



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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"Put on the whole armor of God"

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"Be Ye Perfect!"

The doctrine of Christian perfection, or "entire sanctification," has been a prominent teaching within certain Christian denominations and movements over the centuries. But is it possible to achieve spiritual and moral perfection in this life? What did Jesus mean when He instructed His disciples to "Be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect"?

by Mike James



Is it possible for a Christian to be perfect in our flesh and blood bodies? Believe it or not, I have run into this idea a few times in my life. Once was in college when a street preacher was suggesting this in a

public area on campus. I heard it again from a Seventh-day Adventist who used to visit my church in Maryland. I also heard it from some folks in the Church of God.

Because of this I decided to write this article. At first glance, you may wonder why anyone would think they could be perfect in this life since Jesus Christ had to die to purge us of our sins. If we can become perfect on our own, why would we need Jesus?

We also find scriptures that seem to make it clear that if we are flesh and blood we will continue to sin. Examples of this are **Romans 3:23**, which tells us that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. I guess the argument could be made that once you receive God's Holy Spirit you can begin to move toward perfection. But what about Paul's statement in **Romans 7:15-20**, where he seems to be saying (long after his conversion) that he still has issues with sin. Are we to believe some Christians can become perfect when Paul could not achieve it?

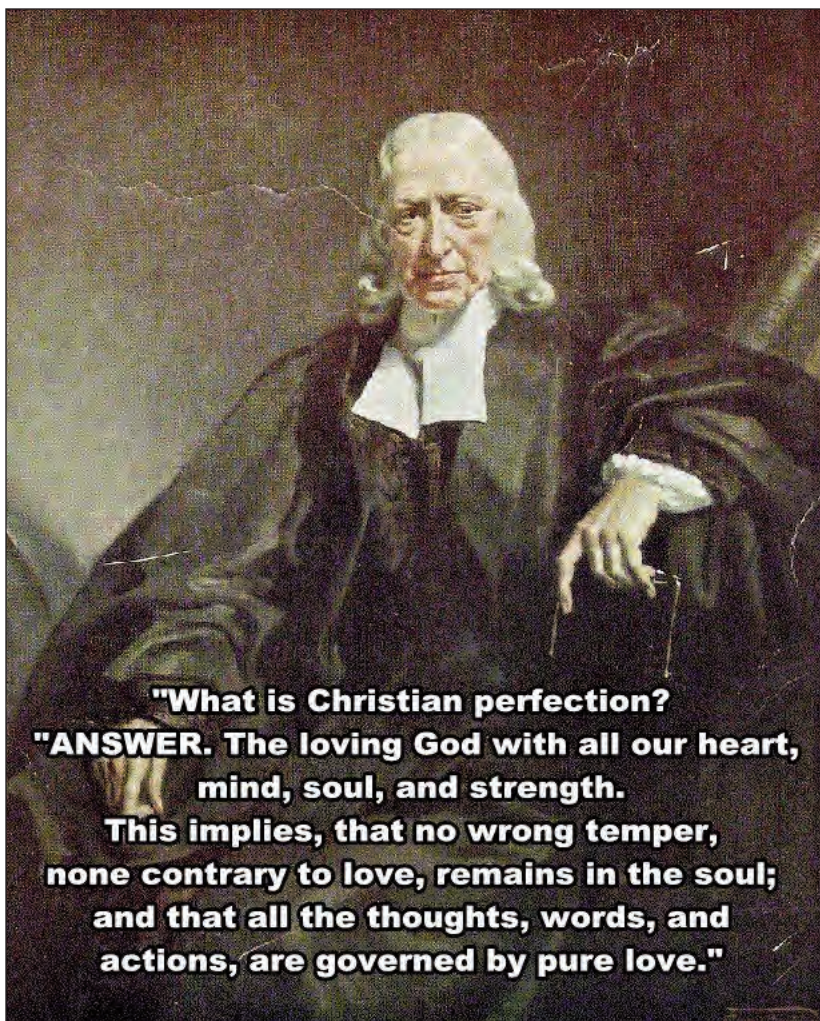
Before we deal with Scripture, I think it is important to look at the issue through Christian history. Some early church fathers and medieval theologians have discussed the possibility of reaching perfection. In reading an article on "Christian Perfectionism" in Wikipedia, I learned the following: People like Irenaeus, Origen, Macarius of Egypt, Clement of Alexandria, and Gregory of Nyssa speak about Christian perfection, but it is not clear if they believed it was achievable in this life.

John Wesley appears to also speak about Christian perfection in the 1700s, but looking closely at his writings we learn his definition of sin is a bit different than the biblical definition (1 John 3:4). Wesley thought of sin as something you had to voluntarily do. A wandering thought or momentary anger would not be considered voluntary by Wesley.

In the Methodist Church today there is a doctrine about the ability of reaching perfection in Christian love in this life.

A *Catechism for the use of the People called Methodists* teaches:

"Through the Holy Spirit God has given us His love so that we may love Him in return with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. This is a gift offered to all Christians, and by responding **we affirm that there is no limit to what the grace of God is able to do in a human**



John Wesley, founder of Methodism, on Christian perfection, or "entire sanctification"

life. By giving us the Holy Spirit, God assures us of His love for us and enables us to love as He, in Christ, loves us. **When God's love is perfected in us**, we so represent Christ to our neighbors that they see Him in us without hindrance from us. Perfect love, as Christian perfect is often called, is the result of, and can only be maintained by, complete depen-

Jesis said, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). But what did He mean by "perfect"? Was He suggesting that it is possible to achieve spiritual perfection in this life?

dence on Jesus Christ. It is given either gradually or at one moment."

The Confession of Faith, one of the Doctrinal Standards of The United Methodist Church, teaches that entire sanctification (making something holy) may come upon the believer gradually or instantaneously:

neously:

"We believe sanctification is the work of God's grace through the Word and the Spirit, by which those who have been born again are cleansed from sin in their thoughts, words and acts, and are enabled to live in accordance with God's will, and to strive for holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

"Entire sanctification is a state of perfect love, righteousness and true holiness which every regenerate believer may obtain by being delivered from the power of sin, by loving God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and by loving one's neighbor as one's self. Through faith in Jesus Christ this gracious gift may be received in this life both gradually and instantaneously and should be sought earnestly by every child of God.

"We believe this experience does not deliver us from the infirmities, ignorance and mistakes common to man, nor from the possibilities of further sin. The Christian must continue on guard against spiritual pride and seek to gain victory over every temptation to sin. He must respond wholly to the will of God so that sin will lose its power over him; and the world, the flesh and the devil are put under his feet. Thus he rules over these enemies with watchfulness through the power of the Holy Spirit."

In the nineteenth century, there were Methodists who sought to revitalize the doctrine of Christian perfection or holiness, which had, according to religion scholar Randall Balmer, "faded into the background" as mainline Methodists gained respectability and became solidly middle class. While it originated as a revival movement within the Methodist Episcopal Church, many followers of the holiness movement remained within mainline Methodism. The holiness movement grew to be interdenominational and led to a number of Wesleyan-holiness denominations, including the Free Methodist Church, Church of the Nazarene, the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana), The Salvation Army, and the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

Holiness Pentecostal denominations (also known as Wesleyan Pentecostals or Methodist Pentecostals) believe in entire sanctification. Inheriting Wesleyan-Arminian theology from the holiness movement within Methodism, Holiness Pentecostals are the original branch of Pentecostalism, and these denominations include the International Pentecostal Holiness Church, the Church of God (Cleveland) and the Church of God in Christ. For these Pentecostals, entire sanctification is the second work of grace in a series of three separate blessings that Christians experience. The

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first work of grace is conversion (the new birth) and the third work of grace is the baptism in the Holy Spirit (which is marked by speaking in tongues). According to church historian and theologian Ted A. Campbell, this three-part pattern is often explained by stating “the Holy Spirit cannot fill an unclean vessel,” so the cleansing of the heart that takes place in entire sanctification is necessary before a person can be filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit. The testimony of those who attended the Azusa Street Revival was “I am saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Ghost” in reference to the three works of grace of Holiness Pentecostals, the oldest form of Pentecostalism. Finished Work Pentecostal denominations, such as the Assemblies of God, reject the doctrine of entire sanctification.

George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, taught Christian perfection, also known as “perfectionism,” in which the Christian believer could be made free from sin. The early Quakers, taught that as a result of the new birth through the power of the Holy Spirit, man could be free from actual sinning if he continued to rely on the inward light and “focus on the cross of Christ as the center of faith.” George Fox emphasized “personal responsibility for faith and emancipation from sin” in his teaching on perfectionism. For the Christian, “perfectionism and freedom from sin were possible in this world.”

As we can see, there have been Christians who think perfectionism is achievable. But this is not a belief held by the Church of God movement. There are several scriptures we need to unpack to address this question. Let’s start with the one that was used first in a discussion I had with someone who thinks perfection might be possible. The scripture is **Matthew 5:48**. The scripture states, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” At first glance, it would seem the scripture is saying we should be perfect like God, but, as we have said many times, context is everything. What do the preceding verses say that can help us understand verse 48.

Well, the preceding verses tell us the meaning for verse 48 can be found beginning in verse 43. Here we read that the context of verses 43–48 is contrasting how mankind deals with their enemies and how God’s love would have us deal with them. Christ had love even for those who killed Him so we should try to emulate that perfect character of Christ. It’s important to note the verse does not even say we can achieve the perfection of the Father in this way, but we should be trying to.

One source I read on this scripture noted that there is no mention of a time element regarding when this perfection can be achieved. Because of this lack of mention of a time element, we can’t claim the verse is asserting the perfection can be attained in this life.

Matthew may be using the phrase about perfection here in a similar way to a scripture that was familiar to him (Deuteronomy 18:13). There are various translations of this scripture in Deuteronomy. Some say we must be blameless before our God while others say we shall be perfect. But the point is, these scriptures are not saying we can be perfect or blameless; they are asking us to try to attain to that goal. Another scripture Matthew would have been familiar with is **Leviticus 19:2**, where God tells Moses to tell Israel, “Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.” Of course, God wants us to be holy—we should try to be—but even here there is no evidence God was expecting humans to achieve that goal.

Think about it. Are you equating yourself with the Father? Thinking you can achieve perfection in this life is equating yourself with the Father. To me, this is blasphemy. Remember, the Father has always been here. We are created beings and can never equate ourselves with the Creator. We will become much greater than we are in the flesh, but that only

occurs when we are born again into the spiritual body that is our potential (**1 Corinthians 15**).

In the Gospels, there is repetition among the writers. One writer describes situations that another writer has written about. This is also true for the scripture we have been investigating, **Matthew 5:48**. **Luke 6**, many believe, corresponds to **Matthew 5**. We also find in **Luke 6:36** a verse very similar to **Matthew 5:48**, but Luke uses the word “merciful” instead of “perfect,” which is used in Matthew. The Greek word for “merciful” here can be translated compassionate or merciful. In both verses, the statement is preceded by a description of how we ought to love our fellow man. God is used as the example we should follow.

To me, by studying both scriptures in context, it becomes very clear God is not expecting or seeking perfection from us, but He wants us to try hard to be more in line with His character.

Are we saying that we could have done what Christ did as a man? Christ was special because He was also God and became man to live the perfect life for us. To equate our character as achieving Christ’s character in this life is to diminish Christ and His sacrifice for us.

Look at the contrast made in **1 Corinthians 15:47–49**. Flesh-and-blood mortals are in one category and Jesus Christ is in a different category. Only He could have achieved what He did as a human being. We cannot. We don’t get close to the nature of Christ (perfection) until we are born again.

Note what Paul says in **1 Corinthians 15:50**: “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” Now why would that be? One Bible commentator says because “flesh and blood” stands for perishable, corrupt, weak, sinful human beings. If we could achieve perfection, why would we need to be changed into spirit bodies?

Getting back to the word for perfection in **Matthew 5:48** (*teleiotes/teleiote*), it can mean perfection but is more generally used for *wholeness* or *maturity*. That same Greek word is used in **1 Corinthians 2:6** and is translated “maturity.” Again, it is used in **Philippians 3:15** and **James 1:4** for maturity in mind and patience.

Another argument that is made from Scripture for the possible attainment of perfection in this life relates to Abraham, Noah, and Job. In **Genesis 17:1**, Abraham is told to be perfect, and Noah is described as perfect in **Genesis 6:9**. **Job 1:1** tells us Job was perfect. The word for “perfect” in the first two scriptures is the Hebrew word *tamiym*. The word can mean perfect, but other terms it can be translated into include entire, integrity, truth, without blemish, complete, full, sincerely sound, without spot, undefiled, upright, and whole. In Job the word for perfect is *tam* which can mean perfect, morally upright, pious, undefiled, and complete. It appears to me God was using these men because of their integrity and uprightness in comparison to other men living in that time.

Obviously, we know Abraham and Noah were not perfect. In **Genesis 20**, after Abraham is told to be perfect, he lies to Abimalech and jeopardizes his relationship with his wife. After we read about Noah being perfect, he sins in **Genesis 9**. One commentator says the reference to perfection in both these cases relates to their obedience to God. They were trying to follow and obey God to the best of their human ability. Yet they could not achieve true perfection in this life.

In **Job 1:8**, God compares Job’s “perfection” or “uprightness” or “completeness” to other men. Job had it going on in comparison to other men, but we know in reading the book of Job, Job was not perfect in relation to God.

Another scripture to keep in mind in this discussion is **Luke 18:19**. Prior to this verse Jesus is called “good” by someone. His answer is that no one is

good but God. Here we see Jesus making a distinction between God the Father and all of humanity. In other words, this scripture implies to me that we cannot reach the level (perfection) of God in this life. In fact, since God has always been He will always be in a class by Himself and most especially when humans remain in their flesh and blood. **Mark 10:18** addresses this same scenario.

Further evidence about the fact we can’t be perfect in this life comes from **2 Corinthians 7:1**. Here we read that we are to perfect our holiness. In other words, the goal is to be like Christ and to continually keep striving for this goal. But this scripture makes it clear to me it is an ongoing effort. Other scriptures tell us the goal will be met when we are resurrected (**1 Corinthians 15**).

The goal is to live a holy life (**1 Thessalonians 4:7**; **Leviticus 19:2**). But nowhere in scripture are we told we can achieve that goal in the flesh.

One of the greatest Christians of all time was the apostle Paul. If anyone could get close to holiness or perfection in this life, we could argue, it would be someone like him. Yet look at what he says in **Romans 7:14–25**:

“For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want *to do*, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this

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death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin” (NASB).

Here Paul speaks about the inner struggle all Christian’s experience in trying to do good. He admits that he is still having that struggle between his inward carnal nature and the spiritual nature God is creating within him. The book of Romans was written around AD 57. This was likely ten years or less before his death. And Paul is still struggling with sin.

For those who believe they can achieve perfection in this life, please continue to set that lofty goal before you. It should help as you try to become more Christ-like. And we all should be reaching for that goal.

But I also want to get real with those who think they are near perfection. Do you own all your thoughts? Nothing untoward ever crosses your mind? Are you dissatisfied with the example of other Christians around you? Many people (not all) with perfectionist tendencies are often critical and judgmental of others around them. Remember, as Christians we also want to have the merciful nature of Christ as well as the holy nature of Christ. Satan can even use the goal of trying to be righteous as a snare for sinful ideas.

One other area of scriptural inquiry which relates to this subject can be found in **1 John 3:6**. Here we read the following in the KJV: “Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him.” This seems to be saying once we become a Christian we no longer sin. But the message is clearer when we look at another translation of this same verse. In the NIV we read this: “No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.”

That helps us make more sense of this scripture. Some (like the street preacher on my campus many years ago) have only looked at the KJV and erroneously thought that we don’t sin as Christians. That is not what the scripture is saying. It is telling us we are not actively engaged in sinning;

we are not *practicing* sin. Once we receive God’s Holy Spirit and repent, we begin living a different way of life more in tune with Christ’s example. We try and avoid sin and live like Christ, but we will come short of what Christ did as a human.

Also notice **1 John 3:5**. It shows the distinction between Christ and His brethren. Here we read that Christ takes away our sins because there was no sin in Him. This certainly implies that being sinless is something only Christ could do as a human.

Wesley used scriptures like **1 John 3:9** to teach perfection was possible. In the KJV this verse reads: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” But the NIV translation makes this scripture a bit clearer: “No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.” The point of this scripture is we don’t go on willfully sinning or intentionally seeking to be sinning once we are converted to Christianity. It is not saying that Christians are incapable of sinning.

Another scripture Wesley used for his idea about perfection was **Romans 6**. In this chapter you read about dying to your sin and not living any longer in sin. But a careful reading of the chapter makes it clear that being slaves to God will lead to holiness (Romans 6:19, 22), which will occur when we receive eternal life (Romans 6:23).

Notice a few chapters back in **1 John** we get a better understanding for what we read in **1 John 3**. In **1 John 1:8–10** we are told we (Christians) are still sinners. But by confessing those sins (when they occur) and repenting, those sins (like our past sins) are removed.

Ephesians 5:1 tells us to be followers (KJV) or imitators (NIV) of God. A follower or imitator is trying to be like the example. But we all know that you can never be **EXACTLY** like the person you are trying to follow or imitate. We can’t be sinless like Christ, but we must work harder at trying to be just like Him.

Maybe those who think perfection is possible are

concerned about their fellow Christians. Maybe they are looking around and seeing things in our congregations that are not examples of trying to live up to the ideals of Christ. For that I thank them for addressing the question. Even though I don’t believe we can achieve perfection in this life, I sure do believe we need to strive and fight to try and achieve it.

Finally, Paul may have put it best in **Philippians 3:12–21**: “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (NIV).

This scripture is clear that we continue to strive to be like Christ in life. We don’t achieve it until we are transformed in the resurrection from the dead.

Sources:

“Christian Perfectionism,” Wikipedia.

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Is “Faith” the “Gift” of Ephesians 2:8?

by Vance A. Stinson

Citing Ephesians 2:8–10, Reformed theologian R.C. Sproul states: “Considerable debate has ensued regarding the meaning of the first sentence. What is the antecedent for the word *that*: *grace*, *saved*, or *faith*? The rules of Greek syntax and grammar demand that the antecedent of *that* be the word *faith*.... Faith is a result of the Spirit’s sovereign work of regeneration. It is no accident that the statement concludes a passage that begins with Paul’s declaration that we have been ‘quickened’ or ‘made alive’ while we were in a state of spiritual death” (*What Is Reformed Theology?* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, pp. 156, 157).

But is this true? Is “faith” the “gift of God,” or is it the means through which the gift of God is granted?

People knowledgeable of Greek grammar don’t always agree with each other on precisely how the rules apply. That’s why there’s been “considerable debate” over the “meaning of the first sentence.” So rather than argue about syntax, let’s take a closer look at what the passage actually says and consider Paul’s own use of these terms.

Ephesians 2:8–10: “For by grace you have been

saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

The “that” which is “not of yourselves” is 1) “the gift of God” and is 2) “not of works.” (Note that the expression “not of yourselves” parallels “not of works.”) As we shall see, the phrase “and that not of yourselves” refers back to “you have been saved.” **Salvation**, not the faith by which it is received, is the “gift of God” Paul has in mind here.

Since Paul elsewhere insists on faith rather than works as the means of receiving the free gift of salvation, it would make little sense for him to say that faith itself is the free gift and is not a result of works. Faith, by definition, is not “of works.” Paul is here speaking of something that is received by faith *rather than* by works.

Paul elsewhere declares that salvation is through faith, not by works. He writes: “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith [Recall Ephesians 2:9: “not of works, lest anyone should boast”]. Therefore we conclude that a man is **justified** by faith apart

from the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:27–28). He asks the “foolish Galatians,” “Did you **receive the Spirit** by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (Galatians 3:1–2), and explains that “the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be **justified** by faith” (verse 24).

So what is the “gift of God” that is “not of works”? *Salvation!* By omitting the phrase, “and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,” we can easily see that Paul is saying what he has said so plainly elsewhere: “For by grace you have been saved through faith...not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

As Sproul points out, this statement comes at the conclusion of “a passage that begins with Paul’s declaration that we have been ‘quickened’ or ‘made alive’....” Indeed! Being “quickened” or “made alive”—*salvation!*—is the subject! And “that” salvation is the gift of God we receive by faith.

The faith through which we are saved is our own faith. Enabled by grace, it arises within us as a response to the gospel. It is through this faith that we, with empty hands, reach out to receive the free gift of salvation.

Questions & Answers

by Vance A. Stinson

Does the Bible affirm a flat earth?

QUESTION: The Bible proves earth is flat. We live under a dome. God sits on top and looks down on us. God stopped the sun and moon, not the earth. When will you address flat earth? Bible or science? I believe the Bible. I believe this is one of the great deceptions the devil has pulled over our eyes.

WB (sent by e-mail)

ANSWER: One of the problems here is that you're taking a modern, scientific understanding and reading it back into the biblical texts.

Let me explain.

The scriptures that speak of "the earth" are not referring to a planet named "Earth." The Hebrew term means "land," and it almost always refers to a *specific* land mass.

Also, we find people throughout every culture, including ours, using the same kinds of lived-experience descriptions for movements of the heavenly bodies and other natural phenomena, and the writers of the Bible are no different. We, as they, speak of the sun "rising" and "going down." It is absolutely *true* that the sun does rise and set—but only from our perspective (or lived experience). When we and biblical writers speak of the sun "rising" or "setting" or "moving across the sky," we (as they) are not asserting science; we're simply describing (from our point of view) an observable phenomenon.

It's not a question of "Bible or science?" The Bible does not contradict the discoveries of science. The biblical writers may have used some of the same terms and expressions used in pre-scientific cosmologies, but so do we. We speak of the "blue sky above" as if the sky were a dome, and we, just as the ancients, use all kinds of metaphors to describe the wonders of nature.

Make no mistake, we live on a spherical planet, one that makes an annual trip around the sun. And that fact in no way contradicts what the Bible says.

Did Paul expect to go to heaven upon death?

QUESTION: When I read Philippians 1:21–26, it seems Paul thought that when he died he would immediately be with Christ. Does it seem that way to you, or am I missing something?

W.C. (sent by e-mail)

ANSWER: Yes, it sure does. To "depart and be with Christ" would be "far better" for Paul than "liv[ing] on in the flesh," though his "remain[ing] in the flesh" would prove beneficial to the believers at Philippi. From this, we might ask a fair question: If Paul did not think he was going to "depart" this life and *consciously* (and instantaneously) "be with Christ," how could departing be "far better" than continuing to "live in the flesh"?

Indeed, this passage, standing alone, could be taken to mean that Paul believed he would be consciously in the presence of the Lord during the intermediate state (i.e., the state between death and resurrection). On the other hand, the passage doesn't actually say that Paul expected to consciously leave his dead remains and immediately go to be with Christ in heaven. A careful analysis of the text shows that this passage in no way contradicts or even presents a serious challenge to the view known as "conditional

immortality" (sometimes called "soul sleep"), which states that the dead are in an unconscious state and are completely unaware of the passage of time.

Paul himself elsewhere describes the "dead in Christ" as being asleep. Believers who have "fallen asleep," he says, will "rise...to meet the Lord in the air" at the Second Coming (1 Thessalonians 4:13–17). This suggests that Paul expected believers who "sleep in Jesus" to "meet the Lord," not at the moment of death, but at the Lord's coming. It would be odd to speak of meeting the Lord at His coming if Paul thought the dead in Christ were already consciously with Him in heaven.

Consider the following as an alternative to the traditional explanation of Philippians 1:21–26:

Paul knew that if he died (thus *departing* from his friends and the experiences of life "in the flesh") he would "be with Christ" *in his next conscious moment*—in the resurrection—no matter how much time passed between his death and his resurrection (which will occur at the Second Coming). From his point of view, all the hardships of living "in the flesh" would cease at death, and in the next moment of his conscious existence, he would no longer be "in the flesh" (i.e., mortal, subject to suffering and death), but would be "with Christ."

In other words, Paul connects his death with his resurrection because he knows that those who "sleep in Christ" are completely unaware of the passage of time between death and resurrection. The reason dying would be "far better" for him is because the suffering he's had to endure will end at that point. He refers to "the things which happened to me" and to "my chains" in this same epistle (1:12–14).

Another possibility is that Paul expected to be "with Christ," not consciously, but in the same way those who "sleep in Jesus" are with Christ—they are "with Christ" in the sense that their identities are preserved in the mind of God and their names are in the book of life. Understood this way, Philippians 1:23–25 could be paraphrased as follows: "For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart this life's troubles by falling asleep in Jesus. That would be better for me. Nevertheless, remaining alive is better for you, as I will be able to continue helping your progress and joy of faith."

It's not too late!

QUESTION: Is it too late for me to be saved? Have I gone too far?

K.R. (sent by e-mail)

ANSWER: No, it is not too late for you to be saved; you have not gone too far. How do I know this? The simple fact that you are concerned enough about your salvation that you sent these questions tells me so. Only the incorrigibly wicked will be ultimately lost. They are incorrigible (unchangeable), not because of God's choice, but because of their own choice. They have, in effect, "locked the door from the inside" (to borrow an expression from C.S. Lewis). God has not locked them in; they have locked Him out. If they would unlock the door and let Him in, He would come in and restore the relationship.

You obviously want the door to be unlocked so God can come in. You have not gone so far as to want Him permanently shut out of your life. So let Him in. Trust Him to clean you up and make right your relationship with Him.

Please request your free copies of our booklet, *The Assurance of Salvation*, and our reprint article, "What Is the Unpardonable Sin?" I believe you will find them helpful.

Passover Question #1

QUESTION: "Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed" (Luke 22:7). "And the first day of unleavened bread, when

they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?" (Mark 14:12). "And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.... And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?" (Luke 22:8, 11).

Point: please, were the disciples asking Jesus how they might go and prepare for the morrow or for the present day in which they asked this question? In other words, please, in the disciples' minds, were they preparing for eating the Passover with Christ the following day (since the Jews eat it the evening beginning of fifteenth day), or, in their minds, were they preparing to eat it the evening beginning of the fourteenth?

I'm wondering if the disciples really come to Jesus asking to prepare the Passover on the *thirteenth* to be eaten in the evening beginning the fourteenth, or why would they be asking to prepare on the thirteenth a Passover that would only be eaten a day later in the evening beginning fifteenth? Why not wait and prepare it on the fourteenth as do all other Jews. Had Jesus instructed them earlier He was going to eat the Passover on the evening beginning the fourteenth, rather than the evening beginning the fifteenth?

E.F. (sent by e-mail)

ANSWER: It's important to understand that, by the time of Jesus, the entire Feast of Unleavened Bread (apparently including the fourteenth day itself, which was the day on which the Jews killed the Passover lambs) was called "Passover." In the OT, the fifteenth is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6), but in the texts you cited, the "first day of unleavened bread" (or "first of the unleavened") is the fourteenth. Apparently the fourteenth was considered a part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (or the Passover festival) because that was the day the Passover lambs were offered at the temple and when the "de-leavening" process was completed.

In the night of the fourteenth, Jesus and His disciples had a Passover meal. It was a "Passover" meal because of its association with the Passover festival, but it was not the **statutory Passover** referred to in Leviticus 23:5. The disciples came to Jesus at the very beginning of the fourteenth (as the thirteenth was ending) and asked Him about plans for the Passover. Given the fact that sacrificing and roasting a lamb required several hours, it seems very odd that the disciples would only now present this question to Jesus. We may logically posit that this particular "Passover" meal was *not* the one that followed the sacrificial rite known as "the LORD's Passover."

According to Mark's account, after the two disciples "prepared the Passover" (14:16), Jesus and the others arrived and joined them. Notice *when* they arrived: "And when it was evening, he [Jesus] came with the twelve" (verse 18). This suggests it must have been very late in the thirteenth when the two disciples went to prepare for the Passover; and then Jesus and the others came shortly after sunset. There simply could not have been sufficient time to sacrifice and prepare a lamb. And it's out of the question that they sacrificed the lamb in the thirteenth, just before the fourteenth began, for there is no biblical permission given for a Nisan 13 Passover sacrifice. Therefore, as stated earlier, it appears that this "Passover" meal was not the meal in which the Jews ate the sacrificial lambs but was the first meal of the festival season that had come to be known as "Passover."

But yes, I do believe it is obvious that the disciples thought they would be keeping the statutory Passover the next night, and that they would be observing the entire festival with Jesus. Even at this

point, they were still thinking that Jesus would soon restore the kingdom to Israel; they certainly did not anticipate the events that would begin taking place that very night.

Passover Question #2

QUESTION: Leviticus 23:6 states that the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the evening of the fifteenth day, while Exodus 12:18 says evening of the fourteenth day. How can I reconcile these please? Also, Exodus 12 says the Passover is on the evening of the fourteenth day (verse 6). And that the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the evening of the fourteenth day (verse 18). So, please, is the Passover then the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or...?

E.F. (sent by e-mail)

ANSWER: Leviticus 23:6 says the Feast of Unleavened Bread is “on the fifteenth day of the [first] month.” The fifteenth begins at the end of the fourteenth. That’s why Exodus 12:18 says the Feast is to be kept from the “evening” (Heb. *erev*), or *end* of the fourteenth (which begins the fifteenth) until the “evening” (end) of the twenty-first. (Similarly, the Day of Atonement, which occurs on “the tenth day of this seventh month,” begins “on the ninth day of the month at evening [*erev*]” and is observed “from evening [*erev*] to evening [*erev*]”—that is, from the end of the ninth to the end of the tenth. See Leviticus 23:26, 32.)

Exodus 12 says the Passover is on the fourteenth day *ben ha-arbyim* (between the evenings, or *erevs*), an expression referring to the latter part of the day. The Passover lambs, then, were to be sacrificed and offered at the tabernacle (temple) during the after-

noon of the fourteenth. They were then roasted, and that night (beginning of the fifteenth) they were eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. The **Passover sacrifice**, then, took place in the “evening” (*ben ha-arbyim*) of the fourteenth, and the **Passover meal** took place in the night of the fifteenth, or beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Confusion sometimes occurs when it is noted that our “Passover” is in the beginning (shortly after sunset) of the fourteenth. That’s because we apply the word “Passover” to what we’re doing, though technically it’s not the Passover. It’s the memorial of Christ’s death, and we do it in the night He instituted it. We call it “Passover,” or “New Testament Passover,” because we do it in recognition of “Christ our Passover,” who “was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Christian Pragmatism

by Michelle Algarra



The usual problem ordinary citizens have to face is making ends meet and coping with the high cost of living. Actually, there are solutions to overcoming various forms of worries and stresses, and there are ways of meeting various needs.

Christians have to provide for their needs in the following areas: spiritual, psychological, intellec-

tual, material, employment, and miscellaneous requirements. For individuals who have experienced some financial traumas or huge financial debacles or losses, there are practical alternatives one can implement. Some of the following give some suggestions or tips that may be valuable to promoting a pragmatic way of dealing with the high cost of living.

1. Health Requirements

Expensive medical treatment can literally eat up a person’s entire savings, and can transform even millionaires into paupers virtually overnight.

People with money are used to availing themselves of treatments from prestigious private hospitals, private physicians, and taking brand-name medicines. Costs can be exorbitant if regular hospital visits, especially for inpatients, become habitual for every perceived health problem.

For people undergoing financial problems or lacking in means, there are many public or government hospitals and government doctors that provide free treatment with no consultation and other fees. There are hospitals that give away free medicines with some prerequisites or requirements such as prescriptions and medical certificate(s). There are PWD (Persons With Disability) identification cards similar to senior citizen IDs that provide up to 20 percent discounts on major purchases for medicines and many other commodities.

One can even look at the fringe benefits one can derive from health trials, such as getting acquainted with a lot of good physicians, nurses, and other medical personnel who can give valuable guidance and information regarding various health issues and concerns and also provide much needed advice as well as rest and relaxation periods through temporary hospital confinement, providing ways for physical pain to be manageable through experience of the efficacy of various drugs promoted, etc.

If the patient is concerned about his or her welfare, he or she must have the initiative to do personal reading of various medical literature (such as drug literature) and books written by doctors to be more informed regarding the effectiveness of drugs taken, and also generic, herbal, and holistic alternatives.

2. Food Consumption

Eating at expensive restaurants on a regular basis can also drain the budget. One can enjoy the ambiance accorded by hotels and various food establishments even without having to purchase expensive food. This is a little facetious, but you can bring your own coffee at places where expensive coffee such as lattes, etc. are consumed with expensive pastries. And you can avail yourself of free mineral water, access to clean toilets, and free newspapers from these establishments. However, when one has money, one should also make sure there are purchases made from these restaurants even occasionally as gratification for the service the waiters, service crew, janitors, security guards, etc. provide and so the owners may also earn money.

If possible, it would be much better to cook one’s own meals (purchase food from the market and grocery with the health alternative in mind).

3. Intellectual Food

New books are expensive. Voracious readers find reading a necessity and books are consumed like food. Instead of buying new books, one can purchase second-hand books at secondhand bookstores and shops. The prices are marked down considerably. And there are many libraries where one can borrow books, and if one possesses basic knowledge of the computer, one can just read using the smartphone, the computer itself, research through internet and read for free without having to purchase expensive new hardbound copies. Authors sometimes do not allow their books to be placed on the internet, though, and would require people to purchase them through internet retailers. It is not wise to hoard hard copies of books, for they occupy too much space and deteriorate after a while, so it would be wise to just give them away after reading pleasure as a means to share with others. Books can be given away to friends, donated to libraries, schools, or churches for the reading habits of others.

4. Apparel

A lot of people are fond of clothes and purchase them regularly. Fashion conscious buffs purchase expensive designer clothes that become out of style after only a brief period of time such as after only some months. Clothes at large boutiques and department stores are expensive.

One can have an abundance of beautiful inexpensive clothes because of the proliferation of thrift shops, small stalls, and even designer clothes on sale at boutiques. One can buy a lot of clothes with only a small amount of money. Afterwards, one can share by giving them away to needy folk, friends, etc.

It would be wise to purchase clothes that are durable in classic designs and are comfortable rather than simply trendy, so they may last a long time and can still be given away to others.

5. Shelter

One of the ministers said it is not necessary to live in a fancy house in order to be happy. The main blessing of a large house is the space for furniture, appliances, gadgets, and other possessions accumulated. Also, space to move around and to have many guests for various social activities. But one can really be comfortable living in sparse living areas. Practically speaking, when one is asleep one is not aware of whether or not one is sleeping in an expensive hotel room or even just a small room or apartment, or even just a tent or even in the streets. As long as one has enough of one’s basic needs, inclusive of shelter, and some luxuries that are provided for free by government agencies, church groups, and other giving oriented individuals, one can be content.

6. Entertainment

Watching movies at cinemas has become an expensive pastime. It is not even necessary to have one’s own television set. One can watch TV (the news, church programs, etc.) in places with public television, including listening to the radio. And because of the YouTube and smartphones and the computer, it is no longer necessary to go to theatres or cinema or even purchase television sets. One can watch all programs anywhere.

Computer shops have mushroomed, and even the lower middle class can easily take advantage of them. But it would be much better to have a smartphone or laptop/microcomputer. These are major requirements for various freelance online jobs.

7. Travel

Walking is the least expensive way to travel and is a good form of cardiovascular exercise. Vehicles are only for people who can afford them along with expensive upkeep and really require them for travel. Commuting is a cheaper alternative to purchasing a vehicle that may be damaged through accident or use.

8. Exercise

Various forms of physical activities are valid exercise. It is not necessary to go to expensive gyms or purchase expensive exercise machines. Chores at home, walking, and different sports activities are exercise the body needs.

A sedentary lifestyle may lead to obesity and other health problems.

9. Spiritual Needs

Always pray, read the Bible, listen to watch church sermons and programs, and read the literature of the church and even other types of Christian literature. They promote good mental and spiritual health.

“I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 1).

Holdouts of God

by George Roper



The influence of dominant entities and corporations can yield great sway upon those of lesser means. These sources often have great wealth at their command to facilitate getting their way and to make their goals a reality. Whether through unscrupulous or legal means, any obstructions to their plans

that present themselves are easily overcome. Individuals that resist the wiles of these prominent forces are often few in number. In real estate ventures, those who resist the aggressive overtures of multi-million-dollar developers and refuse to acquiesce are known as holdouts.

Holdouts do not concede to the aims those greater institutions would wish to impress upon them. An example of this can be seen in the account of Edith Macefield. Macefield was an 86-year-old woman who resided in Seattle, Washington. A commercial developer had taken interest in the surrounding community and was moving forward with building a shopping mall. The site of the mall would be located on the block that Macefield resided. Ms. Macefield lived in the center of the city block of interest. When she was first approached by the developer, the majority of the occupants on the site of the proposed mall had already been bought out. Ms. Macefield was initially offered \$750,000 for her home, which she declined. A follow up offer was made for 1 million dollars, with all expenses paid in relocating and provisions for compensated health care for the remainder of her life.

Once again, Ms. Macefield declined a very generous offer. She expressed that she did not have an interest in the money but held a stronger connection

to her home. Macefield purchased the home from her mother in 1952. Her mother passed away in 1976. She had no remaining relatives. Macefield recognized that her mother had the right of dying at home and she wished to be afforded the same. She therefore would not sell.

When the developer saw that Macefield would not sell, the mall was built around her home. The aesthetics of a large retail structure engulfing a small two bedroom home resonated with many. Ms. Macefield garnered much attention and was greatly admired for her stand. She was seen as a champion that resisted the power of a conglomerate. She passed away in 2008. Although her home has changed owners several times, it still stands intact in the shadow of the shopping center called the Ballard Blocks Mall.

Another example of a holdout—this one from the pages of the Bible—is the narrative of Naboth. Naboth owned a vineyard that was adjacent to the property of Ahab, the King of Samaria. King Ahab sought to buy out Naboth for his vineyard and place an extension onto the royal property. As was the case with Ms. Macefield, a generous offer was made for the land. However, Naboth declined the offer. He refused to sell and became a holdout himself.

“And it came to pass after these things *that* Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which *was* in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, ‘Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it *is* near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. *Or*, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money.’

“But Naboth said to Ahab, ‘The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!’” (1 Kings 21:13, NKJV).

Naboth, as a holdout, refused to sell and concede to the interests of a corporation or, in the case of

Ahab, the standing government.

As Christians, we live in a society where we too are holdouts. We prove to be holdouts by adhering to a moral standard dictated by God that is eschewed by the mainstream. We are holdouts by acknowledging and fulfilling the religious practices that are dictated by God but are ignored by popular Christianity. We are holdouts in resisting the pull to assimilate with the libertine culture of our day.

Paul admonished his audience to be holdouts and preserve the pursuit of developing God’s character.

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2, NKJV).

Christ as well acknowledged the importance of taking on the position of a holdout.

“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 24:12–13, NKJV).

We as Christians are to endure, or hold out, in an environment that is ripe with immorality. We are engulfed in a world that places enormous pressure to “sell” our inheritance and abandon our connection to God (Revelation 3:11). As with Ms. Macefield, we are to continue to hold out and resist giving in to the incentives placed before us to deviate from God’s way of life. As with Naboth, we too are to reject invitations contrary to what we are committed to, no matter how prestigious the inviter may be.

Paul further gives support for the Christian to hold out from succumbing to the pressure of the societal pulls of the world.

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13, NIV).

THE REMEDIATION

by W. Adam Boyd



Life is speckled with trials, tribulations, illness, and calamity, and many people go through their lives and ponder if hardships they are going through are “tests from God.” Many of these situations are likely a result of autonomous living and of consequence of our own decisions. For example, what

we eat, our lifestyle, and physical activity contributes greatly to our overall health. Let’s consider a few examples. If you smoke cigarettes and get COPD or lung cancer, is it God that is testing you, or did you afflict yourself? If your diet consists of McDonald’s and Taco Bell, then is God testing you by afflicting you with high cholesterol, hypertension, or obesity, or do you have the power to control these things? If you lie to a good friend of many years and they uncover your lie and end the friendship, is it just a test, or was this because you chose to lie? We can begin to understand that many hardships we go through are brought on by ourselves! Why is

it then that some blame God for their trials and think that he *constantly* tests us? Do we test ourselves?

Testing vs. Temptation

We certainly know God can test us as evidenced by the story of Abraham (Genesis 22:12): “And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.” You see, God wanted to see how Abraham would *act* according to the directions he was given. He passed the test, so God stopped him from proceeding. That was clearly a test.

We also know that God will not tempt us with sin. James 1:13–15 says, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Here we can see that we are tempted of our own desires, which can lead to a choice—a choice to sin or to follow God and His law. This brings me back to our beginning examples. We have choices, and we take an action based on

those choices that can lead to a certain consequence, sometimes a desirable consequence, and other times not so much.

There is some good news, however! The Bible tells us that if we are tempted in our fleshly desires, God provides us with tools to overcome them! First Corinthians 10:13 says, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” This escape could be in many forms, such as the Holy Spirit residing in us guiding us away, timing, brethren counsel, etc. The important piece is that we have the choice *and* the power to resist! Unfortunately, our carnal nature often causes us to leave the toolbox at home sometimes or choose the wrong tool when another is needed.

Now that we have reviewed and understand there is a difference between testing and temptation, let’s explore how we can improve our escape!

Remediation

Remediation is the act or process of remedying something that is undesirable or deficient. Many of

us are probably familiar with this term from college or possibly high school. If you do not satisfactorily pass a test or graded activity, your teacher may choose to perform a remediation with you. That is, they will help you identify a weakness, a deficiency, or a misunderstanding and then allow you to retest. This can be a great tool to really solidify one's understanding of a particular concept. For example, if you are taking an American history course and fail a test on the Constitution, perhaps your teacher may ask you to complete a remediation assignment in which you write the Constitution out on paper ten times, then retake the examination later. Surely, there are other examples of what could be done, but this would likely enable you to memorize and understand much of what's within that document and hopefully lead to a better performance on the retest. You would also probably retain that information much longer having become more intimately familiar with it and may understand it better than others in some cases. Maybe then you could help others who struggle to understand it as well.

Now let's take our example of the history test and translate that into our Christian walk by supplanting some wording:

If you do not satisfactorily **resist sin or temptation**, **God could choose** to perform a remediation

with you (**or you could remediate yourself**). That is, **He** will help you identify a weakness, a deficiency, or a misunderstanding and then allow you to **overcome that sin**. For example, **if you are wrestling with a particular sin that has plagued you for a while**, perhaps **God may allow certain situations to occur in your life, set aside a Sabbath day for you to come together with brethren and study His Word (He did that!)**, **create Holy Days that are symbolic of principles and have meaning and value (He did that too!)**, and then **no doubt you will be faced with that sin in the future and have the choice to overcome or surrender to it**. Surely, **using these tools will help you overcome sin**. You may understand it better than others in some cases. Maybe then you could help others who struggle to understand it as well **and help them to overcome**.

Can you get the gist, here? We have constant remediation available to us every week! We can go to Sabbath services, reach out to brethren and ministers for help, study the Bible, review and discuss Scripture with others, etc. Our Bible teaches us that there is great value in what we gain from our trials as shown in 1 Peter 1:6-7: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of

your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Why do you think that is? One way to look at it, is that it's training. Aren't we all training right now to be a part of God's Kingdom? During training, we should be building character, building stronger relationships with God, and increasing our faith. Essentially, we become stronger!

Whether or not God tests us, or we test ourselves, the important takeaway is what we learn from these trials we go through and how we apply those lessons in our lives moving forward. Try not to ask, "Why am I being tested?" or "Why am I going through this?" Sometimes the simplest answer is that "it's just a part of life" or "it's because I chose to ____." Instead, ask yourself what you can learn from it and how it is going to make you a better Christian. It's no doubt a constant job to study, work to make ourselves better, be accountable, pray, repent, and keep up the good work. These trials and tests shape and strengthen our character. We **can** overcome and pass the test, we just have to study, remediate, and realize that we have the power to do so because "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

Let's Go Brandon!

by Jeff Flanick



Now that I have your attention, you may be thinking the title of this article is quite provocative to be included in a church newspaper. Politics aside, the origin of this year's most well-known phrase came into existence accidentally as a consequence of a newswoman succumbing to one of the following concepts: **"fake news"** or **"cognitive bias."** The phrase "Let's Go Brandon" was coined when a reporter for NBC Sports either purposely attempted to provide "fake news" by intentionally "mishearing" the derogatory chant directed at the current president or by inadvertently "mishearing" the Nascar race crowd's crude chant as a by-product of her expectations (her "cognitive bias.") The reporter was interviewing a man named Brandon who had just won the race. Therefore, in her mind, it was reasonable to assume the fans were enthusiastically cheering for Brandon (the winner of the race just completed). The intention of this article is to show how the concepts of "fake news" and "cognitive bias" affect our views; and more importantly, how these concepts impact our *correct* understanding of God's Truth as presented to us in Scripture. It is imperative that we understand biblical Truth in order to faithfully apply it in our daily lives.

"Fake news" is not merely a recent phenomenon coming into public focus as a result of grievances held by former President Trump. Throughout history "fake news" has been manifested by many people, groups, nations, and empires. During the Soviet Union's collapse, the official news entity, Pravda, was notorious for its "less than truthful" coverage of life behind the Iron Curtain.

The list of "fake news" related to the Bible (or more accurately put, *attributed* to the Bible) is substantial. Perhaps the most significant "fake news" story of all time can be found at the very beginning

of mankind's history as recorded in Genesis. We are all familiar with Satan's big lie contained in chapter three:

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, "You shall not eat of any tree in the garden"?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die."' But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die' (Genesis 3:1-4, ESV).

"Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died." (Genesis 5:5, ESV).

The biblical account confirms Eve did indeed make a "life and death" decision based on "fake news." Adam's (as well as Eve's) inability to correctly discern the Truth of God, as opposed to the false narrative being conveyed to them by the serpent, cost them dearly.

"Cognitive bias" can be created through a variety of factors working individually, or collectively. Elements that can lead to the creation of "cognitive bias" are: anchoring bias, confirmation bias, consensus effect, misinformation effect, emotions, and social pressures, among others. Anchoring bias is a tendency to strongly hold onto first impressions as well as premature conclusions pertaining to a subject. Confirmation bias describes a propensity to favor evidence that aligns with your view, rather than investigate evidence that contradicts your pre-established viewpoint. Consensus effect—or echo chamber—relates to tendencies of predominately engaging with like-minded individuals and/or sources. In these closed-loop environments, the reinforcement of views already conceived are fortified; while alternatively, opposing viewpoints are squelched. The misinformation effect describes a situation whereby an individual relies comprehensively on the thoughts and evidence presented by others, even when these opinions are contradictory to their own experience or investigation. The detrimental

impact of emotions in reaching rational conclusions is well known. And finally, the impact of social pressures, and the desire to conform to the world around us, has certainly been experienced by the reader.

The dynamic combination of "fake news" and "cognitive bias" may lead a seeker of biblical Truth into falsehood and error. Working in tandem, these two elements of deception create a potentially lethal enemy. The biblical adage, "a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12, ESV), certainly comes to mind.

One of the weightier deceptions held among various Sunday-keeping churches, or what some biblical-based groups refer to as traditional "Churchianity," is the (false) belief that the Old Testament has been "repealed," so to speak. This significant deception is generated, as well as propagated, utilizing "fake news" and "cognitive bias" mechanisms. Decades of continued disregard for the Old Testament as a way of life for believers creates a reinforcing dynamo of Truth suppression. Many prominent denominations treat the Old Testament as a quasi-supplemental background story for the New Testament, as opposed to it being an essential part of the entire Word of God. The complete Word of God being the instruction manual for righteousness. Righteousness being defined in *Thayer's Dictionary* as: "correctness of thinking, feeling, and acting," or alternatively, right living. "Fake news" discounts the validity and relevance of the Old Testament on people's lives today. All aspects of "cognitive bias"—anchoring bias, confirmation bias, consensus effect, misinformation effect, emotions, social pressures—contribute to this nearly universally entrenched "Churchianity" dogma. It can be quite difficult to unpack Scripture fact in the face of the deep-seated "group think" encountered at nearly every turn.

Question: What does Christ, the Messiah, tell us regarding the Old Testament's place in the life of a believer today (in breath-taking clarity)?

Answer: "For I tell you truly, until heaven and earth pass away, not a single jot, not a stroke of a

See FAKE NEWS, page 14

In Loving Memory

Faye Brown 1944 – 2021



Faye Lynne Watson Brown was born December 1, 1944, and passed away on October 10, 2021. She was preceded in death by her parents, Hamilton C. Watson and Evelyn Rose (Rieck) Watson, and sister, Susie Watson.

Faye was married to Beuran (Buddy) Brown for 41 years. She was the mother of three sons, Stephen McLaughlin, Rodger Brown, and Johnny Brown. She never had daughters, but her daughters-in-law, Melanie Brown and Lana McLaughlin, filled that void. Faye was proud of her eight grandchildren and seventeen great-grandchildren. She loved those grands so very much and always enjoyed showing her friends their adorable pictures.

Faye will be missed by her family, friends, and all of those she touched through the years. We will miss you, Faye.

Sharon Richardson 1941 – 2021



Sharon and husband Lloyd Richardson, Sr.

Sharon Patricia Fuller Richardson fell asleep in Christ on Thursday, September 2, 2021.

Born on January 10, 1941, Sharon was a native of Memphis, TN. She is survived by two daughters, Kelly Walker Legett of Barlett, TN, and Kippi Lynn Walker of Olive Branch, MS; a sister, Vicki Llewellyn Bryant of Nashville, TN; three grandchildren, Alexander Legett, Dane Walker, and Chloe Walker; as well as three great-grandchildren, Lexi (11), Laya (7), and Nathan (3) Legett.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Lloyd Richardson, Sr.; son, William Davis Walker Richardson; brother, John Thomas Fuller, Jr. III; and parents, Eloise and John Thomas Fuller, Jr.

In her early years Sharon was a talented physician's office assistant, often being requested to conduct special blood draws on infants due to her light expert touch and loving manner. She became a wonderful homemaker and parent, very involved in her children's schools and activities. She was the very best mom, loving unconditionally. Sharon was known far and wide for her story-telling of events in her life that were incredibly funny; many clamored for her to write a book! She was an avid reader and also loved crossword puzzles. Her favorite game show which she never missed was Jeopardy.

Sharon was married to the love of her life, Lloyd Richardson, Sr., who was a pilot. They loved traveling in their motorhome, riding motorcycles, living on their houseboat for years, and raising their son Billy. Sharon loved to dance, especially to her '50s favorites. She was a very active member of the

Church of God International (Memphis congregation), serving as treasurer/secretary and known as the "church lady" by the children—and she always cooked awesome dishes for their potluck meals. She was unfailingly loyal, compassionate, and generous, and will be greatly missed by many.

Betty Register Slocum 1931 – 2021



Betty Mae West was born January 8, 1931 in Ironton, Missouri to Harrison and Ella (Brooks) West.

She was born during the depression on a cold and snowy day. Her father had to ride his horse to get to the doctor, and on his way he stopped at a neighbor's and asked her to go stay with Ella. Before the doctor could get there, Betty made her way into this world weighing only four pounds. She was wrapped in a blanket, placed in a shoe box, and put on the oven door to keep her warm. The neighbor lady killed a chicken and fed Ella and Betty the broth she made from it. It worked, and she grew into a strong healthy girl.

In 1946 she and Ken Register were married and began the adventure of their lives together. She said many times that she was grateful to God for her full and wonderful life. It wasn't always easy; there were many struggles along the way. However she learned to embrace the blessings and joys that life brought her way.

She spent her life committed to the service of God. She loved her family with her whole heart, she was a wonderful wife and mother, and she touched so many lives wherever she went.

She and Ken moved to California with their two young sons in the early 1950s, where their daughter was born a few years later. There they committed their lives to the faith they shared.

Betty always had a giving heart and showed kindness to others. If she knew of someone that was sick and needed help, she would be there. She even helped a doctor with home births. She was always the first to volunteer when there was a need.

She ran a used clothing and furniture shop for the church. She also managed a flower shop. When Ken was transferred to Western Canada, she continued to help wherever needed. After being there several years, they moved back to the states and returned to where their lives began in Missouri. She started a leather sewing business where she made leather garments. She sold the business after Ken was ordained a minister and became the local pastor as well as having other church responsibilities. Ken began a visiting and baptizing tour traveling all over the Midwest and up into Canada with Betty right by his side. They both loved this part of their work.

After 62 years of marriage and a happy wonderful life together, Ken passed away. A few years later, at age 82, she found love and companionship with an old friend, Darrel Slocum. They were happily married for five years before he passed away. She spent the last few years of her life enjoying time with her family and loved ones.

She was a sweet, loving, caring and giving lady. A lady in the true sense of the word. Ken always said she was a Proverbs 31 (verses 10–31) woman. Plus she made the best molasses cookies you ever tasted! She will be missed.

She is preceded in death by her parents, her husband Kenneth Register, her son Steven Register, her sister Mabel Buchecker, and her second husband Darrel Slocum.

She is survived by her son Dave Register (Linda), her daughter Nancy Beckerdite (David), 6 Grandsons Jon and Steve Register (Jessie), Daniel, Drew (Joanna), Alex and Nathan (Margarite) DeJarnette, and granddaughter Francesca Gruter, fourteen great grandchildren Aiden, Ariana, Xander, Elijah, Silas, Isaiah, Alice, Azlyn, Bailey, Laynee, Emmanuel, Bodhi, Ryker, Ariya, as well as her brother Leon West (Joann), her sister Judy Brandt (Neal), several nieces and nephews, and her step children Keith, Rob and Cynthia Slocum.

Carol Culpepper 1956 – 2021



Funeral services for Mrs. Carol Ann Culpepper, 64, of Marion, LA were on November 9, 2021, at Kilpatrick Funeral Home Farmerville Chapel with Vance Stinson officiating. Interment followed in Concord Cemetery in Marion under direction of Kilpatrick Funeral Home of Farmerville, LA.

Carol was born on November 12, 1956, in Farmerville, LA. She lost her battle with COVID on November 3, 2021, in a hospital in Monroe, LA. She is preceded in death by her parents, Vaughn and Edna May Johnston Mosley.

Survivors include her loving husband of 46 years, Elzie Franklin Culpepper of Marion, LA; children, Jessica Smith of Calhoun, LA, Nathan Culpepper and fiancé Robin Edgeworth of Marion, LA, and Stacey Beezley and husband Mark of Magnolia, TX; grandchildren, Jayson, Jared, Merissa, Natalie, Aiden, Kaylee, Alli, Ava, Gracie, and Rylee; brother, Dewayne Mosley and wife Kim; sister, Linda Roan (see announcement below) and husband Kenneth; and numerous nieces, nephews, and extended family members.

She was a loving mother and a faithful member of the Church of God International. She attended the Shreveport-Bossier City, LA, congregation. Her favorite pastime was making memories with her grandchildren. Carol retired from Ouachita Christian School after many years of driving the school bus and working in the cafeteria.

Carol's life was filled with kindness, generosity, and self-sacrificing love. She will surely be missed.

Linda Roan 1953 – 2021



Linda Roan, 68, of Lyman, SC, lost her battle with COVID on Friday, November 5, 2021. She was the loving wife of Kenneth E. Roan for 40 years and the daughter of Vaughn and Edna Mosley.

Linda was a RN for 30 years and LPN for 10 years. She was a devout Christian, a student of Scripture, and member of the Church of God. She attended Sabbath services with various groups, including CGI. She loved spending time

Continued next page

Continued

with her family and friends, and enjoyed sewing clothes and quilting.

Linda is survived by her husband; three children, Paul Ray, Dianna Trochleman, and Casey Roan; one brother, Dewayne Mosley (Kim); six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and a host of nieces and nephews.

She is preceded in death by her parents and one sister, Carol Culpepper.

Larry McCoy
1944 – 2021



Larry Vincent McCoy, 77, lost his battle with cancer on September 24, 2021. A graveside service was held for him on October 2, 2021, at Lee’s Summit Historical Cemetery, with Raymond Coleman and Lenny Cacchio officiating.

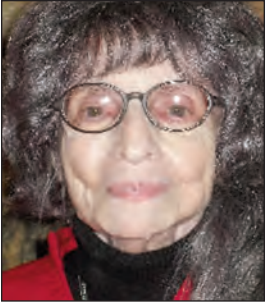
Larry was born on July 12, 1944 to Willard and Biola McCoy in Hebron, NE. He married Alice Jayne Patterson on January 10, 1964.

Proceeded in death by his parents, Larry is survived by his wife, Jayne McCoy of Lee’s Summit, MO; two sons, Brent McCoy (wife Vera) and Christopher McCoy (wife Kimberly), both of Lee’s Summit; four granddaughters, Angela and Theresa of Amarillo, TX, Madison of Kansas City, MO, and Savannah of Phoenix, AZ; one grandson, Chancellor of Lee’s Summit; five great-grandchildren, Leo, Indie, Annaleigha, Josiah, and Quinn; two brothers, Stanley McCoy (wife Karen) of Flemington, MO, and Steven McCoy (wife Peggy) of Weaubleau, MO; a sister, Linda Gordon (husband David) of Branson, MO; two brothers-in law, Larry Patterson (wife Debbie) of Fordland, MO, and John Patterson (wife Sandy) of Fordland, MO; and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

Larry was a longtime member of the Church of God. He was baptized at Myrtle Beach, SC, Feast site on October 10, 2009, by close friend Wayne Hendrix. He retired from GM in Shreveport, LA, in 1995.

Larry was a loving husband, father, grandfather, and friend. He will surely be missed by his family and friends.

Laura Mae Moran
1930 – 2021



Laura Mae Moran died October 13, 2021. Born May 23, 1930 in Philadelphia, PA to Thomas Benton Johnson, Sr. and Ella Mae Johnson, she was eldest of eight children. Laura enjoyed music,

singing, and playing the violin and French horn. She earned LVN and RN degrees. At 91, her license was active.

A remembrance service was held for Laura on November 6, 2021, at the Church of God Big Sandy building.

In 1974 Laura married James Lee Moran. For over 20 years Laura helped Jim minister to broken people in his practice as a psychologist. The Morans loved God and their neighbor. Laura was an outgoing person, known for her enthusiastic caring attitude and sincere interest in others.

Among those who love and miss Laura are daughter Michele; sisters Rue Bell and Ella Horter; brother-in-law Harold; grandchildren Jessica Lewis (Jordan), Joshua Voyce, Randall Wright (Melissa), Renee Arias (Boris), Katie Swanson (Peter), and nine great-grandchildren.

Laura was preceded in death by her devoted husband of almost 38 years, James Lee Moran; her parents; sisters Mary, Faith, and Grace; brothers John Wesley and Thomas; and daughter Cindy Wright. We await a joyful reunion at Christ’s return.

“For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’ ... Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:52–54, 57).

Rod Martin
1948 – 2021



Calvin Roderick Martin, son of Dorman and Isabel Martin, born in Pocahontas, Arkansas on August 7, 1948, passed away on October 9, 2021 at the age of 73. He was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, and friend. He was surrounded by his family, who loved him dearly, as he

passed.

Rod is survived by his wife, Peggy Martin, his children, Brandy (Matt) Pledger, Jason (Shre Regina) Martin, and Julie Martin, his stepchildren, Erica Woodruff (Clayton) and Emily Sullenger (Patrick), his 11 grandchildren, Ashton Baltz, Savannah and Forest Pledger, Jake, Westin, and Boe Martin, Skyler Marley, Malone and Tristen Woodruff, Karson and Will Sullenger, and his younger sister and brother, Jeff Martin (Cristina) and Susan Klein (Michael). He loved his family more than anything.

Rod was a member of the Air Force national guard and was a Sigma Chi at the University of Arkansas. He loved to read books, especially about religion, history, and physics. Watching a good storm roll in with the wind blowing was one of his favorite things to do. You knew he loved you when he gave you a hard time and made you laugh. He was a very strong,

intelligent, loving, wise, and kind man. He loved his wife, his best friend and soulmate, greatly. He will be missed but never forgotten.

Kenneth “Ken” Lash
1956 – 2021



Kenneth “Ken” E. Lash, Jr, 65, of Hart County, Lavonia, GA, passed away Friday, November 5, 2021, at St. Mary’s Hospital in Athens, GA.

Born on September 26, 1956, in Blue Ridge, GA, he was the son of the late Kenneth E. Lash, Sr. and Frances Gendron Lash.

Ken received a MBA from Brenau University and was a production manager for Covidien Health Care. He was also a member of the Church of God International, and he loved model trains. Mr. Lash was a US Army veteran.

Survivors include his son, Kenny Lash of Lavonia; daughter, Crystal Lash of Lavonia; two brothers, Tim Lash and John Lash, both of Hartwell; and two sisters, Cynthia J. Lash of Atlanta and Catherine S. Cash (Jessie) of Hart County.

Mr. Lash was preceded in death by his parents and his wife, Chun U. Kim Lash.

A celebration of Ken’s life was held Tuesday, November 9, 2021, in the chapel of the Strickland Funeral Home of Hartwell with Pastor Josh Cash officiating.

We look forward to seeing Ken again in that day when the trumpet of God sounds and all who “sleep in Jesus” arise to meet their Lord.

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WATCH FOR MORE TO COME!

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

2021 FEAST OF TABERNACLES REPORTS

In spite of the difficulties imposed by the ongoing COVID pandemic, “true worshipers” in many countries were still able to “worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:23) at this year’s Feast of Tabernacles.

5 persons baptized, 268 sojourn to the Feast of Tabernacles 2021 in Runaway Bay, St. Ann, Jamaica

There was an air of familiarity about the conditions under which we were heading to the Feast of Tabernacles this year. Twelve (12) months on from our first “pandemic” feast and the context was the same—evolving restrictions, changing curfews, “no movement” days, new Corona waves, etc. The most important factor of all was also constant—Yahweh was with us, making a way for us to observe the Feast of Tabernacles in his presence!

As per tradition, we launched the Feast with the opening night ceremony (albeit an abbreviated one due to nightly curfews at 8pm). We enjoyed a lively set of praise songs before being reminded by the speaker that we were in the presence of the Lord, for the purpose of rejoicing, bringing our offerings, and learning to fear the Lord and obey Him. On the first day we had 268 persons on-site to celebrate the festivities in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Pastor Horane Smith, who traveled all the way from Canada along with his wife Beverley, family, and a few other brethren to celebrate the Feast here in Jamaica, reminded us that Jesus Christ is Earth’s rightful ruler, and that the days of the current imposter on the throne (Satan) are numbered. This was followed by a sermon in the afternoon by minister-in-training Winston Samuels, who leads a small but vibrant CGI group in Maroon Town, St. James.

This set the tone for what was to fol-

low. We received sermons from Deacon Noel Scuburgh (Canada), Deacon Derrick Allwood, Jeremy McKenzie, Jonah Lewis, Elder Christopher Hendricks, Pastor Pedro Hall, Elder Stephen Scale, Sean Goldburn, and Jordan McKenzie. We also heard from Elder Kenroy Allen (Canada), who visited with his wife Marie Angela to bless us at the Feast. Sermons ranged from inspirational to doctrinal, all helping to strengthen us in the Word and in the Faith. Special items of poems, songs, and dances served to inspire us throughout the Feast.

The Feast is usually a time of fun, with loads of physical activities. With the Covid-19 pandemic still raging, and nightly restrictions, we had to find a creative way to bring people together to have fun while keeping safe. Last year, we combined the Fun Show and the Jamaica Night into one event, JamFun, forgoing the usual Family Fun day. However, this year the planning committee, lead by Deaconess Stacy and Deacon Eliud Ramocan, pulled off a coup, merging the Family Fun day into JamFun and negotiated all-inclusive day passes for all who were attending the Feast! It’s fair to say everyone had a wonderful time on the beach, eating and drinking, dancing to music, enjoying the entertainment, games, and conversations. This was the highlight of the Feast for many people, just being together again after such a long time apart.



Ministers and newly baptized members, from left to right: Pastor Horane Smith, Elder Ken Allen, Elder Christopher Hendricks, Elder Stephen Scale (back), Cameika Christie, Monique Dunbar (front), Glenroy Dacres, Denise Brown, Coral Morley

The planning committee truly outdid themselves. I can’t wait to see what they will come up with next year!

The Prayer and Outreach ministry hosted their regular morning prayers via Zoom, continuing the momentum they started at the very beginning of the pandemic, by praying together every day. They also hosted an inspiring afternoon of praise and powerful testimony, where persons shared their experiences of God’s deliverance through their trials.

For the second year running, we did not organize a sports day, however that did not dampen the competitive rivalry between the house of Judah and the house of Israel. The inaugural Sukkah building competition saw our builders demonstrate their architectural prowess in what was a very symbolic activity, commemorating what the Israelites did during the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) in ancient times. There was a clear winner (Judah of course), however what was most welcoming was the collaboration and camaraderie between both houses, as they worked together to help each other produce the best version of their respective Sukkahs. O how we long for the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles when the true houses of Israel and Judah will be reunited under the rulership of our Messiah Yeshua!

The annual Herbert W. Armstrong Memorial speaking competition on the moot “Unless you are circumcised, according to the law taught by Moses, you cannot be saved” had four participants, including one former champion. This year we had a winner, as upcoming apologist Rosan McKenzie pulled

off her maiden win in what was a very tight competition, earning herself \$70,000 Jamaican dollars and a place on the prestigious trophy commemorating twenty-five (25) years of apologetic excellence. Just prior to that was the inaugural Ian A. Boyne Young Speaker competition, with the moot “Be it resolved: Colossians 2:16 supports the continued keeping of the feast days for Christians today.” Special commendations to all the competitors, Da’Neeka Grant, the Hylton twins, Daecia and Daneillia, and Vaniel Findlay, who delivered a master-class presentation to take home the trophy and the prize of \$20,000 Jamaican dollars.

The morning of the Last Great Day saw five (5) persons confirming their commitment to the faith through public profession in the way of baptism and laying on of hands. Those who were gathered on the beach sang heartfelt songs of joy as we welcomed the newly baptised members to the fold.

Brother Sean Goldburn warned us that storms are coming and we ought to be prepared. Finally Pastor Horane Smith closed off the Feast on the Eighth Day in a fitting manner, encouraging us that we will indeed See the King.

It was a lovely Feast, one I’ll never forget. Let the planning commence in earnest, as we anticipate observing God’s commanded assembly, to rejoice, bring our offerings, and learn to fear the Lord at the Feast of Tabernacles 2022.

*Elder Stephen Scale
CGI Jamaica, Kingston*



Pastor Horane Smith, from Canada, delivering the message on the opening day

Some 425 Share “Millennium Experience” at the Feast in Kenya



Doors were opened for the 2021 Feast of Tabernacles, with all the preparations at high gear. Church of God International, Kenya chapter, initially had settled upon having all the members converge at one site, and the site we identified was Nyamanga, Migori County. However, due to unavoidable circumstances, some congregations would not be able to join the rest of us; therefore, had an option of conducting the Feast at other smaller centres. At Nyamanga we hosted over 100 residential members, and over 50 nonresidential.

Other cites we supported included 1) Kehancha, with slightly above 55 members; 2) Eberage, with 87 members; 3) Nairobi, 37 members. University and college students in Kisii slightly above 46. However, this number would dwindle because of ongoing exams. We had another site in Embu that was supported as well. I did not get the clear figure at the time of sharing this report. In total, approximately 425 joined in the “Millennium Experience” in Kenya.

My major focus in this report will be on the main site. The curtains were raised on September 20, 2021, in the evening, as the Feast was dawning. Participants

started arriving early in the day, having travelled from all corners of the country and ready for the Millennium Experience. This evoked the Jerusalem experience when people would travel to Jerusalem for the pilgrimage festivals. To some this was the first time they were connecting names to faces, as they have been hearing of familiar names but not connected physically.

The sound of songs could be heard from a distance that attracted crowds from the neighborhood. Brother Zablon and the Migori team took to the podium to welcome brothers and sisters, young and old. The program that evening included welcome remarks, introduction, and devotion, with a meal thereafter. Brethren were tired and needed to rest, having traveled from far.

The theme for the 2021 Feast of Tabernacles was “Preparing for the actual Millennium.” The key song:



Over 150 attended the Nyamanga (Migori County) Feast of Tabernacles site.

“All to Jesus I surrender”; Key Verse: Revelation 20:6. Some of the elders had an opportunity to share a word to the congregation. What amazed me most was how God distributes talents; some topics were presented more than twice from different elders, and you would think that you are hearing it for the first time. People went home spiritually rich.

Some of the topics captured throughout the feast included: God’s perfect creation week; how sin entered the universe; when the most feared enemy “death” is finally destroyed; God’s plan of redemption; whether Jesus will find the church He left still intact; baptism as an ingredient to salvation; the Kingdom of God. Besides these topics, Bible discussions with questions-and-answer sessions were such an experience. Family life study became the most appreciated program, though time was short.

The Feast created an opportunity to have the elders get together. Brother Robert had an opportunity to promote



Before the Feast ended, three repentant souls were buried in the waters of baptism.

MIP and why we all need to undergo through the online training. More emphasis was on the *Biblical Eldership* book by Alexandar Strauch, which clearly outlines and promotes servant and shared leadership.

Brother Robert was tasked to ensure translation of the lessons to Swahili is made available due to language barrier and difficulty in accessing the documents online.

As we were coming to the end of the Feast, three souls surrendered to our Lord and asked to be baptized. There was nothing that would stop the two gentlemen and one lady from getting into water after accepting Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and as the Son of God.

They are now a new creation in Jesus, and we thank God for the fruits.

Robert Onsando Nyambaso

CGI Houston Hosts Second Feast in Galveston, Texas

For the second year, CGI Houston hosted the Feast of Tabernacles in Galveston, Texas.

This jubilant event started off with the amazing sound of the shofar by the

servants of God.

The Festival theme of Spiritual Temple Building (Part 2) was just as exciting as Part 1; it was packed with thought-provoking messages challenging the hearer to prove all things, hold

fast to that which is good!

The Feast was a wonderful time, for all the spiritual food served by the servants of the Most High was truly inspiring as well as satisfying for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Sermon topics included “The Royal Priesthood” (Parts 1 and 2) by CGI Houston Pastor Clifton J. Buchanan; “Walking in the Light” by CGI Houston Deacon Albert Debolt; “Welcome to the Kingdom” (Parts 1 and 2) by Feast Keepers of New York Pastor Ray Hall; “You Have Been Called” and “Cultivate your Garden” by Jacques Russell of CGI Houston.

The Children’s program, headed by Kathy Joseph and Mykala Buchanan, was exciting as well as challenging for the kids. The children enjoyed passionately making scrolls inscribed with their favorite scriptures on them; colorful balloon collages with the fruits of the spirit hand-

written on them; and folding tablets containing the Ten Commandments hand-carved on them.

Mykala Buchanan read aloud a selection from the law each day, encouraging us all to remember the commandments, to read the law daily during the Feast of Tabernacles. Mykala also blessed us with special music on the Last Great Day.

Seminars this year included: “Dangers of Worldly Praise” and “Firstfruit Harvest—Hidden Secrets Revealed [parts 1 and 2].”

This year we had 46 attendees in total with 35 being the highest daily total. The live video feed was broadcast on Zoom this year which provided opportunities for several others, who otherwise would not have been able to attend in person, to tune in daily.

The weather was beautiful which led to wonderful family-like fellowship highlighted by the family beach potluck enjoyed on beautiful east beach Galveston.

In all, great fellowship, fantastic awe-inspiring messages, truly a great time had by all.

All Praise, Honor and Glory belong to the Holy One of Israel, our Great and Awesome God!

Clifton J. Buchanan



Feasting on Fruit and Fellowship

Feast of Tabernacles 2021: Collingwood, Ontario Canada

Approximately 135 brethren enjoyed an exciting time of celebrating the glorious plan of God and the exciting future He has for us during the Millennium and beyond. This was our second Feast of Tabernacles with which we were under COVID restrictions—but it did not hinder our joyous fellowship! The beginning stages of the fall leaves’ colours and the crisp fresh air made for a beautiful millennium-type setting.

We were fortunate to be able to ALL physically attend services in the main conference room together again this year (wearing masks, socially distancing, etc). We are pleased to report, as well, that again this year we have not heard of any person becoming ill or contracting a virus! God truly blessed us all with His protection.

As well as all the inspiring and uplifting messages that we heard, many brethren also shared their musi-

cal gifts with hymns and special music. The assembled brethren clapped, swayed to the music, and rejoiced with uplifted hearts!

Virtual Bible studies were held each morning, as well as a fruitful and edifying evening of Bible study mid-Feast.

The key highlight of fellowship was the afternoon barbecue and outdoor games where we delighted in taking off our masks and seeing all the wonderful smiles! We shared a fabulous

meal prepared by the Coish family—including GREAT homemade chocolate chip cookies and songs by the youth choir, followed by boisterous laughter during the outdoor games.

We were also blessed to welcome two new members into the family of God—Thomas Anthony and Sophie McClurkin. The baptisms took place in the outdoor heated swimming pool while brethren cheered and rejoiced as these two people surrendered and let Christ live within them through the

Holy Spirit. Romans 8:14: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” We were all truly honoured to welcome Thomas and Sophie into the Family!

A dedicated team of brethren worked diligently to serve and ensure that this Feast of Tabernacles was a joyous and enriching celebration for all. We are all looking forward to gathering and rejoicing at the Feast of Tabernacles in Collingwood, Ontario again NEXT year!

by Sandee Willshaw



Friends and Brethren of Rowan Church of God, CGI enjoy a “Feast of Contribution” in Salt Lick, KY

It was Tuesday, September 21, 2021, at 11:00 a.m. when the brethren of Rowan Church of God in association with CGI and several friends came together to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in Salt Lick, Kentucky.

Each day began with a sermon and/or sermonette. Each offered encouragement, enlightenment, and a little history. For example there were messages of “Strong Meat,” “What Is Your Future?” “The New Government,” “Unholy Characteristics,” “The Coming Drought of the Word,” and “Are You A Patriot of the Kingdom of God?” There was plenty for us to consider.

So after the last “Amen” Tuesday we all scattered. No, no, no! What am I saying? We actually had a meal and fellowship. After all, there were some we had not seen in some time and wanted to catch up with them. Then we

left to get settled in at the lodge where many of us were staying during the Feast.

After service Wednesday we had lunch and fellowship. Then we traveled to a nice restaurant for a tasty meal.

After that, each day was about the same with exception to enjoy the Ark Encounter, a visit to the Miniature Museum, and Bingo night.

The Ark is absolutely awesome and the Museum is amazing. If you ever get a chance to see either, take it. It’s difficult to explain just what you can experience at either place.

For myself, my litmus test was the kind of animals on the ark. Sure enough there was a

plaque that stated two of each kind of unclean animal was on the ark and fourteen of the clean animals.

Bingo was definitely a fun night. We played until all the prizes were gone. Actually there were so many prizes we had to double up. Otherwise we would have been there until the wee hours. Everyone from age five to ninety-one won a prize and some two or three. All prizes were donated. And the Church provided all the food and covered all other expenses, including the bus to the Ark.

The weather was a little unpleasant the first two days. It rained. But each day it improved. On Monday it was a perfect day. Probably the best all-around day of the Feast. We travelled

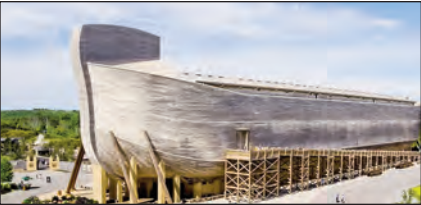
to Cave Run Lake for a baptism. A perfect preamble to the Last Great Day.

Once again our congregation has been blessed. We pray we will never do anything to lose those blessings. God has been so merciful we can never do enough to show our appreciation. As mortals we do our best to be obedient.

This Feast gave each of us a snapshot into what God’s Kingdom will be. It was a Feast of contribution. Our different skills were offered without hesitation. We didn’t have any committees or appoint anyone. Where there was a need there was always someone to jump in and do their part. And those gifts have continued.

We are looking forward to the next Feast of Tabernacles. May God bless all who read this article.

Submitted by Alice Edwards Lauria



Brethren enjoyed the “Ark Encounter” at Feast 2021.

In Spite of Restrictions, Philippine Brethren Have Memorable Feast

The Philippine brethren once again celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles virtually, with the exception of some provincial localities that were able to meet in person for the first day of the Feast, on the in-between Sabbath, and on the Last Great Day. We were looking forward to celebrating the Feast in person as restrictions were being eased a few months prior to the Feast. However, with the emergence of the COVID Delta variant, Metro Manila and adjacent areas were put on a higher level of quarantine, prompting a last-minute shift to the contingency plan. Nevertheless, the brethren still enjoyed the Feast and celebrated with much joy as commanded in **Deuteronomy 16:13–14 (NIV)**: “Celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress. Be joyful at your festival—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites, the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns.”

Online Services—A Focal Point of the Celebration

A focal point in every Feast celebration is the daily service, where congregational prayers are offered to God, hymns are sung, offertory music is played, special music rendered, and messages delivered every day. All of these were part of our online services, and each played an important part in the conduct of the service. However, the messages presented to us provided a key highlight of the service. They provided a “spiritual feast” for everyone as the speakers expound on topics relevant to the Feast from the words of God. This year’s Feast celebration underscored this observation and is

actually brought to the fore given the circumstance we had to deal with. The “spiritual” aspect of the Feast was more pronounced than ever. Listening to the messages, one can’t help but notice several recurring themes that are very relevant and timely for all. The topics covered

1. reminded us that we are on a journey to the Kingdom of God
2. emphasized our citizenship is in heaven (we are aliens/strangers/sojourners in this world)
3. us to stay focused on the goal that is the Kingdom of God
4. encouraged us to be hopeful amidst all adversities
5. reminded us to continue with our Christian living, overcoming, and growing
6. stressed our roles as kings and priests in the millennial reign of Christ

The presentations will help us in “rightly dividing the word of truth” as we strive to diligently present ourselves to God as one approved (2 Timothy 2:15). On hindsight, one can easily see that these themes are all really interconnected, and they reinforced the spiritual component of the Feast by edifying, encouraging, and building up the brethren more than ever.

Joining us in our services via prerecorded messages were Messrs. Wayne Hendrix, Mike James, and Bill Watson. They gave riveting messages and helped in this edification, encouragement, and building up of the brethren.

If one wishes to revisit them, these online services are readily available in the following platforms:

Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/cgipilipinas/videos>)

YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/TheChurchofGodInternationalPhilippines/videos>)

Online Activities

Just like last year, our traditional Feast activities, designed to strengthen camaraderie among the brethren, were done virtually. We can say a Philippine Feast observance is not really complete without a *bayanihan* night. On this night, we would normally join a communal dinner and have lots of fellowship, fun, and laughter. So, on the second day of the Feast (September 22), we joined a virtual *bayanihan* night and we did just that via Zoom™. We were blessed to have someone generously sponsor a meal for that night aside from what were prepared at home.

On the third day (September 23), we had a fun-filled game night. This was a first ever for us to do. A Bible-based Kahoot™ game was played. The brethren had fun as they figured out the answers to biblical questions tailored fit for the occasion. After the Bible quiz, a name-that-hymn game was played. Participants had to guess the title of the hymn being played. Those who got it right were then asked to sing a portion of the hymn (guess that’s the fun part of it).

On the sixth day (September 26), we had an online talent show. The participants were requested to have their talent videos submitted ahead of time and were compiled to have one beautiful and memorable presentation. Brethren from the different congregations did a wonderful job of sharing their talents via different forms—singing, dancing, interpretative singing, song rendition with piano accompaniment, and time-lapse drawing. We are indeed thankful that we had this night that everyone

can truly enjoy.

A Baptism During the Feast

This year’s Feast gave us another reason to rejoice as we welcomed to the body of Christ Aaliyah Anselmo, daughter of our Naga local church coordinator, Arnel Anselmo. She has been faithfully attending services and fellowshiping with the Naga congregation and decided to take the next step. On September 24, she accepted our Lord Jesus Christ and was immersed in the waters of baptism. And we are sure that the angels are rejoicing with us (Luke 15:7, 10).

The Verdict

Although we were not able to meet in person at our traditional Festival sites to celebrate the Feast, we felt it was still a great observance. All of this was made possible by everyone—from the ones giving special music, to those who shared their talents, to the speakers, to the generous sponsors, the media and technical team, the Festival coordinators and committees, and to all the members who actively participated in the activities to make this one truly special.

We had fun. We had laughter. We had moments of moving and wonderful sharing of life experiences. We felt revitalized spiritually after it. We felt comforted by the fact that despite all the troublesome events occurring around us, God has been truly faithful to His promise recorded in **Hebrews 13:5 (NIV)**: “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” He has, after all, granted us a Feast to remember and cherish for the rest of our lives. Given the circumstances, we still say this is the best virtual Feast ever.

Ferdie S. Padilla for CGI Philippines

Hudson Valley Festival Attendance Doubles Over Last Year

Feast of Tabernacles 2021: Poughkeepsie, New York

The Church of God International hosted the Feast of Tabernacles in the Northeast region of the continental U.S. in Poughkeepsie, New York. This marks the second year that the Feast was held in the Hudson Valley of New York State. The occasion saw attendance double over last year’s attendance as brethren from a number of states and the Caribbean gathered to celebrate God’s appointed Feast.

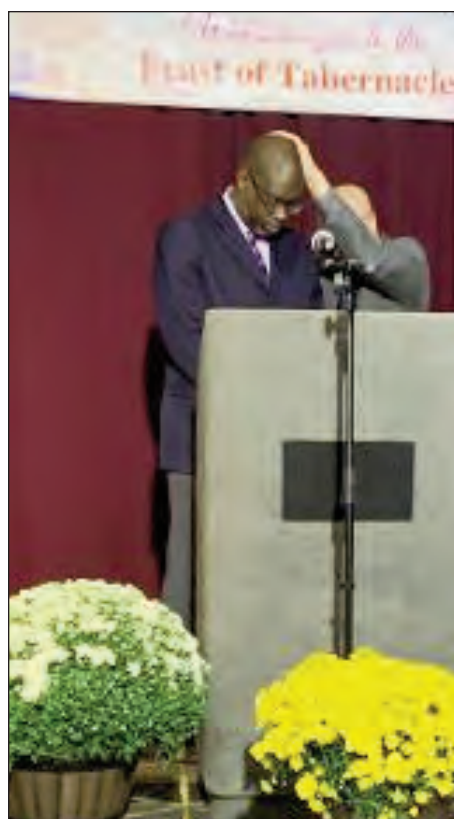
Inspiring messages were shared over multiple modalities serving those attendees in person, online via webcast, and transmitting over Zoom, a teleconference application. Safety precautions were taken and a healthy environment was maintained throughout the course of the Feast

for all in attendance and thereafter post-Feast.

The Hudson Valley area boasts a scenic beauty that can not be overlooked. This year, feastgoers were afforded the opportunity to take in the surroundings from the vantage point of a sunset dinner cruise along the Hudson River. The evening concluded with music aboard the vessel, capping off an experience that accentuated the fellowship.

The Feast in New York also yielded the ordination of George Roper as an elder to serve the New York congregation. Mr. Roper’s entry into service in the ministry will help to bolster the needs of the church.

This year’s Feast site in New York was rewarding, and the location looks to be a staple in the slate of CGI’s Feast sites going forward.



Left: Mike James ordains George Roper to the ministry. Above: Mike congratulates George after ordination.

FAKE NEWS, continued from page 7

pen, will disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matthew 5:18, Berean Study Bible).

If one does not “over-think” things, the Truth is in plain view. The Earth is still here, therefore the Law (the Torah as revealed to Moses) is still in effect. Obviously the heart of the Law is contained in the Ten Commandments.

Regarding the Ten Commandments, most readers here are keenly aware of the Sabbath vs. Sunday controversy. The proper day of worship has been under attack for nearly the entire history of the church. “Fake news,” originating out of the thoughts and rationalizations of men (as opposed to the clear instructions personally written on tablets of stone by the Creator of the universe), has received wide acceptance. “Confirmation bias,” using all of its various tools and techniques, has proven to be a most effective catalyst in promoting Sunday worship as the dominant “day of rest.”

What does the Eternal God say?

“And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation” Genesis 2:2–3, ESV).

“Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God...” (Exodus 20:9–10, ESV).

“Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant **forever**” (Exodus 3:16, ESV).

Psalm 33:11 says, “The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations.” And Hebrew 13:8 tells us, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

Today, much of “Churchianity” is convinced the Sabbath is Sunday. For the sake of argument, let’s assume this is so. We read in Revelation 20:6 “Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” In the fourth chapter of Micah, the prophet writes, “Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, And to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us about His ways, and that we may walk in His paths.” These biblical verses, from both the Old and New Testaments, paint a similar picture whereby those who are transformed into spiritual beings at the return of the Messiah participate in the new Government of God as members of a teaching and ruling class. How would the popular view of Sunday worship look in practice? Would Christ, John, Peter, Paul, Moses, Daniel, and David (and so many other saints from the Patriarchal and Apostolic ages)—vigilantly practicing Sabbath-keepers—teach men alive during the Millennium to worship on the sev-

enth day, while simultaneously, “New Testament” Sunday church-goers taught their people to worship God on the first day of the week? Does this make any logical sense? Is God arbitrary in His thinking? As the writer of Hebrews said above, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” It would be biblically inconsistent for Christ to worship on Sunday in the future Millennium, as it is indisputable that during His first coming, Christ worshipped on the Sabbath day.

Continuing to examine the ramifications of a speculative “two-tier” system of observances in the future Millennium, let us consider dietary laws. It is “food for thought” (pun intended) to imagine great feasts in the New Jerusalem of the future. Can you imagine Moses or Daniel observing the latter saints celebrating at a table with their subjects who were enjoying a delicious pork loin, or ham? What about Isaiah and Jeremiah seeing shrimp and lobster on the menu? I would think there would be some serious confusion and utter chaos should such an event take place. Elohim is a God of order; He does not disseminate confusion. Confusion is inherent in the religion of Babylon; it should have no residence in the worship of the true God, the Creator of the universe.

Of course there are so many other areas where “fake news” and “cognitive bias” distort a believer’s perception of the truth. The Holy Days vs. the pagan holidays; the correct view of the Millennium Kingdom being found on Earth (as opposed to living on clouds “somewhere” in heaven); eternal punishment vs. eternal punishing; the “rapture” vs. “enduring unto the end”; and so on. In the interest of brevity, one final topic of investigation examines perceptions of our Master and Savior Jesus Christ.

The twin “devils” of “fake news” and “cognitive bias” distort the truth of Christ by portraying our Messiah as an almost exclusively peaceful, “anything goes”-type “hippie,” while virtually ignoring all other aspects of His personality. This distortion can be a significant impediment to the spiritual growth of a believer, so much so, that it might even impact one’s eternal fate. How can this be so? Misconceptions about the Messiah were at the heart of the rejection of Christ during His incarnation. Many of those who studied the Torah did not grasp the difference between the Messiah’s first and second coming. These individuals did not understand that the Son of God was first to come as the Lamb of God, and subsequently, after fulfilling the required duties and purposes of His initial visit to the Earth, He would come again, this time as the Lion of Judah.

The “fake news” of a long-haired “Woodstock-like” love-child from the 1960s distorts the authority, as well as the expectations, of the coming King and Ruler of mankind. The “cognitive bias” of an entirely passive Christ seemingly permits followers to discount the words and demands of Christ in their lives. It is nearly universally accepted that Jesus had long, soft, flowing hair. This is easily proven to be a deception. The Bible verse, “*Does not even nature*

itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?” (1 Corinthians 11:14), clearly contradicts the common image of Christ. There were times Christ had to blend in with the crowd to escape capture. It is also notable to recall the Roman soldiers needed Judas to identify Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane in order to arrest Jesus for trial. If Jesus was simply the only one with unusually long hair at that time, there would be no need for additional verification of Christ’s identity by Judas. Our Messiah was a working carpenter. He exemplified the typical look, and possessed at least the typical strength, of a man engaging in His acknowledged profession.

It may seem like these details are not all that significant. Having a correct view of Christ is most assuredly of great importance in creating the firm passion and commitment needed by His followers to obey His directives. Failing to understand the entire nature of Christ’s character can lead one astray. Simply perceiving Jesus as a type of “Disneyland dad”—one who doesn’t really expect full obedience to His requests, one who fails to appropriately punish wrong behaviors, and one who changes His expectations of those He loves—imparts great spiritual harm to His followers. To be found worthy of living in the Kingdom we must understand Christ authentically, we must strip away false narratives and perceptions. We must strive to be, not only hearers of the word, but doers as well. We must understand fully the expectations Christ has laid out for us—in Spirit and in TRUTH. Understanding the severity of Christ, analogous to a firm, yet very fair and loving parent, helps individuals grasp the importance of obeying the entirety of Christ’s message. John records our Master’s words as this:

John 14:15: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (ESV).

In combatting “fake news” and our personal biases, it is profitable to keep the following Bible verses (both the ESV) in mind:

Jeremiah 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”

Proverbs 14:12: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.”

Diligent study of the Scriptures is required if a believer wishes to dramatically reduce the infiltration of “fake news” into their spiritual life. We must strive to replace popular opinions with the words and instructions of God. We must always strive to read Bible verses in **context**, as too many times Scripture verses taken out of context lead to damaging misinterpretations of biblical teachings.

A famous quote by Ayn Rand is, “We can ignore reality, but we cannot ignore the consequences of ignoring reality.” This saying applies to biblical realities just as well.

The Bible alone is our best defense, our “infallible vaccine,” if you will, against “fake news.”

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16, ESV).

California Dreaming

It has been a few years since the Church of God International has had a fellowship group in California, but with my recent (August) move there I’m hoping to change things. We recently sent letters to our mailing list in the Los Angeles area, and we already have a few contacts in this area. I’m hoping to have a small group established in Southern California by 2022.

Timothy Maggenti of Davis, California was baptized on September 14, 2021 (see pics below). If you reside somewhere in California and you would like to connect with like-minded individuals to form a cell group or Church please contact me at mhjames6043@yahoo.com or 240-304-6798.

Mike James



Mike James baptizes Timothy Maggenti in Davis, CA, on September 14.

MEDINA CGI HISTORICAL CEREMONY

A great success!

It was a beautiful and pleasant day for about 60 folks who turned out to share in the ceremony of publicly presenting Ohio's Historical Marker for the church building that the Church of God International (CGI) purchased back in January of 2019. The Weymouth Preservation Society and the Church of God International's Medina Congregation sponsored the ceremony.

The event was arranged for official recognition on behalf of the State of Ohio to reflect and honor the people, places, and events associated with Ohio's rich state history. The *all bronze marker* was presented with a special unveiling ceremony that was preceded with the pledge of allegiance, given by a troop of Medina Boy Scouts, an opening prayer by CGI Pastor Bill Watson, and presentations given by a handful of officials representing different historical societies from the state of Ohio.

In addition, a Resolution of Commendation from the Board of County Commissioners and a Proclamation from Governor Mike DeWine and Lieutenant Governor Jon Husted was presented in their absence by the Weymouth Preservation Society. It was quite the affair and turned out to be a valuable venue to introduce the CGI congregation of Medina, Ohio to the community.

This was all conducted because of the rich historical value this church building has, due to retaining much of its original design and materials. The building itself is located in the community of Weymouth, just outside of Medina, that was founded in 1817. The actual construction of the building was completed in 1835 by a small congregation of about 20 people—making this church building, to the best of our knowledge, the fourth oldest in the state and oldest church building in Medina County!

The building does represent a colorful history, which was primarily because of its activism against slavery, going back to 1840 (before the Civil War). The congregation took a strong stand against slavery with 14 proclamations and proceeded to encourage their Northeast Ohio governing body to accept the proclamations and participate in the "underground railroad."

However, the NE governing body refused to accept the proclamations and participate, so the congregation broke fellowship with them and joined up with Oberlin, Ohio's greater Christian body, and became an active participant in freeing and smuggling runaway slaves up to as far as Detroit and on into Windsor, Canada! They actively participated in *resisting* what was law in the United States, going against the government and risking being arrested for helping people that were "immorally trafficked." They were a courageous bunch of Christian

pioneers!

Interestingly enough, after the festivities were completed at the church building, many went over to the Weymouth Historical Museum (about a quarter mile from the building) and enjoyed refreshments provided by the CGI, and "antique memorabilia" of a by-gone era that was connected to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was quite a Sunday afternoon and very informative about what went on in this area of Ohio over the last 186 years!

So, brethren, if you're ever in the area of Northern Ohio, please take some time and spend a Sabbath visiting us. We'd love to have you experience the *warm nostalgia* of the nineteenth century as you sit in wood pews (with cushions) that are over 180 years old! You always have an open invitation to "take your shoes off" and stay a while!



See additional photo on next page



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