



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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

Fall 2015

Questions and Replies

by Vance Stinson



Vance A. Stinson

What was the angels' "first estate"?

QUESTION: I am writing you concerning Jude 6. What was the angels' first estate? What habitation did they leave?

HT, Chicago, IL

REPLY: The English Standard Version translates Jude 6 this way: "And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day...."

Scripture shows there are various orders of angels—seraphim, cherubim, archangels, perhaps many others—and that the various orders have specific positions of authority, or responsibility. For example,

in the book of Daniel we find that angelic "princes" are in some way involved with nations (see 10:12–14, 20–21; 12:1). Angels act as God's messengers, as we see in these and other passages, and act as protectors of God's people (Psalm 91:11–12; Matthew 18:10). As the writer of the book of Hebrews says, "Are they [the angels] not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14).

The angels' dwelling place is heaven (Matthew 18:10; 22:30; Revelation 5:11). They were made free moral agents, which means they were capable of choosing to obey or disobey God. Unfortunately, some of them fell into rebellion. These are the demented spirits the Bible identifies as demons. Their original habitation (or "proper dwelling") was heaven. When they rebelled against God through stepping outside their God-given positions of authority, they were cast out of heaven. The latter part of Jude 6—"he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day"—metaphorically describes their gloomy outlook toward a certain fate, which they will meet in the final judgment.

"LORD" or "Lord"?

QUESTION: Is it true that the word "Lord" (in Psalm 110:5) in the King James Version should be capital "LORD"?

HT, Chicago, IL

REPLY: No, "LORD" (capital letters) is reserved for God's name, YHWH. The word translated "Lord" (lower case) in Psalm 110:5 is *Adonai*, a title of respect used only of God. The verse tells us that God the Father will act through the Messiah (identified as the "Son" in Psalm 2) in subduing His enemies.

Is baptism required for salvation?

QUESTION: I do agree with your understanding of water baptism done by immersion, but I question whether baptism is required for salvation, the means of salvation, or whether it is simply a symbolic act of what has already taken place in your life. Would you look at three passages for me and help me put them together in a coherent fashion. Matthew 3:11 says, "I baptize you with water FOR repentance." He didn't baptize in order that he would repent, but BECAUSE he would repent. Acts 2:38: "Repent and be baptized FOR the forgiveness of sin." The "for," I believe, is better translated "because."

Acts 10:45 shows the gift of the Holy Spirit had already been poured out upon the Gentiles BEFORE they were baptized in water.

These passages appear to me to show that salvation is by grace through faith, but baptism is only a symbolic act that comes after the fact.

SD (sent by e-mail)

REPLY: Your understanding of Matthew 3:11 may be correct. I certainly would not argue against it. However, it may be that *Young's Literal Translation* captures John's intent more accurately: "I indeed do baptize you with water to reformation." In other words, John expected the persons he baptized to reform their lives; his baptism was *unto* repentance (reform, change). "Repentance" is not necessarily a one-time event; it can refer to the initial change of mind, but it can also refer to the *process of change*, or reform. John baptized

repentant persons, but expected "repentance" (reformation, change) to occur in the way they would conduct themselves in the days to follow.

People on both sides of the baptism question have produced studies on the meaning of "for" in Acts 2:38. It appears to me that the word can be used either way, depending on context. Let's look more closely at this text and see if we can discover the correct meaning.

Peter says, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Is "for the forgiveness of sins" to be connected only with the command to "be baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ"? Or is it also to be connected with the command to "Repent"? In other words, is Peter saying, "Repent, and then be baptized in view of the forgiveness that occurred upon repentance"? That seems a stretch to me. Peter most likely sees repentance and baptism as two aspects of a single act. The immersion is a public confession of what has just happened internally—i.e., the old sinful self has been slain. The result: remission of sins and reception of the Holy Spirit.

Second, let's not neglect the latter part of Peter's statement: "and you *will receive* the gift of the Holy Spirit." Peter is not saying, "Repent and be baptized because you *have received* the gift of the Holy Spirit." Here, he anticipates that the gift of the Spirit will come with (or following) baptism, not before.

Q & R Continued on page 3

In This Issue:

The Significance of Being a New Believer
George Ramocan
Page 5

Confirming the Kingdom of God
Bill Watson
Page 6-7

Doctrine Is Essential!
Lloyd W. Cary
Page 8-9

Church News: Page 10-15

CGI Jamaica Surges Ahead
Ian Boyne
Page 12

CGI Canada is On the Move!
Adrian Davis
Page 14

Bad Weather
Vivian Hall
Page 14

Obituaries
Page 15

NE Ohio Prophecy Conference
Page 16

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Open Church Policy

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

God's Holydays 2015

New Testament Passover

April 2, 2015 (Observed at sundown)

Feast of Unleavened Bread

April 4–10, 2015

Pentecost

May 24, 2015

Feast of Trumpets

September 14, 2015

Day of Atonement

September 23, 2015

Feast of Tabernacles

September 28–October 4, 2015

Last Great Day

October 5, 2015

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- With few exceptions, submissions should be from 800–1000 words in either .doc, docx, rtf, or .txt format.
- Submissions may be sent either to vancestinson.org or lloydcary@gmail.com or, preferably, to *both*.



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Q & R Continued from page 1

My conclusion, then, is that Peter was telling the crowd to repent and be baptized for the purpose of receiving the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Of course, we cannot put God in a box and dictate to Him when or under what conditions He may give the Holy Spirit to individuals. As you point out, Cornelius and his household received the Spirit before they were baptized. But this is the exception, not the general rule—and we cannot use the exception to establish the general rule.

Here, I believe, is the only logical conclusion we can come to: *Baptism is not the cause of justification; it is the normative occasion of justification.* Is it required? Is it necessary? *Absolutely*—for Christ commands it. It would be most foolish to neglect it. However, we must acknowledge that God can work outside the normative order if He so chooses. Our job is to simply do what Christ tells us to do. Unless we see signs that indicate otherwise (as was the case with Cornelius), we should assume that justification occurs on the occasion of baptism.

Why were Gnostic writings “left out” of Scripture?

QUESTION: I was talking to my brother, which turns out he’s a Deist. He and I were talking about how he doesn’t believe in Bible prophecy and that the Catholics wrote the Bible. He also mentioned the Gospel of Thomas and how it was purposely left out of the Bible, and it talks about when you’re banished to hell there’s a way out supposedly. Now I was a member of the Church of God, and I had never heard of such a thing. I would like some clarification.

ED (sent by e-mail)

REPLY: The issues you asked about have been issues I have considered carefully in recent years, primarily because of the increasing amount of attention given to claims regarding Gnostic writings and patristic motives behind the canonization of Scripture. So perhaps I will be able to offer something that will help you in your efforts to sort through the issues your brother brought up.

First, the Catholics did *not* write the Bible; nor did they “decide” which books belonged to the New Testament Canon. The bishops and scholars of the historic, visible church (it was not “Roman Catholic” at that time, and there was no concept of papal infallibility) simply looked at the historical data that had been preserved by Christians from the earliest days and were able, based on the clear evidence that had been handed down, to affirm which books were truly apostolic (i.e., were written or authorized by one or more apostles).

One reason it was necessary to formally canonize the New Testament was because the Gnostic sects that had begun to develop in the second century were growing and proving to be a threat to the Christian faith in certain areas and were producing their own “Gospels.” The “Gospel of Thomas” is one of many examples. The reason the Gnostic writings were “left out” of the New Testament Canon was because the historical data preserved by many Christian theologians, apologists, and churches of the various cities making up the Roman Empire showed that early Christians did not use those writings in meetings, did not teach from them, did not recognize them as Scripture, and did not hold the dualistic views that essentially defined Gnosticism. All the fathers knew, from the very first appearance of the Gnostic writings, that these writings presented teachings contrary to the teachings of the apostles. To accept them was to depart from teachings that had been in place from the first century.

A study of the Christian writings from the earliest times after the apostles shows that the four Gospels were the *only* Gospels accepted by Christians of that time—and this was *long* before formal canonization. We also discover that Paul’s epistles were accepted as Scripture and were in wide circulation. And we find a very large number of quotations from the New Testament in the writings of the early church fathers, showing that from earliest times the books that were later formally canonized were already recognized as inspired Scripture. There were some debates on whether certain books should be considered inspired Scripture, but the issues surrounding those debates were not that difficult to resolve.

We also know that, before the formal canonization of the New Testament, lists of the books that make up our New Testament existed. Also, if you read any of the Gnostic writings, you will quickly see that they differ radically from the books of the New Testament. The Gospels and epistles making up the New Testament are theologically consistent. The Gnostic writings are based largely on the belief that matter and material things (the “lower world”) are essentially flawed and arose from the work of the demiurge, while God is associated with the “upper world,” which consists of spirit and perfection. This would mean that the Word could not have truly become flesh—so heretical ideas about Jesus grew out of the Gnostic system.

The early church fathers did not reject the Gnostic teachings merely because of what some Gnostics may have said about a “way out of hell.” (Some speculative Christians—Origen, for example—also thought “hell”

was remedial, or a sort of “purgatory,” but most rejected that idea.) The early theologians and apologists rejected the entire Gnostic system because they recognized it was a false philosophy that opposed genuine biblical and Christian doctrine on a number of critical points.

In all probability, your brother has embraced Deism because he’s been duped by the misinformation that’s been spread through TV documentaries and books that come to the public disguised as unbiased scholarship. They are anything *but* unbiased, and the “scholarship” behind them is pathetic—and I’m being kind! I might also add that Deism comes across as a rational alternative to “book” religions, but I’ve found that Deists’ reasons for rejecting the inspiration and authority of Scripture do not reflect the rational thought they proudly espouse. They use the same tactics liberals and radicals like Bart Ehrman use to discredit the Scriptures.

What about that mysterious number 666?

QUESTION: I just wanted to ask Mr. Vance Stinson about the strange 666 number of Revelation 13:18.... I am sure that there is an explanation for the number. The last part of Revelation 13:18 says that it is the number of a man. I understand that this is future and that numbers can have other meanings that

may not be understood in a narrow context? I was hoping that you had an explanation maybe in a broader context, or that there are other examples in Scripture that may explain it better.

DW (sent by e-mail)

REPLY: Let’s look carefully at the description of the “number of the beast.”

“Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or

the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666” (Revelation 13:16–18, ESV).

Notice that the mark of the beast is the name of the beast and the number representing his name. So to receive the mark of the beast in one’s right hand or forehead is to receive the name of the beast. A ruler’s name represents his authority. To receive a king’s name in the right hand or forehead is to willingly put oneself under the king’s authority. Therefore, anyone who receives the mark (name, or number representing the name) of the beast puts himself under the beast’s authority and pledges allegiance to the beast.

Now, contrast the beast’s crowd with the crowd that follows the Lamb: “Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads” (14:1). The first group has the beast’s name written in their foreheads (or right hand), while this group has the Lamb’s and the Father’s names written in their foreheads, which means they have given their allegiance to God and the Lamb.

Since the beast has a name, and the number representing that name is “the number of a man,” the beast must be a man, but a man who represents a governmental system that incorporates false religious practice (as indicated in the descriptions of the two beasts of this chapter). By the time of Domitian (Roman emperor from AD 81 to 96), the earlier emperor Nero was regarded an antichrist figure. The number 666 was most likely understood to be the numerical value of the name Nero Caesar. The beast was not Nero himself; but Nero, as the antichrist figure he had become, was a symbol of the antichrist system that was present in the reign of Domitian and of the antichrist system that will once again emerge in the time of the end.

It is possible that the final antichrist (beast) system will have someone at the helm whose name has the numerical value of 666, but that would not be essential to the final fulfillment of this prophecy. I think the main point here is that the name of Nero Caesar (in the “666” form) identifies the antichrist system itself. For the seven churches of Asia Minor, the beast was manifest in the reign of Domitian. There would be other manifestations of the beast system in the centuries to follow. Nero still serves as a symbol for any future antichrist system that persecutes the people of God for refusing to pledge allegiance to its leader or its Satan-inspired activities.

Does lying magnify God’s truth and bring glory to Him?

QUESTION: I shall be very pleased if you can explain in detail the meaning of Romans 3, verse 7, where Paul the apostle claimed to have lied.

BH, Brooklyn, NY

REPLY: Verses 5–8 show that Paul is addressing the *false* notion (held by some) that, since human sinfulness results in God’s righteousness being revealed in sharp clarity, the more we sin the more God is glorified. It is in this context that Paul says, “For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner?” Paul is speaking *hypothetically*; he is not saying that he actually lied. He is saying, “If human sinfulness brings to light God’s righteousness and is to His glory, why does God still condemn those who commit these sinful acts?” Paul’s answer is

Q & R Continued on page 4



Q & R, continued from page 3

simple: God is just in His judgments. Even if God’s righteousness shines more brightly through the darkness of human unrighteousness, the end (God being glorified) does not justify the means (human sinfulness).

With this same thought in mind, Paul continues, “And [if our sinfulness reveals God’s righteousness and brings glory to Him] why not say, ‘Let us do evil that good may come’?—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say.” In verses 7 and 8, Paul is asking two “if” questions in order to show the fallacy of equating bad behavior with good outcomes.

Why did Jesus tell the disciples to buy a sword?

QUESTION: Can you explain what Jesus means in Luke 22:35–38?

BAJ, Winnfield, LA

REPLY: Let’s read the text carefully:

³⁵ And he said to them, “When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?” They said, “Nothing.” ³⁶ He said to them, “But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. ³⁷ For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’ For what is written about me has its fulfillment.” ³⁸ And they said, “Look, Lord, here are two swords.” And he said to them, “It is enough.”

In this passage, Jesus refers to the mission He sent His disciples on earlier (verse 35), and then explains that the future will not be as easy for them as that mission was (verses 36–37). Before, their needs were met; but in days to come, their needs will not be met. The reference to buying a sword probably should not be taken literally. He is just telling them that when they go on future missions, they’ll have to go prepared.

Apparently, the disciples took Jesus literally when He mentioned buying a sword. They said, “Lord, look, here are two swords.” Jesus answered, “It is enough” (verse 38). In other words, when they said they had two swords, Jesus said, “Enough of such talk!” They were missing the point of His statements about the difficulty they would face in the days ahead.

Are the races of man different “kinds”?

QUESTION: I’ve never believed in marrying outside my race, but some do. In the book of Genesis, what does “kind” and “after his kind” mean? Does it mean different races of people?

BM (sent by e-mail)

REPLY: The “kinds” of the book of Genesis are the different kinds of animals. The animals that are capable of breeding with each other and producing offspring are of the same kind. For example, wolves and dogs can breed and produce offspring, so wolves and dogs belong to the same “kind.” There can be many different variations within a particular “kind.” We see this, for example, in dogs, chickens, and horses.

All humans are of the same kind. There are variations within humankind, but all humans, irrespective of racial distinctions, descended from Adam and Eve. So, no, the different “kinds” in Genesis are not different races. Blacks, whites, and all others are of the same kind. There is no biblical injunction against interracial marriage.

Is there a conspiracy to hide God’s name?

QUESTION: Recently, I discovered online a version of Matthew in its original Hebrew (prior to the Greek translation), and the Messiah’s name in Hebrew transliterates to “Yeshua” in accordance with the presumed Aramaic version of his name.

I have one major disappointment with the Old Testament (OT) of the KJV, which is the totally covered-up name for the heavenly Father. The Tetragrammaton of Hebrew characters Yod, Hay, Wav, Hay [YHWH] underlie every instance of the term “the LORD” in the OT. Clearly, “the LORD” is not a translation, but rather a cover-up to deceive. We can see the Father’s name in context from Isaiah, where the inspired writing ought to read, “I am YaHuWaH; that is my name...” (Isa. 42:8).

This makes sense, whereas the Bible text suggests readers believe that the heavenly Father’s name is a mere title, i.e. the LORD. It’s time this deception be seen for what it is, with a correction for all congregations of the churches of Alahym (aka “God”). In the kingdom of Alahym on earth, are the saints from this current era going to refer to OT scriptures with that reading of “the LORD”? I believe the Messiah and the heavenly Father will take a dim view of that phony carry-over of deception. I will certainly be conservative in such a setting, and use the heavenly Father’s Hebrew name for “salvation,” i.e. Yahuah.

For optimized transliteration, the rule is to reduce or eliminate alphabet letters, provided the sound is not altered. In so doing, we may see the Father’s name written as Yahuah. The Jews did a pretty good job of hiding the Father’s name for so long.... RC, Ventura County, CA

REPLY: A good many people today are being misled by the false claim that there is a version of Matthew “in its original Hebrew.” No such “original” exists. What you’re referring to is a very late translation of a text far removed from the original. A patristic source refers to a Hebrew original for Matthew, but since it is widely known that classic Hebrew was known and used only by Jewish scholars, the fathers who referred to the “Hebrew” spoken and written by first-century Jews were almost certainly referring to Aramaic. They *called* it “Hebrew,” but it was not Hebrew. It is possible that Matthew wrote in Aramaic, but if he did, his writings were *immediately* translated into Greek, since Greek was the most widely spoken language of the time. Matthew certainly intended that his book reach the widest possible audience, so it makes no sense that he would have written it in classic Hebrew, a language that was not well known. In all probability, he wrote in Greek, which was the nearest thing they had to a universal language at that time.

There has been no attempt to cover up the Father’s name. The Jews used substitute titles because they misinterpreted the Third Commandment. They used substitute titles (*Adonai* in Hebrew, *Κυριος* in Greek) in order to avoid profaning God’s name. The word *Κυριος*, which corresponds to the English word “Lord,” is used in the place of YHWH throughout the Septuagint (LXX). No doubt, the earliest Greek-speaking Christians used *Κυριος* (“Lord”) when they read from the LXX. The practice continued into the Latin Vulgate, where YHWH was translated “Lord.” The English translators did not conspire to hide the name. On the contrary, they called attention to it by putting the substitute “Lord” in all caps.

I use the name Yahweh in sermons all the time. I don’t do it because I think it pleases the heavenly Father; I do it simply to identify the God of the Hebrews and distinguish between Him and the false gods of the heathen. You will also find the name Yahweh countless times in scholarly material. There is no conspiracy to hide the name, and there’s never been one.

I believe your belief that we are required to use the Hebrew name is based on a misunderstanding regarding the Hebrew concept of “name.” A person’s name is his or her reputation, not merely a distinct sound. The name “Yahweh” doesn’t mean much to English-speaking peoples. It spoke volumes to Hebrew-speaking people, however. Many believe it refers to the Creator’s eternal nature (that’s why Moffat translates YHWH as “the Eternal”), but it most likely refers to His everlasting *faithfulness*. The same is true for *HA YAH* (“I AM”). In Exodus 3, God tells Moses that He will keep the promise He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When Moses asks for His name, He says “I AM WHO I AM,” and then tells Moses to tell Israel, “I AM [*HA YAH*] has sent me to you.” In other words, “I AM [the God who faithfully keeps His promises.]” Israel would (ideally) call Him by a name that meant “HE IS [the God who faithfully keeps His promises.]” *Ha Yah* = I AM; *Yahweh* = HE IS. He is the faithful One—that is His name! Again, one’s “name” in Hebrew thought is one’s *reputation*. “I Am the Faithful One” is *God’s name!*

Now, let’s notice, from Scripture, what it means to “call on the name of Yahweh.”

In Exodus 6:3, God says to Moses, “And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the *name* of God Almighty [*El Shaddai*], but by my *name* Yahweh was I not known to them.” Notice carefully that the fathers *did not know the name Yahweh*. They called Him *El Shaddai*. He appeared to them under that name, not the name Yahweh.

But notice the following scriptures:

- Genesis 12:8: “[Abram] built an altar unto Yahweh, and *called upon the name of Yahweh.*”
- Genesis 13:4: “and there Abram *called on the name of Yahweh.*”
- Genesis 21:33: “And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and *called there on the name of Yahweh*, the everlasting God.”
- Genesis 26:25: “[Isaac] built an altar there, and *called upon the name of Yahweh*, and pitched his tent there.”

In these passages, we’re told very plainly that the fathers “called upon the name of Yahweh.” If they did not know God by the name Yahweh, as Exodus 6:3 plainly says, how could they have called upon the name of Yahweh? The answer is simple: one can call upon the name of Yahweh without pronouncing, *or even knowing*, the name itself. Whether one uses the name *El Shaddai* or *Yahweh* makes no difference, for when Abraham called upon the name of *El Shaddai*, he was in fact calling upon the name of *Yahweh*. The “name of Yahweh” is not about a particular way of pronouncing a name. *Yahweh IS El Shaddai!* So when the fathers offered sacrifices to *El Shaddai*, they were offering sacrifices to *Yahweh*. When they called upon the name of *El Shaddai*, they were calling upon the name of *Yahweh*. And when we follow the example and direct teaching of Jesus and address God as our *Father* in heaven, we are *calling upon the name of Yahweh*.

The Significance of Being a New Believer

by George Ramocan



George Ramocan

A key component of CGI Canada's national evangelism program is to prepare members "to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have... with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15, KJV).

From time to time, friends and relatives raise reasonable questions or objections to our beliefs that are worthy of a thoughtful response. Here is one such question raised recently and the answer we provided:

Question: "We who keep the law do not keep it perfectly. How then does this make us different from those who do not keep the law, since we all break the law?"

Answer: Indeed, neither Christians nor non-Christians keep the law perfectly. James 2:10-11 says: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law"

Since we all break the law, how does this make those who keep the law different from those who do not keep the law?

What Do the Scriptures Say?

The answer is found in the terms of the New Covenant into which God calls believers. Firstly, the New Covenant requires God's people to keep His law. Hebrews 8:10 says: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Hebrews 8:10).

The primary reason God gives us His Holy Spirit is to move us to love and obey His law (Ezekiel 26:36). Secondly, under the New Covenant, God grants believers the gift of repentance and forgiveness of sin. Notice what the New Covenant says in Jeremiah 31:34: "...for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin [lawbreaking] no more.

This provision of the New Covenant belongs exclusively to those God calls. It was inaugurated by Jesus in Matthew 26:27-28: "Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, '...Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'" (Matthew 26:27) And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. (Mark 4:11-12)28). God provides believers with the gift of repentance so when they sin they can repent.

Thirdly, God's covenant ascribes the righteousness of Christ to believers so that even though they sin, they appear righteous before God through the blood of the New Covenant. First John 2:1-2 says, "...And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins."

God's covenant covers the believer's unintentional sins through the intercessory work of Christ, so that even though the believer sins, he is counted as righteous. This does not mean "once saved, always saved." There is no forgiveness of sin for the believer who deliberately sins as a way of life. If you sin willfully, God's covenant allows you to repent and be forgiven of sin. However, if the believer sins willfully *as a way of life*, there is no more forgiveness of sin (Hebrews 6:4; 10:26).

Fourthly, contrary to what many believe, God does not call believers to keep His law perfectly. Believers are called to keep God's law blamelessly. Ephesians 1:4-5 says, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:4).

Walking blamelessly means the believer does not break God's law *deliberately*. Believers are counted as righteous so long as they walk blamelessly. Romans 8:1-4 summarizes the status of believers before God under the New Covenant: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous

The Person Who Is Ignorant of God's Truth Is Not Held to the Same Degree of Accountability As the Person Who Knows the Truth

requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

Repentance is a gift of God to those He calls. Repentance is not available to the uncalled. A man or a woman whom God has not yet called cannot repent of sin. It is God who draws people to repentance. Jesus said in John 6:44, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him..."

The unconverted are not held to the same degree of accountability for sin as the converted. This is because they are not in covenant agreement with God. God's plan is to call them eventually. Jesus explains in John 15:22 how one becomes more accountable for sin. Speaking of the people He calls, Jesus says: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin" (John 15:22).

This is illustrated in Deuteronomy 14:21, where God holds His covenant people accountable for His law while He allows the unbeliever to break that same law without being accountable. "Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God" (Deuteronomy 14:21).

Another illustration is found in Mark 4:11-12, where Christ concealed the Gospel so that those who were not being called could not understand. "And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them" (Mark 4:11-12).

The time is coming when unbelievers will be called by God and brought into the New Covenant. Sadly, when they are called, they will rebuke many of us for not living up to the covenant.

Conclusion

The provision of the New Covenant keeps believers in a state of righteousness before God even when they break the law. When believers sin willfully, the New Covenant gives them the gift of repentance and forgiveness to address willful sins. When believers sin unwittingly, their sins are not counted against them because of the intercessory work of Jesus Christ. If believers keep on sinning deliberately as a way of life, they lose their privilege of repentance and forgiveness (Hebrews 6:4; 10:26).

In the Meantime

Unbelievers on the other hand, are not yet called (John 6:44; John 10:26; John 8:47; 2 Corinthians 4:4). They cannot love the law of God, nor can they repent of sin, because as yet, they do not know what sin is (Romans 7:8). Repentance and forgiveness of sin is a gift of God exclusively to those He calls. Herein lies the difference between the believer and the unbeliever who breaks God's law. The believer is provided for under a covenant relationship into which he is called, while the unbeliever is not. **Ω**

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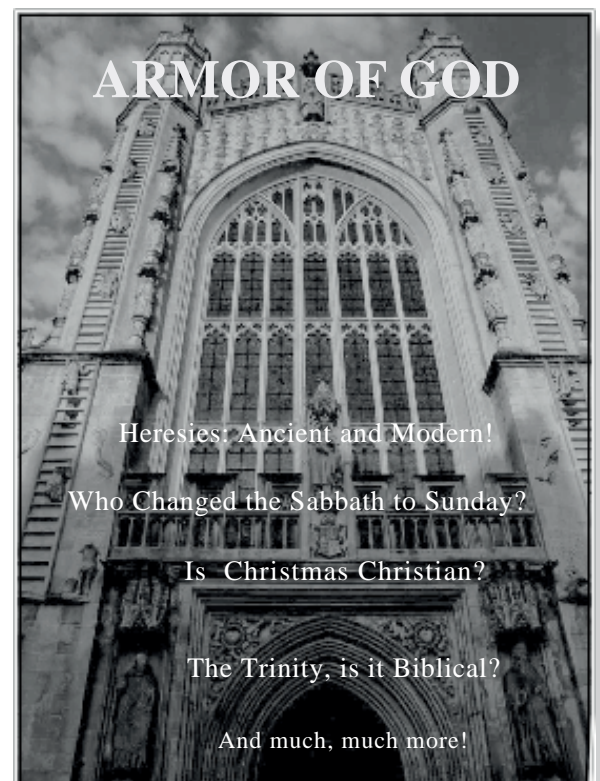
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Confirming the Kingdom of God

So many Christians are taught and fully believe heaven is the place where the Kingdom of God will be. Today, the vast majority of Christian denominations firmly support the location of God's Kingdom as being in heaven. Can this be true? Is that what the Bible states and what Jesus Christ described and explained?

by Bill Watson



Bill Watson

Jesus Christ came preaching the *Kingdom of God* (Mark 1:14–15). This was a major subject of His ministry—to announce the coming of the Kingdom of God and forewarn mankind this Kingdom would flourish and become so dominant that it would—*are you ready?*—fill the earth as the waters cover the sea. *WHAT?*—some may say—*How can this be? I thought heaven was where the Kingdom of God would be. What do you mean, “fill the earth?”*

It is rather remarkable, in light of so many obvious scriptures clearly explaining the

Kingdom of God will be *on earth*, how such a large number of Christian denominations ignore this fact and continue to teach *heaven* is the reward of the Christian saved, consequently misunderstanding the location of the Kingdom of God. It really is incredible! It is a testament to just *how powerful* centuries of teaching *false information* and embedding them in traditions ingratiating family and friends, can be.

How Does This Happen?

The Christian church has been under enormous pressure from the surrounding cultures throughout its history. Its legacy illustrates a long list of encroachments that have *eroded* the original apostolic teachings that were instrumental to the foundation of the early Christian movement. The sad part is, these *doctrinal intrusions* have been relentless from the inception of the church. From the time Christ ascended to His Father, the church suffered persecution, then confusion, and finally conversion to something it never was intended to be. Actually, it was *hijacked* and made to represent something *totally different* from what Christ had in mind.

Notice what Dr. Henry H. Halley had to say in his *Bible Handbook*. “The Church was founded, not as an institution of Authority to Force the Name and Teaching of Christ upon the world, but only as a Witness-Bearing institution to Christ, to hold Him before the people. Christ Himself, not the Church, is the Transforming Power in Human Life. But the Church was founded in the Roman Empire, and gradually developed a form of Government like the Political World in which it existed, becoming a vast Autocratic organization, ruled from the top” (page 767, “Church History”).

Dr. Halley continues: “Emperor Theodosius (A.D. 378–398), made Christianity the State Religion of the Roman Empire, and made Church Membership Compulsory. ...The Church had Changed its Nature, had entered its Great Apostasy, had become a Political Organization in the Spirit and Pattern of Imperial Rome, and took its Nose-Dive into the millennium of Papal Abominations.

The Imperial Church of the 4th and 5th centuries had become an entirely different institution from the persecuted church of the first three centuries. In its ambition to Rule it lost and forgot the spirit of Christ” (page 760, *Church History*).

We find this corroborated in Revelation, chapters two and three. Notice what we read throughout this area of Scripture that substantiates what Dr. Halley observed in his research about church history and what we know from additional sources we can investigate. The apostle John is very plain about the concerns Jesus Christ had about His church, late in the first century. Notice some excerpts from these two chapters.

“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil... and for my name’s sake have laboured, and have not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love... repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Revelation 2:2–5).

“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty... Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:9–11).

“I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is... and hast not denied my faith... But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam... So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth” (Revelation 2:13–16).

“I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works... Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess... I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not... I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works” (Revelation 2:19–23).

“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found your works perfect before God... hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief... Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments... He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment...” (Revelation 3:2–5).

“I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it... Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation... Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Revelation 3:8–12).

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because you are lukewarm... I will spue thee out of my mouth. 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... anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see” (Revelation 3:15–18).

As you can see by just some of the excerpts mentioned, Jesus was *not* completely satisfied with the church’s condition, level of involvement, commitment, and dedication. There was far too much tolerance, compromise, and complacency, mixed with a degree of piety and self-righteousness, present in the congregations. He was very clear that unless they repented and stirred up their performance and got rid of the influences that caused them to become compromised, they would have their light put out. This simply meant they *wouldn’t be allowed* into the Kingdom of God.

The point is well made: This is how misconceptions and untruths creep into the church—and it does and, indeed, did happen!

Seek You the Kingdom First

In Matthew 6:33 we are told to seek the Kingdom of God and all things will be added unto us. This is a formative principle, because it is a *vision statement*. Matthew is explaining that if we live our lives focused on the goal of the Kingdom of God, He will assuredly take care of our needs. There would be no reason to be preoccupied or obsessed by the things of the flesh, or our appetites.

Fixing our sights on the Kingdom of God will provide us with an outlook that views this physical reality with a different paradigm—a spiritual view and inclination (Romans 8:4–14; 2 Corinthians 4:17–18). Because of our renewed purpose in life, we will be steered differently—arranged to work within the guidelines of our calling, revealed to be *servant leaders*. The values, standards, laws, and principles we live by will naturally generate a different personality, defined by those rules we live by, which should be *God’s* rules.

Taking on this course of lifestyle and remaining “Christ-centered” will help us to be clear about our future and how to secure that future based on the right spirit (attitude) and truth (undistorted). We must remember that truth is an important ingredient when attempting to make the right decisions about our relationship with God. We must also keep in mind it’s not about us, but rather us pleasing God; and we do that by living within the boundaries He defines. *His* will, not ours! If we want to assure ourselves of the right *substance* we must use the correct *forms* of doctrines so the product of our personality, character, and lifestyle meets with the approval of our Lord and Savior. Yes, we are *saved by grace*, through faith; it’s not of ourselves, but rather a *gift of God* (Ephesians 2:8). But, “...we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, which God hath before *ordained* [prepared] that we should *walk* [to be occupied with, live] in them” (Ephesians 2:10). This is a clear and very direct statement that expectations are upon every Christian to perform within a definition of “good works,” but defined by God. Why is this so important? Because we are *rewarded* by works—saved by grace, yes—but *rewarded by works* (Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:6; 1 Corinthians 3:8,14; Colossians 3:24–25; Revelation 22:12).

Kingdom, Continued on next page

Kingdom, Continued from previous page

Let's Confirm This Kingdom Reward

Qualifying for entrance into the Kingdom of God is what we must be honed in on. That is the target—to be granted entrance into the Kingdom of God. But what does that mean? What is the entrance into the Kingdom of God defined as? In simple terms, it's being rewarded with immortality—to be an immortal being, born of actual spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17–18; Philippians 3:20–21; 1 John 3:1–3).

This provides the *means* by which we now can enjoy the benefits of the Kingdom of God that commences here on earth at the return of Jesus Christ (Zechariah 14:9; 1 Corinthians 15:22–23; Revelation 19:11–16). Clearly we are told, flesh and blood *cannot* inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50–58).

It's important we take note of this fact: Heaven is not mentioned throughout any of these scriptures, or implied as having anything to do with being a reward. As a matter of fact, what the Bible discloses is, we are to meet the Lord in the air and remain with Him; and He is *going to Jerusalem*, landing on the Mount of Olives to establish His global Kingdom on earth for the next 1,000 years (Revelation 20:4). However, keep in mind, this is *just the beginning*. The Kingdom of God extends *beyond* the millennial rule of Christ—it extends on into the New Heaven and New Earth (Revelation 21).

It will start with the millennium—a thousand-year rule of rebuilding the waste areas (Ezekiel 36:35–38; Amos 9:13–15)—establishing the rule of God's law, but on *earth*. We are assured there will be no end to this Kingdom (Isaiah 9:6–7). Notice what the prophet Isaiah says: "And they [the trees of righteousness, the resurrected immortals] shall build the old wastes, they [the immortals] shall raise up the former desolations, and they [the born Sons of God] shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations... But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles... I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God... For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations" (Isaiah 61:4–11).

This is going to be a time of real change. A time when the deserts will bloom and war will not be learned any more. Swords will be turned into plowshares, and peace will finally be on earth. There will be no more hurt in the Kingdom of God—earth will become a millennial paradise for all humanity (Isaiah 2:1–5; Micah 4:1–5).

Isaiah confirms that Christ will rule this utopian society, and even the Gentiles will seek His rest and peace; but it will be on earth, not in heaven! Notice: "They [physical humans] shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [nation, world]; for the *earth* shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse [Jesus Christ], which shall stand for an ensign [flagstaff, token, banner] of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek [salvation]; and his rest shall be glorious" (Isaiah 11:9–10).

What a powerful time this will be. The planet will light up with the glory of the Savior, the King of kings, and Lord of lords right here on *earth*—ushering in peace for all mankind, finally!

Take note: All of these scriptures confirm the Kingdom of God will be located on *earth*, inhabited with a mixture of resurrected immortal spirit beings and physical, flesh-and-blood human beings who survived the tribulation. They will be the first generation to help rebuild the social structure based on the rule of God's law. That will be the foundation of knowledge on the planet, and it will be the job of those resurrected Christians, now immortal beings, born of spirit, to serve humanity with the teaching and understanding that will bring them into a relationship with Jesus Christ and God our Father, resulting in their ultimate birth into this family of God. So get ready, and may God speed that day!! Ω

A Mini-Study

Without doubt, the Bible is largely, by extension, the story of one man's family. God's unconditional promises to Abraham, the father of the faithful, were magnified and passed down to his sons, Isaac and Jacob, and later confirmed by Jesus Christ.

These promises, made to Abraham and his progeny, were twofold: they were told they would become a great nation and through their lineage all the families of the earth would be blessed. These promises of material blessings, prosperity, and national greatness—as well as spiritual salvation—were developed and expanded unconditionally to Abraham's descendants. Jacob, later named Israel, and his twelve sons (tribes) were prophesied to grow into a great nation and a company of nations *in these latter days*. Obviously, God fulfilled the prophetic blessing for all peoples on earth with the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the Savior of mankind (Galatians 3:16). But where is the prophetic fulfillment promised for the tribe of Joseph (Genesis 48:19–20)? Who among all the nations of the earth matches and thereby fulfills the profile of these promises *today*?

Also, God later promised David that his throne would always exist, and that Christ would occupy that throne when He returns. Since God's promises cannot be broken, this throne must exist perpetually upon the earth. The only extant throne that historically and prophetically matches God's promise among all the modern nations is Great Britain. The twelve families of ancient Israel are today scattered in northwestern Europe, the state of Israel in Palestine, and the North American nations of America, Canada, and the rest of the British Commonwealth.

Joseph (consisting of Ephraim and Manasseh) and Judah have historically been the dominant nations in these last days. Though knowledge of Israel's identity is *not* essential to salvation, it nonetheless provides a much clearer understanding, or a key to biblical prophecy. The fact that these nations have historically adopted the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob imposes greater responsibility to God upon these cultures and confirms the validity of the Word of God. For a quick mini-Bible study, refer to the references below.

References: Genesis 12:2–3; 13:14–16; 17:2–8; 24:60; 25:29–34; 26:2–5, 24; Romans 4:13; Genesis 27:27–29; 35:9–13, 23–26; 48:1–22; 49:1–33; Deuteronomy 33:1–29; 2 Kings 17:18–24; 2 Samuel 7:8–16; Psalm 89:19–37; Jeremiah 33:14–26; 1 Chronicles 5:2; Deuteronomy 7:6–11; Luke 12:48; Romans 11:1–29.

For both a balanced and biblical insight, be sure to request our free eight-CD series entitled *Biblical Origins of the British Commonwealth and USA* by Bill Watson. This series comes with an illustrated manual and is yours for the asking. Check the biblical and historical references from the privacy of your own home.

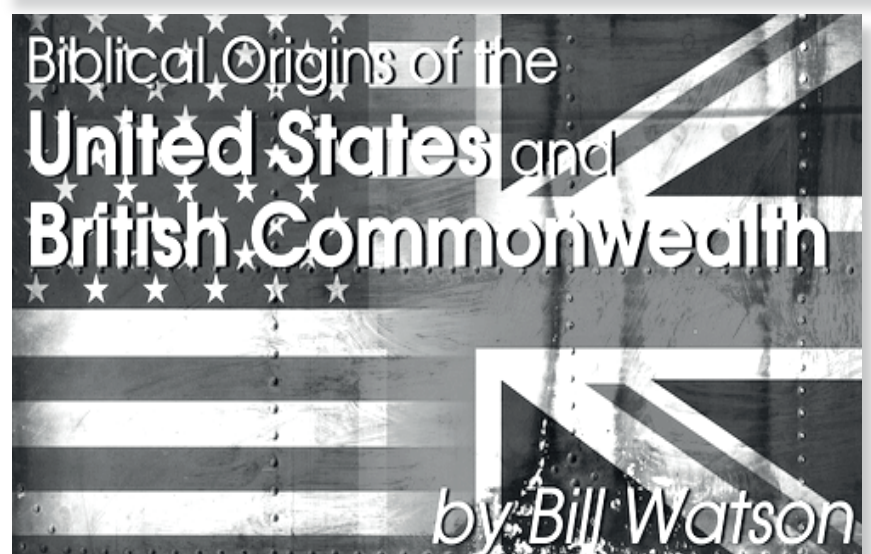
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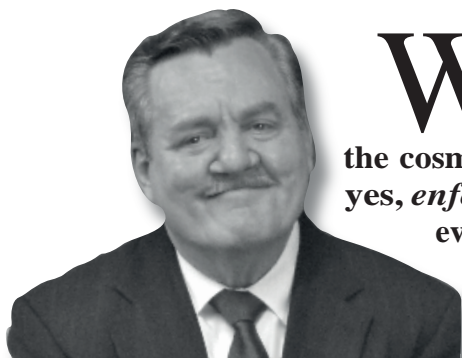
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Doctrine is Essential!

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by Lloyd W. Cary



Lloyd W. Cary

We live in an age of increasing ecumenism. Before Christ returns, the evil powers of the cosmos are going to promote, and yes, enforce a one-world religion on everyone living on this planet.

How are you going to protect your mind against this Satanic onslaught? The only sure way is to be grounded in God's Word so you are able to recognize the counter-

feit teachings and miracles that will *stun* the world. We must be rock solid, not only by leaning on our Rock, but by obeying Him in studying our Bibles so we will be grounded as children of God. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

Most typical Protestant churches believe in variants of different speculations about a rapture; the immorality of the soul, heaven, hell, trinity, X-mas, Easter, antinomianism (no-law), New Testament theology, and so forth. A few more beliefs or doctrines we see dividing people today—and even some in the very Churches of God!—church eras, the place of safety, the gospel, the timing of the supposed rapture; young-earth vs. old-earth creationism; tithing, speaking in tongues; charismatic vs. non-charismatic; premillennialism vs. amillennialism; eternal security; women preachers; Sabbath vs. Sunday; eating in restaurants on the Sabbath vs. not doing so; the world's holidays vs. the biblical holydays; whether or not Mary had other children; who, what, is the devil; the Azazel controversy; aliens; is Jesus merely a created being; is Jesus God; is Jesus the archangel Michael; is God a trinity vs. a divine family; and many more. Why aren't we all speaking the same thing (1 Corinthians 1:10)? Jude warned of certain men creeping in undetected, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness [looseness, liberality, lawlessness] and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 4). The remedy? "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (verse 3).

These are *all* doctrines held by various *professing* Christian groups, many of which are non-salvific issues! Again, we ask, WHY, in view of 1 Corinthians 1:10, all the *differences*? Most doctrinal variants stem from the fact that the proponents of these different ideas believe in dual or alternative authorities with no absolute authority above their opinions and preferences. While many profess God's Word as their final and absolute authority, they violate the rules of Bible study. (Request our free booklet, *How to Study Your Bible*.)

Christ's followers are commanded to *prove* all things BY—*what*? Popular opinion?—No! By the living Word of God! "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). This should be the "marching orders" for all ministers, all churches, all teaching, all preaching, all doctrines, all sermons, all writings, all opinions, and all practices, are to be measured by God's written Word, not the traditions, opinions, or commandments of men. Christ warned in no uncertain terms that cannot be honestly misunderstood, "Howbeit *in vain* do they *worship* me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of *men*, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:7–9).

When we compare the majority of today's professing Christian churches with the early New Testament church, we see how far modern Christianity has gone astray. Why do they not just do what God *SAYS*? Abraham was blessed because he *believed* WHAT GOD SAID (Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23).

Beware of the Scribes and Pharisees

Christ warned His followers to "beware of the scribes and Pharisees"—the scholars of His day (Matthew 23:13–15). We are warned in the beginning, middle, and end of the Bible about adding, subtracting, or in any way altering God's Word (Deuteronomy 4:3; 12:32; Proverbs 30:56; and Revelation 22:18–19). We cannot pick and choose, cafeteria-style, which parts of God's Word we should obey and which ones we let fall by the wayside.

We need to beware of Satan's footnotes in our study Bibles. A sure way to *cloud* true doctrine is to *bury* it between two pieces of false doctrine. Nearly all "study Bibles" are jam-packed full of men's explanatory notes of why God's Word doesn't really *mean* what it *says*. Many seem to think that just because there is a so-called "scholarly" marginal note or footnote in their study Bibles, it must be true.

God's people need to believe what God *said* and to stand fast to the old "landmarks" of God's Word. *God* set His Word as the ultimate, final authority, not a compromising "new world religion." Do not forsake the old paths (Proverbs 22:28). Let nothing tempt you to believe that the multiplication of forms and ceremonies, constant reading of liturgical services, or frequent communions, will ever substitute for the "Sword of the Lord." "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

"Show me in the Bible where it says..."

These verses may sound so familiar to our ears that we may take them for granted and do not realize their true value. Any church that does not honor or submit to the Bible is as useless as a body without life, or a steam engine without a fire. A minister who does not follow or obey God's Word is as useless as a soldier without arms, a builder without tools, a pilot without compass, or a messenger without a message.

The Bible, or Tradition of Men?

Sola scriptura is a Latin term that means that Scripture alone is authoritative for the faith and practice of the Christian. The Bible is complete, authoritative, and true. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Many protest that *sola scriptura* is not biblical; that the Bible does not explicitly teach *sola scriptura*. They argue that the Bible nowhere states that it is the only authoritative guide for faith and practice. While this may ring true at first blush, Jesus *did* say, "...It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by..."—*what*? The ideas and traditions of men?—No! "by *every word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4).

Presumably, most of our readers believe and have proven to themselves that the Bible is the Word of God. The Bible declares itself to be God-breathed [θεοπνευστος *theopneustos*], inerrant, and authoritative (2 Timothy 3:16). We also know that God does not change His mind or contradict Himself (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8). So, while the Bible itself may not explicitly state *in those exact words* that *sola scriptura* overrules tradition, it most definitely does *not* allow for traditions that contradict its message. *Sola scriptura* is not as much of an argument against tradition as it is an argument against unbiblical, extra-biblical or anti-biblical doctrines. The only way to know for sure what God expects of us is to stay true to what we *know*, to what He has revealed in His Word, the Bible. We can know, beyond the shadow of any doubt, that Scripture is true, authoritative, and reliable. The same cannot be said of tradition.

A good comeback for those who argue for extra-biblical tradition or strange doctrine is, "Show me where it says that in the Bible!" And then insist they *do* it! In essence, we are arguing for proof of SOUND BIBLICAL DOCTRINE.

My KJV says, "For *I* give you *good doctrine*, forsake ye not My law" (Proverbs 4:2). Verse 4 says, "...Let thine heart retain My words: KEEP My commandments, and live." Our God is a God of truth (Psalm 31:5; Jeremiah 10:10).

Isaiah 28:9–10 asks, "Whom shall He teach knowledge? And *whom*

Continued on next page

shall He make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts [humble, spiritual babes]. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; *line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.*”

DOCTRINE is one of the things most professing Christians hesitate to discuss. In fact, in many circles it is a “taboo” subject. Indeed, doctrine has been made out to be “the biblical bad guy” in many Christian circles today. “Don’t talk about Bible doctrine,” many parrot, “or you’ll get into an *argument*.” “It will upset and divide people! Mercy! It’s not politically correct! It’s not loving. You’ll offend someone!” Oh, really? Let’s take the dare. Let’s talk about doctrine.

It would be difficult, indeed, to get people to sit down at a table with open Bibles and discuss various teachings of the Bible. People, by nature, do not *want* to change—they want to believe what they want to believe. Doctrine just means “a teaching, instruction.” or “that which is taught.” Strangely, many people do not know, or even want to know, what their own church teaches! Theirs is often a mere “Christian” fellowship group.

Instead of being taught sound biblical doctrine, many would rather have their church, priest, pastor, or teacher provide them with music, meals, or entertaining stories. “Teach us *s-m-o-o-t-h* things,” they say (Isaiah 30:10). *Experience, entertainment, and feeling* are the buzz-words today.

“Beware of Satan’s footnotes
in your Study Bible”

They would rather be told how Jesus loves them, and that all they have to do is say the “sinner’s prayer” and be assured they are saved now and forever.

WHY Is Doctrine So Important?

It’s important because there are *true* doctrines and *false* doctrines. There are the doctrines of Christ (Hebrews 6:1) and doctrines of devils (1 Timothy 4:1).

Teachers who attempt to siphon off some of God’s people must first open the door of their minds. They often come under the guise of “new understanding,” “new truth,” conviviality, and ecumenism. Political correctness has conditioned the majority of people to defend this supposed “open-mindedness” by saying we should not “judge” others, but should have a spirit of “love” and “be more Christ-like,” etc. The basic idea is that we should seek fellowship among various groups and *compromise*—i.e., by *ignoring* differences in doctrine and practice, by putting everything we believe “on the table.” Beware! Do not become so “open-minded” that your brains fall out!

And yes, it is true; Bible doctrine *does* divide. Correct doctrine *divides* truth from error! Many were astounded at Christ’s doctrine: “And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were *astonished* at His doctrine” (Matthew 7:28). Also see Matthew 22:33; Mark 1:22; 11:18; Luke 4:32; John 7:16).

Christ said, “Think *not* that I am come to send peace on earth: I came *not* to send peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34–38). This is because following true biblical doctrine will *set you apart* from commonly believed teachings about God and the Bible. Peter added, “the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” (2 Peter 2:2). “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you” (1 John 3:13; John 15:18).

True doctrine is *indispensable* to Christianity! True Christianity cannot exist without it. It is the bedrock of true Christianity. The New Testament repeatedly emphasizes the value and importance of sound doctrine. To save time and space, turn to these scriptures in your own Bible. If need be, chain reference them in your own Bible for further reference.

1. 1 Timothy 4:6,13, 16

3. 1 Timothy 6:1, 3

5. 2 Timothy 4:2, 3

7. Titus 2:1,1

9. Hebrews 6:1–2

11. 1 Timothy 1:3, 8-10
2. 1 Timothy 5:17

4. 2 Timothy 3:10, 16

6. Titus 1:9

8. Titus 2:7, 10

10. 2 John 9–10

12. Proverbs 4:2

Actually, “doctrine” is used in the Bible 51 times, and “doctrines” is mentioned five times. That’s pretty important. One of the surest ways to become a *victim* of false doctrine is to think that it is not dangerous and you don’t need to be concerned about it. Don’t tell me what the Bible “means”; tell me what it *SAYS* and I’ll *know* what it *MEANS*! LET GOD’S WORD BE THE STANDARD! *ReSTUDY* your *Statement of Beliefs*. Prove all things!

We are repeatedly warned, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:24). We are admonished, “Let him who *thinks* he stands, *take heed* lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12).

When someone tells you that false teaching is *not* a big problem and you don’t *need* to be very concerned about it—that is, just love the brethren and don’t worry about wrong doctrine—he is teaching you *a false doctrine* when he *says* it! He is telling you that either because he *is* a false teacher, or because he is *under the influence* of false teachers! It is just a matter of time before he will try to get you to accept *other* false teachings!

Who, What is Behind the Deception of False Doctrine?

As we know, “... that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan... *deceiveth* the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). To “deceive” means to cause someone to believe something that is not true; to trick, mislead, falsify, dupe, defraud, or victimize.

Going on, “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if *his ministers* [Yes, Satan has ministers!] also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:13–15).

Ezekiel 22:25–26 reveals, “*There is a conspiracy* of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have *devoured* souls; they have *taken* the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated My law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, *neither have they shewed difference* between the unclean and the clean, and have *HID* their eyes from My Sabbaths, and *I* am profaned among them.”

What Can We Do About It?

In essence, how can we escape the danger of false teaching?

(1) **LOVE THE TRUTH.** We have seen that the people who are most likely to accept error are the people who are not sufficiently dedicated to the truth.

“For the *mystery of iniquity* doth already work: only he who now letteth [restrains and hinders] will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; *because they received not the love of the truth*, that they might be saved. And for this cause *God* shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie” (2 Thessalonians 2:7–11).

(2) **STUDY GOD’S WORD DILIGENTLY.** “Prove all things” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). If we proved a doctrine once, we can prove it over and over! The way to *recognize* error is to compare it to the truth (Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16, 17). “Thy Word *is* truth” (John 17:17).

(3) **HONESTLY EXAMINE EVERY DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE** before we accept it (2 Corinthians 13:5). Further, if we can’t teach it to others *from the Bible*, we don’t know it well enough ourselves!

(4) **LET GOD’S WORD BE THE STANDARD** for all our spiritual decisions (Galatians 1:6–9; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Matthew 15:9; 2 John 9; etc.)

God’s Word says, “For *I* give you *good doctrine*, forsake ye not My law” (Proverbs 4:2).

“If you put the brethren in remembrance of these things, you shall be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, which you have attained” (1 Timothy 4:6).

What about you and me? How much do *we* care about truth? Do we care enough to read God’s Word, to study diligently, to remove error from our lives, and serve God faithfully? If you *know* the truth, have you *obeyed* it? Are you *living* a faithful life as a Christian?

Although we can have sound doctrine without fully knowing Jesus, we cannot fully know Jesus without sound doctrine. He is more than a feeling. Beware the dangers of *drifting*! Beware of Christian *compromise*! Beware of the “Yea, hath God said?” club (Genesis 3:2) which is intended to open your mind to questioning what God *said*!

In this article we’ve boldly opened the “taboo” subject of biblical doctrine. We are *told* to do so (Titus 2:1) even though it may be uncomfortable or “politically incorrect” in some circles. Sound doctrine should be our central focus, first, last, and always, *testing* our beliefs to see if they truly do line up with what God has *said* about Himself in the Bible. Ω

Church News

Shreveport-Bossier City CGI Commemorates 30th Anniversary

On August 15, 2015, the Shreveport-Bossier City church gathered to commemorate the group's 30th anniversary as a branch of the *Church of God International*. Thirty years is a long time, and there were many wonderful memories to be shared! Along with those memories, we reflected on all of the members we have lost over the years. It's comforting to know that we will be reunited with them once again in God's Kingdom!

The local CGI began in 1985 with a "Personal Appearance Campaign" at Airline High School. Two of the original members were Robert and Barbara Marlowe. Following Robert's death, Barbara has recently returned to the area, and to our fellowship. She is the only original member still in attendance. The next "oldest" members are John Woodard and his dad, James, who both began attending in 1986.

For our 30th anniversary, we had a very inspiring sermon by Mr. Vance Stinson, who has been ministering to our group for many years. The sermon was followed by the baptism of Elbert and Leona McLaughlin's daughter-in-law, Tara, along with a fantastic potluck meal. What a wonderful Sabbath indeed!

Thirty years have seen a lot of ups and downs for the church. Through it all, we feel we have a solid foundation to continue forward as we look to God's soon-coming Kingdom! If you are ever in the area, come on in and enjoy some of our Southern hospitality, mixed with the desire to serve our Creator by serving others! For our current schedule and directions to our location, you can visit our website at: cgishreveport.org. Ω

Submitted by John Woodard & Ken Bounds



Vance Stinson presenting the sermon



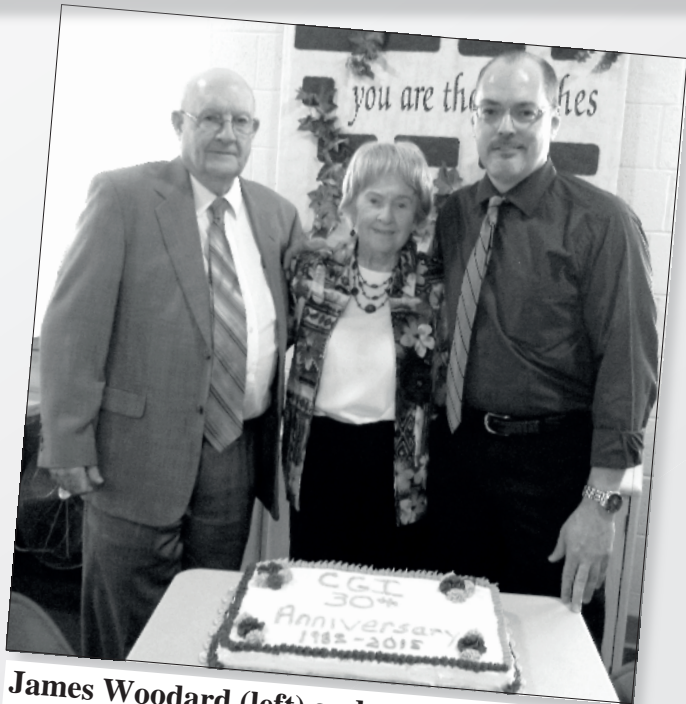
Lots of good food and great fellowship on the church's 30th anniversary



James Woodard providing special music



Tara McLaughlin in the baptismery



James Woodard (left) and son Johnny (right) with Barbara Marlowe, one of the Shreveport-Bossier City congregation's founding members

Six Baptisms in Toronto

On Sunday, August 16, 2015 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, the angels of heaven rejoiced as the family of God welcomed six new members into the growing body of Jesus Christ. The grand event was witnessed by fellow brothers and sisters of Christ in CGI, Toronto.

The journey began for each of the candidates at the moment of repentance, then gaining further understanding of the need for a proper baptism of immersion in water and culminating in the putting to rest of a life led by the sins of the flesh by being fully immersed in the water and brought back up as a new life in Jesus Christ.

By renouncing their former life without Christ, and now living for Christ through being fully immersed in a body of water, and being reborn as new creatures in the body of Christ, the six new saints have made the most sensitive decision any person can make.

The six new saints are wife and husband, Carla B. Jaghroo-James, and Alphonso F. James; David Jagmohan; Leesa Janelle; Shanieka S. Scarlett; and Simran Randhawa, who were baptized by MAP candidates Deacon George Tenakis and Deacon Ken Allen.

The laying on of hands was performed by Pastors Horane Smith and George Ramocan, respectively.

The elation of the candidates was evidenced by their countenance and tears of joy. Family and friends all shared in their triumphant decision.

In today’s trying times, we could all use some help. However, sometimes the help we want is not the help we necessarily need. Then there are other times we seek complicated answers to simple problems.

We often tend to rationalize within ourselves that if we can get a fancy answer from a worldly authority in whatever their respective positions may be, we immediately place unwavering faith on account of it.

Then when it fails, we seek it out from another, whom we perceive to be better than the last; all the while overlooking the easiest and most obvious answer to lift the weight of the burden off of our shoulders.

Well, there is a “helper” that exists that comes from the greatest authority figure ever in existence. This “helper” that I speak of comes in the form of the Holy Spirit, and from the living God. This Holy Spirit is a tool that God has equipped us who are baptized with, and is also looking forward to sharing this precious and invaluable gift with others yet to be baptized.

If a doctor had not a scalpel, but a plastic butter knife instead, I think surgery would have to be postponed that day.

As a workman of the hospital can’t function properly without his necessary tools to perform at an optimum level, similarly a workman of God cannot function as effectively without the Holy Spirit actively involved and operating within himself. Our greatest role model, Jesus Christ, was Himself baptized.

We are used to a world where, if something is free, then it must have little to no value, or it is too good to be true and comes with a “catch,” as we say. Well, we should consider that the living God does not come from our world. We must ask ourselves if the Holy Spirit were for sale, who could buy it? Not all the treasures of earth would even put a dent in the cost of purchase. I assure you it would be a number no man has ever heard of before.

The Holy Spirit is given freely because God is not for sale. The Holy Spirit is also a catalyst for spiritual empowerment over the trials of life. This is a gift we should highly consider accepting. This is a gift and a promise from the mouth of the Christ Himself. If a good friend gave us a gift, oh how proud we would be that our friend considered us enough to give us a gift. Well, how much more so would we be proud if the Prime Minister, President, or King of our country came over to our house and brought us a gift.

Well, I suppose we would feel like bursting at the seams with joy. We would parade that gift around, we would honor and cherish it. We would clean it constantly at the first sign of dust. We would tell all of our family and friends, and would show it to strangers. Even our pets would know about it.

On the opposite side, however, how would we feel if we gave a friend something that was precious to us and they mistreated it? If we gave them something that was a part of us, and they showed a lack of appreciation towards it? Well, I gather we would be extremely hurt by this act of negligence that was shown to us by our friend. We might even reconsider the friendship. So it is with the Holy Spirit.

We should be humbled by this gift given to us in the form of the Holy Spirit, which affords us the opportunity to overcome by its power and brings us a little closer to the Father through Christ. May all those baptized in Jesus Christ cultivate this Spirit to reach the full measure of spiritual maturity. Baptism in Christ is not the end of the journey, but rather it is the beginning of a new life.

Just as a we had to learn to walk and speak when we were babies, we must now learn how to walk with spiritual legs so our feet are not quick to run to evil. We must learn to speak again, as our old speech is not acceptable to a holy God. We must use our spiritual voice instead, which considers before speaking.

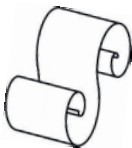
Our old thoughts must be unlearned, and more spiritually profitable thoughts should be considered instead. We should seek to do good works with our hands. What does it profit a person to commit reckless acts with their hands, then with those same hands dipped in the sins of their idleness use it to feed themselves? It is akin to putting iniquity in our mouth.

These aforementioned attributes are just some of the fruits of the Spirit. This is a sign that your tree is now bearing good fruit that is pleasing to God. This is a sign that you are aligned in harmony with God. When you want to do acts of your own volition towards others without compensation or compromise, this is just one example of evidence of the Holy Spirit in mankind.

When we were children, our parents never had to teach us how to be bad, as it was instinctive; but they always had to teach us how to be good. Let us then follow the instructions for eternal life as new children and saints by the ultimate parent, the living God in Whom there is no error.

This is what baptism should mean to everyone from all walks of life. It is not a light matter, and should not be treated as such. By getting baptized correctly, we have successfully removed an invisible barrier that was ever present between us and God, as it is the first sign of trust between God and us, being born as a new creature in Jesus Christ. Ω

Submitted by David Jagmohan



Kitchener Annual Camp



In a shady campsite surrounded by forests, parks, and the scenic north shore of Lake Erie, brethren from several congregations came together. Even though almost everyone got lost trying to get there, it was worth it in the end, because we all had a relaxing weekend enjoying God’s creation. The Sabbath featured an outdoor service including guitar-accompanied hymn singing and a sermon encouraging us to prove God to ourselves. This will give us the inner strength and faith to be a light to others.

The weekend involved chats around the campfire (and snacks cooked over the fire), games, a group walk in the moonlight, a tasty potluck meal, swimming, and more! Everyone was involved and everyone contributed.

We got close to nature, close to the ground (unless you had an air mattress), close to each other, and close to God. Ω

Submitted by Rachel Davis

CGI Jamaica Surges Ahead; Reports Strong Spring Holydays



Ian Boyne

The Kingston, Jamaica, congregation of the *Church of God International* (CGI) had an attendance of 284 at its Pentecost services, following a similarly strong attendance of 280 at Days of Unleavened Bread services. Brethren started the Passover season on a high, with the baptism of 13 persons into the faith.

CGI Kingston has one of the largest congregations in the Church of God movement globally. The CGI has five congregations in Jamaica—Maroon Town, May Pen, Spanish Town, and Ocho Rios, in addition to Kingston. Approximately 120 brethren met for Pentecost services outside of Kingston. (The church just held a public campaign on

the years, we have brought people who have sought to defend the trinity, sacred names, anti-Sabbatarianism, anti-Feast-keeping, etc.

We just recently had the country's leading apologist, Dr. Clinton Chisholm, who has Masters degrees in Greek, apologetics, and biblical studies from the famed Sheffield University in Britain, where he studied under the renowned liberal scholar David Clines. Chisholm gave reasons why Sabbath-keeping was "nonsense" and "Modern Galatianism." I rebutted and we had a lively interactive session. We also recently had a well-known Seventh-day Adventist Bible teacher come to present arguments against Feast-keeping.

Upcoming sessions will feature theologians debating us on postmortem salvation ("This is not the only day of salvation"), universalism, and what is the Gospel. Since January, I have been leading the church in a series of doctrinal presentations, emphasizing our distinctive doctrines and why we have the faith once delivered to the saints. I have critically examined the doctrines of justification by faith, Calvinism, Molinism, replacement theology, and heaven-going, drawing on the latest scholarship, including the work of NT Wright.

I strongly encourage members to pay keen attention to doctrine and to read accredited scholars in philosophy and theology. We have an Institute of Religion consisting of some very bright young people who are carrying out critical studies on our fundamental doctrines and who conduct debates on them. I myself continue to read widely in theology and philosophy and to keep abreast of what our critics are saying on the anti-Church of God (anti-"Armstrongite") blogs. As a pastor, I listen keenly to prolific critics of our movement like Byker Bob and Gavin Rumney, both of whom I find particularly perceptive and insightful.

Doctrinal literacy is very important, especially at a time when so much negative information is so easily available on our movement online. If one is not grounded in the truth and in scholarship, he will be easily blown away with all the documented information on corruption and immorality.

The growth of the church in Jamaica demonstrates that our movement, far from dead, can continue to grow under the right conditions. We will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Feast in Jamaica at Casa De Shalom in Ocho Rios. Contact me at iboyne@jis.gov.jm or 876-579-6066. Ω

Submitted by Ian Boyne

the subject "Should You Keep the Sabbath?" attracting 62 visitors.)

On Pentecost in Kingston, I delivered a sermon on the book of Obadiah, focusing on the importance of relationships in God's church and the necessity of our not nurturing a spirit of bitterness and resentment. In the afternoon I gave a doctrinal presentation on tongues-speaking, a follow-up with a particular focus on 1 Corinthians 14, which our movement has generally neglected to exegete. There was a question-and-answer session where brethren were encouraged to challenge the presentation.

There have been a number of exciting developments in CGI Kingston. We added a new congregation late last year (May Pen, Clarendon) when a small, independent Church of God 7th Day congregation came over to the CGI after coming to acknowledge the importance of the holydays as well as the distinctive doctrines taught by the CGI. In addition, a much larger group of three Church of God 7th Day congregations which had for years been studying the holydays finally flung open their doors on the First Day of Unleavened Bread for holyday services, after a presentation I gave to their leaders pointing out the necessity of holyday observance. This story is an exciting one.

Previously, three sets of leaders of ex-Worldwide Church of God groups had made presentations to this group on the holydays, but the leadership was not convinced. Finally, an approach was made to me to make a presentation. The group even offered to pay me, but I declined, asking only for their sincerity and objectivity in weighing the evidence. So in early February they assembled all their leaders from the three congregations to hear my presentation. We spent nearly five hours together in both lecture and question-and-answer sessions.

In the end, the Bishop was convinced the Feast days should be kept. We followed up with discussions, and the Bishop circulated my tapes to a number of members. Bishop Chambers was very gracious to me. He said my presentation was the most effective and impactful he had heard on the holydays. Imagine my delight in knowing that after a number of years of studying the Feast days, this year, as a result of our presentation, this group had began to worship God on His holydays!

The Bishop has subsequently told me that he is making preparation for the group to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in the tourist parish of Portland, adding yet another Feast site in Jamaica, where the Church of God will celebrate its 40th Feast of Tabernacles. (I was there at that first WCG Feast in Jamaica in 1975.) Bishop Chambers told me: "Pastor Boyne, we are so excited and delighted to be observing God's Feasts. The scales have fallen from our eyes and we rejoice that we can now move on into greater truth."

In my presentation to this Church of God 7th Day group, I systematically examined all the common arguments against the holydays and quoted from critical material put out by the Church of God 7th Day, as well as the Seventh-day Adventist church, which has now published a full-length book critique of Feast-keeping, *Feast-Keeping and the Faithful*, by one of its top scholars, Dr. Ron du Preez. I used that material and showed why their arguments don't work.

I do some unusual things which would probably make Herbert Armstrong roll in his grave—if the immortal soul doctrine were true! In a movement which has been known for suppressing contrary ideas and outrightly persecuting people espousing them, I have deliberately sought out critics of our doctrines to present those ideas to our church members.

We have an interactive Monday night Bible Study which has been going on since 1994, to which we invite leading Evangelical, mainstream, and non-Christian religious scholars and practitioners to do critical reviews of Church of God doctrines. We ask them to come in and make an initial 40-minute presentation showing why a particular distinctive doctrine is wrong, and then we have lively interaction. I as pastor sometimes present a 20-minute rebuttal and then ask members to pose their own questions. Over

About us...

In Kingston, the church meets every Monday night for a Bible Study, with the first Monday of each month devoted to a prayer and testimony meeting. At these Bible Studies, outside guests from a variety of religious perspectives are sometimes invited to make presentations, answer questions, and sometimes debate with the church's representatives. This has proven to be an important mechanism for intellectual and theological growth of the members and for practical training in evangelism and apologetics.

The church takes out advertisements in the most widely circulating newspapers and holds campaigns on controversial topics to generate interest in the truth.

The church is pastored by Mr. Ian Boyne, a 38-year veteran in the Church of God. He is assisted by an ordained elder, Glenford Smith; eleven deacons: Messrs P. O'Connor, D. Grant, C. Clarke, C. Hendricks, D. Alwood, L. Henry, G. Bell, J. Sutherland, P. Morris, A. Morgan, F. Tracey; and two deaconesses: Mrs. M. Barton and Mrs. S. Hall.

Leaders of CGI Jamaica

The above are Elders and Deacons of C.G.I. Jamaica, along with the Regional Director, Pastor Bill Watson.

The main objectives of the C.G.I. Jamaica are to join our international brethren in proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God as a witness and to feed the flock in fulfillment of the Great Commission found in Matthew 28.

Kingston

Sabbath Services are held at Sagicor Auditorium (Formerly Life of Jamaica Auditorium) in New Kingston

28-48 Barbados Avenue, Kingston 5

Spanish Town

563 Rodney Boulevard, Dela Vega City

Spanish Town

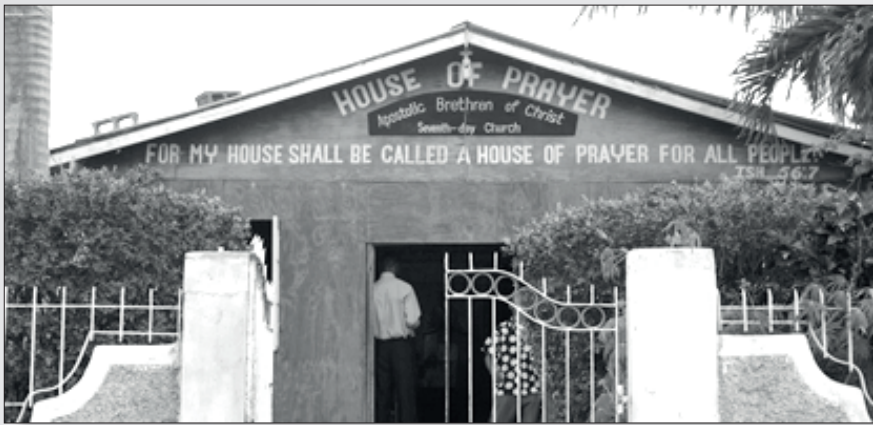
Ocho Rios

4th Floor, Simmonds Plaza

Ocho Rios, St. Ann



Church services in Kingston



CGI Jamaica, Spanish Town



Children at CGI Kingston services



Special music rendition at the Kingston Jamaica congregation of CGI



Laying on of hands



Special Music



George Ramocan



Kelly-Ann Boyne, prosecutor and daughter of Pastor Ian Boyne, giving a tribute at church services in Kingston



Ian Boyne

CGI CANADA Is On The Move!!



Adrian Davis

Brethren, God is blessing our efforts!

First, I'm happy to report that we have made a financial turn around! Year-to-date figures show our income is up and our expenses are down! That's great news, and it is a result of your faithfulness. Thank you!

Our vision for 2025 is to be *Best-In-Class, The Safest Place* with the Christian core values of caring, courtesy, consideration. We believe the world will be a very different place in 10 years. People everywhere will be looking for an-

swers. God's people will need a place where they will be safe and well nourished.

Structure Brings Stability

Many initiatives fail through lack of organization. People can have great intentions, but without structure, their efforts tend to unravel and wind down. We can't afford for that to happen. To structurally support our vision of *Best-in-Class*, we are developing a curriculum for the eldership. We recognize that most of our elders have families and full-time jobs in addition to their ministerial duties. However, it is a priority for us to grow. We are developing a curriculum that takes time constraints into consideration, but also ensures that each year, our elders are deepening their knowledge of God's Word and strengthening their gifts and abilities to better serve you.

To support our vision of *The Safest Place*, we have embarked on a *Natural Church Development Initiative*, which is spearheaded by Pastor George Ramocan. The premise for this initiative is taken from Jesus's instruction to His disciples:

"And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come" (Mark 4:26-29, KJV).

A key insight here is that the earth brings forth fruit by itself. Men don't fully understand how. What men have to do is remove the weeds and other obstacles to growth in order for the seed to sprout and grow and produce fruit by itself, naturally. In the same way, God's church will grow naturally when the obstacles to growth are removed. Our initial focus is Ontario. We thank our brethren outside of Ontario for your patience with us as we try to effectively use the resources God has given us in order to grow to better serve all of Canada. Ontario is our base. Without a strong base, we cannot build. Once our base is strengthened, we will focus on the rest of Canada.

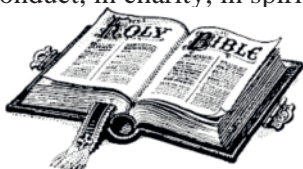
The Ontario congregations recently completed a survey, which enabled them to share their perspective of their congregation's strengths and weaknesses. The results have been compiled, and on Sunday, June 30th, Pastor Ramocan and Brother Zion Hezekiah educated the *National Evangelism Team* (comprising volunteers from each congregation) on how to interpret the results for their congregation and the steps that need to be taken next. You will be updated on this information locally.

NCD Seminar

Addressing Weaknesses While Leveraging Strengths

One of the biggest insights was Jesus Christ's instructions to each of the churches in Revelation Two and Three. For each congregation, Christ pointed out what they were doing well, as well as the areas of weakness that needed to be corrected with a sense of urgency! Not addressing the weaknesses would result in spiritual failure. As a result of this initiative, each congregation now has clear feedback on its strengths and weaknesses. Each year, we will revisit this structured analysis to identify the growth needs of each congregation.

As we please God, He will bless our efforts. We are experiencing His blessings already! We are on the move! Let's continue to love and support one another. Let's build a church that has a real impact. Let's be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in charity, in spirit, and in purity! Ω



Bad Weather

by Vivian Hall



Vivian Hall

Watching the news, do you get the idea that along with the shootings, robberies, and other crimes, weather could be our next calamity to come? The book of Job, chapter 38, talks about weather—snow, hail, torrents of rain, etc.—as do other books of the Bible. Most of us are aware of the rain and flooding during Noah's timeframe, and we know that *fire*, not water, will destroy the earth next time.

I am not making predictions. That would be assuming something outside my ability to do. I refer only to the *possibility* of future calamities involving severe weather. It seems that severe winter weather is usually followed by extreme conditions for the other seasons. This pattern *may* be significant for days to come.

Although the weather of late is unpleasant, weather does not seem to be our major problem. Lawlessness does abound (Matthew 24:12), which will ultimately lead to our destruction. This truly seems to be imminent. People do not want to *do* right. They want only to *be* right.

We cannot see the rules for this earth. We have neither the wisdom nor the desire. Genesis 8:22 states, "While the earth remains seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease."

The earthquake in Nepal is an example of disaster by nature. Over 5,000 dead at last report. Along with bad weather, we as people keep shooting and killing each other. I do not know what is next to come. This I do know: unless humankind repents and seeks to serve God, we are headed for more calamities.

We are experiencing storms and weather fronts in a number of states. Tornadoes are rampant. Matthew 24:12 states, "And because lawlessness shall abound the love of many will grow cold." People don't appear to care about other people; they hurt and harm each other in countless ways. Could these erratic weather events be the start of something more dreadful?

We can only wait and see!

Ω

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

(2 Chronicles 7:14)

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 can publish it under "*Church News*." We'd love to hear from you!

The editor

In loving memory...



Michelle Dionne Waite

Services were led by Brother Dave Copeman, accompanied on keyboard by Sister Loretta Jasper as 49 people joined in singing a selection of Michelle’s favourite hymns. Special music was a beautiful duet sung by Jessica Kowalczyk and Katelyn Palmatier entitled *Blessings*.

Pastor Adrian Davis then delivered a powerful message of lessons from Michelle’s life titled *Lay Hold of Eternal Life*. The message provided an opportunity for those grieving to hear the Gospel message presented in terms of how Michelle lived her life. He covered three points: Michelle died as a Christian who believed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ; the mind leads the body, even if that body is disabled and uncooperative; Michelle believed in her own resurrection. He closed by reminding us that while we grieve her loss, we have hope in HER future, which is now sealed as part of the body of saints asleep and awaiting the return of our Saviour.

After services, we shared a potluck lunch and then were able to gather to share in our memories of Michelle. Several people came to the microphone to share their thoughts, memories, and impressions of Michelle with her family and friends. An album of memories created by the congregation, replete with pictures, handwritten comments, and other souvenirs of Michelle’s life was presented to her mother, Sister Marilyn Jamieson.

Michelle was a beloved member of the church, having been baptized at the Feast in 2011 in Midland, Ontario. Michelle helped with church decorations, organized a jewellery-making class at the Feast, and was an avid long-distance runner in her youth. We look forward to seeing her again when her health issues are but a distant memory.

By Sister Michelle’s request, memorial donations can be mailed to:

Church of God, International
900 Oxford Street
P.O. Box 33034
London, Ontario
N5Y 5A1

Submitted by Murray Palmatier Ω

On Sabbath, June 27, our beloved sister, **Michelle Dionne Waite**, went to sleep after a long battle with cancer dating back to her teens. She was the daughter and best friend of Marilyn Jamieson, and both were members of the Burlington CGI congregation.

On July 25, the members of the London and Burlington congregations gathered together in London for Sabbath services that were dedicated as a memorial to Michelle. In addition to members from the two congregations, we were blessed to have members of Michelle’s family and friends with us.

Immortality

You are to me a part
A hidden recess in my heart
An echo of yesterdays.
The memory of your name,
A melody’s refrain,
Still touches me.
Far away as moon and stars
That brighten the Heavens afar
A reminder of today.
A faint recall of eyes,
Your laughter deep inside,
I still recall.
There is no death within the heart
God’s knowledge does impart
Our forever.
His Promises are sure,
We will endure,
For all Eternity.

by Phyllis Selena Benner
London, Ontario congregation



“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:51–54).



Thelma Boyd Carrothers
January 17, 1930 – May 18, 2015

Thelma Carrothers

Thelma and her husband Cecil hosted one of the earliest CGI congregations in Baltimore, Maryland beginning in 1978. After Cecil’s death in 1986, Thelma took over as the host for the group and services were held in Columbia, Maryland for a time. Cecil and Thelma had six children, three sons and three daughters. Thelma went through many struggles in her life, but she wanted to let us know she leaned on Jesus and trusted the Bible, the Word of God. Till we meet again, Thelma. Ω



“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and 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...” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

“...And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east...and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee” (Zechariah 14:4,5).

THE NORTHEAST OHIO PROPHECY CONFERENCE

in Akron, Ohio, August 15th, was a conference you would not have wanted to miss!

The morning service was led by Mr. Wayne Hendrix speaking on the topic, *Are We In The Last Days?* Mr. Hendrix pointed out, “There is a prophetic scenario in the Bible that *MUST* happen before Christ’s Second Coming” and went on to list the escalating deceptions put out by false ministers, wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, crime, abortions, immorality, and the overall breakdown of society. *Are We In The Times of The End?* he asked. “Indeed we ARE!”

Mr. Bill Watson conducted the afternoon service expounding the topic, *The Warnings: From The Voices of The Prophets*. Mr. Watson began with the statement, “In all history there have never been events of the magnitude which we see today!” Mr. Watson went back and forth through the Prophets, highlighting their warnings and showing their relevance to world conditions today, and what true Christians must do today. His conclusion: “The house is burning! What does God expect you to do?”

There was an open question-and-answer session after each presentation, one that was quite lively at times, ranging from “once saved, always saved,” to faulty “new” Bible translations, to the necessity of repentance, and the question of rebaptism.

We had 23 brand *new* people over the two sessions. Fifty-eight was our top attendance. We had 45 to 50 in the afternoon.

Many booklets and welcome packets were handed out as well. We hope to post the entire Conference on the website in the coming weeks, since it was filmed.

Our next Public Campaign will be conducted in Queens, NYC. George Ramocan and Bill Watson will be discussing the phenomenon of the Lunar Tetrads, or better known as “The Blood Moons.” This will be on September 12th, just before the Feast of Trumpets.

Stay tuned. The Church of God International is *on the move!*



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