trust and pray that all the other youth will come to the same decision when they are ready.



Sherina Chin and Bridgette Edwards Baptized

The baptismal service was lead by Pastor Kenroy Allen. He led us with an exhortation from Romans 6 on the symbolism and importance of baptism. The service was interspersed with the singing of hymns and contemporary worship songs. Three deacons from the local congregation, Shey Smith, Anthony Brathwaite, and Dwight Chin (Sherina’s father) assisted in the laying on of hands ceremony and prayer for the newly baptized.
We pray that God will continue to bless these two young ladies all the days of their lives, and that they will continue to utilize their gifts to edify the Body. Ω

Submitted by Courtney Scarlett



Ancient books (scrolls)

Odd Bible Facts You May Not Know...

- Swearing on the Bible is against the Bible—Matthew 5:33–37 (KJV).
- Over 100 million copies of the Bible are sold each year.
- The Bible is the most commonly stolen book in the world, most likely because it is so available in hotel rooms and places of worship.
- Jesus was not an only child. He had *at least* 4 brothers mentioned by name and at least 2 unnamed sisters.
- The full Bible has been translated into 532 languages. It has been partially translated into 2,883 languages.
- The Bible has been translated into Klingon.
- The King James Bible contains 788,258 words, 31,102 verses, 1,189 chapters, and 66 books.
- Nearly 8 in 10 Americans regard the Bible as either the literal word of God or as inspired by God.
- Women are more likely than men, older people are more likely than younger people, and African Americans are more likely than other races to read the Bible.
- John Wycliffe produced the first translation of the entire Bible from Latin Vulgate into English. However, after he died, the false church exhumed and burned his corpse as punishment for his translation work.
- China is not only the largest producer of textiles and manufactured goods in the world; the country is also the largest producer of Bibles.
- While there are no descriptions of Jesus in the Bible, the image of Him with fair skin, light hair, and blue eyes is most likely incorrect and reflects the cultural influences of European Christians. Christ most likely had more Middle Eastern features.
- The world’s smallest Bible can fit on the tip of a pen. Scientists etched the 1.2 million letters of the Old Testament on a tiny silicone disk, which they call the Nano Bible.

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