



# THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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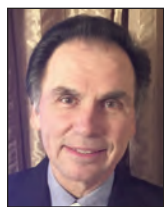
"Put on the whole armor of God"

Summer 2022

## God's Human "Harvesting" Plan (Embedded in the Holy Days?)

*Just HOW is it God is "harvesting" human beings? And HOW do the Holy Days explain WHAT this plan is? Can we gain some insight into what God is doing and how He is actually reproducing Himself? And, additionally, WHY is this so important for us to understand? Can we improve our clarity about His plan by answering the What, Hows, and Whys?*

by Bill Watson



From the outset of the story explained in our Bibles, we are introduced to the idea of what God's mission, objective, and purpose is for creating men and women. The explanation from the start was about making man in His own image—after His kind—in His likeness! Notice: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion.... So, God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it.... And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:26–31).

From this narrative a couple of *underlying fundamentals* are recognized that describe His original intent and goal for mankind. Immediately, we are introduced to the concept that God intends humanity to reproduce—He said, be fruitful, multiply, and replenish and subdue the earth! And in order to do this He created the human species in two versions, male and female. This was to facilitate the process He designed—one man and one woman—monogamously together, opposite in gender, with reproductive capabilities to multiply their kind, resulting in a "type" of the "God kind." It's a stunning mission statement, but it describes in concise fashion God's simple intent for humanity and WHY He created this *plan*.

However, there were *potential risks and complications* that caused God to devise a *salvation process* even before He commenced the creation. Notice: "Be not you therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord...Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus **before** the world began...and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:8–10). Paul further substantiates this when addressing Titus: "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised **before** the world began" (Titus 1:1–2). So, we see this *plan* was conceived *BEFORE* the world began. Yes, God has a *redemptive process* in mind as to HOW He plans to bring "immortality

and eternal life to light for mankind through the gospel."

### The Plan is Built Around Growing and Harvesting Seasons

Wherever you look on this earth, regardless of the category of creation surrounding us, we see *growth* and *reproduction*. There are many forms and methods of multiplication and replenishment. In the *physical world* we exist in, no matter the type of species, or category of kinds and types of material, we see fruitful reproductive and specific means of growth associated with bacteria, insects, mammals, fish, and

plants, and we see how seeds take on different materializations of types and kinds of trees, vegetables, shrubs, and vines. There are so many remarkable varieties of "growth and harvest" that encompass the material world we live in—including mankind's own spiritual growth and harvest!

Clearly, God made it this way to serve as a constant reminder of describing WHAT He is doing on the human level, for His *spiritual purposes* of reproduction. Interestingly enough, He, knowing we must sustain ourselves with food, wisely embedded His very process of human "harvesting" within the methods of our human food production. For those who take the time to notice, the *harvesting process* of our food supply is an ongoing reminder of WHAT God is spiritually doing to grow His family. Yes, that's right—God is growing His family in a very particular way and will result in "harvesting" immortals from His human creation, rewarding them with eternal life!! This is very fascinating and quite the *reality check* for those who recognize WHAT God is *spiritually* doing with and for humanity.

And so, to make it more relative with a *pragmatic connection* to our human realm, He creates and institutes a sequence of Holy Days to outline and provide a template—a thumbnail sketch, an allegory—of HOW He is bringing many sons and daughters into His *immortal family*. These Holy Days are all listed in Leviticus 23. They start in the early spring and end in the fall and, uniquely, are *all connected to the "growing and harvesting seasons" of the human food supply!* An incredible idea that overlays the physical with what God is doing on the spiritual level. Unquestionably, once you begin to recognize the growing and harvesting cycles of the food chain, the "what, hows, and whys" become much plainer in meaning—and the distinction of 1) *redemption* (spring Holy Days) and 2) *reconciliation*, or *restitution* of all things (fall Holy days) becomes much plainer in understanding HOW God is accomplishing His reproductive plan!

### Summarizing the Spring Holy Day Season

According to the Hebrew calendar, the first month of the spring harvest occurs in the month of Abib, or Nisan. This is the first month of the year (Exodus 12:2; 13:4; Deuteronomy 16:1). It's also the month in which the *first of the first fruits* is harvested—primarily the cereal crops: barley and

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wheat. Both were planted in the previous autumn, with barley maturing faster and harvested sooner, compared to first fruits (*not the first of the first-fruits*) of their new meal, or grain (*wheat*) harvest, which was harvested about 50 days later in the *Feast of Harvest* of the first fruits (Exodus 23:16)—also known as the Feast of Weeks, or Day of Pentecost (fifty) (Leviticus 23:15–16; Deuteronomy 16:9–10)).

In the spring, this growing and harvest season is divided into primarily two segments. The **first segment** is connected to a *wave sheaf* that signified the “first of the first fruits.” This was a commencement marker—the foundational platform—that is tethered to the *redemptive power* of Christ actually ascending to His Father for acceptance as the *first of the first fruits* of the **human harvest**, after He was crucified and resurrected from the dead! Everything is established on this foundational validation—“Christ the first fruits; afterward [second], they that are Christ’s at His coming!” (1 Corinthians 15:23).

It is by His innocent life and shed blood, confirmed by a successful resurrection (harvested) from the dead three days and three nights later, that He has “trail-blazed” the way for immortality to be obtained for those human beings who repent and “grow” in grace and knowledge of His ways. This *conversion event* is portrayed in the imagery of the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. It reflects in one’s life the commencement of the *redemptive process* by accepting Jesus Christ as the first human being—the human Wave Sheaf, our Savior—successfully completing the course from human, flesh and blood, to immortal Spirit life for our benefit and eternal inheritance!

Incredibly, this is made clear by the physical growing and harvest seasons of the spring, which upon overlying the spiritual event of *human harvesting* God is conducting through Christ—the “*first of the first fruits*,” the “*wave sheaf*”—assures the additional “first fruits” (Christians) will experience a similar resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:50–58). Paul affirms this *guaranteed change* when he said: “But, if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you [the Christian], He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken [*re-vitalize, to make alive*] your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you” (Romans 8:11).

Notice: “For we know that the whole creation

groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves [*Christians*] also, which have the *first-fruits* of the Spirit, even we ourselves [*Christians*] groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption [*the transformation to a spirit being; an immortal*] of our body [*by the resurrection*]” (Romans 8:22–23). The apostle James has more to say. Notice: “Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights.... Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of *first-fruits* of His creatures” (James 1:18).

The spring Holy Days are about the metrics of HOW *redemption* will be accomplished. They also answer some of the questions on WHAT we are to become if we “sow and grow” the right seed! But, the fall Holy Days complete the picture! They answer the questions as to “why and what” this is all for—of WHAT the end-game is. Those answers are embodied in the meaning of the fall Holy Days!

Summarizing the Fall Holy Days

Salvation is not just about GETTING salvation. It’s also about GIVING and serving God for His purpose and His Will. So many of us only think about “get-

God is literally moving heaven and earth to bring His plan to fruition and achieve the *long-term objective* of getting all that will come into His “spiritual dimension.”

ting” into God’s kingdom. Traditional Christians usually are most concerned about entering into heaven—but then what? Nobody seems to ask, “What is it we’re going to do in God’s Kingdom?” or “Why is it so important we enter God’s Kingdom? So often, many don’t put much thought into the reason for GETTING salvation—and yet salvation isn’t just about us GETTING it!

God has an overriding, bigger, much bigger picture attached to this *salvific plan*, and it’s all about sharing and *multiplying the harvest of human beings* that have gone before us and have yet to be born. As incredible as it seems, God has called us to become kings and priest (Revelation 5:10; Isaiah 61:6), to serve Him with rebuilding the waste cities and repair

the desolation of many generations. Notice: “And they [*resurrected first-fruit Christians*] shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations” (Isaiah 61:4). Amos claims: “And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof.... And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land, which I have given them... (Amos 9:14–15).

Our destiny is all about serving our God for the benefit of humanity! As remarkable as this is, the **short-term reason** WHY we have been called is to prepare mankind for the *physical resurrection* of the “*rest of the dead*,” after the 1,000-year reign of Christ is finished (Revelation 20:5–6). **For the long term:** “the restitution [restoration, reconciliation] of all things” unto Himself (Acts 3:21). This is WHAT the fall Holy Days are all about—“that they [Christians] might be called trees of righteousness, the *planting of the LORD*, that He might be glorified” (Isaiah 61:3).

As we have come to understand, Christ will return at the last trump (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:52) as a conquering King of kings and Lord of lords. He will be returning with the objective of subduing all evil and reconstituting His government on earth. Commencing from that time, there will be no end to it. Notice: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon His kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6–7). This is what the *Feast of Trumpets* is all about—the returning Savior to take control of what is rightfully His to claim and have (Revelation 19:11–21) and to reward the first fruits.

After this, the *Day of Atonement* will unfold and,

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THE FIRST-FRUITs of the grain harvest were brought to the priest to be waved before God at the beginning of the seven weeks of harvesting. The wave-sheaf—the “first of the first-fruits”—pictures Jesus Christ.

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The “Feasts of the LORD” (Leviticus 23) portray God’s plan to ultimately give everyone, including the teeming masses of today’s world and the billions of past ages, a full and fair opportunity to be saved and enter His everlasting Kingdom. The “harvest” of lives that will take place at the Second Coming of Christ is but the beginning of God’s seasonal plan—it’s a “harvest of first fruits.” But a far greater harvest of lives is coming in the future, both in the 1,000-year reign of Christ upon this earth and in the great White Throne Judgment to follow the Millennium. How unsearchable are the riches of God’s plan for His creation, for the creatures who bear His image and likeness!

as portrayed in sequence, Satan and his minions will be “restrained” and prevented from negatively influencing Christ’s effort to reestablish God’s government, until the 1,000 years are over. (However, eventually Satan will be ultimately held accountable and removed from all involvement with God’s creation forever and ever [Revelation 20:1–3; 7–10]). So, this gives time for the Kingdom of God to flourish for 1,000 years, uninterrupted without any demonic activity and influence that would deceive the people of earth at this time.

*The Feast of Tabernacles* represents this period and is illustrated by the prophet Zechariah. Notice: “And it shall come to pass [during the 1,000-year reign], that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zechariah 14:16). This will be an annual memorial celebration during the Millennium, commencing with Christ landing on the Mount of Olives to rule the world (Zechariah 14:9).

And finally, the Last Great Day, when the rest of the dead will be raised (Revelation 20:5). This is the fulfillment of the *short-term objective* of WHY we rebuilt the waste places and the desolation of many generations. This will lead us to the final harvest of human beings—when all that ever lived and died not knowing Jesus Christ, or having an opportunity to accept Him as their Savior, will finally get to do just that! This will be *their first chance*, and if they concede and surrender to Christ and God our Father, this

will allow them to be changed and enter into the New Heaven and New Earth (Revelation 21:1–3).

#### **The Human Harvest is God’s Ultimate Goal**

God is determined to afford as many as He can to obtain immortality and live eternally in His Kingdom. It is His ultimate aim to save as many as He can. Keep in mind, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). God is literally moving heaven and earth to bring His plan to fruition and achieve the *long-term objective* of getting all that will come into His “spiritual dimension.” Peter reminds us, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved [the material world], what manner of persons ought you to be... [while] Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for the new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. Wherefore, beloved [Christians] seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Peter 3:11–14).

This is our mandate, to “*sow and grow*,” and learn to be without spot, blameless, and at peace with Him. Our objective today is to dedicate ourselves and commit to “*growing and sowing*,” so we may accrue the spiritual strength and healthy fruit that will assure us of our harvesting, which is the out-

growth from His pruning via the Holy Spirit that has been fueling and infusing us to serve Him in our lives as Christians (John 15:2).

John tells us we must abide in Him. He [*Jesus Christ*] is the true vine and the Father is the husbandman [*Farmer*]. John warns us if we bear no fruit we will be taken out; and if we bring forth fruit, He (*the Father*) will purge us to produce more. Over and over, John claims if we learn to allow God to work in our lives, He will guide and afford us opportunity to bring forth much fruit! And why is that so important? So we can be harvested (*resurrected*) and glorify the Father by bringing forth—by producing—much fruit (John 15:1–14).

This has always been obvious in the growing cycles of His physical creation, and it reveals HOW this spiritual truth applies to us for our edification and awareness of His expectations. Keep this in mind: What does a farmer do to a plant, tree, shrub, or flower if it doesn’t produce? Remember, if there is no value of production, then there is simply nothing to harvest. That is unfortunate and a disappointing thought!

So, take the time to drink of the water, get into the light, and talk to the Husbandman, while you rest in His grace. What I’m suggesting is we must drink in God’s Word regularly—study, meditate on it day and night, while we supplement this with prayer, talking to Him and resting in His grace while fasting. It’s the only way to assure you will produce *GOOD fruit* and then be harvested (*resurrected*) for greater works in His Kingdom that has no end!!



# Living in an Orwellian “Twilight Zone”

by Jeff Flanick



Picture if you will a world in which the moral compass, the social compact, and the definitions of “right and wrong” are skewed, or more accurately put: *obliterated*. Any reader who has seen *The Twilight Zone* (either when first shown during the golden age of TV, or viewed much later via Sci-Fi channel reruns) might have read the first line conjuring up Rod Serling’s voice in their mind’s “ear.” Wikipedia has a succinct one-sentence summary regarding the essence of *The Twilight Zone*’s theme as being individual episodes examining a “story in which characters find themselves dealing with often disturbing or unusual events, an experience described as entering ‘the Twilight Zone,’ often with a surprise ending and a moral.”—

The dilemma in our world today is even more complex than simply a controversy between what is “right” and what is “wrong” from a moral standpoint. What we are experiencing is more befuddling than simply a clash of cultures and of individual philosophies. There is an unprecedented distortion of facts and observable reality. Current events depict a “topsy-turvy” world where confusion and disorder rule the day on a scale not seen in living memory. Examples of such obvious convoluted reality seem to grow on almost a daily basis. Men are “women” and women are now “men.” Vaccines that don’t stop infection or transmission of a virus are promoted as being *effective* by established government medical agencies. Misinterpretations of data stating police inordinately kill one race of unarmed men versus another are touted as being factual by the mainstream media. Adding to the confusion of our time is an attack on **language itself**. There is the creation of new pronouns such as “zhe” and “zhem.” It is now in vogue to refer to a single individual as a “they” (instead of “he” or “she”). Modern terminology such as this is bewildering at best, or to many traditional people, it can be seen as being “just plain crazy.” For most of modern history, “they” has represented more than one person. There are also attacks on terms like “mother” with a (supposedly) more equitable term: “birthing-person.” These gyrations appeal to emotion over intellect, and the desire of political correctness over truthfulness. Being “woke” is now all the rage and a supposed “badge of honor.”

Attacks on **history** are also popular as evidenced by Critical Race Theory (CRT) and its revisionist narratives regarding the establishment of the United



States of America. While there may be a kernel of truth in some aspects of CRT regarding the lack of acknowledgment of minority contributions in our history, the degradation of the work, effort, and sacrifice of the founding fathers of our nation is disingenuous at best and falsely malicious at worst. Attacks on the imperfections of the men involved in the creation of our nation and its institutions have been foisted on the public in order to discredit many aspects of our history and our systems of governance. These strawman-type arguments obfuscate the reality of our history and refuse to give an appropriate historical context for the times in which these individuals lived. It should also be noted that no person is perfect, or without flaws, except for Christ the Messiah. These attacks on language and history are made under the guise of equity and inclusiveness.

The moral fabric of our Judeo-Christian-based society is under a relentless escalating assault from those wishing to destroy it. Schools are allowing explicit sexual material to be increasingly promoted within their walls. Sexual discussions concerning evermore devious and perverse material are being promulgated to an increasingly younger audience at breathtaking speed. As most readers have heard, even the Disney Corporation, long vaunted as a bastion for wholesome family entertainment, has vehemently opposed a Florida law banning such sexual discussions with children in grades Kindergarten through the third grade. My how things have changed! Many leaders in our land are adverse to parental objections over this cultural programming and insist the state has rights over parents in these matters. Former Governor McAuliffe of Virginia said the following in reference to this topic: “I don’t think parents should be telling schools what they should teach.” Many politicians on the left have similar views to McAuliffe.

A nation as diverse as ours will most assuredly be comprised of citizens holding differing views and opinions with their resultant conflicts and disap-

pointments. Unfortunately, as it stands currently, society’s ability to reach conclusions based at least on the premise of the need to acknowledge similar facts and evidence is now being untethered. Long-standing accepted views on concepts such as basic scientific biology, time-honored governing laws, and the need for gathering tangible evidence to understand a matter can no longer be agreed upon in the public square. The inability to rationally discuss fundamental components of an argument exacerbate the problem of synthesizing an accurate solution to problems confronting us. The foundations of our society are eroding with great speed, and the divide amongst various constituencies is ever widening. This contributes to a polarization in the body politic, and an inability for progress, teamwork, and unity.

Those in power are now attempting to resort to censorship and propaganda in order to assert their agendas. Recently it has been announced that the Department of Homeland Security is forming a working group to deal with “disinformation.” This proposed group is reminiscent of both George Orwell’s “Ministry of Truth,” as well as Stalin’s Department of Desinformatsiya (disinformation) in 1923. The aim clearly is to prevent alternate views from being discussed and presented. We have all heard of the “fact checkers” on Facebook and Twitter. Even data taken *directly* from official government sources were banned on media platforms with respect to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the controversial 2020 election. Who decides what is “information” versus what is “disinformation”?

The current publicity over abortion illustrates many of the points mentioned above. There is a lack of clarity and objective discussion on the abortion procedures themselves. This is especially true of late-term abortions. The recently rereleased CGI *Armor of God* program covering abortion offered some sobering reality on what takes place during an abortion. Many pro-choice advocates refuse to address this reality. The existence of a human life housed safely within the body of its mother (as God designed it) is not discussed; rather, the unborn child is fluffed off as being “genetic material” or a “clump of cells.” Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen testified this May, “It [abortion] enabled many women to finish school that increased their earning potential.” Yellen also stated during The Financial Stability Oversight Council’s annual report to Congress: “I believe that eliminating the right of women to make decisions about when and whether to have children





would have very damaging effects on the economy and would set women back decades.” Supporters of abortion are not only ignoring the reality of the unborn child, they are also refusing to accept the time-honored process for judicial review and judicial autonomy regarding a matter such as this. As decisions with respect to abortion appear to become rightfully, that is, constitutionally, delegated back to the state legislatures (or more aptly put, the people), abortion supporters want to disregard the rule of law, along with the mechanisms of democracy, in favor of mob rule and intimidation.

Tucker Carlson, in response to the current hysterias over the abortion issue as well as the supposed problem of extreme “racism” in our country, has said the following: “This isn’t just about intimidating Supreme Court Justices, five of them, into changing their views on *Roe v. Wade*. It’s about attacking Christianity, because Christianity stands in their way.”

He also has said, “Modern liberals hate Christianity not because it is repressive, but because they are. Any religion that puts God before government is by definition a threat to their power,” he said. “Christianity specifically rejects their most cherished dogma—which is a racial hierarchy. The Christian message is the opposite of the equity agenda.

“The totalitarians always do hate Christians. The Soviets killed the priests first, so did Mao. During the Spanish Civil War, the Communists subjected a statue of Jesus to a symbolic execution in front of firing squad.

“Undermining Christianity is the central project of the left.” Tucker is taking a wide-lens view of our current predicaments.

I have briefly listed just a few matters illustrating our world’s descent from truth and knowledge as it stands today. As with any philosophical examination, it is not the who, what, or where questions that are most difficult; it is the *why* question. The Scriptures help us understand our present situation with some clarity.

Throughout the Bible we see that mankind cyclically replaces God and God’s law with deception, error, and rebellion. Man wishes to be his own “boss” and he thinks he knows “better” than his Creator. The end result always ends in catastrophe: from the fall in the Garden of Eden, to the “collapse” at the Tower of Babel; from the captivity of tribes in northern Israel, to the fall of the southern kingdom of Judah among many others. The book of Judges records this in **Judges 21:25**: “In those days *there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*”



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

**Psalms 10:4** tells us, “The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek *God*; *God is* in none of his thoughts.”

The prophet Isaiah exclaims in **Isaiah 5:20–21** (NIV): “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who turn darkness to light and light to darkness, who replace bitter with sweet and sweet with bitter. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.”

Isaiah tells us in **Isaiah 59:6–10** (NKJV):

Their works *are* works of iniquity,  
And the act of violence *is* in their hands.  
Their feet run to evil,  
And they make haste to shed innocent blood;  
Their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity;  
Wasting and destruction *are* in their paths.  
The way of peace they have not known,  
And *there is* no justice in their ways;  
They have made themselves crooked paths;  
Whoever takes that way shall not know peace.  
Therefore justice is far from us,  
Nor does righteousness overtake us;  
We look for light, but there is darkness!  
For brightness, *but* we walk in blackness!  
We grope for the wall like the blind,  
And we grope as if *we had* no eyes;  
We stumble at noonday as at twilight;  
*We are* as dead *men* in desolate places.

**The answer to why we are living in times such as these is the abandonment of God and the willful ignorance of His Word and His Way of Living.** Our societies have become exactly what Paul told Timothy they would become. No more accurate description could be written to describe our world today than that which was recorded by Paul nearly 2,000 years ago:

“But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13).

Scripture details a world in the intermediate future which becomes more evil, more false, more wicked. The reader should be familiar with the warnings of Jesus in Matthew, the Book of Revelation, and many other places in Scripture. The persecutions to come may very well involve your stance on the Bible, the Sabbath, the Holy Days, and the rest of God’s Commandments. A true believer in God the Father and God the Son may possibly have to make a life and death decision on where they stand with respect to “disinformation.” As the New World Order coalesces into a synthesized governmental/media/military amalgamation, the likelihood that some type of “verified voice of ‘truth’” global organization is formed (which is diametrically opposed to Bible-based, Sabbath-keeping, Church of God, apostolic-styled worship beliefs and values) most certainly exists. We have seen through the recent pandemic experience glimpses of such control on citizens with respect to “acceptable” thought and “appropriate” societal action. It is not a stretch of the imagination to connect the dots and see the extension of these tools into the arena of individual beliefs and the exercise of religious freedom.

**Revelation 20:4** alludes to such a choice with respect to one’s belief and conviction:

“Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those

who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

We must strive earnestly to focus on **TRUTHFUL information** so readily available to us today in the form of God’s written Word. As David said in opening the book of Psalms: “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or set foot on the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the Law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night” (**Psalms 1:1–2**).

Understanding God’s Word will help us to prevent falling for “disinformation.” The Scriptures are the key to life, both in this present life, as well as life eternal.

How wonderful will the Millennium be? Can we imagine it? Isaiah opens his book with this description of the world to come:

“In the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.

“And many peoples will come and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways so that we may walk in His paths.’

“For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. Then He will judge between the nations and arbitrate for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

“Nation will no longer take up the sword against nation, nor train anymore for war” (**Isaiah 1:2–4**).

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# The Black Hebrew Israelite Movement

by Mike James



I decided to write this article due to the influence I see the Black Hebrew Israelite (BHI) movement is having on the Church of God. I am aware of some of our members leaving the Church due to this influence. In other places our members have interacted with people who have been influenced by the BHI. Years ago, the Church put out a pamphlet addressing the Christian Identity Movement (CIM) due to similarities between some of our beliefs and the beliefs of this movement. You can write or call to obtain a free copy (it's entitled *The Seed of Satan: Does the Devil Have Offspring on This Earth?*) Or, if you prefer, you can read it online: <https://www.british-israel.ca/Seed.htm>. We need to remember there are distorted gospels out there (Galatians 1:6–8) that we need to recognize and call out.

Just like the CIM, the BHI movement has many similar beliefs to the Church of God. These similar beliefs include the belief in keeping the Sabbath, holy days, and God's law. We all place an emphasis on prophecies pertaining to Israel, too. One of the major differences between the Church of God and BHI and CIM movements is the Church of God believes God's plan of salvation is for *all* people. Many in the BHI and CIM movements believe God is only focusing on saving either the white race or the black race. There are many nuances of belief among these racist groups just like there are nuances within the Church of God. There are also nuances in how they understand the prophecies pertaining to Israel. And just for the record, the CGI does not have a doctrinal statement on prophecies pertaining to Israel. Herbert Armstrong's teachings on this subject are looked at with different opinions within CGI. That will be the subject of a future article.

Some BHIs do believe God is trying to save everyone, but they think the black race is Israel. Many other BHIs believe God is only trying to save the black race and other people of color. This is perhaps the biggest issue I have with the BHIs, although there are many others.

For this reason I want to make people aware of the movement, its origins, and its beliefs to help them understand that, despite their similar beliefs, most of them are involved in teaching a lot of false doctrine.

The origins of this movement can be traced back to the late nineteenth century in the United States. Many of the early leaders were either slaves or influenced by the slave experience. Connections were drawn between African Americans being slaves with the ancient Israelite experience as slaves in Egypt. Many BHIs today look at the negative experiences of African Americans in the United States and connect it to the cursing God prophesied on Israel. The ironic thing about this is many of the theories about the United Kingdom being Israel developed in the eighteenth century, but they were due to the various blessings British people felt God had bestowed on them. More

about this in a future article.

One of the early leaders of the movement was William Saunders Crowdy. Crowdy was born into slavery on the southern peninsula of Maryland in 1847. By 1863, Maryland outlawed slavery and Crowdy joined the Union forces as a cook at age 16. After the war many slaves were moving to places in the Midwest for greater freedom and opportunities. States like Kansas and Oklahoma were popular destinations for recently freed blacks. Crowdy eventually settled in Oklahoma, where many small towns had a majority black population and black leadership.

According to Crowdy's story, he began to hear voices in his head which commanded him to obey them. Crowdy was frightened by the voices. His granddaughter related, "It was many years before he

know when people were talking to him and he would stare into space while his lips moved, but no words came from his mouth. Crowdy believed the experiences were from God, telling him to establish a new church.

In his final vision Crowdy saw tables descending from heaven with the names of established churches on them. There was also filth and vomit on these tables. Then Crowdy saw a small table coming down with the name Church of God and Saints of Christ. This became the name of his new church.

Crowdy began to teach seven keys that he believed he learned from God. One of the keys was to follow the Ten Commandments, but another was to not drink any wine.

By the time of Crowdy's death, he had gained

thousands of followers who believed in his view that Jesus, Moses, and the early Israelites were black. Hundreds of ministers were trained in Crowdy's beliefs, and many went on to form their own groups.

Crowdy's influence opened up the way for Judaic, Islamic, and Rastafarian teachings that grew up among blacks over the next 30 years.

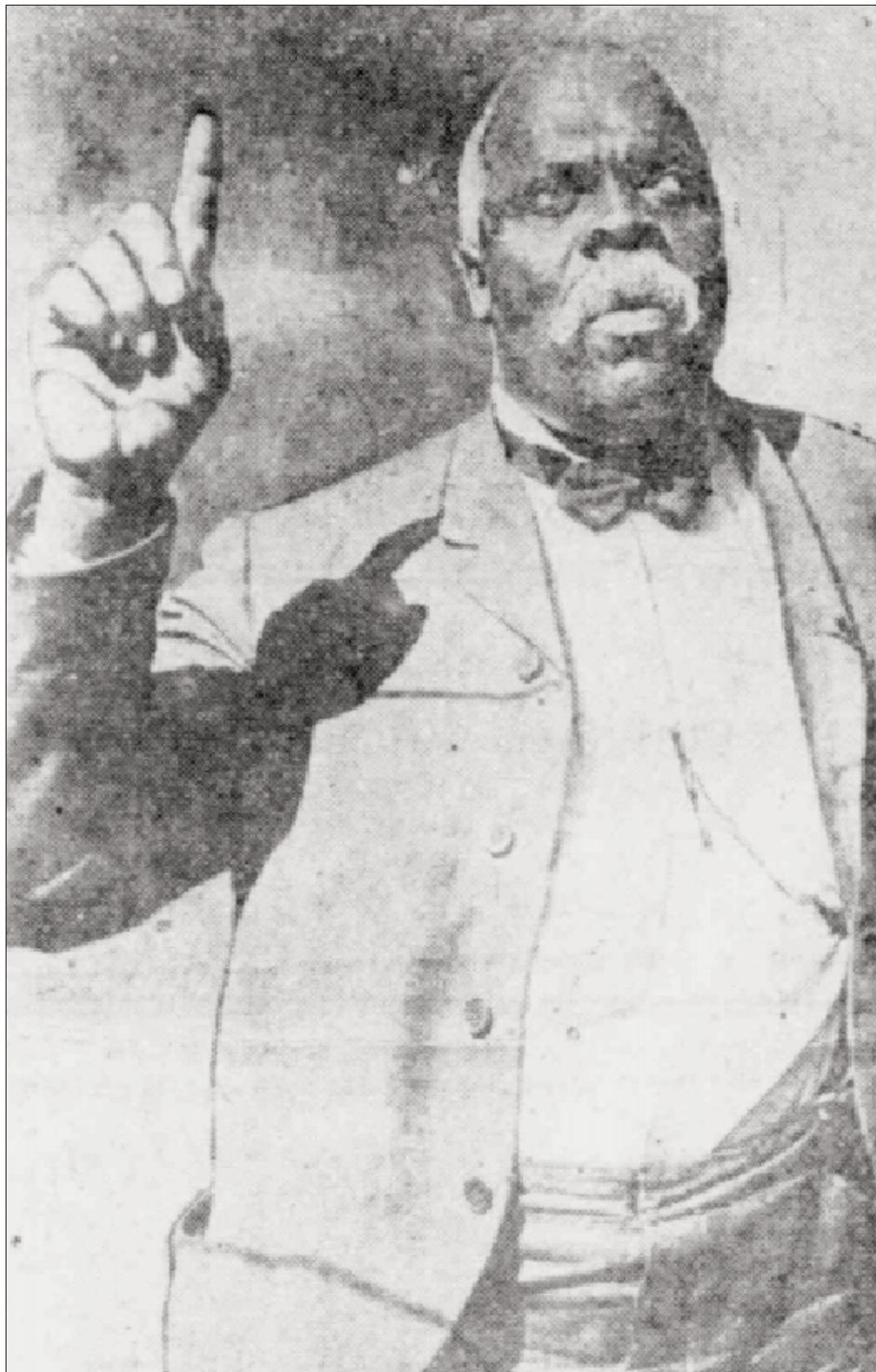
Another early leader in the BHI movement was Frank Cherry. Cherry grew up in the South and worked as a sailor. He learned Hebrew and Yiddish and eventually set up a church in Philadelphia in 1915. Unlike Crowdy, Cherry taught that whites were hated by God.

It would seem clear to most that the Bible teaches God desires to save all people. He is no respecter of persons and treats all people equally (Romans 2:11). How is it that BHIs can believe God is only trying to save blacks? The first thing you need to understand is that most BHIs do not follow proper biblical hermeneutics in interpreting the Word of God. BHIs use their own spin on the Scriptures, and they call it the receiving of precepts.

BHIs use Isaiah 28:9–10 to support their idea that God has given His special people (blacks) the correct understanding of Scripture. They understand the word "precept" in Isaiah 28 to mean a special understanding. So, in other words, God has given BHIs special understanding to interpret various scriptures in their own way. That's how they come up with some of the outrageous ideas we will be discussing a bit later. If you debate them on some of these scriptures, they will reason you don't have the special understanding

they do to discern the scripture correctly.

The true interpretation of Isaiah 28 relates to the sins of Ephraim. God is making a statement that Ephraim (Israel) is like a drunk person. They can't be taught just like a drunk can't be reasoned with (Isaiah 28:1, 3, 7). Verses 9–10 then makes the analogy of teaching a child by using building blocks of knowledge. A little bit here and a little bit there. Once a child masters something, you then build upon that knowledge. But since Ephraim won't listen God will teach them through people of another tongue (verse 11). Judah will suffer a similar fate to Israel because they will not listen to God either.



William Saunders Crowdy (1847–1908)

learned that the voice was not his imagination but actually the voice of God speaking to him." I doubt the voice came from God due to some of the teachings Crowdy later developed. We must remember Muhammad also heard voices that told him he was receiving the final revelation from God. The Koran contradicts the Bible in several ways, as do some of Crowdy's teachings. The voices Crowdy heard could have been originating from a different spirit than God.

By 1892, the voices and visions he was experiencing became more compelling and his behavior became more erratic and distant. At times he did not



The BHIs also use scriptures like Matthew 13:10–11 to back up their beliefs on scriptures like Isaiah 28. In Matthew 13, we read about Jesus only revealing His truth to His chosen people, the disciples. BHIs try to use this to justify their twisting of the Scriptures. It is true that God is not allowing everyone to be aware of His truth right now, but, as we will see, these groups are way off on major truth revealed in the Bible.

One of the most egregious errors of many BHI groups is their belief that God is only saving Israel (or the Black Hebrew Israelites). Some of these groups include other people of color (Indians, Latinos, etc.) as being saved too. Some believe white people may be saved, but they will be enslaved in the future kingdom. But many BHIs only see salvation for Israel. This goes against one of the most fundamental teachings in the Bible.

The BHIs use scriptures like Matthew 10:5–6, 23 and Matthew 15:21–24 to point out that Jesus said He wanted His disciples only to preach to the lost sheep of Israel and that is who He came for. The problem is they don't look at all the Scriptures. That is what we must do before figuring out a doctrine.

God obviously intends salvation for all people (John 3:16). The reason Jesus said He came for the lost sheep of Israel is because it had to fulfill prophecy. In Ezekiel 34, God says He will bring back His lost sheep, but what they didn't know is the final fulfillment of that prophecy will take place in the future. It did not take place at Christ's first coming because His sheep did not know Him. And that was part of His strategic plan to bring in the Gentiles.

John 1:11 goes on to tell us that Jesus came to His own (Israel) and they did not know Him. But we read later in the New Testament that God first opened the way to salvation for the Jew, but now for the Gentile (Romans 1:16). Finally, in Acts 10–11, Peter realizes God includes *all mankind*, not just Israelites, in His plan of salvation.

Notice what the Scriptures make very clear. In Acts 10:34–35, we read God accepts men who fear Him and do what is right from EVERY NATION! First Timothy 2:4 states that God desired that ALL MEN be saved! Second Peter 3:9 states that God does not wish that ANY should perish! There are many other scriptures that make it very clear God has a plan for all of mankind to get an opportunity at eternal life.

Let me be clear before I move onto my next area. The color of people's skin does not matter to God. If Christ came as a black man, it would not matter. If He came as a Chinese man, it would not matter. But the Bible is clear—He came as a Jew.

BHIs use several scriptures to try and get us to think the ancient Israelites and Jesus were black people. Here are some examples.

Let us begin with Exodus 4:6, which BHIs use to say Moses was black. Here we read about Moses' hand turning leprous or white. The argument is since his hand turned white, he must have been black to differentiate from the color his hand already was. First, the context of this scripture is not about Moses' skin color. Second, leprosy turns the skin into a white color along with creating bumps on the skin. Some BHIs think white here means vitiligo. Vitiligo is a disease that causes whitening of the skin. Again, there is a problem here because white folks can develop vitiligo on the skin. Remember, white people are not "white." Even white people can develop vitiligo and you can see the lighter vitiligo appear on the skin of a white person. This scripture is about Moses being made aware of the power of God.

Another scripture they use to support their idea the ancient Israelites were black is Jeremiah 14:2. This scripture addresses (depending on the translation you use) them being black as they turn to the ground to lament. The context of the scripture pertains to the Jews being in a state of mourning. When the ancient

people mourned, they would fall prostrate on the ground and many times mourn in sackcloth and ashes. The rubbing of the ashes on themselves would give the appearance of being black due to the ash. This is not about their skin color being black.

Another preposterous interpretation of Scripture comes up in Genesis 25:25. Here we read about the birth of the twins Esau and Jacob. Because the scripture addresses Esau being ruddy or red, BHIs interpret this to mean his skin was white to note the reddish hue in his skin. They argue that black people do not show redness in the skin like white people do. There are several issues with this interpretation. We can begin with the limited chance two twins would be different colors. Secondly, 1 Samuel 17:42 uses the same Hebrew word found in Genesis 25:25 to address David. If David was ruddy like Esau, how could the BHI argue that David was a black man, which is something many of them believe?

Also, Lamentations 4:7 addresses the princes of Israel and uses the same word there for their ruddiness. Another problem with this theory is the BHIs cite the Jewish historian Josephus, who wrote that many Israelites fled into Africa. I'm not disputing that some Israelites fled into Africa. What the BHIs fail to mention is Josephus also claimed that Esau and Jacob were identical twins except for the hairiness of Esau. In other words Josephus did not teach Jacob was a black baby and Esau a white one.

**Let me be clear before I move onto my next area. The color of people's skin does not matter to God. If Christ came as a black man, it would not matter. If He came as a Chinese man, it would not matter. But the Bible is clear—He came as a Jew.**

They also use Revelation 1:14–15 to explain that Jesus must have been a black person due to the description of His hair and feet. First, please understand that the book of Revelation is a highly symbolic book. Colors, numbers, beasts, and various other items represent something often in a symbolic way.

In this case, in verse 14 Jesus is described as having hair white like wool. BHIs argue that older black men's hair looks white like wool. But notice carefully the scripture says, "His HEAD and hair were white like wool." So not just his hair is white, but also his HEAD. Obviously, as many commentators agree, the point of this scripture is to use the color white to signify the righteousness of Christ—much like the white garments the saved saints wear in Revelation represent their righteousness.

BHIs then argue that verse 15 is describing Christ's feet as being black. In verse 15, we read about His feet being like brass and burned in the fire. BHIs think if His feet are burned in fire, they will turn black. Again, they use their precept idea to interpret these scriptures anyway they like. These verses are not about the color of Christ's skin, but of the nature of His character. Christ being burned in the fire signifies His suffering for us just like fire takes out impurities in anything it burns.

Another major problem with BHI theology revolves around Deuteronomy 28. This chapter of the Bible is known as the blessings and cursings chapter. God lays out to Israel during the time of Moses the blessings they can achieve if they are obedient to God and the curses that could befall them if they are not.

The BHIs focus on the cursings section of this chapter to put forth the idea that these cursings can

fit no group of people better than the slaves who suffered during the North American slave trade of the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. There is no doubt that the slaves suffered at the hands of the slave traders and plantation owners, but Deuteronomy 28 has nothing to do with the North American slave trade. The various curses that did play out upon Israel can be addressed during later times in Israelite history. Let's look at some of the proof.

In Deuteronomy 28:49 we read about a nation coming to oppress Israel. The nation is likened to an eagle due to its swiftness. Another clue as to who this nation is relates to their language being different from that of Israel. BHIs, using their precept logic, say that this nation is the United States, which was heavily involved in the slave trade of Africans. This theory is without merit.

When we investigate some of the later prophets' writings, we find a better answer to who this eagle nation was. In Hosea 8:1 we read about an eagle coming against Israel because they transgressed against God, His law and covenant. This is a direct connection back to what God warned Israel about in Deuteronomy 28. Now what do scholars believe Hosea was referring to? The Assyrians, who laid siege to Israel in the 700s B.C. and eventually conquered them.

In Isaiah 28:11, we also read about the language of the people God would bring against Israel as being foreign. Isaiah 33:19 makes mention of this other speech also. Commentators write that Isaiah is alluding to the Assyrians and the Babylonians who would later conquer both Israel and Judah due to their lack of adherence to following their God.

In Deuteronomy 28:53, we read about cannibalism being a curse that would befall Israel due to their sins. Once again, this curse happened in Israel long before the North Atlantic slave trade of the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. Evidence of this can be found in 2 Kings 6:24–31 and Lamentations 2:20 and 4:10.

Deuteronomy 28:36 tells us Israel's king will be driven out with his people to another nation to worship gods of wood and stone. This story happened to Judah's King Zedekiah in 2 Kings 24–25 and 2 Chronicles 36. But what African king was taken to the United States or the British Commonwealth during the slave trade?

Another problem with the BHI movement's view of Deuteronomy 28 is found in verse 52. Here we read about the cities of Israel being besieged and their walls being knocked down. This fits in historically with what happened to Israel and Judah in the 700s and 500s B.C., but it does not fit in with the slave trade of the Middle Ages. White slave traders did not have to lay siege to African villages to take the slaves away. Many were sold into slavery by their own people.

Finally in verse 68 of Deuteronomy 28, it talks about Israel going back to Egypt as slaves on ships. It says they will offer themselves as slaves there, but no one will buy them. Some BHIs teach that Egypt here is a type of the United States or United Kingdom. But this does not fit. In history Israelite slaves were conscripted into the Assyrian army. They were forced to fight for the Assyrians back in Egypt. Other commentators suggest this verse also pertains to the Egyptian slave trade which continued in Syro-Palestine after the destruction of Israel and Judah. We know for a fact that the African slaves were sold, so this scripture could not be talking about them because it says no one will buy them.

Other false ideas of some of these groups include problems in understanding the birth of Christ. Many of these groups believe Joseph was the biological father of Jesus through intercourse with Mary. They believe that "virgin" in Luke 1:26–27 means young maiden. They also believe that Luke 1:34 means

Mary was not aware of how the pregnancy would take place. Obviously, Luke 1:35 explains how it would take place through the power of the Holy Spirit. But based on their precept interpretation of Scripture, the BHIs teach the Holy Spirit in verse 35 was “the spirit of the Law.” In other words, since the forefathers of Israel had resisted the law of God, Mary would fulfill it. The power of the Highest over Mary would be the instructions according to the law directing Mary on what to do. Again, this is an outrageous interpretation of the scriptures.

To support this view on Mary, the BHI also reason from Luke 1:38–39 that since Joseph also lived in the city of Judah, where Mary went to visit Elisabeth and Zachariah, you must put the dots together to realize they had sex during her stay there. The BHIs reason Mary was in the same place as Joseph for three months (Luke 1:56–57). Again, this is being made up out of thin air. The Scriptures say nothing about Joseph and Mary having sex before Jesus is born. This is heresy.

Luke 1:34 makes it clear that Mary did not have sex before Jesus was born. Matthew 1:18, 24–25 provide further confirmation of this fact. BHIs counter these scriptures by telling their adherents to counter this argument by asking Christians what the marriage laws were among the Jews. In other words, if you had sex with someone, you had to then marry them (Exodus 22:16). BHIs teach that Matthew 1:18 means before the wedding feast, wedding chamber, and before tokens of virginity had been taken. Again, they say this due to their “precepts” interpretation of the Bible. Biblical commentators agree the language of the Gospels make it clear Mary was not sexually active until after Jesus was born.

The BHIs also use scriptures like Luke 4:22; John 6:42; and Luke 2:48 to prove Joseph is called the father of Jesus. Of course, Joseph took the *role* of Jesus’ earthly father, but Luke 2:49–50 makes it clear that God the Father was also the Father of Jesus.

Because of their belief that God is only saving the Israelites (people of color or black people), BHIs have a different way of looking at the word “Gentile” in Scripture. Most of them don’t believe it means non-Israelite nations, but that it means non-believing Israelites or Israelites that have been disbursed among the nations.

For scriptural support they will cite verses like James 1:1, which mentions the twelve tribes scattered abroad. All this scripture is saying is the letter of James was written to Israelites who had been scattered among the different lands. It is not defining the word “Gentile.” They also use John 7:35 in concert with James 1:1. In John, we read about the Jews surmising where Jesus will go. They say, “Will he go to the dispersed among the Gentiles...?” (KJV). From this they reason that the word “Gentiles” here is referring to the dispersed Israelites living in other nations. That is not what this means at all. The NIV translation makes this scripture much clearer: “Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks...?” The point of this scripture is not that the Jews or Israelites are Gentiles, but that they live among the Gentiles.

Despite what some people on the Internet are say-

ing, “Gentiles” in the Old Testament comes from the Hebrew word *goy* or *goyim*. The word merely means heathen or nations. In the New Testament the word gentile comes from the Greek *ethnos* which means nations or peoples. In other words, non-Jews or non-Israelites. Proof of this can be found in Luke 21:24. Here we see the word *ethnos* used for “nations” and for “Gentiles.” The context of this scripture is about the destruction of Jerusalem (the capital for Jews and Israelites). It was to be trampled on by the Gentiles (meaning the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70). You cannot get around the fact that Jews are not Gentiles and vice versa.

Despite what the BHIs think about Gentiles, the Bible is clear God is out to save all peoples. John 10:16 is speaking about the Gentiles as God’s lost sheep. Romans 3:29 tells us God is the God of the Jews and the Gentiles. In Acts 2:21 everyone who calls on God can be saved.

Another misconception BHIs teach is about Esau or Edom. BHIs teach that when Esau and Jacob were born, Esau was white and Jacob was black. They then use scriptures that seem to be speaking ill of Esau/Edom to prove that God is not going to save white people. First of all, their idea the twins were two different colors is incorrect. Secondly, their use of prophecies about Edom are also off base.

They use Obadiah 1:15–18, which talks about the house of Esau becoming stubble. They play this up to mean God wants to destroy all whites for what they have done. God’s prophets use very similar phrases about other peoples too, not just Esau. In fact, in Amos 6 God talks about destroying Israelites. Another scripture they use is Malachi 1:1–5 that speaks about God’s hatred for Esau. But again, God says He hates Israel too in Jeremiah 12:8. For further proof God is not going to destroy all of Edom note Amos 9:12. Here we read about a remnant of Edom being ruled by Israel (see verse 11). The context of these verses is the Millennium. In fact, this scripture from Amos is also quoted in Acts 15:17, where the context is about saving the Gentiles.

The Bible is full of scriptures that make it clear God has always welcomed all nations, races, ethnicities into His community if they would follow God. The Old Testament is full of these scriptures. Here are a few:

Exodus 20:10. The stranger could keep God’s Sabbath day.

Numbers 15:15–16. If the stranger would be like the Israelites, he could join them.

Leviticus 24:10–23. BHIs teach you are whatever your father was. In this scripture an Israelite who had an Egyptian father is dealt with according to God’s law. In other words, the Bible looked at this Egyptian (according to some BHIs) as an Israelite.

Exodus 12:38, 47–49. A mixed multitude left Egypt with Israel.

Leviticus 19:33. Israelites were to love the stranger as themselves.

Jeremiah 12:16–17. Gentiles living around Israel could become part of Israel if they followed God.

Isaiah 56:3, 6–7. Foreigners could become part of Israel and join themselves to God.

Genesis 15:19 and Numbers 32:12. Caleb the Kennizite was a part of Israel.

2 Kings 5:1–23. Naaman the Syrian was a part of Israel.

1 Kings 17:8–16. The Canaanite widow from Zarephath was a part of Israel.

One other major area of disagreement I have with many in the BHI movement pertains to their viewpoint on apocryphal and pseudepigraphic scriptures. BHIs believe these scriptures are equal to the Bible. We do not. History makes it clear that these other books were never included in the canon of Scripture by the Jews or the early Christians.

Jesus even confirms what He considered Scripture in Matthew 23:34–35 and Luke 11:49–51. Both scriptures mention “the blood of Abel...to the blood of Zechariah.” What Jesus is alluding to is the first book of the Hebrew canon which of course is Genesis where Abel is mentioned. But many do not know that the Jews set up the Old Testament books with 2 Chronicles being their last book. That is where the blood of Zechariah is mentioned. None of the apocryphal or pseudepigraphic books were used by the Jews as canonical. So when Jesus says from Genesis to 2 Chronicles, He is including only the Old Testament books everyone typically considers the Old Testament.

Not until 1546 at the Council of Trent did the Catholic Church officially add apocryphal books to their Catholic Bible. The reason this was done at that late date was a counterattack against the Protestant Reformation. Some of the apocryphal books supported Catholic doctrines that the Protestants were protesting.

In conclusion, I write this article not to fight against our BHI brothers and sisters. They have many beliefs that are correct and true. But when there is great error like who God is and is not trying to save, we need to speak against that error (John 12:48).

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The Church of God International is an open church.

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



# The Greatest Event Ever Planned

by George Roper



One of the most challenging things to manage is planning for an event. Event planning, whether in a small or large setting can be an overwhelming experience. There are so many components that must be overseen and guided by a coordinator to achieve an optimum experience for all in attendance. The coordination of hosting an event encompass many facets that need attention. From procuring the venue, to curating the menu, from booking the entertainment to creating the guest list—all while trying to remain within a budget. Aspects such as these, down to the smallest detail, are addressed in preparation for any affair.

Event management can become complex in balancing the collaborating features of a program. One of the most trying aspects in steering a function is in working with the various personalities of those involved. Some personalities may be seen to be overbearing, inclined to hamper progress, or offer contributions that are unwelcomed. Another challenge to the forming of an event is the occurrence of the unforeseen. The proverbial adage “Whatever can go wrong, will go wrong,” has worried many a planner.

Given the demands that can accompany the planning of an event, many would rather not be in a position to organize any manner of festivities. In a comprehensive list of the most stressful life events composed by researchers Holmes and Rahe, getting married was found to fall in the top ten. According to Holmes and Rahe, the planning of the nuptials and the perception of the subsequent life adjustment to follow registered high on their composed stress scale of life events, lending evidence that the planning and preparation stages of an event can prove to be overwhelming.

Many who take on planning an event are well-intentioned. However, once the planning moves from theory to application in practice, it can become evident that sufficient preparation was not made. In 2011, Thessa, a young girl from Hamburg, Germany, invited a handful of friends to her sixteenth birthday party through Facebook. Unbeknownst to her, the posting went viral, resulting in 15,000 people who did not know Thessa, confirming to come by RSVP. Alarmed, Thessa’s parents notified police and fled their home before Thessa’s birthday event arrived. The party was cancelled and public announcements were made, to no avail, as 1,500 people descended upon the home on the date of Thessa’s birthday. A hundred police, with a contingent on horseback, were stationed at the residence, as the crowds who gathered with signs, presents, homemade cake, and alcohol sang Happy Birthday to Thessa. Throughout the night that transpired, eleven arrests were made, two fires were extinguished by the fire department, one police officer was injured, and dozens of women wearing open-toed shoes cut their feet on broken glass. Those incidents notwithstanding, the crowd was peaceful. Thessa’s experience highlights that proper event planning is not a chore to be lackluster about.

In yet another account demonstrating how proper planning and execution can derail an event is that of the Frye festival. The Frye festival is known as one of the most disastrous debacles to occur in the realm of event planning. The Frye Festival was a music festival organized by entrepreneur Billy Mcfarland and rap artist Ja Rule that was to occur in the Spring of 2017 on an island in the Bahamas. The festival was to be headlined by mainstream musical artists

and offer luxury accommodations, accompanied by fine dining. The target audience for the event was a youthful generation of the upper class and those with means. In the winter of 2016, a highly successful and influential marketing campaign was conducted to promote the festival which would occur the following year. Marque, A-list models and social media influencers were hired to create video footage, act as spokespersons, and to promote the event. The marketing campaign was an enormous success. As a result, the concert was sold out with some ticket packages reaching \$250,000 a ticket. Six thousand concert-goers were expected to appear. Although the promotional venture had created strong buzz, due to mismanagement, there actually was no infrastructure for a concert to be held nor was there appropriate housing to accommodate the attendees.

As the festival date approached, musical artists, sensing the disorganization, pulled out. When the attendees arrived, there was utter chaos as housing arrangements, transportation, bathroom facilities, food, etc. were nonexistent. As a result of the failed music festival, many concert-goers lost their money, numerous employees were not paid, and a number of investors lost upwards of twenty-five million dollars.

In 2018, Billy Macfarland plead guilty to wire fraud to defraud investors and ticket holders. He was sentenced to six years in prison. The Fyre festival account is further evidence that the undertaking of

**There is no event more elaborate and more complex than the event that God is planning with all of humanity.**

events requires proper planning.

Indeed, many events do go well with the time and efforts that have been invested into them. In the events that we may direct and attend, irrespective of the size, there is a scope attached to those functions, nonetheless. Our affairs will have limitations that need to be controlled. Whether they be budgetary limitations, attendance limitations or limitations by way of supply of food and beverage. We seek to operate our events in accordance with whatever capacities that we may be working with. Should we exceed those capacities, our event could suffer greatly. It is with this acknowledgement that we should find ourselves in awe at the planning of another event—an event planned and managed by God.

The Bible details throughout its pages an event that God has ardently and extensively been planning, an event that will ultimately have humanity be the benefactors of eternal life. In the process of executing that plan, Christ came to achieve objectives that would make God’s planned event accessible. By Christ’s own admonition, He stated:

“For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day” (1 John 6:38–40, NIV throughout article)

This newfound circumstance will result in individuals sharing the same inner reasoning and the same outward appearance as Christ. John recounted these sentiments to his audience:

“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2, NIV).

Such an ambitious plan was prepped and organized before the world that we are familiar with was

established.

Paul acknowledged this fact to his readers:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Ephesians 1:3–4).

God’s planning was elaborate and precise, so as to account for all things that would need to be addressed in the various stages of preparation leading to when this monumental event will be completed—so much so that even beings that operate on a higher level than man have found God’s event planning to be intriguing.

As Peter pointed out in reviewing the development of God’s plan:

“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into” (1 Peter 1:10–12).

From the perspective of man, it is a massive undertaking. Far exceeding the constraints of our own events with regard to attendance and all other aspects.

The writer of Hebrews confirms that the expected attendance for this event involves many people.

“In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered” (Hebrews 2:10).

Unlike people of our day, God has not fallen overwhelmed by the sheer number of attendees that would be involved in such an event. Nor has he been dissuaded by the difficult personalities that he has encountered in man. Instead, He and all of creation anxiously look forward to when this event that has commanded so much time and attention will finally take place.

“For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:19–23).

In our own affairs, event planning can be stressful and trying. However, when planned for properly, successful events can be rewarding. There is no event more elaborate and more complex than the event that God is planning with all of humanity.

“There will be no more delay! But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets” (Revelation 10:6–7).

Beyond being impressed with the sheer magnitude of how this event will be conducted, we should remain grateful to be a part of the greatest event ever planned.



# 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 consequences of our own decisions. For example, what we eat, our lifestyle, and physical activity contribute 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: “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” (Genesis 22:12). You see, He wanted to see how Abraham would *act* according to the directions He was given. He passed this 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* have 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).

# The “Oneness” Doctrine

## An Old Heresy That Never Goes Away

by William Blank



The “oneness” doctrine (also known as “modalism”) has been around for a long time. It basically proposes that the Father and the Son are not two separate persons, but that the Father became the Messiah. It is one of the deceptions that John was warning against in his first letter. “Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ. This is the antichrist, he who denies the *Father and the Son*” (1 John 2:22). A number of Christian denominations hold to the oneness doc-

trine, and now it is creeping into the Messianic movement. This has happened because some people are ignorant of the fact that the word “one” has more than one meaning in Hebrew and Greek, as it does in English. Genesis 1:1 states, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The word “God” is translated from the Hebrew word *Elohim*, which is the plural of *Eloah* and means a deity. Genesis 1:26 says, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, and after Our likeness.’” That is why the author of the fourth Gospel starts out by saying, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word

was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” This is definitely indicating that there were two persons in the beginning. First John says that “God is love” twice (1 John 4:8, 16). *Love cannot exist without at least two persons*.

One of the “proof texts” that the oneness proponents use is John 10:30: “I and my Father are one.” This is a case where one means unity (or one) in purpose and character. If a person maintains that this means *one in number* then they should become a Sikh because Jesus in His beautiful prayer says,

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“The glory that You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be *one even as We are one*” (John 17:22). The Sikhs believe that eventually everyone will be absorbed back into one being.

Another “proof text” that is used is Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD is one.” “One” in this verse is *echad*, which means united and is from *achad*, which is a primitive root that means to unify (see *Strong’s* 259 and 258). Since *Elohim* is plural, it cannot be restricted to one in number.

A number of people do not realize that in the Old Testament “the LORD” can refer to both the Father and the Son. It says in Genesis 19:24, “Then *the LORD* rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from *the LORD* out of heaven.” There are a number of times in the Old Testament where it says that the LORD appeared to humans: Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, etc., and yet Jesus said that *not any man has seen the Father* (John 6:46). Jesus said that He came in His Father’s name (John 5:43). In His prayer, He said, “And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.” John 8:58–59 says, “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’ So they picked up stones to throw at him.” The reason they wanted to stone Him was

because they realized that He was saying that He was the One who appeared to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:1–15). These are some of the texts that show that “the LORD” that appeared to humans in the past was the same person that became the Messiah.

John 10:17–19 is another “proof text” that is used by the oneness proponents because in the King James Version it says the Messiah has power to take up His life again, thus (according to them) eliminating the act of the Father in raising Him. The problem is that the KJV used an incorrect choice of words. In the Greek the word translated power is *exousia*, which means privilege or authority, the terms most translations use. Power would be from a different Greek word: *dunamis*, from which the English word “dynamite” comes. There are a number of texts that say God (the Father) *raised* Jesus. Read Acts 2:24, 32; **3:15, 26**; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33, 34, 37; 17:30–31; Romans 4:21; 6:4; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:15; 2 Corinthians 4:14; **Galatians 1:1**; Ephesians 1:17–20; **1 Thessalonians 1:9–10**; Hebrews 13:20; and 1 Peter 1:19–21. And there are many more. (The passages in bold are especially significant.)

John 8:17–18 states, “And in your law also, it has been written that the witness of two men is true. I am One who witnesses concerning Myself, and the Father who sent Me witnesses concerning Me.” If Jesus and the Father are not two separate beings then

the principle of two or more witnesses establishing something (which is proclaimed throughout the Scriptures) would be a sham.

The amazing and wonderful example of the willingness of Abraham to offer up his beloved son—the event the Messiah alluded to when he said that Abraham saw His day (John 8:56)—loses much of its significance if the oneness doctrine is valid.

It is incomprehensible to me how anyone who has read all the writings attributed to John could hold to the oneness doctrine. The following is a list of the texts which indicate that there are two separate entities:

John 1:1, 18; 2:16; 3:16–18, 34–35; 5:17, 19–27, 37, 43, 45; 6:29, 32, 37–40, 44–46, 57, 65; 7:16, 28–29; 8:16–19, 27, 28, 29, 38, 42, 49, 54; 9:4; 10:15, 17–18, 25, 29, 38; 11:4, 41–42; 12:26–28, 44–45, 49–50; 13:1, 3, 31–32; 14:1–2, 6–7, 10, 12–13, 16, 21, **23–24**, 26, 28, 31; 15:1, 8–10, 15–16, 21, 23–24, 26; 16:3, 5, 10, 15, 23, 25–28, 30, 32; 17:1–15, 17–18, 21–26; 18:11; 20:17, 21, 31; 1 John 1:2–3, 7; 2:1, **22–24**; 3:8, 23; 4:9–10, 14–15; 5:1, 5, 9–11, 13, 20; 2 John 1:3, 9; Revelation **1:1**; 2:27; **3:5, 12, 21**; 5:1 connected to 7, 9, 13; 12:10, 17; 14:1, 4, 12; 20:6; 21:22–23; 22:1, 3 (The scriptures in bold are especially significant.)

I probably missed some and there are many more in the rest of the New Testament. The following are just a few to consider:

Matthew 3:17; 11:25–27; 27:46; Luke 9:35; 23:46; Acts 7:56; Philippians **2:6–11**; Hebrews 1:13.

## Questions & Answers

by Vance A. Stinson

### Getting tattoos, mixing fabrics, and trimming sideburns

**QUESTION:** In this article (<https://www.denisonforum.org/resources/what-does-the-bible-say-about-tattoos/>) Dr. Dennison attempts to address the topic of tattoos on professing Christians. Although I personally don’t endorse the idea of getting tattoos, the article does bring out a couple of comparisons that I sometimes struggle with. For example, the mixing of fabrics and the trimming of sideburns were forbidden, but of course today most men groom their sideburns. So clearly certain laws given to Moses are still intended to be obeyed, yet others aren’t. How are we to discern the difference in those laws?

T.H., Dallas, TX

**ANSWER:** It’s best to approach this subject with the understanding that the principles underlying *all of the commandments, statutes, and judgments* are universal and therefore are to be obeyed. The problem is that we don’t know for sure what some of those laws that seem odd to us actually refer to. For example, the mixing of fabrics may have been forbidden because the priest’s garments were of mixed fabrics, so to avoid confusion and keep the priesthood separate (the meaning of “holy”), the people did not wear garments of mixed fabrics. Or, it may be that merchants mixed cheaper fabrics with the more expensive ones, producing inferior products while charging too much for them. The underlying universal principle, or law, is clear and is still in force today: Don’t cheat folks! Whatever

the case, it’s certain that God doesn’t have some kind of issue with what kinds of fabrics our clothing is made of, just as he doesn’t insist on taking one’s shoes off when in His presence (unless that’s the custom showing respect and honor within a particular culture).

Tattoos, cuttings in the flesh, and cutting the edges of the hair and beard were apparently associated with pagan religious practices at the time, so the underlying law, which is still in place, is: Don’t attempt to serve God the same way the heathen serve their false gods, and stay far away from superstitious and magical rites.

It is probable that some of those practices were magical rites designed to bring good luck. God is simply telling the Israelites to rely on Him and avoid putting their trust in magic and superstition for healthy crops, babies, etc. Archaeologists have uncovered evidence for some of these customs, but there are still uncertainties about many of the specifics pertaining to them.

Because of my age and background, when I see tattoos I do not associate them with anything positive. However, I realize that the people who get them today usually do so for reasons other than magical or religious or as a sign of servitude, and since I usually don’t know their motives for getting tattooed, I cannot tell them they are in violation of God’s law. The most I could do would be to tell them that I think their tattoos are unbecoming and that some day they will most likely regret having gotten them.

The specific commandments within the Torah tell us something about how the timeless, universal Law of God applies to specific circumstances common to the time in which the Law was given to Israel. For example, Moses commands that a parapet be put on the roof of one’s house (Deuteronomy 22:8). The purpose of that law was for the protection of the people who would go up on the roof and use it as a living area. Have I disobeyed that law by not putting a parapet around the roof of my house? No, of course not. My roof is not used as a living area; I’ve never had or served a single meal upon it. But I am to obey the underlying universal principle, which means that

if I dig a swimming pool in my backyard, I must fence it in or do something to make sure my neighbor’s children don’t wander into it. It’s called loving one’s neighbor as oneself—and *that* is the timeless principle (law) underlying the parapet instruction.

Here’s another example: I recently underwent surgery—the surgeon cut into my flesh, and I have the scar to prove it. Now the law forbids cuttings in the flesh. So did I violate the law? No. The Bible does not forbid cutting the flesh for the purpose of fixing a problem. It does forbid cutting the flesh for the purpose of getting a “god” to do a favor for you (see 1 Kings 18:27–28).

In one way or another, all those laws that seem odd to us had some kind of purpose like that—either for the protection of human life or the preservation of God’s way of life as opposed to heathen religious/magical practices.

### Why did God command the prophet Ezekiel to bake with excrement?

**QUESTION:** Please explain the meaning of Ezekiel 4:12 (KJV): “And thou shalt eat it as barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight.”

P.D. (sent by e-mail)

**ANSWER:** The things Ezekiel was commanded to do in the sight of the people (in chapter 4) were symbolic actions describing the things that would come upon Jerusalem and the house of Israel. In 4:12, the prophet is commanded to enact (symbolically portray) the punishment described in 4:13: “Thus shall the people of Israel eat their bread unclean, among the nations where I [God] will drive them” (ESV). The prophet, repulsed by God’s command to him to bake his bread “on human dung”—that is, bake the cake using human excrement as fuel for the fire—was permitted to substitute cattle manure instead (verse 15). The point here is that the prophet is, by symbolic actions, describing to the people the consequences of covenant breaking.



# You Have Some Nerve!

by Stephen Scale

Today (April 7, 2022) was fascinating!!! I had the privilege of being seen by the renowned Jamaican neurologist Dr. Daniel S. Graham, truly a great Jamaican servant, one of a kind (literally!). You can read about his achievements in this article in the January 2, 2017 issue of the *Jamaica Gleaner* (“Jamaican neurologist dominating his field,” Health, *Jamaica Gleaner* (jamaica-gleaner.com).

He is the only neurologist in Jamaica (in 2022) that can execute a nerve conduction velocity test. It costs J\$85k, which at the time I got the quote felt like a lot (imagine what surgery will cost!!!). But, upon completion, it was worth EVERY CENT.

I’m doing this test because about eight (8) months ago I started feeling a tingling sensation in my left little finger. I thought it might be due to high blood pressure or stress. Sometimes when I sleep too little over a few days of intense work pressures, parts of my body goes numb, indicating that I need to rest. I asked a doctor about it and he told me to monitor it, and that if it persist I should come back to him.

About six (6) months later I saw another doctor, Dr. Nicholson at medical associates about it. She gave me a referral to see an orthopedic specialist, Dr. Steven St. Juste. I set an appointment for a few weeks later. When I finally saw him, he expertly examined my left hand, doing some basic checks, like testing if I could grip a piece of cardboard between my little and tiny fingers, and using a little pointed hammer to check the sensitivity in my nerves by gently knocking various muscle points in my hand. He intuitively asked if the sensation was the same on both sides of the ring finger on my left hand. I didn’t notice before, but there was a vast difference. He went on to explain that I was exhibiting what is called Guyans Canal Syndrome, a type of ulnar nerve entrapment, which happens in proximity of the Guyans canal, just below the wrist. But, just to be sure, he wrote a referral for me to do a nerve conduction test. He mentioned that there is only one in the island, that the other one was extremely difficult to reach, being overseas most of the time. Dr. Graham was basically my only option.

I called and was told that the test would cost J\$85,000. They only accepted cash and they didn’t accept health insurance. Sounded very suspicious to me! On top of that, I had to do a COVID test a day before I came in. I wasn’t enthused, I wanted to pull out, forget about the test, move on with my life, and live with the ailment. I asked my wife, Mishka, what she thought. She said it’s best to address the issue now, because it would only get worse. Makes sense! I listened to my wife, as I do most of the time; she is a woman of wisdom.

I arrived on time for the 1:00 p.m. appointment. Dr. Graham politely invited me in and explained to me that he had to handle a matter on the road for 30 minutes, and then he would be back. I took the opportunity to quickly buy some household supplies, then return promptly to the doctor’s office to catch up on some work deliverables while I waited. Thirty minutes became one hour, then two hours (it seems Dr. Graham was not acquainted with afternoon traffic in Kingston; his estimate was woefully off!). I was a patient getting impatient. I had a class at 5:00 p.m., two hours from now. The test was to take about one and a half hours. There was no way I would make it home in time for the class. I either had to leave right now or make up my mind to miss class. Knowing myself, if I left I was not likely to come back; too many things to do. So I decided to wait. I am so happy that I did!

### The Tests

Dr. Graham conducted two test to determine the location and magnitude of my nerve issue, a nerve conduction study (NCS) and an Electromyography (EMG).

#### Nerve conduction study (NCS)

The test involved an electric jolt to my nerve, with some connections between two points along the nerve on my arm. The normal flow entails the brain sending signals to the nerve endings, the jolt would reverse this, sending a strong signal from the nerve in the arm to the brain. The brain would respond with a signal of its own along the transmitting

nerve. The connections would measure the speed of the signal along the nerve.

#### Electromyography (EMG)

Another test involved sticking a needle-like probe through the skin into the muscle. Dr. Graham then asked me to move my hand, which would require my brain sending instructions to the muscles in my hand via the nerves, telling it to move. The connections on my hand would register the electric waves that represents the instructions. When there is no movement triggered from the brain, and my hand is still, then muscle is supposed to be silent, not generating any waves. However in the areas of my hand served by the damaged nerve, it was clocking erratic waves. Dr. Graham explained this is because they were not under control of the brain. Muscles are by nature restless, their function is to contract and enable movement, i.e. the muscle stays busy...it has a tingling sensation.

### The Insights

The experience was very insightful...painful...but I learnt a lot about how the nervous system works (either that or my latent biology knowledge came rushing back, after all I finished fourth in the Caribbean in CXC Biology).

Here are some of the insights/observations:

- All nerves are connected to the head/brain.
- If the nerve is impeded, the connection to the brain is weak...
- All muscle tissue has nerves connected to them. If the nerve connection is damaged, then the muscle no longer reacts in conjunction with the instructions from the brain.
- My left little finger separates from the rest of my fingers in my hand. I have to force the finger to stay close to the rest of my fingers.
- The affected muscles become numb, weak and eventually shrinks back (i.e. muscle loss). I recently observed (to my unpleasant amazement) that my hand was getting thin. The muscle between my thumb and index finger has all but disappeared, there is just mostly skin and bone...

### Spiritual lessons from my experience with Ulnar Nerve Entrapment

While lying there soaking up every moment of the experience (all two hours of it) and the periodic sensations of electric shock waves jolting through my arm, I reflect on the spiritual lessons from this experience:

- Christ is the head (the brain), we believers are a part the body (different muscles)—Colossians 1:18.
- We are connected to Christ through the spirit (the nerve)—1 Corinthians 2:11–16.
- Christ communicates with us through the Spirit, using the Word, instilling his character in our minds, conscience—Galatians 5:16, 22–25.
- The connection via the Spirit can be weakened, damaged, or even severed completely—John 15:6.
- The connecion can be weakned/damaged by:
  - Un-repentd Sin:
    - Your sins have separated you from God—Isaiah 59:2.
    - If I cherished sin in my heart...you would not hear me—Psalm 66:18.
    - Conscience seared like with a hot iron—1 Timothy 4:2.
    - Take not your holy spirit from me—Psalm 51:11.
  - Trauma: e.g. disillusion, disappointment...
    - If we are not directly connected, but we are depending on the faith of others, we are likely to be traumatized if they die or otherwise leave the faith—Matthew 26:31.
    - If something bad happens in our life; e.g., we lose a loved one tragically or to illness. We had prayed for their healing, but they died. We might be disappointed in God and lose our faith, our connection to Christ.
    - Just as though every muscle must be connected to a nerve that connects to the brain for it to function proper-

ly, so every believer must be personally connected to Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

- Spiritual inactivity:
  - If we don’t use the Spirit, we lose the Spirit.
  - Do not quench the spirit—1 Thessalonians 5:19.
  - Take away the talent from the one who did not put it to use—Matthew 25:28–29.
  - Stir up the gift—2 Timothy 1:6.
  - Do not give up meeting together—Hebrews 10:25.
  - Not reading the Word—2 Timothy 3:16; Matthew 4:4.
  - Not praying and fasting—Matthew 26:41.

- This usually happens gradually; the sooner it is detected, the easier it is to correct.
- In the case of trauma the damage can be quite sudden. You have to ensure that your faith and trust is not in any man, but in Christ. The shield of faith (Ephesians 6:16) is necessary to protect you against the fiery darts—i.e., the potential trauma and trials that could possibly cause your faith to be destroyed through disillusion or disappointment.

When the spiritual connection is damaged or weak...

- We no longer move according to the instructions of the Head, Jesus Christ. He is sending instruction by the Spirit, but we are unable to hear clearly.
- The message becomes distorted; we stop believing the truth and start believing in lies and false doctrines.
  - Itching ears, gathering teachers to suit their fancies—2 Timothy 4:3.
- We may find ourselves moving away from the rest of the body (like my finger moved away from my hand), finding it hard to come to church services, having to force ourselves, feeling like a misfit when we do attend, until eventually, we drift away...into isolation.
- We become numb, insensitive to what’s happening to others in the body; we become self-absorbed.

#### BONUS LESSON:

- Be patient, and be a good patient. Dr. Graham allowed me to teach my 5 p.m. class right there in the office. I did not have to fight the traffic; I was quite comfortable. I got to do the nerve test, teach my class, eat a late lunch, and reflect on how fearfully and wonderfully made I am, in God’s image and likeness.

### What can we do?

1. Develop a habit of regular spiritual self-examination, early detection of disruptions in the connection to the Head. Symptoms include:
  - Loss of interest in church and other spiritual activities
  - A sense of detachment from the body
  - Not functioning in the body
  - A tingling sense of irritability
  - Start doubting the doctrines you were once convicted of
2. Ask for help! (I went to the doctor.)
  - Don’t ignore the symptoms.
  - Seek God for help; fast and pray about the situation.
  - Consult an expert (pastor, elder, deacon, other spiritually connected brethren).
3. Interrupt the cause of the connection weakening/damage.
  - Sin:
    - Confess your sins—James 5:16; 1 John 1:9.
    - Repent of your sins—Acts 3:19.
    - Ask for forgiveness.
  - Trauma:
    - Stop trusting in man; trust in God.
    - Stop idolizing men, worship God alone.
    - Get rid of false notions that God will not allow bad things to happen to you and those around you. Consider God’s



blameless servant Job: “*naked I came into this world, naked I will leave...the LORD giveth, the LORD taketh away; blessed be the name of the LORD!*”—Job 1:21–22.

- Spiritual inactivity:
  - Resume spiritual activity immediately.
  - Work with an accountability partner on this; iron sharpens iron—Proverbs 27:17.

4. Strengthen the connection.
  - Eliminate the things that cause weakening and damage of the connection.
  - Reinforce the habit of regular spiritual activity: church attendance, Bible reading, meditation, prayer, fasting (“Draw near to me and I will draw near to you”—James 4:8).
  - Get close to others in the body. Rekindle strained relation-

ships, make new relationships in the body, talk to new persons, and help those in need.

**Conclusion**

I do not know what will happen with my left hand, what the prescription will be, or whether it will be effective. Time will tell. But I hope the lessons I gained from this experience will help me and others to stay connected to our Head, Jesus Christ.

# Some Lessons Learned Over Trials

by Michelle Algarra



God allows Christians to go through severe trials as an opportunity to exercise faith and trust in an all-powerful and all-knowing God. It is hard to believe, though actually true, that every time we go through a difficult problem or adverse situation there are corresponding blessings. That is God’s way. For every hardship we experience, there are parallel blessings we usually do not immediately discern. There are lessons learned over all our experiences, good and bad.

Sometimes we pray the “rosary,” counting all our bad experiences in ancient history as if they were still occurring in the present. We must learn to live in the present and for the future, not for a dead past. And painful as it is, and difficult as it is, we must learn to forgive all those who have wronged us, and also to learn to forgive ourselves for our own shortcomings and mistakes.

The failures and traumas we go through in life can

actually be a testing ground to develop fortitude and find alternative ways to become successful in our endeavours, in spite of or despite those failures. We must also learn patience and tolerance, and overcome anger and outbursts of wrath, blaming everybody for our trials and branding them with derogatory terms like morons or psychotic individuals.

We must also be deeply grateful for the spiritual truths we have learned as God opened our hearts and minds to the truth, while learning to respect other people for differences in religious beliefs and perspectives. Every person has been endowed by God with conscience and the capacity to discern right from wrong, regardless of religious affiliation or ideology.

Sometimes we feel as if it is the end of the world when we go through terrible problems. But there is a best friend and parent who can empathize with our needs and is always willing to listen to our heartfelt and deepest woes, feelings, perceptions, and complaints. That is God the Father. He is our loving parent, and Jesus is our elder brother. Being God, they

have the capacity to bear our yokes for us and grant us the strength to continue on with our lives with hope and faith.

We also have the obligation to learn to sympathize with the problems of other human beings and strive to find ways to help them with their trials, and not be constantly judgmental and critical. If none of them are perfect, neither are we. Only Jesus is perfect, never having committed one single mistake, fault, or sin.

Learn to forget the painful experiences of the past, and be deeply grateful and thankful to God for the blessings in the present, and pray for a fruitful and productive life with whatever remaining time we have left in this brief human existence.

It is ultimately God’s decision whether or not we shall be granted eternal life, but this is a promise and a gift given by grace, with corresponding obligation on our part to overcome and bear fruits. It is difficult but we must learn to utilize and harness the power of the Holy Spirit to defeat our human nature and strive hard to be more like God.

## A Brief Review of the TV Series *The Chosen*

by Michelle Algarra

As a Jewish Christian viewer, I have favorable comments about *The Chosen*. We finally have a good TV series-cum-serialized movie on Jesus Christ without depictions of the horrible torture He had to endure—scourging and crucifixion scenes not included.

The movie was very good despite the fact it was part-fiction, part non-fiction. It was a fictionalized attempt at portraying the Gospels; however it presented a fresh portrait of Jesus Christ and the other biblical characters. The characters behaved in a natural way like real people, most especially Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus Christ was depicted as a normal person, not in the stilted sanctimonious holier than thou persona in other Jesus films.

of human existence, not just “spiritual death.” Being born again is to be granted immortality in God’s Kingdom, eternal life being a gift from God. Jesus did come to ransom us from our sins, and give us opportunity for eternal salvation in God’s Kingdom.

Some Protestant evangelicals give credence to “minor” forms of fornication, and the Samaritan woman’s adulterous behaviour was justified moralistically. Of course, we do not know any of the reasons

behind why the Samaritan woman had five husbands, as the Bible is silent in this area. However, Jesus did call her to repentance and conversion, not being a respecter of persons. And He gave respect and deference to women, who were looked down upon by society for centuries.

The TV series was historical fiction, though also based on the Bible. Scale of 1-10, it rates 9 in terms of quality and 8 in accuracy of perspective.

## Feast of Tabernacles 2022

### Pinellas Park, Florida

*October 10th – October 17th*

YOU ARE INVITED to join us in the sunshine state in beautiful Pinellas Park, Florida, for the 2022 Feast of Tabernacles! We will have our daily worship services at 11:00 AM along with wonderful opportunities to fellowship before and after services, with many planned activities for all groups.

**Location**  
Pinellas Park Performing Arts Center  
4951 78th Avenue North  
Pinellas Park, FL 33781

We will be offering Ignite for our teens ages 13–18. And have our newly enhanced Sparks children’s program: “Monumental,” for ages 2 to 12.

Go off-road for a **Monumental** adventure through the colorful canyons and sunbaked trails of the southwest. By exploring God’s awesomeness, your kids will form a rock-solid faith for the road ahead. Each day at **Monumental FEAST**, kids trek through field-tested rotations that reinforce relevant Bible points and immerse kids in new adventures.

All major motels offer discounts for AAA, AARP, Military, Good Sam Club, and many others; don’t forget to ask for the discount when reserving.

**We are looking forward to seeing everyone having a blessed Feast!**



# CHURCH NEWS



THIS IS A WONDERFUL TEAM we are building, based on their diversified gifts and enthusiasm to work together as servant leaders. — *Robert Onsando*

Standing in the **FRONT ROW**, from left, is 1) Brother Zablon Anyumba; 2) Brother Evans Ogiri, whom we baptised two years ago; 3) myself (Robert); 4) Brother Richard Mose, who worked with Brother Patrick, and we agreed with Patrick that I will help this brother grow as we exploit his talents. 5) Brother Ezekiel is a wonderful person whom we have been working with for a while now.

On the **BACK ROW**, from left, is 1) Brother Reagan, who is a youth we are mentoring. 2) Brother Johnson will be helping me at Igwera church, where we have the orphans and widows and where we recently baptized five people. 3) Brother Moffat is a very special man, transformed from being a Rastafarian to a man gifted in planting churches. He has planted seven churches that we are now working with, striving to establish them in a good understanding of biblical truth. 4) Brother Benjamin Bett, and finally, 5) Brother Kagera, whom we have been working with him for about a year and a half.

## 2022 HOLY DAY CALENDAR

*These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times (Leviticus 23:4).*

- NT Passover:** April 14 (observed at sundown)
- Feast of Unleavened Bread:** April 16–22
- Pentecost:** June 5
- Feast of Trumpets:** September 26
- Day of Atonement:** October 5
- Feast of Tabernacles:** October 10–16
- Last Great Day (Eighth Day):** October 17



**ABOVE:** Robert Onsando, who is spearheading the African CGI work of spreading the gospel and planting churches, was ordained during a recent visit to the United States. Left to right: Blake Silverstein, Vance Stinson, Robert, and Wynn Skelton.

**BELOW:** Mike James, who officiated Robert’s ordination ceremony, with Robert on the day of Robert’s ordination.





# In Loving Memory

**Martha Bell Melson**  
March 15, 1939 – March 20, 2022



**Martha Bell Melson**

Martha Melson, age 83, of Nashville, Arkansas died on Sunday, March 20, 2022 in Nashville. She was born March 15, 1939 in Nashville, Arkansas, the daughter of the late Charlie Fred Lamb and Iva Bissell Lamb.

Mrs. Melson was a member of the Church of God International and was an avid yard sale shopper.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Charles Victor Melson; one daughter, Susan Annette Melson Jacoby; one grandson, Richard Bryce Shelton; three sisters, Mertle Lorene Brown, Opal Lavaughn Fritts, and Mary Louise Bennett; and one brother, Charles Henry Lamb.

Survivors include one son, Stan Melson (wife

Deb) of Nashville; two sisters, Dora Jean Lamb and Janice Diane Davis, both of Nashville; five grandchildren, Joseph Mobbs, Colton Lane Melson, Brentley Dewayne Shelton, Charles Bradley Shelton, and Johnathan Blake Jacoby; as well as five great grandchildren.

Graveside services were Thursday, March 24, at Restland Memorial Park, with Wynn Skelton officiating, under the direction of Latimer Funeral Home in Nashville.

**Dorothy Ann Davis**  
May 26, 1941 – March 19, 2022

Dorothy Ann (Jacobson) Davis, 80, passed away on March 19, 2022. She entered the place of safety and joined the hundreds and thousands who will be the first fruits of Jesus Christ at His coming.

Dottie was born in Iron Mountain, Michigan on May 26, 1941 to Evar Axel and Winifred (Hopper) Jacobson. Dot was most passionate about her faith and Bible study. She loved going to church every week and loved the people there. Dorothy was a registered nurse and spent much of her time being a caregiver to the sick, her friends, and her loved ones. Over the years, she mastered the art of praying for the ill. In fact, she prayed for over 100 people daily.

Dorothy also enjoyed photography and researching family genealogy. There were two commonly heard phrases at every family gathering when she had a camera in her hand—“Can you do that again?” and “Now—look natural!” Dot also loved to travel; she went to Ireland, England, Australia, Canada, and most of the United States. She was also an avid experimenter with cooking; she enjoyed learning about natural foods, new cooking techniques, and health through nutrition.

Grandma Dot, or Aunt Dottie, loved her family dearly, especially her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She was a child at heart and cherished her time with them most, enjoying the occasional tea party or puppet show, encouraging her family members join her whenever possible. She was also an avid game player; in fact, games were a serious



**Dorothy Ann Davis**

sport. She especially enjoyed playing cribbage, and when she couldn’t talk others into a game, she played solo (and to her credit, she only lost once). Speaking of sports, she generally didn’t like them, but if her children or grandchildren were involved, then she was the loudest one to root for them at games.

Dorothy is preceded in death by her parents, Evar and Winifred Jacobson; her two brothers, Bradden and Harry Jacobson; and her daughter, Suzanne Blanchat.

She is survived by her loving husband of 60 years, Max Davis; her son, Timothy (Jeanice) Davis; and her grandchildren, Bryan Blanchat, Bethia (Joel) Driver, Tim “TJ” Davis, Alayna (Callum) Wood, Chelsea (Bryt-Lee) Dowler, Derek Blanchat, Carleigh Blanchat; and her greatgrandchildren, Henry and Thomas Wood, and Addalyn, Mayleigh, and Caela Driver.

## FEAST OF TABERNACLES 2022 Poughkeepsie, New York!

**It’s time to step up our planning for this year’s Feast of Tabernacles, and the brethren who will be keeping the Feast this year in New York invite you to join them at the Pouhkeepsie site for eight wonderful days. Here is the information you’ll need for making your plans:**

**Holiday Inn** (MEETING HALL ON SITE)  
2170 South Road  
Poughkeepsie, New York 12601  
(845)462-4600

- **MAKE RESERVATIONS BY PHONE 24/7 under the name “Church of God International,” Code “CGI”**
- **\$109 Weekly Rate, \$209 Friday & Saturday Rate**
- **1 King Bed /or 2 Queen Beds, Sofa Bed, Microwave, Mini Fridge, (no kitchenette)**

Holiday Inn Website: [www.ihg.com/holidayinn/hotels/us/en/poughkeepsie/pours/hoteldetail?cm\\_mmc=YextLocal\\_-HI\\_-US\\_-POURS](http://www.ihg.com/holidayinn/hotels/us/en/poughkeepsie/pours/hoteldetail?cm_mmc=YextLocal_-HI_-US_-POURS)

**Residence Inn** (OFF SITE)

2525 South Road  
Poughkeepsie, New York 12601  
(845)463-4343

- **MAKE RESERVATIONS BY PHONE 24/7 under the name “Church of God International,” Code “CHURCH OF GOD”**
- **\$139 Rate, Full Kitchen**
- **Studio King, with Sofa Bed**

Residence Inn Website: [www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/pouri-residence-inn-poughkeepsie/overview/?scid=45f93f1b-bd77-45c9-8dab-83b6a417f6fe&y\\_source=1\\_NjUwMzc0LTQ4My1sb2Nhdklubi53ZWJzaXRl](http://www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/pouri-residence-inn-poughkeepsie/overview/?scid=45f93f1b-bd77-45c9-8dab-83b6a417f6fe&y_source=1_NjUwMzc0LTQ4My1sb2Nhdklubi53ZWJzaXRl)

Residence Inn Reservation Link: [www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1646357191685&key=GRP&app=resvlink](http://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1646357191685&key=GRP&app=resvlink)

**This year’s Feast will feature a three-hour dinner cruise that will sail by the Statue of Liberty and in view of the New York City skyline. Tickets are \$75 per person.**



# 4 baptized at Shreveport-Bossier City CGI



FOUR NEW SISTERS were added to the family on March 19, 2022. They are (left to right) Lleshaun Aldridge, Sarah Nowack, Susan German, and Keitha Smith. Tyler Scroggins (below), who had been baptized previously, received the laying-on-of-hands. With four baptisms, five laying-on-of-hands ceremonies, and 32 in attendance, it was a Sabbath to be remembered—a truly joyous occasion!



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### Summer Issue

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