



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

The official newspaper of The Church of God International

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"Put on the whole armor of God"

Winter 2014

Feast of Tabernacles 2014 REPORTS

Feast in the Philippines



Filipino brethren gathered for eight joyous days of fellowship and worship at Tagaytay City (above), Maranding in Mindanao (below, left), and Iloilo City (below, right). (Photos submitted by Rene Corpuz.) For more reports on the Feast of Tabernacles 2014, see **Feast Reports**, page 6.



IS A CALIPHATE IN THE MAKING?

Part 1

Over the last few years the Middle East has exponentially increased in violence and civil unrest. Syria and Afghanistan, have entered into the equation along with Iraq, Iran, China, and Russia—increasing concerns due to the danger of providing terrorist groups like ISIS, Al Qaeda, the Taliban, Hamas, and others, “safe-havens” to strengthen their positions for launching attacks throughout Europe, Canada, and the United States. Where is all this leading—what is the “end game” that’s in play?

by Bill Watson



Bill Watson

Many throughout the Western nations just don't understand what they are involved with—*what they are fighting*. Some of the leaders in the West, in particular the United States, refuse to call these *Islamic radicals* for what they are. Instead, they opt to “shade” it in gray, obfuscating the direct terminology for more *politically correct terms* that insinuate criminals, lone wolves, illegal immigrants, gang members, etc.—actually preferring in some cases to categorize obvious terrorist attacks as crimes, or “work place violence.” The result of this kind of abstruseness does nothing for properly characterizing the

real dangers, risks, and potential chaos; the destruction, death, and jeopardy these *Islamic radicals* pose to the open and free lifestyles of Western Civilization—most throughout North America and Europe just *DON'T GET IT!*

Perhaps, the only possible way to understand what is actually going on is by asking and answering the questions: is there a caliphate underway? *Is that what is in progress?* Is that what *radical Islam* really wants? If we can answer these questions, maybe we can appreciate what we're up against. Clearly, if some of our Western leaders would look at this problem from the *perspective of the objective* these “killing cells” have, then perhaps, we could begin to under-

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stand the enormous magnitude and severe degree of risk and peril our civilization—our lifestyles—are confronted with. After all, it’s not like these *particular Muslims* have been secretive or coy about their goals. No, to the contrary, they have been *very open and public—even using social medias*—announcing their *ambitions and intentions to destroy* the Israeli state in Palestine and Western civilization as their “*end game*.”

It’s unfortunate, but many living in the West, especially in North America, don’t recognize this is *serious and very real*—it’s as though it’s so foreign to our way of thinking that we just can’t get out of “denial.” Sadly, future accelerated violent conditions are going to take many by surprise, and when these tragedies erupt—events that *will mandate the term “terrorist attack,”* because they will result in the death and mutilation of innocent civilians in the streets of the United States, Canada, and throughout Europe—it may be too little, too late.

50 TERRORIST ATTEMPTS OR ATTACKS HAVE ALREADY OCCURRED!

When I mention or, more accurately, *warn* there are growing concerns that North America will experience civilian casualties—innocent men, women, and children killed or maimed by some heartless radical Muslim killer(s), or sleeper cell—I do so with the *deepest sense of conviction* that it’s *just a matter of time* before it happens with *increased* frequency and severity. Why do I say that? Because it’s already happening around us, but we’re being *lulled to sleep* by the terminology our leaders insist on using, which marginalizes the attention to danger and vigilance necessary to take *precautionary action!* Why do they insist on



Photo by Spencer Platt/Getty Images News/Getty Image

this “politically correct” terminology? Answer: because they know this would completely disrupt our freedoms, liberties, and Western lifestyles like no other force could; it is the *result of what terror does to a free and open culture!*

But, this does not dismiss the facts—and the facts are as follows: regardless, of how much we don’t want to call these conditions of danger “terror” and these very macabre killings “war”—*facts are facts*—these *jihadi Muslim*s have *declared war on Israel and the West:* and that *makes it a war of reciprocation on terror!* It’s time our leadership and military sagas understand that, unless the same level of commitment is equally met with what these passionately committed religious fanatics express, our way of life will seriously be threatened and ultimately affected with *heart-breaking circumstances* that may touch many of us personally in the way of bombings, house invasions, and execution-style *open killings*, or cold-blooded murder. Again, why do I say this? Am I being hyperbolic? Is this over-the-top exaggeration? It wouldn’t appear so, since these *Muslim jihadist* groups like ISIS, Hamas, Al-Qaeda, and Hezbollah are presently killing thousands by these very means—it’s their MO—it’s becoming more commonplace every day to hear about these outrageous and unconscionable acts of violence and their *clarion public justification* for doing them!

Let me mention just a few and take note what this much-abbreviated list already shows has occurred over the last 13 years since 9/11 in 2001.

- EL AL@LAX (2002): Egyptian nationalist shoots and kills two at EL AL ticket counter at LAX airport.
- Albany, NY (2004): Two men help fund an informant’s terror plot.
- Little Rock, AR (2009): American trained in the Middle East, working as a “lone wolf,” shoots and kills one soldier at a military recruitment center.
- Fort Hood, TX shooting (2009): Military psychiatrist, acting as a “lone wolf,” shoots up a military deployment center, killing 12 soldiers and a civilian.
- Underwear bomber (2009): Nigerian man attempts to blow up a USA bound airliner, but passengers subdue him.
- Times Square bomb scare (2010): Pakistani-American trained in Pakistan tries on his own, but fails, to set off a car bomb in Times Square, NYC.
- Parcel bomb (2010): Al-Qaeda, in the Arabian Peninsula, attempts to implant bombs in printers shipped in cargo planes bound for the USA. An insider informant stopped it.
- Pentagon shooter (2011): US marine reservist with jihadist literature shoots

at military buildings in DC and is arrested as he seeks to desecrate the graves of veterans of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

- Capitol bomber (2012): A Moroccan man whose visa expired years earlier attempts to act as a homicidal bomber and blow up the Capitol, but is stopped by the FBI.
- Boston marathon (2013): Two Chechen-American brothers detonate two homemade bombs in a crowd at the Boston marathon, killing three people and maiming dozens. One was captured; the other was killed in a firefight.
- Terrorist vehicular attack (2014): Quebec man, turned to radical Islam, runs down two Canadian Forces personnel, killing one, with his car. A chase ensues; he flips his car, emerges with a knife, and is shot dead by police.
- Cold-blood killing (2014): The shooter, a radical Islamist, shot in cold blood the Honor Guard at the War Memorial in Ottawa, Canada, and then ran into the Parliament to kill the attending legislators, but was shot dead in the building by the Sargent-of-Arms.
- Hatchet attack (2014): A man believed to be tied to radical Islam wielding an ax in a busy NYC business district wounded two police officers before he was shot dead by two other police officers.
- The ongoing public beheadings by ISIS of noncombatants who are, in particular, westerners working in the Middle East as journalists and health/social workers.
- November 2014: Two young Palestinians storm a Jerusalem synagogue with meat cleavers and a gun killing four rabbis before they’re killed in a shoot out by police.

I could detail much more about what we’re beginning to see and list literally pages of attacks—some stopped and thwarted, but sadly others that were successful—resulting in the death and maiming of hundreds of people. We are now starting to see the “face” of terrorism change its MO to a more random-target tactic, enhanced by the element of surprise! This is hard, if not almost impossible, to defend against because of the nature of our open society in Western culture.

Surprisingly, the positioning of some of these groups is now beginning to encroach into the borders of North America. **Presently**, there is *video documentation* and FBI information available, identifying about *three-dozen* “home-grown” Jihadist terrorist camps scattered across the United States. It is suspected these compounds are under the leadership of Sheikh Mubarak Gilani, founder of the US-based group called “Muslims of the Americas.” I know it is hard to believe that this could be operating within the borders of the United States, but the freedoms and liberties that are provided by law apply to all, until, of course, that law is broken.

However, declassified FBI documents confirm one such Islamic jihadist group *in Texas* was identified as part of these three dozen training camps that were further identified by Homeland Security as connected to this “Muslims of the Americas” organization. Additional investigations linked this group with a Pakistani-based militant group Jamaat al-Fuqra, which originally was started by Gilani in New York City, believe it or not! The Clarion Project and ACT *confirm this*.

The Jamaat al-Fuqra group has been linked to collaborating with major terrorists organization, which include Hezbollah and al-Qaida (ref. *WND*).

But, as stated before, our culture and lifestyle is at *serious risk*, and this is beginning to gain the attention of the common citizen due to the increased disclosures of this kind of information and the frequency of *homeland terrorist attacks*. Unfortunately, the *heart-breaking events* mentioned earlier and the effect it’s going to have on all of us sooner or later will be life-changing. It’s unavoidable that security will increase, *resulting in the loss of certain degrees of freedom*, as these terrorists—lone wolves, or al-Qaeda, ISIS, Hamas, or Muslim

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Brotherhood operatives—expand and improve their techniques inside, as well as outside, of the borders of North America.

There are some real dynamic times up ahead for us. Our world conditions seem to change almost daily with some kind of event that lends attention to another *prophetic nuance*—Russia and China signing a very *enormous trade agreement without involvement* of the USA. Also, the Pope is conducting ecumenical meetings under the auspices of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. Both are ecumenical offices created for the purpose of dialogue with multiple representatives from a variety of religions. The first one includes Muslims, Hindus,

Taoists, Sikhs, and Jews. The latter includes popular evangelicals such as Kenneth Copeland, Rick Warren from the Saddleback Church; even Joel Olsteen has indicated a degree of endorsement toward the Pope and Catholic Church. *Just what is going on?* some might ask.

There are serious considerations to take into account. Many are concerned as to where this is all leading and how it fits into the prophetic script that is in our Bible. What does all this mean? Are we in the making of something that will turn into another world power? And if so, what effect will that have on the community of nations throughout the world? We'll explore these questions and others in the next issue of the *International News*.

Restoring the Lost Art of Confession

“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

by Vance A. Stinson

Back in the 1970s, I took a job as a salesman. I didn't know much about salesmanship, but I was willing to learn. The salesmen who sold me on the idea were convincing. They told me of how the earning potential in sales was practically unlimited, of how they had achieved great success, and of how I could imitate their success. The new job looked promising.

Within a week or so I was off to a five-day “sales cruise.” I would soon discover that all the men on the sales team held strong religious convictions. In fact, my trainer was a part-time preacher. I can't say much for his theology, but he sure knew how to sell!

Unfortunately, within less than an hour on the first morning of my training, the job began to seem much less attractive than before.

Our first prospect that morning was an elderly gentleman who was raking leaves in his yard. We pulled into his driveway, got out of the car, and introduced ourselves. The gentleman was friendly, but a bit uncomfortable.

After a few moments of small talk and commenting on the beautiful weather, the sales pitch was made. The old fellow didn't want our product. My trainer began applying pressure. No sale. More pressure. Still no sale.

Finally, after several failed attempts to convince the prospect that he needed our product, my trainer realized he was wasting his time. He then turned his attention to a nearby house and asked who lived there. The old fellow was reluctant to give us any names but finally told us that a Mrs. Jones lived there.

We then hurried over to Mrs. Jones's front door and knocked. When Mrs. Jones came to the door, my trainer introduced himself and said, “Mrs. Jones, your neighbor, Mr. Smith, highly recommended you.”

I was stunned! Mr. Smith did anything but “highly recommend” her. He didn't even want to give us her name. Yet, here was this “Christian” minister resorting to blatant fabrication—most of us call it *lying!*—in order to get a foot in the door and make a few bucks.

This was the first of several such misrepresentations of the truth I witnessed that week. I began wondering how a man who professed Christianity and who was seen frequently in the pulpit, supposedly expounding biblical principles, could so twist the truth and still sleep soundly at night. Surely he knew he was being less than honest.

Or did he?

Think about it for a moment: Do you think the salesman would have admitted his deceptive tactics? Not likely. In fact, he probably was unwilling to admit his guilt *even to himself!*

As I thought about it, I realized that my trainer had convinced himself that his tactics were above board, that he was actually doing the people a favor! He had

managed to justify his actions. After all, he reasoned, the people need this product, and I'm doing them a favor when I do everything I can to get them to buy it. Good ol' me—I'm just trying to help!

Not only was he deceiving prospective buyers, he was actually deceiving himself!

Self-deception is a very real phenomenon, and the Bible is not silent on this matter. We readily see the ulterior motives of others, but it's not so easy to admit our own internal faults and flaws.

If we are to overcome our sins, live godly lives, and achieve spiritual maturity, then we simply must recapture the lost art of confession.

Confession: Key to Spiritual Growth

The apostle John wrote, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8–9).

Most of us admit that we are sinners, but we tend to come short of admitting to ourselves the full truth about the motives and attitudes that lie at the roots of what we say and do. The problem is not a lack of conscience; it's a lack of willingness to endure the discomfort of facing up to our innermost drives.

In describing those he terms “the evil,” Dr. M. Scott Peck writes, “The problem is not a defect of conscience but the effort to deny the conscience its due. We become evil by attempting to hide from ourselves. The wickedness of the evil is not committed directly, but indirectly as a part of this cover-up process. Evil originates not in the absence of guilt but in the effort to escape it” (*People of the Lie*, p. 76).

This uncanny ability to cover-up, hide from, and escape guilt is not restricted to “the evil,” however. All of us have this ability, and to some extent we all put it to use. And until we are willing to give the conscience its due, we will continue to deceive ourselves.

This proclivity to hide from our own sins is so powerful that we sometimes transform our faults into virtues. For instance, the “busybody” who revels in exposing the secret sins of others convinces himself that he's “just telling the truth.” When confronted by someone he has hurt, he says, “I guess I'm just too honest for my own good.” Thus, he denies his conscience its due by turning his fault into the virtue of honesty.

When I was being trained in sales, I asked my trainer what he thought about the use of high-pressure tactics in selling. (Of course, I knew that he resorted to such tactics and seemed to be proud of it!) He answered, “Some people say I'm a high-pressure salesman. I'm not; I'm an aggressive salesman.” He knew that “high-pressure salesman” car-

ries negative connotations, so he avoided that characterization. But “aggressive salesman” implies hard work and dedication—virtues anyone would be proud of.

We sometimes see this same phenomenon in the church. The person who comes among us with his own hidden agenda and desire to gain a following manages to convince himself that he's “just trying to help people see the truth.” He may even convince himself that he has a divinely appointed mission to deliver church members from spiritual darkness.

Such people simply do not acknowledge the truth about their motives. They come among us looking for a platform. They wish to display their spiritual brilliance and theological genius. They may spend long hours “searching the Scriptures,” but they hide from themselves the fact that their primary motive is to draw attention to themselves. Their vanity and spiritual pride is transformed into righteousness.

The platform-seeker does not go home at night and search his soul. He doesn't kneel before God and admit, “I'm filled with vanity.” He doesn't strip away the layers of deception, lay his heart bare before God, and say, “This is the real me; these are my real motives.” Rather, he prays for “more truth,” convincing himself that he is humbly seeking deeper understanding and a closer walk with Christ.

When confronted, the platform-seeker identifies himself with the apostles and prophets who faced opposition from the ignorant and unlearned. When rejected, he adopts the old martyr complex, and convinces himself that he is being “persecuted.”

Such persons are locked into a no-growth zone. Until they learn how to give their conscience its due—until they recapture the lost art of confession—they will be up to the same old antics next year, and the year after. Or, they may burn out, abandon “religion,” and then set out to find new ways to feed their vanity.

Not only do people deceive themselves to avoid the pain of guilt, but they also deceive themselves regarding underlying self-worth issues. Such persons often fall into the seemingly inescapable pit known as the “Messiah Trap.” They may appear to be the most loving people on earth, but in reality their expressions of “love” are attempts to prove their own sense of self-worth. Like the platform-seeker, the “Messiah” is unwilling or unable to face his real motives.

No one wants to feel worthless, but it's important to understand that we cannot find the peace of mind we naturally desire until we first admit to ourselves our own motives and attitudes—those deeply buried drives and feelings that form the underpinnings of our behavior.

True peace of mind comes only through honest, open-hearted confession. Once we confess—once we

Continued on next page

give our conscience its due—we are then able to abandon self as the means whereby true peace of mind may be obtained. Only then can we find the one means through which justification is made possible.

No Justification Without Confession

In recent decades we've heard a lot about "self-esteem" and of establishing a good sense of "self-worth." We are even told by some that one of our greatest problems is that we don't love ourselves enough. We are left with the impression that self-hate, or lack of self-esteem, is at least partially responsible for the ills of society.

Perhaps the "I'm OK" philosophy has its place, but should adulterers, thieves, liars, and murderers perceive themselves as "OK" people? No, of course not. What about the salesman who distorts the truth, and the platform-seeker who has his own hidden agenda? Should such persons apply "positive self-imaging" and learn to perceive themselves as "OK" people?

No, they should not. That is, they should not until they first come face to face with the truth about their real motives, and then turn to the one Source—an *outside* Source—through which they may rightly claim freedom from guilt.

The so-called "sin of self-hatred" has been greatly overstated. The apostle Paul says that "no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it" (Ephesians 5:29). Jesus commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves, which means that we should love our neighbor as we naturally love ourselves. If self-hatred were one of man's most common proclivities, Jesus would not have told us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Self-love is natural, and need not be nurtured. But self-confrontation is painful and requires some effort. It requires that we examine our innermost selves and honestly confess our sins.

The apostle Paul didn't advocate "positive self-imaging" or such silly exercises as standing before a mirror and repeating "I love you" one hundred times each morning, as some pop psychology guides would have you do. Notice Paul's admission: "For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do" (Romans 7:15). Paul is speaking of his own personal struggle with sin.

He goes on to say, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice" (verses 18–19).

That doesn't sound like a very positive self-esteem or sense of self-worth, does it? Paul did not try to persuade himself that he was something other than what he really was. No "positive self-imaging" or ego-stroking here.

Paul further states, "I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (verses 21–24).

Paul confesses his sins, his unworthiness, his guilt. But now he brings us to the solution to his problem: "I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 7:25; 8:1–2).

Paul did not hide his sins from himself; he confessed them. And through confession, he was able to turn wholeheartedly to the only means of true justifi-

cation and freedom from guilt. His justification was not self-established through good deeds or through denying his conscience its due. His freedom from guilt was founded solely on the righteousness imputed to him through Jesus Christ.

Once his sins were remitted and he was declared righteous—not on his own merits, but through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ—he was able to say, confidently, "Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me" (Romans 7:20).

Paul's justification was not because of himself, but in spite of himself. Had he refused to confess his faults, had he hidden the truth about himself from his own consciousness, he would not have been able to confidently declare his freedom from guilt, and he would have closed off all avenues for further spiritual growth.

The same is true of us. If we fail to examine ourselves—our motives, attitudes, and feelings—we too will find ourselves in a no-growth zone. Confession is essential to spiritual growth and maturity. It is paramount to that life-changing experience we call repentance.

Repentance is more than a onetime experience in which we express our sorrow before God and ask for His mercy. It is an ongoing, lifelong process. It is not a continual feeling of downtrodden unworthiness, but a positive commitment to be honest with one's self and to admit the truth about one's own desires, drives, motives, and attitudes. It is the desire to allow the light of God's Word to penetrate the darkened regions of our innermost being, and the resolve to change when change is needed.

While feeling sorry for one's sins is part of the process of repentance, repentance is more than mere sorrow. The apostle Paul says that "godly sorrow produces repentance" (2 Corinthians 7:10). This means that sorrow for one's sins leads to repentance, or change. Repentance is the positive result of godly sorrow.

The process of repentance begins with confession.

How to Confess

Confession entails more than listing the sins one may have committed on a given day. It involves looking deeply within ourselves and honestly examining the motives that underlie our behavior. This is a form of meditation, and when it is done prayerfully, we can expect some very rewarding results.

The next time you pray in private, spend some time reviewing the things you said and did during the preceding hours. Be honest about your motives. For instance, did you pay someone a compliment? If so, why? Did you do it for the benefit of the other person? Or were you fishing for a compliment in return? If you were fishing for a compliment, then admit it. That may seem to be a trivial matter, but it illustrates how we tend to hide from our real motives.

Did you harbor resentment toward a fellow employee who was promoted over you? If so, why? Because the person used deceit in getting his promotion? Or because you were envious? Again, be honest. If you were envious, then admit it, and ask God to help you put away your envy.

If you had an argument with your spouse, were you willing to listen to his or her point of view? If not, why? Perhaps it was due to your own stubborn pride. If so, confess it, and ask God to help you overcome this problem.

Had the dishonest salesman admitted his real motives and given his conscience its due, he would have abandoned his deceptive tactics. And if the platform-seeker would be honest with himself, before God, he would give up his hidden agenda.

While confession may be painful at first, its end result is happiness, peace of mind, and deep appreciation for the mercy and loving kindness of God. This truth is expressed beautifully in Psalm 32:

"Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

"While I kept silence [about my sin], my body wasted away through the groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. *Selah*

"Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin. *Selah*

"Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. *Selah*

"I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.

"Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the LORD. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart" (NRSV).

The Beginning of Sorrows!

by Vivian Hall

Is this the time of the "beginning of sorrows" spoken of in the Bible? Things seem to be going from bad to worse to super-bad these days.

Global tidings are bleak and the daily news is disheartening to say the least. Gunfire and violence are in the news every day. There are wars and rumors of wars along with earthquakes in diverse places. There are attacks on embassies, and plagues in Africa that threaten the whole Earth.

Since the time of Christ, people have promoted the end time. Perhaps that time has come. If so, should saints quake in fear?

But what if it isn't that time? Mark 13:8 indicates, "These are the beginning of sorrows." However, verse 32 states no one knows when.

Luke 21:28 says, "Look up for your redemption draws near."

There is no "on the scene" prophet standing to say exactly what these dread events are actually depicting. The truth is, we do not know.

If, as many believe, the end is near, is not redemption also near?

We must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling! Philippians 2:12 tells us how.

We need a personal relationship with our Creator and to learn His will. This we need to do as we see events we fear. Work on self—perhaps the end is near.

You can save no one else, so the best thing to do is work on you.

Strive always to do God's will, although the battle seems to be uphill.

In all you do, work on you. Strive toward your Kingdom home, and bravely face whatever shall come.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: FEBRUARY 15, 2015

Submissions may be sent to either
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lloydcary@gmail.com or, preferably, to both.

In Loving Memory

Betty M. Kelley



Betty Kelley

Teresa Rankin, and Leasa Lee, all of Indiana; two step children, Lisa Hartle of California and Rick Kelly of Alaska; thirteen grandchildren and seventeen great-grandchildren; three sisters, Geraldine Brake, Dellajean Robertson, and Connie Gulley.

She was preceded in death by her parents and a daughter, Vonda Parnell; two sisters, Kathy Mart and Betty Avaline Prince; two brothers, Robert Joe Rednour and Donnie Page.

Services were on Wednesday November 5, 2014 at Palmer Funeral Home in May's Lick with Pastor James Pollitte officiating. Burial followed in the May's Lick Cemetery.

Betty M. Kelley, 69, of May's Lick, KY, passed away Sunday, November 2, 2014, at the Hospice of Hope Care Center at Kenton Pointe. She was a retired sales clerk and the wife of Nathan Kelley. Mrs. Kelley was born in Albany, Kentucky on September 24, 1945, the daughter of the late Louis and Ina Ferrell Rednour. She was a member of the Church of God International. She loved to cook and work in her yard.

Survivors other than her husband are four daughters, Linda Burton, Debra Graham,

James "Buddy" Quarles



Buddy Quarles

Buddy retired from Lone Star Steel Company after working there for 31 years.

A memorial service for James "Buddy" Quarles, 81, of Longview, Texas, was held December 1, 2014, at Welch Funeral Home in Longview, with elders Vance Stinson and Carrol Scott officiating.

Buddy died Friday night, November 21, in a Longview hospital.

He was born on May 17, 1933, in Daingerfield, Texas to James Riley and Annie Lou Harrison Quarles. He served in the United States Marine Corps from 1953 to 1956. He married Ida "Pat" Finley in Daingerfield in 1954.

He was an instrument technician and a foreman.

He was preceded in death by his sisters, Corine Goss and Madell Lankford. Survivors include his wife Pat; son, Tony Vance Quarles and wife Linda of Augusta, Georgia; daughter, Patti Jo Quarles of Longview; brother, Gerald Quarles of Kilgore; grandchildren, Kaycee Quarles, Terry Quarles, Cheryl Lynn Clark, and Kelli Michelle Lockey; great-grandchildren, Karli Lockey and Mallory Clark; numerous nieces and nephews; and many friends.

On July 4, 2014, Buddy and Pat celebrated 60 years of marriage—"60 great years," says Pat.

Buddy was known as a "Jack of All Trades" and problem solver, as he had exceptional skills in matters pertaining to building and construction, electrical wiring, plumbing, and landscaping. He was creative and known to "think outside the box" in coming up with solutions or simply finding a better way to do a job.

He and Pat lived in a subterranean home, one Buddy built himself. He accomplished this task in two years and nine months by working on it on weekends and each day after coming home from work. His strong work ethic was acquired early in life and demonstrated countless times over the years.

He was always willing and eager to put his talents to use in helping his neighbors and people in need. He helped neighbors with problems requiring his expertise, and he refused to accept payment for his services. His neighbors remember him as a kind, generous, and thoughtful person.

Buddy was a man of faith. He is among those who "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13).

We look forward to seeing him in that day "when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality." Until then, he will be missed.

So when this corruptible has put on
incorruption, and this mortal has put on
immortality, then shall be brought to pass
the saying that is written: "Death is swal-
lowed up in victory."—1 Corinthians 15:54

Food program gets donation from church

The following article appeared in the Friday, October 31, 2014 edition of *The Harrison Daily Times* (Harrison, AR).

The Church of God International has made a sizable donation of food to the Harrison School District's backpack program.

The Tyler, Texas, based denomination, which met at the Durand Center earlier in the month, presented the food on Wednesday, Oct. 15, to Shirley Smothers, the school district's human services worker.

Members of the First Lutheran Church were also on hand to accept the food donation. Smothers explained that church members every week filled backpacks with food. The backpacks are

sent home on weekends with children from needy families.

About 100 students a week qualify for the food-filled backpacks.

Sheila Ledford, a Church of God member from Bentonville, said this is the third year the church has helped out with food donations.

Smothers said the backpack program welcomes monetary donations in order to buy fresh fruit. The First Lutheran Church wrote a grant for this about two years ago, but funds are about to run out.

Members of the First Lutheran Church pose with a donation of food from the Church of God International. The food was used for the Harrison School District's backpack program, which provides food for needy students and their families. First Lutheran volunteers fill the backpacks with food. The donation was made on Wednesday, Oct. 15, at the Durand Center prior to a Church of God International meeting. At far right is Sheila Ledford of the Church of God International. Next to her is Shirley Smothers, human service worker for the Harrison School District. (Photo by David Holsted/Staff)



Grace

The Grace of God—such an awesome gift
Granted to those who God's Word they obey
Not the cheap grace taught by ministers deceived
What the world will find out on Judgment Day!

Those who say the Sabbaths and Law are loosed
I say to you, "Fool, have you never read?"
Read, my friend, the book of James
For he tells us true Faith without works is dead.

Works is defined in the Word of God
As obedience to His Law and living under His rule.
If one reads His Word and does not see this
He is honestly only a spiritually blind fool.

Are you one who twists and turns the Scriptures
Teaching and learning what God did not say?
If so, I truly would not want to be you
When we all come before God on Judgment Day.

The Grace of God comes with a great cost
And because of this—there's few who obey.
They study—they live—and obey every Word of
God,
Rejecting cheap grace and walking God's Way.

Cheryl Ann Mulford

Feast Reports 2014

Harrison, AR

The Feast of Tabernacles was held once again in the beautiful city of Harrison, AR. The brethren were truly blessed this year with dynamic and inspiring sermons.

On the first day of the Feast, Wayne Cole gave an exemplary sermon about how we should treat our time with urgency, respect, honor, and using it wisely. He stated that what Christianity really is, is to “be the message.” We should all be the light of the world and to let our light shine in this current world of darkness.



Letting our light shine and being the message became the overall theme for the rest of the Feast.

At the second sermon of the day, David Campbell gave a thought-provoking presentation explaining the parts that make up a kingdom: the King, the territory, people to rule

over it, and the rules, or laws. There is no end to God’s rule or authority, because he knows how to do it right.

On the second day of the Feast, a split sermon was performed by Jean LePont and Wynn Skelton. Jean LePont preached about God’s Kingdom and our role in it. He further spoke about the change in man that must take place in order to be in the Kingdom and the relationship between God and man. Wynn Skelton explained in his sermon how the Feast pictures a time when we have the opportunity to do great things, and that we need to reveal what a great God we worship. We needed to radiate God and Jesus Christ wherever we go in life, so that others may see our light shine.

On the third day of the Feast, Art Hulet gave a sermon on the Kingdom of God, what it’s about and how we’re getting there.

On the fourth day of the Feast, Stephen Glover gave a remarkable sermon about standing up for Jesus, and to not be drawn into the world. It was important to know who it is we serve, and that it was time to stand up against Satan. We are to be separate in our hearts and to come out of this world.

On the fifth day of the Feast, a split sermon was given by Darrel Slocum and Wayne Turnbull. Darrel Slocum defined love as the bond of perfection. God is love, and if we don’t have love, we can’t know God. Love grows because God has placed it in our hearts and it grows as we practice the giving of love. Wayne Turnbull explained that what was coming wasn’t the end of the world, but the end of man’s rule. He explained that we were under attack through our marriages, families, finances, and the like. We’re dealing with not just ourselves, but something more powerful—Satan. The way to resist the devil was to treat others the way you should be treated. Be peaceful and don’t fight anyone, and keep the commandments and live them.

On the sixth day of the Feast, Dean Roberts gave a sermon concerning being ambassadors to Christ and that God wants to work through us despite our infirmities. We are all His ambassadors, though we don’t have any rights in the world because we belong to Christ. We still have to live here, so we should spread the message.

The last day of the Feast was Youth Day. Max Davis gave a sermon on humility and its importance in our lives. The prophets and leaders were humbled before God used them. He also expressed that we must not attempt to lower our standards, and we

must maintain our ideals. We should also give someone the opportunity to grow before telling them that they’re doing something wrong.

On the Last Great Day, Charles Groce gave the offertory, and Wayne Cole gave another wonderful sermon about the Last Great Day being an act of love. He also preached that people weren’t called in the Old Testament, yet



Wayne Turnbull



Wynn Skelton



Wayne Cole

Christ died for the world, including all that had died in the Old Testament. He quoted Revelation 20 and showed that it makes very clear the answer to what will happen to the unconverted.

Great sermonettes were given by Cliff Packard, Ted Stanley, Pete Hornbuckle, and Denny Ledford.

The brethren were blessed by many talented performers that gave special music as well as offertory music.

There were also many activities at the Feast, such as a pizza party and bowling; a raffle that helped pay for some



Allie Packard

expenses as well as to help the brethren in need (congregations were represented via their basket prizes or other gifts to be won at the raffle during a ’60s and ’70s themed dance); two Bible studies given by Stephen Glover and Skip Martin; a picnic that was indoors this year because of rain; a trip to Branson, MO to see a show and a luncheon for the senior citizens at a local restaurant.

As a last but by no means least note, our food drive for the local community’s Backpack Program for the Harrison School District, was an enormous success. Sheila Ledford was interviewed by the *Harrison Daily Times* on behalf of the brethren. The paper wanted to use our church as an example to other churches to be motivated to give.

Submitted by Carol Buser

Myrtle Beach, SC

With much love and joy we welcomed God’s Feast of Tabernacles in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina! We were blessed once again to have the beauty of the Atlantic Ocean as our backdrop to such a special observance. With the sandy beaches, palm trees swaying in the breeze, gorgeous sunrises and sunsets, we were reminded daily of God’s awesome creation.

With a small group of us spending a day in preparation, getting the meeting room set up, all things were finally ready. As the sun began to set on the first evening we eagerly anticipated our hospitality event. With a lovely buffet of *hors d’oeuvres* set out for everyone’s enjoyment, we had a wonderful evening filled with greeting old friends, and new, with hugs, smiles, and laughter.

Our services each day were filled with inspired messages brought to us by servant leaders in God’s church, with special music provid-

Devan Nolen Jernigan was baptized by her father, Mike Nolen, in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean. Below, Wayne Hendrix (assisted by Mike Nolen and Devan’s grandfather Gene Morris) performs the laying-on-of-hands ceremony at seaside.



**Robert Balsamo**

innocence of our children, the knowledge of our responsibility in setting a loving example for them, and we are seeing the future of God's church in their sweet, beautiful faces.

We are also blessed to have Infuse as a part of our Feast experience in Myrtle Beach. With an inspiring team of young adults serving, Infuse offered daily morning classes targeted at the young adults in the church (but open to all). Infuse hosted various activities, including a food drive for a local charity. A popular activity offered by Infuse was the Children's Carnival and Parent's Night Out. The children had a wonderful time playing games, winning prizes, and eating pizza, while the parents had a few hours to relax and go to dinner or take a walk on the beach. Infuse also hosted the Volleyball Cook-out and the Ice Cream Social. The Volleyball Cook-out is a time to spend enjoying a hot dog or a hamburger before heading out to the beach for some friendly competition or a little relaxation. The Ice Cream Social is a favorite activity for many. It takes place just prior to the Family Fun Show, with a sing-along to get everyone warmed up before the show.

In keeping with our traditional activities at Myrtle Beach, the senior luncheon was a time for wonderful fellowship while everyone enjoyed a buffet of delicious food. The women's luncheon and Bible study was also a time for fellowship and good food, along with an opportunity for the ladies to serve one another through prayer, an ice-breaker, music, and a presentation. The Family Dance was another great time to come together, enjoying fantastic music by our own Feast band, with a tasty buffet for everyone to partake of. The Family Fun Show was a wonderful night filled with talent of all kinds, from so many of the brethren. It truly was a fun night. The activities at Myrtle Beach are always well attended opportunities to happily enjoy the loving fellowship of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

This Feast was special in so many ways, one of which was the baptism of a new babe in Christ. Devan Nolen Jernigan was baptized by her father, Mike Nolen, in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean. It was a very emotional time as we watched her being immersed in the water, to come back to shore and have the hands of her father, of her grandfather (Gene Morris), and of Wayne Hendrix laid upon her as many of God's people stood along the shore, waiting to lovingly welcome her as a new member to the body of Christ.

To all who attended, and all who served, at Myrtle Beach this year, thank you! You each brought a spirit of love and joy that shone for all to see. We thank you for your support, prayers, and love for each other, and for us.

God be with you till we meet again...

Submitted by Pamela Nolen

St. Petersburg (Pinellas Park), FL

Beautiful warm weather and great fellowship were abundant during the Feast of Tabernacles this year at the St. Petersburg, FL area for the Feast of Tabernacles 2014. Services were held at the comfortable Pinellas Park Performing Arts Center where for eight days we heard inspired and instructional sermons and sermonettes.

**Ben Faulkner**

What a delight to see the gathering of likeminded brethren coming together to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast is a time to rejoice and fellowship for the people of God while listening to uplifting and inspired messages and music.

Each sermon and sermonette built one upon the other to give us a taste of the coming Kingdom of

ed by gifted brothers and sisters in Christ, and with a warm and loving group of brethren who make up our Feast family.

Beginning with the second day of the Feast, we were so very blessed to have a dedicated group of ladies, who give freely of their time each year, provide daily lessons and activities to our children. The classes end on the last day with one of the main highlights of the Feast—the children's choir performing for Youth Day. Their performance, along with the Blessing of the Children, another very special part of the Feast, brings a joy that is hard to describe. We are looking at the

**Cecil Green**

God and what our goal ultimately is.

Great sermons and sermonettes were delivered by Bill Watson, Ben Faulkner, Vance Stinson, Dave Rusinko, Jr., Dwight Harrison, Steve Miller, Michael Roy, Alex Fontao, Larry Sharp, Steve Niebler, and Ian Faulkner.

Special music was performed by Miriam Moreno, Jean Harkins, Sunny Faulkner, and Marge Watson.

Complete services and Bible studies were webcasted every day for the benefit of anyone who could not be physically there with us, we had as many as over 200 connections in a service, some of those connections were not a single person watching but rather two or more or a group in many instances watching the webcast but showing as one connection.

For the first time, this year the group in Australia connected with us via Go-To-Meeting for the two Bible studies while they were keeping their next morning services. Everyone at the Pinellas Park Performing Arts Center could see the Australian brethren in a big screen. For the questions and answers section of the

**Sabbath School children performing on Youth Day**

Bible studies, they were able to ask questions and listen to the answers as if they were there with us. It was really and awesome experience—and it was one we hope to continue in years to come.

Two morning seminars were presented by Ben Faulkner. Seminar 1 was titled "JESUS: Times, Places, and Message." Seminar 2 was titled "EARLY CHURCH: Times, Places, and Message."

The children's Bible Sabbath School was well attended this year, culminating with a song program performed during Youth Day services and an ice cream party after the performance provided by the Sabbath School teachers Patty Fontao and Eileen Gonzalez.

Teen Bible classes every morning were conducted by Darren Collins with the help of several other men giving presentations to teach teens Bible-based principles.

Lots of time to fellowship during several social activities which included a family bowling night, an afternoon of games and rides at Celebration Station, a cookout at the park, a luncheon/BBQ, and a volleyball tournament. And, as always, the main highlight of the social activities was the dinner/dance with around 100 in attendance with lots of music, fellowship, good food, and of course lots of dancing.

It was a great spiritual Feast filled with love to one another, fellowship and the opportunity to worship and celebrate God's Feast of Tabernacles together with

Continued next page

**Alex Fontao****Dave Rusinko, Jr.****Bill Watson leads songs as his wife Margie accompanies on the piano.**

brethren from different Church of God organizations in unity as one body.

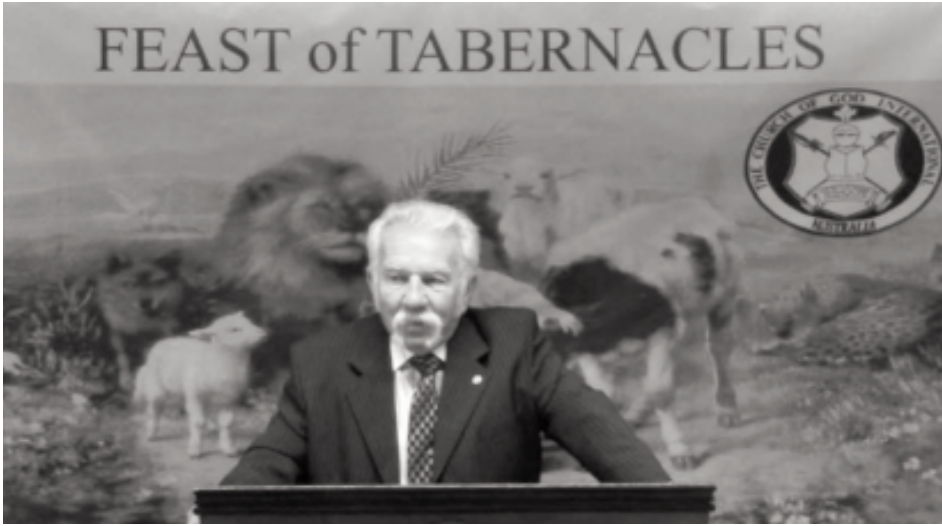
Thanks to all who contributed and helped in many areas and to everyone in attendance at the Feast. You are the ones who made this Feast of Tabernacles a great one. We look forward to see you next year again.

Redcliffe, Queensland Australia

What a wonderful Feast we all enjoyed in Redcliffe, Qld. The weather was brilliantly sunny and warm (just as it should be in “Sunny Queensland”). Our new venue was an absolute joy. We were really quite spoilt by our hosts Chris and his lovely wife Thea Novic of the Redcliffe Tennis Centre. They set up everything in their conference room for us, for the whole eight days, from banners to chairs, lectern, tea and coffee, etc. We really didn’t have to do anything but enjoy the time together and learning what fellowship and God’s special Feast means to us here on earth.

Herb did a really exceptional job, with a sermon each day, and two on the first day of the Feast. His first sermon on the first day of the Feast was titled “Why Are We Here?” A really good way to begin the Feast. Then, after a lovely BBQ lunch (set up, served, and cooked by Chris and Thea), Herb gave another sermon in the afternoon titled “Why Me?”

Day two, Herb spoke on “Testing of Faith.” We also had special music with Alex Scholes singing and accompanying himself on the guitar. He sang “Somewhere.” (Alex has a really wonderful opera/tenor voice which we know



Herb Haupt during one of his 9 sermons

is a blessing and a gift from God.) After services we went out for lunch and then a restful afternoon before getting ready for a 7:00 p.m. Bible study in our unit. We watched a DVD Bible study from Vance Stinson.

Day three was God’s Sabbath with Herb speaking about “What is Our Mark?” A very insightful message from him. We had another Bible study at our unit at 2:00 p.m. We all went out for dinner that evening.

Day four was Sunday. We went to breakfast on the foreshore and then to the Redcliffe Markets. What an extraordinary event this is. I know I have never seen markets quite like this. They take up the whole foreshore road and sidewalk. So many really wonderful stalls with the soft sea breezes from the ocean as their backdrop. We had a free morning to do as we wished and then a 2:00 p.m. service with Herb speaking on “More Than the Letter.” All out for another lovely evening meal.

Day five, Monday, services were at 10:00 a.m. with Herb speaking about “Difficult Times.” We all came to realise just how difficult these times really are. The afternoon was free time, with some people going out for a round of golf. Herb and I had a nice rest in the afternoon. He is not all that well by now.

Day six, Tuesday, Herb and I went out for breakfast with some of the folk. He is definitely running out of steam and very low on energy by this time. We sat in a beautiful playground after breakfast and watched the little ones thoroughly enjoy themselves on swings and slides, etc. It was a lovely, restful time for us both. We had services at 2:00 p.m. once again with Herb’s sermon called “Don’t Quit!” (I thought that was very appropriate). A few of us went night fishing off the shore just over the road from our unit. It was wonderful fun, though I didn’t catch anything but a couple of crabs. Peter caught two lovely bream. I fully intend to try it again next year.

Day seven, Wednesday, service were at 10:00 a.m. with Herb speaking on “Where Will We Find Peace?” Also, Alex sang and played “The Lord’s Prayer.” We were all thrilled by his singing. After services we went to the Bramble Bay Bowling Club for lunch and to have a game of Barefoot Bowls. What fun we had, with quite a deal of laughter and ribbing. No one really took it very seriously. Herb seemed to laugh the loudest and longest from the sidelines.

The Last Great Day, we had services at 10:00 a.m. with more visitors coming for services and lunch. Herb’s sermon was “The Last Great Day.” We all shared our last Feast meal with another BBQ and much laughter and good feelings. In the afternoon (2:00 p.m.), we had another video sermon, which was a follow-up

on Vance Stinson’s Bible study which we had heard on Friday evening. We shared a small evening meal and we all said our goodbyes, till some of us met again on Saturday at Ipswich for our weekly service at 1:00 p.m.

How did Herb really do it? He says that God gives him the words and the strength to do what has to be done. Ministers and their wives know how much it takes to get one sermon out, so full credit must go to Herb and God that he managed nine sermons in eight days. (I know, as his wife, just what it took out of him.)

It was really great to have visitors with us for quite a few of the services. People who could not make it down to Ballina for our last few Feasts joined with us in Redcliffe. Some of these people have been on our “Aussie Chat” mailing list for many years, and it was really great to finally get to meet them. I would like to thank everyone for making this year’s Feast a really special one. By the way, we have booked the Redcliffe Tennis Centre for the Feast of Tabernacles 2015 (September 28 to October 4, and the Last Great Day on October 5). It would be really wonderful to see you there next year.

Bye for now, and may you walk and talk with God every day.

Submitted by Tui Haupt

Search a Little Further A Feast Report from Ballina, Australia

The water splashed cool and refreshing against my legs as I weaved in and around the black rocks along the shore. Which way was the tide going, in or out? I was trying to figure our schedule for beach trips and our family’s much loved past time of searching for shells. It was that time of year again. The Feast had arrived and we were in Ballina, a lovely seaside town nestled in the northern coastal region of New South Wales, Australia. The weather was glorious, and it truly felt like God placed His hand there to make it so, and everywhere we looked we saw the majesty of His creation.

I recalled the previous Feast when I walked the same area of beach and watched an osprey feeding on a fish. I had noted the event in that year’s Feast report because it tied in with the theme of my article. With that thought in mind, I pondered if I would be asked to write another article this year, and wondered about a title. Sometimes it helps me think of what to write; sometimes it is the other way round. I watched the joy and contentment on my husband’s and son’s faces, happy to be enjoying God’s Feast again and the many activities we share this time of year. I was humming a hymn we had sung earlier that day during services. We carefully walked and climbed over the rocks that were formed eons ago by a volcano when it spewed out a torrent of molten lava down a path towards the sea, sizzling as it cooled and formed what we now could see as the jet, black rocks on the shore smoothed over by the countless millennia of the endless crashing of ocean waves. Searching the pools and crevices we persisted, hoping to find the perfect shell we had still to discover. Our buckets always brimming, full each trip, we often joked, “Don’t look down!” knowing we could-



n’t resist picking up and admiring the beauty masterfully drawn in the features of each pebble and shell rolling through the waves or sunning on the shore. 1, 2, 3, 4...25...39.... We stopped counting. We would have to head back to our apartment soon to wash up and rejoice with our fellow brethren over an evening meal. But “just a little longer,” we said, feeling good to be where we were. I started thinking, “Just look a little further,” and kept saying that for a while under my breath. Then I thought, *Search a little further, that’s what we need to do when we want to understand God’s Word, His ways, and His reasons.* I felt content knowing that God’s Feast Days would give us that special time set apart from our normal lives to do just that—search a little further.

That sounded like a good title, I said to myself, and started to hum the words and chuckled as I thought of searching a little further for that extra special shell we were always wanting to find. I relished as I compared my thoughts and actions, and the duality of searching for the beauty in God’s Word and the beau-

ty manifested in His creation. Then, with the very next step, I saw it—it was wedged between two rocks that had been carved out along the shoreline eons ago. We had never been able to move them before, the sand holding the rocks firm in their place. I called out to my husband. We both looked and knew in our hearts the rock would move. A small one was wedged neatly between two larger ones and was easily freed. Without effort one of the larger rocks tilted back. The little gift was in my hands, not a crack, scratch, or mark on it. How it got there unscathed, passed so many huge boulders without damage, was amazing. For years our endeavours found remnants of these beauties, but none had survived the perilous, watery journey over the rocks.

Our son was now excited wanting to make sure the little treasure was secure and protected. We knew it could have been a coincidence, but we liked to think it was a special little gift laid out for us because we happened to “search a little further.” We all felt uplifted in our hearts by this happy find, and it sparked an uncanny theme to the start of this year’s Feast to “search just a little further” into these special Holy Days. What treasures would we find and learn about during this year’s Feast of Tabernacles? The ways of God are perfect and glorious, and we are privileged to be a part of His Kingdom, even if now it’s just a shadow of things to come.

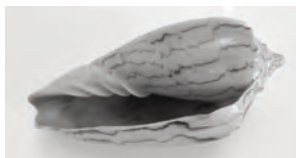
These special Holy Days that our Father not only commanded us to partake in, I believe, were set aside for us, His children, to be a special time of year to reconnect with Him and our Elder Brother and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. A time to re-engage our commitment, our passion, our yearning for that family connection which we all need. That belonging to one another as brothers and sisters feel; all individuals but like-minded in our zeal, beliefs and ways. So I knew in my heart as I held that little gift and my feet felt the seawater and sand between my toes, that this special time of year was much more than just a holiday to our favourite beach.

These days are God’s way of breaking the cycle of the humdrum roles of our earthly lives, freeing us if only for a short time to show us a future, our future, all be it a shadow of what lay ahead in His glorious Kingdom. The temporary tabernacles we inhabit and the earthly scripts we conduct somewhat resemble a dress rehearsal for a play laid out in which we are to perform. The lessons we learn and the growth we hopefully acquire lead us to see that this is no ordinary play we are rehearsing for, but it is the role of a lifetime—our *eternity*!

To be Christian, to be called out, to be chosen by the One above all there is, was, and ever will be, holds a great responsibility. It can be overwhelming at times, our frail and weak nature seeming all too bent on making us feel like failures. I know in myself I cry aloud daily in my spirit. Maybe those around me cannot hear me, but I know my Father does. I feel blessed in knowing my Heavenly Brother speaks on my behalf, knowing the trials I endure and the struggles I need to overcome.

To be called out of this world, to be separated, to desire a different future requires something special. Like the manna God gave His people in the desert, so too, God gives a type of manna to His children today—the “bread of life”—His special nourishing Word without which no one would enter His Kingdom.

As these Holy Days rolled out, God’s manna filled our hunger. Daily we feasted on His Word, blessed to have so many brothers gifted in the ability to deliver the Lord’s wonderful message. We were also very blessed to have the talents of so many people behind the scenes help with the production and advancement of spreading the Gospel through today’s technology. This Feast was a first with Australia connecting with their American brethren in the US via “livestream” on two occasions for Bible study. Even though there were a few snags with working out things through the “world of internet,” I must say we sure felt close to our American family and it sure felt good. A big thanks to all involved from your



THE LITTLE GIFT, reminder of this year’s festival theme: “Search just a little further”



Brethren enjoying good food and fellowship

bond just that little bit closer with one another. Talent shines in so many ways. Some people can get up and preach, others can sing or play music. Some like to write and some like to talk. But I think one of the greatest talents is how a person can make another laugh. Joy is such a wonderful extension of our love and is so greatly needed in all our lives. It is certainly what our Heavenly Father intended us to share at His Feast. The fun we had, whether it was over an evening meal, a beachside breakfast, a leisurely river cruise, a movie night, or a laughter filled family evening playing games, will be remembered for a long time with delight.

Well, another Feast completed. How fast it passes by. The lessons absorbed in our hearts, our spirits rejuvenated, our bodies revitalized, and our joy renewed. To sum things up, it was a very successful Feast. The love shared amongst the brethren was our gift to one another. God’s selfless love for our redemption and salvation so wonderfully laid out through His Almighty plan and wisdom is His everlasting gift to us. Like the beautiful shell I held in my hands at the start of this Feast, with its perfect design crafted at the time of creation, so too has God crafted His plan for mankind, the gift for all who desire, seek, and care to search a little further.

Dianne Prather-Tuskes

Leamington, Ontario

What a spectacular Feast we just celebrated! So few know about God’s feast days and even fewer understand their significance. How privileged we are to have the opportunity to be immersed in this experiential form of learning. This year, in Leamington, Ontario, about 130 brethren gathered together to celebrate the Feast for eight days. We were also privileged to have a dozen of our brethren from the United Church of God fellowship with us. We received numerous comments from them regarding how blessed they felt to share the Feast with us.

On opening night, Pastor Murray Palmatier set the stage by telling us the Feast must be transformative—that we should not be the same people when we leave the Feast. His opening message gave us a clear perspective on our purpose for gathering together. We were then blessed with meaningful and encouraging messages from George Ramocan, John Reedy, Mike James, and Adrian Davis.

The CGI Burlington congregation hosted this year’s Feast. We had wonderful activities, which facilitated many fellowship opportunities. We added two new activities, which were a big hit: How to Paint and How to Make Jewelry. Both classes were really well attended and the brethren truly enjoyed learning from expert teachers, Dylan Swan and Michelle Waite. One of our youth, Daniel Kowalczyk, coordinated both a men’s and women’s table tennis tournament, which took place throughout the week in the common area, where brethren could witness the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat.

We had two special music performances every day. Almost every morning we put on a Children’s Bible Study and a Youth Bible Study. A communal luncheon where everyone could be together was provided on the first and last day. All brethren were encouraged to attend. Those who couldn’t afford were told not to worry about paying. Those who had extra funds were asked to donate. The brethren looked after each other and the finances worked out. Our holy day offerings were up 50 percent over last year’s! Brethren were spiritually nourished and socially enriched and they responded with wholehearted worship and great joy!

On Saturday night, we had a movie night followed by an open and interactive discussion. On Sunday night, Pastor Murray Palmatier facilitated a special event entitled Family Building, which enabled brethren to get to know one another better in an interactive and immersive experience. Tuesday was Youth Day and our youth ran a flawless service! Everyone was inspired by how well they did and the special message Deacon Jan delivered to them. Following the service, the youth went Go-Karting. That evening we had our Fun Night and experienced tremendous musical talent as well as emerging comedic talent! We had a wonderful family day with lots of new and challenging activities.

We also had two interactive Bible Studies on the topics of Christian endurance and how Christians must “judge” and “not judge.” Pastor Murray then facilitated an interactive seminar on building Christian communities.

The sermons were powerful! Pastor George Ramocan gave the first sermon showing how the earth’s environment is being wiped out and the urgent need for God’s Kingdom. He followed this up with another sermon providing practical advice on fulfilling our Christian calling. Pastor John Reedy’s first sermon was on the theme of the garden and followed that up with a sermon on faith. That sermon dovetailed nicely with the Bible Study Adrian Davis gave on the true meaning of Hebrews 11. Pastor Adrian also spoke developing true leadership and the covenant community in the book of Malachi. Pastor Mike James gave a powerful sermon on having a Kingdom vision and followed that up with an equally powerful message on the meaning of the Last Great Day. Pastor Murray provided new insight in the building of the temple during the post-exilic period.

On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, we welcomed three new believers into the Body of Christ: Victor Paron from our Toronto congregation, Kathy Houle from our Kitchener congregation, and Dylan Swan from our Burlington congregation.

One of the clear themes for the Feast this year was building a healthy, loving, and safe community within which believers can thrive. This is much more diffi-



Children’s art class

cult than it sounds. Human nature, being what it is, leads us to believe that our perspective and our feelings matter the most. This type of thinking leads to behavior which is harmful to others. We naturally care more for our own state than the state of others. This is why we see unhealthy conflict in congregations. We may believe we are very spiritual because of our knowledge, but God measures our spirituality based on how our knowledge of the truth influences how



The youth who attended this year's Feast in Leamington

we treat each other.

In Matthew 5, Christ makes it clear that our worship will not be accepted if we are the source of hurt in the congregation:

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matthew 5:21–24, KJV).

In this scripture, our Saviour makes it clear to us that as spiritual as we may think we are, our worship means nothing if we are harming God’s children. The apostle John reinforces this teaching by telling us plainly:

“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God loveth his brother also” (1 John 4:20–21, KJV).



Three new members of the Body of Christ: Victor Paron, Kathy Houle, and Dylan Swan

on the things of others. As we build, let’s be especially careful not to disobey our Lord’s very clear command:

“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 18:10, KJV).

The word *despise* means to “have a low opinion of.” In a faithful Christian community, no one is disesteemed. In fact, the opposite is true. We must train ourselves to see Christ in everyone who has God’s Holy Spirit and understand the gift(s) they have to edify the body:

“And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness” (1 Corinthians 12:23, KJV).

As God adds believers to the body, it’s our responsibility to provide a safe place for them. They should immediately feel at home with us. We might not know where they are coming from; we might not know their individual pains; what we do know is this: God has entrusted them to us for safekeeping and He has recruited them to help build the body. Let’s get our minds off ourselves and onto our great mission. In doing so, we will develop true love for God and His



Family Day at Leamington

people.

Thank you to CGI Burlington for hosting such a successful feast! Thanks to all the speakers who worked hard to bring God’s word to His people. Thanks to everyone who attended, participated and helped make the feast such a transformative experience!

Pastor Adrian Davis

Morant Bay, St. Thomas Jamaica

Nestled on a little hill near the historic site of the Morant Bay rebellion which brought slavery to an end and overlooking the vast expanse of the blue Caribbean Sea, the semi-secluded Morant Villas Hotel formed the perfect Feast site which fostered bonding, relationship mending, and an escape from the rustle and bustle of the immediate world that is ignorant of the great plan of Yahweh for humanity and the universe at large.

Branded by the theme, “Living the Kingdom-Driven Life,” the eighty seven (87) feast-keepers were served nutritious, spiritually edifying, and heart-searching meals on a daily basis. The opening meal was served through Pastor Pedro Hall and entitled “Thy Kingdom Come O Lord.” The current realities were presented revealing the disastrous impact of mankind’s actions on planet earth. Feast-keepers were admonished that their being at the Feast is in preparation for the world tomorrow in which they will have to correct that which mankind has done wrong. Current statistics about death by diseases, environmental degradation, and other man-generated atrocities were clearly outlined, and a call for the Kingdom to come was unanimously echoed by the prospective world leaders who were also updated on that which will obtain in the Kingdom to come. The soon-to-be world leaders were then reminded of their tasks and responsibilities in the Kingdom, hence the need to be living the Kingdom-driven life. Brother Stephen Allen followed on day two with the topic “The Love of Yahweh: Are You Showing It?” The love (*agape*) of God was properly examined and Feast-keepers were encouraged in how to maintain and show this *agape* in a period in which “the love of many is waxing cold.” Pastor Horane Smith served on days three and four with “When God Really Doesn’t Make Sense” and “Treasures on Earth,” respectively. Feast-keepers were reassured that God is indeed real despite the atrocities facing them and the world at large, and that the time is coming when all this will come to an end. With this we were encouraged not to store up treasures on earth but in heaven as we anticipate the coming Kingdom.



Horane Smith

Pastor Hall was privileged to serve a second time under the topic “A Heart That Forgives.” Critical to entering the Kingdom of God is one possessing a forgiving heart. Day six was Youth Day, and young Brother Chevoy Martin was just as skillful in his serving as he dished out “Practice Now What You Want to Preach Later.” Feast-keepers were reminded that they have to do now that which they are expected to do in the Kingdom to come. This is the thrust of the theme “Living the Kingdom-Driven Life.” Day seven saw Brother Henry Small from the Ocho Rios congregation serving “Preparing for the Future Now.” Feast-keepers were encouraged through hearing that Yahweh’s ultimate plan for them supersedes their current realities. Pastor George Ramocan closed the Feast with a serving comprised of a portion of all the other meals served before as he spoke on the topic “How to Enter Into the Kingdom of God.” Feast-keepers were given practical steps to take in order to enter the Kingdom. Crucial to entering was the call to literally seek the Kingdom above everything else. He clearly explained how the statement, “all these things will be added to you,” can be a reality when one truly seeks the Kingdom.

Each day’s activities started fittingly with a very fulfilling prayer meeting at the poolside. Conducted by Pastor Hall, every morning at 6 a.m. sharp Feast-keepers streamed expectantly from their rooms to the pool, which is surrounded by lush green grass and trees having the Caribbean Sea in full view. Beautiful hymns enveloped the morning air, which was sometimes cold and always refreshing. Prayers were sent up for the day’s activities, individuals who gave prayer requests, and all the Feast sites on planet earth. Each morning persons were allowed to share a testimony, a Bible verse, a comment on the Feast so far, etc.

Everyone left the prayer meeting rejuvenated and well charged to face the anticipated day. Comments from Feast-keepers include: “For me, the prayer meeting is the highlight of the Feast, apart from the sermons.”

The third spiritual highlight of the Feast was the Bible study entitled “What Drives Your Life?” conducted by Pastor Hall. Feast-keepers were informed of the five main or common things that drive a person’s life. These were guilt, resentment and anger, fear, materialism, and the need for approval. Feast-keepers were informed that everyone’s life is driven by one thing or another and encouraged those who are called to be driven by the need to enter the Kingdom of God. It was a very interactive and heart-searching experience. Feast-keepers comments include: “This is the best Bible study I have ever attended.”

With the main focus aside, the fellowship and recreational activities were great. The highlights were the beach trip, trip to the mineral bath, and the Ball. A three minute car-pooled drive took us to the Lysons beach where old, young, and in-between either soaked their bodies in the warm Caribbean Sea waters or enjoyed the refreshing sea breeze and warm sunshine on the shore. Some persons were careful not to let the waters pass their ankles while other ventured far and deep.

The trip to the country's best hot water mineral bath, which was supposed to be a couples-day-out activity, ended up with singles, youths, widows, and babies attending. Bags were packed, and we car pooled and took a fourteen mile journey to the community of Bath, St. Thomas. On reaching our destination, some persons chose to enjoy the hot mineral waters at the Bath Spa and Hotel while others (including elderlies) braved the narrow winding path up the lush hill laced by dangerous precipices, to the natural untouched hot water river and fountain. There, persons got the treat of their lives. Persons got body massage using scorching hot water, pimento seed oil, hot stones, and mineral mud. The trip ended with a refreshing drink (coconut water) from the jelly coconut man and rejuvenated ride back to the Feast site.

The Ball started at 8:00 p.m. with music from the '70s, '80s and '90s. Patrons all decked in their evening gowns and suits were ushered to their assigned tables. Appetizer was the good old Jamaican mannish water (soup made with ram goat head, etc). This was followed by a tasty serving of rice and peas, a choice of fish, curried goat, and baked chicken with pasta salad and a glass of strong natural ginger-flavoured juice. Dessert was a cup of cookie-and-cream ice cream. The ballroom was injected by live performances of songs from yester-years. The dance floor was opened at about 10:30 p.m. and patrons danced the night away.

On the first day of the Feast, a brand new member was added to the church. Young Oneil Scott was baptized in the raging waves of the Caribbean Sea. The baptism was originally slated to be done in the pool after the prayer meeting. However the pool was not fully prepared, so we made the trek into the town of Morant Bay to the town beach. There were signs that a very high tide occurred earlier. The sea was rough, actually throwing the baptizers and the baptizee from the sea to the shores. After a while the young man was properly immersed and hastily left the waters. Hands were laid upon Oneil and he was welcomed to the family of God.

Overall, the Feast was a great one. Many said it was their best Feast ever and are looking forward to making it much better next year.

Pedro Hall

442 Attendants, 8 Baptisms at ‘Best-Ever’ Feast in Jamaica

The dynamic Jamaican CGI work held to its steady growth pattern, as this year 442 persons attended the Feast of Tabernacles in the tropical Caribbean island. The Jamaican work, spearheaded by 42-year Church of God veteran, Pastor Ian Boyne, also added 8 newly baptized members on the Last Great Day.

Canadian Contingent

It was an exciting and enriching Feast, with a refreshing international flavor, as 18 Canadians, led by Jamaican-born Toronto pastor Horane Smith, shared in the Jamaican Tabernacles experience. Visitors from the United States also enhanced the fellowship at the Festival.

It was an especially moving and memorable occasion for Pastor Smith and his wife Beverly, as they witnessed the baptisms of their twin sons, Jody and Cody. Pastor Smith had the rare, but undoubtedly delightful privilege—alongside Pastor Boyne—of baptizing his own sons.

Two Feast Sites

Such has been the dynamism of the CGI Jamaican work that, for the first time, the island officially held two separate Feast sites. The Northern Coastal resort town of Ocho Rios hosted the main group, presided over by Pastor Boyne, which numbered 355 at the capacity-full Casa de Shalom meeting hall.

Ministerial Apprenticeship Programme (MAP) candidate and leader of the Spanish Town CGI congregation Pedro Hall presided over the second site, which hosted 87 persons in the historic town of Morant Bay, capital of the South Eastern parish of St. Thomas. Mr. Hall was supported in his Feast work by Pastor Horane Smith and his Toronto co-pastor George Ramocan, who serves as Mr. Hall's MAP sponsor. (There was one baptism at this site.)

The exuberant praise and worship, led by worship leader Deacon Chris Hendricks, was complemented by a variety of special items of music, dance, poetry, and dramatic presentations throughout the Festival.

Sermons

The speakers delivered sermons, sermonettes and exhortations on a wide variety of topics related to the central meanings of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Pastor Ian Boyne gave an eye-opening exposition called “Lessons From the Life of Moses,” in which he presented Moses as a model for how spiritual Feast-keeping exiles should live. By Moses's rejection of his palatial upbringing, in favour of suffering with God's people, he showed his denunciation of Egypt's

values and his faith in Yahweh's promises. So, too, should believers eschew the values, allurements, and seductions of this world, and live for, and in anticipation of, God's coming Kingdom on earth.

Despite his celebrated status as Israel's deliverer and legendary leader, however, Moses had an anger problem, Pastor Boyne asserted. Drawing on several scriptural references, he showed a pattern of unchecked emotional outbursts by Moses, which eventually led to his being prevented, by Yahweh, from entering the Promised Land. Moses's fate should serve as a warning for believers to identify patterns of compromise, sin, or weakness which could result in their eventual exclusion from the Kingdom of God.

In his second sermon, Pastor Boyne reiterated the meaning and significance of the Feast of Tabernacles. He emphasized, dramatized, and painted a picture of God's coming Kingdom, explaining that it was something to treasure, like the pearl of great price. There is great need for a spiritual intensity, he said, as overcoming requires a strong motivation. He cited leading-edge psycho-neurological research proving how crucial it is for Christians to have a zero tolerance for sin and compromise.

Pastor Horane Smith presented two sermons, titled “Does God Really Make Sense?” and “Behold Your King!” The first was an intriguing philosophical foray into questions having to do with God's role in, and response to, the multiplicity of atrocities people face every day. For instance, how is it that the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer, while God seemingly just looks on? He then quoted several scriptural references which affirmed that, yes, God does make sense. He is indeed a God of order, love, and justice, as Jesus revealed.

In his second sermon, he showed from many scriptures that Jesus satisfied the biblical qualifications of the promised Messiah.

Pastor George Ramocan, who joined the Ocho Rios Feast site on Day 6, gave a sermon titled “The Kingdom of God—Man's Most Urgent Need.” He declared the Feast of Tabernacles a world symposium dealing with matters of the World Tomorrow. He emphasized that believers must first clarify the philosophical foundations of their faith and practice. They needed to get clear on whether they truly believed that God exists. Is it really true that there is eternal life? Will God actually establish a kingdom of eternal peace and prosperity? It is in answering these questions that believers will understand, deeply, that God's promised Kingdom is the most urgent need of man. Unless believers first answer these questions in the affirmative, they will struggle to pay the price for eternal life in God's coming Kingdom.

In his other sermon, Pastor Ramocan spoke on the topic, “How Does One Make It Into the Kingdom of God?” He focused on what it means to “seek first the Kingdom of God.” He urged members to prioritize kingdom interests, and to be willing to sacrifice anything for God. Young people, especially, should anchor their lives in God's promises and not be deceived into worldliness due to their drive for educational and career success. If they put God and His work first, and diligently live out the requirements of their faith, God will honour their faithfulness in providing the things they need, as he had done for Pastor Ramocan himself. He also gave some practical tips on how believers can remain faithful and fruitful in God's church.

Other Speakers

Elder Glenford Smith also delivered two sermons, titled “Whose Report Will You Believe?” and “The Common Denominator of Spiritual Success.” Other speakers included Deacon Derrick Alwood (“Examine Yourself”); Mr. Ricardo Hall (“Parables of the Kingdom”); Mr. Sean Goldbourne (“The Babylonian Defense Plan”); Mr. Stephen Scale (“The Body as God's Temple”); Mr. Shannon Henry (“What Kind of Christian Are You?”); Mr. Eliud George Ramocan, Deacon Fenton Tracy, Mr. Ray Williams, Mr. Khari Ballantyne, Mr. Jeremy McKenzie, and Mr. Jordan McKenzie.

HWA Memorial Speaking Competition

The annual Herbert W. Armstrong Memorial Speaking Competition generated much anticipation this year, and it didn't disappoint. For the first time, it had a non-Jamaican participant, namely, Mr. Courtney Scarlett, a member of the Canadian CGI contingent. He matched theological wits with five Jamaican contestants on the theme, “Why the Doctrine of the Immortal Soul is False.”

In the end, Mr. Stephen Scale upstaged the favourites and walked away with the coveted HWA Trophy, to wild applause from the crowd. Pastor Boyne, who announced the results, made special mention of Mr. Scarlett, whom both the judges and the audience agreed, was spectacular in his delivery.

Social Activities and Events

The annual **Family Fun Show**, coordinated by Mrs. Kaydene Wright, was a highlight of the Festival, and lived up to its “fun” billing. A wide range of items of dance, music, drama, and poetry delivered a night of excellent fun and entertainment to the hundreds who attended. Mrs Aldith Smith coordinated a particularly memorable historical portrayal of “Women in the Bible.” The Canadians were well represented by the vocal talents of Horane Smith, who showed off his fun, entertaining side, to the appreciative Jamaican audience.

Not to be outdone, Mrs Meleisa Haynes, coordinator of the annual **Jamaica Night** event, gave the buzzing crowd a memorable evening of entertainment, with surprise guest artiste, Ernie Smith, a Jamaican musical icon. His masterful performance had the audience rocking and singing along to his well-known hits,

including “Duppy or Gunman,” “All for Jesus,” and “Pitta Patta.” The entertainment complemented an enjoyable communal meal, served earlier.

The Peace and Love in Marriage Ministry (PALM), presided over by Mr Erlett Findlay, organised an exhilarating **Family Fun Day & Picnic** outing dubbed “Family Fun Splash” at the celebrated Waterland attraction. Several families and singles enjoyed various water activities including a water-based obstacle course, canoe ride, water slides, and a scenic nature walk.

PALM also coordinated a lovely Dinner & Dance session at the annual **Couples Night** event.

Youth Activities

Youth Ministry leaders Jeremy McKenzie and Katherine Foster planned and executed an interesting Youth Day Service on Day 7 of the Feast. Their innovative presentations included dances, songs, poetry, and a memory dramatic skit entitled “Demonstrating Faith.”

The Youth Eat Out Night event, held on Day 2, was also a big success, as it was enjoyed by all involved. And the interactive Youth Rap Session, conducted by Youth Overseer Elder Glenford Smith, on the theme “Christian Dating &

Sexuality,” was a helpful, educational, and fun exercise.

Baptism

The Last Great Day witnessed the baptism of seven new members into the body of Christ. Over 75 persons congregated on the Turtle Towers Beach to celebrate with the candidates, who originated from Maroon Town in St James, Kingston, and Toronto, Canada. Amidst joyful singing, Pastor Boyne and Elder Glenford Smith baptized the first five candidates.

Pastor Horane Smith was then joined Mr. Boyne in baptizing his twin sons, Jody Smith and Cody Smith. Pastor Boyne and Elder G. Smith then performed the laying-on-of-hands ceremony.

Best-Ever Feast...Until 2015

The singing of the closing hymn “Till We Meet,” which coincided with the end of the Last Great Day, signaled the culmination of what many veteran Jamaican Feast-keepers claimed was their best-ever Feast. It also expressed the anticipation many are already feeling for Feast of Tabernacles 2015, which Pastor Boyne has started forward-planning for, as it will represent forty years since the Church of God held its first Feast in Jamaica in 1975.

Kentucky Dam Village (Gilbertsville, Kentucky)

Brethren who gathered for the Feast at Kentucky Dam Village State Resort Park in Gilbertville, Kentucky—some 140 of us this year—were once again treated to a variety of fun-filled activities, including a church cookout and songfest, a dance, and fun show, and many other activities. All this, of course, was in addition to the spiritual nourishment provided by daily sermons and two informative Bible studies.

Speakers were (day 1) Farrel Vincent, Wendell Yeary, and Bill Russ; (day 2) Bobby Whitt and Alan Graham; (day 3) Steven Wyke and Tony Buchert (with sign language by Julia Marr); (day 4) Eugene Lucka and Tom Kaffung; (day 5) Archie Reynolds and James Pollitte; (day 6) Mark Schwarzkopf and Fred Weed; (day 7) Mark Skiba and Marvin Wyke; and (day 8, the Last Great Day) Bronson James.



Marvin Wyke



Tom Kaffung



Steven Wyke



Alan Graham



Julia Marr



Archie Reynolds



Tony Buchert



Bill Russ



Mark Schwarzkopf



Wendell Yeary



Mark Skiba



Eugene Lucka



Farrel Vincent



Fred Weed



James Pollitte



Bronson James



Bobby Whitt

Canonization of the New Testament

by Bill Russ

There are times we all walk a very thin line between what we believe and what is truth. We all have past ties and experiences that influence us to some degree in what we believe. Most of us come from a Protestant or Catholic background; their basic beliefs are the same. The teaching of the Worldwide Church of God may have influenced some of us. I can only wish I were more influenced by Worldwide than by Protestantism; I had much to unlearn to know the truth. Some of you had little to unlearn in comparison.

The topic I would like to discuss is the canonization of the New Testament (Christian Bible) of the Holy Scriptures. Much is said today about the Roman Catholic Church canonizing the New Testament. At one time I agreed with this, but no longer. Others in God's Church will say they never believed the Catholics canonized any part of the Holy Bible. I cannot truthfully make that statement; I had no truth to fall back on. I was greatly deceived by the teachings of the church groups that I associated with. First Thessalonians 5:21 ("Prove all things; holdfast that which is good") was not a part of the culture of my early church affiliations.

We live in a time of great deception. Do we as a people want to be deceived? The question may sound odd to some, but we need to ask ourselves if we *want* to be deceived. If the truth is not what we are seeking, what is the alternative? We have been deceived, we are now deceived, and we will be deceived again. How is one deceived? Can you knowingly be deceived? If you know what the truth of a matter is, you are not deceived. You may be disobedient and/or defiant, but you are not deceived. How then can you be deceived? By being ignorant! You can and will fall prey to deception through your own ignorance. We are charged with not only knowing the truth, but walking in it.

During the Dark Ages the mother church—the visible (false) church—kept the people in Western Europe ignorant in both religious and scientific matters. That term, "Dark Ages," refers to the period of time from AD 476 to 1453. (We today are living in our own dark age, kept ignorant by both church and state.) One of the many causes for the Dark Ages is that the Roman Catholic Church held sway over Western Europe, and it was an era of repression and imposed ignorance. If one can keep the people ignorant, one can better control them. Through fear, intimidation, and ignorance the church controlled what the people believed and tried to control what they were thinking. During this time people were forced to be ignorant. The visible church killed untold millions who tried to question her authority. Not so today. We are ignorant, not by force, but by choice. Peter gave us warning in 2 Peter 3:5:

"For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water."

Many today do not want to know what is truth; it is truth that is rejected by the world of Christendom.

A bestseller by author Dan Brown, the 2003 fictional novel (and movie, in 2006) called *The DaVinci Code* has awakened a renewed interest in Christianity, especially the so-called missing books of the New Testament, also called the Christian Bible. The setting in order of the books in the New Testament is called the Canon of the Bible. We do not use the word "canon" in our everyday conversations. (We may talk about a c-a-n-o-n, a weapon, but we rarely use the word c-a-n-o-n.) I believe it would be prudent to define the word so we will all be on the same page. It refers to the books of the Bible officially accepted as Holy Scripture. The Greek term *kanon*, which is called canon in English, meant *mea-*

suring rod. The main use of the term canon now has to do with a body of "accepted" sacred writings (i.e., those writings that passed the measure). Most scholars say the Roman Catholic Church canonized the New Testament of Holy Scripture. *The DaVinci Code* is based on the belief that the Catholic Church indeed canonized the Christian Bible. But this book and movie are based on a false premise. I believe that if the Catholic Church had any influence on what the Bible contained, we would have the Apocalypse of Peter, but not the Revelation of Jesus Christ, as recorded by the Apostle John.

We can see that the Church of Rome believes it canonized the Bible by adding or deleting books from the Bible. Yet the word "canon," in the Greek (*kanon*), means *measuring rod* and in English means *an established principle*. What is the measuring rod if, in fact, hundreds of years passed before the books were assembled in the form we use today? How can we have an established principle from the very start of the assembly of anything? More on this later.

There are other opinions of the canonization of the Bible, however. Some believe Hillel II had a great deal to do with the canonization of the New Testament, but the majority view is that the Roman Catholic Church canonized it, due to the fact it is a male chauvinist organization in its orientation. There are also many who believe that the Catholic Church is guilty of a massive cover-up, leaving out books that should have been part of the canon. These include such titles as the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, and the one *The DaVinci Code* played up, the Gospel of Mary. Not much is offered as to why the first two were not part of the canonization, but much *is* made of the omission of the Gospel of Mary. The Gospel of Mary presents Mary Magdalene as not only being a follower of Jesus but as also having the primacy—not Peter (this, too, is false). Many believe she was the wife of Jesus and that the Holy Grail was not the cup Jesus used at the Last Supper, but was His bloodline, passed on to the child He and Mary had. The book was based on this belief. Today many in the world have this distorted view of Christendom and, because of this, many do not believe Jesus was the Son of the Most High. Many do not now believe—if they ever did—in the divinity of Jesus, the miraculous virgin birth, and the resurrection from the dead. Some even believe Mary Magdalene, but not Jesus, is worthy to be worshipped.

So that all may know where I stand on a cover-up by the Church of Rome, I will state this: they are not guilty of leaving any book, or books, out of the canonized Bible, because *they are not responsible for the canonization* of the New or the Old Testaments. They would like to have some of the books removed from the canon; the book of Revelation would be gone in a flash if the Catholic Church had her way. On her part, there is no cover-up on omitting books from the canon of the Bible; she does not teach or live by the Word of God. At best, she is a worshipper of the sun; at worst she worships Satan in the form of Nimrod, Semiramis, and Tammuz. If the Catholic Church assembled or canonized the Bible, it would certainly be a very contradictory book.

There is yet another view on the canon. As stated, some in God's Church believe Hillel II had much to do with the Canon. It is not my point to minimize the work of Hillel II; we all owe Hillel II a vote of thanks for his work on the calendar.¹ I feel his moment in time *was* his work on the calendar; I can find no such work on the canon. Indeed, I can find not a word of reference to Hillel II working on the Bible canon. I have some of the same problems with Hillel II, as with the Church of Rome: too many years passing by, with all the apostles sleeping with their fathers and no one living having

seen Jesus or even having heard the very words of our Lord and Savior.

First Corinthians 14:33 tells us, "God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints." God did not love the world by haphazardly giving us the Bible and obscuring the truth. He desires that we be certain of the validity of His Word. What total confusion it would be if the Bible was put together hundreds of years after all who walked with Jesus and had written about their eyewitness accounts of the life of Jesus were now long dead. I find it hard to believe that a God of such insight would allow it to be accomplished in such an accidental way and purely by chance. It is like believing God used evolution to create life.

Jude, one of Jesus' brothers (half-brothers, if you wish), has this to say: "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:3–4). This may be acceptable for those who heard our Lord and Savior's words, or the words of the Apostles, but what about us latter-day saints? The Word had to be preserved from that time to our time—how can we contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints? We cannot look to the Catholic Church for the truth of the Holy Scriptures, or rely on men some three to four hundred years later to canonize (assemble) the Bible.

The Roman Catholic Church, as it emerged from the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, was very different in its teachings and practices from the church you read about in the book of Acts. It was not the true Church of God; it was the visible church. The Church of Rome had become the great-apostatized church. In fact, surviving historical records from the second and third centuries portray a clear shift away from the teachings and practices of the Apostles to a very different brand of "Christianity." It was the Christianity we see so much of today.

Paul wrote, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man" (Galatians 1:6–11).

We have to be on guard for there is a counterfeit gospel, and there has been from the time of the Apostles. We need to prove all things from the Word of God. The Roman Catholics rely on papal interpretation and the early Catholic writers, while the Protestants tend to rely on Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other Protestant writers. If they were teaching a different gospel during the time of Paul, Jude, and the other Apostles, how careless would it have been to put the Bible together hundreds of years following the death of the Apostles?

The question should be *who* put together our New Testament, not *when*! The answer, I believe, is found

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Questions & Replies

by Vance A. Stinson

Is there hope for Judas?

QUESTIONS: I have just finished listening to a...very powerful sermon [on Judas Iscariot]. My questions:

1. Did Judas commit the unpardonable sin?
2. Did God select Judas for destruction or does Judas yet have an opportunity for salvation in the Second Resurrection?
3. What of the fact that Judas was possessed?
4. What of the scripture in John 13:18?

While this sermon opens very deep, deep questions, my questions are:

1. What is the unpardonable sin?
2. Can a person commit this if he is unconverted?
3. What is it that God will not forgive?

I certainly don't want to commit such a sin and ask God in prayer not to allow such a thing. Please give me some clarity.

—B.P.

REPLY: Your first question—"Did Judas commit the unpardonable sin?"—is a difficult one, as some scriptures seem to indicate there may be hope for Judas, while other scriptures seem to indicate there is no hope for him. We'll come back to this question later, but before we can even begin a discussion on the fate of Judas and whether or not he committed the unpardonable sin, we'll need to answer the first of your second set of questions: "What is the unpardonable sin?"

Simply stated, the unpardonable sin is the *unrepented* sin. God cannot forgive sins if the sinner is not repentant, but He is quick to forgive the sinner who turns to Him in genuine repentance. As John states, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

To "confess our sins" is to admit our sins and turn from them. "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever *confesses and forsakes* them will have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

Writing to fellow believers who may have given in to evil desires, James urges, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:8–10).

God is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Repentance is the key. God forgives the sinner as soon as he repents, but where there is no repentance, there is no remission of sins.

The writer of the book of Hebrews warns, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4–6).

The reason "it is impossible...to renew them again to repentance" is not because God has thrown them in prison, slammed the prison door shut, and locked them in. Rather, it is because they have locked themselves in the prison. *The door to the sinner's prison is locked from the inside.*

If a "backslider" repents—if he is sorry for his sins and wants his relationship with God restored—then he obviously has not fallen so far that repentance is now impossible for him. Such a person can be, and *will* be, pardoned upon genuine repentance.

Can an unconverted person commit an unpardonable sin? Of course! The sins of the unregenerate remain unpardonable until repentance occurs. The sinner who hears the true gospel and is thereby called to repentance and faith still has free will; he can still choose *whether* to repent and accept God's provisions for salvation. As long as he refuses to repent, his sins cannot be pardoned. They are "unpardonable" *only* because the sinner refuses to meet the conditions God requires. But they are *not* unpardonable in the sense that God will not pardon them under any condition.

Jesus had certain unregenerate Pharisees in mind when He said, "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy

against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matthew 12:31–32).

The Pharisees had just attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to "Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons" (verse 24). Why is speaking against the Holy Spirit unforgivable, though speaking against the Son of Man is not?

Many people who spoke against Jesus (the "Son of Man") would later repent and become truly converted believers (see Acts 2:36–41; 8:1–3; 9:1–19; Galatians 1:13). But the Pharisees' "blasphemy against the Spirit" was particularly grievous because this kind of sin can only come from a heart so hardened that repentance is either unlikely or impossible. Jesus knew the hearts of these Pharisees. He knew their accusation was not from simple ignorance, but was from *willful* ignorance. They *deliberately ignored* the reality that was right there before their eyes! This was *clearly and unmistakably* the power of God at work, but these men chose to openly accuse Jesus of exercising the power of Satan! There was no room in their hearts for repentance—and *that's* why their "blasphemy against the Spirit" was unpardonable.

Again, we see that the key is *repentance*. Where repentance is possible, remission of sins is possible.

The third of your second set of questions, "What is it that God will not forgive?" is answered above. To reiterate, God will not pardon any sin if the person committing it refuses to repent.

And that brings us to your first question: "Did Judas commit the unpardonable sin?"

If Judas truly repented, then his sin, as serious as it was, was not unpardonable. So the more important question is, Did Judas really repent?

One passage *may* suggest that Judas repented once he came face to face with the consequences of his sinful actions.

"Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, *was remorseful* and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' And they said, 'What is that to us? You see to it?' Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself" (Matthew 27:3–5).

Judas "was remorseful" and confessed he had "sinned by betraying innocent blood," but was this genuine repentance, or was it self-pity? The fact that he committed suicide only tells us that the emotional consequences of what he had done were overwhelming, but it does not tell us whether or not his remorse reflected real repentance. His act of returning the silver may suggest real repentance, but it is impossible to know precisely what was in Judas's heart at that moment. At best, Matthew 27:3–5 shows there *may* be hope for Judas.

On the negative side, Judas is called the "son of perdition" (John 17:12), the same title given to the end-time "man of sin," the "lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:3–8). "Son of perdition" means "son of *destruction*," a title that echoes the fate of the person to whom it is given.

Further, Jesus, speaking of Judas, says "woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matthew 26:24).

The difficulty here is determining whether the "woe" Jesus pronounces on Judas pertains to his ultimate fate or to the miserable state Judas created for himself through his betrayal of Christ. By taking his own life, Judas was expressing his own remorse-driven disgust with his life. From *his* perspective, at that moment, it would have been good if he had not been born—so he took his own life. It is possible, then, that Jesus was referring to Judas's temporal fate, not his eternal fate. But, again, we cannot be certain.

I could answer your first question only if I could know for certain what was in Judas's heart. Only God knows for sure, so we'll have to leave the matter in His hands.

You asked, "Did God select Judas for destruction or does Judas yet have an opportunity for salvation in the Second Resurrection?"

The White Throne Judgment is a day of *judgment*. For each individual, judgment results in one of two possible outcomes: eternal life, or eternal death. The incorrigibly wicked will prove their incorrigibility and will meet their fate in the lake of fire. Others, however, will turn to God with their whole hearts and will receive eternal life. What will the outcome be for Judas? We do not know with any degree of certainty.

But we *do* know that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). If "all men" includes Judas—and I'm sure it does—then God did not "select" him (or *anyone*, for that matter) for destruction.

Some reason that, since Judas's treachery and fate were prophesied, they were necessarily predetermined from eternity. The problem with this, however, is that it assumes the Old Testament prophecies that are, in the New Testament, applied to Judas are *specifically* about Judas and no one else. This is a false assumption.

Peter shows that Judas "fulfilled" certain Old Testament scriptures, but when we read the scriptures Peter cites we realize Judas "fulfilled" them in the sense that Judas's treachery and fate are *echoed* in those passages. These clearly are *not* specific predictions about the one man, Judas Iscariot.

Read Acts 1:15–20, and then carefully read the scriptures Peter applies to Judas:

“And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, “Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.

“(Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.) For it is written in the Book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it’; and, ‘Let another take his office.’”

Peter quotes Psalm 69:25 and 109:8. Let’s carefully notice the wording of each:

Psalm 69:25: “Let their dwelling place be desolate; let no one live in their tents.”

Psalm 109:8: “Let his days be few, and let another take his office.”

In Psalm 69, the psalmist describes the bitter anguish he experiences as his many enemies seek to destroy him. While he is innocent of the charges they bring against him, he admits he is not without sin (verses 4–5). He speaks proverbially when he says, “They [his enemies] also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (verse 21). His enemies are wicked men, and the psalmist does not hesitate to ask for their death: “Let their table become a snare before them, and their well-being a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see; and make their loins shake continually. Pour out Your indignation upon them, and let Your wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their dwelling place be desolate; let no one live in their tents. For they persecute the ones You have struck, and talk of the grief of those You have wounded” (verses 22–26).

New Testament writers apply the psalmist’s distress to the suffering Jesus experienced under the hands of wicked men. Much of Psalm 69 echoes events associated with Jesus’ arrest, trial, and crucifixion. This is the sense in which these things are “fulfilled” in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Notice that the psalmist does not speak of a single enemy. He says, “Let *their* dwelling place be desolate; let no one live in *their* tents.” Peter applies this verse to Judas, using “his” instead of “their.” Judas *did* fulfill this scripture. He “fulfilled” it in the same sense that other statements in the Psalm were fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. We find many such statements in the book of Psalms. While some speak specifically of the Messiah, most of them are not specific predictions about the Messiah. They apply to Him and are “fulfilled” by Him in the sense that they echo significant events in His life and ministry.

Psalm 69:25, then, does not specifically single out Judas. The psalmist’s prayer is “fulfilled” *every time* a wicked person’s treacherous plot is foiled and his “dwelling place” is made “desolate.” This scripture “had to be fulfilled” through Judas only because Judas, by his own choice, was the kind of person described in this passage. No doubt, given the political climate of the day and the hate-driven desperation of Jesus’ enemies, if Judas had chosen not to go through with the plot, someone would have “stepped up” to do the job. Remember, Satan was also very active in this situation, so, if Judas had changed his mind, the Devil would have been able to “pull it off” through another one of Jesus’ many enemies.

Peter also applied Psalm 109:8 (quoted above) to Judas. Here, the “his” refers to *any* of the accusers referred to in verses 2–5. Notice the psalmist’s use of “they”:

“For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful have opened

against me; *they* have spoken against me with a lying tongue. *They* have also surrounded me with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause. In return for my love *they* are my accusers, but I give myself to prayer. Thus *they* have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.”

The psalmist then prays that the one (whoever he may be) who accuses him falsely receive the punishment for the crimes he alleges (cf. Deuteronomy 19:16–21): “Set a wicked man over him [the false accuser], and let an accuser stand at his right hand. When he is judged, let him be found guilty. And let his prayer [his plea for help] become a sin. Let his days be few, and let another take his office” (Psalm 109:6–8).

While the psalmist speaks of an individual accuser, it is clear that he has in mind *all* his accusers. After expressing his strong feelings against his accuser, he sums up by saying, “Let this be the LORD’s reward to my *accusers* [plural], and to *those* who speak evil against my person” (verse 20).

Psalm 109:8, then, prophetically pertains to Judas in the sense that it echoes Judas’s fate due to his treacherous actions, but it does not pertain exclusively to the death of Judas and appointment of Metthias to take Judas’s place. The “shoe” fits, so Judas has to wear it!

(Editor’s note: Let me emphasize that I am not suggesting that there are no specific prophecies about the Messiah and His ministry. Indeed, there are *many*! But it’s important to realize that even sections of Scripture that do not specifically speak of the coming “Son of David” are prophetic in the sense that they ECHO events surrounding His life, mission, ministry, death, resurrection, and reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.)

This brings us to your question about Matthew 13:18, where Jesus says, “I do not speak concerning all of you [disciples]. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘*He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.*’”

Again, we need to examine the scripture Jesus is quoting. In this case, He cites Psalm 41:9 and applies it to Himself and Judas. But we would face serious difficulty if we tried to attribute everything in Psalm 41 to Jesus, for not only did the psalmist say, “Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me,” but he also said, just a few verses earlier, “I said, LORD, be merciful to me; heal my soul, for *I have sinned against you*” (verse 4).

As with the other passages we have examined, this one, too, applies to Jesus and Judas in that it echoes Judas’s treachery. If Judas had chosen not to go through with the plot to betray Jesus, this passage would not apply to him. But, since he did choose to betray Jesus, this description of the psalmist’s experience with a treacherous friend was “fulfilled” through the actions of Judas.

You also asked, “What of the fact that Judas was possessed?” Luke 22:3 and John 13:27 state that “Satan entered” Judas, who then went and conferred with the chief priests and captains on how he might betray Him to them. This means that, at that point in time, Satan took control of Judas. But Judas wasn’t an innocent victim; the Devil could not have taken control of him had Judas not already chosen the path that leads to destruction. Satan found a willing agent in Judas Iscariot.

Does the fact that Satan took control of Judas make a difference in the question of whether Judas might still be saved? Perhaps, but we must remember that Judas was a willing participant in Satan’s efforts and continued to be a responsible agent. Satan may have been Judas’s “partner in crime,” but Judas still had his share of the blame. As we have shown, other scriptures identify Judas as the betrayer. He, not Satan, is called the “son of perdition,” and Christ is speaking of the man Judas, not the “spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2), when He says, “Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”

No doubt, given the political climate of the day and the hate-driven desperation of Jesus’ enemies, if Judas had chosen not to go through with the plot, someone would have “stepped up” to do the job.

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in 2 Peter 1:12–21. The Apostle Peter explained to his readers that his death was imminent, and that he wished to ensure that after he was gone there would be an authoritative record of Jesus’ real teachings. There were already, in the late 60s AD, “cunningly devised fables” (verse 16) circulating. Peter explained that the young Christian community should look to him, and to his fellow Apostle, John, for the “sure word of prophecy.” This becomes clear when we read Peter’s words carefully. Beginning in verse 12, Peter writes in the first person singular about his approaching death, and his desire to leave a permanent record:

“For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off

my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease” (2 Peter 1:12–21).

How could Peter ensure that they would have a reminder of anything after his death if the Bible was not put together during his lifetime or shortly after?

In verse 16, he abruptly switches from “I” to “we.” Who is the “we”? The answer becomes obvious in verses 16 through 18:

“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.”

The “we” are those who accompanied Jesus to the mountain where they saw His transfiguration, and heard the voice from heaven (Matthew 17:1–6). These were Peter, John, and James, the brother of John. By the time Peter was writing 1 Peter, James had died—the first of the Apostles to be martyred (Acts 12:1–2)—so Peter’s “we” had to refer to him and to John. Before his death, Peter put together the very first Christian Bible, consisting of 22 books. Near the end of the first century, John added the five books that he wrote, bringing the total to 27, the number of books in the New Testament that we have today. Already, in the second century, in the earliest writings of the “Church Fathers,” we see that the New Testament existed, and was quoted from and referenced frequently. Certainly there were attempts to change the books, but they were already written and too well known to be abandoned. Measuring

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rod—could time be the measuring rod? By this time it had become an established principle. Time itself was the measuring rod, the canon, as it were.

How should we understand the various “lost gospels” referred to by the author of *The DaVinci Code* and other writers? We should not be surprised by such so-called discoveries, because the New Testament itself warns of counterfeit gospels already circulating in the days of the Apostles. How much more would we expect such accounts to multiply in ensuing years, after the Apostles had died? Remember that the Apostle Paul, writing in the mid-50s, warns of those who sought to bring “another gospel” and “another Jesus” (2 Corinthians 11:4). He labeled these preachers as “false apostles” and “deceitful workers” (verse 13). Peter assured his readers that he and John had not followed the “cunningly devised fables” that were already extant in the first century. Some of these false gospels have survived, however, and have found a new audience in recent years.

2 Peter 1:19–21: “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Scriptures were inspired by God, and men of God spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 3:15–16 “...and account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as

they do also the rest of the Scriptures.” Peter is calling the writing of Paul “Scripture.” How can this be if there were to be hundreds of years before the Bible was put together? Or if Peter had no part in the assembly of the Christian Bible?

2 Thessalonians 2:1–3: “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition....” People did not wait until the third or fourth century to start writing to the churches.

How are we to study the Holy Bible? Are we to study it in the same haphazard way we believe the Holy Scriptures were assembled? God, through Isaiah, showed us how to study the Bible. Using this method, we can come to better understand how the Bible came to be.

“Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little” (Isaiah 28:9–10).

Not everything known about our Lord and Savior was to be in the Bible. John 21:25 informs us, “And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.”

Man was warned not to add or delete from the Word of God. Deuteronomy 4:2 states, “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take

anything from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”

The Apostle John warns, “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18–19).

Now the sum of the matter is whether or not we can trust men in the third and fourth century to know which books to include in the Bible. Knowing who the Church of Rome is, we certainly cannot trust her. Not knowing who Hillel II was, would you trust your eternal life to someone who did not walk with the Lord? There were letters (epistles) written to the churches during the life of Paul. I believe the ones who wrote the majority of the New Testament books were also the ones charged with its assembly, namely Peter, Paul, and John. Peter, in all probability, assembled the first 22 books, and John added the final five, with the book of Revelation being the last and containing the warning about adding or taking away from this book.

May the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob help us to rightfully divide the Word of Truth.

¹ In the *fourth century*, Hillel II established a fixed calendar based on mathematical and astronomical calculations. This calendar, still in use, standardized the length of months and the addition of months over the course of a 19 year cycle, so that the lunar calendar realigns with the solar years. Adar I is added in the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th and 19th years of the cycle. The current cycle began in Jewish year 5758 (the year that began October 2, 1997).



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