



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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"Put on the whole armor of God"

Fall 2021

CHINA: THE EMERGING RED DRAGON

On July 26, 2021 former Secretary of State and CIA Director, Mike Pompeo said: "If America is not strong the world will be at the mercy of tyrants and enter an era we cannot imagine." Why does it seem our present leaders are not aware and sensitive to this reality? Why does it appear there is a purposeful agenda being unleashed to weaken the United States of America?

by Bill Watson



It is no secret; the world we're living in today is very volatile. There are so many sources of disruption tearing at the fabric of humanity, designed to take it apart, thread by thread—that it's becoming rather overwhelming to many world's leaders, as to the available solutions to all this chaos. However, *one thing is for sure*: the United States has been a strong, resilient balance of power, equipped to resist and proven by winning two world wars and a handful of other smaller conflicts, to be a "failsafe fire wall" against the development, proliferation, and dominance, of a worldwide totalitarian government.

Many will claim, the United States is the "light" that represents a free social structure that presents opportunities unlike most nations around the world. But, *today, specifically and in particular*, the United States has been targeted by an enormous amount of "Marxists" ideology designed to infiltrate much of the social strata in all segments of its hegemony.

This point is *well illustrated* by the fact that *self-acclaimed socialists* are now openly running for political office within the USA! Additionally, in combination with the recent shift to readopt "Globalist Policies," just goes to substantiate this undeniable contrasting fact: the United States is in a struggle for its very "sovereign existence" as a free capitalist nation, and is under attack by forces *within its gates* that do not agree with the freedoms and liberties that are defined by the founding documents it was built on. Clearly, it is an *existential threat* to its future longevity and, consequently, the stability of the world!



The Globalists' Menacing Agenda

Over the last few decades it has become glaringly obvious the "Military Industrial Complex" that President Dwight Eisenhower warned us about in 1961 has indeed grown in influence, power, and control within the strata of government, education, and the judicial and main stream media segments of our society. Entertainment in particular has been used to "soften the influential edge" of this *social engineering* that has been conducted by *all* political parties—Conservative, Republican, Progressive, Independent, Libertarian, Democrat, or Democratic Socialist—through movies, music, and culture-canceling documentaries; or by simply mischaracteriz-

ing the daily news and misinforming the American public through disinformation.

Additionally, with the growth, size, scope, and influence of social mediums like Google, YouTube, Apple, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and so many others, freedom of speech has become a "target to be censored" by those controlling these large super-tech platforms. Unfortunately, it has become painfully clear, if the management of these tech giants don't like what you say, they will assuredly either shadow ban your material or just cancel your account (and I speak from personal experience too!). Why even the former President of the United States, Donald Trump, has been banned from using some of these mediums. It's stunning to know and understand, compounded by *being personally affected* by some of these censor controlling policies that this kind of *media manipulation and censorship* can be conducted against those with opposing views within the United States—when, actually, "freedom of speech" is constitutionally protected!

But, this kind of action is typical of the *agenda being orchestrated* by those who want to take the United States down. And clearly, what's so menacing about this is the present concerted effort to neutralize and destroy the United States. This is due to the Globalists believing it represents an obstacle to prevent the emergence of a *New World Order* that has been established and labeled *The Great Reset*.

Now some might ask, what is the *Great Reset* and why is it important to watch, track, and gauge? First, it's important because the Bible explains, ultimately a Babylonian, world-influencing government will wreak havoc on the world (Daniel 7:19–26). It will use tactics of surveillance for control and repression, and ultimately military force, for manipulating the people's behavior, due to some kind of engineered and socially installed "MARK."

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Interestingly, *restricting* freedom of speech is a fundamental first step in controlling the people. Stamp out the means of opposing views and ultimately the people will concede to thinking the side they're hearing has to be right because it's the only thing they know. The mainstream media knows this principle and tactic very well and does their best to report only that which they want you to know or be aware of. They are "determined masters" at controlling the narrative.

We are told this leader (the Beast) of the Babylonian system will ultimately change times and laws and persecute Christians—"wear out the saints"—that don't listen and obey (Daniel 7:25). The people will be required to *receive a mark* from this system if they want to eat and work (Revelation 13:16-18)—a controlling tactic foisted on the populace for manipulating their behavior.

Undeniably, God will be watching as to who concedes and resists, for purposes of determining who is with Him—God—and who is not. Notice what is said: "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, *and receive his mark* in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the *wrath of God* which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his [God's] indignation; and he [the person] shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: ...And they [those that take the mark] have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image and whosoever receives the mark of his name" (Revelation 14:9-11).

This is a very serious situation in light of the consequences. We're being told, if one is caught up in the required demands of the government and surrenders to receiving this "mark" at the time it's implemented, you will be subject to the wrath of God! So, it's crucial to recognize how this mandate will be imposed upon an unsuspecting worldwide public. And as in anything of this magnitude, *we can expect incremental "conditioning" of the people* will become a preliminary operation—very similar to the techniques used by the Nazis to ingratiate the German people during their rise to power [*in the 1930s*]. And, admittedly, **fear** was a major tactic used to manipulate concessions and obedience from so many German people and, ultimately, what lead to the Jewish Holocaust.

This *fear tactic* is what is behind the *Great Reset!* It is positioned and utilizing similar tactics to achieve their 2030 goal of accomplishing this globalist agenda. Founder and Chief Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab, said, "Now is the historical moments of time. Not only to fight the real violence, but to shape the system." Prince Charles said, "We have a unique, but rapidly

shrinking window of opportunity to learn lessons and *reset ourselves* on a more sustainable path. It is an opportunity we have never had before and may never have again. So, we must use all the levers we have at our disposal, knowing each and every one of us has a vital role to play."

Both of these statements were spoken with the *current corona pandemic as the backdrop*, which provided the perfect moment in time—the guise, the catalyst, the means—that is being defined as a "window of opportunity" that will *help us to "reset ourselves on a more sustainable path."* They're calling it the "Fourth Industrial Revolution."

As the doors open, this Fourth Industrial Revolution will lead us to a whole new brave world of "AI transhumans"—cyborgs—humans that will be a combination and infusion of *man and machine*. Presently, the globalists World Economic Forum has disclosed a video where three futurists predict what human life will be like in a postmodern, so-called



Great Reset Era. Professor Stuart Russell from the University of California, Berkeley, speaking at the Global Technology Governance Summit, assured everyone that the kind of AI that people are worried about losing their jobs to does not exist yet. But Professor Amy Webb of N.Y.U.'s Stern School of Business predicted that the development of genome editing will "write new codes for life" and "redesign organisms for beneficial purposes." As a matter of fact, Professor Webb claimed this technology has already begun with some of the coronavirus vaccines, which, she said, "make use of an '*engineered code*' in the form of a messenger RNA [mRNA]" (Ref. Breitbart art. by: Kurt Zindulka /Aug. 2021).

Clearly, the technology is moving toward the development of AI to be merged with the human organism. Notice again what Klaus Schwab said about this technology and its future use and objective at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, December 2020. "What the fourth industrial revolution will lead to is *a fusion of our physical, digital, and biological identity....*" In his book, *Shaping the Future of the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, he explains how this future technology will allow governments to "intrude into the hitherto private space of our minds,

reading our thoughts and influencing our behavior." He goes on to say, "Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies will not stop at becoming part of the physical world around us—they will become part of us.... Indeed, some of us already feel that our smart-phones have become an extension of ourselves. Today's external devices—from wearable computers to virtual reality headsets—will almost *certainly become implantable in our bodies and brains.*"

Danish Parliamentarian Ida Auken posts on the WEF website concerning the goals of transhumanism: "Welcome to the year 2030. I don't own anything, including a home, and I have no real privacy—nowhere I can go and not be registered. I know that somewhere, everything I do, think, and dream of is recorded." But she goes on; "My *biggest concern* is all the people who do not live in our city [metaphorically: refuse the implants], those we lost on the way. Those who decided that it became too much, all this technology.... Those *who got upset with the political system* and turned against it" (Ref. *New American* magazine, Alex Newman: "'Great Reset' Transhumanism: Merging Man & Machine").

This information, these discussions and planning sessions that are now going on with much of the intelligentsia in research, industry, and academia is, frankly, quite unnerving and very sobering! Obviously, I think we all can see the *conditioning going on around us* and where these kinds of mandates and ideas are leading. Let the apostle John remind us: "And he [the Beast and False Prophet] causes [Greek: *poy-eh-o*—makes, secures, mandates] all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive [give] a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell [*without this mark you will not be able to function*], save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom, Let him that has understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man and his number is 666" (Revelation 13:16-18).

CHINA: the Threatening
RED DRAGON

In the midst of all this, China has been building, investing, and developing its multi-segmented size and scope of operation as a nation state, taking advantage of its many accesses to the internal operations of a variety of nations, their natural resources, and international water gateways. Additionally, China has grown its strength militarily, technologically, economically, politically, and its global influ-

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE:
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Submissions may be sent to
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2021 FALL HOLY DAY CALENDAR

Feast of Trumpets
September 7, 2021

Day of Atonement
September 16, 2021

Feast of Tabernacles
September 21 – September 27, 2021

Last Great Day (or Eighth Day)
September 28, 2021

Holy days are observed beginning sun-down the previous evening and end at sun-down on the days listed.

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ence by implementing its “Belt and Roads” initiative around the world, when and where it can.

It has become a determined purveyor of pursuing its goals of becoming the world’s greatest superpower by 2035. Clearly, China has become very aggressive over the last couple of decades, illustrated by its recent takeover of Hong Kong and its insistence to dominate and control the South China Sea. This has been compounded by increased military exercises by both China and the USA in the South China Sea, amidst threats to invade Taiwan. Admiral, John Aquilino, the head of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, made this comment: “My opinion is this problem [China invading Taiwan] is much closer to us than most think....” And this is because Beijing views annexing Taiwan as its “number one priority.”

In addition, China has been setting up 5G Cyber technologies all around the country and is essentially going cashless economically, utilizing facial identification of every person. Yes, China is taking digital control of all its people within its borders with a wide array and variety of policies, methods, and technologies that provide personal social credits based on a technocracy that is accelerating in scope for more government oversight! It’s designed to surveil an individual’s character—his integrity, obedience, and trustworthiness to the Chinese society and culture. *Brethren, what does this sound like?*

This is what *China is promoting* to the UN, the IMF, and many of the Eurasian and Western globalist organizations as a “template” to use for a NWO that will be cashless and managed by the government and a world central bank. ***Brethren it is real!*** It is happening right now, and China continues to be emboldened and a dangerous threat to the United States—the last bastion of freedom!

They currently are now openly cyber-attacking without hesitation, or shame. They have been stealing technological secrets for decades, working *espionage tactics* to their advantage. They have also been highly *suspected* as being the originator of the Wuhan virus (a.k.a. the Corona Sars2 virus), whether purposely or accidentally. Further, evidence *appears to be growing* that *seems to indicate* China—in combination with hundreds of non-profit Foundations and USA corporations, politicians, and a multitude of government operatives—helped hijack and rig the 2020 USA Presidential election, for their own self-serving gains and additional infiltration and control of the United States government. ***If***—and I emphasize ***if***—this is true, we may very well be seeing the beginning of the end of the *world’s balance of power and the taking down of the last powerful birthright nation of God’s promise to Abraham!* If that happens, the world *without the United States* will be a very different place!

Ever since the reconnection with China, when President Nixon opened up the doors of trade in the 1970s, China has been working toward growing their nation with the intent of surpassing the United States. They have been a very “determined aggressor” to be the *sole provider* of goods and services to as many nations as they can via their Belt and Roads Initiative. At present this Global Infrastructure Strategy includes 140 nations across multiple continents! And they have been collecting personal data all around the world on as many people as they can. Why? Because data is key to Artificial Intelligence (AI). And AI is key to surveillance, repression, and control! Could this be setting the world up for the “mark” to come? What does it sound like to you?

So Where Do We Go From Here?

With China in the shadows, working *nefariously mischievous* with cyber attacks, a growing military presence, their Belt and Roads Initiative, and the Confucius Institute that promotes Chinese cultural, language, and ideologies—an infiltration strategy—it is no wonder many leaders in the United States



believe China is currently the USA’s most dangerous existential threat!

With that as a consideration, China presents a formidable danger and enemy to the strength of America’s peace in our homeland and, clearly, to the rest of the world—IF the USA is somehow neutralized. Could China become the “tool” that God uses to reduce the United States’ power and influence on the geopolitical stage? The plausibility of such an event, considering the current state of affairs we have, could afford this to happen, especially when considering the prophet Isaiah’s cryptic warning about correcting Israel *in the latter day*. Notice: “Has he smitten him [Israel], as he smote those [Israel’s enemies] that smote him? ...In measure [moderation], when it shoots forth [when it happens], you will debate [wrangle, contend] with it: he stays [removes] his rough [severe, grievous] wind in the day of the *east wind*. By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged [forgiven, pardoned, expiated]; and this is the fruit to take away his sin” (Isaiah 27:7–13).

However, this would *not dismiss* the rise of the Beast on the original footprint of the Roman Empire in Europe. Instead, it could indeed *facilitate its birth* into its destined perdition (Revelation 17:11). Perhaps, as a consideration, like the 1930s, when the Nazis rose to power out of the ashes of WW1—history repeating itself by the Beast rising out of the ashes of a world war with China that results in the United States being defeated. This may be something to consider. Perhaps. But, keep in mind, a war is coming that destroys 25 percent of mankind—it’s called the “fourth seal” (Revelation 6:8).

On the other hand, former President Reagan reminded us: “Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children’s children what it was once like in the United States where men were free.” Also, remember this statement from Thomas Jefferson: “And what country can preserve its liberties, if its rulers are not warned from time to time, that this people preserve the spirit of resistance? ...The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure.”

These statements remind us the freedoms we have in the United States must be defended and protected, and resistance can be expected when leaders forget who elected them and why, and what they were elected to do. As Christians, it is our duty to occasionally remind them of their God-ordained duties: “For he [the ruler] is the minister of God to thee [us, the people] for good” (Romans 13:4). We cannot expect God to preserve our unalienable rights *attributed to us by Him* if we are not willing to stand in the gap and preserve the freedoms and liberties He provided us here in this birthrighted land of Manasseh,

and to exercise our civil liberties and God-given rights as Paul did when exercising his Roman citizenship upon his arrest.

Remember what Ben Franklin said: “Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.” Jefferson said something similar: “He who gives his freedom for safety gets none of them.

So What Can We Do?

The United States is under attack from within and without. There are people, private interest groups, non-profit foundations, politicians, entertainers, and athletes that would like nothing else but to see the United States collapse, or be destroyed. This is a time to make a stand, “pick a lane,” and be brave, courageous, and bold in your faith for our families, our country, and of course, *the work of our God!*

Our nation needs to find its way back to the Judeo/Christian values that somehow have been forgotten and allowed to be replaced by a growing pagan, neo-heathen, and humanist culture that has been taking us down the dark road of abandoning the God of Israel. *This is not good!* We must revisit and revive our families with renewed enthusiasm for God and country!

Keep in mind, there is nothing sacrilegious about being patriotic. It is okay, as a Christian, to express your disapproval when it becomes apparent our freedoms are being jeopardized and our families endangered. Remember, it is never too late to appeal in prayer to God for mercy upon our land. Even Abraham attempted to beseech God, hoping to rescue Sodom and Gomorrah, as evil and corrupt as they were.

So brethren, in today’s environment, God’s Church needs to *step up* and be courageous, brave, and bold—a prayerful and an outspoken people! This is not a time to be fearful, timid, or tacit about the *things you know are not in the best interests* of you, your family, communities, and religious freedoms. Remember: “to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). If we have the love of God in us then we should not let fear cause us to hesitate and draw back (Hebrews 10:38), because perfect love casts out fear.

Notice what the apostle John says: “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may *have boldness in the day of judgment* [this is a day of judgment—God is watching our reactions]: because as he is [and He is fearless], so are we in this world. There is not fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: Because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4:17–18). And why do you think that is? It’s because “fear” can cause you to draw back and separate from those who we should love. *Brethren, be not fearful in these uncertain times.* Instead, learn to love your families, friends, your neighbors, and church community; and draw near to God, and He will draw close to you!

When did polygamy become a sin?

QUESTION: There are some scriptures I have been wondering about. The first three are these:

1 Samuel 13:14: “The LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart.”

1 Samuel 16:7: “the LORD looketh on the heart.”

2 Samuel 3:2–5: “unto David were sons born....” David’s sons are Amnon, born to Ahinoam; Chileab, born to Abigail; Absalom, born to Maacah; Adonijah, born to Haggith; Shephatiah, born to Abital; and Ithream, born to Egital. These (the names after “born to”) are David’s wives.

Then we come to Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite:

2 Samuel 11:2–5: “and he [David] lay with her.”

2 Samuel 11:27: “David fetched her, and she became his wife.”

2 Samuel 12:1–13: “the LORD sent Nathan unto David.... David said unto Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’”

Now the question: When did it become a sin to have more than one wife? David had many wives, but it was not a sin until he took another man’s wife. The Ten Commandments have only two laws that deal with SEX: number seven and number ten: “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife.” Even after David was an old man, he still had many women.

2 Samuel 15:16: “the king left ten women, which were concubines.”

Also see 1 Kings 15:5: “David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.”

1 Timothy 3:2: “A bishop must be blameless, the husband of ONE wife.”

When did it become a sin to have more than one wife???

G.P., Rogers, AR

ANSWER: Polygamy was not unusual in ancient times, and Moses permitted the practice, but “from the beginning it was not so.” Any act that violates the will of God is a sin, and the will of God regarding marriage is revealed in the biblical account of humankind’s origin.

God made Adam, and from the flesh of Adam he made Eve and gave her to Adam as a companion (Genesis 2:7, 18, 21–24). He commanded the two of them to “be fruitful and multiply: fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28). Now, God could have brought forth multiple women from Adam’s DNA, and Adam would have been able to “fill the earth” with his progeny at a far greater rate than he could with only one woman. With multiple women, he could have had a real baby factory going on there.

Yet, God gave to Adam only ONE wife! This action reveals God’s will regarding marriage. It was His will, from the very beginning, that one man and one woman unite as husband and wife until the bond they had formed was broken by death. Those conditioned to think of God’s will as being expressed only in terms of specific rules—“Thou shalt...” or “Thou shalt not...” do this or that—will reject what I propose here as a weak and perhaps nonsensical line of reasoning. Nevertheless, *it is the very line of reasoning Jesus Himself used* when answering a question on marriage and divorce. Can we learn anything from Jesus about how we should understand the creation account? Can He teach us something about interpreting Scripture?

I think He can. Let’s begin with how He could clearly see the good and perfect will of God expressed in God’s own creative acts.

When the Pharisees tested Jesus, asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any reason?” Jesus answered, “Have you not read that He

Questions & Answers

by Vance A. Stinson

who made *them* at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:4–6, NKJV throughout).

The text does not explicitly state that God disapproves of divorce, but Jesus understood that God’s acts in creation are consistent with His will for that which is created, and that it was God Himself who had joined Adam and Eve together, thus instituting marriage for the human race. His conclusion—“Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate”—answers the Pharisees question; no, it is not lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason.

But that didn’t satisfy the Pharisees. They retorted, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” (verse 7).

Jesus’ reply is most instructive: “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery” (verses 8–9).

Jesus is not taking issue with Moses; He is simply explaining *why* Moses wrote this law. This was a *regulatory* law. In that society, men *were* divorcing their wives. Moses, rather than forbid divorce, gave the nation a law designed to discourage divorce and protect women who had been divorced by their husbands. But Moses’ permission should *never* be interpreted to mean that divorce was lawful in the sight of God. (There were, and are, legitimate reasons for divorce, but that subject is outside our concerns here.)

We learn from this that what was practiced in Israel and even permitted in the Law of Moses was not necessarily reflective of the good and perfect will of God. We also learn that Jesus saw in God’s creative acts a law higher than the regulatory features of the Law of Moses. It is through this higher law that we discern God’s will for marriage, irrespective of what was practiced in Israel and what Moses permitted.

From the beginning, marriage has been between one man and one woman. Polyamorous and same-sex relationships have *always* been outside God’s perfect will for marriage and for human sexuality. These truths are clearly revealed in the creation accounts.

So back to your question, “When did it become a sin to have more than one wife?”

There was never a time when polygamy was *not* a sin!

What about David, then? Wasn’t he a “man after God’s own heart”? And doesn’t Scripture say that “David did *what was* right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite” (1 Kings 15:5)? Does this not mean that David’s having multiple wives and concubines was not a sin?

First Kings 15:5 means that David’s responses to God’s commands were *relatively* better than the

responses of the kings named in the preceding verses. David’s most egregious sins—sins that permanently impacted his kingdom—occurred “in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.” These sins included adultery, deceit, and murder. Taking another man’s wife in adultery, plotting a cover-up upon discovering her pregnancy, and arranging for her husband’s death to keep him from discovering the truth are horrendous sins and far outweigh David’s other sins, including his obvious problem with sexual lust and his taking multiple wives to himself.

God seems to have “winked” at polygamy in ancient times, and we’re not sure as to why. Perhaps it was due to the fact that human beings, even those who seek to apply God’s will to their lives, are in some measure influenced by the customs, attitudes, and social norms of the cultures in which they live, and God takes that into account as He judges the thoughts and intents of human hearts. Consider “righteous Lot,” for example. When the men of Sodom surrounded his house and demanded that he send out the two strangers he had taken in, Lot went out to them pleading, “Please, my brethren, do not so wickedly! See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof” (Genesis 19:4–8). Later, after Lot and his family fled Sodom, he would let his daughters get him drunk and have sex with him in order to bear children (verses 30–38).

Yet, in spite of these acts, all of which are appalling to everyone reading these words, Peter refers to Lot as “righteous Lot,” a “righteous man” whose “righteous soul” was tormented because of the lawless deeds of the ungodly men he lived among (2 Peter 2:7–8).

Here, Lot is compared with the ungodly men of Sodom, so we should understand his righteousness in a *relative* sense. Compared with the filth and wickedness of the men of Sodom, Lot looked “as clean and pure as the driven snow.” He did place his trust in the God of his uncle, Abraham, but it is clear that “righteous Lot” was in some measure a product of the age and culture in which he lived.

This is true of all of us—and it was true of David. David lived in a world where polygamy was considered acceptable or even necessary, perhaps because of the diminishing male population (due to war) and the women’s need of economic support.

Thankfully, God considers such influences as he deals with us. David’s polygamy was most decidedly not in harmony with the good and perfect will of God. This “man after God’s own heart” missed the mark in this regard.

So in what sense was David a “man after God’s own heart”? This description does not refer to David’s life in all its details. He was certainly not acting as a man after God’s own heart when he committed adultery, resorted to deception, and came up with a plan to send a man to his death.

The description, “man after God’s own heart,” *pertains to David’s role as king over Israel*. Unlike Saul before him and many of the kings after him, he was indeed a man who conscientiously strove to govern the nation in accordance with God’s will. God could see this quality developing in David while he was yet a young shepherd, so He knew David would be far better equipped to lead the nation than Saul had been.

But David was a morally flawed individual. He was far from perfect; nevertheless, as a general rule his moral imperfections did not override his better judgment when it came to the responsibilities of the office God had placed him in. That’s what God had in view when He said that David was a man after His own heart.

What value does the “Law of Moses” have for Christians?

QUESTION: (1) Given that salvation does not depend on keeping the law of Moses, what are the consequences of obeying it or not obeying it? (2) What parts of the law of Moses does God expect Gentile Christians to keep today? (3) What is the scriptural basis for your answers to questions (1) and (2)?

J.F., Dallas, TX

ANSWER: A thorough answer would require more space than we have available, so here’s a brief answer, beginning with your first question:

“Given that salvation does not depend on keeping the law of Moses, what are the consequences of obeying it or not obeying it?”

Throughout my reply, I will assume that by “law of Moses” you mean the law of God as set forth in the Torah and as expounded, exemplified, and upheld by the Writings and the Prophets.

Indeed, salvation is a gift, not a wage that is owed to us for our good behavior. A gift, by its very nature, is not a wage; it’s not something that can be earned. Condemnation, on the other hand, *is* something that can be “earned.” Paul says it plainly in Romans 6:23: “For the **wages** of sin is death, but the **gift** of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We obey God’s law, not to “earn” salvation but to avoid “earning” condemnation. A condition for receiving and retaining the gift of salvation is that we not fall back into the sins that “earned” condemnation for us in the first place. A gift with conditions attached to it is no less a gift. Consider this illustration: A dad gives his son a car as a gift. The son did not pay anything for the car. Yet, the dad lets the son know that if the son violates certain rules he risks losing his driving privileges and may have the car taken away from him (since it’s still in the father’s name). These conditions do not make the car any less a gift.

So what are the consequences if the son violates his father’s rules? The father takes the keys from the disobedient son and takes away his driving privileges. Similarly, the child of God risks losing the gift of salvation if (s)he persists in breaking the Father’s commandments. As the apostle Paul says to believers in Galatia, “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, **that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God**” (Galatians 5:19–21); and as he says to believers in Corinth, “Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9–10).

You also asked, “What parts of the law of Moses does God expect Gentile Christians to keep today?” and “What is the scriptural basis for your answers to questions (1) and (2)?”

First, the law God gave to Israel through Moses has both **universal** and **cultic/covenant-specific** features. The cultic features are those things pertaining particularly to the tabernacle (temple) and its services. Circumcision was the entry rite to the covenant, so Gentiles could become a part of the covenant community through circumcision. Only then could they eat the Passover and enjoy full participation in the sacrificial system (Exodus 12:48; Ezekiel 44:7; Jeremiah 51:51). So the cultic and covenant-specific features did not apply to Gentiles outside the covenant.

Second, many of the commandments, statutes, and judgments are civil laws and pertain to Israel as a

nation. They also pertain to conditions and circumstances of the time, though they are founded on a higher law. For example, the command to put a parapet around the roof of a new house (Deuteronomy 22:8) is founded on the higher (universal) law to “love your neighbor as yourself.” We apply the law, not by putting a parapet around a roof that’s not going to be used as a place of work or leisure, but by fencing in our swimming pools and making sure our property is a safe place for our families and for visitors.

Third, some laws are regulatory in nature. The law requiring a man to give his wife a bill of divorcement before sending her away (Deuteronomy 24:1–4) is a regulatory law. It was given in view of the fact that men were divorcing their wives (Matthew 19:8) and was intended to discourage divorce as well as to curtail certain unfortunate outcomes when divorce did take place.

The law God gave to Israel through Moses reveals the good and perfect will of God but also reflects the cultural circumstances of the day. Slavery, for instance, was not an ideal institution, but many depended on it for survival in ancient economies, so God gave regulations for slavery and indentured servitude. Like slavery, divorce was never the ideal, but it’s going to happen because humans are weak and flawed. The law recognizes these realities and puts regulations on them so as to prevent certain undesirable outcomes.

The Torah was inspired of God and is still “valuable for teaching the truth, convicting of sin, correcting faults and training in right living” (2 Timothy 3:16, CJB), but it is essential that we “rightly divide the word of truth” when we use it as a guide for our lives. We determine which laws apply, or how certain laws apply, by first determining the (1) **category** and (2) **intent** of each law. This may be difficult in a small percentage of cases, but for the most part it’s not that difficult a task. We should be able to see the universal/moral principles underlying each law and, viewing it through the overarching principle of loving God and neighbor, determine how it applies to our particular situation.

Did Paul repudiate feast observance?

QUESTION: Colossians 2:16–17 reads, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (KJV). What is the meaning of this, if we still keep the holy days, or eat clean meats, or keep the Sabbath? Why is this written? What does it mean?

D. (sent by email)

ANSWER: Colossians 2:16–17 strongly suggests that the Christians at Colosse customarily enjoyed eating and drinking together in their Sabbath and festival celebrations. Paul’s admonition concerns dealing with heretics who practiced asceticism and angel-worship (see verses 18–23). These problematic individuals were judging the Colossian believers on the basis of the burdensome rules and regulations—“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle” (verse 21)—the heretics themselves were practicing.

The text in question, then, indicates that the Gentile believers of Colosse were customarily coming together on Sabbaths and festivals to enjoy the feasting and fellowship normally associated with biblical holy days; but now certain individuals were introducing a philosophy that threatened to disrupt the healthy, joyous, and meaningful fellowship and worship customs of the Colossian believers.

Paul reminds the Colossians that the festivals are a *shadow* of the good things to come in God’s unfolding plan—that is, they point to the Reality, the

Substance—but the festivals are not in themselves that substance or reality. The heretics, by attaching their rules and regulations to the holy days, were stripping festival-observance of its intended purpose and turning the festivals into something they were never intended to be—hence Paul’s explanation: they are “a shadow of good things to come.”

Many have assumed that the false teachers in Colosse were Jewish believers (perhaps the “party of the circumcision”—Galatians 2:12) who were attempting to impose Jewish practices on Gentile believers. This may well be true, but if so the problem was not with simple festival observance, which is wholesome and beneficial, but with legalistic perversions that are contradictory to the mode of festival observance where believers come together to worship God, enjoy wholesome fellowship, and rejoice in the freedom Christ has purchased for humankind.

It seems that some scholars within the Evangelical community are laying aside older assumptions and now recognizing that Colossians 2:16–17 is not a repudiation of festival observance, *per se*, but is an exhortation regarding a problematic philosophy that threatened to disrupt normal Christian fellowship and worship practices. D.R. de Lacey writes, “The ‘judgment’ [in Colossians 2:16] seems to be criticism of the Christians’ present practice, apparently of eating and drinking and enjoying Jewish festivals, in contrast to those whose watchword was ‘do not handle, do not taste, do not even touch’ (Col. 2:21)” (*Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, InterVarsity Press, 1993, “Holy Days,” p. 403).

How did Christ “become sin”?

QUESTION: Second Corinthians 5:21 means that Christ’s not knowing sin *exceeds* our *performed* sins so that we may come into being righteous, with God in Him.... [It does not mean that Messiah was made sin and abandoned by the Heavenly Father. That’s a false teaching of the theologians.]

T.O. (sent by email)

ANSWER: In 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul states, “For He [God the Father] made Him who knew no sin [Jesus Christ] to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” This verse has been the topic of much debate among scholars. Some say that the word “sin” (in the phrase “made Him...to be sin for us”) refers to the sin-offering, not to sin itself; others say Christ “became sin” in the sense that our sins were *imputed* to Him, though Christ Himself was sinless.

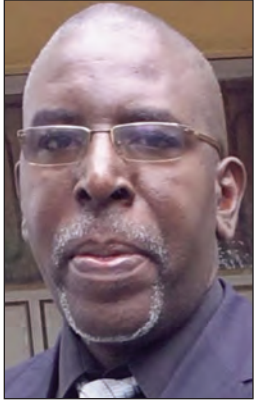
One thing is sure: the phrase does *not* mean Christ *actually* became sin. Without a doubt, it means the sinless One was treated *as if* He were sin.

In Psalm 22:1, David was expressing precisely the anguish he was feeling *in that particular moment*. God had “forsaken” David in the sense that, *in that moment of intense anguish*, He was not acting as David’s “rock,” “fortress,” “high tower,” “shield,” or “deliverer” (Psalm 18:2; 144:2). David obviously knew that the “abandonment” was not permanent, for he ends the psalm by declaring God’s ultimate victory over the oppressive powers.

The suffering Messiah, like David, cried out to the One “who was able to save Him from death” (Hebrews 5:7), but His Father—the One who had the power to intervene, rescue Him, stop the suffering, and display His power and glory in a way never before seen—*did not act*, but left His Son to die an agonizing death. The sense of abandonment, though temporary, was a new experience for Jesus. In identifying with the agony of His forefather David, He expressed His solidarity with humankind in general.

God's Plan of Redemption

by Robert Onsando



It is our obligation to heed to the great commission as commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ, to go out and “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:18). Therefore, let us walk in his steps. “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6).

This is how Jesus began his ministry: “The time has come,” He said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15). The main components of the Kingdom of God are enshrined in God’s plan of salvation. After the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, God established a plan of restoration or redemption to mankind to bring him to the original state as per the initial plan. While the devil, the father of lies, had a counter plan—a *plan of deception*!

It is quite evident that all was well with Adam and Eve until sin entered their world. At the end of each day of creation week, God saw that what He had made was *good*; however, on the sixth day, after making man in His own image, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). I want to emphasize the latter part of the verse: “it was *very good*!” What changed the world was the entrance of sin through compromise on the part of our first parents. “Just as one sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12).

In God’s plan of redemption, Jesus Christ is the main player. He is “the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). This is the Jesus we are talking about, and the center of our focus, who upon fulfilling His redemptive obligation said these words on the cross: “It is finished.” With that, He “bowed His head and gave up the spirit” (John 19:30b). This marked the climax of our redemption. More importantly: “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6–8, NIV). We can surely see how God loved this world and wanted it restored to the original settings. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, NIV).

Whoever rejects this plan of salvation rejects Christ, therefore rejecting God the Father who sent Him. In this plan of redemption, Christ is at the center stage. Phase one is the First Coming of the Messiah; then, in the church age, Christ is manifested through the Holy Spirit as a counselor and guide; and finally, at His Second Coming, Christ will be with us forever.

Therefore, God set up events throughout the biblical calendar year at different times that would serve as a reminder of these phases of God’s plan until full restoration is achieved. God repeatedly says that this is to be “a lasting ordinance” (Leviticus 23:14b). These important festivals and holy days of Leviticus 23 all point to Jesus Christ. The feasts that point to His First Coming as the Messiah have been fulfilled and serve as a memorial of the events that must be told to our children and grandchildren.

Where are we now? The feats pointing to the First Coming of Christ as the Messiah have been fulfilled, so we observe the remaining feasts in anticipation of the Second Coming of Christ as a King.

The whole world is celebrating festivals like Christmas, Halloween, Easter, etc., but God has set His holy days with a purpose, and through them we see God’s entire plan of redemption and restoration. This is what brings hope to the world, as we look forward to receiving our King and the fulfillment of His promise. “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:10). This is what the devil is against.

To accomplish his mission, the devil has sneaked in his usual deceptive schemes by planting the false belief that these festivals were for the Israelites only and were “fulfilled at the cross.” The feasts are said to have been included in the “handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us,” and that Christ “took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Colossians 2:14). One can easily be taken away by this deception, which seems to counter the “lasting ordinances” principle. What is often forgotten is Paul’s instructions to the Corinthian about the ordinances. Notice:

“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you” (1 Corinthians 11:1–2). “Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:8). The devil further peddles lies by saying that the feasts were for the Old Covenant, so New Covenant believers need not keep them, as they are obsolete—as if God made a mistake by having a complete set of appointed feasts laying out His complete redemption plan, but man can pick any of the feasts he wants and leave out the others.

Why do the Feasts of the Lord Still Matter?

The feasts are the Lord’s and are not for Israelites only.

“The LORD said to Moses, —Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the LORD, which are to be proclaimed as sacred assembly’” (Leviticus 23:1–2).

The feasts are a lasting ordinance.

“This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live” (Leviticus 23:14b, 21, 31, 41b).

“I know that everything God does will endure for-

ever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it, so men will revere him” (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

“God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?” (Numbers 23:19).

“Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (James 1:16–17).

The feasts were kept during Jesus’ time.

“Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover” (Luke 2:41). This was a practice that His own parents kept.

“On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?’ He replied, ‘Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, “The teacher says: ‘My appointed time is near, I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house’”’ (Mathew 26:17–18).

“I will not drink until I drink a new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Mathew 26:29). This means that we will have the Lord’s Passover with Jesus again in the Kingdom.

“Now there were some Greeks among those who went to worship at the Feast” (John 12:20). This clarifies that in New Testament times even non-Jews participated in the feasts.

“On the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to Sacrifice the Passover Lamb, Jesus disciples asked him, ‘Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?’” (Mark 14:12).

“Now it was the day of preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down” (John 19:31). They kept the annual Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was to be kept on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread. “And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of Unleavened Bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein” (Leviticus 23:6–7).

“It was preparation of the Passover week, about the sixth hour” (John 19:14).

“The sheaf was commanded to be waved the day

Who is an Israelite/Jew?

A Jew is any person whose religion is Judaism. God used Israelites/Jews to reach out to the world. “Therefore, Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too” (Romans 3:29). “Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all” (Romans 4:16). Therefore, we are all Israelites by faith through Abraham the father of all nations.

“As the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.’ For there is no difference between Jew and Gentiles—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:11–13). It was through Israel that God wanted to shine light to the world. “For this is what the Lord has commanded us, saying, I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:47).

Therefore, it is not true to say that the feasts were meant for the Israelites alone, as many would want to put it, which of course is one of the devil’s schemes to oppose God.

after the Sabbath, which is the first day [Sunday] and that is the day Jesus rose from the grave” (John 20:1).

“But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near” (John 7:2).

“Now at the feast the Jews were watching for him and asking, ‘Where is that man?’” (John 7:11).

“On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘If a man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink’” (John 7:37).

The feasts were still kept during the apostolic era.

“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread” (1 Corinthians 11:23).

“For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26).

“When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread” (Acts 12:3).

“But we sailed from Philippi after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and five days later joined others in Troas, where we stayed seven days” (Acts 20:6).

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20).

“Jesus became the firstfruit to be accepted, then if the firstfruit is holy then the whole batch is holy” (Romans 11:16).

“Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost” (Acts 20:16).

“Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous because by now it was after the fast” (Acts 27:9).

The feasts will be kept after Jesus Christ returns and establishes the Kingdom on earth.

Then the survivors from all the nations that have

What Changed in the Feasts?

“Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: ‘Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased.’ Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, my God’” (Hebrews 10:5–7).

“He [Christ] did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, but entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12).

“The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship” (Hebrews 10:1).

“Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7–8).

Christ is now the Passover Lamb; therefore, no more animal sacrifices—and that is the primary thing that changed—but the feasts remained to fulfill the initial purpose.

Why the Holy Days are Important to Us

The holy days not only teach us God’s plan of salvation, they point us directly to our Savior Jesus Christ. Christ is our Passover. It is by putting on Christ that we put out sin (as pictured by the Feast of Unleavened Bread). Christ was the first of the first fruits, and it was through His resurrection that we can receive the Holy Spirit as Counselor, Comforter, or Advocate (pictured in Pentecost). We believe Christ is going to intervene in world affairs on the Day of Trumpets and become King of kings and Lord and lords. Those who have accepted Christ are now *at one* with Him through baptism and His Spirit, having their sins forgiven (pictured in the Day of Atonement). Christ is coming to set up His government in the Millennium and rule this earth, and His people are now preparing the way for and are representatives of that Kingdom by following in Christ’s footsteps (pictured in the Feast of Tabernacles).

God’s people must keep the annual holy days in their true spiritual intent as constant reminders of the plan of God. Doing so stresses the spiritual meaning of the festivals, just as Paul did when he wrote: “Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5).

attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the king, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zechariah 14:16).

“‘From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,’ says the LORD” (Isaiah 66:23).

Parable of the Talents: Vital Lesson for the People of God

by Michelle Algarra



A prominent teaching in the Church of God has to do with the meaning of the parables of the talents, or pounds (see Matthew 25:14–30; Luke 19:11–27). The parable is said to refer to the spiritual “talents,” or the degree or amount of the Holy Spirit God gives to an individual, and how one can enhance it.

All other gifts God gives individuals are also talents that must be used wisely, not only for self-improvement but in loving service to others. God wants a person to improve in every area of his or her life and to be productive. If talents are simply hidden, a person dissipates, becomes fruitless and unproductive, and later in life will be filled with shame and regret over a life that seemingly was wasted.

A true Christian dedicates his time, or his life, in seeking the number one goal, which is to serve God and others—to love God with all one’s being and love others equal to love for self.

It is the innate desire of every human being to grow and develop spiritually, psychologically, and intellectually, and to enjoy material things. The church, family, work, and school are the venues available to utilize and improve upon every talent and skill God gives a person, through diligence, resourcefulness, assertiveness, and confidence in the Almighty. Drive is the main ingredient in ruling one’s self each day to redeem the time, because the days are evil, and not to be idle spiritually and in

every other respect.

Each person has an innate proclivity to be an achiever, most especially in learning to be a good Christian, manifesting the fruits of the spirit and endowed by God with many talents and skills which must grow into fruition.

In order to become productive, one must exert effort in daily prayer and Bible reading and strive hard to root out all evil thoughts, words, and actions. A minister said, “God won’t do for you what you can do for yourself.” God provides the Holy Spirit and various other resources and talents, but it is up to the individual to make them grow. Neglecting them could result in dissipation, retrogression, and atrophy.

Spiritual fruits can be obtained if, with the help of the Holy Spirit, one continually makes use one’s intellectual and creative gifts. The daily habit of making wise use of one’s time and availing of all the resources necessary for improvement, such as books and the internet, for example, and striving hard not to



compromise when it comes to obeying God’s commandments, statutes, and judgments, should be the main goal each Christian should have as each day passes.

We should become better Christians as we grow older, in other words. The ideal is to stop sinning altogether, but temptations and human nature are still present, so it is impossible to achieve perfection the way Jesus Christ was able to achieve it as a God-man on earth. Continual assessment of one’s growth as a Christian, and continual repentance and overcoming, is the means by which one moves toward the ideal. One must continually ask God for help in exerting effort at overcoming and in making up for one’s weaknesses and profound insecurities and innate failings.

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15–16).

Even before baptism, people called into God’s church already have a fair amount of knowledge regarding Scripture and the difference between right and wrong, good and evil. At baptism, this moral underpinning is solidified into a commitment to strive hard to become a righteous individual through the power of the Holy Spirit inculcated into an individual through the laying on of hands. Counting the cost entails understanding of the fact that one must not deviate from this great purpose, that our whole life, our existence, is what God expects as our response to the gracious mercy He has bestowed upon us, giving us the Lord Jesus Christ and everything else because of His great love for mankind.

In Loving Memory

Bobby Ray Thomas

September 14, 1931 – June 16, 2021

A celebration of life for Bobby Ray Thomas was held on Wednesday, June 23, 2021, at L. C. Weaver Cemetery in



Campti, LA, with Vance Stinson officiating.

Bobby was born to Russell Robert Thomas and Alma Friday Thomas on September 14, 1931, in Chestnut, LA. He passed away on June 16, 2021 at his home surrounded by his family.

He is preceded in death by his parents; a daughter, Kellie Thomas; brothers, Leonard Newmons, Lester Thomas, and Russell Thomas; sister, Jo Lynn Greemon, and two infant sisters, Alma Thomas and Betty Thomas.

Bobby is survived by his wife of almost 68 years, Shirley Thomas;

daughters, Debbie Ebert (husband Alan) and Kim Caswell (husband Wayne); his granddaughter, Brandey Kaiser (husband Adam); and his pride and joy, his great-grandson, Max Kaiser. He is also survived by his brother, Billy Rex Thomas of Natchitoches, his sister-in-law, Kay Thomas of Bushnell, FL, as well as numerous nieces and nephews, all of whom he dearly loved.

Bobby had a servant's heart. He proudly served his country in the United States Air Force for 10 years. He was stationed for a short time on the Island of Okinawa and flew missions over North Korea in a B29 as a left gunner during the Korean conflict. He served his community as the Post Master in Campti for 26 years, as well as on the Natchitoches Parish School Board for 12 years. He was devoted to his family, and, most importantly, he loved and served God. He loved tending to his flower and vegetable gardens, both of which he took great pride. Bobby also loved hunting and fishing when he had the opportunity.

Bobby was a member of the Shreveport-Bossier City, LA congregation (CGI). He will be remembered as a man of great honor, dignity, and faith.

Vornie Ray Woodley

September 20, 1966 – August 7, 2021



Vornie Ray Woodley, 54, died on August 7, 2021, following a long battle with bone cancer. He is survived by his wife of 33 years, Lorene Roberson Woodley; four daughters, LaShannon Roberson, Ashley Woodley, Brianna Woodley Diaz (husband Nick), and Chelsea Woodley; six grandchildren, Alexis, MJ, Jaylen, Malaysia, Madison, and PJ; two sisters-in-law, Wanda Taylor and Sue Fields; five brothers-in-law, Rickey Fonda, Michael Roberson, Ronnie Roberson, Gerry Roberson, and Jeffery Roberson; and his step-father, James Mims.

Vornie was preceded in death by his mother, Erma Jean Mims; sister, Tina Mims; brother, Tim Mims; and a special uncle, Charlie Ray Russell.

Vornie loved studying the Bible and sharing what he learned with his family. He also loved spending time with his family and friends, and was a fan of Marvel Comics movies.

He worked for Coca-Cola for around 15 years, and for FedEx Ground for around 20 years.

He was a member of the Church of God International of Tyler, Texas, and attended services with the Shreveport-Bossier congregation. He was introduced to the church in the early 1990s through Wayne Caswell, a co-worker at Coca-Cola. He attended services several times as a guest of Wayne and became convinced that he needed to be keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. In 1998, Vornie was baptized by Mr. Bronson James, and he, Lorene, and the children became a part of a new church family. Vornie's service in the church included giving sermonettes, performing special music, and being an integral part of our Bible studies. Despite the toll the treatments were having on his body, he would say that he instantly felt better the moment he arrived at church.

We have lost a dear friend and will miss him greatly, but we are comforted in knowing we will see our friend and brother again in the resurrection.



Vornie & Lorene Woodley

New CGI Elder Ordained

Elder Michael E. Reis is a native of Trinidad and Tobago who grew up in Port-of-Spain. He came to the United States as a student in April 1975 and attended the Diesel Institute of America, Landover, MD, where he received a Certificate in Diesel Engineering. Shortly after, in July 1977, Michael joined the U.S. Army as a Combat Engineer. During his 21 years of military service, he earned an associate's degree in arts from the University of Maryland, and a bachelor's degree in organization management from Columbia Union College. He later went on to earn a master's of science degree in quality systems from the National Graduate School, U.S. Navy, Falmouth, Massachusetts, in 2004. He retired honorably from the U. S. Army in August 1997, as the non-commissioned officer in charge of the Department of Radiology, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, D.C. He is presently employed with the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command, Quantico, VA.

In September 1994, at the age of 37, he met his mentor, Bishop Randall Dailey, PhD., New Bethel House of Prayer, Baltimore, MD. He accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior and was baptized. Under Bishop Dailey's

tutelage and in recognition of his commitment to service to the Lord and to the church, he was ordained as a deacon in 1996 and received formal training and call to the ministry. Bishop Daily appointed him the head deacon in 1997, and he was assigned various offices and positions within the church. In addition to serving in various capacities of leadership throughout the years, he was involved in a variety of ministerial endeavors that prepared him to be involved in church building and missionary service in Zimbabwe, Africa in 1998.

He joined CGI, Gaithersburg, MD, in 2017. His ministry to serve God and His church led him to apply into the Ministerial Apprentice Program (M.A.P.). He was ordained into eldership by the Church of God International, Tyler, Texas, on March 22, 2021. Elder Reis is supported in his ministry by his wife, Merle and son Anthony.

His commitment is to be a servant elder to the household of faith, preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, and helping those in need of healing of the mind, body, and spirit. Elder Reis's ultimate desire is to bring people to fully embrace God's love and live victorious in the obedience of His Word and the fullness of His

promises for the everlasting Kingdom. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which

God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).



Left to right: Merle Ries, Michael Reis, Mike James

The Greatest Hoax

by George Roper



Accounts of falsehood are often contrived with the express purpose to deceive. This malicious intent manifests itself by casting a fabrication to appear as genuine. When such disinformation is indulged, the false becomes plausible and accepted as fact. This elaborate construction of lies is commonly perpetrated to defraud or obstruct those it ensnares. Individuals may fall prey to this extent of deceit, while a more advanced form of fraudulence can delude a multitude.

One example of such a hoax is seen in the anecdote of George C. Parker. Parker was a professional con man who specialized in fraudulently selling public city landmarks in New York to unsuspecting buyers. Parker swindled many in his practice from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. His victims would often be newly arrived immigrants to the States or out of town visitors. Parker’s most common piece of real estate to sell was the Brooklyn Bridge. This career con artist would sell the Brooklyn Bridge to naive buyers several times a week for a price of anywhere from \$75 to \$5,000. In turn, the credulous purchaser would receive a fake deed to the bridge. It is said that he once sold the Brooklyn Bridge for \$50,000.

During this time, the Brooklyn Bridge required a toll to cross for individuals or those with horse and wagon. After purchasing the bridge, Parker’s victims would set up a toll booth to collect passage over their newly acquired property, only to be disbanded by the police and enlightened as to how they fell prey to a hoax. Parker was later sentenced to life in prison. It is his exploits that serve as the origin of the phrase, “If you believe that, I have a bridge to sell you,” proving how an elaborate hoax can fool individuals in isolated circumstances. However, hoaxes are also adept at deceiving people in mass.

A contemporary example of how a hoax can beguile the many is seen in the example of “The Shed at Dulwich.” The Shed at Dulwich was a restaurant in Dulwich, London. The restaurant had earned the coveted top-rated standing on TripAdvisor, a platform that rates the service of providers in the hospitality industry. Due to demand, it was impossible to garner a table at this prestigious restaurant. This highly rated culinary venue had reservations extending for over a year. Ironically, the restaurant was never real. The hoax was devised by journalist Oobah Butler as a social experiment. Butler established a buisness phone line, a website, and a fake menu for the restaurant. The menu consisted of the most unappetizing concoctions, while pictures of the entrees were actu-

ally inedible household products fancied up to look succulent. In the buildup of promotion for the faux restaurant, the notion of exclusivity prompted a strong demand from those who hoped to be patrons. The hype rose to such a level that reputable sources came to bestow glowing reviews for the boutique eatery, as other institutions sought to collaborate.

In furthering the hoax, Butler opened the restaurant for one night to serve actual food. A random group of reservations were granted. The dinner guests, who believed they had gained entry to the most exclusive restaurant in town, were told to meet at a disclosed location. There they were blind folded and led to Butler’s backyard. Patrons encountered a restaurant ambiance setting and a DJ providing background music. Diners were served pre-packaged microwave meals and canned soup. Following the meal, the dinner guests stated that they would plan to visit the restaurant again in the future.

Hoaxes have a broad deceptive reach that can affect the individual perception or the common outlook of the masses. The Bible, one of the most sociological case studies of how humanity has been beguiled, testifies to that very fact. It attributes Satan to be the instigator of a widespread hoax.

At the onset of the Bible’s recount, we find Satan perpetrating a hoax to a limited audience, by way of targeting Eve. Satan’s ruse served to contradict God.

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”

And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die” (Genesis 3:1–4, NKJV).

One of the most prominent features of Satan’s hoax was not to believe God but, in fact, to disengage from Him. Satan’s hoax perpetrated that Eve should deviate from God’s instructions and severe all consultation and collaboration with God.

As this hoax was originally received by a singular audience in Eve, the generations of mankind to follow would so too be indoctrinated by the very same hoax.

“So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9, NKJV).

The Bible attests that the whole world has been duped by Satan’s hoax to deviate from God’s instructions and severe all consultation and collaboration

with God. God indeed has taken issue with the proliferation of this hoax.

Hear the word of the LORD, O children of Israel,
for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land.
There is no faithfulness or steadfast love,
and no knowledge of God in the land;
there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery;
they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed (Hosea 4:1–2, ESV).

Satan’s hoax is so widespread that it has touched and permeated every individual. As mankind has embraced this hoax and woven it into his culture, the derivatives of pain and heartbreak have increased. The collateral damage from it over the millennia has been catastrophic. Yet a time is coming in man’s future where God will repeal this pervasive hoax.

Notice the contrast in the state of the world when Satan’s hoax is the standard rational among the population versus when God’s authenticity is the prevailing conventional manner of living.

In days to come
the mountain of the Lord’s house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.
Many peoples shall come and say,
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more (Isaiah 2:2–4, NRSV).

Satan’s hoax throughout history has certainly been the most dominant and detrimental hoax of man’s experience thus far. However, the grasp of Satan’s hoax is temporary. In contrast, God’s truth will prevail forever.

All your words are true;
all your righteous laws are eternal (Psalm 119:160, NIV).

We look forward to that time when all will recognize God’s truth.

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WATCH FOR MORE TO COME!

Should We Venerate Mary and the Saints?

Part 4

by Mike James

The Saints (Chapter 7)

Mary is not the only person many Catholics and Orthodox Christians pray to; they also pray to the saints. The original Christians used the term “saint” to signify members of the faith. Scriptures like Romans 1:7, Romans 15:25, and Ephesians 1:1 make it clear the saints are all the believers and followers of Christ. They are not a special class of Christians. But over time the term “saint” came to mean a really good Christian—a special Christian. Just like with Mary, the veneration of the saints has mixed the worship of pagan gods with the veneration of the various saints. Christianity grew up in a Roman Empire that was influenced by Greek thought. The thinking of Hellenism reigned supreme from Alexander through the Roman Empire (300 BC–300 AD). Greek religion was influenced by the paganism that came before it. The Babylonians had thousands of gods and goddesses, as did the Greeks and Romans. Today, Catholics and the Orthodox pray to thousands of saints. When we look at the practices of the Greek culture of the time we will see how it influenced what became Christianity.

Christianity would find it difficult to rid the Greek culture of their gods and goddesses. These had been intimately connected for many centuries with every phase of life and were destined to survive the victory of Christianity, for belief in them was ingrained in the very nature of the people.²³⁸

History provides direct evidence of ancient pagan temples becoming Christian church buildings. Disciples prayed to Mary and the saints for the same benefits the ancient pagan peoples sought to receive by praying to their gods and goddesses. Festivals for pagan gods and goddesses were taken over as feast days for the Virgin and various saints. Now, obviously, today’s Catholic and Orthodox worshipers think of the saints and Mary when they pray, but the point is there is only ONE Mediator between God and man, Jesus the Christ (1 Timothy 2:5). Let’s take a look at some of the many examples where pagan worship became saint worship.

Hera the Queen of Heaven and the guardian of women had marriage functions associated with her. These functions have been transferred over to St. Catherine, who is not only the patroness of love, but of marriage.²³⁹ St. Nicholas has largely replaced the functions of Poseidon.²⁴⁰

Before making a trip, sailors will

pray to him. St. Pelagia of Antioch, whose festival falls on October 8, has been connected by Usener with Aphrodite.²⁴¹ St. Venere, invoked by Albanian girls as patroness of marriage, is connected with the Roman Venus.²⁴² The modern Greeks, more than any other Christian people, have retained pagan festivals, for many of the Eastern Church celebrations are merely the survivals of ancient ones, and are often held at churches or monasteries whose saints have taken the place of the old gods.²⁴³

While I was growing up, my grandfather lived out his remaining years at my house after my grandmother died. He would tell me numerous stories about life in the old country (Greek island of Ikaria). One story I recall pertained to prayers he and another young man prayed to the Virgin Mary in a church. An icon of the Virgin was used to affix coins to when people prayed. If the coin stuck to the icon the prayer would be answered; if not, the prayer would not be answered. My grandfather informed me he prayed that he would receive safe passage to the United States. Obviously he made it, and the coin did stick. But imagine my surprise when I found a book showing this practice was drawn from pre-Christian Greek religion.

What my grandfather was actually getting involved in (without his knowledge) was a form of divination. The ancient Greeks were known for their oracles, who supposedly could foretell the future. Before I address the example my grandfather was involved in, I will cite an example from the island of Amorgus.

On this island, the Church of St. George Balsamites is located. The priest from this church was supposed to be able to divine the future. The church was built over a stream. The priest would pray to the saint the church was named for and then draw some water from a receptacle with a plug that was full of water. Different items such as hair, insects, leaves, etc., may appear on the surface of the water from the stream. Each of these items was believed to have a special meaning. The presence of hair, for example, meant illness or trouble.²⁴⁴

Another example that mirrors my grandfather’s experience concerns a shrine to the *Panaghia* (Virgin Mary) at Cremasto on the island of Rhodes. Here, the person asking for an understanding of the future places a coin on the icon of Mary. If it sticks, his wish is granted; but, in any case, the priest gets the coin.²⁴⁵ My grandfather’s friend’s coin fell off, but his stayed on. He made it to America and his friend did not.

On Zante, near the village of Callipado, Schmidt found an icon of Mary in a rock-grotto. The icon was revered by the peasants, who placed copper coins against it; when a coin stuck, the answer was favorable.²⁴⁶

A similar example comes from the Church of St. John of the Column in Athens. The church was built around a Corinthian column. The column was found right where the church was built. Some believe the column was part of a structure dedicated to Asclepios, the Greek god of medicine and healing in the fifth century B.C. The church is sacred to John the Baptist, the patron saint of fevers. A legend about John states that when he was near death he tied all diseases to the base of a column with silk threads—a yellow thread for fevers, a red one for measles, etc. He then said, “When I die, let any sick come and tie a silk thread to the column and be healed.”²⁴⁷ Sick Greek Orthodox believers come to this location to pray. They affix colored threads or bits of rags or even locks of hair to the column with wax in the belief that their disease will be transferred to it.²⁴⁸ Even silver pieces are placed on it, in order to get oracular responses; if they adhere a cure is promised.²⁴⁹

The Greeks also would put money on the icons of saints affixed with wax. Lucian mentions a statue of Pelichus, to whose thigh silver coins were affixed with wax, since it was believed to have the power of curing fevers.²⁵⁰ It is still the custom in Greece, as it was in antiquity, to hang up models in wax or silver of the parts of the body cured by the saint—arms, hands, feet, eyes, breasts, etc.²⁵¹ Great numbers of votive offerings—*anathemata*—were brought to the shrines of the old healing gods, especially models of parts of the body.²⁵²

Eastern Orthodox and Catholic officials recommend their adherents pray to the various saints. The actual wording of the Council of Trent helps explain this. “The saints who reign together with Christ offer up their own prayers to God for men. It is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid, and help for obtaining benefits from God.”²⁵³

In ancient Babylon, the birthplace of many pagan beliefs that passed to other religions, there were thousands and thousands of gods and goddesses. Every month and every day in the month was under the protection of a particular deity.²⁵⁴ When Rome ruled the world, the same Babylonian ideas were transferred to the Empire. Converts from paganism were reluctant to part with their old beliefs, and

some of the old gods began to morph into Christian saints. The old idea of gods associated with certain jobs and days has continued.

The Orthodox Church also has a saint for venerating on each and every day of the calendar year. The Bible says there is only one mediator between man and God, so why do the Orthodox and Catholics pray to Mary and the saints? Catholics and the Orthodox are taught that the saints can intercede to God for us. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, they are told to worship God and then to “pray, first to Saint Mary, and the holy apostles, and the holy martyrs, and all God’s saints...to consider them as friends and protectors, and to implore their aid in the hour of distress, with the hope that God would grant to the patron what He might otherwise refuse to the suppliant.”²⁵⁵ The Orthodox Christians believe the same. According to Father Anthony Coniaris, “Even after their [saints] deaths they perform works of love as intercessors in heaven who pray for us.”²⁵⁶ But wait a minute! The dead are asleep. Mary and the saints can’t hear or respond to prayers.

Considering all the data, one conclusion we could draw is the Orthodox and Catholic system of saint veneration developed to some degree from the earlier beliefs in the various gods.

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* even says these “legends repeat the conceptions found in the pre-Christian religious tales.... The legend is not Christian, only Christianized.... In many cases it has obviously the same origin as the myth.... Antiquity traced back sources, whose natural elements it did not understand, to the heroes; such was also the case with many legends of the saints.... It became easy to transfer to the Christian martyrs the conceptions which the ancients held concerning their heroes. This transference was promoted by the numerous cases in which Christian saints became the successors of local deities, and Christian worship supplanted the ancient local worship. This explains the great number of similarities between gods and saints.”²⁵⁷

Some of the syncretism between pagan gods or goddesses and saints is beyond a shadow of a doubt. People in the Roman Empire were used to the worship of the Greek and Roman pantheon and to the worship of local gods. It was an easy step for Christian congregations rooted in paganism to replace the customs of local cults with



the worship of dead martyrs.²⁵⁸

According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, “Churches or ruins of churches have been frequently found on the sites where pagan shrines or temples originally stood.... It is also to some extent true that sometimes the saint whose aid was to be invoked at the Christian shrine bore some outward analogy to the deity previously hallowed in that place. Thus in Athens the shrine of the healer Asklepios... when it became a church, was made sacred to the two saints whom the Christian Athenians invoked as miraculous healers, Kosmos and Damian.”²⁵⁹

We see evidence of this in medieval Europe also. One such account is a letter from Pope Gregory the Great, by way of Abbot Miletius, to Saint Augustine of Canterbury, who was spreading the gospel among the Angles of England at the beginning of the eighth century.²⁶⁰ The letter tells us about church policy for converting people to Christianity. “We wish you to inform him that we have been giving careful thought to the affairs of the English and have come to the conclusion that the temples of the idols among that people should on no account be destroyed. The idols are to be destroyed, but the temples themselves are to be aspersed with holy water, altars set up in them, and relics deposited there. For if these temples are well built, they must be purified from the worship of demons and dedicated to the service of the true God. In this way, we hope that the people, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may abandon their error and, flocking more readily to their accustomed resorts, may come to know and adore the true God. And because they have a custom of sacrificing many oxen to demons, let some other solemnity be substituted in its place, such as a day of dedication or the festivals of the holy martyrs whose relics are enshrined there. On such occasions they might well construct shelters of boughs for themselves around the churches that were once temples and celebrate the solemnity with devout feasting.”²⁶¹

By trying to appease the customs of the pagan converts the church allowed the “saints” and their stories to morph into the old gods the pagans worshipped. One big source of the stories is the *Legenda Aurea* (*The Golden Legend*), an account of the lives of many saints, compiled by Jacobus de Voragine in 1260.²⁶² It becomes unthinkable to take literally such accounts of saints’ lives after we have read the profane literature (especially the romances and epics) of the same era.²⁶³ In both genres there appear the same motifs, the same narrative sequences, and sometimes the same names.²⁶⁴ There are many examples we could cite, but I believe these few examples will suffice.

Saint Hubertus (Hubert) is the patron saint of hunters, and his feast day is on November 3. His legend tells us he loved hunting so much he was even

out on Good Friday hunting. As he is chasing a large stag the deer turns around and faces Hubertus with an image of Christ between its antlers. The image had an inscription which said, “How long will you allow this vain passion to lead you to neglect the salvation of your soul?” Hubertus sought to repent through a life of mortification at a monastery. Hubertus became the bishop of Tongres and Maastricht. He was said to be a healer of rabies in men and animals.

The legend of Saint Hubertus appears as the Christian rewriting of a tale that can be corroborated countless times in the medieval literature of Celtic origin.²⁶⁵ These tales concern the encounter of a human and an animal (a white doe or stag) that is the animal guise of a creature from the Otherworld—that is, a fairy.²⁶⁶ The young knight Guigemar goes to the forest to take part in his favorite hobby, hunting. He notices a doe impersonating a stag with antlers on her head. He shoots an arrow that hits the animal, but the arrow comes back and seriously wounds him. The animal then speaks, saying she is sorry, while warning Guigemar of the fate that awaits him.²⁶⁷

The words “horn” and “stag” are related to the Celtic god Cernunnos. On the Gundestrup Cauldron, a veritable condensed iconographic index of Celtic mythology, we find this horned god surrounded by various animals and numerous fertility and wealth symbols.²⁶⁸ The date of Hubertus’ feast day is significant because of its proximity to Samhain (November 1). This is the time when the beings of the Otherworld have temporary permission to visit the living and is also the moment when the living gain furtive access to the Otherworld.²⁶⁹

Saint Brigid is another famous figure. Her feast day is February 1, which was originally the pagan festival of Imbolc, marking the beginning of spring. There is debate over whether she was a historical figure. Her name, associations and feast day are the same as the Celtic goddess Brigid.

The golden legend of St. Brigid is rich with marvelous tales involving birds and other flying creatures.²⁷⁰ In fact, Saint Brigid was credited with magically creating a bird to console a young girl after she lost a small silver chain.²⁷¹ Celtic mythology does in fact have bird-goddesses who did not vanish with the Celts.²⁷²

July 25 is the feast day of the dog-headed Saint Christopher. According to the legend, the barbarian Reprobis, who stood about seven and one-half feet tall, was born with a dog like face in the third century AD. In his most famous story he carries a little boy across a river and later finds out the little boy was Christ. His name is then changed to Christopher. The tradition of cynocephalic deities proves that the dog’s head is a feature that undoubtedly belongs to a long series of gods.²⁷³ The dog is also associated with “the Beyond” in Celtic folklore.²⁷⁴

The Celts even worshipped a greyhound named Guinefort that became a saint up until 1930. Jean-Claude Schmitt showed that the worship of Saint Guinefort was situated at the heart of an entirely pagan belief that Christianity attempted to eradicate.²⁷⁵ Basing his work on the testimony of Etienne de Bourbon (thirteenth century inquisitor), Schmitt relates the following: “Women with sick children would carry their offspring to the supposed site of the sepulcher of a sacred dog. They followed a custom of offering it salt and other things. On the bushes that surrounded the site they would hang swaddling clothes of the ill child and stick nails in the trees that grew in this spot. They would then pass the naked child between the adjacent trunks of two trees, imploring the fauns to take this child, who they said was in their care, and return him fat and safe and sound.”²⁷⁶

This belief in the dog saint originated from a legend of a dog that saved a child from a snake. His master came home and found the dog with blood around his mouth and his child missing. The man killed the dog later to discover his child safe near a dead snake. A cult formed where the dog was buried and women brought their sick children to the site. The Catholic Church never officially canonized the dog, but the cult persisted into the twentieth century.

Another interesting legend is that of St. Denis whose feast day is October 9. The legend tells us that Denis was a third century bishop of Paris who was decapitated for his faith. One of the things you are told to pray to Denis for is headaches! In the sixth century, Gregory of Tours first mentioned the decapitation of Denis. In the seventh century, an anonymous writer, who declared his version was based on an oral tradition, added a detail to the decapitation: after having been parted from the martyr’s body, the head continued to move and give praise to God.²⁷⁷ In the ninth century the legend was completed.²⁷⁸

Denis was born to a wealthy family in Athens not long after the death of Christ. He was converted by Paul the apostle and left home to preach in Europe, ending up in Paris. He was later arrested by the Roman governor Fescennius and subjected to various forms of martyrdom. After refusing to renounce his faith thru scourging, burning, lions, and crucifixion, he was decapitated. After being decapitated, he picked up his head and carried it north of Paris to a town that is now known by his name.

This pretty legend has every appearance of a pious invention intended to shroud the relics of a tenacious pagan myth that preceded Christianity.²⁷⁹ Indeed, the cellar of the Basilica of Saint Denis has yielded remnants of pagan worship that are much older than the founding of the monument.²⁸⁰

Celtic lore is full of decapitations. The Irish mythological texts that constitute the best conservatory of the

Celtic tradition in this regard offer the example of the feast of Bricriu, during which there takes place a decapitation similar to that of Saint Denis.²⁸¹ In her book titled *Dieux et Heros Celtes*, Marie-Louise Sjoestedt summarizes this important text, which is itself the adaptation of an older Celtic myth in which the rite of the severed head is invested with a sacred value: the giant Curoi, seeking to challenge the heroes of Ulster, shows up in the middle of a feast holding a chopping block in one hand and an ax in the other.²⁸² Curoi asks that a hero cut off his head and agree to have his own head chopped off the next day. When the challenge is accepted the head is cut off, but the giant gets right up picks up his head and goes to the lake he lives in. Indeed, the theme of the severed head plays an essential role in the whole Celtic religion.²⁸³

As paganism began to die away vestiges of it began to live again in the Christian Church. The use of statues is another example. Statues were used to worship the gods and goddesses in Greek and Roman religion. It’s interesting the Catholic Church uses statues to venerate their saints. The Orthodox Church uses icons. The Catholics argue the images are allowed because they merely represent Christ and the saints. The Orthodox argue that their icons are merely windows to the divine which can help in prayer. But these reasons are difficult to reconcile with scriptures like Exodus 20:4–5, Deuteronomy 7:25, and Numbers 33:52.

Another vestige of paganism is the placement of a circle or aureole around the heads of those who were venerated. This continued in the Western and Eastern Christian Church. Christian art in the West and icons in the East sometimes picture saints with a circle around their heads. The aureole (disk) was used in ancient days by Babylonian artists or sculptors, when they wished to represent a being, apparently human, as a god.²⁸⁴

The disk, and particularly the circle, were the well-known symbols of the Sun-divinity, and figured largely in the symbolism of the East.²⁸⁵ The Romans depicted Circe, the pagan goddess of the sun, with a circle surrounding her head.²⁸⁶ Apollo, as the child of the sun, was often thus represented.²⁸⁷ Christ, Mary, and the saints are all depicted with these circle symbols in iconography.

I also recall in the Greek Orthodox Church the frequent kissing of icons by the believers. You could buy a candle at the back of the church when you entered and plant it in a sandbox and kiss a nearby icon. The kissing of icons also recalls the ancient custom of kissing statues.²⁸⁸ Cicero speaks of a bronze Heracles at Agrigentum, whose mouth and chin were worn away by kissing.²⁸⁹ During Church festivals the icon is adorned with myrtle and laurel, as statues were frequently garlanded in antiquity.²⁹⁰ The carrying of the icon

Continued next page

in procession also has its counterpart in antiquity.²⁹¹ Thus the cult statue of the Eleutherian Dionysus at Athens was carried forth on fixed days each year from the city shrine of the god.²⁹²

Again, the Catholic and Orthodox believers today would argue they are not venerating the old pagan gods, but the point is the veneration of the saints puts emphasis on something that should not be emphasized. Saints are sleeping in the dust of the ground awaiting a future resurrection. Only the Father and Son should be prayed to.

CO-REDEEMER (Chapter 8)

As we have seen how the veneration of Mary has evolved through history could there be a further evolution in the future? To analyze this question we will go back to a movement that began in the Catholic Church in the eighteenth century. A movement for Mary began at that time promoting the idea that veneration for Mary was lacking. With the motto “Nunquam satis” (never enough), this movement, led by Alfonso Maria de Liguori (or Liguori) (1696-1787), greatly influenced popular Catholicism as well as the contents of pontifical documents.²⁹³ According to Liguori, who was later canonized by the Catholic Church, “there are things that one requests of Jesus and are not received, but if one requests them of Mary, they are granted.” In his classic work, *The Glories of Mary*, Liguori says, “If my redeemer should reject me, I will throw myself at Mary’s feet.”²⁹⁴ The book also makes these outrageous claims: “...the way of salvation is open to none otherwise than through Mary.” “At the command of Mary all obey—even God.”²⁹⁵

Liguori also said that the sinner who comes directly to Christ needs to be fearful of His wrath. But if he will pray to the Virgin, she will only have to “show” that Son “the breasts that gave him suck” and His wrath will be immediately appeased.²⁹⁶ But that reasoning conflicts with Scripture. Notice Luke 11:27–28: “Blessed is the womb that bare thee,” a woman said to Jesus, “and the paps that thou has sucked!” But Jesus answered, “Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.” Liguori might have missed that scripture. Besides, the Word of God is clear; Mary can’t do anything for anyone right now. She is resting in her grave.

Perhaps these ideas influenced other Catholics. The seers at LaSalette, France (1846) reported the Virgin telling them that the arm of her Son was “so heavy and pressing that she could no longer restrain it, that only her unceasing entreaties had thus far held back the chastisement, and that people would never be able to repay her for this.”²⁹⁷ Repay Mary? I’m sorry, but this sounds a lot like Mary taking the role of a mediator with her Son. The bigger problem is the lack of scripture to confirm this role.

Mary plays an oversized role in both the Catholic and Orthodox churches. Prayers to Mary play an important part in the regular worship ceremonies of both the Catholic and Orthodox churches. She is even called the “Queen of Heaven.” But we need to remember Mary is not in heaven and she is not a queen. So why use this phrase for her which is the name the pagans gave to their mother goddess?

What Liguori began and others helped build here is the concept of Mary being a Co-Redeemer along with Christ, and in my mind that is a heresy (1 Timothy 2:5). In 1894, Pope Leo XIII wrote that when Mary “offered herself to God as a servant for the office of Mother, and when she made a complete surrender of herself with the Son in the temple, she became associated already with Him in the painful expiation on behalf of the human race.”²⁹⁸

Ten years later, Pope Pius X noted that Mary “was associated with Christ in the work of human salvation.”²⁹⁹ In 1918, Benedict XV said: “Not without divine design, she was present, suffered and almost died with her Son who was suffering and dying, she abdicated her maternal rights over the Son for the salvation of men, as far as she could, immolated Him to satisfy the justice of God; therefore, it can be said with good reason that she redeemed, with Christ, the human race.”³⁰⁰

Pius the XI, as he brought the celebration of the redemption to a close in 1935, called on Mary in the same manner, remembering her at the foot of the cross “suffering as co-redeemer.”³⁰¹ The new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks of Mary as cooperating “in the Savior’s work of restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace.”³⁰² The problem with this Mary veneration is that Scripture is clear that Mary has nothing to do with restoring our lives (Acts 4:12); it is done in Christ and Him only!!

Further evidence of the prominent role Mary plays for Catholics can be found in the words used in some of their prayers to Mary. In the “Hail Mary” prayer the last line says this: “Holy Mary, Mother of God. Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.” In a popular Catholic prayer book, *Novena Prayers in Honor of Our Mother of Perpetual Help*, one prayer says: “We have no greater help, no greater hope than you, O most pure Virgin...for we hope in you....” Another prayer from this same book states: “Come to my aid, dearest Mother, for I recommend myself to thee. In thy hands I place my eternal salvation, and to thee I entrust my soul.... For if thou protect me, dear Mother, I fear nothing: nor from my sins, because thou wilt obtain for the pardon of them; nor from the devil, because thou art more powerful than all hell together; not even from Jesus, my Judge, because by one prayer from thee, He will be appeased.” The notion

that one prayer from Mary has the magic power to appease Jesus makes Mary into a wonder working woman and denigrates Jesus into a punitive Judge who needs to be softened by His compassionate mother.³⁰³ Such teachings are blasphemous, to say the least.³⁰⁴

Could the Catholic Church be moving toward proclaiming a fifth major Marian dogma after the Motherhood of God (431), the Perpetual Virginity of Mary (649), the Immaculate Conception (1854), and the Bodily Assumption to Heaven (1950)? The fifth dogma would be Mary’s universal mediation as Co-Redemptrix (Co-Redemptress), Mediatrix of all grace, and Advocate for the people of God.³⁰⁵ Some believed this dogma was near when Pope John Paul II was Pope. John Paul had said of Mary: “Mary, though conceived and born without the taint of sin, participated in a marvelous way in the sufferings of her divine Son, in order to be Co-Redemptrix of humanity.”³⁰⁶ To say that Mary is a Co-Redeemer with Christ is verging on blasphemy. Scripture is clear (Acts 4:12; John 8:36).

CONCLUSION

Some will argue, “Why does it matter. Today we don’t worship the false gods.” This is true, but Scripture teaches we need to worship in “spirit and truth” (John 4:23–24). The teaching that Mary and the saints are in heaven and can hear prayers is not truth. It takes away from biblical truth, which is what our faith stands or falls on. The teaching on Mary and the saints also takes emphasis away from God, even if that is not the desired outcome. This moves people close to idolatry even though that may not be the intention.

First Corinthians 10:19–22 says the pagan idols of the past were demons being worshipped. If Satan is an arch-deceiver, could he not use his guile to focus our attention onto Christian saints and Mary to take away from the worship of the true God? Remember Satan appears as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). He will use any means necessary to limit our relationship with the true God.

Something interesting occurred back in 1981 when the latest Marian apparitions began in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Spain. While “Mary” was appearing in Medudgorje and El Escorial, the Hindu and Ceylonese goddesses made similar showings in India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka).³⁰⁷ But also, in November 1981, six teenage girls and a boy in Rwanda reported seeing “the Mother of the Word,” warning of horrors to come and pleading for repentance before it was too late.³⁰⁸ The funny thing about Bosnia and Rwanda being visited at the same time in 1981 is that both of those places became war torn regions in the early 1990s at roughly the same time. Both of those regions experienced mass genocide the likes of

which had not been seen since World War II.

Is that just a coincidence or does the “god of this world” pull some strings behind the scenes of world events? We read earlier about the scripture in Daniel pertaining to the influence of the Prince of Persia over that nation. Could Satan have been trying to influence the mind of Catholic believers to believe in these apparitions, especially when the linkage could be made to drama that would occur in both of these countries in the future? After all, the Virgin did reveal secrets of things to come in both places. In Bosnia she predicted that war would come. In Kibeho (Rwanda) the seers reported early on that the Mother of the Word had asked that a chapel be built in the village and be called “the Gathering of the Displaced.”³⁰⁹ This prophecy or prediction was on target because by 1994 there were 2.2 million refugees in Rwanda due to the war and genocide. The village of Kibeho became an epicenter for many of these displaced.

But not all the Virgin’s predictions have been accurate. In Kibeho the apparition reported three things: the Virgin Mary had come to prepare the world for her Son; two, the world is coming to an end; three, the end of the world is not a punishment.³¹⁰ Now we could debate the first two pronouncements, even though it’s been forty years since the vision and Christ has not returned. But the third prophecy (prediction) can be evaluated. The Bible is very clear that the end of the world will be a punishment (Revelation 19:11–21) on the world. When you research these various visions, it seems like the messages from “the Virgin” are sometimes on target, but not always. We have seen there are some confirmed miracles, but not many. Some of these events have been frauds and hoaxes, but not all. In our estimation something “other worldly” does happen in some of these cases. But we must not lose sight of the fact “other worldly” can be coming from a good source or a bad source. Remember that Satan is the “father of lies” (John 8:44). And one other caution for our Catholic and Orthodox friends out there:

In Deuteronomy 13:1–5, God warns us about prophets who predict the future or show a sign or wonder. The warning is even if that prediction is correct and they offer information on following another god we should not follow them because the true God could be using it to test us. We have shown you how Mary is not capable of answering prayer or hearing prayer. Don’t forget what deception is. Deception is not obvious or apparent. It is hidden and sometimes difficult to ascertain. The only thing you can count on to determine if something is or is not of God is through God’s Word. God’s Word makes it very clear the Virgin Mary and saints cannot speak, talk, or communicate at this time. If Mary and the saints aren’t talking, who is? If you have read this

entire booklet you have seen the scriptures that address the enormity of Satan’s deception. There is no doubt Satan and his minions have the power and the motivation to lead Bible believers astray.

One of the more modern apparitions we have not spent any time with occurred in Scottsdale, Arizona in 1988. Here nine young adults at St. Maria Goretti began experiencing apparitions of Mary and Jesus. The primary and first seer was Gina Talone. Gina was a very talented child and later adult. You can find more about this story from many sources, but I do want to conclude with some comments from a reporter who spoke and researched these apparitions. He said the following: “The only thing about Gianna that seemed in the least peculiar was her claim that Satan had appeared to her one evening during the summer of 1981. She had been napping when she opened her eyes and saw the Devil himself standing at the foot of her bed. He had the lower body of a beast, but from the waist up appeared to be a man, an imposingly handsome one....”³¹¹

Finally, in the summer of 1988 in Meadville, Pennsylvania at a Greek Orthodox summer camp called Camp Nazareth, something strange happened. I mention this story because I know one of the priests and one of the camp counselors who were there. An icon began to weep one night and a sweet smelling aroma wafted up from the tears that were falling. The priest used cotton balls to swab the liquid from the icon onto other icons at the camp and other pictures of saints and Mary. The other icons and pictures then began to develop more droplets of the sweet smelling liquid. Now the priest and counselor I know would not lie about this. Up to 200 other campers and priests witnessed this. I know my friends in the Orthodox and Catholic Church are seeking God. I know they are good people. But I also don’t believe God created this wonder. I’ll let you make up your own mind about

how this happened, but I hope this booklet will help inform your decision.

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The television comedy Seinfeld is without question considered to be one of the most popular and influential television sitcoms of all time. An episode called “The Soup Nazi” consistently ranks as one of the top three episodes in the show’s illustrious history. The tag line, “No Soup for you,” instantly conjures up recollections of the show for millions of people to this very day.

Soup, in the context of the Bible, always reminds me of the story of Jacob and Esau in Genesis. As a child attending church Sunday school, the story of Esau giving away his inheritance for a bowl of soup (or, more properly interpreted, a stew of lentils) shocked me. It was bewildering to my immature (yet thinking) mind that someone could make such a “bad trade.” Esau made a trade that was worse than the Boston Red Sox giving up Babe Ruth to the Yankees for a few hundred thousand dollars and a musical; or the Indianapolis Colts giving up John Elway for Mark Hermann and some draft picks. Couldn’t Esau have skipped a meal or two to retain his magnificent inheritance? Was he *that* weak—*that* impatient?

Read the essence of the exchange in **Genesis 25:29–34** (ESV):

²⁹ Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. ³⁰ And Esau said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!” (Therefore his name was called Edom.) ³¹ Jacob said, “Sell me your birthright now.” ³² Esau said, “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?” ³³ Jacob said, “Swear to me now.” So, he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus, Esau despised his birthright.

What an event to contemplate! As with anything we read, there is always more to the story: the background events, the experiences each individual has had in their life that molded their personality and decision making, etc. For the purposes of our examination, let’s simply measure what was gained against what was lost from the vantage point of Esau. Yes, there are many more lessons here, including the shrewdness of Jacob; but we can examine those another time.

As Esau was the firstborn of the twins, he was entitled to the lion’s share of his father’s inheritance. The blessing initially promised to Esau would not only have given him a double share of his father’s inheritance, it would have also placed him in the position of the most esteemed and favored member of the family tribe. Above all these temporal things, the inheritance Esau surrendered to satisfy his short-term desires included all the spiritual promises given to Abraham and his seed. It is clear from the eventual outcome of the story that Esau did not place much thought or concern on his birthright promise, so much so that he let this incredible blessing pass from his control for an evening’s meal—yes, just one (albeit delicious) meal! How did such a thing come to pass? This is not just a fascinating story that happened several millennia ago. The lesson here is vitally important to all today, especially to those followers of Jesus the Messiah who are chosen by the Father in this lifetime.

As Peter’s first epistle states in its opening verses (**1 Peter 1:1–4**, NASB):

¹ To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout [the world and throughout time]...who are chosen ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood...³ [and] according to His great mercy has caused us to be born

No Soup for You!

by Jeff Flanick

again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ **to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you**....

I took the liberty of replacing the names of the ancient places Peter listed in verse one with “the world and throughout time,” as it is implied that the Father has, and still is, calling individuals during this lifetime to become first fruits and to receive an inheritance. What is the inheritance promised to those who overcome?

Paul exclaims, “*I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the*



glory of His inheritance in the saints” (**Ephesians 1:18**, NASB).

Over in **1 Corinthians 2:9** (ESV), Paul exclaims:

But, as it is written,
“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—

In **John 10:27–28**, Christ states, “**My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.**”

Do these inheritance promises sound appealing to you? They are available to you should you decide to pursue them. Much like Esau, however, many find the immediate demands of this life, as well as the cares of this world, to be the preeminent concern of their existence.

In addition, we have never lived in a time of such overwhelming expectant desire for instant gratification. The advent of email, the cellphone, and the internet have contributed to an exponential growth in society’s “need” for having their wants fulfilled without delay. People are heavily influenced by the saturation of media 24/7, depicting things such as instantly famous YouTube “celebrities,” “get rich quick” stock investments, overnight cryptocurrency windfalls, house flipping investment schemes, just to name a few. Proliferation of lotteries, gambling, hand-outs, credit cards, long-dated loans “with no money down” all contribute to the attitude of focusing on the here and now, as opposed to the long-term strategies of hard work, sacrifice, and planning that are necessary in building true lasting wealth and satisfaction. We live in an era of “Why wait? Live your ‘best life’ NOW!”

Returning to the lesson of Esau and its application for believers today, what is your “soup”? What short term “need” (or, more aptly put, DESIRE) are you willing to trade away your heavenly inheritance for? It is easy for mortal beings to get wrapped up in the physical, as well as emotional, needs and desires of

this existence. Life at times can be a struggle. There are periods in one’s life when it may seem overwhelming, monotonous, even boring. People can get trapped by things that make them feel good (at least temporarily) in order to cope with the aforementioned negative feelings. They develop habits, addictions, patterns of living that may be detrimental, not only in this life, but also regarding their eternal destiny as well.

Just as food is a matter of personal preference and taste, so are sins and vices. One person may love chicken soup, while another prefers tomato. Similarly, sins come in a variety of “tastes” as well. Gambling may be the vice for one, while drinking or drugs may be the Achilles’ heel for another. There are many more sins than can stand between believers and their inheritance, not just vices like sex, pornography, greed, and gluttony. Perhaps it is selfishness, lack of charity, refusing to follow the commandments of God, obeying the Sabbath, what have you. There are numerous traps and mine fields to avoid as we navigate through our lives.

Turning back to the wisdom of Peter, we read: “Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (**1 Peter 5:8**, NASB).

Christians must not only battle themselves, their wills, and their desires, they additionally are subjected to the artful deceptions of Satan in their endeavor to overcome this world. The “prince of the power of the air” is all too willing an accomplice to keep Christians distracted from the awesomeness of their promised inheritance using the things this world has to “offer.”

From the very beginning, back in Genesis, up unto this very day, Satan has been tempting, deceiving, and tricking mankind as he attempts to thwart the Creator’s plan to establish His Kingdom on Earth with His called-out ones.

Esau being short-sighted lost out on so much more than he gained! Patience and delayed gratification can provide great benefits. I am reminded of the patience, as well as the ordeal, that Jacob went through to finally marry Rachel, the woman of his dreams. Some things are simply worth waiting for; the reward is worth it! Seven years seemed like nothing in the eyes of Jacob, knowing that eventually he would be with Rachel. We should have a perspective like that of Jacob’s in our lives when it comes to our spiritual reward. We must continually focus on our long-term goals, not our short-term wants and desires, if we truly wish to obtain our inheritance.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 (Berean Study Bible) sums up our obligations in this lifetime best: “When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is this: Fear God and keep His commandments, because this is the whole duty of man.”

As Christ said in **Matthew 13:44** (NIV), “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”

Selling all one has means giving up the sins—the *soup*—in our lives so we can inherit the treasures laid up for us in heaven.

The promises of the future are worth so much more than any temporary comfort or pleasure.

Revelation 2:7 (Berean Study Bible) states, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **To the one who overcomes, I will grant the right to eat from the tree of life in the Paradise of God.**”

Revelation 21:7 (ESV) states, “The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.”

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FEAST OF TABERNACLES 2021

North American Feast Sites

This year the Feast of Tabernacles begins at sunset on September 20 and concludes at sunset on September 27, which begins the Eighth Day (or Last Great Day). You are encouraged to make your festival plans as soon as possible (for updates and more detailed information, visit www.cgi.org/fot).

Medina, Ohio

Location: 3398 Old Weymouth Road, Medina, OH 44256
Festival Coordinator: Tony Buchert
Phone: 740-507-0206
E-mail: medinafot@gmail.com

LODGING INFORMATION

Holiday Inn (15471 Royalton Rd [Rt 82], Strongsville, Ohio 44136)
Web: holidayinn.com/cle-strongsvil
Phone: 440-238-8800

Holiday Inn Express and Suites (5185 Gateway Dr., Medina, Ohio 44256)
Web: guestreservations.com/holiday-inn-express-suites
Phone: 330-722-6006

Comfort Suites, Brunswick (1464 Town Center Blvd., Brunswick, Ohio 44212)
Web: guestreservations.com/comfort-inn-brunswick
Phone: 330-558-9961

Additional Lodging Resources
<https://www.vrbo.com/>
<https://www.airbnb.com/>

Collingwood, Ontario

Festival Coordinators: Rick Dubler and Jim French
E-mail: Rick.Dubler@CgiCanada.org; Jim.French@CgiCanada.org

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Location: North Shore Oceanfront Hotel (201 75th Ave. N, Myrtle Beach, SC 29572)
Web: <https://northshoremyrrtlebeach.com/>
Phone: *Please note:* Reservations for the Feast of Tabernacles can be made through Central Reservations: **1-800-599-9872** (ask for **Church of God International room block**).
Festival Coordinator: Mike Nolen
Phone: 843-761-5211
E-mail: tmnolen@homesc.com

ROOM DESCRIPTIONS AND RATES:

Ocean Front Queens: These rooms are equipped with microwaves, small refrigerators, and coffee pots. The rate per night is \$89.00.

Ocean View Queens: These rooms offer the same amenities as the Ocean Front rooms with a lesser view of the ocean. The rate per night is \$79.00.

One Bedroom Villa Suite: These room are off the beach but have a full ocean view. Most are equipped with a galley kitchen (please be sure to specify), in addition to a living room and separate bedroom. The rate per night is \$119.00.

Two Bedroom Villa Suite: The Villas offer two bedrooms, living room, two and a half baths, and a full kitchen. They are a short walk from the beach and have an ocean view. The rate per night is \$159.00.

As noted above, you may make your reservations by calling Central Reservations at **1-800-599-9872** and ask for Church of God International room block.

Fishkill, New York

Location: Conference Center of Springhill Suites/Residence Inn (500 Westage Buisness Center Drive, Fishkill, New York 12524). The hotel is located on a large lake-centered campus. The campus houses many other hotels, retail outlets and restaurants.

Phone: 845-896-8100 (make reservations by phone 24/7 for “Church of God”)

Rate: \$139, studio, 1 king bed, sofa bed, trundle bed, microwave, mini-fridge (no kitchenette). (Deadline to make reservations at this hotel is 8/21/2021.)

ADDITIONAL LODGING:

Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham
14 Schuyler Blvd.

Fishkill, New York 12524

Phone: 845-896-5210 (make reservations by phone 24/7 for “Church of God,” Group Code: 2109church)
Rates: \$99, 1 queen bed suite, full kitchenette / \$119, 2 double bed suite

Hot Springs, Arkansas

Location: The Legendary Vapors (315 Park Avenue, Hot Springs, Arkansas)
Festival Coordinator: Skip Martin
E-mail: SMartin400@gmail.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/127437209343667

LODGING INFORMATION:

The Arlington Resort Hotel and Spa (239 Central Avenue Hot Springs, AR 71901)
Phone: 1-800-643-1502
E-mail: info@arlingtonhotel.com
Website: www.arlingtonhotel.com

The Staybridge Suites (103 Lookout Circle, Hot Springs, AR 71913)
Phone: 501-525-6500
Website: www.ihg.com/staybridge/hotels/us/en/reservation
E-mail: staybridge.suites@squarecap.com

Candlewood Suites (3404 Central Hot Springs (Hwy 7), Hot Springs, AR 71913)
Phone: 501-624-4000
Website: <https://www.ihg.com/candlewood/content/us/en/exp/suites>

We are working on housing discounts, but VRBO and AirBnB Rentals have many houses, cabins, and condos available in the area on a variety of budget and housing needs.

VRBO: www.vrbo.com/vacation-rentals/usa/arkansas/hot-springs

AirBnB: www.airbnb.com/s/Hot-Springs—Arkansas—United-States/homes?adults=1&place_id=ChIJR1AyiJMqzYcRDR4CRPm-qLo&checkin=2021-09-20&checkout=2021-09-28

Check the website (www.cgi.org/fot) or Facebook page (facebook.com/groups/127437209343667) for updates.

Galveston, Texas

Location: Galveston Island Convention Center (The San Luis Resort, Spa, & Conference Center, 5222 Sewall Blvd., Galveston, TX 77551)
Housing: Galveston offers a host of variety for housing from VRBO starting around \$100 a night for a three bedroom house, as well as various hotels.
Registration: E-mail Clifton Buchanan at cbuchanan126@gmail.com.

Panama City Beach, Florida
(sponsored by Common Faith Network)

Website: <https://commonfaithnetwork.org/feast-of-tabernacles/>

McCall, Idaho

(sponsored by the Celebration Church of God)
Website: <https://celebrationchurchofgod.org/feast-of-tabernacles>

St. Petersburg/Clearwater, FL

The Auburndale / St Petersburg Church of God International will be joined by the Church of God in Miami and the Church of the Sovereign God in Tampa in providing Feast of Tabernacles Services at the Pinellas Park City Auditorium, which is located in the heart of the Pinellas County/St Petersburg area.

The Auditorium is only about a mile from the Performing Arts Center, where we have held the Feast since 2009 and are scheduled to be back for 2022 after the reopening.

For updates, check <https://cgiauburndale.org/feast-of-tabernacles-update>.

Caine Wilkes finishes in ninth place at Olympics in Tokyo

On August 4, 2021, Caine Wilkes of Charlotte, North Carolina competed at the 2021 Olympics in Tokyo, Japan. Caine competed in the super-heavyweight (men weighing over 241 pounds) division

and came in ninth out of fourteen competitors.

Caine snatched 381 pounds and performed a clean and jerk of 478 pounds. Caine’s ninth-place finish was the first time he finished in the top ten in a

world championship level event.

Caine and his family have attended the CGI Feast site in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina many times over the past 18 years.

Congratulations Caine!!



Church of God Olympian—Caine Wilkes of Charlotte, NC, placed ninth in the super-heavyweight division of the Olympic weightlifting competition in Tokyo, Japan.

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