



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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"Put on the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:13)

Winter 2017

Is Anybody Listening?

There appears to be a growing mood of indifference toward holding people accountable for their actions. It would seem because the wicked prosper, it now pays to be crooked. And since it would appear evil prospers, cynicism and distrust is increasing throughout the world. What can we expect and do at this point?

by Bill Watson



Bill Watson

I'm not quite sure, maybe it's just me, but recently it seems the circumstances we find ourselves observing are "seething" with unnecessary agitation. Don't get me wrong—I'm not suggesting dismissing the reasons for *legitimate* concerns and issues, but some of the civil discourse exhibited by so-called political leaders, community organizers, and government operatives frankly leaves a lot to be desired.

It seems there's more "deflection" of subjects going on than you can shake a stick at. In the course of public debate, "deflection"—or *distrac-tion*—is a common strategy used to keep the attention and focus elsewhere; in other words, keeping the subject off any topics, evidence, or leads that may point to the truth about the matters under scrutiny. It's very grievous and disappointing to see such disrespect for the rule of law by those entrusted—the political administrations, lawmakers, and law enforcement agencies—to protect the integrity and truth of the hegemony. Some will claim there appears to be "other things in play" that are not meant to be understood, or plainly seen by the public. Clearly, this leads to questions about *why*. Could it be so certain "players" can benefit from the ruse?

Obviously for some, this fuels all kinds of conspiracy theories because there are just too many loose ends. These unanswered questions compound the circumstances into suspicion and distrust toward those in leadership or investigative roles, thereby causing many to doubt the results or conclusions allegedly representing the truth of the matter. The Kennedy assassination of November 1963 is a good example of this, and there is doubt surrounding the Warren Commission's final report that many suspect is not accurate, and is *purposely* disingenuous to protect a conspiracy "cover-up" to kill the President of the United States.

Currently, there are people claiming the moon landing was a hoax, that 911, the Sandy Hook, as well as Las Vegas shootings, are all suspected to be "false flags" and not what they appear to be. Some have said the Bergdahl prisoner exchange and the 911 Benghazi, Libya terrorist attacks were the result of something far more nefarious at work, as are the questions surrounding the "Uranium One Deal," which resulted in the United States surrendering 20 percent of its uranium supply to Russia, of all things, and without a whimper. How does that happen? Who agreed to that arrangement? What was the logic behind this decision, and who signed off on it?

Clearly, many of these items and issues deserve the attention of those responsible for upholding the law and commissioned to investigate and ferret out the truth.



This is why they were elected—so if there was something illegally done, or personal gain was obtained at the expense of the nation's well being or national security, then those perpetrating these crimes would be held accountable for those actions.

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Open Church Policy

The Church of God International is an open church.

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

— 2018 Holy Day Calendar —

New Testament Passover

March 29, 2018 (Observed at sundown)

Feast of Unleavened Bread

March 31 - April 6, 2018

Pentecost

May 20, 2018

Feast of Trumpets

September 10, 2018

Day of Atonement

September 19, 2018

Feast of Tabernacles

September 24 - September 30, 2018

More information will be forthcoming.

Last Great Day

October 1, 2018

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

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3900 Timms Street

Tyler, TX 75701

CGI Web Site: www.cgi.org

CGI E-mail: info@cgi.org

Phone: (903) 939-2929

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"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20).

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THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS
3900 TIMMS ST., TYLER, TX 75701

Notice!

- It is the desire of the staff to publish *The International News* quarterly. We can do this only if *you*, the reader, help by submitting timely articles, reports, and pictures.
- With few exceptions, submissions should be from 800-1000 words in either .doc, docx, rtf, or .txt format.
- Submissions may be sent either to vancestinson@cgi.org or lloyd Cary@gmail.com or, preferably, to *both*.

DEADLINE for the *next* issue is **Feb. 15th 2018**.

We look forward to seeing you soon... *in print!*



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Editor-In-Chief: Vance A. Stinson

Editor: Lloyd W. Cary

Contributing Writers: Lloyd Cary, Tom Kauffung, George Roper, Betty Register Slocum, Bill Watson, and to the many contributors who made this publication possible, *thank you*.

• **Production:** Lloyd W. Cary

• **Business Manager:** Benny Sharp

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OVERSEAS OFFICES:

• **Australia:** Minister, The Church of God International, PO Box 171, Boonah, Queensland 4310, Australia

• **Canada:** The Church of God International, 900 Oxford St., PO Box 33034, London, Ontario, Canada N5Y 5A1

• **Jamaica:** The Church of God International, 60 Cairncurran Ave., Western Dist. PO, St Andrew, Kingston, Jamaica

• **Philippines:** The Church of God International, 7 Opal St., Severina Subdiv, KM 18 South Superhighway,

*Paranaque, Metro Manila, Philippines. Email: rene@cgiphils.org

CGI Website: www.cgi.org

CGI E-mail: info@cgi.org

Phone: 903-939-2929

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However, it seems even the “mainstream media” is *indifferent* to finding out the truth. The investigative reporting of years ago seems to be M.I.A. This is very disappointing!

What has happened to the affection for “liberty through law”? What’s happened to the *vision, respect, and will*, to protect for God, family, and country? Who has beleaguered the world into thinking it’s not important to include God in our culture, and *Christian* integrity and character doesn’t matter? No one, it appears, is held accountable for mitigating these serious breaches of national trust!

Where’s All This Leading?

If it feels good, do it. If you’re not with the one you love, love the one you’re with. Freedom is just another word for having nothing left to lose. These are just some of the phrases that have helped our growing humanistic society become what it is today. These lyrics from past songwriters have been the *type* of words influencing our youth for many decades. And it’s grown worse—much worse—and we’re now seeing the fruits of these ideas, feelings, and outlooks come to fruition. It isn’t pretty!

The rhetoric has accelerated: *Pigs in a blanket, fry them like bacon.* This has been a past slogan of the *Black Lives Matter* movement toward law enforcement. Additionally, rappers are singing lyrics that are sending messages of violence and disrespect.

Notice Anderson Paak in *The Weekend* album: *We on 16th ridin by the police station, we might make a pork rind out of pig, bro, somebody tell these M*** F*** to keep their hands off me, I aint a M*** F*** slave, keep your chains off me, F** the black cop too, that’s the same fight.* Notice this about women from the same guy: *Put Molly [date rape drug] all in her champagne, she ain’t even know it. I took her home and I enjoyed that, she ain’t even know it.* He also has some things to say about President Trump: *I fantasize shooting Trump down, a shot for every black man who got gunned down.*

Even Madonna, some months ago at a rally in D.C., said she is angry and has thoughts about blowing up the White House. This kind of speech just adds to the anger and frustration. And though she spoke in context to illustrate non-violence, after lacing her comments in vulgarity, it became very clear she was all about *agitating* rather than suggesting solutions for what she thought were the problems.

Over and over we see hypersensitive expressions wrapped in hyperbole’s passion all designed to aggravate and exacerbate the protesting *Antifa* crowds for effect. This is the goal of anarchists who have become the “village idiots” of elitists like George Soros and others, who support his *Open Society Foundations*, which is nothing more than supporting the globalist agenda so prominent among the progressive rich.

However, many additional causes are now driving the cultural and political movements within the United States, Canada, and Europe. There seems to be no end to the multiple sources of political action, conflict, and terrorism—you can hardly keep up with it.

Assuredly, the trends are worsening. The legalization of laws directly *opposed* to God’s Word reflects the ongoing departure and purposeful abandonment of the God of Israel.



Eventually, this trajectory will merit His attention and *corrective intervention*! Why do I say that? Because that is His pattern!—especially for those nations who adopt Him as their God—and history proves the United States has done just that from its beginning. Historically, its culture was originally based on both the Old and New Testaments! It has tried to be a Judeo-Christian-based society, though admittedly, it has “missed the mark” in many ways.

Notice what God says through the prophet Jeremiah, when warning the House of Jacob and Judah in the 6th century B.C., keeping in mind Jacob (Israel) did not exist at this time—they had been conquered by the Assyrians 120+ years *before*: “Declare this in the house of *Jacob*, and publish it in *Judah*, saying, ...But this people has a revolting and rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone [away from God] ...Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you. For among my people are found wicked men [very selfish leaders, extortionists, and liars, ungodly people]: they lay wait, as he that sets snares: they set a trap, they catch men [they defraud and bribe, frame, and unjustly blackmail for self gain] As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit [they are involved with all kinds of nefarious activities]: Therefore they are become great, and waxen rich [Many have assumed leadership positions with average wealth, but leave office as multi-millionaires off the backs of the people]. They are waxen fat, they shine [they become empowered, enamored with themselves, and often become narcissistic and egocentric]: yea, they over pass the deeds of the wicked [they hold no one accountable, because too often they are the beneficiaries of the wickedness of others, i.e., collusion]: they judge not the cause [they are not interested in the truth], of the fatherless, yet they prosper [they exploit and use the children, e.g., pedophilia, trafficking, child slavery, and prostitution]; and the right of the needy do they not judge [they don’t care for the poor except to execute advantage for their own selfish purposes].



“Shall I not visit for these things? says the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this [yes, God is on a countdown to hold these leaders and people accountable for such unconscionable evil]? An astonishment and horrible thing is committed in the land [yes, God is outraged over what He sees and what is being legalized and accepted as normal—as He was with Sodom and Gomorrah]; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means [the ministry is not doing its job; they concern themselves with money and appeasement, being politically correct]; and my people love to have it so [the people love those who speak the soft things, things that entertain and make them feel good]: and what will you do in the end thereof” (Jeremiah 5:20–31)? And that is the question indeed—*What will we do?*

Unfortunately, many people think since judgment isn’t swift, God’s “OK” with what is going on. This couldn’t be further from the truth! However, we are told about this very thing. Notice: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Throughout Psalms 10, David asks why God allows the wicked to take advantage and be benefited. He illustrates what evil the wicked participate in and makes the observation that because God’s intervention to stop the wicked is not immediate, he is encouraged to *continue* (Psalms 10:6, 13). Yes, because evil seems to go unpunished swiftly, the wicked continue in their ways. They become *emboldened* since they’re not punished immediately.

Why do we think that is? Does it make any sense? Or is God negligent in His ways—derelict of duty to swiftly move in and break in pieces the evil ones involved with this kind of wicked activity?

These are all good questions, and if we want answers, it requires us to know God’s objective in using this delay tactic. And this can be understood by knowing His *patterns*, which were displayed when handling ancient Israel. Keep in mind that before both Israel, to the north, fell to the Assyri-

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ans, and Judah, in the south, fell to the Babylonians 120-plus years afterwards, God sent prophet after prophet warning them to forsake their sins, or judgment would come. This is a plain indication God is very patient with His people. All of us involved with the Christian walk can attest that this is an *admirable* characteristic and *welcomed* attribute of God's! I'm sure we're all agreed His patience is greatly appreciated!

The Pattern God Continues to Use

Many prophets were sent to both Israel and Judah over a period of decades, of which some came and went without any of their prophecies occurring. And because those prophecies didn't happen *immediately*, the changes (repentance) they proclaimed necessary to avoid God's judgment didn't happen. The people didn't believe—they didn't listen! So they didn't change.

Consider the prophet Amos who lived and preached in the 8th century B.C. during the reign of Jeroboam II. This was about 10 to 15 years *before* Tiglathpileser invaded northern Israel. When it did happen, that invasion was the first of four, spanning over approximately 65 years, which led to the complete collapse and destruction of the northern 10-tribe nation, called Israel. (Judah remained intact in the south.)

However, Amos, who came after the prophets Elijah and Elisha, and perhaps overlapped with Joel and Jonah, was sent primarily with three objectives. *First*, to proclaim judgments of the surrounding nations of Israel. *Secondly*, to indict the nations of Israel to the north and Judah in the south. And *third*, to announce the future blessings of Israel rebuilding the waste cities for habitation and the planting of vineyards and gardens—described futuristically as a time of peace. But interestingly, the prophecies of Amos—everything he stated and warned about—didn't happen while he was alive. Instead, he died without anything he said coming to pass! He was a prophet without validation in that regard.

Furthermore, this was a time of great affluence and wealth for Israel. Oh, there were rumors of war and unrest, but for the most part, it was a time of peace. So why was Amos claiming such “doom and gloom” during a time of wealth, prosperity, and peace? Why in the world would he be talking about rebuilding the waste cities when Israel's cities at this time were in good shape and filled with energy and commerce? I'm sure it just didn't make good sense to many of the Israelites at the time. Sadly, nobody was really *listening*—they dismissed him as irrelevant! And probably, some considered him just an old false prophet—a big “bag of hot air”—as they stretched out on their beds of ivory and enjoyed their summer homes.

Yet God was giving them *fair warning*. Notice chapter 6. Throughout this chapter, Amos indicts ancient Israel for being no better than the Gentile nations around them and for luxuriating in their wealth, but without any real interest in protecting what God had provided them—their land, affluence, and freedom. Notice: “...Ye put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near [you think you're invincible, too strong to collapse, but by doing that you're causing the decline to come upon you]; (you) that lie upon the beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock [enjoying your wealth]... That chant to the sound of the viol [enjoy your music]... That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments [and your soft lifestyles];” (Amos 6:1–6). But now notice the last part of verse 6: “but they are not grieved for the affliction [breach] of Joseph.”

This last statement is very clear about God's assessment of Israel's condition, His displeasure. As a matter of fact, He is disgusted with their “elitist” selfish attitude, which now has translated to *indifference* for the health and well being of the greater whole of the nation. Israel was being led by self-centered narcissists who used the wealth of the nation for their own self gain and promotion—a very similar condition that presently has emerged into the light and is recognized as infesting the United States and United Kingdom with an enormous amount of poisonous *corruption* embedded deeply in the leadership of government, education, and law enforcement.

Amos proceeds to announce: “Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed [they will be visited by God and taken down]. The LORD God has sworn by himself, says the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city [the capital, Samaria, symbolic of the nation]

with all that is therein” (Amos 6:7–8). Read on and listen to what Amos warns Israel about until he finally, once again, pointedly states: “But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, says the LORD the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath unto the river of the wilderness” (Amos 6:14).

This never occurred during Amos's life. That's right! He died and went to the grave, never seeing or knowing what he said ever came to pass. I'm sure it's safe to say, the people of his time were relieved when “the old man” died. I'm sure his message of “doom and gloom” was not very popular among the people of his own nation during this time of affluence and relative peace. Yet God used him to warn them of the impending judgment coming, due to their sins. But sadly, *they didn't listen!*

A Modern Day Warning From the Prophets

Throughout the Christian community today, many will claim there is no real prophetic value to the writings of the prophets—instead, it rests only in the *historical* significance and lessons we can learn from the mistakes ancient Israel made with God. But is this true? What about all the writings of circumstances and conditions that have not yet happened? So many prophecies plainly claim, “...in the *latter days* you shall consid-

er it” (Jeremiah 30:24). Also, in Genesis 49, notice: “And Jacob called unto his sons... Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the *last days*” (Genesis 49:1). That is a prophetic statement! And there are so many more. (Write for our *free* booklet, *Can You Understand Bible Prophecy?* for a more comprehensive explanation.)

What many people don't realize is that 30 percent of the Bible is prophecy, with many of those eschatological prognostications targeted for the last days. This is why many find prophecy so fascinating!

To understand how this works, it's important we recognize prophecy is often *dual* in description and application.

What I mean is, prophecies consist of announcements of both thesis and antithesis; type and anti-type, or a prior, more immediate fulfillment that will be repeated in kind or type in the latter day. This method, combined with figures of speech, metaphors, analogies, and poetic writings that are often symbolic, is liberally spread throughout the prophecies of your Bible. Many prophetic writings happen to be used and understood in this manner.

Though many prophecies were fulfilled when the Assyrian invaders pillaged the northern ten tribes, conquering and capturing them, and taking them out of their homeland—it was also only a foretaste of a much bigger “latter day collapse” of modern day wealthy and affluent nations that have a similar relationship with the God of Israel and who were sifted through the nations between *then* and *now*.

Notice what Amos says: “Behold the eyes of the LORD God are upon the sinful kingdom [any sinful kingdom], and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving [except] that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, says the LORD. For lo, I will command, and I will sift [shake, or scatter] the house of Israel among all the nations [they will migrate, set and scatter], like corn [wheat] is sifted [shaken] in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth” (Amos 9:8–9). Then, in the Millennium, when the tabernacle of David is raised, Israel will come out of captivity to build the wasted cities and inhabit them in peace (Amos 9:11–15). Both houses, Judah and Israel, will be reunited at this time, and King David will be resurrected and rule under the direction of Jesus Christ (Jeremiah 30:9–11; Ezekiel 37:15–28).

Unfortunately, what most don't understand, nations who claim the God of Israel to be their basis, their foundation, of moral and religious clarity and equivalency, are *accountable* to Him. The United States and the United Kingdom, along with many of the Commonwealth nations of the West, have a lot to answer for, since they have been weighed in the balances and found wanting when compared to His expectations. Jeremiah is also very clear about warning these nations that God will visit for the transgressions committed. Notice: “For I am with you says the LORD, to save you [Israel—both Judah and Israel]: Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you [lands of captivity], yet will I not make a full end of you [God will not utterly destroy Israel]: but I will correct you in measure [He will be fair, but you will be held accountable], and will not leave you altogether unpunished” (Jeremiah 30:11).

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Is Bigger Better?

by George Roper

The number of believers that gather together in holy convocation at any particular congregation is often seen as the predominant measure of a church's appeal. Some may reason that church size is a reflection of a congregation's influence, relevance, or viability. One consensus is that large congregations are healthier and more refined, while small congregations are pedestrian. Although the supporting arguments of a large congregation vs. a small congregation will differ, the most important aspect of a church is the development of its congregation's character in emulating Christ. Those in attendance of a small congregation shouldn't feel dismayed or perceive their church home to be inferior. Likewise, those who are a part of a substantially larger congregation shouldn't feel validated solely by their numbers, nor should they see their congregation as having ascendancy. The weekly attendance at any given congregation does not dictate how authentic a body of believers is, as church size is merely a parameter of circumstance, rather than being intrinsic to caliber.

Many see that the large congregation differs from the small congregation by mistakenly attributing the number of churchgoers as a reflection of the degree of quality in a church service. The large congregation may be seen to be more adept or polished in their presentation. There may be a stronger degree of accouterments accompanying a church service and a greater degree of ambiance. Such a congregation may also have a greater pool of resources to draw from. Undoubtedly, some will find the solidarity in numbers appealing when attending a church of this size. There is comfort in the unison of being surrounded by a great number of people who share the same spiritual aspirations. Furthermore, there is a fullness of sound that resonates within one's ears as hymns are sung by a throng of voices—all of which contribute to the appeal of being in a large congregation.

Conversely, small congregations may appear to differ from their counterparts as being more rudimentary. One erroneous ascription to the small congregation is the premise that they are less professional in their approach to conducting church presentations. They might have limited resources, yet parishioners may perform multiple tasks in the conduction of a church service, rather than focusing on one role. One of the greatest appeals of a small congregation is the intimacy that's shared amongst the members and visitors to that congregation. The comfort that is found in numbers at a large congregation is made up for in the warmth and hospitality that is shared in a small close-knit gathering of believers. The geniality extended through fellowship in a small congregation is without equal, while in larger assemblies, it can be more challenging to develop a personal rapport with each and every member because of the size of the congregation.

In contrast, the large congregation must contend with its own girth in terms of how it operates logistically. Without proper organization, a large congregation can become cumbered in bureaucracy. Many studies have shown that smaller groups perform more efficiently than larger ones. One of the most prevalent theories demonstrating this is the "Ringelmann Effect." Its stance attests that individuals become less productive as the size of their group increases. This theory is attributed to Maximillien Ringelmann, a French professor of agricultural engineering, who established his findings in 1913. In his work, Ringelmann had participants pull on opposite ends of a rope, or as the activity would contemporarily be referred to today as the athletic game "tug of war." In so doing, Ringelmann found that singular participants expended the highest degree of effort. Yet as more were added to the rope, forming a group effort, the exertion expended by each individual significantly decreased. In essence, individual effort decreased as the group grew. Since then, Ringelmann's findings have been corroborated and duplicated many times in accredited studies. He is seen as having laid the groundwork of social psychology.

The point illustrated from Ringelmann's findings shows that productivity decreases exponentially as a group grows in size. The experiment demonstrates that individual members do less or contribute less as a group multiplies. A response known as "social loafing" surmises that someone else will address the need at hand, so maximum effort or attention need not be put forth towards a given task. When applied to congregations and bodies of a church, this line of reasoning suggests that smaller congregations potentially offer another dimension for attendees to be afforded an opportunity to achieve personal growth. It also demonstrates how even in a large congregation, there is an instinctive gravitation to this dynamic of small teams by the advent of youth groups, singles meetings, parenting classes, and Bible study groups—whereby more is accomplished in the confines of a smaller unit. There is greater ease of communication,

information is relayed more efficiently, and material is received more effectively within the smaller unit. Furthermore, there is greater rapport and intimacy established within this smaller team.

Jeff Bezos, founder and CEO of *Amazon*, the largest Internet based retailer, supports this claim by expressing that communication can become convoluted in larger organizations. Bezos asserts that when meetings must be held, they should be amongst a small team. He exemplifies this through his well known two-pizza rule. This position expounds that teams shouldn't be larger than

what two pizza pies can feed, reasoning that small

teams can operate more effectively than larger teams are able.

In the New Testament church, many congregations were composed of small groups who met in believers' homes. In this capacity, most homes or residence courtyards were equipped to hold no more than 15 to 20 people. As the church grew, many regions where the church existed contained multiple house congregations. Today, using the paradigm that smaller groups are more efficient, it would stand to be more productive to have 100 congregations of 30 churchgoers than to have one congregation of 3,000 parishioners.

Indeed, people may have preferences on the size of church they attend. Some attend congregations whose attendance stands at what is intrinsic to that particular church, while others attend congregations that they hope to see grow. Whatever category personally applies, it is important to remember that developing the character of God is paramount to one's growth as a believer. This objective is not contingent upon how many people are standing beside us in our congregations as we do so. Consequently, both the large and the small congregation are capable of incubating Christians to that end.

Christ discussed the preoccupation of such concerns among other life stressors when He spoke to the church and all congregations that compose the body of Christ—all the while acknowledging their size in the greater scheme of things. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:32–34, KJV). Focusing on spiritual attainments is always the priority above physical conveniences and promotional ambitions. We must put those aspects into perspective when evaluating our outlook. Whether the congregations that we attend are large or small is inconsequential. It is the purpose of this modality—the spiritual organism that we call the church, to foster an environment where parishioners can be edified and develop the character of God. The quantitative frame within which this process is carried out is secondary. Yet the fundamental ambition of spiritual growth should remain our primary pursuit. Ω



Is Bigger Really Better?

An Open Letter to My Brothers and Sisters for Consideration About Cancer

Note: The writer of this letter asked to remain anonymous.

This year I was diagnosed with cancer. As is for most of us who receive this information, I was stunned, felt completely numb. I didn't think this could ever happen to me; this happens to other people. The fact of the matter is, four out of every 10 Americans are diagnosed with some type of cancer. Coming to grips with this fact, I realized I have to do something, but what?

My Story

I am a 63-year-old woman, who like you, was cruising along in life with daily work and activities. I was essentially in good health when I experienced a major rise in body heat—a hot flash, hampering my balance. This scared me, so that same day I saw my physician. My doctor wanted to rule out cancer, so I agreed to go for a mammogram screening. I was guilty of not doing this for many years. This screening referred me for a diagnostic mammogram. The results of this test showed I had a mass in my right breast; then a few days later, a biopsy was taken. Upon my disclosure relating the fact of two paternal aunts dying from breast cancer, genetic testing was ordered. An MRI was additionally scheduled. The MRI indicated I had another mass in my left breast; therefore another biopsy was scheduled and taken. All of this transpired from mid-January, up to and including the first week and a half of February, 2017.

While awaiting biopsy results, I called my insurance company asking, “Do you cover alternative treatments for cancer, say homeopathy?” They politely checked, but would only cover the conventional protocol of surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation.

There were so many factors troubling me about doing the conventional protocol of chemotherapy. One aunt who followed this protocol went into remission for a few years. Then the cancer returned; sadly, she died. The other aunt is a mystery of sorts; no real facts are known. What is known though, she too died from breast cancer.

Then I thought about all the special prayer requests for brethren fighting cancer and each individual's circumstances. I pondered about submitting to the doctor's sincere advice—but why would I be doing this? Was it out of fear? Was it by a traditional rooted conviction that we must just listen to what our doctors recommend for us, or was it simply because the insurance company only pays for conventional protocols? I was beginning to get worried at this time.

More recently, I have two friends who each lost family members using the conventional protocol of chemotherapy. Though remission occurred, the cancer returned more aggressively; unfortunately, they died. So I honestly wondered and struggled with my own personal situation. Is this method really for me, or is there another way to deal with cancer?

Upon being honest with myself, I concluded the most important reason I was so troubled with the conventional protocol was simply not wanting a man-made chemical running throughout my body. Chemotherapy kills good cells along with some types of cancer cells (not all cancers), in addition to depleting the immune system, which is already greatly compromised.

After some days of waiting, the biopsy results came in and the verdict: malignant invasive ductal carcinoma (Stage 2) in one breast, and high-grade ductal carcinoma in situ (early Stage 1) in the other. With tears streaming down my face and truly terrified, I tell the breast specialist I do not want to do any surgeries. I also mention I do not want conventional chemotherapy or radiation. I somehow managed to muster the ability to think of one question to ask: How long does it take for cancer to reach Stage 1? I was told for this type of cancer it takes approximately 10 to 12 years for developing this stage. That was shocking! Upon leaving the center, I filled out a request for transferring information, and I was sent to Radiology to request copies of all imaging.

After many prayers, shedding of tears, and being anointed, I finally came to terms with this news. I realized I would have to be making some type of decision regarding my treatment. The two most obvious choices are to do nothing, or listen to the breast specialist and request an appointment with an oncologist to proceed with surgery, chemotherapy, and/or radiation. However, there is a third option, holistic healing—the not-so-clearly-understood protocol. *It is this third option, the concept of holistic healing, I'd like to strongly suggest for everyone to take vital time to explore!*

The Exploration

My research began with going online searching for alternative treatments. Unfortunately, I didn't come up with anything that seemed beneficial. However, I did recall in years past, I was treated by homeopathic doctors with good results; so I searched out this office online. They offered a cancer protocol with Mistletoe Injections along with taking a homeopathic remedy tailored to the patient's constitution or simply just receiving the Mistletoe Injections. I started to seriously consider what they had to offer. I pulled up the recommended online site **BelieveBig.com**. Here I found detailed reports of information regarding just what Mistletoe does, plus a list of doctors who work with Mistletoe around the U.S., in addition to Believe Big's involvement with the *John Hopkins Hospital* study of Mistletoe; yet I still wasn't sure just what to do.

In the meantime, a very close friend from another Church of God group sent me one of the most important emails I could have ever received. This led to two extra special websites of equally beneficial value, which I am very compelled to share with everyone.

Chris Wark: chrisbeatcancer.com

Ty Bollinger: thetruthaboutcancer.com

Let me explain, Chris Wark is a cancer survivor. He shares what he learns from trusted doctors, along with his own personal healing research, and additional survivor stories. Chris stresses the benefits of a nourishing diet to heal the immune system to fight cancer. Ty Bollinger lost family to cancer. He turned his hurt into a personal quest to search out all viable holistic approaches, nationally and internationally.

Chris Wark and Ty Bollinger are extremely educated advocates regarding alternative means of healing cancer, **yet each site contains various amounts of information on how to rebuild the immune system and overall health during or after implementation of a conventional protocol!** *Both men interview countless numbers of both doctors and survivors, thereby exploring the healing of so many different forms of cancer with an array of holistic protocols.*

It was through these websites I came to understand the cause of cancer is due to the breakdown of the immune system. Both websites stress the extreme importance of putting sugarcane and artificial sugar completely out of the diet. **Cancer loves sugar; it is food for cancer to grow!** I additionally gleaned the importance of an organic diet or at least a high fruit and vegetable diet (based upon what a person can afford); and of having a drinking water filtration system that removes chlorine and fluoride from city water. I also learned the importance in using natural resourced products for personal and household care/cleaning. Several of the videos taught how to incorporate certain supplements and vitamins into a cancer fighting diet.

The survivors' stories I watched were a tremendous inspiration; and I felt greatly inspired in my personal quest. As you may have already guessed, I chose a holistic approach to fight my cancer. I realize choosing a protocol for treating cancer is a very personal decision. I just feel the natural healing route gets marginalized. After all, cancer is basically an immune deficiency disease. My personal investigation has proven there are numerous ways of treating cancer. There are far too many for me to mention all holistic protocols. However, an easy way to search these is to go on YouTube and plug into the search tab: *The Truth About Cancer: A Global Quest*. There are several sequences offered there to view holistic options.

The good news is, you don't have to be wealthy in order to do a holistic protocol, and you can change a protocol if you are not getting the desired results. I am eight months into my holistic approach, I feel very strong and healthy. Through my diet, supplements, vitamins, and the holistic protocol being implemented, I am nourishing my body, thereby strengthening my immune system to fight the cancer. The human body can fight cancer, by the grace of our all-knowing, loving God; but we have to give it the proper tools—nourishment and exercise. This brings to mind the prophet Daniel when he was presented with eating the king's delicacies and refused it in place of the “alternative” of vegetables and water; challenging the Babylonians with this proposition for 10 days (Daniel 1:11–13). Needless to say, God's Laws have a lot to offer in many areas, which good health happens to be one if we choose the “alternative” edibles to eat as He mentions (Leviticus 11 & Deuteronomy 14).

An Open Letter, continued on next page

An Open Letter, continued from previous page

The one point I did not expound upon with my diagnosis was the fact that the Stage 2 cancer had protruded through muscle/skin and was exposed on the outside of my breast. This is presently gone!! Unfortunately, there is a dip close to the breast plate where the cancer has eaten muscle away; I am hoping this doesn't get larger. I went for an ultrasound five months into my treatment.

The results showed no significant changes. For me, this is good news. The first step in fighting cancer holistically typically produces this result. My personal goal is to kill cancer stem cells through starvation. I am not worried about mass shrinkage; yet I hope not to see any significant growth. With God's blessings, the brethren's prayers on my behalf, and after watching so many cancer survivors' success stories, I am highly optimistic that I can beat cancer!

So my final point is this very important fact: **We do not need to feel rushed into any decisions regarding our treatment.** We have time to just stop, go before God our Helper, process the news, breath again, and begin a thorough research before deciding upon a protocol. I strongly recommend researching chrisbeatcancer.com and thetruthaboutcancer.com where diet and various holistic approaches will be resourced for you. I am looking forward to God's Kingdom on earth when disease will no longer have dominion over humanity. In the meantime, we have God, each other, and many choices to choose from; yielding to our own private thoughts and feelings in one of the most important decisions of our lives. Praying for healing for all.

*With deep heartfelt Christian love,
Simply your sister in Christ*

Why Was Jesus Baptized?

by Tom H. Kauffung, Elder

We think mostly of the scriptures that say "repent [of your sins] and be baptized."

There are other elements in the baptism ritual besides repentance. When we repent, we include the fact that we are publicly saying that we are abandoning serving and exalting self, and are dedicating our lives to serving our Creator God.

Jesus was without sin, so did not need to repent of sins, but said per Matthew 3:15 that His baptism was to "fulfill all righteousness."

While it seems evident that Jesus already was not serving and exalting self, but was doing His heavenly Father's will, it was a personal, private dedication.

By being baptized publicly by John the Baptist, it made these elements His public witness to the world.

This is confirmed in Matthew 4:1-10 with the account of Jesus being tempted by the devil to serve and exalt Himself through His power. This apparently occurred right after His baptism.

Then per Matthew 4:17, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," thus doing His heavenly Father's will and "fulfilling all righteousness." Ω

Listening, continued from page 4

Notice Micah says something, which makes no sense for his timeline, since the Assyrians were actively invading Israel during his lifetime, resulting in captivity and removal. Yet, he says this: "And the remnant of Jacob [a nation historically connected to Israel] shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest [it shall be strong among other nations of the world], as a young lion among the flocks of sheep [it can also be sensitive and charitable]: who, if he go through [this remnant of Israel], both treads down, and tears in pieces, and none can deliver [if this lion unleashed all its strength, none could deliver you from it]. Your hand shall be lifted up upon your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off [its military prowess will be superior to the nations of the world]" (Micah 5:8-9).

What is it we're reading here? The Scriptures indicate a remnant nation with historical roots connected to the Israel under siege at this time by the Assyrians, would, in the latter days, be strong again among the nations of the world; but be brought down due to its abandonment of God and its sinful ways (Micah 5:10-15).

These people, however, at the return of Christ, will be reconciled back to Palestine at the beginning of the Millennium to be established as the nation of Israel that the Gentiles will look to as an example—the light on the hill! Notice what Jeremiah says, because this has *never happened*—yet it is written for our understanding, that we may know.

Notice: "Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travails with child together; a great company shall return there" (Jeremiah 31:8-11). Keep reading—this has yet to happen! It is the description of a *future exodus* that will be greater than when Israel came out of Egypt (Jeremiah 16:14-15; 23:6-8; Isaiah 27:12-13; 11:11-16).

So What Does This Mean?

The obvious conclusion is, a nation of Judah and *another* considered by God as carrying the name of Israel, *exists in the latter days*. This becomes unquestionable, since both houses are notably identified distinctly from each other. Clearly then, we must realize *all* of Israel, *including* the Jews presently in Palestine, are going *back into captivity*. This will be Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30:7). Notice what is said: "For, lo, the days come, says the LORD, that I will bring **again** the captivity of my people Israel [but, at this time Israel does not exist. They went into captivity 120+ years before this writing. Israel never returned from their original captivity. So, how can they come into a second captivity?] and Judah [Judah was going into captivity by the Babylonians at the time of this writing. Yet the prophet is claiming they will go into captivity again!], says the LORD; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it" (Jeremiah 30:3).

Also, keep in mind the prophet Joel substantiates this about Judah by proclaiming in the *latter days* Judah and Jerusalem shall have captivity brought on them again (Joel 3:1). Let me remind us: a nation of Judah exists today, but known to the public as Israel—which they are, but do not represent *all* of Israel.

This is a *direct warning* to those nations embracing the God of Israel, which the United States and the United Kingdom and its Commonwealth nations do—that they will be conquered and taken into captivity, *again*, in the latter days. Upon the return of Christ, they will be re-gathered, forming an exodus that will minimize the original exodus from Egypt. Then, millions of refugees—physical human beings—from these former historically connected nations of Israel, will be guided back to Palestine to build the waste cities and rebuild Israel under the direction of Jesus Christ, King David, and the Spirit-born family of God (Zechariah 14:1-9, 16-19). They will reconstruct the nation of Israel to become that light upon the hill for all nations to look to as a model. And from there, the law of God will begin to cover the globe as the sea covers the seabed.

At that time "...the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High [Spirit-born sons of God], whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him" (Daniel 7:27).

This will be a time of restitution of many things, and will prepare the world for the resurrection of the *rest* of the dead at the end of the thousand years (Revelation 20:4-5)! God wants as many of us as possible to be there with Him, helping to reinstitute His values and laws—the very government of God. So, we need to be courageous and determined, because the times are upon us to be spiritually equipped for the storm ahead. **I hope you're listening!** Ω



Do You Have Cable TV?

Many people wonder: What can **I** do to help further the Gospel?

You—yes, ONE PERSON—can make a difference preaching the precious Gospel of the Kingdom to the world! (See Matthew 28:19-20.)

If you have a local cable television provider, check with them to see if they have a "public access" or "community" channel. If so, they may be able to broadcast our program, *The Armor of God*, locally—perhaps even **FREE**!!

All it would entail is *you* relaying DVD copies of the program regularly, in advance, to their offices. For more information, contact Ann Alpert at info@cgi.org

The Spiritual Journey of Our Family

How a battery radio and the discovery of the Sabbath led
a country saw miller's family to the Church of God

by Betty Register Slocum

My dad, Harrison West, was a country boy who grew up in heavy timber land in southeastern Missouri. I also grew up in the country, and have many fond memories of those years.

My grandfather (on my mother's side of the family) had a sawmill. Timber work was the most available kind of work for the people living in the area. My dad worked for Grandpa when he was around 20-21 years of age. This is when my dad and mom met. They married in 1929.

Dad learned a lot from Grandpa, enough to have his own mill someday. Dad also knew timber well—the different kinds of trees, mostly oaks, like red, white, and black oak. He knew which ones to cut. The oaks make very good floors for homes.

He loved walking through the woods checking them out. He worked hard in taking care of his family. Mom helped him, even with cutting the trees down and into logs. I remember us three children going with them. We sat on a quilt at a safe distance away from the tree cutting. As the oldest, my responsibility was to see to it that the other two stayed on the quilt. Sometimes there would be a picnic lunch.

Dad's hands became sore and crippled from the logs he hewed with a broad axe. He would sell the ties to the local railroad for 50 cents to a dollar each. This was the mid-1930s, and was before he got his own sawmill.

I remember sitting on those ties on the back of the truck when they were taken to town, which was some three or four miles away.

Sometime during the mid-1940s, Dad finally got the sawmill. My grandpa (on Dad's side of the family) bought it for him, along with 80 acres of timberland. Dad was happy; his dream had come true. He worked the mill himself, with the family's help. I remember helping catch the slabs for the logs as they came through the saw. I also wheeled out sawdust in a wheelbarrow when I was around 12-15 years of age. By that time, Dad had acquired some help from a nephew.

One Sunday afternoon, Dad informed us that we were going to church. We had never gone to church as a family before.

When we got ready to leave for church, I was sent out to open the gate. As I waited at the gate, I wondered why it was taking so long for Dad to come out. When he came, he explained that he was rolling his last cigarette. He told us kids he picked up the habit from our mother's brothers. I remember them smoking also, all three of them.

I did not fully realize it at the time, but a change was coming for our lives. At church, when the altar call was made, Mom and Dad went up front and knelt down, along with several others. This was a little scary for us kids, especially when they started dancing and speaking in tongues.

Dad quit smoking and using curse words, which was something he was "good at" when his mule would sit down (while skidding logs) and refuse to move until it wanted to, no matter what Dad called it.

Mom would sing a lot, and both Mom and Dad would pray a lot on their knees. They would pray real loud. This was scary also. Our neighbor asked me, "What is all that yelling about on the hill?" I was embarrassed to say, but I did tell him. It became the talk of the neighborhood, and the neighbor was a Baptist minister.

My parents finally learned that God could hear them without the yelling.

A few years later—I believe it was 1943—we moved again, this time to a place that was further south. The sawmill that Grandpa bought for my dad went with us, as it was what kept food on the table. The land of 80 acres, mostly timber, had no house. We rented a small one down the road until Dad could build one for us. For a while, neighbors supplied our water.

We were still going to church and, by that time, were getting used to it. Dad and Mom were reading the Bible, trying to understand it—here a little, there a little—but the more they would read, the more confused they became.

The Ten Commandments caught Dad's eye. He discovered that Saturday was the seventh day of the week. He tried to share this newfound knowledge, but to no avail. At that time, Mom provided the only encouragement he had. He never gave up, though those days were during World War II, and it was very hard times.

I was married by this time, and my husband (Ken Register) thought my dad was nuts. At that time, he didn't want me to spend much time with them.



Sometime later, my husband set out to prove they were wrong. He said, "How can all the churches out there be wrong?" But in years to come, he would find out—big time!

My parents had no electricity. They used kerosene lamps and listened to a battery radio. One evening, Dad turned on the radio, and out jumped the voice of Herbert W. Armstrong from XEG Texas-Mexico. The reception was poor at times; the broadcast would come and go. Dad got so excited when he heard Mr. Armstrong say Saturday was the Sabbath. He could hardly wait to tell Mom. He had found what he had prayed for!

So this is how it all began in my family. Dad did not know how to spread this good news, so he got my sister and me to learn some Gospel songs. The next Saturday we found ourselves on Main Street on a corner block, Dad with his Bible, and my sister and I singing. My sister and I prepared as best we could. We could harmonize pretty well, so we strum the streets singing our hearts out.

We sang *When We All Get to Heaven*, *The Old Rugged Cross*, *I'll Fly Away*, and whatever else we learned. A few people started gathering around us, some joining in with the singing. Dad would tell us when it was enough. Dad would raise his hands, with the Bible in one of them, and say, "This is why we are here—the truth." He still had that Pentecostal blood in his veins. He would get pretty loud. Some stayed, some moved on, and some were interested enough to ask him questions. Dad was satisfied at the time.

Since he had a sawmill and plenty of lumber, he decided to buy a small lot in the lower part of town, which he felt he could likely afford. His mind was working—and so was God's Spirit.

When he found a suitable lot, he was asked about his plans and if he was going to build a house. He revealed his intentions. So it happened. It was very small, but Dad had plans. And this was the start.

I lived too far away to see all this, but I was kept informed.

Meanwhile, Dad got permission from family and neighbors to use the property along the highway to build a brush arbor. He got plenty of attention. When the little house was finished, he sent out the word. (See the picture. Dad is on the far left; Mom on the right. I believe the year was 1948.) Dad had a few buddies he would talk to downtown, and they spread the word. Dad had set a meeting time, and people wanted to hear what he had to say on the subject, *How Can Saturday Be the Lord's Day?* (As you can see in the photo, there were more people than the little house could hold.)

Journey, continued on next page

Journey, continued from previous page

Dad baptized most of these people as we sang *Shall We Gather At the River?* (a creek was close to the action). Months went by, and only a few remained.

Dad was on the radio for a while. My little sister would go with him and sit and listen to Daddy. She loved her daddy. You could say she was Daddy's little girl. She never forgot those years. Today she is a member of God's church—and she's a grandmother.

Our mother was baptized in 1968 in God's church. A friend next to her (in the photo) was also baptized about the same time. They both were faithful all those years.

Mom passed away in November 2006; her close friend died a couple years earlier. Mom was around six weeks short of her 95th birthday.

Thanks to God for Mr. Armstrong and my dad. They paved the way for my husband and me being called. We were baptized in Big Sandy Lake by Mr. Meeker and Mr. Dick Armstrong in 1953, during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Marian McNair was also there helping. Sometimes I feel I have been in the church most of my life—and that's a very good thing.

There's been a lot of water to pass under the bridge, some very muddy, some wonderfully beautiful waters, some waters of sorrow, but many blessings. All my experience has increased my faith to continue on and press forward even more.

The past 60-plus years of serving God and His Son have been so rewarding! God is so merciful. Being a servant is very special to God. I'm grateful for the five generations from these roots. I get excited when I think of it. My desire is that my grandchildren and great-grandchildren will recognize where their blessings have come from. Now to be faithful and endure to the end.

Dad was a diabetic. He passed away during the Feast of Unleavened Bread in 1969. Until we meet again, Dad, sleep on...until you hear that trumpet sound.

Thank God for that battery radio and His servant, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. Ω

Youth News

Hi, I would like to update everyone on what is happening with our Youth programs. *Infuse* has just had its first meeting (November 17, 2017) for our Infuse Leadership Team for this fiscal year. We also have *Infuse* representatives at the December Winter Family Weekend in Kentucky.

The *Ignite* teen program is still ramping up, and we will be providing more information on this program once we have the website up and running.

Our *Sparks* program is for pre-teen children, and we are looking to brand all our children's Sabbath School lessons soon and upload them to our *Infuse* and *CGI* websites.

We plan on having an *Infuse* and *Ignite* retreat in 2018. To learn more about the Youth programs, please read our Feast reports in this edition of the *International News*. If you have some feedback, advice, or would like to volunteer your time for our Youth programs, please email me at mhjames6043@yahoo.com Ω

—Mike James

GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Lloyd Cary, editor of the *IN*, and his wife, Gail, of the Toledo, Ohio congregation, celebrated 50 years of marriage after the Feast. They were married on October 15, 1967 in Whitehouse, Ohio by Pastor Dennis Pyle. They have two children and five grandchildren. They look back with gratitude for the many blessings from our heavenly Father. Ω



Introducing CGI Radio Network the voice of HOPE, the voice of TRUTH

CGI Canada and the CGI Canada Evangelism Committee adopted a proposal for the introduction of Internet radio (called *CGI Radio Network*) to complement its evangelistic strategy. By January 2018, CGI Canada expects to have an Internet radio service broadcasting archived media resources and pre-recorded media resources via the Internet 24/7. We will feature programs as *Armor of God*, *Bible Talk*, *Wednesday Bible Study* (online), timeless hymns, Bible listening programs, and more.

This move is in line with CGI's global vision to use the advances in technology to preach the Gospel in a cost-effective way. Internet radio helps to utilize otherwise dormant media resources at a cheaper cost, with limitless reach around the world.

It is anticipated that we will build on the success of the pre-recorded broadcasting by progressively introducing live radio. If you have any program suggestions, or you are able to volunteer, please stand up and be counted. Contact CGI Canada Evangelism Coordinator, Horane Smith (pastor) at info@cgitoronto.org.

Stay tuned for more news on the launch.

Ω



Q. Doesn't Paul say that to be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord"? If, then, a Christian dies and is "absent from the body," is he not immediately (and consciously) "present with the Lord"?

A. The expressions "absent from the body" and "present with the Lord" are found in 2 Corinthians 5:6,8 KJV. In the preceding verses, Paul speaks of the present mortal condition and the future glorified state. The mortal body is described as "our earthly house" (verse 1), "this tabernacle" (verses 1,4), and our present "home" (verse 6). These descriptions are contrasted with the everlasting "building from God," or "house not made with hands" (verse 1), which is "our house which is from heaven" (verse 2) with which we shall be "clothed" (verses 24).

A person who is "absent from the body" has put off the present clothing. He will remain "naked" (verse 3), or "unclothed" (verse 4), until he is "further clothed" (verse 4) with his "building," "house," or "habitation" from heaven. At that time, he will be "present with the Lord."

Both the present mortality and the future immortality are described in terms of "clothing." The mortal body a person occupies is his present clothing. His future clothing is the immortal body he will obtain at the resurrection, which takes place at the Second Coming of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:21–23,50–55; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). He is "naked," or "unclothed," between death and resurrection. Therefore, Paul did not mean that a person who is "absent from the body" is immediately and consciously "present with the Lord." (See John 3:13.)

In his previous epistle to the Corinthian believers, Paul wrote, "Behold! I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, [die] but we shall all be *changed*—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we [who are alive] shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:51–53). *When* will this occur? *In the future*, "at His coming" (verse 23).

Compare this with what Paul said to the same church in his next epistle: "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (2 Corinthians 5:4).

It is inconceivable that in one epistle Paul links putting on immortality with the future resurrection, but in the other epistle he links putting on immortality with "going to heaven" at death. *If* Christians are clothed with immortality, or "swallowed up by life" immediately after death, why would he be looking forward to a future resurrection? Ω

lwc

Feast Reports, 2017

2017 Feast of Tabernacles in Australia

How is it that after each Feast of Tabernacles, we say, “*This is the best one yet!*”? I can really say this year was one of the best Feasts I have attended. I have been attending the Feast of Tabernacles since 1992, so I have some experiences. To start with, the weather was good (only one day a bit wet), so the beach and surrounds were great. Redcliffe is certainly one of the prettiest places to visit and stay in.

On the *first* day, we had morning services. Herb gave a very good and traditional sermon on *Why Are We Here?* It is always great to have this lesson reinforced each year. It’s also very good for new people in our church. After morning services, all 16 of us went for a lovely sit-down lunch. Our afternoon service at 2:00 PM was a DVD presented by Mr. Ben Faulkner, titled, *Are You Ready to Teach?* (This was a sermon presented in the USA from last year’s Feast.) We were all very uplifted by this sermon, and it had us all thinking and talking about whether we are ready or not for the future. We all went our own way after services were finished. Everyone was very tired and needed time to rest. I know Herb was rather knocked up and very tired. We had a quiet evening back at the cottage where we were staying.

Friday morning service was presented by Michael Cole, a visiting minister from another Church of God group. He gave a good and informative sermon titled *Covenants*. We were very blessed to have two ministers preaching to us live this year. It really helped Herb, who was not very well before and during the Feast. (Two weeks before the Feast of Trumpets, we both ended up in hospital with influenza A. Herb had double pneumonia. So we were both a bit slower than usual.) There was another get-together with everyone for lunch. The coffee shops on the boardwalk are very plentiful—we could take our pick of a new one each day. A few of the women folk went shopping after lunch. An early Sabbath evening followed the day’s activities.

Saturday we had a conference call service by phone, from USA, New South Wales Australia, Vanuatu, and Redcliffe. It was all very informative and interesting to hear from other people who were listening to us in Redcliffe. After that, we had our normal 11:00 AM service with a DVD sermon from USA with Bill Watson, titled, *We Are Not of This World*—never a truer word spoken. During the Feast, we all felt really blessed to be having very encouraging relationships with like-minded people. Admittedly, we still have to interact with people who do not know why we are so happy and joyful. But the fun to me is letting them know why we are in Redcliffe (again). People do remember from the last time we spoke to them, and to be greeted by waitresses, etc., with a happy smile and words of remembering is really something. In the afternoon, we had a Bible Study from Herb, *The Kingdom of God*. That evening, we had dinner at another restaurant with a few of the brethren.

Sunday, we don’t have a morning service, but we all meet up for breakfast on the boardwalk. Then a great time is had at the markets. What an incredible sight, so many exciting and beautiful people and little dogs!!! Yes, dogs are very important to the people of Redcliffe. I even saw one very pampered little pooch being wheeled in its own special pram. Food stalls, clothing stalls, jewelry stalls, leather work, and the list goes on and on. This is my once-a-year treat, to see the sights. We had our afternoon service at 2:00 PM and special music presented by Alex Scholes, then a DVD from Dave Rusinko, *Truth Matters*—once again, another very insightful sermon.

A very exciting event was when we found a wonderful Chinese restaurant on Sunday night. Quite a few Feasts ago, it was tradition for all of us at the Feast to have a Chinese meal together as a *Family Night*. Somehow or other it changed, but much to everyone’s delight, we are going to incorporate it once again. Large roundtables are just so much fun to eat at!!!

Monday, at the 10:00 AM service, Michael Cole gave another very interesting and informative sermon, *In the Millennium*. After services, we all met together for a *Picnic/BBQ* with games on the beach. The wind was a bit much at the first site we chose, so after the men cooked and we ate, we all moved to another spot out of the wind, and had a wonderful time. Boche is the favourite game, I think. It really amazes me how we can all come together each day and still find many fascinating things to talk to each other

about. Oh, if only more families could feel as we all do with God’s special people in His family.

Tuesday morning’s 10:00 service included a wonderful DVD sermon from Wayne Hendrix, *Connecting the Dots*. Wayne always has a wonderful approach to any subject he preaches on. We were all very impressed, and after this sermon the word for the day was **Rejoice**. Fancy, in this day and age with all the technology, etc. at everyone’s finger tips, there does not seem to be much rejoicing out there in the world. I know we all rejoiced with vigour and vim. Another great lunch followed in a restaurant/cafe. Herb and I had an early evening and went rather early to bed.

Wednesday came, and we were all very conscious of the Feast drawing to a close. Herb gave a sermon at 10:00 AM titled *Signs of the Time*. What an awful time it is for so many people, even here in Australia, where we know we are a blessed nation. After services, a few of the women went shopping, and a couple of the men went to the Aircraft Museum, and then they went to the fish market for their lunch. (Each to his own!) We had quite a lot of visiting with each other during the Feast. It was really nice to have people come and chat or go to someone else’s place to catch up on the day’s events.

The *Last Great Day* is one of great happiness and also a certain sadness. The great happiness is due to knowing what we are to look forward to in God’s Kingdom, and the little sadness is because we have to wait for another year to come and celebrate with God’s people at the next Feast of Tabernacles. Fortunately, we can look forward to some of us meeting up again for Passover, Pentecost, Trumpets, and Atonement. Back to the service on the Last Great Day: We had another wonderful sermon from Bill Watson titled *Last Great Day*. We are all so looking forward to Christ’s coming to stop the awful mess which we humans have made of His wonderful creation. Another final Feast meal, and then we all went to a couples unit and spent a quiet and reflective time together until sunset.

We have re-booked the Winton Room at the *Redcliffe Cultural Center* for next year’s Feast of Tabernacles, so now is the time to start preparing! Before I leave this report, I would really like to publicly thank our brethren and visitors for all the joy, help, and happiness you shared with us all. Thank you all, and keep safe, and may you walk and talk with God every day.

Submitted by Tui Haupt, Ipswich Congregation

Questions and Objections

Questions for Atheists and Evolutionists

God said, “Come now and let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18). He also challenged, “Prove all things” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). How can we prove God’s existence? Let’s take God up on His challenge!

When I see a building or painting, how do I know there was a builder or a painter? I can’t see him, hear, touch, taste, or smell him, yet the existence of the building or painting is *proof* there was a builder or painter. The same principle applies with the existence of God. Creation show me there is a Creator. I don’t *need* faith—all I need are eyes to see and a brain that works (See Romans 1:21–25.)

With the The test of any theory is whether or not it provides answers to basic questions. Some well-meaning but misguided people think evolution is a reasonable theory to explain man’s questions about the universe. Evolution is *not* a good theory—it is just a pagan religion masquerading as science.

1. Where did the space for the universe come from?
2. Where did matter come from?
3. Where did the laws of the universe come from (gravity, inertia, etc.)?

Questions, continued on next page

Catching the Ball

A Feast Report from Australia

God's Feasts are awesome! And this year was packed with great messages, great music, and great people. The weather was a blessing, the events were enjoyable, the people were fantastic, and the services were inspiring. Every year I am amazed at how much more we can learn about God's laws and His ways.

It was incredible how God's Word was expounded through the lips of so many gifted people in the sermons offered up each day. It was as if a blanket was being carefully crafted, woven with truth, wrapping each of God's children with His Spirit and love. The warmth from each lesson confirmed and reassured us that the path we had all chosen to get us to this Feast was the right one. Our lives may not always go the way we would like them to go, but during this short time each year it is as if a window in our mind bursts open letting in a breath of fresh air. God's Word holds true to its cleansing power and living water. It is a foundation more solid than any bedrock. It is secure and stable, sound ground from where we can stand and build our lives while nurturing ourselves and our children with His everlasting truth.

Questions, continued from previous page

4. How did matter get so perfectly organized?
5. Where did the energy come from to do all the organizing?
6. When, where, why, and how did life come from dead matter?
7. When, where, why, and how did life learn to reproduce itself?
8. With what did the first cell capable of sexual reproduction reproduce?
9. Why would any plant or animal want to reproduce more of its kind since this would only make more mouths to feed and decrease the chances of survival? (Does the individual have a drive to survive, or the species? How do you explain this?)
10. How can mutations (recombining of the genetic code) create any new, improved varieties? (Recombining English letters will never produce Chinese books.)
11. Is it possible that similarities in design between different animals prove a common Creator instead of a common ancestor?
12. Natural selection only works with the genetic information available and tends only to keep a species stable. How would you explain the increasing complexity in the genetic code that must have occurred if evolution were true?
13. When, where, why, and how did: a) Single-celled plants become multicelled? (Where are the two-and-three-celled intermediates?) b) Single-celled animals evolve? c) Fish change to amphibians? d) Amphibians change to reptiles? e) Reptiles change to birds? (The lungs, bones, eyes, reproductive organs, heart, method of locomotion, body covering, etc., are all very different!) How did the intermediate forms live?
14. When, where, why, how, and from what did: a) Whales evolve? b) Sea horses evolve? c) Bats evolve? d) Eyes evolve? e) Ears evolve? f) Hair, skin, feathers, scales, nails, claws, etc., evolve?
15. Which evolved first (how, and how long, did it work without the others)? a) The digestive system, the food to be digested, the appetite, the ability to find and eat the food, the digestive juices, or the body's resistance to its own digestive juice (stomach, intestines, etc.)? b) The drive to reproduce or the ability to reproduce? c) The lungs, the mucus lining to protect them, the throat, or the perfect mixture of gases to be breathed into the lungs? d) DNA or RNA to carry the DNA message to cell parts? e) The termite or the flagella in its intestines that actually digest the cellulose? f) The plants or the insects that live on and pollinate the plants? g) The bones, ligaments, tendons, blood supply, or muscles to move the bones? h) The nervous system, repair system, or hormone system? i) The immune system or the need for it? Ω

Dr. Kent Hovind

Be sure to request our free booklet, *Evolution—Fact or Fallacy?*

But sometimes life can throw us a few too many curve balls and some pretty hefty low punches. We might struggle and think we will never have the strength to endure to that finish line with all the scratches, bumps, bruises, and broken bones we get along the way. For all the tests we may take, for all the ventures we set out to achieve, nothing is more noteworthy than succeeding in the “game of life”—its destiny, and the gift of salvation.

Life's lessons can be a bit like a coach throwing you a ball. It's practice and you're training for a big event, the Grand Final. Are you going to catch it this time, or is it going to fall? Will you fumble a while as you try to grab hold of it? Will you finally secure it in the palms of your hands and run with it, or do you stumble and lose it again? As the practice plays on, do you hog the ball, or do you pass it along? Your coach is assessing you. Are you a team player? Have you been listening? Have you been studying his game plan? Or are you running your own game, hoping it will all just work out in the end?

God is our coach. He knows what we need to play our best game. He knows we will no doubt get a few scrapes along the way. He knows we will probably fall not once, or twice, but over and over again. He knows we will feel beaten at times and consider that maybe it's all too hard to carry that ball. Our coach knows when our knees are about to buckle, and the goal line seems too far away. That's why He sent His Holy Spirit to strengthen us when we feel there is no hope, to quench us with living waters when we thirst, and to fill our hearts with a fire when only a spark is left. Only His Spirit can guide us and comfort us and motivate us to rekindle that flame and set us on the true and clear path when the chips are down.

Compassion was a key theme running through many of the sermons this year at God's Feast, and it was the message that rang clear in my mind and what I took home in my heart. God's eternal love for His creation and His enduring grace will see His plan unfold through His saving gift of salvation. *Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends* (John 15:13). Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ gave the ultimate sacrifice for all of mankind. Through His death and resurrection, all of mankind will be able to enter God's kingdom either through the first resurrection or the Great White Throne Judgment. Through His love, all of mankind can be saved, not lost.

This message of compassion, sacrifice, and salvation fueled a fire in my heart, as I believe it did for all those who attended the Feast of Tabernacles here in the sunny state of Queensland. Our group joined many other groups to observe this wonderful Feast at Kawana Waters on the Sunshine Coast just north of Brisbane. The location was hosted by the *United Church of God Australia*, and it is the second year our group has celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles here with them. There were so many things to do after services, like going to the beach, sightseeing, bush walks, BBQs and picnics, restaurants, water parks and fun parks, dances, and even a fantastic John Denver concert, to name a few. At peak times, there were approximately 400 brethren who attended services, and the number of younger members who attended this year was very encouraging. The weather we enjoyed throughout the Feast was great and such a blessing. With little rain throughout winter, many had left their homes with grass turning brown, but rain, which had come just before the Feast days and then soaking rain afterwards, meant the grass was green again. As these rains bring a promise of a good harvest for the farmers, so too is the hope of a good harvest unfolding for God's Kingdom through the living waters that were poured out onto His people here throughout the Feast.

Our heavenly Father knows our needs before we ask. He blesses His children and nurtures them. He picks them up when they fall and comforts them when they are discouraged. He returns the rains when we seek them and is patient with us when He teaches us. Like a coach who throws us a ball, our Father watches from the sideline and waits. Will we catch it, and what will we do with it? He is carefully moulding us with His love, passing on His instructions in the most important game plan of our lives—the Grand Finale—the event of our salvation and His everlasting Kingdom. Ω

Submitted by Dianne Prather-Tuskes, Slacks Creek Congregation

Collingwood, Ontario, CANADA

Feast of Tabernacles 2017



For the second year in a row, the picturesque town of Collingwood, on the shores of Georgian Bay, played host to the Feast of Tabernacles. One hundred forty brethren, from as far away as the Canadian Maritimes and the United States, came together for our annual eight-day Festival.

This year, “Celebration of Kings and Priests” provided a central theme for the various elders, MAP candidates, and speakers to base their sermonettes, sermons, and Bible Studies around. The beautiful décor, designed by Lissa Palmatier, also supported this meaningful theme. Several members who had celebrated more than 50 Feasts remarked that the messages were among the most impactful they had ever heard.

This year, the brethren were uplifted by various pieces of special music performed by the Festival Choir (led by Jim Leith), along with *Infuse/Ignite/Sparks* groups, and others. Highlights were renditions of *Total Praise* and *With the Sound of Trumpets* that supported the Festival theme.

The Sabbath and Last Great Day began with evening Bible Studies by Deacon Jan Kowalczyk and Pastor Adrian Davis, respectively. Deacon Jan spoke about *God’s Plan of Salvation* (“GPS”) and the lifelong process that is required. Pastor Adrian brought us a study on the book of Philippians, centering on chapter 1, verse 27, showing how our conduct must be “worthy of the Gospel of Christ.” Following each study, the *Infuse* group provided a worship session where the brethren were invited to praise God in song. Many remarked how nice it was to “see youth who are willing to serve.”

Throughout the duration of the Feast, three *Infuse* sessions were held. Pastor Murray covered the dangers of the *Peter Pan Syndrome* and how to avoid falling victim to it. Deacon Jan spoke on how a *Godly Work Ethic* will help us develop into mature adults and servants of God. Pastor Adrian, along with his wife, Jennifer, spoke of proper dating techniques and steps we can take to prepare ourselves for a godly marriage. The youth were treated to a dinner as a small token of gratitude for their service, sponsored by *Infuse Canada*. Additionally, *Infuse Canada* t-shirts and hoodies were sold to raise funds for future activities.

Saturday morning gave way to an *Appreciation Breakfast* for the seniors. Over 50 of our honoured older brethren enjoyed a hot meal and fellowship at *Gustav’s*, the on-site restaurant. Everyone was presented with a hand-made bookmark crafted by the *Infuse*, *Ignite*, and *Sparks* groups as a service project. Our beloved seniors were touched by this “heartwarming and thoughtful act of kindness; it was a lovely way to give back and show appreciation.”

This year, we were blessed to witness three baptisms. *Eric R. Dormer*, who was first introduced to the Ottawa congregation by a fellow member, decided to give his life to Christ. *Joseph Doan*, a member of the Toronto congregation who first discovered CGI at the one of the locally held campaigns, was also baptized. *Jessica Kowalczyk*, a young woman who is an actively serving member of the Burlington congregation, chose to follow in her parents’ footsteps and dedicate her life to the Lord’s service.

Throughout the duration of the Feast, there were many opportunities for fun and fellowship. The Ottawa congregation organized *Family Day*, with the main event being *The Amazing Feast Race*. This activity required groups of four or five individuals to complete a series of assigned tasks. Individuals were asked to lasso, ballroom dance, effectively memorize a series of objects, and lead their blindfolded partner through a two-hole golf course, just to name a few. *Family Day* also included lunch and *Bible Trivia*, which was organized by Ernie Marion.

Sunday night, four groups of individuals accepted the challenge to complete an *Escape Room*, working through various puzzles and challenges to find and claim “the King’s lost crown, sceptre, and jewels.” The activity was the brainchild of Dylan Swan, who was ably assisted by his family. The evening concluded with *Bible Jeopardy*, led by Rebekah Cox and the Burlington youth.

Other activities included a *Scenic Caves Hike* which ended, for those who dared, with a half-mile zip line over the colourful Collingwood forests. A fun *Family Dance* was preceded by some line dancing instruction, where we learned the Electric Slide and other dances. Finally, no Feast would be complete without the annual *Fun Show*, which included an appearance by “Gladys Knight and Her Pip.”

After the Last Great Day ended, another tradition closed the Feast when over 50 brethren joined together for our *Farewell Dinner at Boston Pizza*.

Many thanks go to the Burlington and Ottawa congregations, as well as those who helped them work together to organize such an inspiring Feast. Several who experienced the Feast for the first time were left to look back on this “wonderful, uplifting, inspiring, and eye-opening experience.” When you get a chance, check out the amazing photographs captured by Daniel Kowalczyk and Rosina Armenti on the Canadian church website (www.cgicanada.org/feast-photos-2017/).

Here’s looking forward to next year when Collingwood will again play host to the Feast!

Submitted by Katelyn Palmatier

“And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month” (Leviticus 23:41).

“Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner” (Nehemiah 8:18).

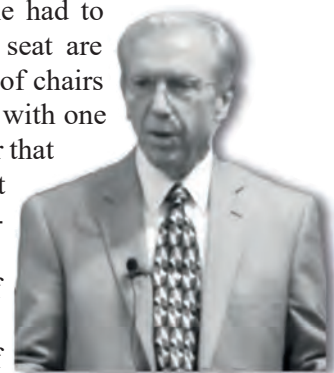
CGI PHILIPPINES 2017

Feast Report

The best Feast ever! It all sounds too familiar to all of us who are keeping the Feast through the years. But, as always, we are amazed at how we can top the previous year's "best Feast experience ever" and allow us to say that this year's Feast was the best ever! And this rings true with the Church in the Philippines. Truly, God has been good and gracious to the Philippine brethren as we celebrated this year's Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day at the Summit Ridge Hotel in Tagaytay City and in other Feast sites, namely Cebu and Iloilo.

As is customary for us, we had two "bayanihan" nights. These are nights where the brethren have communal dinners and great fellowship. The first *Bayanihan Night Dinner* was sponsored by the provincial congregations of Malolos, Naga, Masbate, and Sagay. We were treated to their local delicacies and desserts. As expected, food and drinks were abundant. After the dinner, some of the brethren took a rented karaoke and sang their hearts out. The *second* Bayanihan Night, sponsored by the Manila and Alabang congregations, was as memorable as the first one. Food was overly abundant, this time satisfying the local criteria of "quantity, quality, and variety." And this time, after dinner, the brethren played "musical chairs." Participants had to dance around a limited number of chairs while music is

played, and when the music stopped, everyone had to scramble for a seat. Those unable to have a seat are excluded from the next round, and the number of chairs is also reduced. This goes on until two are left, with one chair to sit on. Imagine the thrill and the laughter that accompanied this game. Several things stand out in these two nights—the camaraderie, fellowship, and helping hands that went with them. Truly, all activities necessary for the success of the Bayanihan Nights (food preparation, setting up, and cleaning up) were done in the spirit of cooperation and service.



Wayne Hendrix

We had the privilege of having **Mr. Wayne Hendrix**, an elder from Ohio, and his charming wife, Mrs. Sandi Hendrix, join us for the whole duration of the Feast. He certainly gave inspiring, thought provoking, powerful messages that will certainly be of help to the brethren as we all carry on with our Christian walk. He added depth and great insight to our understanding of our calling, our oneness with Christ, and our merciful God. Before flying back home, they also joined us in the Sabbath service after the Feast. Mr. Hendrix gave a riveting, heartfelt message on improving our prayer lives. His sermon left some of us sniffing, trying to hold back our tears.

During the Feast, two days were dedicated to the youth and the elderly. The 2nd day of the Feast can be called a *Youth Day*. Messages in the service were focused on building up and guiding the youth. This is timely, since the local churches have a sizeable young population. The afternoon of that day was dedicated to a *Youth Forum*, facilitated by the Naga congregation. A "Faith Analysis" workshop was conducted for them using the SWOT paradigm. They had fun while doing it. Mr. Hendrix spoke to the youth during the forum, and told a story whose lesson reverberates for everyone—stay close to God so you don't run the risk of not hearing Him when He reaches out to you. A similar day dedicated to the elderly was held on the 5th day of the Feast. Messages during the services were also focused on the elderly. After a lunch together, a program hosted by the Alabang congregation was held honoring the elderly among us. In that program, they were treated to song numbers and were serenaded as the couples among them danced.

The talented among the brethren were able to showcase their God-given gifts via song and dance numbers during the *Talent Show*. Everyone had fun and enjoyed the presentations. After the Talent Show, some of the brethren enjoyed dancing once again before calling it a night.

As to the services, well, they were well attended and everyone took the time to learn and gain deeper insights to the truths of God. A total of 20 messages were delivered during the Feast until the Last Great Day. It was indeed a Feast that nourished us spiritually. Adding vibrance and texture to the services were the different special music performed by the Alabang, Naga, Manila, Malolos, Sagay, and Masbate local church choirs, as well as the sister acts of the Luntok and current and former dela Cruz sisters. The senior's and the children's choir also rendered special music.

Adding joy to our celebration were nine baptisms that happened at the Cebu site. Attendance to this year's Feast was also amazing: 241 in Tagaytay, 47 in Iloilo, and 95 in Cebu—a total of 383 adults and children combined.

For us, this was truly the best Feast ever! And special credit goes to the Festival Committees who worked hard to make the events successful, and most of all, the individual members themselves who rejoiced and celebrated with much joyful fervor as commanded in Leviticus 23:39–43.

And as is customary for us, a video presentation was made to the congregation after the afternoon service of the Last Great Day. Not a few shed tears as the moments captured by the presentation were flashed and were once again relived. There was so much rejoicing, fun, and a lot of good memories made during the Feast, that when it's time to say goodbye to one another, tears overflowed and hugs were spread around. Nobody really wanted these beautiful times to end, and one day it won't, when its final fulfillment happens at the time God sets up His Kingdom here on earth. Until then, we will always look forward to another best Feast ever! Ω

Submitted by Rene Corpuz, CGI Philippines

Ignite Sparks



The Canadian Feast site, in Collingwood, Ontario, played host to CGI's newly-branded youth groups, Ignite and Sparks. These two groups form the core of our Youth Program, as we work with the future of the Church, preparing them for service to God. The *Sparks* and *Ignite* programs are designed to support their eventual transition into *Infuse*.

This year approximately 15 children under the age of 13 worked with Sister Elizabeth Anane and her assistants on the *Sparks* program designed by Brandy Webb. For six mornings before services, they gathered to learn more about *Building Godly Treasure*.

In addition to our youngest children, our *Ignite* youth joined our *Infuse* group for three dynamic sessions covering the topics of *Christian Dating*, *The Peter Pan Syndrome*, and *The Christian Work Ethic*. These interactive studies addressed timely topics our young people face in this secular world.

Youth Day gave them an opportunity to serve as ushers, greeters, worship leading, piano accompaniment, opening and closing prayers, and special music from each group. Many also contributed in organizing some of the Feast activities and were instrumental in leading the worship sessions after the Bible Studies.

Youth Day also coincided with the day that we baptize those who desire to give their life to Christ and accept His sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin. Jessica Kowalczyk was added to our growing group of baptized Infusers!

It wasn't all about learning and growing! Other activities provided time for fun and bonding. During the Family Day's *Amazing Feast Race*, a team of our girls went up against a team of our boys and two other teams of adults. The girls finished the course two minutes ahead of the boys, with the two teams of adults coming in behind them!

The three groups gathered one morning for a service project in honor of our Seniors. The *Infuse* and *Ignite* group worked with the *Sparks* group to make personalized bookmarks for the *Seniors' Breakfast*. What a sight it was to see them all working together!

Finally, a dinner was held at *Boston Pizza* to honor and thank our youth for all of their hard work and service at this year's Feast. Ω

Submitted by Murray Palmatier

Three Views of the Feast of Tabernacles 2017, Kumasi, Ghana, West Africa

From Pastor Nicholas Boakye Arius

The perspectives of three persons are included in this Feast report: the overseer of the Ashante region congregations, a youth leader from the Kumasi congregation, and a first time visitor from Canada.

The Feast of Tabernacles was met with great anticipation and excitement from all members of the different branches of the *Church of God International* (CGI) family here in Ghana. Preparation began months before its due date on October 5, 2017. This year's Feast took place at Mount Olives Retreat Centre in Kumasi. All members and equipment were transported safely to the site the night before the Feast began.

We had a total attendance of 127 adults and 32 children, plus our guests from Canada and Jamaica. From Canada, we had Kenroy and his wife Marie Angela Allen, and two sisters, Landon and Jorie McLaughlin; and from Jamaica, Alicia Smith. We had a successful service on the first day, which began with Feast-goers exchanging greetings.

Ministers of the church took time to teach the church a number of messages from the Word of God throughout the days, and we were greatly blessed by the messages. In addition to the daily services, we had some entertainment and sports activities like the *Bible Quiz*, *Youth Dance Performances*, and *Football* (soccer) games.

The Last Great Day, as always, came with a great sense of joy and happiness. It was a special day that was marked by non-stop praises and songs from the Praise and Worship Team, along with the powerful Word of God that brother Kenroy Allen ministered.

This Feast of Tabernacles was an ecstatic and joyful Feast of the Lord, which everyone was happy to attend. The Feast ended as members from the four congregations gathered their belongings and boarded their buses back to their destinations. Just like every other year, there were reports of kids not wanting to depart due to the great joy that the Feast always brings them. News came in from the different branches announcing their safe arrival to their homes.

We give special thanks to our heavenly Father for giving us such an event. We also give thanks to our guests and the entire *Church of God International* family in Canada and all our members of the church who in one way or the another made this Feast a success. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ bless all of us and give us everlasting peace. Ω

Yours in Christ,

Nicholas Boakye Arius

From Belinda Owusu

Feast of Tabernacle 2017 was indeed a blessed and a memorable one. The Feast gave us, the youth, the opportunity to live by the commandment of God and practice what we learn in the Scriptures.

Having Jorie and Landon, two youths from the CGI (Toronto), Canada join us this year was great joy to us. Pastor Ken, Pastor Nicholas, and all the pastors through their teachings of the Word of God opened up our understanding of the Feast of Tabernacles. It also brought the youth from all other branches together, and we really understood and appreciated one another because we lived together, worshiped and praised together.

We have a stronger and revived youth right after the Feast because of the joy through dancing and other activities like the *Bible Quiz*. Individual talents were also developed at the Feast, and the youth have been more involved in church activities there after.

We are really grateful and hope you always come with more people from the youth ministry so we can have a more blessed Feast. We say God bless you more. Ω

From Landon McLaughlin

This year I had decided to go experience what Sukkoth (Feast of Tabernacles) was like in Ghana. When I had arrived, I found about 100 observers at this site. The services begin with opening prayer, followed by a praise and worship portion, the sermon, announcements and a prayer, then closing with a chant (a benediction in Twi, their native language).

Sounds typical, right? But it's actually not so typical. You see, when they do praise and worship, it is a different kind of praise and worship that you do not typically see in a Sabbath-keeping church. Praise and worship starts and the fun begins. The music is loud, vibrant, and colourful, as women and men sing praises unto God and rejoice with gladness in their hearts. They are dressed in bright, colourful outfits, head-wraps and sashes. There is even a portion during praise and worship in which members will dance about, reminiscent of David dancing before God (2 Samuel 6:14). From the youngest to the oldest, you can see groups dancing and conga lines parading in the church.

The energy and joy from the members rubs off on us Westerners, that we start to clap and dance along. The brotherly love from the Kumasi congregation is such an uplifting and warming feeling.

There is a group of women, who constantly go to work in the kitchen, feeding the members of the congregation at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. This was something different that I hadn't experienced at another Feast site, and it was absolutely wonderful. The Kumasi Feast was full of love, kindness, sharing, and togetherness.

The sermons I thoroughly enjoyed, as they were more interactive than what I had normally experienced at other sites, basically just lectures. But here we were asked questions during the sermon, which kept me more engaged than I would normally be.

During this Feast, there was a change in me. Now, normally I would be a seat warmer when I observe Sukkoth at any site. However, this Feast, I actually received the courage to do something during the youth services. I actually sang a song, which if you know me, I rarely ever do. Also, during services I even joined in on one of the interactive sermons. Surprise, surprise!

It is a Feast that I couldn't forget, and it was one of the most uplifting and wonderful Feasts I have ever had. If you have not experienced a Feast in Ghana, then I must say, you have to experience it at least once in your life. Ω

Landon McLaughlin is an active member of the Toronto congregation. Landon and a younger sister, Jorie, both attended the Feast of Tabernacles on this their first visit to Africa.



Pastor
Pastor
Nicholas
delivers
a message
in English
while
Pastor
Nicholas
Boakye
translates
to Twi.



Kenroy Allen with Kumasi Youths
Sedorf, Michael, and Belinda



Feast Attendees on the Last Great Day

400 Attend CGI Feast in Ocho Rios, Jamaica

Four hundred brethren attended the Caribbean's largest indigenous Feast site in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, as the *Church of God International* (CGI) marked another memorable Feast of Tabernacles, which brethren insisted was definitely their "best ever."

Feast cruise visitors from *Christian Educational Ministries* (CEM) in Texas, who attended on the Last Great Day, the presence of nearly 30 brethren from Canada who spent the entire Feast at the site, and the baptism of three new souls, were highlights of an exhilarating Feast of Tabernacles.

Messages delivered were very impactful, and focused on Christian living and overcoming. There were messages on *Suffering Before the Glory*, *How to Rejoice*, *Gaining the Spiritual Jackpot*, *Keys to Successful Christian Living*, *Maintaining a Positive Mental Attitude*, *Enduring to the End*, and *Lessons from the Book of Jeremiah*, among others.

Speakers were Horane Smith, Christopher Hendricks, Noel Scoburgh, Winston Samuels, Derrick Alwood, Stephen Scale, Jordan McKenzie, Dwayne McKenzie, Jonah Lewis, Ray Williams, Ricardo Hall, Henry Small, Eliud Ramocan, and Ian Boyne.

Jamaican Toronto congregation Pastor Horane Smith, who led his delegation, contrasted this world with the World Tomorrow, and highlighted how bankrupt this world really is, highlighting the glorious World Tomorrow. He was pleasantly surprised and speechless when I presented him with a plaque honouring him for his decades of faithful service to God's people. The church gave him a standing ovation. He also presented an eye-opening seminar on the Friday night of the Feast looking at *Anti-Judaism in Christianity*, which was followed by a prayer and testimony meeting.

Exciting, enlivening, and inspiring praise and worship was a part of every day's proceedings, and we were blessed with exceptional special music selections which included dances and instrumental renditions. There were prayers on the beach every morning, as some brethren took the opportunity to put the needs of their brethren before the Lord before we started services.

The young people were heavily involved in services, quite apart from *Youth Day* when a representative gave the sermonette. The brethren enjoyed delightful fellowship both in planned and member-initiated activities. We had our usual *Family Fun Show*, as well as the always much-anticipated *Jamaica Night*, which features sumptuous Jamaican food, music, and fellowship. This year we had a very well-received *Fashion Show*.

There were trips to the world-famous Dunn's River Falls, as well as another picnic to Blue Hole Nature Resort. There was also an unforgettable *Couples Night* party, where couples showed their stamina on the dance floor! The brethren had come out to the Feast to rejoice, and they certainly did.

Another highlight of the Feast over the years has been our speech competition, which is an apologetics forum where members display their skills in presenting arguments to defend a controversial doctrine of the Church of God. This year the Sabbath was the topic, and again Deacon Stephen Scale walked away with the trophy after he gave the most scintillating defense of the Sabbath, demolishing many arguments commonly used attempting to show the discontinuity of the Sabbath in the New Testament.

We were so delighted to host our brethren from the United States who came on the cruise. They traveled over an hour to join us. Thanks to Linda Benton and Marla Prouty, who did such a fine job of coordinating, and thanks to Skip Martin who brought us together. How moving it was to be blessed with the voice of Karen Clark, daughter of the late Bryce Clark, one of Mr. Herbert Armstrong's early senior ministers.

The brethren left the Feast recharged and refreshed, ready to take on the world and to go back into the evangelistic field. The Kingston CGI congregation is among the fastest growing of the Church of God congregations internationally, and is the largest Church of God congregation in the Caribbean.

Through our work, two separate Church of God 7th Day groups, with several congregations, have now been confirmed in the Feast days after my presentations to their headquarters congregations demonstrating that Feast-keeping was just as important as Sabbath-keeping. One of these groups met with the other CGI Feast site in Portland, while another (which came to Feast-keeping later) met at its headquarters church site and came with us on the Last Great Day.

So passionate is its Bishop, Dr. Selwyn Sewell, about the necessity of Feast-keeping, that he has invited a number of Church of God 7th Day

leaders from various groups to meet at a special "Jerusalem Conference," where I will address them on the subject, calling on them to obey God and lead their congregations into keeping God's holydays. This meeting will have taken place by the time you read this article (November 18).

By the time you read this also, yet another major campaign will have been held (November 25) discussing the issue of the Sabbath. The church takes seriously its mission to take the true Gospel to the Jamaican people and to fulfill the Great Commission. The Feast of Tabernacles only gave us more determination and strength to continue our mission. Ω

Submitted by Ian Boyne

Canadian Brethren Attend Jamaican Feast Site

Twenty-eight brethren from CGI Toronto, and two from the Kitchener congregation, journeyed to Jamaica for the Feast of Tabernacles, this year. CGI had two sites in Jamaica, one in the north coast resort of Ocho Rios, and the other in the north eastern town of Port Antonio.

For some of them, it was their first feast attendance in Jamaica, while nearly half of them had been there before. The words they used to describe the Jamaican feast experience were "awesome," or "better than expected," and "I want to go back."

The Jamaican experience was truly memorable given the scorching heat, longer services, and the hospitality shown by the local brethren. The Canadian brethren not only attended, but were actively involved in some of the activities there such as the Fun Show, Sports Day, climbing the famous Dunn's River Falls, a dance item and delivering sermons and sermonettes.

The Canadian speakers were Horane Smith, Noel Scoburgh and Shey Smith.

Submitted by Horane Smith

Youth News

Hi, I would like to update everyone on what is happening with our Youth Programs. *Infuse* has just had its first meeting (November 17, 2017) for our *Infuse* Leadership Team for this fiscal year. We also have *Infuse* representatives at the *December Winter Family Weekend* in Kentucky.

The *Ignite* teen program is still ramping up, and we will be providing more information on this program once we have the website up and running.

Our *Sparks* program is for pre-teen children, and we are looking to brand all our children's Sabbath school lessons soon and upload them to our *Infuse* and CGI websites.

We plan on having an *Infuse* and *Ignite* retreat in 2018.

To learn more about the Youth Programs, please read our Feast reports in this edition of the International News. If you have some feedback, advice, or would like to volunteer your time for our Youth programs, please email me at: mhjames6043@yahoo.com.

—Mike James

Where Did Christmas *Really* Come From?

Ah, here we are again: It's Christmas time! But where did Christmas *come from*? You might be surprised! Nearly any comprehensive encyclopedia will give you the history of Christmas. We recommend that you check it out for yourself.

The word "Christmas" means "Mass of Christ," or, as it later became shortened, "Christ-Mass." It came to us as a Roman Catholic Mass. And where did they get it? From the HEATHEN celebration of December 25th, as the birthday of Sol, the SUN-GOD! It is, actually, an ancient rite of BAALISM, which the Bible condemns as the most abominable of all idolatrous worship! It is not so much as MENTIONED anywhere in the New Testament. It was never observed by Paul, the Apostles, or the early true Christian church! The idea Jesus was born December 25th is one of the FABLES the Apostle Paul prophesied (2 Timothy 4:4) that would deceive the world in these latter days. The plain truth is, Christmas is NOT Christ's birthday at all! And this festival, important as it seems to so many, is not of Christian, but of pagan—Babylonish—origin! But does that make any difference? Isn't it alright to go ahead and observe it anyway? Isn't the "Christmas "SPIRIT" a good and splendid thing, regardless of how it got started?

Christmas has become a COMMERCIAL season. It's sponsored, kept alive, by the heaviest retail advertising campaigns of the year. You see a masqueraded "Santa Claus" in many stores. Ads keep us deluded and deceived about the "beautiful Christmas *spirit*." The newspapers, who sell the ads, print flowery editorials exalting and eulogizing this pagan season and its "spirit."

The Santa Claus lie, the Xmas tree, holly wreath, mistletoe, yule log, the Madonna Mother and Child, all stem from rank paganism—FAKE Christianity.

A gullible people has become so inoculated, that many are outraged when told the *truth*! But the "Christmas spirit" is recreated each year, not to honor Christ, but to sell merchandise! "After all," many reason, "it's for the children."

As David Kupelian wrote in his book, *The Marketing of Evil*, "The plain truth is that within the space of our lifetime, much of what Americans once almost universally abhorred has been packaged, perfumed, gift-wrapped, and sold to us as though it had great value." This goes double for the professing religious world!

Like all Satan's delusions, it appears as an "angel of *light*" (2 Corinthians 11:14–15), and is made to appear good. *Billions of dollars* are spent in this merchandising spree every year, while the cause of Christ must suffer! It's part of the economic system of Babylon!

Shocking as these facts are, they are the plain facts of history and the Bible! The real origin of Christmas goes back to ancient Babylon. It is bound up in the organized apostasy with which Satan has gripped a deceived world these many centuries! In Egypt, it has always been believed the son of *Isis* (Egyptian name for "Queen of Heaven") was born December 25th. Paganism celebrated this famous birthday over most of the known world for centuries *before* the birth of Christ. December 25th is NOT the birthday of Jesus, the true Christ! The Apostles and early true Church NEVER celebrated Christ's birthday at any time. There is NO command or instruction to celebrate it in the Bible.

Unfortunately, we do not have the time or the space to give you a *complete* rundown on the Christmas hoax. But we do encourage you to send for our brochure, *Is Christmas Christian?* [ICC], and our booklet, *Facts You Should Know About Christmas* [XMS]. We also invite you to view our on-line videos at:

- <http://cgi.org/bill-watson-exposing-christmas/?rq=christmas>
- <http://cgi.org/armor-of-god-is-christmas-christian/?rq=christmas>
- <http://cgi.org/armor-of-god-1/2015/12/26/armor-of-god-should-christians-observe-christmas?rq=christmas>
- <http://cgi.org/bill-watson-exposing-christmas/?rq=Christmas>
- <http://cgi.org/armor-of-god-is-christmasChristian/?rq=Christmas>

God be with you as you pursue His truth.

Ω

Lloyd W. Cary



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