



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

The Official Newspaper of the Church of God International

Vol. 31, No. 4

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

Winter 2010

A World In Transition —Part 5

by Bill Watson

With all that is presently going on throughout the world, could the Old Testament prophets have any message of substance for our modern day nations? Do these clarion voices have any value in such a highly developed time of technology and communication? It is quite shocking when one realizes just how contemporary their warning messages are for us today!



Bill Watson

After receiving one of the longest and most detailed prophecies in the Bible, Daniel was told, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4). Most of us would agree the present day and age we are living in is certainly one that could be described as "running to and fro," while surrounded by prodigious amounts of knowledge. Since the

Internet's inception, and now with so much information made available with such ease, it's almost *too much information* ("TMI"). Obviously, it's fair to say we are living in a time that seems to *match* the descriptions prophesied to occur.

It was also plainly stated, "... the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried [tested via tribulations]; but the wicked shall do wickedly [wickedness shall continue]; and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:9-10). The prophet explains some will understand, and this recognition will be made available during a time when things will be fast paced, and knowledge will be increased. It will also be during a time of trouble such as never was before, since there was a nation (Daniel 12:1). It's quite stunning to realize how compelling the prophet Daniel captures the essence of our present time—and to think this was *written about 2600 years ago!*

However, here is an important item to keep in mind: If we are honest with the text, you would think there is no way any Christian layperson or

scholar could deny this is talking about a future time—that it's prophetic! However, as hard as it may be to believe, there are Christians who will insist it's only historical—that regardless of the terms used, clearly pertaining to the "end times," *Christian Preterists* will claim these prophecies *have all been fulfilled!* They will debate and contend that *most of the messages* of the prophets are nothing more than Israelite history that was already completed during the time of the original nation of Israel. Yet incredibly, you can't help but to wonder in stark amazement: How can this be, in the face of such plain terminology?

Yet, this is what the *plain truth* of the Bible is up against. This prime example of how some will attempt to obfuscate the plainspoken Word of God is very typical among some liberal Christian scholars, pastors, and lay members. Yet, regardless of this reckless approach to Scripture, conversely, there is real *present-day value* in the *warning messages* of the prophets if we allow them to speak *from their context*.

So, let's take some time to consider their "warning voices" in the light of *when they wrote*, and overlay them onto our day and age, using the *prophetic principle of duality*. As incredible as it may sound, this will help answer the question about *what happened to, and why* the United States and Britain *will not* be able to protect the Israeli Jews in Palestine when they are attacked by the "king of the north" at the time of the end, as was presented in our last chapter.

Consider The Warning Of Micah

Surprisingly, the prophet Micah has a prophecy worth pondering. Before we consider his words, let's *put him in context with his time*. Remember, it's important to do this with all the prophets. Otherwise, you can occasionally miss a major dimension in prophetic insight and/or significance—and this is

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What Is Your Addiction?

by Lonnie Hendrix



Lonnie C. Hendrix

For many of us, an image of a drunkard or junkie comes to mind when the word "addiction" is mentioned, but the term suggests a phenomenon which encompasses a much broader range of activities than abuse of alcohol or drugs. This reality was brought home to me by an intensive study of the phenomenon, prompted by the addictions of two members of my extended family to drugs. In trying to understand their disease, I came to see that we are all susceptible to this disease. In fact, our very nature is prone to developing addictions of many different

kinds and intensities, and the inability of most of us to see or accept this reality is a symptom of the disease!

After reviewing a great deal of literature on the subject, it quickly became apparent to me that a precise definition for the term "addiction" is difficult, even for the professionals who are most knowledgeable about it. However, the two components of addiction that appear to be almost universally agreed upon are: 1) Loss of control over the use of some substance or behavior, and 2) Persisting in that use or behavior even in the face of negative consequences. Moreover, it is clear from reviewing what the professionals have to say about addiction that people engage in the behavior to experience pleasure or enjoyment, to escape from reality or problems, and/or to fill a void or replace something that is missing in their lives.

Hence, we begin to see that the phenomenon of addiction has a much wider application than a casual glance would suggest. Most professionals now realize that people are susceptible to a whole host of addictions: alcohol, drugs, caffeine, nicotine, pathological gambling, sex, shopping, eating, dieting, bodybuilding, sports, work (workaholism), computer games, Internet, television, pornography, etc. In fact, anything that so

captivates our attention and consumes our energy and resources to the effective exclusion of other substances or activities could be described as an addiction. Now do you begin to understand why this article was entitled "What is Your Addiction?"

Another prominent feature of the phenomenon is the propensity for those of us who are addicted to something to deny the reality of the problem. The professionals involved in treating this disease frequently hear things like, "I can quit or stop whenever I want to quit or stop"—"I'm only doing this to escape the nagging and fighting at home"—"This is just harmless recreation; I'm not hurting anyone by engaging in this behavior," etc. Do any of these statements sound familiar to you? They are called *denial*. They fly in the face of the reality of the enslavement that the addict has experienced. They contradict the reality that the addiction has interfered with the person's relationship with God, relationships with family and friends, and the potential and development of the individual him/herself. Such statements also ignore the fact that anyone who is associated with the addict has had to modify his or her behavior in some way to accommodate the addict's behavior.

Now do we begin to realize how pervasive this problem is in our society? How did this happen? How did so many of us become

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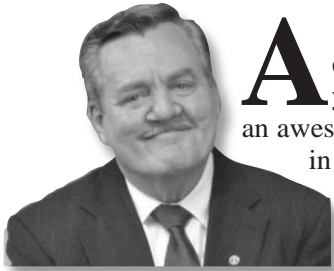
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Christendom Astray

“Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?”



Lloyd W. Cary

A wise man once said, “Give me a Bible and a candle and shut me in a dungeon, and I will tell you what is going on in the world.” It is indeed an awesome responsibility to own a Bible. The Bible is, in essence, a call to return to God. Nonetheless, the Bible is under attack today as never before in history.

That Christendom is astray from the doctrines and practices established by the prophets, Christ, and the apostles of the first century is recognized by nearly everyone. The unbeliever asserts it without fear. The churches admit it without shame. Politicians are of the opinion that it would be unfortunate if it were otherwise. The Bible itself predicted that it would be so.

- “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.... they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3–5).
- “Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:30).
- “There shall be false teachers among you.... and many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” (2 Peter 2:1–2).
- “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).
- “And their word will eat as doth a canker” (2 Timothy 2:17).
- “.... all nations deceived” (Revelation 18:23).
- “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

Some years ago, a man interviewed a group of people well versed in the evolutionary theory. He reported: “I discovered that most believers of evolution are believers because they have been *told* that all intelligent people believe in evolution.” Unfortunately, most people also believe what they are *told* about the Bible rather than believe what the Bible actually says for itself. Even though we are surrounded by undeniable evidence of a Creator, when aggressive “educated” individuals express their atheistic views, many believers compromise their beliefs through peer pressure rather than give God the credit He deserves as the Creator. Compromising God’s Word is the Christian’s greatest enemy!

People refuse to accept the Bible as God’s Word for a variety of reasons. Some dismiss the Bible as God’s Word because the people who *claim* to be Christians behave so badly. Notably, it is not that a disbeliever cannot believe, but that he *will not* believe. He *enjoys* his sin, indulges it, excuses it, and prefers it above the knowledge of God. The very thought of God poses a threat, holding him responsible; therefore, God must be ruled out of the universe. Does this mean that God does not exist, or that the Bible is wrong? Not at all! Likewise, because of peer pressure, vanity, jealousy, lust, and greed, it is a matter of history that professing Christendom has long ago abandoned or “changed” large parts of the Bible, and has not lived according to the teachings of Jesus.

The Nature of God

Today’s Christendom has largely rejected the teachings of the Bible and submitted to *what others say* rather than “proving all things” by their Bibles. Consider some of its beliefs. For example, a fundamental doctrine of Christendom is the doctrine of the trinity. According to this teaching, God is made up of three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three, it is claimed, are co-equal and co-eternal, three persons in one God. When asked to explain, Christendom’s theologians call this dogma “a divine mystery.”

Mystery indeed! Trinitarianism promotes not only a mystery, but a contradiction and an impossibility. It puts forth an idea, and no sooner expresses it than it withdraws it and contradicts it. It says there is one God, yet not one but three, and that the three are not three but one. It is a mere jangle of words, an incomprehensible bewilderment of mind, all the more dangerous because it employs the language of the Bible, which speaks of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is not what the Bible teaches!

If we are to believe in the trinity doctrine—that God is one-in-three and three-in-one—we must first resolve such imponderables as:

- Since Jesus was begotten by the Father (Matthew 1:18,20; Hebrews 1:5), did He beget *Himself*?
- When Jesus said, “I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I” (John 14:28), was He saying He was greater than *Himself*?
- When Jesus prayed to His Father in heaven (Matthew 6:9; John 7:1; Luke 23:46), did He pray to *Himself*?
- When Christ said no man would know the day or hour of His return, not the angels, neither the Son, but the Father only (Mark 13:32), did *one* part of Him know what *another* part of Him did not?
- When Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me” (Matthew 27:46), did He forsake *Himself*?

- When Christ ascended to His Father in heaven (John 20:17), did He ascend to *Himself*?
- When the Father said to His Son that He was to sit at His right hand (Psalm 11:1; Matthew 22:44), did He sit on His *own* right hand?

The idea of “three persons in one God” is completely foreign to the Hebrew Scriptures and Greek Scriptures. The word “trinity” never appears in the Bible. It is an ancient Babylonian concept read *into* the Scriptures, not one taken *from* them. (For more information, send for our *FREE* booklets, *Is Jesus Really God?* and *Who, What Is God?*).

The Use of the Cross

Consider another teaching of Christendom. The nearly universal “symbol” of Christendom is the cross. For example, many churchgoers wear a cross, medallion, or have a crucifix in their homes, as if believing displaying the supposed instrument of Christ’s death grants them special recognition, indulgences, or immunization from certain consequences. Many, perhaps most, church buildings display crosses, steeples, and stained glass windows as a sign of “holiness.” Few seem to know or acknowledge that the cross actually is of pagan origin. It’s true! The facts show that, rather than being the exclusive symbol of Christianity, the cross was in use centuries before the birth of Christ. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* freely admits this:

“The sign of the cross represented in its simplest form by a crossing of two lines at right angles, greatly antedates, in both the East and the West, the introduction of Christianity. It goes back to a very remote period of human civilization” (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1908 Edition, Vol. IV, page 517).

The cross was later “christianized” because, it is claimed, Jesus died on a cross. Many members of Christendom’s churches even bow down before images of the cross in their religious services. Is this what the Bible teaches?

Definitely not! For one thing, there is evidence that Jesus did not die on a cross shaped like the one usually used in Christendom. Some scriptures in the Bible say that Jesus died on a tree (Acts 5:30; 10:39). Many scholars admit He was hanged on what the original Greek language calls a *stauros*. A *stauros* is simply an ordinary pole or stake, or a single piece of timber.

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

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especially true if viewed only from a *textual Preterist's* historical outlook.

Micah makes an extraordinarily interesting statement regarding Israel, especially when we understand at the time of this writing, ancient Israel was under siege by the Assyrians. That's right—the northern sector of Palestine, known as *Israel* at this time (750–685 B.C.E.), was being ravaged, conquered, and occupied, with its citizenry being captured and exiled out of the country. Their homes, families, and lifestyles were totally disrupted and destroyed, never to be restored again. This was a very devastating time for the people of the northern ten tribes, who were considered and called by the name of “Israel.”

Notice this peculiar statement—peculiar because it doesn't seem to fit the context of the time of the writing. Even modern *liberal scholars* will consider this section part of an “interpolation,” but they don't explain anything about this interruption in the context. Regardless of this mitigation, however, notice: “And the *remnant* of Jacob [Israel] shall be in the midst of many people as dew from the Lord... And the *remnant* of Jacob [Israel] shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people *as a lion* [king of the forest] among the beasts of the forest [other nations], as a *young lion* among the flocks of sheep [gentle and harmless]: who, *IF* he [this lion] goeth through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver” (Micah 5:7–8).

In other words, this nation, Israel, described as the gentle young lion, could be soft, playful, and harmless to the beasts of the forest (other nations of the world). But, it was also powerful! It was profiled as this “*Israeli lion* of a nation,” and is gentle as well as powerful—and again, so powerful and mighty that if it wanted to, it could demolish all the other nations of the forest. But the original nation of Israel, *at the time of this writing, did not match* the profile described! It was under siege and being taken down and conquered by the Assyrian Empire. Also, keep in mind the present, or historical record proves the Jews (Judah) never achieved such a position that could be described as a powerful worldwide “lion of a nation.”

Now let's take a moment to remember: at the time of this writing, Israel was a divided nation. The two divisions were defined as Judah to the south, with its capital city Jerusalem, and the 10-tribed nation called Israel, to the north, with its capital city Samaria. (Four books in the Old Testament are dedicated to the chronicling of this fact.) The northern nation called *Israel* was presently under siege by the kingdom of Assyria. The Assyrians had commenced invasions from as early as about 745 B.C.E. into the northern territories conquering multiple cities, occupying the land, and carrying away many Israelites into captivity over an approximate 65-year period (not so much from Judah in the south, 2 Kings 15, 16, 17, 18, 19). This was approximately the time of Micah's prophecy (740–687 B.C.E.), whose warnings had its emphasis directed toward the northern kingdom of Israel, *not* necessarily Judah.

With this mind, re-read Micah 5:7–8 and then ask yourself: How does this make any sense, when in fact, the nation was being overrun by enemy troops and invading Assyrian hords who were pillaging, raping, and killing everything in sight? *It makes no sense* in the context of Micah's life, since at this time the northern 10 tribes of Israel (not Judah) were being conquered and overrun by these Assyrian invaders! It was in the process of being “taken out” as a nation which resulted in Israel (not Judah) becoming a vassal state for Assyria (2 Kings 17: 23–24).

So, what is Micah saying? What does this writing mean? What is he thinking? Read it again, please; and consider the conditions and *real-time* circumstances of Micah's day! Clearly, either this is some cruel idealistic “psycho-babble” to make everyone “feel good,” because it definitely wasn't a good time for the people of the northern 10 tribes; or it was, indeed, a “prophetic interruption/insertion” for a future time, which would apply to a latter-day culture of people considered or profiled as cultural descendents of, or a remnant of, Israel—and characterized as a *powerful lion* among the Gentiles of the forest (world) that had the potential to be both dominantly ferocious, or gentle among the beasts (nations of the world).

Obviously, considering the current conditions at the time of the *original writing*, this portion of the text *wasn't* intended for those *current-day* Israelites during Micah's lifetime. It couldn't be! Remember, they were about to be exiled out of the territory as captives, losing their nation, never to return! For all intents and purposes, this was the end of the northern sector of Israel—only Judah remained (2 Kings 17:18).

Therefore, we have no other option but to look elsewhere for those *remnant descendants*, who are the recipients of the birthright promises, and were to *become* a powerful nation and company of nations (Genesis 48:19), characterized as a lion among the beasts, and also profiled as being gentle as a lion among the flocks of sheep. However, unlike what was happening to them at the time of this writing—at this time in the future, they would



Jacob transferring the prophetic birthright blessings
(Genesis 48:14–16)

become so overwhelmingly powerful, that if they decided to have their way with any nation, the capability was theirs to conquer them. Notice, “Thine [these birth-righted people] hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off” (Micah 5:9). The Jews never achieved this!

Plainly, at the time of this writing, the original nation of Israel *was not the one!* The reason is unmistakable: they were under siege and losing their nation to the Assyrians who were over-running the country and turning them into a vassal state for the Assyrian Empire. Far from being characterized as a lion, they were conquered, occupied, and *cut off!* They went down without so much as a whimper, according to the historical and archeological records of the Assyrian conquests. It wasn't a difficult invasion and occupation for the very brutal and merciless Assyrian war machine.

Hence, we're left with no alternative but to consider it a *prophetic insertion* from God as an encouragement to Israel, the nation, intended to assure them the time would come when they, as a nation again, made up from a “remnant of Israel” (Jacob) at a later time out into the future, would match the profile described—because they certainly *didn't* match it at this time when Micah *originally wrote* these statements.

Keep in mind that the United States, together with the Commonwealth Empire of Britain, *did* match that profile throughout the twentieth century. But sadly, that time has passed, and it's becoming discernable, by virtue of the current political decisions and cultural trends within the United States and England's decline and loss of its Commonwealth nation network, that God is beginning to leave these cultures to their own lusts, humanistic appetites, and secular idolatries. As a culture of people, we are becoming reprobate—noticeably void of judgment, calling that which is right, *wrong*, and that which is good, *bad*—unequivocally, engaged in debates that unquestionably, *should not be debated*, and yet they are!

Notice what Micah continues to say, in context to those profiled as this “leftover” portion, this *remnant of Jacob* that would become powerful, but yet gentle: “And it shall come to pass in that day, [not Micah's day, because ancient Israel was under siege. This was for another time, many centuries from the time of the original writing, when a portion, trace, leftover, remnant of these cultures would come to dominance] saith the LORD, that I will *cut off* thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will *destroy* thy chariots [the *remnant* of Israel's military]: And I will *cut off* the cities of thy land, and *throw down* all thy strong holds: And I will *cut off* witchcrafts...” (Micah 5:10–15). Notice, this is *after* this same “remnant of Jacob” achieved “lion status,” or dominance among the nations of the world.

Remember, you can't be a *remnant*, a *residue*, a *leftover*, or *surviving portion*, until you have been reduced, or eliminated from the original size and condition of the nation; and this was exactly what was happening while this was being written. The northern ten tribes (the original nation) were very affluent at this time. It was

a good time during the first half of the 8th century B.C.E. for the 10 tribes of Israel. They had achieved a *superior regional status* for a time, commencing with King David of Israel, at about 1000 B.C.E., until Assyria began its invasions some 250 years or so later. However, due to their sins, God allowed them to lose everything during this corrective invasion/occupation (2 Kings 17:13–18).

Therefore, the context of Micah 5:7–15 has to be for another time, many years into the future—and *after* their *present downfall*, which was executed by the Assyrian Empire over four sieges that lasted 65 years and culminated in the total removal of all those Israelites during the years of about 750 B.C.E. through 685 B.C.E. (2 Kings 17:23–24). This section of



The Prophets have a
message for us today!

the text is clearly inserted for a time when the *surviving portion* that had escaped and migrated would regroup and become like a lion. It would develop into a powerful, yet sensitive combination of nations, and God would assure all their enemies would be cut off (Micah 5:9). But, let's not forget: “And it shall come to pass in that *day*, saith the LORD, that I will *cut off* thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will *destroy* thy chariots” (Micah 5:10). This is “that day” when this “remnant” would abandon the living God *again*, but in the future.

However, the point is emphatically made: These texts are warning a people considered to be the *remnant of Jacob* (Israel) who would be at risk *again* of losing everything *after regaining a world status* (profiled as a lion)

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Judah was prophesied to provide the Messiah (Genesis 49:9–10).

among the nations of the world. If you understand the profiles of the birthright nations of Israel (Genesis 48:17–22; Genesis 49:1; 22–26; Deuteronomy 33:13–17), and recognize this as a description of an unmatched *worldwide status* that would eventually be accomplished, then it should be obvious, *WORLD HISTORY MATCHES AND CONFIRMS THE BIBLICAL PROFILES* to be the national cultures of the United States of America and Britain's Commonwealth Empire who are actually carrying Jacob's name; and they comprise this *remnant of Israel* (Genesis 48:16) "in the last days" (Genesis 49:1).

The Prophet Jeremiah

Now, though this might be too incredible to believe, let's continue and consider what the prophet Jeremiah says as well. If we put him in context, we must advance about 100 years or so, to about 625–586 B.C.E. His ministry was conducted during the period of Babylon's rise to world dominance. At this time, Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon were all contending for world power in this region. It was also during this time that Judah tried to make an alliance with Egypt, hoping to strengthen its position against Babylon. However, in the end it proved useless, and Babylon ultimately succeeded in conquering both Assyria and Judah, while Egypt went back to its homeland.

Jeremiah's ministry was designed to warn Judah (not Israel) that God was not pleased with the idolatry, corruption, and lack of moral fiber within the society of Judah. And it was at this time Jeremiah warned Judah that if the nation didn't repent and turn back to God, it would go the way of its backsliding sister, Israel (Jeremiah 3:6–8). Babylon's rise to power provided God the instrument of correction He would use to destroy this last remaining tribe of Israel, the southern nation, called Judah. Remember, Israel no longer existed. The Assyrians conquered it about 100 years or so **before**. There was no nation of Israel during the ministry of Jeremiah; only Judah remained (2 Kings 17:18)!

But surprisingly, Jeremiah discusses Israel at times, as if it still exists! Some will argue that he was using the terms generically as a common, general reference, with no distinction intended. They will claim Jeremiah made no issue regarding the distinction of terms and really didn't concern himself with the divided kingdom. Though this may seem plausible at first, once you read the texts, it becomes obviously clear: *He did understand* the distinctions and separation, and indeed, plainly used the terms *for clarity* of certain prophecies that were specific to *both* Israelite nations (plural!)—Judah and Israel.

The prophet claims, "And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah" (Jeremiah 3:11). Unmistakably, Jeremiah clearly indicates he knew the difference. He's making comparisons between them to make specific and distinctive points of warnings from God. He goes on, "Go and proclaim these words toward the north [where Israel had migrated to], and say Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity [lawlessness], that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God..." (Jeremiah 3:12–13). Clearly, God is appealing for the *remnant peoples of Israel* (not Judah), who were taken up into the northern areas of the Caspian and Black Sea, Caucas Mountains, and the cities of the Medes, to repent of their wickedness. His appeal continues, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: ... At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; ... In those days the *house of Judah* shall walk with the *house of Israel* [notice the differentiation], and **THEY** [both] shall come together out of the *land of the north* to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers" (Jeremiah 3:14, 17, 18; see also Jeremiah 5:11–31; 23:5–8; 31:29–33).

Here is a well-defined, sharp statement confirming Jeremiah knew very accurately there were *two separate sections* making up the nation of Israel. They were the *house of Judah* and the *house of Israel*; and furthermore, they will be reunited in the *last days*, plainly proving **both** would exist in the end times. Now keep in mind, all Jews are Israelites, but not all Israelites are Jews! Don't forget, there were twelve tribes of Israel, and the Jews were *only one* of those tribes (Genesis 49). Jeremiah knew this very well and understood the significance of being specific concerning these *two* Israelite nations, because God had *different* purposes for each. One would be used for the *scepter promise*, assuring the King of kings would come from the tribe of Judah. In other words, Jesus Christ would be Jewish (Hebrews 7:14)—while the tribe of Joseph (his sons, Manasseh and Ephraim) would retain the *birthright promise* (1 Chronicles 5:1–2; Genesis 48:18–20). There is no doubt about Jeremiah's awareness, accuracy, and

purposeful reasons for using *distinct* verbiage of *separation* when describing Judah and Israel.

Jeremiah's End Time Prophecy

Jeremiah continues to warn Judah by making comparisons with what happened to the northern nation of Israel. Notice, "For the house of Israel *and* the house of Judah [both—plural] have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD. They [both] have belied [falsely, feigned, lied to] the LORD, and said, It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us [we're untouchable, invincible]; neither shall we see sword [war] nor famine: And the prophets shall become wind [meaningless], and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them" (Jeremiah 5:11–13).

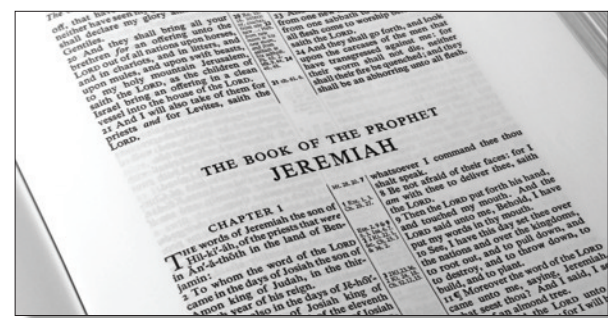
Much like the nation of the United States today, the notion is that it's all-powerful; and upon considering its economy, military, and alleged benefit to the world, many will say it's too big and significant to fail—but is it? History has proved, at least up until now, that indeed this has been true. Through two world wars and multiple conflicts since then, along with a terrorist attack in 2001, it would appear the United States has been relatively preserved and protected from any major calamities, at least due to war. However, the archers are sorely grieving him (USA and UK), and shoot at him, and hate him (Genesis 49:23). Up until now, his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob (Genesis 49:24). But in all due respect, how long will the mighty God of Jacob tolerate and continue to "enable" the humanistic and epicurean social system that has emerged over the last 400 to 500 years, before He determines enough is enough?

Jeremiah continues, "Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold I will make my words in thy mouth fire [destruction], and this people wood [fodder], and it shall devour them. Lo, I will bring a nation upon you, from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say. Their quiver is as an open sepulcher, they are all mighty men. And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish [demolish] thy fenced [protected] cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword [military]. Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you" (Jeremiah 5:14–18).

Obviously, this is describing a military invasion that God is warning *Israel* about (Jeremiah 5:15). The question is, does it apply *only to Judah* who was about to be invaded by Babylon, or does it go beyond that, literally intending to include Israel also? And if it does collectively and/or separately include Israel, how can this be, since Israel, as a nation, *didn't exist at the time of this writing*? Remember, they were conquered, occupied, and dispersed **over 100 years before** this was written! *Israel is history at this point*. Unless, of course, it's understood that this prophecy has a dual (double) meaning to it, and the Israel in this context is, in fact, the *end time* nation(s) carrying the name "Israel" in the last days.

Arguably, most will contend and say it is specific only to the Babylonian invasion of Judah (who is the last remaining tribe of Israel) at that time. And most assuredly, this is an acceptable and plausible understanding considering the present circumstances surrounding Judah. But consider what Jeremiah says next: "...Wherefore [when] doeth the LORD our God [do] all these things unto us? ...Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours" (Jeremiah 5:19). In other words, this will happen when you forsake the God of Israel. *This is happening now, today*, in the United States and Britain, as well as Jewish Israel. We have become very secularized and humanistic. And since Jeremiah does in fact say, "Declare this in the house of *Jacob* [Israel], **and** [that's in addition to] publish it in *Judah* saying, Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not: Fear ye not me?..." (Jeremiah 5:20–22)—don't you think it's all the more reason to consider the *strong possibility* of a *prophetic parallel application* (prophetic duality) for our day and age?

Notice what Jeremiah goes on to describe: "But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God... Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have witholden good things from you. For among my people are found wicked men: ...As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich [by this culture of duplicity and corruption]. They have waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass [overlook] the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge [defend/plead]" (Jeremiah 5:23–



Jeremiah's voice warns us:

"...in the latter days... consider this"

Transition, continued on next page

28). Now notice what God says through the prophet about all of this wickedness and what He will do about it: “Shall I not visit [intervene] for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged [punish, take vengeance] on such a nation as this” (Jeremiah 5:29)?

Without a doubt, Judah was taken out by the Babylonians and for 70 years held captive as a nation, until they returned to Palestine under the leadership of Nehemiah and Ezra, who were emancipated by Cyrus the Mede. But with that said, the message remains clear: “Declare this in the house of *Jacob*...” (Jeremiah 5:20)—also, distinct from Judah, who’s mentioned separately! **But why?** Remember, Israel (Jacob) doesn’t exist as a nation at the time of this writing! Could it be because there are people today in the U.S.A. and former Commonwealth nations of Great Britain who have eyes that don’t see and ears that don’t hear the evil they are surrounded by? The obvious answer to that question is a resounding *YES!* Sadly, this is due to prophets (ministers) who are irrelevant and speak falsely, along with priests who bear rule because the people want it that way (Jeremiah 5:31). They don’t want to hear the truth because *they can’t handle the truth!*

It’s painful to think that if we as a nation don’t repent and return back to God our Father, through Jesus Christ, destruction and captivity awaits us; and yet unfortunately, this is exactly what Jeremiah appears to be saying. This is not a pleasant message to be associated with. But then, announcing the good news (Gospel) of God’s coming world-ruling kingdom never was intended to be an easy job. As a matter of fact, we are warned by Jesus Christ Himself: “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the *false prophets*” (Luke 6:26).

Jeremiah has much more to say on this subject concerning *both* Israel and Judah, irrespective of the fact *Israel didn’t exist* at the time of Jeremiah’s writings. It will become much clearer in our next chapter regarding Jeremiah’s *duality* and *parallel warning* to his *present-day* nation of Judah **and** its *contemporary* application for both *end-time nations* of Israel and again, a “latter day” Judah. Ω

...**TO BE CONTINUED...**

Christendom Astray, continued from page 2

Dr. E.W. Bullinger writes, “It never means *two* pieces of timber placed across one another at any angle, but always of one piece alone.... The evidence is thus complete, that the Lord was put to death upon an upright stake, and not on two pieces of timber placed at any angle” (*Companion Bible*, Appendix 162).

“In the Egyptian churches the cross was a pagan symbol of life, borrowed by the Christians, and interpreted in the pagan manner” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th Edition, Vol. 14, page 273).

The truth is, of course, no one knows for sure. The shape of the *stauros* is really a non-salvation issue. The point is, even *if* Jesus had died on a cross, would the *way* Christendom uses it validate its use? If someone you loved very much were stabbed or shot to death, would you wear a replica of a knife or gun around your neck or bow down before it in a house of worship? Of course not! There is nothing “holy” about a death instrument! The very thought of doing so would be an abomination to you. Further, your Bible reveals it is a *sin* to bow down to or worship anything or anyone but the true God. Once again, we see that Christendom has gone astray. The Bible says:

“Thou shalt not make unto thee *any* graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: *Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them*, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me” (Exodus 20:4–5).

The apostle John verifies this in the New Testament: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen” (1 John 5:21).

Yet Christendom has made a literal “idol” of the cross.

Idol Worship

Many other doctrines and practices of Christendom could be mentioned to show that what passes for Christendom in the world is not truly Christian at all as the Bible defines it. For example, the adoration of Mary, the belief that the souls of the wicked will burn eternally in hellfire, and the celebration of Christmas and Easter are all derived from pagan tradition and prove that in many, many points, Christendom’s worship is *not* in harmony with the Bible.

Should we be surprised that such a thing should happen? Not at all. Jesus Himself prophesied it would happen. He told the Jews of His day: “Not every one that *saith* unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will *say* to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, *I never knew you*: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21–23).

But What About Christmas?

Surely Christmas honors the infant Lord Jesus, does it not? No, it does not. By checking reference works in nearly any public library, you will find that it was unknown among the earliest Christians. Jesus instructed His followers to observe a memorial of His death, not of His birth (1 Corinthians 11:24–26).

Quoting *The Catholic Encyclopedia*: “Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church. . . . The first evidence of the feast is from Egypt.”

What, then, of the date December 25, celebrated by many as the birthday of Christ? To begin with, it could *not* have been the date of Jesus’ birth. The Bible shows that at that time of year, the shepherds would not have been out in the fields. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1907, Vol. V, page 611) acknowledges the shepherds would not have been out at night in the cold, rainy season of winter (Luke 2:8–12). As for the origin of the date, *The World Book Encyclopedia* says:

“In A.D. 354, Bishop Liberius of Rome ordered the people to celebrate on December 25. He probably chose this date because the people of Rome already observed it as the Feast of Saturn, celebrating the birthday of the sun.”

Since the date of Christmas is of pagan origin, it should not be surprising that the customs surrounding that day—Santa Claus, the Christmas tree, the mistletoe, the Yule log, exchanging gifts, and all the other accompaniments—are also of pagan origin.

“Most of the Christmas customs now prevailing . . . are not genuine Christian customs, but heathen customs which have been absorbed or tolerated by the Church. . . . The Saturnalia in Rome provided the model for most of the *merry* customs of the Christmas time” (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*).

Also, *The Encyclopedia Americana* shows that among the many customs borrowed from the pagan Roman feast of Saturnalia was “the giving of gifts.”

There is no escaping it—Christmas is simply a *pagan* festivity that has been repackaged, perfumed, and decorated in “Christian” wrapping paper, but within it is a seething mass of sexual orgy and non-Christian ritualistic worship. It does *not* please God to deceitfully “honor” Him with such customs. Knowing this, we should heed the apostle Paul’s admonition against mixing the true and the false—truth and error. He says that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Galatians 5:9). He reproved some of the newly converted Christians for slipping back into the pagan days they had kept before conversion (Galatians 4:10,11). How much more important it is for true Christians today to shun a celebration that was *never* authorized by God, stemming from pagan Babylon, and falsely bearing the name of Christ!

For a much deeper study into this subject, be sure to request our FREE booklets, *Is Christmas Christian?* and *Facts You Should Know About Christmas*.

Good News! Greater Than Pagan Celebrations!

The question naturally arises, “Has God left His people with *no* Christian celebrations?” Absolutely not! True Christians have something far better than vain, pagan celebrations. We find God’s annual holydays listed in Leviticus 23. These days symbolically reveal God’s plan of salvation for all mankind—a plan not revealed by Easter bunnies laying colored eggs, or by a fat man in a red suit being pulled through the skies by magic flying reindeer!

The first holyday mentioned in Leviticus 23 is the weekly seventh-day Sabbath. Notice, beginning in verse 2, God says, “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, concerning the feasts of the LORD [not “the Jews”], which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations [commanded assemblies], even *THESE ARE MY FEASTS*. Six days shall work be done: but the *seventh* day [not just any day in seven] is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: *it is* the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings” (Leviticus 23:2–3). The seventh-day Sabbath is to be taught and kept holy in accordance with the biblical instruction. Instituted at creation, reaffirmed to Israel as a part of the covenant at Sinai, and taught by Jesus Christ, who is the Messenger of the New Covenant, the observance of the Sabbath is basic to a Christian’s relationship with God (Genesis 2:2–3; Exodus 16; 20:8–11; 31:12–17; Mark 2:27–28; and Luke 4:16).

Immediately after commanding the Sabbath, God commands adherence to His seven annual holydays: “These are the feasts *of the LORD*, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons” (Leviticus 23:4). Just as it keeps the weekly Sabbath, the Church of God also observes the annual holydays that were ordered by God, kept by the ancient Israelites, and continued by the early New Testament Christians. These seven annual “appointed feasts” picture God’s plan of salvation for man, and are otherwise undiscoverable (Leviticus 23; Zechariah 14:16; John 7:8–10; Acts 2:1; 12:3; 20:6, 16; 27:9; 1 Corinthians 5:8; and 16:8).

The annual holydays are named the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day. These days occur on specific dates of the Hebrew calendar, with the exception of Pentecost, which is counted in a biblically-prescribed manner. Like the weekly Sabbath, each is reckoned from sunset to sunset. For further in-depth information, be sure to request our free booklet, *God’s Seasonal Plan*, and our CDs, *Keeping the Festivals* and *Renewing the Holy Days*.

Indeed, Christendom *has* gone astray from the Bible! *Way* astray! But *you* don’t have to go astray with it. *Send* for the materials offered in this publication! Learning the truth about pagan holidays as opposed to God’s holydays has a marvelous liberating effect. No longer do we need to feel obligated to follow practices that have proved to be a yoke of bondage, financially, psychologically, and otherwise. And, most important of all, our knowing these truths frees us to pursue the course that is pleasing to God, so that we may find everlasting life in the soon-coming Kingdom of God (John 8:32; Romans 6:21, 22). Can there possibly be any better Good News than that? Ω

Addiction, from page 1

addicted? Scientists and health care professionals have demonstrated that many of us have a genetic predisposition to addiction. We also live in a society where a large number of diversions are available to us. Many of us have other problems that make us more susceptible to addiction: self-esteem issues, traumas, anti-social tendencies, impulsiveness, depression, etc. Moreover, the properties or characteristics of the substance and/or behavior themselves sometimes contribute to their potential for abuse (i.e., the way it acts on our brains).

Hence, one might well ask: *Are we talking about a disease or a moral failure?* The answer is, we are talking about *both*! Science has demonstrated that the brain of the addict undergoes physiological and psychological changes in the course of an addiction. Moreover, most, if not all, addictions have been observed to involve the pleasure center of our brains. Nevertheless, the fact remains that addiction is also a matter of personal will. We have clearly been given the choice of following what is right or what is wrong. Even the secular professionals who deal with addiction acknowledge there is a spiritual component to the phenomenon!

The Bible equates sin with disease. David wrote: “There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds [stripes] stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh” (Psalms 38:3–7).

Isaiah equated understanding, repentance, and conversion with being healed (Isaiah 6:10). When he prophesied about the Messiah, he wrote, “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; AND WITH HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED” (Isaiah 53:5). When the Pharisees rebuked Christ for eating and fellowshiping with sinners, He told them a physician is sent to attend to those who are sick, not those who are healthy (Matthew 9:10–13, Mark 2:16–17, Luke 5:29–32). Clearly, God regards sin as a sickness or a disease!

Moreover, we have already discussed how addiction captivates and enslaves an individual. This is the very thing that happened to the Israelites when they turned to idolatry. You will notice throughout the Old Testament that the Hebrew word “Abad” is used to describe their idolatry. *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* defines the word as “to work (in any sense); by impl. to serve...enslave...keep in bondage, be bondmen, bond-service, compel...(be, become) servant(s), do (use) service, etc.” So idolatry involved devotion to an idol by serving, working for, and becoming enslaved to the idol. Is that not part of the definition of addiction? That same Hebrew word was used in the Ten Commandments! God said, “Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor SERVE them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God...” (Exodus 20:5, Deuteronomy 5:9). Hence, addiction is the modern-day equivalent to idolatry, AND IDOLATRY IS A SIN!

In his letter to the saints at Rome, Paul made plain the fact that we have all suffered from an addiction to sin! He wrote: “Let not sin therefore reign [rule] in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts [desires, cravings] thereof. Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:12–14). He went on to show them that Christ had freed them from being the servants of sin and made them the servants of righteousness instead (Romans 6:18–22). Moreover, he went on to give a perfect illustration of sin as an addiction. He wrote: “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, SOLD UNDER SIN. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Romans 7:14–20). Paul realized that his sin had taken control, and that it was a part of his very nature. He concludes with thankfulness that Christ will deliver him from his diseased, sin-ridden body (Romans 7:24–25).

Our addictions may start out as something pleasurable and enjoyable, but they quickly become our masters! Christ told His followers that “no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other” (Matthew 6:24). Moreover, Christ’s entire mission was about freeing us from the wrong master—about freeing us from our addictions. Isaiah prophesied about the Messiah, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, TO PROCLAIM LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES, AND THE OPENING OF THE PRISON TO THEM THAT ARE BOUND” (Isaiah 61:1). Moreover, so that there could be no mistake as to whom the prophet was referring to, Christ read this passage to the people gathered in a synagogue during His earthly ministry (Luke 4:16–19). “And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, THIS DAY IS THIS SCRIPTURE FULFILLED IN YOUR EARS” (Luke 4:20–21).

Christ told His followers that He had told them the things He shared with them so “that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Christ over-

came the addictive nature we all possess, and He expects us to do the same! (1 John 5:4–5). In the book of Revelation, the promise of reward is given to the ones that “overcometh” (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). Christ gave us the formula for freeing ourselves from all of our addictions. He said: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man [DENIAL]: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:31–34).

Brethren, Christ expects us to overcome our addictions. He does not want us to use lame excuses for our behaviors or deny that we have problems. Moreover, we cannot use our human nature as an excuse for our addictions. We read in the epistle of James: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:12–15). The professionals tell us that addiction can end in two ways: recovery or death. That truth is verified by Scripture.

One of the first steps to recovery is the acknowledgement that there is a problem on the part of the addict. Denial must be swept away. John wrote: “If we [Christians] say that we have no sin, WE DECEIVE OURSELVES, and the truth is not in us. IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS, AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:8–10). Will you take that first step toward recovery by admitting that you have a problem?

Alcoholics Anonymous has developed a world-renowned “Twelve Step Program” to help those people recover who have been addicted to alcohol, but the principles can be applied to help those with other addictions as well. What follows is an adaptation of those principles for all of us who are facing an addiction of one kind or another:

- 1) We must confess that we are powerless to deal with the addiction on our own.
- 2) We must believe that God can restore us to sanity.
- 3) We must decide to place our lives in God’s hands.
- 4) We must take a personal inventory of our lives and examine our habits and behaviors.
- 5) We must admit to God that we have sinned.
- 6) We must submit ourselves to God’s work in our lives.
- 7) We must ask Him to heal us of our disease.
- 8) We must think about how our addiction has affected those around us.
- 9) We must be willing to work at repairing damaged relationships.
- 10) We must continue to take personal inventory of our lives and repent when we find sin there.
- 11) We must seek to improve our relationship with God through prayer, study, and meditation.
- 12) We must be willing to share what God has done for us with others and be willing to help and support our brothers and sisters in Christ in their struggle to overcome.

Another important component to recovery is that we must learn the wisdom contained in the old axiom of taking “one day at a time.” This, too, is scriptural. Christ said, “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matthew 6:34).

In this same vein, we must learn to cope with the probability of an occasional relapse, for this is also a prominent feature of addiction and recovery. We must learn to be like the Apostle Paul, “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before” and “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phippians 3:13–14). Failure is not an option. Remember, the only alternative to recovery is death!

Therefore, let us accept Paul’s advice to us as Christians and recovering addicts: “That ye put off concerning the former conversation [life] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:22–24). Brothers and sisters in Christ, we have work to do! We must surrender our addictions to God and Christ and overcome this pernicious nature of ours. Jesus Christ has given us the truth to set us free!

W



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What the movie didn't tell!

Church News

Feast of Trumpets Celebration in Louisiana



Over 40 members from the Shreveport and Texarkana churches gathered for our annual combined service to celebrate the Feast of Trumpets in Bossier City, Louisiana, on September 9, 2010. An inspiring sermon by Dean Roberts was followed by a wonderful fellowship meal. We're already looking forward to next year's celebration!

Submitted by John Woodard

Introducing a New Child of God

The Hickory CGI would like to introduce you to a new son of God, **Mr. William Huddleston**. William heard the truth in the 1970s and tried to run away from it for many years. He has been through many dark trials, circumstances, and sicknesses to get to the point of total commitment to the faith.

Elder Mike Nolen baptized and laid hands on William on December 25, 2009 at the Holiday Inn in Hickory, North Carolina. We are so proud of him. He has great musical talent that he shares with our group from time to time. He and his wife, Susan, have two sons and a couple of grandchildren. You may send your cards of congratulations and encouragement to our brother in Christ at this address:

William Huddleston, 6744 Big Oak Trail, Cherryville, NC 28021-9523, or you may e-mail him at: Williamhuddles19@yahoo.com.



Mike Nolen baptizes William Huddleston

In loving memory...



Mary and Bill Heiman

Mary Trueblood Heiman September 17, 1926–September 15, 2010

Pendleton, Indiana—Mary Trueblood Heiman, 83, of Pendleton, passed away September 15, 2010 at her home, following a brief battle with pancreatic cancer.

She was born September 17, 1926, in Jennings County, Indiana, and was a Pendleton resident since 1954.

She was a 1944 graduate of Anderson High School and a graduate of St. John's School of Nursing with a registered nurse degree.

Mary was employed at St. John's Medical Center in Anderson, Indiana, for 25 years as an obstetrics nurse.

In addition, she was very active in growing vegetables and keeping two acres of lawn mowed. She also mowed around a 13-acre field to allow sunshine to get to the crops.

She was also an avid reader.

"I thought she was a beautiful, active woman who managed her home and family very well," said her husband, Bill Heiman. "We were the oldest couple that Charles Groce ever married."

Mary was a member of the *Church of God International*.

Survivors include her beloved husband, Bill Heiman; beloved children, Mark (Carolyn) Trueblood, Karen Smith, Teresa (Gary) Trueblood, and Roger (Nancy) Trueblood; stepchildren, Bert Heiman, John Heiman, Jane (Michael) Sternemann, Jim (Lynn) Heiman, and Carol (Lance) Onken; nine grandchildren, Aaron, Sean, and Brandy Trueblood, Kyle Smith and Heather Weston, Nikki Mohr and Jeremy Trueblood, and Ben and Justin Trueblood; nine step-grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; one step-great-grandchild; and two great-great-grandchildren.

Mary was preceded in death by parents, Henry and Clara (Madden) O'Connor; husband, Chancey Trueblood, Jr.; and a son, Todd Trueblood.

Services were held at Wilson St. Pierre Funeral Service and Crematory, Lahm Chapel, Pendleton, with Ferrell Vincent officiating. Burial was in Anderson Memorial Park Cemetery.

What's going on in your local Church area? Combined services? Public Bible studies? Potlucks? Church activities? Celebrations? Memorials? Visiting ministers? Birth or death announcements? Plans for getting *The Armor of God* on a free Public Access television station in your area? Let us know and perhaps we will publish it under "Church News." We'd love to hear from you!

The editor

Feast Reports, 2010

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

The Feast of Tabernacles 2010 at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, was quite extraordinary this year with a little sun, a little wind, plenty of rain, and an unexpected fire alarm the last day, which forced an evacuation of the beautiful conference center at Ocean Dunes and ultimately led God's people to the parking lot to sing the traditional last hymn. Overall, we had a great Feast.

The Choir and Special Music were more than terrific. Infuse had a good turnout, and the teen class was well attended. Our little ones had a lot of fun in their Sabbath classes, especially performing their two songs as a choir.

The Family Fun Show was beyond great, and the professionalism of each and every one was outstanding. The Family Dance was a great time for fellowship, and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves very much, especially the children. A nice buffet was set up with yummy things to eat. The Ministerial Luncheon was ready Friday afternoon, and Roger King's Bible Study was that evening. The Senior Luncheon was Sunday, and as usual, the food was outstanding.

The next day, the Women's Luncheon/Bible Study was a fun and inspiring event to attend. Ideas and suggestions were flowing to inspire more closeness among women in the church and to help each other with our realities of every day life, good or bad. Communication, of course, is the key that will open some doors of help.

The weather cooperated so the Volleyball/Cookout event went on as scheduled, but the softball game was rained out.

Youth Day and the Blessing of the Children was successful, and of course humbling when you see the little ones blessed and knowing God's hand is always there to lift them up when they may fall. Mike Nolen's offertory was kicked off by explaining how he is uncomfortable when talking about money, knowing how many are having a tough time, but explained that it wasn't so much the money given, but the helping of others—to serve, to help, to sacrifice to help one another. Giving is who we are—having a giving spirit. Wayne Hendrix explained in his sermon how there was something special at the Feast—it could be a hug, providing comfort, helping someone, etc. He told us we were brought out of Egypt and we are to enjoy the Feast. We are tabernacling with God in the spirit and all of this was His plan, to be at one with His children.

During the second service of the day, Gary Jenkins's sermonette let us know that God's plan is to have a family, and those we lost, too, are to be in that family. We are to step out of this world and get on with our lives. He said God cannot and will not fail. Mike Nolen reminded us that the Old Testament has not been done away as some assume. Without the Old, how could you understand the New, and vice versa? All of God's Word is for doctrine, reproof, etc.

Gene Morris explained that miracles can happen by way of God's people helping one another. People who are willing to give in order to help those who otherwise couldn't get to the Feast, or to help those at the Feast who are on hard times, participate in a miracle being performed. We should accept the help given to us; one day we may be able to do the same for someone else in need.

Mike James showed us how Egypt represents evil, and Israel was to separate from that. He brought out the importance of separation from this world, which will bring us closer to God's world.

Morgan Pinkerman reminded us that it takes all the members, all the parts to build this relationship of like mind.

Bill Watson told us God's Kingdom is the most important pursuit. We are to become royalty. Stop bad things and change to God's good ways.

Patrick Williams explained how we grow—by obedience. We start as a small seed and absorb more light little by little.

Bill Watson said things are changing in the political scene, and it needs a reality check. But we are the greatest nation on earth. Are we developing the way God wants us to? Another dimension will come to this earth. We must get rid of things that are dragging us down. Satan and his demons are still at work and could influence our weaknesses. He said not to take our calling lightly.

Dave Rusinko, Jr. talked about the Millennium and what must come. Do the work, he said, and pray for others. Tom Kauffung reminded us that persecution, then glory, will come. Also, be not just hearers of the Word, but doers.

Isaiah Eaton talked about God's love and how at times we get distracted from that love and need that closeness. Love is God and God is love.

Ben Chapman talked about the land Israel fled to and the country we are still looking for and one day will find.

Wayne Hendrix, in his sermon on the seventh day, told us time is of the essence for all of us. We are near the end time. Before anything else happens,

the binding of Satan has to take place. During the Last Day offertory, Wayne Hendrix brought out the various images of money—basically used for vanity, but it can also be used for good, like the Work. God will use it for the right purpose.

Murray Palmatier spoke of freedom, quoting Martin Luther King, and the many freedoms that we will have within God's Kingdom.

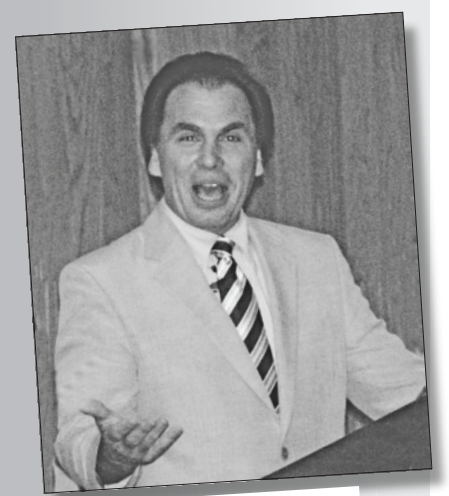
We were very happy to see there were a little over 230 people at the Feast of Tabernacles here at Myrtle Beach. Fantastic! W



Beautiful Myrtle Beach



William Morgan



Bill Watson



An exciting Infuse service



Family time



Wayne and Sandi Hendrix



Vivian Rust

Feast Reports, 2010

Feast in St. Petersburg (Pinellas Park), Florida

Beautiful warm weather and great fellowship were abundant during the Feast of Tabernacles this year at beautiful St. Petersburg, Florida. The services were held again this year at the comfortable Pinellas Park Performing Arts Center, where for eight days we heard very inspired and instructional sermons and sermonettes.

The first day began with the offertory message given by Mr. Bill Watson, followed by a sermon from Mr. Jeff Reed about time and the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles in the future. In the afternoon, a Bible Study was delivered by Mr. Bill Watson about the resurrection of the dead and the spiritual tabernacle promised to us.

The second day, Mr. Larry Sharp gave a sermonette about the spirit of the Feast; Horane Smith gave the sermon about the King of all kings.

The third day, Mr. Adrian Davis delivered a sermonette exhorting everyone to make a Feast of family unity. Following was a sermon delivered by Mr. Wayne Hendrix on the subject of God's plan for mankind, and explaining why we were here keeping the Feast of Tabernacles.

The fourth day sermonette was given by Mike Roy on how to protect and help our children. Mr. Wayne Hendrix gave a sermon on the establishment of God's Kingdom and our reward as the firstfruits to rule as kings and priests reigning with Jesus Christ.

The fifth day we had split sermons given by Mr. Dwight Harrison, who spoke about the journey to the Feast, and Mr. Jeff Reed on the subject of what we need to do to rejoice at the Feast of Tabernacles.

The sixth day was "Youth Day," starting with a sermonette by Mr. Alex Fontao, exhorting young people to repent, come to Christ, and change their lives. Mr. Charles Groce gave a sermon on the challenges of being young in the Church of God, and how to define yourself as a Christian, including advices from the audience. The Youth Chorale gave a great performance.

The seventh day Mr. Shey Smith delivered a sermonette on Abraham's blessings, and Mr. Bill Watson gave a sermon on the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles and the chance all mankind will have to learn about, accept, and glorify Jesus Christ. A very interactive Bible Study was conducted during the night by Mr. Charles Groce and Mr. Bill Watson, with a lot of interaction and questions from everyone in attendance.

The eighth day (Last Great Day) an offertory message was delivered by Mr. Bill Watson, followed by a sermon from Mr. Charles Groce on the subject of the Great White Throne Judgment. He talked about the billions and billions of people who will be resurrected to have the chance to experience what we have just had a little taste of in the past eight days.

During the eight days, we enjoyed beautiful inspired music performed by the Festival Chorale, directed by Mr. Frank Klett; Special Music performed by Frank Klett, Miriam Moreno, and a trio comprised of Shey Smith, Jasmin Smith, and Jessy Bennett. On Youth Day, we had the pleasure of listening to the Youth Chorale. Piano solos were given by Jennifer Davis, Frank Klett, and Margie Watson. An energetic and dynamic Praise and Worship music service on Sabbath afternoon was presented by the Toronto church, and was enjoyed by everyone.

Infuse classes, seminars, activities, and a community project, along with Infuse teen classes and activities, were conducted during the Feast coordinated by Mr. Jeff Reed. Children's Sabbath School during the Feast was conducted by Pamela Barnes.

Other activities during the Feast included Miniature Golf, Bowling, a BBQ Luncheon, Volleyball and Softball Tournaments, a Cookout, a Talent/Fun Show, and the very famous Dinner Dance. All activities were well attended and enjoyed by everyone.

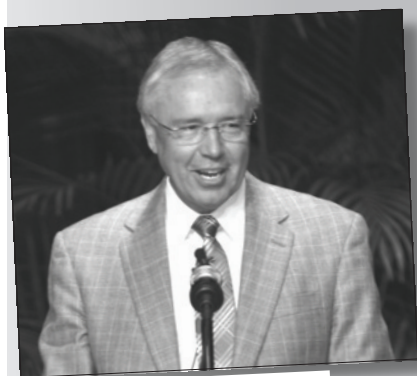
Thanks to everyone who attended and contributed to make this Feast a great and enjoyable Feast of Tabernacles where God was glorified. W

Submitted by Aleida Fontao

The deadline for submissions to the next issue of the International News is **February 15th, 2011.**



Youth Chorale



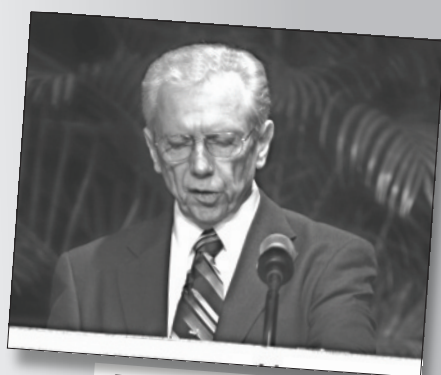
Charles Groce



Alex Fontao



Festival Choir



Wayne Hendrix



Bill Watson



Softball time

Feast Reports, 2010

Victoria, British Columbia

The Gathering Of His Lambs

In obedience, brethren flocked from near and far to gather in scenic **Victoria** (better known as the Garden City on Vancouver Island) to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles 2010. We had an awesome reacquainting with very dear and old friends, and introduced ourselves to some unfamiliar faces. What a privilege to come together with the body of Jesus Christ in joyful fellowship and peaceful surroundings. This year we stayed at the Harbor Towers Hotel, two blocks from the inner harbor and a comfortable stroll to Fisherman's Wharf, where they boast the best fish and chips on a floating seafood restaurant. We enjoyed bountiful food this Feast with incredible spiritual and physical cuisine. What a family reunion we've all enjoyed. Our cup runneth over.

Brad and Judy Dullum and their daughter Nicky, from Wisconsin, shared their musical talents with us, and their view of the Feast this year. They loved the theme "Practical Christian Living Sermons" at the Feast. Judy remarked, "The brethren are friendly, warm and welcoming. Our family enjoyed the good sermons and the incredible beauty of the area, truly a millennial setting. We couldn't have asked for a better Feast."

We had many fine speakers and inspirational messages this year for which we are truly grateful. The brethren say thanks for all the hard work, dedication, and incredible love the ministers showed us this year in their sermons, Bible studies, and fellowship. Hats off to Feast Coordinator Eric Jantzen and his wife, Angela, for their living sacrifice of love and service to the brethren, not only at the Feast, but all year long.

There were a variety of activities to engage both young and old. There were a couple of catered meals on holy high days when we could just sit and talk and catch up on news. Early on, brethren enjoyed the relaxing Imax experience and the museum, and later in the week, for more energetic young folk, there was mini golf, go-carts, and the hazardous batting cage as well as Wild Play. (Wild Play is Tree Adventure Courses suspended between six and 60 feet off the ground.) So everyone did climbing, swinging, and playing in the forest, or fun games like zip lines, wobbly bridges, Tarzan ropes, scramble nets, and more! Variety Talent Night, as well as Games Night, was great fun. Many participated in "A Minute to Win It" contest.

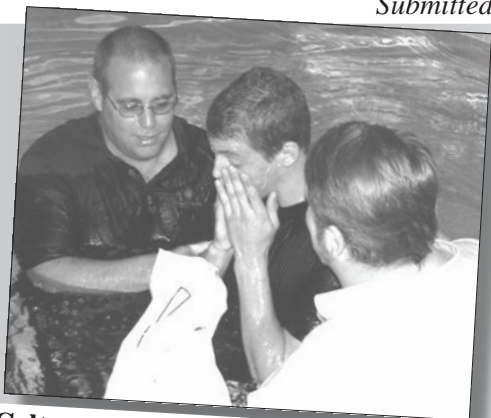
Larry and Jayne McCoy from Missouri said in their best southern drawl, "We love the 'British' Victoria and the water and the sailboats. We found everyone very friendly...we'd love to come back."

A highlight of the Feast was when ministers John Coish and Eric Jantzen baptized two young people: Colton Patriquin (part of the Jantzen family) and his daughter Amy, while the whole church looked on, shed a tear, sang, and welcomed two young people into the family. What an awesome and joyful day, and all the angels sang for joy!

We were also inspired by Doris French, from Mesa, Arizona, who drove herself to the Feast from Seattle, Washington, where some of her children live. She celebrated her 90th birthday with her church family at the Feast. She said it will take her four weeks to get home, as she will visit family on the way.

Isaiah 40:11 says, "He tends His flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart." This is how I felt this year—that God was tending to us with great tenderness, love, and mercy, realizing we are but dust, as many have had a difficult pilgrimage this past year. I am sure we all felt truly loved this Feast as we partook of the living waters. Praise and thanks to our High Priest, Jesus Christ. W

Submitted by Jean Jantzen



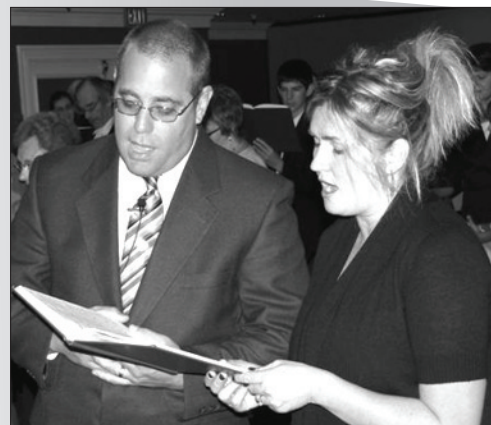
Colton Patriquin of Nanaimo baptized



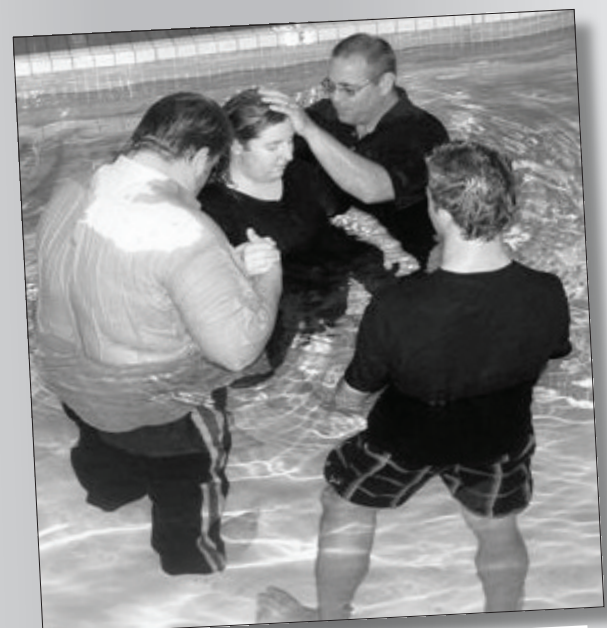
Little ones enjoy fellowship, too!



Doris French enjoying 90th birthday at the Feast



John Coish and wife enjoying the hymn singing at the Feast



Amy Jantzen baptized by Dad and John Coish

Feast Reports, 2010

Kentucky Dam Village (Land Between the Lakes)

Many Christians across the earth returned home from another Feast of Tabernacles with astonishing experiences, awe-inspiring spiritual food, renewed friendships, and the meeting of new family members. From the very moment I shut my front door to the time I arrived at the Kentucky Dam Village State Resort Park's Feast site, I had an only-one-of-its-kind sense of freedom from this world.

Here I was again on the first day of the Feast in a beautiful millennial setting located on a 170,000-acre peninsula between Kentucky Lake and Barkley Lake in western Kentucky. With the country grappling with wars, a steady stream of bank failures, exploding national debt, a diluted U.S. dollar, a soaring trade imbalance, and a government war on coal, gas, and oil, the Feast of Tabernacles provided me refuge with God's people and a real-time glimpse of God's Kingdom. This year's Feast was truly the best I've had, with each message strong and encouraging and affecting me in areas of my life that needed changing. Many of us have heard messages that affected us deeply (i.e., reminding us of the purpose of life). Also this year, the church had many fun-filled activities planned for the brethren (i.e., Bible Studies, Luncheon Buffets, Senior Luncheon for 55 years and up, a Cookout/Songfest, Talent Show, Family Dance, Pool Party for teens and young people, etc.). The Feast of Tabernacles at Kentucky Dam Village State Park also provided many things to do (i.e., 1850s era museum and working farm, elk and bison prairie, etc.) all isolated from the hustle and bustle of city life, and granting God's people a true sense of removal from this world.

I was so happy to be back at the Kentucky Feast site's beautiful surroundings and the unique isolation it granted me from worldly cares. However, I dream of a day when I'm able to walk and camp along the "River of Life" on my journey to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And I dream of a day when God will reign on earth and the world will come to Jerusalem to keep His Feast of Tabernacles. I have God to thank for this wonderful Feast and life to come!

W

Submitted by David Bumgardner



Congregational Hymns



Kentucky Feast Choir

The Lovebird Award for 2010



**Mary Jane and Jim Byrd
Married by Bill Russ,
April 20, 2008**

The tenth annual "Lovebird Award" was presented at the "Talent and Fun Show," which is hosted each year by Bobby and Ann Whitt during the Feast of Tabernacles. We have a very beautiful Feast site at the Kentucky Dam Village State Park, and this year was our 16th anniversary for being there.

The award consisted of a mother eagle feeding her babies in their nest. The award had a second part, which consisted of a father eagle flying in the air, keeping watch over his family.

The award also had two beautiful nature videos, and a lovebird wind chime.

Our Lovebirds for this year were Jim and Mary Jane Byrd, who hail from Crab Orchard, Tennessee. One has only to see them together to know that they were made for each other. The couple was married on the First Day of Unleavened Bread in 2008, in Mary Jane's back yard. The wedding ceremony was performed by Bill Russ, a CGI minister, and Mary Jane's brother gave her away. Her sister made her wedding cake, which was unleavened, of course! It was a joyous occasion for all in attendance, and for all of the Kentucky brethren who attend the Feast in Kentucky.

Jim has a daughter and a grandson, and Mary Jane has a daughter, a grandson, granddaughter, and two great grandchildren, by previous marriages.

Jim was employed for many years by Hughes Aircraft Company, and has traveled all over the world. Mary Jane was employed as a newborn nursery nurse for 48 years. She has a great love for children, and faithfully serves our youth each year in the Sabbath School program at the Kentucky Feast site. Jim and Mary attend the Knoxville, Tennessee church, and the Feast in Kentucky. Jim has performed several times at the Talent Show, singing, and playing the guitar.

May I say that this is the first time the "Lovebird Award" has been given to a couple of real live BYRDS!

W

Submitted by Nancy Miles



Sabbath School Program Choir



Vance Stinson



Charles Groce



Sabbath School Program Choir

Feast Reports, 2010

First Feast of Tabernacles in Harrison, Arkansas

It was sad to say goodbye to Wagoner, Oklahoma, after more than 20 years there, but the new Feast site in Harrison, Arkansas, turned out to be a blessing from God. Ron and Clara Elkins went above and beyond in making sure everything was just right! The Durand Center, where services and most activities were held, was fantastic. There was no shortage of hymnals. Three drop-down screens with the words to each hymn in foot-tall letters made it easy for everyone in the auditorium to join in and praise God in song. The staff members at the Durand Center were some of the most helpful and courteous people we had ever encountered. It seemed like our wish was their desire. If we asked for tables here, very soon they were there. Need extra chairs in this or that room and, bingo, there they were in a very short time. And the auditorium—what a beautiful place to hold services! Convenient, spacious, and well suited for our needs to be together as a B.A.S.I.C. family (Brothers And Sisters In Christ) to worship our Father in heaven.

Peace of Millennium gave a performance Friday evening, with Buckaroo Bob's Neighborhood joining in with a Christian-themed message for all the kids (big and little) in attendance, followed by a Bible Study Friday night. Buckaroo Bob's Neighborhood returned Sabbath and Sunday mornings with great skits and lessons about life with a Christian attitude.

Dance lessons on Friday afternoon by instructor Marcie Patrick were shown off at the Family Dance Saturday night. For those who didn't dance, we could go down Memory Lane, courtesy of Richard Gawith, using the three giant screens, showing, in pictures, previous Feasts held through the years at Wagoner. A few tears shed for those who have passed, and lots of joy seeing little children now grown into young teens and still in the church. Young or old, active or settled, a great evening to be together having fun, dancing and reliving past Feast memories. We also had the Energizer Bunny (a.k.a. Charlene Waller) from the Texarkana church to prove that, while the main theme of the Feast is to worship God and Jesus Christ, we are to enjoy all of the blessings God gives us and have fun, laughter, and warm fellowship.

The weather was a bit nippy on Sunday for the church picnic, but the great cooks made sure the hamburgers were hot. There was enough food and desserts to feed us twice over, along with lots of fellowship and a good chance to get acquainted with more of the brethren. Plans and suggestions for an even bigger and better picnic at the Feast in 2011 were discussed.

Ever cross your mind to mix corn chips in your ice cream? Well, Wayne Weese thought of it, and though Mr. Weese suffers from a rare form of "esophagus restrictionitis" (not a fatal condition as it only has to do with one's appearance when leading the hymn service), his concoction turned out to be quite tasty. (I guess you cannot be elected as a mayor without *some* original ideas.) Of course, that was not the only treat at the pie and ice cream event. It turned out to be standing room only for a while to get some of the wonderful bowls of cobbler and ice cream.

The Fun Show was FUN—lots of music, laughs, skits, and recitals, with Frank Marang singing his love song to his lovely bride, Margie. They received a standing ovation for that performance. Plans are in the works for next year's Family Fun/Talent Show already. Got something in mind? Come to the Feast in Harrison and get in the line-up!

Kenneth and Vera Bounds brought the brethren the sad news that a local couple had a major fire in their home on Sabbath. By the time the Feast was over, \$1,200 had been collected and given to the couple to help them in their time of tragedy—caring and sharing, the Christian way.

So much to report, so little space to report it! Eureka Springs, Branson, canoeing, hiking, fishing, the Buffalo River, and most of all, a family-oriented Feast. God has blessed us again this year. What a wonderful site to meet at God's Feast of Tabernacles!

Come one, come all to the Feast in Harrison, Arkansas, in 2011! It's a great place with courteous and friendly people, like Sandi and Rebekah and all the staff at the Hotel Seville; Jamie Akers, who provided the catering; Chris Ramsey at the Convention and Visitors Bureau, who helped us in many, many ways; and Marcie Patrick, with dance lessons. These all made possible a great transition from our old site.

You will come back home with memories for years to come—but if you can't make it to Harrison, enjoy and celebrate God's Feast wherever you go in 2011.

Ω

Australian Feast Celebrated in Ballina, New South Wales



Herb Haupt

Another wonderful Feast of Tabernacles was kept this year by the close-knit Australian brethren at the Ballina Jockey Club in the enchanting town of Ballina, New South Wales. Nineteen brothers and sisters enjoyed a full Feast of sermons and family activities.

On the first high day, Bob Schofield gave the offertory, followed by a sermon from Pastor Herb Haupt entitled "An Appointment With God," showing the *importance* of our congregating on the holydays before our heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. After a lovely catered meal at the hall, afternoon services were held, with Lloyd Cary bringing a sermon illustrating "The Contrast Between *Now* and *Then*." We need to draw close to God and each other now, and we have a wonderful future in the Kingdom of God, but in the meantime, hard times are coming.

Each morning, Tui Haupt spoiled us all by preparing coffee, tea, and biscuits (cookies) before services. We were blessed to have Zoltan Tuskes as our song leader each day, and his wife, Dianne, took care of the technical electronic duties like a pro.

On the second day, Bob Schofield asked in his sermon, "Are You Prepared?" He encouraged us to draw close to God and be prepared for the challenges to our faith that will surely come.

On the Sabbath, Herb Haupt gave a message on "Man, His Purpose," reminding us that God loves *all* the people in the world, not just His church, and we should not feel superior to others, but have God's love toward them. In the afternoon, Lloyd Cary gave a Bible Study about "Why People Don't Understand the Bible" and "How to Understand the Bible." That evening we all met at the Country Women's Association meeting hall in town, where we enjoyed a Buster Keaton silent movie (with a quiz at the end, believe it or not!) followed by a DVD of some of the highlights of past Feasts. Bob and Sonja Schofield organized our planned social activities.

On the fourth day, Lloyd Cary spoke on "How to Increase Your Faith," showing us how to keep our focus, and not be distracted in our Christian walk.

On the fifth day, the congregation had breakfast at the now-traditional *Shelly's at the Beach*, where the breathtaking views reminded one of the movie *South Pacific*. Later at services, Bob Schofield presented a sermon entitled "My Fellow Ethiopians." That evening, everyone gathered at the apartment of Lisa DeGraaf and Annie Marlor for an evening of games and a sing-along, with Alex Scholes playing his guitar.

On the sixth day, Lloyd Cary explained "What It Really Means to Follow Christ," referencing the hymn, *Wherever He Leads I'll Go*. In the afternoon, the women and the men headed in different directions for some sightseeing and special fellowship.

On the seventh day, Herb Haupt spoke about "Ambition," explaining that human nature wants everything now, but God has something better for us than silver and gold. Even our calling is a gift, and we must willingly participate in our salvation process. That evening, Lloyd Cary gave a Bible Study illustrating "How to Pray Like Jesus Prayed."

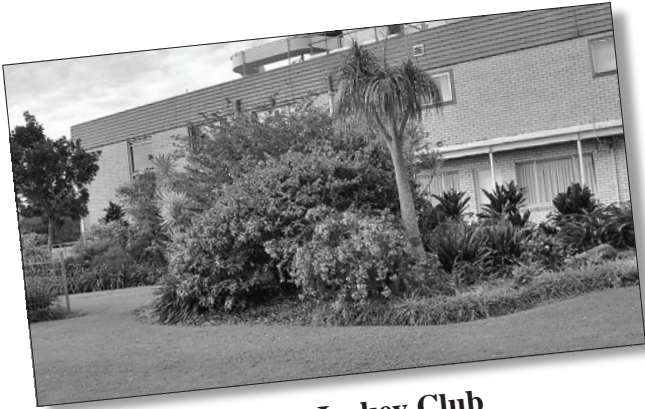
On the Last Great Day, Lloyd Cary reviewed the meaning of the holydays, then showed how they all lead up to the great joy of the multitudes coming up in the second resurrection to have their first opportunity for salvation. There will be joyful family reunions, and then we will enter a *new* phase of God's plan when the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven. Closing remarks were given by Pastor Herb Haupt, then the congregation partook of another catered meal at the hall.

Continued on next page

Feast Reports, 2010

This writer would like to express our deep gratitude for the love shown us by our brothers and sisters in Christ, half a world away. Some may have left their hearts in San Francisco, but we've left *ours* in AUSTRALIA. Ω

Submitted by Gail Cary



Ballina Jockey Club



"G'day, Mate!"



The Australian brethren in Ballina

Niagara Falls, Ontario

*Feast Coordinator: Jan Kowalczyk
Sabbath School Coordinator: Angie Buchert
Special Music Coordinator: Stephanie Chin
Main Pianist: Erica De La Cruz*

Niagara Falls Ontario, a world-famous city perhaps best known for its two sets of large waterfalls on the Niagara River, was the temporary dwelling place for over 160 of God's people in observance of the Feast of Tabernacles, sponsored by the *Church of God International*. It was the second consecutive Feast at this location. There was an average attendance of 170 brethren, with over 180 on the weekly Sabbath, and approximately 175 on the Last Great Day.

Social activities, which provided great opportunities for fellowship at this Feast site, included two Church Luncheons, a Family Day, Karaoke Night, a Variety Show, and much more. The main attractions were the Family Day at the park, and the Variety Show hosted by sisters Ewa Kowalczyk and Stephanie Chin. It was a great delight to see participation from the young, the elderly, and of course those in between. All of the acts were well received, as it was a great evening full of fun and entertainment.

It is always a true blessing to witness the ceremonial acts of individuals who have made a personal decision to repent and to walk in newness of life according to the will of God (Romans 6:3-5). The following members were baptized during this Feast, and are great new additions to the family of God: Eric Hougland, Kerine James, and Godfrey London.

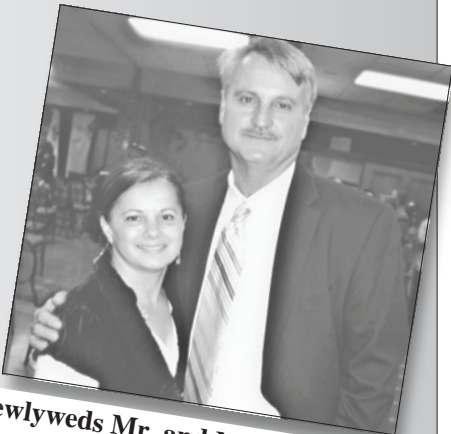
The sermon and sermonette messages were all timely and well received by the brethren. On the Last Great Day, Pastor George Ramocan delivered what many felt was a perfect message to end the Feast on. It was a very inspiring and thought-provoking message, focusing on God's perfect plan of salvation for mankind. He reminded us that the Last Great Day signifies a time after the Millennium when the majority of mankind, rich and poor, young and old, men and women, will be resurrected and have an opportunity to hear and understand the truth, and ultimately inherit eternal life—the final stage in God's plan of salvation for us.

With the great messages, the strong fellowship, and the presence of God's Holy Spirit, although most were sad to leave, we certainly felt better equipped to return to our respective homes and to face whatever new challenges would lie ahead of us over the following year.

Niagara Falls, Ontario, also known as the "Honeymoon Capital of the World," has always been a favorite Feast destination of many, and this year was no exception. Thank you to everyone who attended this Feast site and to all those who contributed to the great success that it was. To God be the glory!

W

Submitted by Zion Hezekiah



Newlyweds Mr. and Mrs. Tom Meleg



The Ramocan Ladies



Pastor Ramocan, Jan Kowalczyk,



Kerine James added to the Family of God

Feast Reports, 2010

Jamaican Festival Report

A gathering of 366 exuberant first-day Feast-keepers met in the idyllic settings of the Ruins at the Falls, in the tourism resort town of Ocho Rios. The joyous celebrations never lost intensity over the next eight days, despite torrential rains which occasioned a change of venue mid-Feast, and the postponement of the baptism of four persons until the morning after the Feast.

Estimates of the damage caused by Tropical Depression 16, which was upgraded to Tropical Storm Nicole, exceed J\$10 billion (US\$100 million) with more than 200 communities surrounded by water and inaccessible, more than 150 houses damaged or destroyed, and 13 people confirmed dead so far. Amidst this devastation, however, the spirits of the Jamaican worshippers remained high, and the riveting and relevant Feast sermons were more memorable than ever before.

Comprising members of the Kingston, Spanish Town, Maroon Town, and Ocho Rios congregations, the assembly celebrated the opening day with characteristic gusto, balanced by an encouraging, yet sobering exposition on the book of Zechariah by Pastor Ian Boyne.

Pointing out that of all the so-called Minor Prophets, the book of Zechariah was the most apocalyptic and Messianic, Mr. Boyne explained that it was to give hope to God's people by revealing His future salvation through Jesus, the coming King and Messiah. He explicated the lessons about Christ's return as King, and exhorted listeners to persevere and overcome, as Christ will be rewarding each person according to his or her works. He highlighted several specific practical situations that can pose a special challenge for believers including lying, lack of forgiveness, and mercy. He, however, reassured everyone that the book of Zechariah showed that God will restore peace and prosperity to the earth, and that this should give us hope to endure.

Tabernacles this year was a rich spiritual feast of unforgettable sermons and sermonettes. In fact, Mr. Boyne said that in his 35 years of keeping the Feast, this year's messages were the most memorable and most impactful he had ever heard. One highlight for most persons was a sermonette by Youth President Sean Goldburn, entitled *How to Overcome the Giants*, in which he used the story of David and Goliath to teach some powerful lessons on how to overcome the challenges, or giants, we all face as believers.

Elder George Ramocan's two sermons were unforgettable. In his first, he explored in depth what it meant to put God and the Kingdom of God at the center of our lives. One profoundly important point he made was that the fundamental problem of people who don't put God above family, personal achievement, comfort, and pleasure, was that they were not fully convinced about the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. In his second sermon, he showed how the book of Revelation was a template for the plan of God for humanity as revealed and symbolized by all the holydays.

Deacon Paul O'Connor gave a piercing sermon on how to avoid being deceived by Satan, including how to spot potential elements of self-deception in our own walk. Deacon Derrick Alwood also gave an interesting and poignant sermonette about the spiritual dangers of depression, and how to deal with this potentially fatal condition.

Overseas minister Pastor Bill Russ gave sermons entitled *The Love of God* and *Understanding the Mark of the Beast*. Pedro Hall of the Spanish Town congregation gave a much-appreciated sermon on *What It Means to Be Spiritual*. This writer delivered a sermon entitled *Don't Bow to Babylon*.

In Pastor Ian Boyne's Last Great Day sermon, he systematically debunked the evangelical doctrine popularly called "Once saved, always saved." He gave a theologically intensive treatise disproving the view that believers should only believe and trust in the power of God, and that personal works play no part in one's eventual salvation. He showed that the power of God will only take effect in the life of Christians who take responsibility for living lives of overcoming, based upon their faith and their commitment to develop godly character. In a comprehensive and in-depth sermon, Mr. Boyne showed that problems, setbacks, and challenges were integral to our eventual salvation, as they presented opportunities for overcoming and for developing the character of Christ. He gave several biblical examples to demonstrate that believers who cooperated with God's Spirit, and who really drew upon God's power while taking full responsibility for practicing faith and for making right decisions, were far more likely to qualify for entry into God's Kingdom than those who didn't.

The dynamism, exuberance, and captivating illustrations of Ricardo Hall's sermon on the evening of the Last Great Day caused many people to conclude that his was the sermon of the Feast for them, however. In his electrifying message, he emphasized our identity as priests and kings elect, in the Kingdom of God, against whom Satan and his kingdom were fiercely opposed.

"We can continue to live how God expects us to live despite the system of governance and the economic crisis that confront us in the world," Mr. Hall asserted. He showed that there were many biblical examples of people who,

while living as aliens, maintained their identities as God's people. In graphic, sometimes hilarious, sometimes poignant style, he explored the stories of Daniel and the three Hebrew boys in Babylon. He also reiterated, using several scriptural references, God's promises to help believers overcome suffering, as well as the glorious promise of eternal life in the World Tomorrow as kings and priests.

Due to a national weather warning of rains, the scheduled baptism for the morning of the Last Great Day had to be postponed for the following morning. We were spared the torrential rains in the early morning as four persons, all children of church members, repented of their sins and were baptized by Pastor Boyne and I in the waters of the Caribbean Sea.

One long-time member of the church, and a Feast-keeper from the early 70's, affectionately called "Lady C," commented that in all her years of Feast keeping, this was undoubtedly—never mind the cliché—her best Feast ever. Her verdict was echoed by many others. Ω

Submitted by Glenford Smith

Philippines Festival Report

This year's Feast was truly a joyful one for the CGI Philippine brethren as the enduring theme was "Rejoice!" The Feast observance was held in a new venue, the Tagaytay International Convention Center (TICC), Tagaytay City. Brethren from Baguio, Naga, Malolos, Alabang, and Manila converged on this Feast site and celebrated the Feast for eight full days.

Although we had lesser activities compared to last year, we still enjoyed the Feast. There was more time to bond with family and brethren. The bonding experience was made even more memorable and enjoyable as we had a buffet lunch together at TICC on the first day of the Feast and again on the Last Great Day. We also dined together in famous restaurants in the city, thanks to the generosity of some of the brethren. All of these restaurants afforded us a good view of the famous Taal Volcano (believe it or not, it's a volcano within a volcano!) and in one instance, we were serenaded with live music. We also enjoyed good food and fellowship on two nights, wherein brethren from Naga and Alabang prepared dinner for us aside from the potluck food brought by the brethren. On the second night of fellowship, some of the brethren played the patintero, a local game, on the limited space available. It was thrilling and was a good bonding activity. Afterwards, the children played the tumbang preso, another local game. Others sang their hearts out in a videoke courtesy of the lodging place by the Alabang brethren.

Not only were we filled with physically nourishing food during the Feast, but spiritually nourishing messages too, from different speakers. The ministers gave two messages each during the entire Feast. Mr. Winston Co's first message elaborated on Romans 11:25, where God is waiting for the fullness in number of the Gentiles to be saved for Christ to return, and emphasized that God is filling up positions for His coming Kingdom. The other one was about the significance of all the Feast days, with emphasis on the role God the Father played in each one of them. Mr. William Co delivered messages with eye-catching Power Point presentations and videos, first about the rebuilding of the third temple in Jerusalem, and second, about the splendor of the New Jerusalem. Mr. Mel Arcinas talked about God's amazing grace and how beautiful are the feet of those that bring the good news of the Kingdom, referring to us, the brethren. Mr. Rene Corpuz spoke of five rules in understanding parables, and on the second instance, reminded us that not everyone who says "Lord, Lord" shall enter into the Kingdom. Mr. Eleno Mellomida spoke of "The Hedges of God" and gave seven tips we, as a church, can adopt so we would grow in numbers.

We experienced two first-time highlights in this year's Feast. For the very first time, there was a public Bible symposia for two days, the first elaborating on man's destiny and the other one on the resurrection (delivered in Filipino, the national language). The other "first" was the Thanksgiving Night for married couples in the church held at the posh Tagaytay Midlands. There they renewed their marriage vows before the brethren. Many of the brethren were touched and some were teary-eyed as they heard the lovely and wonderful vows of love they uttered. The event was a complete wedding set-up. The couples marched on red carpet, were serenaded by good singers, and had a wedding planner. Some of the couples' children acted as flower girls. The sponsored buffet dinner was enjoyed by everyone. Truly it was an affair to be remembered, as one of the church members noted.

On the Last Great Day, Mr. Winston Co read from Numbers 6:24-26 and led the prayer for the pronouncement of blessings on the congregation. Our parting was made more bittersweet with a special video presentation of our week-long celebration (now posted on YouTube with username 143dearheart). For the CGI Philippine brethren, this was "the best Feast ever!" Ω

Submitted by Ferdie & Arlene Venessa Padilla

Feast Reports, 2010

Suna Migori, Kenya



Mr. Zablon Anyumba reports: We really thank the Almighty God since He guided us through to accomplish the festive days of Feast.

This is our third festival since we got into affiliation with the *Church of God International*, which involved three groups in Migori, together with Siaya and Ndhiwa. The attendance was so good for the whole week, and the brethren were in one accord all along.

The schedule was as follows: there were two services every day, morning hours and evening hours. On the very first day, I gave the morning sermon from the book of Nehemiah, chapter 8, verses 1–18.

Our children enjoyed playing football every evening. During the whole week we held these activities and services in our cool compound containing three rooms in the academy.

So we also convey our thanks to the home office for the many ways they have offered help and encouragement; and then we dispersed to our various destinations.

Shalom, in the one hope.

Ω

Butare, Rwanda



Mr. Jean Claude Rubumba reports: We were 17 people meeting at the Sebukangaga house, with long joy, splendid good time on having the long discussion on the lesson regarding the Feast days according to the different versions of the Bible.

We had “looking more party” using difference versions of the Bible. We were a small group, but with faith. The meeting, as usual, was conducted by me, Rubumba, Jean Claude, and Ntakirutimana, Narcisse. We have shared the same table on “sharing the meal” and a wonderful moment for the mothers and sisters was to serve all the church together. This was also the first moment for our small Choir to sing many times. We had a “get a moment to confess and ask the forgiveness between us and God.” We thanked God for all things and His guidance.

W

Thanks to the Great God.

Jean Claude Rubumba

Note: picture is from FT 2009

Submitted by Roger King, Jr.

Overseas Ministries Coordinator

Kenya Festival Report 2010

Almost 30 Feast-goers from Kenya and Tanzania gathered together in Migori town for the Feast of Tabernacles, 2010. Migori is a town in western Kenya, close to the shores of Lake Victoria. This is the site where brethren gathered for eight days for a taste of Jesus Christ’s Millennial rule.

Overcoming the challenges of drought, harsh weather conditions, absence of power and other utilities, attendees were undeterred, and focused upon the spiritual dimension of the Tabernacle experience. The meeting hall for Festival services was a former nursery school building hired by the church for the Festival period, chosen because it’s inexpensive and adapted to accommodate the number of attendees.

Since most members (families) are peasant farmers, our second tithe saving was mostly farm produce like maize and beans, which dominated our meals. Families from Tanzania were accommodated by local residents, and power was supplied by a generator that enabled us to watch the sermon videos. The sermon topics included the following:

Day 1: *Why Are We at the Feast* by George Ramocan

Day 2: *Seed Faith* by Steve Andrews

Day 3: Frank Baker and Art Hulet

Day 4: Nathan Kelly and Bill Russ

Day 5: *Wanderers* by Vance Stinson

Day 6: Lloyd Cary

Day 7: *Do You Know Your Shepherd?* by Wayne Turnbull

Last Great Day: Charles Groce

A mood of excitement was evident throughout the Festival period. Brethren had the opportunity to sing hymns, which were already translated into Luo language to ensure everybody was moving with the tune of the Feast. The Feast ended with a request to the church headquarters for a ministerial visit to this part of the world so that we may have complete joy as we share our experiences. Thanks in advance for your continued support to us and remember us always in prayer.

Ω

Submitted by Michael Omuga

Mananasi-Kenya, Africa

Despite the world’s economic financial crisis, nearly 18 devoted members joined with us through this year’s Feast of Tabernacles.

We enjoyed a variety of fellowship opportunities. Inspiring sermons, songs, and fellowship made concern to enjoy the eight days we spent together. Others are absent because of sickness and the other for the fare.

The emphasis of this year was coming and sharing together what God has provided for us.

On the first day of the Feast, Mr. Isaac Gwaro Motanya asked why did we come for the Feast? This is the sermon from Leviticus 23 which gave us the answers to the topic. He enlightened us on the history of God’s appointed Feast.

A variety of hymns from Church Choir, Children’s Choir, and Teens gave us the inspiration ever. The songs were sermons themselves. They included *Sowing in the Morning*, *Redeemed! How I Love to Proclaim It*, *Oh Let Me Walk With Thee*, *Not I, But Jesus*, *Sitting at the Feet of Jesus*, among the rest.

Split sermons given by God’s servants, “The Law of God,” “Mom and Dad,” “Faith Works,” “The Law of Love,” and “Good Laws,” just to mention a few.

Bible studies taught us more on God’s true baptism and the ten commandments.

The last sermon during the Feast was “Endure to the End,” given by Mr. Isaac Gwaro Motanya as an eye opening. He told us that we will always remain heirs with Christ if we run the race and overcome. He reminded us to remain strong and endure the challenges and trials brought on our way by Satan. He also taught us on how to come together to learn, share, and fellowship.

It was a lesson which we cannot afford to forget! A big thank you for all those who made this year’s Feast a success.

We thank God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord for the perfect weather and for each inspiring moment we spent here in Kenya.

Looking forward to seeing you come again in 2011.

W

Submitted by Mr. Isaac Gwaro Motanya,

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 alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

(Matthew 28:19–20)

Does God Love the World Enough to Save It?

Sometimes in our walk in life, we may fall into a zone that no human being can rescue us from. The doctor can prescribe a drug, or the counselor a therapy, and there still lies that vacuum or emptiness that somehow goes beyond the realm of physical remedy.

Some of the weak among us have resorted to drugs, while others soothe their pain with alcohol, gambling, or some other form of abuse. The result?—they get deeper into their predicament, and a state of hopelessness prevails.

The ideals of our society, namely to get much more money than we have, have brought much pain and anguish for a number of people. The obsession with obtaining materialistic gains at the expense of a humble, pure, and meaningful life with God as the priority, has been placing some cracks in the social order of things. The institution that suffers most of all is the one ordained by God to allow human beings to grow and nurture in His image—the family.

One cannot deny there has been a breakdown in the family when one looks at the divorce rate, and the tendency to be engaged in common-law relationships rather than getting married. Statistics have repeatedly shown that couples who lived together before marriage have a greater divorce rate than those who lived apart before getting married.

When couples divorce, children suffer emotionally and otherwise. It's some of these children who end up with several challenges later in life and turn to drugs and alcohol for temporary relief. The cycle of divorce keeps repeating because we still haven't learned our lesson, and the problems get more complex and harder to solve.

The ideals of our society don't point people to the true and living God. Instead, they steer people away from God into a more secular environment that tells them directly and indirectly they don't need God. When problems occur, the vast majority don't seek Him. But how can they seek God whom they never knew anyway? There are some people aware of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who sent His only begotten Son, Jesus the Christ, to die for the sins of every human being ever born. There are others who know and refuse to have anything to do with Him. With the technology available today through the Internet, cable, satellite television, digital radio, and so on, there's hardly any excuse not to hear the good news—the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Whoever earnestly seeks God will find Him. *

Our God is a *merciful* God. He stands ready to hear that knock on the door from someone who's in need of help—help that governments and the bright minds of this planet cannot provide. He says "all ye that are heaven laden, come and I will give you rest." He means it, and wants to help if you surrender your life to Him and embark on a journey of repentance and taking on a new life and new ideals. In so doing, this life will take on new meaning. In Christ Jesus, a true friend and our Savior, we can put all our trust in Him that He knows best and will take care of us, whether in this life or the life to come. He's a friend who will never fail. Some of us have friends who have failed us, and this only compounds many of our problems; but rest assured that when we put our hope, faith, and trust in Jesus, He'll never fail us. "...lo, I'm with you always, even unto the end of the world [age]" (Matthew 28:20). Indeed, what a friend we have in Jesus. Ω

*** Send for our FREE booklet, *Does God Love the World Enough to Save It?***



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

Published by the Church of God International

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Flint, Texas 75762
Permit No. 777

Feast Report Issue
Check us out on the Web:
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