



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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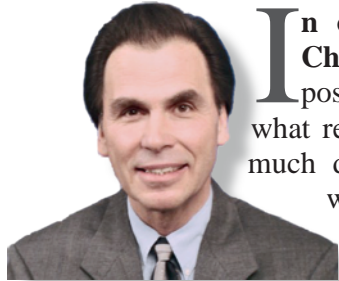
"Put on the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:13)

Spring 2012

Why Are the Holydays Important to Observe?

The majority of Christians today have no idea of the benefits they're missing by not understanding the contemporary meanings of the New Testament holydays. On the other hand, some Christians who do understand them lose interest and reduce their involvement, failing to maximize the value of their application in their Christian lifestyle. What is it we're missing and/or diminishing by not recognizing the benefits of observing the holydays?

by Bill Watson



Bill Watson

In our 21st-century world, the majority of Christians are clearly confused about the purpose of humanity, their potential destiny, and just what really is the reward of the saved. There is so much debate and doubtful disputations about just what the texts mean regarding certain teachings of the apostolic writings. And by using that term, we simply mean the *original intended meaning*. What was it those *original apostolic writers* wanted us to understand, when writing the things they wrote about, and in particular to this article, *the holydays*?

This is an important question, especially since the original apostles actually wrote about these holydays. As a matter of fact, there are multiple references to the holydays throughout the *New Testament*, plainly illustrating they were acknowledged, recognized, and embraced as special days. Many of the texts also reveal they were obviously *expected and attended observances* because of the risks taken and extraordinary effort described about traveling great distances to keep them (John 7:1–15, 37–38; Acts 20:16; Acts 27:7–9).

Notice also, how Luke records Paul's departure from Philippi with a reference to the "Days of Unleavened Bread." "And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days" (Acts 20:6). Presumably, they left Philippi after their observance and participation was complete. Otherwise, why mention them at all?

These references were undoubtedly used by Luke to reference the time of year and certainly to disclose this simple fact: They remained an important

part of the *original way* of the early Christian movement. The disclosure of the holydays within the context obviously implies the major part they played within the *church culture* of the early New Testament Christian church's development. Otherwise, why mention them at all, if they no longer had any significance?

Just How Significant Were They?

It is commonly understood and accepted by most Christians today, including many Christian scholars, that the early Christian church was primarily made up of Jewish or Israelite converts in the beginning. And so from that perspective, those who understand this are not surprised these so-called "Jewish holidays" are mentioned in the course of the New Testament writings (even Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, is mentioned in John 10:22). Understandably then, mentioning these holydays throughout the New Testament, would be expected and considered typical "cultural jargon" within the description of events.

However, it is interesting to note, if these holydays were intended to be minimized, or ultimately eliminated, why use them as *illustration for spiritual lessons and insight*? Why would you include them in the dialogue of *spiritual edification*, and then proceed to clearly leverage them for providing spiritual value and enrichment? It would seem this would only add to their credibility and enhance their usefulness as *something valuable to retain for the educational process* of teaching Christians the spiritual truths needed for improving their relationship with God. Undoubtedly, this would be counter-productive to phasing them out!

Therefore, it stands to reason: The early church understood the meanings of these observances since they referred to actual events—both past

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Could You Be Deceived?

by Lonnie C. Hendrix



Lonnie C. Hendrix

There are a large number of Christians who believe that it is impossible for someone who has God's Holy Spirit to be deceived. Likewise, there are those who are convinced that their beliefs set them apart from all other Christians. "Only the true church knows who and what God is," they declare. "Only people with God's Holy Spirit know about the real Gospel of Jesus Christ," they proclaim. What about these assertions? What does God's Word say about such opinions?

First, a careful examination of the Scriptures will clearly debunk the notion that Christians cannot be deceived. The Bible is literally full of examples that demonstrate this point.

In addressing His disciples about the time of the end, Christ warned them to be careful not to allow anyone to deceive them (Matthew 24:4–5). Notice that He was talking PRIVATELY to His disciples when He gave them this warning (Matthew 24:3). Moreover, He was speaking about a time when He knew that they would be under the influence and direction of God's Holy Spirit! Even so, some have pointed out that Christ said: "If it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:24). Does that mean it is impossible to deceive the elect? Notice the context: it is only possible to deceive the elect if they are not paying attention and fall for the deception. In the verse immediately preceding this one, Christ warned, "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; BELIEVE IT NOT" (Matthew 24:23). He concludes by telling them: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:44).

In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul informed that group of Christians he had received reports that there were divisions among them (1 Corinthians 1:10–11). Keep in mind that he was writing to CHRISTIANS, who were fighting and bickering among themselves. Later in the letter, he took them to task for accepting fornication (1 Corinthians 5:1–2) and engaging in lawsuits against each other (1 Corinthians 6:5–8)! Does any of that sound like rational Christian behavior to you? Finally, as some of the people within the church had asserted there would not be

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Side Effects

by Vivian Hall



Vivian Hall

This is not an advice column! This is not a suggestion paper on what to do! I am not an advocate of non-medical treatment. I do not know your condition! Any opinion I offer would be unprofessional and not based in necessary expertise.

While watching TV news recently, a standard commercial came on. It advertised a well-known product for arthritis. Clearly, it did not claim to cure the condition. The offer was to relieve pain and make the disease easier to tolerate. The announcer lauded the praises of the drug, then, unfazed, listed the *side effects*. The list of possible problems included strokes, blood clots, high blood pressure, aneurisms, and heart attacks. My immediate thought was, *The relief drug is worse than the condition*. It sounded simpler to tolerate the condition. The risk of *side effects* greatly overshadowed any possible benefits.

I've had someone very close stricken with cancer. They now have a wide variety of treatments laden with a range of possible side effects, including seizures, loss of hair, loss of coordination, and compromised immune system. There are many conditions which prove harmful and life threatening. There are many products offered to treat (not cure) them. All have uncomfortable or dangerous side effects. We then take other medicines to relieve some of the side effects, ingest things to make us more comfortable with the byproduct of worse conditions and diseases. The same results are found with events. We determine a course of action. As a result, the *penalty* we incur is lasting harm to ourselves and often others.

When I am sick, I desire whatever treatment is offered with the fewest risks. Have you considered this? Your dread condition is a skin rash. Usual treatment is some type of cream product to rub on. After a time, whelps and redness disappear and a rough crusty dry area remains. This makes needful some other product. The whole system is laden with pain, uncomfortable conditions, and multiple *side effects*.

Last summer, 18 of our 50 states experienced dangerously high dry temperatures. It was labeled the worst heat wave in decades. These record-breaking temperatures spawned many horrendous side effects. There was fainting and heat exhaustion, along with wild fires and deaths. Humans have lost control, if we ever had it, over the earth and the environment entrusted to us. Thus, unfathomed *side effects*!

In the 19th century, it is recorded, when weather raged out of control, the citizens consulted a Higher Power. This practice has become outdated and outgrown.

The Holy Bible tells us what to do when sick or afflicted. James 5:14-16 says, "Call for the elders. Let them anoint you and pray *that you may be healed*." Healing has conditions, not side effects. Moses' sister Miriam was healed of leprosy. I read of no side effects. There are many records of healings. I have yet to read of any side effects. God Almighty made us. Certainly *He* knows what effects anything will have. Some leaders have bowed to the error of thinking *they* can fix what God does not. We experiment with our bodies and minds and test our capacity with needless stress not manifested by God. Bible law lists "clean" and "unclean." We blatantly ignore these instructions while still seeking ways to undo results. Why look for an unclean animal or insect to *cure* conditions of uncleanness? Jesus healed many. It nowhere states He used unclean potions. His admonition was "Go and sin no more."

The practice of idolatry has side effects. Any breaking of God's law has side effects. Anointing and prayer for healing and obedience to God's law *were not designed* to have side effects. Humans in this present state will not live forever. We will die! Avoid side effects by obeying God, who made us! Ω

Watch It!

Be careful what you eat: Pay attention to what you do and say!
Avoid unclean meat: Your body was not made to stay.
Don't just accept something someone tells to you!
Be your own person: responsible for what you do!



Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path (Psalms 119:105).

Who, What is the Church of God International?

Christ said, "*I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing*" (John 15:5).

The *Church of God International* is one of these branches. We draw from a richly diverse populace. God has brought together believers from different races, ethnic groups, ages, economic levels, and religious backgrounds. We have learned to value and appreciate our differences. Our ministry is a *teaching* ministry, and we believe deeply in *servant leadership*. We do not police behavior; instead, we strive to set godly examples. As a result, congregants feel free to be themselves as they grow in understanding.

While we acknowledge that God has blessed us with a rich understanding of His Word, we don't believe we know everything. We are continually striving to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

The *Church of God International* is an *open* church. There is no "screening" to see if you are "righteous enough" to attend. We have many people attending who are new in the faith. Please be aware that some in attendance may not always keep each of God's laws as they should, and some may not believe everything we teach. We pray that they may be strengthened through the services we render and the examples we set as they come to a closer walk with their God. We request that you be neither judgmental nor base your standard for obedience on what you see your brother do. *Christ* is our standard, not weak and sinful men or women. Always remember that you will be judged for what *you* do, not what others do. Your job is to pray for them, set the right example, and please God our Father and Jesus Christ in all that you think, say, and do.

The *Church of God International* sponsors the *Armor of God* telecast, provides written material on a wide range of biblical topics, and has congregations in the United States, Canada, Jamaica, the Philippines, and Australia, with affiliates in other parts of the world. We invite you to find out more about us, our purpose, our mission, our beliefs, and our customs. Send for our newly-revised booklet, *Welcome to the Church of God International!* Ω

Visit us at



www.cgi.org

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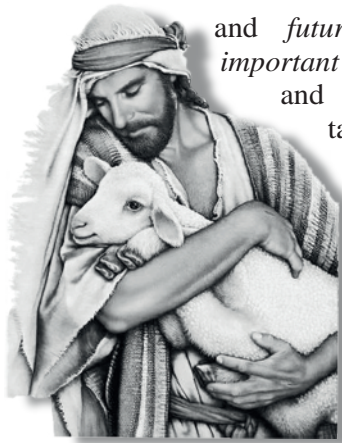
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Passover Lamb

and future events yet to be fulfilled. They became *important metaphors* because of what they represented, and by association, the spiritual insight they taught—which only served to substantiate the reason for keeping them as *teaching tools through participation!* Unquestionably, the ministry of the early New Testament church saw their importance for improving the clarity of the Gospel message and the realities of the *Christian* “purpose driven life.”

In 1 Corinthians 5, we find a classic example of how this is done. A member of the congregation had committed fornication so heinous that even the Gentiles condemned it (1 Corinthians 5:1). Paul proceeded to warn and instruct the congregation, while at the same time reprimanding the individual for such heinous behavior (1 Corinthians 5:2–6). But then Paul says something interesting. He instructs them to “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, [*but notice this:*] as you are unleavened” (1 Corinthians 5:7). How does that make any sense?

The only way it can make sense is that he knows this congregation is *observing* the Days of Unleavened Bread, and they are *physically unleavened*. Otherwise, it’s an absurd statement and is little more than double talk—because you can’t purge leaven out (become unleavened) if you’re already rid of it (unleavened). In other words, how can you purge something out that you don’t have? (Remember, Paul told them, “as you *are* [presently] unleavened.”) It makes absolutely no sense to appeal to someone to remove something that you acknowledge in the same sentence they don’t have!

We are left with only one conclusion: Paul used this specific terminology because, contextually, it was written *during* the Days of Unleavened Bread. Therefore, by the language used, we understand that these Christians were still *observing and participating* in the required function of eating only unleavened products during this seven-day period (Exodus 12:8, 34:18; Leviticus 23:6–8) while at the same time *refraining from all leavened products* (Exodus 13:3, Deuteronomy 16:3). Clearly, we understand how Paul then adds a *contemporary* New Testament *spiritual meaning* to this exhortation by using the comparison of the physical event to appeal for a spiritual response.

Making this comparison is *pragmatic, spiritually insightful, and revealing*, because he was associating the event of the man in question to the fact that they were physically unleavened! He used this as an analogy. Paul then proceeded to connect Christ directly to Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread by telling them to “purge the old leaven” *spiritually*, since Christ was sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7). Then, he makes the startling *spiritual appeal*. He says, “Therefore let us *keep* the feast [holyday], not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:8). Obviously, he is using the *Days of Unleavened Bread* as an analogy, by contrasting *physical leaven* as something spiritually *bad* (during this week only) with what he considers unleavened *characteristics* that are spiritually good.

This is a great example of how the apostle Paul leads you to a more *enriched spiritual understanding* by making the transition from the physical event of the Days of Unleavened Bread to a still deeper spiritual meaning. Paul did this on multiple occasions, connecting the holydays and other actual events and then bringing out the deeper, more spiritual meanings they had to offer. In doing so, he demonstrated the continuums between the Old and New Testaments, showing how they *complemented* each other.

Now turn to 1 Corinthians 10. Here we see some additional methods Paul used to illustrate what God was doing on the spiritual level. Clearly, we see the *magnified meaning* behind another *actual event*: the parting of the Red Sea. What we learn is that it went much deeper than just a miracle God performed to save His people from the Egyptian army; it was actually the “baptizing of a nation” unto God Himself, setting them apart as His nation (1 Corinthians 10:1–2). Paul goes on to describe additional deeper meanings behind several other Old Testament events, and then connects them to spiritually *negative* characteristics such as idolatry, fornication, and lust. He goes on to conclude that all these *physical things happened to them for our examples*. Why? So we Christians could be shown what God expects from us as godly people. We are warned, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12).

This metaphorical and analogous principle *must not be dismissed or underestimated* when considering their application to the holydays. The spiritual metaphors/analogies they represent, when comparing realities that come with the experiences they offer *WHEN PARTICIPATING*—and this is key—is undeniably priceless in so many ways. When you become connected to the holydays *BY YOUR INVOLVEMENT*—and that cannot be emphasized enough—your *LIFESTYLE* becomes impacted, fashioned, and modeled toward the priorities God would have you recognize. It’s *through your involvement* in these holydays that *real change, effects, and disciplines* are constructed in

your Christian way of life. The Christian who *exercises the effort to participate* in what the holydays demand, becomes more personally affected with a clearer understanding by that experience; they serve as an *enhancement tool* for faith building. Observing the holydays results in a *stronger dynamic* for actual life-changing characteristics. *Clearly, the holydays are a very effective PRAGMATIC TOOL for building your faith through the opportunities they offer by the behaviors they require you to exercise.*

How the Holydays Actually Conform You to God

As you begin to participate in God’s holydays, *the deeper meanings and applications become clearer and clearer*. Certain behavioral disciplines are required! And therein lies the challenge for every Christian, whether old or young in their relationship with Christ. When you begin to participate, you will most assuredly be challenged on everything from saving money, to watching how one shops for groceries during a certain holyday season, to when one might decide to take a vacation, or a day off from work, or make arrangements that will assure you a means and freedom by which to exercise your right to worship God. *And make no mistake:* this will not be without some conflict, sacrifice, and/or confrontation in your life (1 Peter 4:1–4). Unquestionably, this can disrupt your relationships and lifestyle, and may require extraordinary planning, contending with some tension or stress while standing up for your faith—and may also necessitate exercising enormous DETERMINATION TO FOLLOW GOD as the priority in your life. It may even require a job or career change, or perhaps some other kind of personal sacrifice. For some, the way may seem “too difficult” and costly, *while others will use them to help build their faith* through this transforming experience.

It’s not surprising why our Lord said, “many are called, but few are chosen” and “when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth”



Passover Bread and Wine

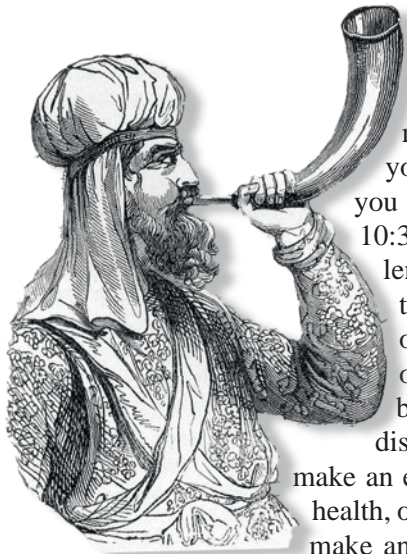
(Luke 18:8)? It’s not easy to be *God-oriented* or *God-centered* in this very materialistic, humanistic, and secular society we live in. There are many potential things that can come along to discourage us from fulfilling our commitments to God. The obstacles that come between us and observing the holydays are just *additional examples* and *little microcosms* of the much larger, more critical *real life distractions, obstacles, and pressures* that attempt to thwart us from the path and boundaries we should be upholding while building our faith as children of the living God throughout our lives on a daily basis.

Living for Jesus Christ, dedicating our life to building a personality He can *use and trust* to help Him rebuild society and reinstitute the government of God on this earth is not an easy task to complete. We are told we are “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20). This does not come without certain expectations from God, often emerging from a life of sacrifice and suffering, secured by and through a *dedicated effort* (Hebrews 2:10–15, 1 Peter 4:1, 12–13) *in faith*.

It’s incumbent on us as Christians to live the lifestyle and the examples of those who went before us. And when we do, our lives will reflect certain behaviors and life management habits that will assure us of a different way of life from those surrounding us outside of God’s church, including most traditional Christians. But it is a very important venue for sharing in the Divine nature (1 Peter 1: 3–4).

It will take faith and God’s Spirit abiding in you—working that faith as *substantive fortitude*—to give you the “spiritual muscle” necessary to forge ahead, regardless of the criticism you may receive for living this new way of life God has called you to (John 6:44,65). Frankly, it’s no different than what those Christians in the early years experienced. Notice Paul’s *encouragement* to those Gentiles who were taking up this new way of life: “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body of Christ” (Colossians 2:17).

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Feast of Trumpets

your best toward achieving the expectations God has for you. Clearly, for those of us who know to do right—not to “do” when we know better, *is considered a sin also* (James 4:17). It’s the sin of omission!

In the course of the year, you will participate in washing the feet of others at the Passover services (John 13:1–17; 1 Timothy 5:9–10) and taking the emblems during the designated evening our Lord was betrayed (1 Corinthians 11:23–26). Arrangements will be made to accommodate the necessary time for travel and attendance, avoiding any conflict that may occur, preventing you from rededicating your life to the Father through Jesus Christ. The effort and spiritual preparation you personally put into making sure nothing comes between you and these holyday events, which *mandate your participation*, could easily be considered reflections of your faith and the degree of commitment and quality of dedication in your Christian life. In other words, our approach/attitude toward these “holyday demands” should be extrapolated and applied onto the larger picture of your overall *actual spiritual commitment and performance*, which if you dare to consider, can provide you insight into the “real” spiritual condition of your actual Christian lifestyle. Those who went before you had similar trials and challenges; and frankly, it was a lot more difficult, dangerous, and life threatening in those early years. Comparably, all of us would agree, it’s much easier today!

Many Christians today *resist* the observance of the holydays simply because they say it was only for the nation of Israel, or “that’s Old Testament stuff.” They don’t realize that dismissing them without any consideration, they not only blind themselves to the “grand scheme” of God’s salvation program, but they miss an *awesome practical advantage, catalyst, or tool* in their *Christian lifestyle* that would enhance their spiritual insight, and *benefit the building of their faith* to greater levels, resulting in improving their relationship with God. Christian living, based on the doctrines of *the truth*, is the *basis* of conversion. *The truths of the holydays provide additional opportunities for securing and assuring your conversion, because they provide a motivational form to build your behavioral substance around.* They help establish *Christian boundaries or guard rails—reference points*—that if we live within them, will better assure us of our spiritual development. The holydays simply provide additional opportunities to express the hope that lies within us, and this *results in stronger faith*, which is pleasing to God (Hebrews 11:6).

There are so many insightful nuances when keeping the holydays. For example, searching out leaven in your homes, cars, workplace, and sharing this exercise with your children, can be used as a lesson for spiritual education about the subtleties of sin in our lives. Another metaphor is symbolized by the portrayal of “Christ in you,” when one eats unleavened bread each day, representative of His broken body for us. Shopping during those days and watching how carefully you consider the items you buy can also be extrapolated and applied in principle to other segments of our actual lives like diet, health, or in general, to what extent we allow ourselves to ingest things mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. Clearly, it’s a lesson about how careful we are, *or not*, about the things we allow to influence us in our lives.

These holyday observances have so much spiritual value for us that when overlaid onto *actual life experiences*, enormous spiritual relevance, insight, and pragmatic lessons about ourselves become plainly revealed. How we approach the holydays and the extent of our actual participation toward them can easily be used as a *barometer* for assessing our real life *spiritual condition*, if we have the courage to look at them that seriously. They can be very valuable for us to reflect upon and use to examine or evaluate ourselves (2 Corinthians 13:5) or “count the cost” (Luke 14:28). We should ask ourselves just how converted we *really are* to the promises we’ve been called to inherit.

One More Example

Consider the Feast of Tabernacles. Unfortunately, for some of us, the Feast isn’t a blessing; instead, it’s viewed as a “burden.” This is regrettable, and obviously not the way God or our Lord intended the Feast to be perceived. All of us are well aware it is very expensive today to travel and stay in a rented facility for about eight to ten days, but this is what “tabernacling” is all about; *it takes faith!* The opportunity to *step out in faith*, leaving everything you own behind, after you have been preparing, sacrificing, and arranging to be in the *symbolic* Kingdom of God, is a life changing experience. And this is only one aspect of the many additional *spiritual metaphors* that come along with observing and *participating* in the Feast. *It is a remarkable experience for faith building in one’s life!* It is a priceless lesson that only through the *literal participation*, the activity of what the Feast of Tabernacles *mandates from our life all year long*, can you begin to really know what it’s like to be a *literal pilgrim* whose citizenship is from another Kingdom (Philippians 3:20–21). It really does help you to focus your life on God, because you are *working all year long*, doing your best to assure you and your family are present at this representation of the Kingdom of God. The experience of living and maintaining the behavioral disciplines helps to develop a mind-set, or perspective in one’s life that motivates you, resulting in becoming more Christ-centered.

Clearly, this fall holyday has tremendous *impact on the lifestyle* of those participants *throughout the year*. We cannot deny that saving money, doing without, making sacrifices throughout the year, or working extra to be sure we have enough funds, causes one to be frugal, hard working, focused, goal



Day of Atonement

oriented, and of course God centered; in this case, we’re motivated by our desire to *be in* the Kingdom of God, Christ’s world-ruling government, the Millennium, in metaphor! How strongly should we be *striving* for and doing whatever we can to assure nothing comes between that Kingdom and us? Obviously, the answer to that is everything within our power should be attempted; the rest we leave in the hands of Jesus Christ to work out. That’s part of the lessons of *faith building* that can also be a part of the Feast experience; but frankly, can only come *by participating in the activity and experiencing the exercising of faith* during your life *throughout the year* as you work and sacrifice in preparation for achieving the goal of attending the Feast of Tabernacles.

The possibility of extenuating circumstances can legitimately prevent some of us from attending—whether health, funds, transportation, or an emergency. There are acceptable “ox-in-the-ditch” circumstances that are excusable and justifiable to keep one home. However, we understand that! That is not the issue, condition, or circumstances we are confronting here.

What we are addressing, are those of us who don’t have a justifiable reason other than we simply *choose not to discipline ourselves*, or make the *personal lifestyle adjustments* necessary to follow through and commit to the *living habits* that are required to *prepare, or sacrifice for* the Kingdom of God in metaphor, the Feast of Tabernacles. *If that’s the case*, if you take that position and extrapolate that as representative of *spiritually defining your actual and real desire* to be in God’s Kingdom—well then, shame on us for allowing that to define us—because it’s simply a reckless, irresponsible, and lackadaisical attitude and approach toward the *real eternal promises* that Jesus Christ died for, so we could be co-heirs with Him (Romans 8:15–23)!

Undoubtedly, all of us know WE ARE CHARACTERIZED BY WHAT WE *DO*, not by what we say. Remember, the holydays give all of us added opportunity to “do.” The *results* we generate *profile our real character* and degree of converted commitment to our God and His promises. How we approach the holydays tells God volumes about us, and can be used as a reflector in many ways, revealing our approach in other areas of our *actual Christian lives* as we attempt to develop Christ in us. Holyday observance is a *unique and brutally honest measuring stick*. If we have the *faith and courage to use* this measuring stick, we should consider how we approach this very plain and

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Harvest Time

simple, law-defined, analogous, metaphorical opportunity the holydays represent. There is added value when doing this that will serve to more accurately and honestly evaluate and *assess the degree of our actual/real spiritual commitment* and dedication toward God's *authentic eternal promises*. This can be quite revealing, and the *quintessential aptitude test* for all of us who claim Christ as our Savior—especially when considering our Lord's perception of those who are faithful in little, will be faithful in much (Matthew 25:21–23; Luke 16:10–13).

Keep in mind, these are the *shadows of real things to come* (Colossians 2:17). With that being said, what if our approach toward these metaphors, these shadows, are, in fact, being viewed as the measures of our *actual degree* of commitment and dedication to God's real eternal promises? How would you honestly measure up?

It would probably do us all some good to hold up the *mirror of the holydays* and view our personal reflection in light of our attitude, commitment to preparation, performance, and consistent attendance to these required ordinances (2 Thessalonians 2:15; Galatians 1:14; 1 Corinthians 11:1–2). Remember, "But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest [rendered apparent, shown, or revealed] by the light [truth]: for whatsoever doth make manifest [apparent] is light" (Ephesians 5:13). ***The holydays are a segment of the light or truth of God.***

With that understood, is it fair to say, comparably speaking: Could our approach toward the holydays reflect the *real level* of sincere desire we have for obtaining His eternal promises? Does our attitude and involvement, or lack thereof, speak to the *genuine level* of commitment toward having a deep relationship with our Lord and Father and to the *actual eternal promises* He is offering us? It's just a thought! But, what if indeed it does reflect what kind of *actual Christians* we really are?

I would like to suggest, as we begin to examine ourselves at the commencement of this *new holyday cycle*: Take a moment and ask yourself, for those of us who understand the holydays are applicable and required ordinances: What does our overall approach, attitude, and attendance toward these holydays tell God about our sincerity and genuine level of dedication and commitment to His offer of becoming co-heirs of the universe with Jesus Christ as *born again immortal Sons of God* (Romans 8:17–18; Hebrews 1:6–9; 1 Corinthians. 15:52–57)?

Ω



God's Holydays 2012

1. New Testament Passover: April 5, 2012*
2. Feast of Unleavened Bread: April 7–13, 2012
3. Pentecost: May 27, 2012
4. Feast of Trumpets: September 17, 2012
5. Day of Atonement: September 26, 2012
6. Feast of Tabernacles: October 1–7, 2012
7. Last Great Day: October 8, 2012

*Observed at sundown.

Feast Site information for the Feast of Tabernacles, 2012 will be posted as soon as details have been finalized. Check back for updates.

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Writer's Guidelines

- The ideal article length is between 800–1000 words. Longer articles will be considered depending on content, composition, timeliness, or space available at the time of publication.
- Accepts unsolicited manuscripts.
- Pays \$.03 (3 cents) per published word for articles and booklets on biblical/theological topics.
- Pays on publication.
- Does not pay for church reports, poetry, human-interest stories, or personality profiles (items normally run in the *International News*).
- Buys all rights, including the right to reprint, in whole or in part, in any format.
- Items must be submitted electronically (e-mail attachment or floppy disk), preferably as a Microsoft Word file.
- Prefers plain text in 12-point type: no colors, frames, multiple columns, auto-indent, or auto-paragraph spacing. (Use tab key to indent paragraphs.)
- Reserves the right to edit for style, content, length, etc.

A few pointers...

- Use only one space between sentences (discard the old "two spaces" rule).
- Periods (or other punctuation) should be *after* references at the end of a quotation, not inside the quotation or parentheses.
 - Incorrect: "Jesus wept." (John 11:35)
 - Incorrect: "Jesus wept" (John 11:35.)
 - Correct: "Jesus wept" (John 11:35).
- Commas and periods are always inside quotation marks.
 - "Before Abraham was, I am," said Jesus.
 - When Christians die, their immortal souls do not "go to heaven."
- Question marks (and exclamation points) are *inside* the quotation when part of the quotation, but *outside* when not part of the quotation.
 - Just what do you mean, "born again"?
 - He asked, "Have you been born again?"
- Tip: Longer articles look better and are easier to read when using headings and subheadings.
- Tip: Read your article *aloud* before submitting. Listen for flow and syntax. Remember, the average reading level is about eighth grade.
- Not all submissions can or will be published, again depending on content, composition, timeliness, or space available at the time of publication. All submissions will, however, be given consideration and archived for possible future publication.
- Send your submissions to Vance Stinson at: vancestinson@cgi.org or to Lloyd Cary at: lloyd Cary@gmail.com (preferably to both!)
Thank you!

Ω

God's Seasonal Plan

Isn't it ironic that man's fascination with the mythological, the pagan, and the idolatrous have literally crowded out God's holydays?

Most professing Christians are totally unaware that God's *plan for all humanity* has been deliberately shoved aside, dismissed, or overlooked by today's clergy as being "done away" or "Old Testament." Isn't it time you knew the *truth* about what God has in store *for you*? Our booklet, *GOD'S SEASONAL PLAN*, explains God's holydays in detail, straight from your own Bible. It's yours *free* for the asking.

Focused Prayer

by Mike James



Mike James

How do you pray? When we think of prayer, we are talking about communicating with God. Do we need to pray in a certain way or have met some preexisting conditions to make our prayers viable?

Some amazing discoveries in science are giving us a greater understanding into how the brain works. Since the brain is so connected to our mind, consciousness, and spirit, we need to take heed of what these discoveries are. I believe some of this new information can help us understand prayer in a much deeper way.

Neurons, specialized, impulse-conducting cells, assist the various parts of the brain in communicating. Neurons communicate with each other through a type of electrochemical signaling driven by the movement of ions (an atom, group of atoms, or molecule). These ions travel through passages in the brain that at their narrowest point are only a little wider than an ion. This means the brain is a quantum environment, subject to all the laws of quantum physics. One of these laws is the Quantum Zeno Effect (QZE).

The QZE is related to the observer effect of quantum physics. The observer effect states that the position of any quantum entity like an atom, electron, or ion appears to change when that entity is observed. In other words, matter at the quantum level can be changed by observing or putting focus on it. Numerous experiments have been conducted over the years verifying this. As we experience reality at the macro level, we are unaware at how different matter operates at the quantum (micro) level. But keep in mind that all matter, including you and me, is made up of this quantum matter that operates in inexplicable ways.

In the QZE, when any system is observed in a sufficiently rapid, repeated fashion, the rate at which that system changes is reduced. One experiment in regard to this involved observing beryllium atoms that decay from a high-energy to a low-energy state. The experimenters found that as they increased the amount of times they measured the change in beryllium, the beryllium changed less. In other words, let us say the beryllium changed from high energy to low energy in 10 hours on average. The document I studied did not give a base line rate of breakdown. And let's say during those 10 hours the experimenters measured the breakdown four times. If the experimenters had measured the breakdown eight times, the beryllium would not have changed in 10 hours, but 15 hours. And if they had measured the breakdown 12 times, the beryllium would have taken 20 hours to change to the low-energy state. Think of this as similar to the old adage that a watched pot never boils. One possible implication of this is that reality can be altered by observation or focus. And this brings to mind the scripture in I Thessalonians 5:17, "pray without ceasing." Could it be God wants us to maintain focus on what we are trying to change? Could that focus have something to do with the power of our prayer? Remember Jesus' prayer in Luke 22:44? If that is not focus, I don't know what is.

In a 2005 paper published in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (U.K.), physicist Henry Stapp and Jeffrey Schwartz linked the QZE with what happens when close attention is paid to a mental experience. For the purposes of this article, I'd like you to think of the mental experience as prayer. In neuroscience, the QZE states that the mental act of focusing attention stabilizes the associated brain circuits. Concentrating attention on your mental experience, a thought, an insight, a fear, visualizing something in your mind, or PRAYER, maintains the brain state arising in association with that experience. Over long periods of time, paying enough attention to a certain brain connection keeps the relevant circuitry open and dynamically alive. These circuits can then become not just chemical links, but stable, physical changes in the brain's makeup.

Now think for a moment about the implications of this in regard to the Sabbath, holydays, and Bible study. If you consistently and repeatedly do these things, your brain (where I believe your spirit is involved) begins to alter and change in relation to these thoughts. Listen to what the neuroscientists have to say about this:

Attention continually reshapes the patterns of the brain. Among the implications: People who practice a specialty every day literally think differently, through different sets of connections, than do people who don't practice that specialty. In business, professionals in different functions—finance, operations, legal, research and development, marketing, design, and human resources—have physiological differences that prevent them from seeing the world the same way.

What science is discovering is that the brain changes as a function of what you put your attention on. In other words, there is power in focus. Now when we look at faith in relation to attention and prayer, there are some interesting implications that can be drawn. Remember the great importance Jesus placed on faith. Notice in Matthew 5:8–13 how impressed Jesus was with the faith of the centurion. Also read James 1:5–8. This scripture tells us not to doubt. Yet another scripture on the importance of faith is Mark 11:20–25. And there are many others. Why is faith so important in prayer? There probably are a number of reasons, but from what we are learning about the brain, it could be said that belief or faith can build upon itself in your brain. The more you believe and don't doubt, the stronger that belief and faith will become for you. And from Scripture we learn that faith can go a long way in getting your prayers answered.

Scientists are discovering that your expectations and attitudes play a big role in your perception of reality. The placebo effect is a great example of this. Numerous experiments have been conducted over the years proving the fact that what you believe may happen to you can happen almost as much as being given something to cause the change. In the placebo effect, patients who are trying to reduce pain are given pills to try and reduce their pain. Some individuals are given an actual pain-reducing medicine like morphine, while others are given a sugar pill (placebo). Many of the patients who get the sugar pill also experience a reduction in pain. One study in 2005 by Robert C. Coghill and others found that "expectations for decreased pain produce a reduction in perceived pain (28.4 percent) that rivals the effects of a clearly analgesic dose of morphine." Donald Price of the University of Florida has shown that the mental expectation of pain relief accounts for the change in pain perception. The brain's deepest pain centers show systematic changes consistent with changes in experienced pain.

William Teller, a professor at Stanford University, has conducted eye-opening experiments into how mental intentions can alter the structure of systems. Teller has had subjects imprint their mental intentions in electronic devices and then had the devices alter things. One experiment had the test subjects think about altering the pH balance in water. The thoughts were imprinted into an electronic device and then the device was sent thousands of miles away. The devices were placed near water and the pH balance of the water was altered. Other control devices with no mental intention imprinted on them were also used near other containers of water and the pH balance of that water was not altered. This makes me think of materials that were touched by Paul being taken to the sick and healing occurring (Acts 19:11–12).

But how does praying for someone make that person better? We may have an idea how it makes *you* better, but what about someone else? Let's look at 1 Corinthians 2:10–16. Here we read that man has a spirit as does God. When you become a Christian, you begin to learn and grow by God's Spirit connecting with your spirit (mind). Romans 8:26–27 also addresses this connection in prayer between God's Spirit and man. Is it possible that this spiritual connection between God and Christians is somehow activating healing in humans? Again, think back to the fact our mind/brain is a quantum environment where amazing things are possible. Could the prayers of the faithful coalesce with God's Spirit which is coursing through all Christians and lead to miraculous events? Scripture does not give us enough information to be sure about how this all works, but I believe our mind/spirit is a very powerful tool in this process, especially when it is connecting with the Spirit of God in us.

Now some may argue that other religions show miracles and healings, too. And I would agree there is some evidence to support there is power in the thoughts and beliefs of others who are not Christian. But we need to remember there is also another spiritual force in the world that works against God's purposes. Take a look at Acts 19:11–20. Here we see evidence that some will be deceived into going after other spiritual powers in the world that can perform mighty feats. And it is highly likely that Satan is aware of how our brain/mind and its focus can be turned in his direction.

Despite the fact we don't have all the answers to the puzzle of how prayer and communication with God's Spirit works, there are some things we can be sure of. The more faith, focus, and passion we put into God and following His ways, the greater potential our prayers and petitions to God have of being answered. Keep praying, brethren, and pray without ceasing. Ω

Sources for this article: "The Neuroscience of Leadership" by David Rock and Jeffrey Schwartz from *Strategy + Business*, Issue 43, Summer 2006.

The G.O.D. Experiments by Gary E. Schwartz with William L. Simon.

Deceived, continued from \ page 1

any resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:12), Paul had to take time to explain one of the fundamental doctrines (Hebrews 6:1–2) of the Christian church (1 Corinthians 15:13–58)! It sounds as though there were a good many Christians at Corinth who were deceived about a good many things!

Once again, writing to the saints (people with God's Holy Spirit) of Galatia, Paul was forced to reprimand some of them for abandoning the true Gospel! He said: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert [change] the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6–7). Later, he wrote: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched [deceived] you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently [openly, clearly] set forth, crucified among you" (Galatians 3:1)? The apostle then proceeded to reinstruct them about works and faith (Galatians 3:2–29). These things are "Christianity 101," and the Galatians clearly appear to have been deceived about them!

Paul warned the Christians at Ephesus: "Let no man deceive you with vain [empty] words..." (Ephesians 5:6). Was the apostle wasting his breath? It appears that he was, if it really is impossible for Christians to be deceived.

Paul warned the Christians at Ephesus: "Let no man deceive you with vain [empty] words..." (Ephesians 5:6)

In Christ's messages to the seven churches of Asia, we see that He had to warn them about deceptions that had crept into their congregations. In His address to Pergamos, He said: "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that HOLD THE DOCTRINE OF BALAAM [emphasis mine], who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that HOLD THE DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANES, which thing I hate" (Revelation 2:14–15). Likewise, He told the saints at Thyatira: "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce [mislead, deceive] my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols" (Revelation 2:20). Remember, Christ is addressing converted people in these passages—people who had God's Holy Spirit!

We Christians are all still learning and growing in grace and knowledge. We don't have all of the truth yet. God reveals things to His servants through His Holy Spirit. King David had God's Holy Spirit, but he committed adultery, lied to cover it up, and murdered the woman's husband when that did not work (2 Samuel 11:1–27)! How long did he remain deceived about his own sins? It usually takes nine months for a baby to be born. In fact, the truth of what he had done did not dawn on him until God sent the prophet Nathan to tell him a parable and use it to show him his sin (2 Samuel 12:1–14). Moreover, David's experience was not unique in this regard. John proclaimed that, "If we [Christians] say that we have no sin, WE DECEIVE ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

Peter and his associates did not understand that they were supposed to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, even though Christ had clearly told them to do just that (Matthew 28:19–20). Hence, God had to reveal this truth to Peter through a dream (Acts 10:9–48)! Afterward, Peter shared his experience with the rest of the church (Acts 11:1–18). As a consequence, from that point forward, everyone within the church understood that God also intended for the Gentiles to hear the Gospel.

The apostle Paul said: "For we [Christians] know in part [our knowledge is limited], and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect [complete] is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For NOW WE SEE THROUGH A GLASS, DARKLY; but then face to face: NOW I [Paul] KNOW IN PART; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians 13:9–12). People love to pretend they know more than they do. We like to think that we know so much more than everyone else, but that is the deceitfulness of our human nature prompting us in that direction! The prophet Jeremiah warned his readers that the human heart is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked..." (Jeremiah 17:9).

We do not want to be like the Pharisee in Christ's parable. "I'm so glad that I'm not deceived like that fellow over there!" "I'm so thankful that I'm not deceived about the doctrine of the trinity!" Notice the parable: "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke 18:10–12). Remember, it was the publican who went home justified

(Luke 18:13–14). Christ warned the Laodiceans: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked..." (Revelation 3:17). Paul said, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Finally, the proof of your Christianity is not demonstrated by what you know or believe. Rather, it is reflected in what you *do* with what you know or believe (James 2:20–24). THERE IS NO SET OF DOCTRINES OR FACTS THAT CAN SET YOU APART AS A "TRUE" FOLLOWER OF JESUS CHRIST!

Instead, the presence of God's Holy Spirit is indicated by a number of other criteria which are clearly laid out in Scripture: 1) an individual who believes and accepts that Jesus is the Messiah who was promised in the Old Testament (1 John 5:1); 2) the exhibition of the fruits of God's Spirit by an individual (Galatians 5:22–26); 3) those who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony [message] of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17); and 4) Christ said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). These are the criteria that the Bible describes as identifying God's true people.

Paul told the saints at Ephesus that God had placed different offices within the church "for the perfecting of the saints..." (Ephesians 4:11–12). We are all in the process of being perfected. WE ARE NOT THERE YET! He went on to say that the process would continue "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). When that is achieved, we will no longer be "children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive..." (Ephesians 4:14).

Could you be deceived? YES! In fact, you would be an exceptional person if you were not! Satan has deceived the WHOLE WORLD (Revelation 12:9), and that includes YOU AND ME! However, those of us who have received God's Holy Spirit have begun the long march out of his darkness into the glorious light of Jesus Christ (John 1:5; 8:12). Moreover, if we continue to walk toward that light, someday everything will be illuminated. Ω

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With more to come!

The Restoration of Sodom

by David Miller



David Miller

In making his defense before Governor Felix, the Apostle Paul stated that he had “hope towards God...that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15). The Greek word translated “hope” in this verse is *elpis* (Strong’s 1680). According to *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, article “Hope,” *elpis* “is in the N.T. sense the expectation of good. This original word denotes a joyful and contented expectation of eternal salvation.” *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* has this to say about *elpis*: “*Elpis* may be defined as desire for future good, accompanied by faith in its realization...In the NT the noun *elpis* and the verb *elpizo* are used always of favorable expectations” (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992, 368, Ed. Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D., pg. 572).

The Apostle Paul proclaimed that he had an expectation of good in the future resurrection of both the just and the unjust. One can certainly understand Paul’s hope in the resurrection of the just. There are many verses in the New Testament holding out great hope for those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. The great resurrection chapter states that those who sleep in Christ shall be raised to immortality at the sound of the trumpet, and their corruptible bodies shall put on incorruption (1 Corinthians 15:51–53). In 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17, Paul writes that the “...dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

But in what sense did Paul have hope, the favorable expectation of good, in the resurrection of the unjust? Although there are verses clearly demonstrating that the unjust will also rise in a resurrection, there are seemingly few verses that hold out hope in this resurrection. Much of modern Christianity, in fact, has no hope for those who have died without accepting Christ. Relying upon such verses as John 5:28 and Revelation 20:11–15, most of Christianity teaches that the unjust will be raised before the Great White Throne judgment only to be damned to an ever-burning lake of hell fire. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Paul had hope in the resurrection of the unjust, and this word is always used in the New Testament in the sense of a favorable expectation of good. Thus, in some sense, the traditional understanding of the resurrection of the unjust has not been properly understood.

A Resurrection to Judgment

The Scriptures are clear that the resurrection of the unjust is a resurrection to judgment. In John 5:28, Jesus made the following statement: “Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.” The word translated “damnation” in the KJV is an unfortunate and inaccurate translation. The Greek word is *krisis* (Strong’s 2920), and is more appropriately translated “judgment.” Some of the misunderstanding concerning the resurrection of the unjust is due to a misunderstanding of the biblical concept of judgment.

According to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*, the Greek word *krisis* “denotes ‘the process of investigation, the act of distinguishing and separating’....it has a variety of meanings, such as judicial authority...justice...a tribunal...a trial...a judgment...by metonymy, the standard of judgment.” *Vine’s* gives a further definition of *krisis*: “decision (subjectively or objectively, for or against); by extension a tribunal; by implication justice” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985, article “Condemnation”).

Thus, the latter part of John 5:28 could be understood to mean those who have done evil will come forth unto the resurrection of a trial, a resurrection where there will be a process of investigation, a process of distinguishing and separating that will result in a decision either for or against. According to *Webster’s New 20th Century Dictionary of the English Language*, the English word “crisis” had its origin in the Greek word *krisis*. *Webster’s* defines crisis, in part, as “a decisive or crucial time, stage, or event.”

This process of judgment at the resurrection of the unjust is dramatically illustrated in Revelation 20:11–15. In this passage, the Apostle John writes that he saw the dead standing before the great white throne, “and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were

judged every man according to his works... And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

The Greek word translated “judged” in these scriptures is *krima* (Strong’s 2917). While this word can mean the actual sentence or verdict pronounced, it can also mean “the process of judgment leading to a decision” (*Vine’s*, article: “Condemnation”). For instance, in 1 Peter 4:17, the Apostle Peter uses the Greek word *krima* when he writes, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.” Clearly, Peter is using *krima* here to denote the process of judgment and not the actual sentence pronounced. Likewise, in Revelation 20, the context would suggest that *krima* is used to illustrate the process of judgment that ultimately leads to a decision. Either the names of those being judged are found written in the book of life, or they are cast into the lake of fire. The point is that there is a process that takes place, an investigation, a trial before the ultimate decision is reached. Thus, a proper understanding of the resurrection to judgment lays the foundation for an understanding of the hope, the expectation of good, that Paul had in the resurrection of the unjust.

The Story of Three Sisters—Sodom, Samaria, and Judah

The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are described throughout Scripture as cities of extreme wickedness and immorality. The book of Genesis records the depth to which Sodom had sunken in wickedness at the time of Abraham. “But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly” (Genesis 13:13). The peculiar sin for which Sodom was renowned was the sin of homosexuality. In Jude 7, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are described as indulging in gross immorality and “going after strange flesh.” The cities were ultimately destroyed by the Eternal through a torrent of fire and brimstone because He could not find even ten righteous men living within them (Genesis 18:32). Sodom’s destruction by fire is an example of the ultimate punishment for unrepentant sinners in the lake of fire (Jude 7).

While Sodom was renowned for its wickedness, Scripture records a city that acted more wickedly than the Sodomites. That city was none other than the city of Jerusalem, the place where the Eternal set His name. In Ezekiel 16, the Eternal directs a prophecy against the city of Jerusalem, the capital of the House of Judah. The opening verses of Ezekiel 16 describe how the Eternal God figuratively took the nation of Judah as His own wife, and made her His special covenant nation. “Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine” (Ezekiel 16:8). In the succeeding verses, the prophecy describes Judah’s subsequent apostasy from her covenant with the Eternal. This apostasy is described in terms of Judah “playing the harlot” by worshiping false gods and burning her children in the fire to idols (Ezekiel 16:17–21). The prophecy then describes Judah becoming more corrupted than her “sisters”—Samaria and Sodom.

“And thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand; and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters. Yet has thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but if that were a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways. As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters” (Ezekiel 16:46–48).

The Eternal God then states that Judah’s depravity actually made Sodom and Samaria appear righteous by comparison. “Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou has multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done. Thou also, which has judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou has committed more abominable than they; they are more righteous than thou; yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters” (Ezekiel 16:51–52).

As the Eternal destroyed Sodom and its inhabitants because of their abominations (Ezekiel 16:50), so He promised to judge Judah as an adulterous woman, and bring on her “the blood of wrath and jealousy” (Ezekiel 16:38). Judah’s idolatrous shrines would be torn down, she would be left naked and bare, and a crowd would “stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords” (Ezekiel 16:39–40). The Eternal is here describing the national destruction of the House of Judah.

It is perhaps somewhat surprising, then, that in the midst of this dire prophecy of the destruction of God’s covenant nation for her sins, there is a promise of her future restoration. This promise of restoration, however, extends beyond Judah and Samaria. It encompasses also the future restoration of Sodom, the less wicked sister. The concluding verses of Ezekiel 16, then, gives us a glimpse of the hope the Apostle Paul had in the resurrection of the unjust.

Restoration , continued on next page

The Restoration of Sodom

The prophecy of Ezekiel continues, “When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them” (Ezekiel 16:53).

The phrase “bring again their captivity” comes from a Hebrew phrase including the words *shuwb* (*Strong’s* 7725) and *shebuwth* (*Strong’s* 7622). This phrase is described as follows in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*: “The phrase...occurs frequently, usually with God as its subject, and means to bring an end to captivity or imprisonment for debt, and thus to turn one’s fortune for the better. Israel’s fortunes will be restored (i.e., Israel will have material prosperity and forgiveness of sins) when the Lord brings the Israelites back from captivity to their homeland (e.g. Ezekiel 39:25–29)” (Vol. II, Geoffrey B. Bromiley, published Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995, pg. 335, article “Fortunes”).

This same phrase is used in Deuteronomy 30:3, where the Eternal states that He will turn the captivity of Israel “and have compassion on thee,” and gather them from all the nations where He scattered them. This turning of the captivity of Israel contains a promise that the Eternal will circumcise the hearts of all Israel “to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live” (Deuteronomy 30:6). The use of the phrase “circumcision of the heart” is interesting, because such language is used in the New Testament as a reference to spiritual conversion in Christ (Romans 2:29; Colossians 2:11).

The phrase “bring again the captivity” is used again in Ezekiel 39:25 in reference to the Eternal having mercy upon the whole house of Israel and restoring them again to their land. This encompasses a promise that the Eternal will pour out His Spirit upon the house of Israel (Ezekiel 39:29).

Thus, when used in reference to the future restoration of Israel, the phrase “bring again the captivity” suggests forgiveness of sin, spiritual conversion, and reception of the Spirit of God. This same phrase is used in Ezekiel 16:53 in prophesying of the future restoration of Sodom and her daughters. The question naturally arises: Since Sodom was completely destroyed by the Eternal in the time of Abraham, how may the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters be restored?

The prophecy of Ezekiel 16 elaborates on the restoration of Sodom in verse 55:

“When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate.”

What does this prophecy mean when it says that Sodom and her daughters will return to their former estate? The Greek Septuagint translation of Ezekiel 16:55 throws light upon this phrase. It uses the word *apokathistemi* (*Strong’s* 600). *The Word Study Dictionary* has this to say about this Greek word: “from *apo* (575), back again, and *kathistemi* (2525), to constitute. To restore, e.g., to health or soundness.... To put back into a former state, restore, reform” (page 224).

The *Word Study* further states that *apokathistemi* is derived from *apokatastasis* (*Strong’s* 605), which means “restitution of a thing to its former condition.” It is fascinating to note that the Apostle Peter uses this very word *apokatastasis* in Acts 3:21, where he states that the Father will send Jesus “whom the heaven must receive until the times of *restitution* of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” It would appear, based on Ezekiel 16:55, that Sodom will be a part of the “restitution of all things.”

It is further interesting to note that *apokathistemi* is also derived from the Greek word *histemi* (2476), which means “to cause to stand, to set or place.” This very word is used in Revelation 20:12, when John sees “the dead, small and great, *stand* before God,” at the Great White Throne judgment. The word *histemi* in turn is derived from *anistemi* (*Strong’s* 450), which means, “Spoken...of the dead, meaning to raise up, recall to life” (page 184). For instance, *anistemi* is used in Matthew 12:41, where Jesus says, “The men of Nineveh shall *rise* in judgment with this generation.” It is also used in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, where Paul states that the “dead in Christ shall *rise* first.”

The prophecy in Ezekiel 16:55 prophesies of a time when Sodom and her daughters will be restored to health and soundness, a time when they will be put back to their former state or condition. The word translated “daughters” in the Septuagint comes from the Greek word *thugater* (*Strong’s* 2364). According to *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon*, when *thugater* is used “with the name of a place, city or region, it denotes collectively all its inhabitants and citizens” (page 292). This prophecy is stating that all the inhabitants and citizens of Sodom will be restored to their original or former estate. They will live again in the resurrection of judgment with Samaria and all her inhabitants and Judah and all her inhabitants. Indeed, the very word used in the Greek Septuagint suggests that all the inhabitants of Sodom, Samaria, and Judah will be caused to stand up, to rise up from the dead!

C.F. Keil, in his commentary on Ezekiel 16, comes to a similar conclusion. He writes, “The turning of the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, i.e., the forgiveness of the inhabitants of Sodom and the other cities of the plain, points beyond the present aeon, and the realization can only take place on the great day of the resurrection of the dead in the persons of the former inhabitants of Sodom and the neighboring cities” (Vol. 9 *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2001, pg. 134).

Not only is Ezekiel 16 a prophecy of the future resurrection of the inhabitants of Sodom, but it is also a prophecy that holds out hope in that resurrection. Ezekiel 16 goes on to state:

“Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when *thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee as daughters, but not by thy covenant. And I will establish my covenant with thee: and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.* That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God” (Ezekiel 16:60–63).

There is only one covenant that is everlasting. That is the New Covenant which is established upon the blood of our Messiah and Savior, Jesus Christ. That is the only covenant that can provide for the complete forgiveness of sins. That is the only covenant that holds out to those who accept it the promise of receiving the eternal inheritance in the Kingdom of God (Hebrews 10:10–18; 9:15).

The prophecy in Ezekiel 16 provides the hope that Sodom will be joined as a daughter with Samaria and Judah in the everlasting covenant, the New Covenant, and will have the opportunity to enter into the Kingdom of God.

Keil notes in his commentary, “[T]he prophecy before us goes beyond Rom. 11:25 ff, inasmuch as it presents, not to the covenant nation only, but, in Samaria and Sodom, to all the larger and smaller heathen nations also, the prospect of being eventually received into the everlasting kingdom of God” (page 134).

The Interpreter’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 6, pg. 151 comments on these verses:

“Verses 59–63. The New Covenant. The thoughts here remind one of Jeremiah 31:31–34, but there are two noticeable differences. First, while Jeremiah looks only for ‘a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah,’ Ezekiel includes within it both Sodom and Samaria. It is true that they benefit only indirectly, as necessary to the full restoration of Judah. Nevertheless, there is a suggestion here that the mercy of God is for all mankind, since who need despair if Sodom may hope for reinstatement?”

This prophecy in Ezekiel throws light on some statements Jesus made in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus upbraided the cities where most of His mighty miracles were performed because “they repented not” (Matthew 11:20). Jesus said, “And thou Capernaum, which art exalted into heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee.” In Matthew 11:23–24, Jesus said it would be “more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment” than for a city that would not receive His disciples nor hear the good news of the Kingdom. The implication of these verses is that if Sodom would have heard the Gospel and seen the mighty works of Christ, they would have repented and would have “remained to this day.” Ezekiel 16 holds out the hope that Sodom will indeed have the opportunity to hear the Gospel and receive the forgiveness of sins in the resurrection of judgment.

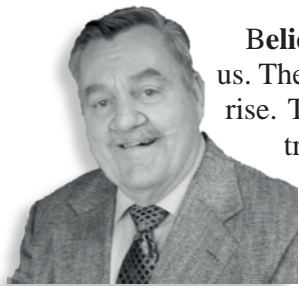
Keil comments on this as follows: “The words of our Lord in Matt. 10:15 and 11:24, to the effect that it will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom than for Capernaum and every other city that shall have rejected the preaching of the gospel, teach most indisputably that the way of mercy stands open still even for Sodom itself, and the judgment which has fallen upon it does not carry with it the final decision with regard to its inhabitants. For Sodom did not put away the perfect revelation of mercy and salvation. If the mighty works which were done in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, it would have stood to the present day (Matt. 11:23). And from this it clearly follows that all the judgments which fell before the time of Christ, instead of carrying with them the final decision, and involving eternal damnation, leave the possibility of eventual pardon open still.”

This is the hope that Paul had in the resurrection of the unjust. The hope is this: that the way of mercy is still open to all those who have perished without receiving the knowledge of Christ and the opportunity for salvation. In the resurrection of judgment, these individuals will be given the opportunity of joining in the everlasting covenant with the Eternal God, and the opportunity of hearing the Son of Man say to them: “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). □

How to Talk to An Atheist

Have you ever had a discussion about God with an atheist? If you have, you know it can be very frustrating. Here are a few tips you might find helpful.

by Lloyd W. Cary



Lloyd W. Cary

Believe it or not, atheists exist! They're all around us. The mind set—the philosophy—of atheism is on the rise. The so-called “new” atheists are waging war on true believers. They come armed with arguments to show that belief in God is absurd and dangerous. In the name of societal progress, they promote purging the world of all religious practice. Further, they claim that people of faith are delusional, dangerous, are mentally ill, or even potential “terrorists.” Many of the new atheists openly declare their hatred for the Judeo-Christian God. Not only do they say it is probable there is no God, but that belief in God and all religion is evil, wrong, and should be proactively stamped out.

Of course, there is really nothing “new” about their pernicious ways. They generally rehearse the same tired old charges and objections that have been offered up by skeptics from time immemorial—repeatedly refuted and explained by Bible believers and theologians from the beginning. The difference today is that more and more of our populace is becoming biblically illiterate, and atheists are garnering a larger and larger platform, being backed up by the media, the educational system, and even enforced by many judicial decisions. Like godless communism and socialism, they would stamp out all remnants of Christianity, because it usurps their power and authority by putting God before men.

As paradoxical as it may sound, there are even “Christian atheists,” holding Christ’s ideology while rejecting the God of Christendom, but holding to the moral teachings of Jesus, claiming, “He never existed, but He had a sound philosophy.”

A recent Reuters press release quoted a poll showing more young Britons believe in aliens and ghosts than believe in God. If you haven’t encountered an atheist yet, chances are you will before long. The question is, how should you deal with them—how can you reason with an atheist?

The report further revealed that three out of four—fully 75 percent—of teens raised in Christian homes walk away from the church after they leave home. The explanation, according to one spokesman for the Church of England, was that “[the ages between] fifteen and twenty-four are traditionally the ages of rebellion when people give up on religion.” But there is more to it than that. Many of these young people don’t give up on religion but, on the contrary, are often caught up *more than ever* in religion—the “religion” of atheism and evolution. They just give up on Christianity.

Why? Because when they go off into the world—to college, the workplace, and various social environments—they are often confronted by brazen liberalism, rationalism, and peer pressure; they don’t know *how* to adequately answer challenges to their faith.

- Intellectual skepticism is one of the major reasons young people walk away from the faith.
- College professors are five times more likely to identify themselves as atheists than the general public. Even some ministers have lost their faith.
- Most Christian students are not equipped to resist rabidly anti-Christian college professors who are intent on converting their students to atheism.
- The “new atheists”—Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens—have achieved a near “cult” status and are growing in popularity through their books and public appearances.

When one doesn’t know *how to answer* skeptics—or is bested in a discussion—one may begin to feel intimidated, insecure, unsure of him or herself. One may even be tempted to wonder, “Could they be right after all?” How should we react with such a confrontation one-on-one?

Second Timothy 2:23 warns us, “But foolish and unlearned questions *avoid*, knowing that they do gender strifes.” This advice is repeated in Titus 3:9.

However, 1 Peter 3:15 tells us, “... *be ready always to give an answer* to every man that *asketh* you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

Proverbs 26:4 says, “*Answer not* a fool according to his folly, *lest* thou also be like unto him.”

The very next verse, verse five, advises, “*Answer* a fool according to his folly, *lest* he be wise in his own conceit.”

These are *not* contradictions. They show balance—two sides of a single truth. We are not to go around looking for or picking fights with non-believers, but to **BE READY** if one comes. We must defend ourselves with the shield of faith and counter with the sword of the Spirit as needed (Ephesians 6:16–17). In other words, we are admonished to be prepared to say the right word in the right place at the right time.

These tips are *not* intended to arm you with a “knockout punch” for every encounter with every atheist, but they will better equip you to stand up to most. Actually, dealing with atheists is relatively *easy* to do. Once you know they don’t have any *evidence* for their atheism, it removes the fear of their attack. They are virtually weaponless, because they cannot logically prove there is no God—the *same* challenge they often hurl at believers. They can only attack the Bible and attack *what they think* are

Christians’ *ideas* of God. But, if you listen closely to them, you can soon find that *their logic has massive holes in it*.

Definition: *Atheism* is a faith/worldview that denies the existence of any supernatural deity.

CAUTION!

Atheists: Do *not* read this article! It is not for you. Go somewhere else. Contents may be hazardous to your faith.

Types of Atheists

First, we need to realize there are *two broad categories* of atheists: *PASSIVE* atheists and *MILITANT*, or *HARDCORE* atheists, with many variants in between. The word “agnostic” means, literally, “I don’t know.” *Agnostics* are usually little more than atheists in a top hat, taking the “safe” side, saying they do not have enough evidence to make a decision. If you listen closely, however, you will notice that they nearly *always* argue for the atheists’ side.

The *passive* atheist is one who simply *lacks* belief. They are sometimes merely disinterested, uninformed, and sometimes teachable. The *militant* atheist, however, will try to *convince* you, *convict* you, and *convert* you. All atheists love converts. And they will *disrespect* you. They nearly always take “the high ground,” calling themselves the “brights,” or “bright ones,” while the believers are assumed to be the dull, uneducated, superstitious “fools.” They often refer to themselves as “free thinkers,” although *they* are the ones who limit their thinking by disregarding the possibility of anything beyond the physical realm.

The militant atheist will have memorized several key arguments, called “show stoppers,” that are intended to shut you down. How do I know? I am qualified to speak, because until God called me, I was *one of them*!

Atheistic “Show Stopper” Arguments

One of their favorite “show stoppers” is, “Could God make a rock so big He could not lift it?” The simple answer is No. God cannot do the logically impossible, any more than He can act out of character with Himself. God cannot, for instance, create a square circle, play on the red squares of a checker board and still adhere to the current rules of checkers, stop being good, or cease being God. God can do everything that is possible to do. Such logical fallacies are actually an insult to the intelligence they profess to have. Such a gigantic rock would be subject to physical entities composing it, such as the laws of physics, mass, gravity, and so forth, that are not subject to a spirit being who operates outside the boundaries of the physical.

Another question skeptics like to hurl at believers is, “Who made God—where did He come from?” Skeptics howl with delight when the believer is stumped by such questions. But God by definition is the uncreated creator of the universe, so the question “Who created God?” is illogical, similar to “Whom is the bachelor married to?” or “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” A more sophisticated questioner might ask: If the universe needs a cause, then why doesn’t God need a cause? And if God doesn’t need a cause, why should the universe need a cause? In reply, Christians can use this syllogistic reasoning:

- 1) Everything *which has a beginning* has a cause.
- 2) The universe has a beginning.
- 3) Therefore the universe has a cause.

Atheists, continued on next page

Atheists, continued from previous page

The only hope for the skeptic is to dispute one or both of the premises.

Everything brought into existence was *caused* to exist. God, as first cause and creator of time, is *outside* of time. Therefore, since He has no beginning in time, He has always existed, so doesn't need a cause. There can be no "cause" of the First Cause because the first cause would then be a second, third, or fourth cause. This train of thought is simply circular reasoning.

"I Know There is No God!"

Some militant atheists will boldly *challenge* you by declaring, "I *know* there is no God!" to see if they can overwhelm you.

You can't get anywhere arguing with them by saying, "Well, I *do* believe in God," or by reciting the seven proofs God exists.

First, we need to realize we are not in a formal debate class. The key is NOT just to refute what they are saying. The *key* is to reveal their ignorance. We need to recognize the *mind set* we are dealing with. Romans 1:20–22 reveals, "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world *are clearly seen*, being understood *by the things that are made*, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him *not* as God, neither were thankful; but *became vain* in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was *darkened*. Professing *themselves* to be wise, they became *fools*" [emphasis added throughout]. That is simply another way of saying, "You can lead an atheist to evidence, but you can't make him think!"

How to Talk to an Atheist

INSTEAD OF ARGUING, ASK *QUESTIONS!* Draw him out. Inquire of *him*, "Tell me about this God you don't believe in. Perhaps I do not believe in that God either!" Nearly always the atheist will have many mistaken concepts of what and who is God. Some of his objections may be that he cannot accept a cruel, harsh God, or the concepts of a trinity, an immortal soul, heaven, or an ever-tormenting hell. You can diminish his objections by heartily *agreeing* with him on these points. "Well," you might tell him, "I do not believe in that God either." Ask him if he would like to see what the Bible really says about these subjects. (This is where we had best heed Peter's advice in 1 Peter 3:15 about *being ready always* to give an answer.)

There are only two ways to refute an argument: a) Show that the skeptic's argument is logically invalid, or b) show that at least one of his premises is false. The more you draw him out, the more likely it is that he will ensnare himself in his own words.

If he is insistent, ask him, "Do you have any logical, *reasonable evidence* that moves one toward a conclusion that God does not exist?" Pin him down.

When the atheist complains that, true, he doesn't have any "hard evidence" that would hold up in court proving God does not exist, press him to *logically and factually explain* the existence of the universe. (Be sure to point out that *opinions* and *guesses* don't count. The truth is, opinions do not count unless they agree with the Word of God!)

If he complains that *if* there is a God, He would stop all the wars, sicknesses, and evil in the world, ask, "By what STANDARD do you judge what is right or wrong, good or bad? Would you have a supernatural power step in and overrule what men want to do, thus taking away their free will?"

If, for example, he should bring up, "Well, God killed thousands of people in the Old Testament," simply say, "*So what?* Do you know the extenuating circumstances of His dealings with certain peoples?" Persist, "If you just have an *opinion* about what God does—*so what?* Not liking something or someone is just your OPINION of what *you* think is good or bad, or true and false—that's OK, *so what?*" Again, the *key* is to get the atheist to explain more and *more!* Show him the inconsistency of his own thoughts.

Keep interjecting, "So what?" or, "That's not *proof!*" and get them to explain more and more, and you'll find that, as they go on, they will overstate their assertions and have large "holes" in their statements.

Demand that they *explain* their presuppositions! Put *them* on the defensive! Make *them* defend what *they* believe! Make them *prove* what they *think* they know.

Caution: When you don't have an answer, tell them so, and that you will research it and get back with them another time. *Never* try to *bluff*, or they will surely sense it and call you on it. Be open, honest, and humble, but persistent.

LISTEN to what they're saying. *Keep asking questions!* Keep asking, "Why? Why? *WHY?* What is your *justification* for your opinions? Could you *prove* it in a court of law?" Remember, your objective is to make them realize they do not have all the answers. See if their statements are truly LOGICAL, or merely emotional opinions based on personal examples or media-driven "junk" science. Keep asking them to *explain* the VALIDITY of their assertions!

I've heard...

- God does not believe in atheists—therefore atheists do not exist!
- An atheist can't find God for the same reason that a thief can't find a policeman.
- If there were no God, there would be no atheists.
- An atheist is a fellow who shakes his fist and defies the God he claims doesn't exist.
- An atheist secretly hopes the Lord will do nothing to disturb his disbelief.
- An atheist is someone who doesn't believe in God—until his plane is about to crash.
- How to confuse an atheist: Serve him a delicious meal and then ask him if he believes there was a cook.
- Of course there are many good traits about the atheist; he got them from Christianity.
- It may be difficult for some to believe in God, but it's much more difficult *not* to believe in Him.
- The trouble with being an atheist is you have no one to talk to when you're alone.
- The lonely moment for an atheist is when he feels grateful and has no one to thank.
- God will say to the atheist, "I know you not" (Luke 13:27).

A Simple Analogy

You might like to point out to the skeptic that *he would have to know **all** things* to "know" there is no God!

Try using the dot and circle analogy: Draw a large circle on a piece of paper or cardboard and tell him that for the sake of this analogy, this circle represents "*all* knowledge"—all languages, mathematics, biochemistry, astronomy, theology, philosophy, psychiatry, quantum physics, everything! Next, give your atheist friend the pen and ask him to draw a dot or circle representing how much of all knowledge *he* knows. If he or she is at all humble, they will most likely draw a dot or very small circle inside your large circle. Point out that since, by his own admission, there is so much he does not know—thus, how can he "KNOW" there is no God? If one insists upon disbelief in God, what he should honestly say is, "Having the limited knowledge I have at present, I believe that there is no God."

Again, your objective is to visually demonstrate that he does not know all things—he does *not*, in fact, "know" there is no God. It is simply his opinion or belief.

If he should attack the Bible, ask him if he has *read* the entire Bible through, and if so, how many times. He will probably lie to you, but if he says NO, ask him how he can have such a negative opinion about a book he has never read. Does he apply such logic to *everything* in his life?

If he says he does not believe the Bible, ask him *what it is* that he does not believe about the Bible. Perhaps you do not believe those particular points either.

If he claims there are CONTRADICTIONS in the Bible, ask him to show you a few. If he attempts to do so, explain them to him. Ask, "Are you aware that *every* alleged Bible contradiction has been answered again and again in an intelligible and credible manner? Point out that there are *many* websites answering such objections.

If he says YES, he *has* read the Bible, ask him if he has read Psalms 14:1, where it says, "The FOOL hath said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" Psalm 53:1 says the same thing.

Perhaps point out to him that if he does not believe there *is* a president of the United States, that would not mean he does not exist. Neither does *his opinion* that there is no God mean He does not exist.

Keep asking questions! Keep pushing him to explain the past. For example, when one of my sons was in about the third grade, his teacher was trying to explain evolution and the "Big Bang" theory. My son kept asking her, "Where did *that* come from," over and over until she dismissed him by saying, "Now you're just being silly." Hmmm... really? I wonder who was *really* being unreasonable.

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God's Calendar

by Bill Russ



Bill Russ

In my latter years I have developed a practice of walking around a lake in Dickson, Tennessee, where I live. The name of the lake is Luther's Lake, named after the family who used to own the lake and the property around it. It is a very picturesque and peaceful place to walk or run.

Late in January, the trees were already starting to look like it was going to be an early spring. They were starting to form buds, the grass was turning green, the temperature was mild, and the buttercups were about ready to blossom.

Unlike the British poet Alfred Lord Tennyson, who wrote, "In the spring, a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love," my thoughts turned to the Hebrew Calendar.

Taking a page from the world—they like saying "Christmas is right around the corner"—I thought, *Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread are right around the corner. It is time again to start thinking about signing up for one more year of living God's way.*

The Hebrew calendar or, as some call it, God's calendar, comes to my mind. A question for all of you: Are you deceived? Reverse the question: Am I deceived? I have been deceived, and likely you too have been deceived. Either one of us can still be deceived and not know it. If you know you are deceived, then you are not deceived—disobedient or defiant maybe, but not deceived.

Jesus did not build many churches; He built but one, but there are many congregations. Beliefs that have caused division in the Church of God include (but are not limited to) eating out on the Sabbath, the sacred name of God, and the calendar. The calendar is not talked about a lot in the church of God. Why? We know the calendar was used by the ancient nation of Israel, and by the Jewish people during the time Jesus the Christ walked the dusty roads of Judea. There were little or no discussions about it. Why so little talk about the calendar during the ministry of the Messiah? Was it not important to the Jews of that age?

It was very important to the people of God during all ages of time. What some of us may fail to understand is that it was not the responsibility of the New Testament church to oversee the calculations of the calendar. The true church of God was never commissioned to oversee the calendar calculations, which had been the responsibility of the Jews for many centuries.

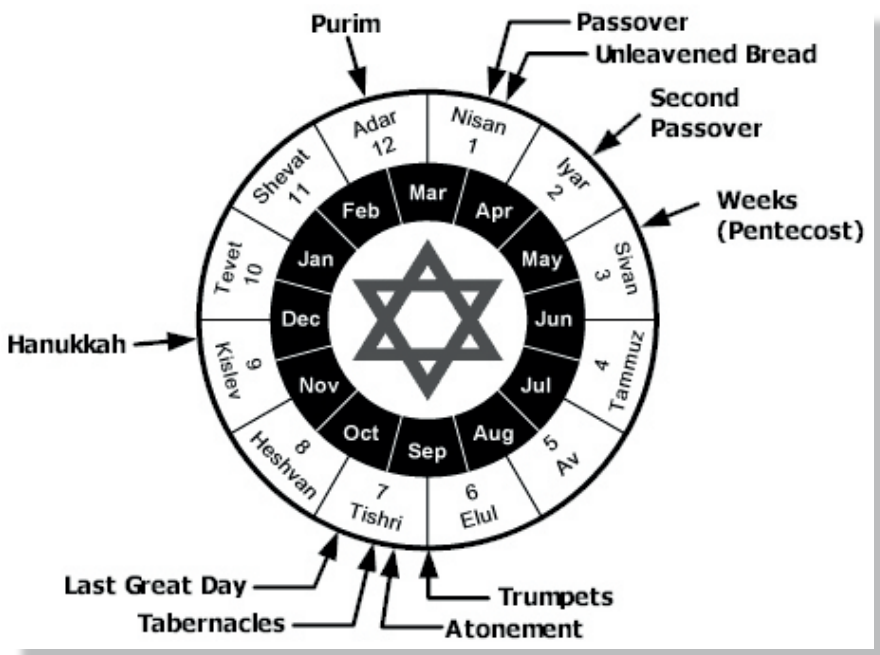
Who are the Jews? Another question we need to know the answer to is this: Were *all* Jews used to calculate the calendar? If we were to read biblical texts about the northern kingdom of Israel, we would not find the word "Jew." The kingdom under Saul was called Israel; it was comprised of all 13 tribes. At the death of Saul, David was chosen king over the tribe of Judah; the son of Saul, Ishbosheth, was set up as king over the rest of the tribes. After the assassination of Ishbosheth, David became king of all 13 tribes. When Rehoboam the son of Solomon became king, God took 10 tribes from him, due to the sins of his father Solomon, leaving him (Rehoboam) Judah and the small tribe of Benjamin. The tribe of Levi could be found in both the northern and the southern kingdoms.

The southern kingdom became the nation or kingdom of Judah. It was located in the south, and the 10 tribes under Jeroboam in the north were identified as Israel. Due to the idolatrous worship instituted at Bethel and Dan by Jeroboam in the kingdom of Israel, the northern priests and Levites immigrated to Judah and Jerusalem. All living in the southern kingdom became known as Jews.

There were at least three tribes living in the southern kingdom of Judah. Did God entrust all of them with the calendar? In the Gospel of Luke, a woman from the tribe of Asher was mentioned. There may have been other tribes in the southern kingdom; it mainly consisted of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi.

Only two tribes were anointed, the priests from the tribe of Levi and the kings from the tribe of Judah. Paul, in Romans 3:1, states the Jews had an advantage; the oracles of God were committed to them. Were the oracles of God committed to all the Jews? What is an oracle? It is an authoritative or wise statement or prediction—a command or revelation from God (from *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*).

Vine's Expository Dictionary says the word "oracle" is a translation of a Hebrew word that means "word" or "utterance." It refers to a communication from God given for man's guidance. There are other words translated, but I want to focus on utterances of God. Jesus the Messiah was the Word who gave the world the laws and commandments of His Father, the utteranc-



es of God. He gave Moses and Aaron commandments He did not give to the nation as a whole.

Can we ascertain what tribe, if any, received the utterance of God on the calendar? We need to look at the written Word of God for the answer. Genesis 1:1 states, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In the first verse of the Bible, is there any evidence here for a calendar? The word "heavens" as recorded in the New King James Version and other translations is plural, meaning more that just the atmosphere around the earth. From a translation infrequently used in the church of God, *The Good News* translation, Genesis 1:1 reads, "In the beginning, when God created the universe...." Hebrews 1:2 gives proof this is a good rendition of Genesis 1:1. It tells us that God has "spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom He made the worlds." In Genesis 1:1, the sun, the moon, the stars, the whole universe was created. In the next verse, all God had to do was make changes to the atmosphere so the light of the celestial bodies could shine on the surface of the earth.

Genesis 1:2-5: "The earth was [became] without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw the light that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day." We now have the first night and day of recreation.

Genesis 1:14: "Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years.'" All of God's annual Sabbaths come in their season; Genesis 1:14 sets the stage for His holydays. We have the foundation to start a calendar, but no seven-day week. We have to look at the second chapter of Genesis for the seven-day week.

Genesis 2:1-2: "Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done." The next day was to start the cycle all over again. At the end of every seventh day the cycle started all over again.

God gave us the night and day; it renewed itself each turning of the earth on its axis. You could be lost in a cave for a month, and the first night or day you come out you could discern night and day; it is from sunset to sunset.

The moon determines the month. If you were to lose the month, at the sighting of the new moon, it would be the start of a new month. You may want to know which one. You then need to study the sun. Is it moving north or south? If the days are long and the sun is moving south, it is summer, moving to the fall of the year.

If the days are getting longer and the sun is moving north, it is spring moving toward summer. If the sun is moving south and the days grow short, it is fall with winter coming on.

The seasons can be discerned by the length of the day and the movement of the sun. The start of a new month can be known by the new moon, and the middle of the month by the full moon.

You can study the signs in the heavens, and never find a seven-day cycle recurring in the natural world. Only the Word of God gives us a seven-day week. If lost, we could never regain it without the

Continued on next page

help of the Creator of the week. You could start a seven-day observance, but you would not know if it was the right seven-day week or not. We need to be on the seven-day week of God’s calendar.

Who wrote the book of Genesis? Was it not Moses, who was from the tribe of Levi? The Levites became known as Jews, by their living in the southern kingdom of Judah. In the book of Exodus, we find a change in the calendar.

In Exodus the 12th chapter, God tells Moses and Aaron that the month of Abib was to be their beginning of months—the Hebrew new year. Moses and Aaron were brothers from the tribe of Levi. From the tribe of Levi through Aaron came the Levitical priesthood who were to carry out the duties at the tabernacle and then at the temple.

The book of Numbers gives us some information about the calendar. Numbers 29:6 tells us about the offerings for the new moon. The book of Numbers is one of the five books of Moses, who was from the tribe of Levi. The Levitical priesthood was charged with giving the offerings, and the blowing of the trumpet on the new moon and the full moon on the solemn Feast day. No holy convocation was commanded for the people unless they fell on a high day. The Feast of Trumpets comes on the first day of the seventh month, and the first day of Unleavened Bread and the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles fall on the full moon.

The church that Jesus built was never commissioned to oversee the calendar calculations, which had been the responsibility of the Jews—precisely the one tribe, the Levites—for many centuries.

Now, 1,942 years after the destruction of the temple, men have risen up to draw disciples after themselves by selling the lie that the Jews are not keeping the calendar right. They or no one else can calculate the calendar without the help of the ones God entrusted it to. Without the Jews, we would not know when the Sabbath comes, and this knowledge was given to the whole nation of Israel. The keeping of the calendar was only given to the Levites. The new moon was the sighted moon in Jerusalem, not where these self-made calculators of the calendar live.

Postponements, they say, are prohibited in the calculations of the calendar. Where do we find this law in the written Word of God? Not in any translations that I have access to. I cannot find the word “postpone-ment” in the entire Bible. There is no instruction as to how it was to be calculated. We are to depend on the ones God gave the job to.

The church was not to be in charge of the calendar, but to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things that Christ commanded them. Read Matthew 28:19–20 and Acts 20:30. He did not teach them or us the particulars of calculating the calendar. Why do they do this? To draw disciples after themselves, who are already in God’s church. They are commanded to go and make disciples of all nations, not to draw disciples after themselves. Prove all things! Ω

Cartoon Corner



A Few Questions for Your Atheist Friend

Here are a few more questions you might ask your atheist friend:

- ❖ Can you *prove* God doesn’t exist? No? Then you argue from ignorance. You’ve committed yourself to conclusions that can’t be supported by the evidence.
- ❖ Since we know scientifically by the Second Law of Thermodynamics that there has been no past eternity of matter, where did matter *come* from? Where did the physical matter for a “big bang” *come* from?
- ❖ Do you believe “nothing” created “everything” either gradually or suddenly? Explain this to me.
- ❖ Why is there “something” rather than “nothing” if there was only “nothing” to begin with? Where did matter *come* from? Proof?
- ❖ How do you explain the high degree of design and order in the universe if there is no God? (See Romans 1:20.)
- ❖ Since absolutely no Bible prophecy has ever failed (and there are hundreds), how do you explain fulfilled prophecy?
- ❖ In view of this, how can one realistically remain *unconvinced* that the Bible is of Divine origin? (Be ready to show him some examples.)
- ❖ Are you aware that virtually *every* alleged Bible contradiction has been repeatedly answered in an intelligible and credible manner?
- ❖ What do you say about the hundreds of scholarly books that carefully document the veracity and historical reliability of the Bible?
- ❖ How do you explain *answered prayer*? (You might want to share some personal examples in your own life.)
- ❖ Is it possible that your unbelief in God is actually an unwillingness to submit to Him?
- ❖ What would be required to persuade you to become a believer?
- ❖ You might even ask him, “Do you believe in extra-terrestrials? (Most atheists do.) Ask him what *hard evidence* he has to prove this opinion. Ask, still pushing him back to beginnings, “Where do you believe *they* came from?”

Realistically, we may seldom expect to “convert” a militant atheist to our way of thinking. Although they are not nearly as “bright” as they think they are, their faith in “St. Darwin” is so strong it’s almost impossible to get through to them. However, by using the techniques in this article, we *can* expect to effectively demonstrate to the atheist that there are, indeed, many “holes” in his *theory* that God does not exist. We know that “No man *can* come to me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44, 65). Be sure to read Job’s assessment of God’s power in Job 12:7–25 and God’s declaration of Himself in Job 38–41—things an atheist will seldom consider.

In the end, you may have to confess to your atheist friend, “I really have to admire your faith in guesses, presumptions, and the unknown. I confess, I just don’t have enough *faith* to be an atheist!”

Finally, you may have to remind your atheistic friend, “If there is no God as you say, then in the end I lose *nothing*. But if there *is* a God as I say, in the end you may find yourself in a whole heap of trouble!” Ω

Related recommended reading and listening helps are available from the Church of God International:

- *Who, What Is God?*
- *Evolution—Fact or Fallacy?*
- *UFOs Exist—But What Are They?*
- *How to Study Your Bible*
- *The Origin of Evil—CD*
- *Prophecy: The Convincing Factor—CD*
- Also, available at most Christian bookstores:
- *More Evidence That Demands A Verdict* by Josh McDowell, ISBN 0-7852-4219-81

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Holydays Revisited

The holydays are, to me, an endless source of fascination. Every year I approach them with renewed anticipation. Long ago someone pointed out to me a simple, elegant pattern in the meaning of these days. The Passover, for example, portrays the sacrifice of Christ. The Days of Unleavened Bread remind us to put sin out of our lives. Pentecost pictures the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Trumpets looks forward to the return of Christ and the resurrection. Atonement represents the binding of Satan and the whole world being “at one” with God. The Feast of Tabernacles looks forward to the Millennium, and the Eighth Day, or Last Great Day, pictures the “Great White Throne” judgment.

Few concepts have done as much to open my understanding of the plan of God as this neat little sequential outline. Observed and expounded year by year, it has pushed our understanding forward little by little.

But there is, I think, one important error that has kept us from understanding even more: We assumed that this one-dimensional outline was all the holydays had to offer. In fact, these days represent some of God’s richest and most complex revelations.

Do you remember a toy called a kaleidoscope? A simple device, it was composed of a cardboard tube, some mirrors, and bits of colored glass. When you held it up to the light and peered through it, the mirrors reflected and repeated the random pieces, creating complex patterns of light. A simple turn of the tube dropped the pieces into a new position, creating a whole new design from the same few pieces of glass. The variations were endless, and the pattern never seemed to repeat itself. I’m told some ladies used the kaleidoscope to develop original quilt patterns.

To some extent, the holydays are like that. Each time the seasons turn them over, it seems I notice something I’ve never seen before. It’s not that I tear up the old quilt. It’s just that new patterns, new relationships, and new ideas present themselves year by year.

Failing to understand this, some people take a one-dimensional view of the holydays. When they see something new, it seems to contradict the old. Instead of seeing it as another dimension, another undiscovered facet of the same truth, they see it *supplanting* what they thought they already knew.

One man, for example, wrote to me expressing confusion about the Day of Atonement. “Why do we fast on the Day of Atonement?” he asked. “After all, Jesus Christ is our atonement. We have already been made at one with God. Why do we fast?”

At first I didn’t understand his question. Jesus stated clearly that after His departure, His servants would fast. If not on Atonement, when would we fast?

To be truthful, I found myself wondering if the fellow really believed in keeping the Day of Atonement at all. More than once I’ve encountered someone who dissembled by making a major argument out of the meaning of the day when they did not even believe in keeping the day in the first place.

But this fellow believed in keeping Atonement. He just believed that we who are at one with Christ no longer need to fast. Not only was he overlooking Jesus’ statement that His servants *would* fast, but he also overlooked the fact that we keep the New Testament Passover every year. After all, Jesus is our *Passover*, and we still observe that. Why not Atonement?

But as the Day of Atonement approached that year, I reviewed in my mind again the man’s question. Why *do* we fast on the Day of Atonement?

There is an important, fundamental difference between Passover and the Day of Atonement. Paul told the Corinthians that as often as we eat the bread and drink the wine of the New Testament Passover we do show forth the Lord’s death till He come. What the Passover is about is Christ’s death. The Day of Atonement, on the other hand, is about our being made “at one” with God.

“But,” one may ask, “doesn’t Christ’s sacrifice make us ‘at one’ with God?” If it does, then why isn’t everyone “at one” with God? Is the sacrifice of Christ all-sufficient for your salvation? If so, then why isn’t everyone saved?

The answer to these questions is simple enough. Everyone isn’t saved or “at one” with God because not everyone has responded to the Gospel.

Are we then saying that there is something other than Christ’s sacrifice required for salvation? It would seem so. In fact, two things are required if we are to be made at one with God: Christ’s sacrifice and our response.

On the Day of Pentecost, when Peter made his first presentation of the Gospel, the men who heard about Jesus’ sacrifice replied to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” They plainly realized that Jesus’ death was only half of the equation.

Peter’s answer is simple: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

The Passover, on the one hand, pictures Christ’s sacrifice—His death in our place. On that side of the equation, there is absolutely nothing we can do. Jesus Christ did it all for us.

But on the other side of the equation, there are some things we’re expected to do. Initially, Peter spoke of it as repentance and baptism.

Paul approached the subject from a slightly different angle. Referring to the “righteousness of faith,” he asked which of us ascended into heaven to bring Christ down, or which of us ascended into the grave to bring Christ up (Romans 10:6–7). He concludes that we had nothing whatever to do with accomplishing *Christ’s* mission.

But he concludes that there are at least two things we must do if we are to achieve salvation: “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9–10).

So unless we believe, repent, confess, and are baptized, we are not saved. It seems safe, then, to conclude that Jesus’ sacrifice *alone* is not sufficient. It requires a response on our part.

It is quite true, then, to note that the Passover pictures the sacrifice of Christ—Jesus Christ is our Passover. There is, however, a *response* required from us that *is not pictured in the Passover itself*.

When we look at the Day of Atonement, we see a very strong correlation between its ceremony and the response of the repentant sinner. The Day of Atonement involves fasting (Leviticus 23:26–32), which is an outward sign of our remorse and our repentance of our sins. Of old, fasting was the commonly accepted means of expressing humiliation, mourning, and repentance. The full priestly ceremony of the Day of Atonement is described in the 16th chapter of Leviticus, and there we find that the confession of sin plays an important role in the atonement process (Leviticus 16:20–22). Washing, an obvious corollary of baptism, is also prominent in the ceremony of the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:4, 24, 26).

The writer of Hebrews comments extensively on the Day of Atonement in chapters 9 and 10. Having drawn the full analogy with much meaning for Christians, Paul says, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22–23). He is referring to the sprinkling of blood and the washing of water mentioned in the service of the Day of Atonement. His analogy is of Christ’s blood and the water of baptism.

So there is a powerful connection between the Passover and the Day of Atonement, but they are still very different in meaning.

The Last Great Day

We have elsewhere noted the similarity between Pentecost and its prophecies of the Day of the Lord (Acts 2:14–21) on the one hand, and the Feast of Trumpets which *plainly* looks forward to the Day of the Lord on the other. Then, if we peer closely at Pentecost, turning the kaleidoscope slightly, we see yet another interesting comparison. In his sermon on Pentecost, Peter explained that the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on that day was a fulfillment of that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: “It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaids I will pour out in those days of my spirit; and they shall prophesy.”

Compare this with Jesus’ pronouncement made on “the last day, that great day of the Feast,” when Jesus stood in the temple and cried, saying “If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spoke He of the spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive” (John 7:37–39).

Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 55:1. What Jesus is saying to His disciples is that not only are we to receive the Holy Spirit, but having received it, we can actually become a *source*: “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of *his* belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

None of this is intended to supplant our traditional exposition of the meaning of the days. The holydays plainly outline the plan of God—the Gospel. But if we are to understand the depth of the riches of God’s plan for us, the holydays should be revisited again and again.

(This article originally appeared in *The International News*, November–December, 1985 edition. Author: Ronald L. Dart.)

Actual Church Signs & Bulletin Bloopers

- Sign on bulletin board: Free coffee and everlasting life—yes, membership has its privileges.
- Forgive your enemies—it messes with their heads!
- God so loved the world that He did not send a committee.
- There are some questions that cannot be answered by Google.
- Wal-Mart is not the only saving place.
- Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered
- The class on prophecy has been canceled due to unforeseen circumstances.
- The sermon this morning: *Women in the Church*. The closing hymn: *Rise Up, O Men of God!*
- The sermon this morning: *Gossip... The Speaking of Evil*. The closing hymn: *I Love to Tell the Story!*
- The honorable Rev. Jones spoke briefly, much to the delight of his audience.
- The third verse of *Blessed Assurance* will be sung without musical accomplishment.
- Illiterate? Write to the church office for help.
- A nervous pastor preaching his first sermon: Instead of “God called me to heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out the devil,” what actually came out was, “God called me to heal the dead, cast out the sick, and raise the devil.”

Over the massive front doors of a church, these words were inscribed: “The Gates of Heaven.” Beneath that was a small cardboard sign which read: “Please use other entrance.” Ω



In Memory of Aris Way

On December 4, 2011 at 10:00 PM, Aris Way entered into a much-needed rest from a long, hard-fought battle with cancer and numerous other health problems. She will be missed by the many who knew and loved her. Aris was baptized at the Feast of Tabernacles at Kentucky Dam Village, along with her husband Donald, October 1, 1999. She was a loyal and faithful servant to her commitment to God.

She is survived by her husband Donald and their only child, Debbie, and her husband, Dr. Paul Kelty. She had three grandsons, Chris, Michel, and Donnie, and their spouses. She also had five great-grandchildren. A crematory memorial service was held at the Veterans Cemetery in New Albany, Indiana. All of the family were there, along with personal friends, Dr. and Mrs. Bob Weis. Services were conducted by Ferrell Vincent. Ω

Submitted by Ferrell Vincent

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

Addendum And Now the Rest of the Story...

A little more about the Feast at Kentucky Dam Village. The previous reports of Feast activities at the various sites were informative and exciting. All of us seem to agree this was the best Feast ever, so far.



“Let the little children come to Me... for of such is the kingdom of God.”

Mark 10:14



Dennis, Deborah, Davarous, Denisha, and baby Destiny Fouse. “And the Lord said, ‘Who then is that faithful and wise steward...’”

Luke 12:42



Jeane O'Barr and Michelle Emrick
“...Repent, and...be baptized...”

Acts 2:38

As mentioned previously, all reports expressed the feeling of the best Feast ever. May I ask you to direct your attention once again to the report from Kachinland? (See the *International News*, Volume 32, No. 4, page 10.) All have needs that beg for prayer from our brothers and sisters in Christ, and the forgiveness, grace, and mercy from our Father.

But, I have to ask, do we have the faith and courage of our brothers and sisters in Kachinland? “Let your conduct be without covetousness; **be content with such things as you have.** ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (Hebrews 13:5).

Ω

Give God the Thanks!

- Today, before you say an unkind word, think of someone who can't speak.
- Before you complain about the taste of your food, think of someone who has nothing to eat.
- Before you complain about your husband or wife, think of someone who's crying out to God for a companion.
- Today before you complain about life, think of someone who passed on too early.
- Before you complain about your children, think of someone who desires children, but they're barren.
- Before you argue about your dirty house someone didn't clean or sweep, think of the people who are living in the streets.
- Before whining about the distance you drive, think of someone who walks the same distance with their feet.
- When you are tired and complain about your job, think of the unemployed, the disabled, and those who wish they had your job.
- Before you think of pointing the finger or condemning another, remember that not one of us is without sin, and we all answer to one Maker.
- When depressing thoughts seem to get you down, put a smile on your face and thank God you're alive and still around.
- Do the math—count your blessings!



Yes, I'm a Senior Citizen

- I'm the life of the party—even if it lasts until 8:00 PM.
- I'm very good at opening childproof caps—with a hammer.
- I'm awake many hours before my body allows me to get up.
- I'm smiling all the time because I can't hear a thing you're saying.
- I'm sure everything I can't find is in a safe secure place, somewhere.
- I'm wrinkled, saggy, lumpy, and that's just my left leg.
- I'm beginning to realize that aging is not for wimps.
- Yes, I'm a SENIOR CITIZEN and I think I am having the time of my life!

More Gems...

- God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts.
- Dear God, I have a problem, it's Me.
- There is no key to happiness—the door is always open.
- Silence is often misinterpreted, but never misquoted.
- Faith is the ability to not panic.
- If you worry, you didn't pray; if you pray, don't worry.
- As a child of God, prayer is kind of like calling home everyday.
- Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape.
- The most important things in your house are not *things*.
- When we get tangled up in our problems, be still; God wants us to be still so He can untangle the knot.
- A grudge is a heavy thing to carry.
- He who dies with the most toys is *still dead*.

Submitted by Tui Haupt



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