



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

The official newspaper of The Church of God International

Vol. 27, No. 3

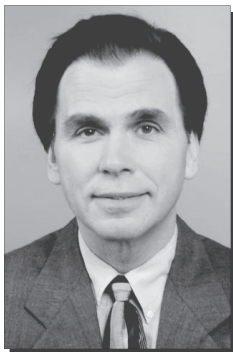
"Put on the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:13)

2006

Evidence of the End Times

Speaking of the end times, Jesus said, "Learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh; So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things [signs of the end of the age], know that He [Jesus] is near, even at the doors" (Matthew 24:32-33). Are we seeing the "fig tree" beginning to bud? Have we finally entered the "season" of the end times? Is the return of Christ "near, even at the doors"?

by Bill Watson



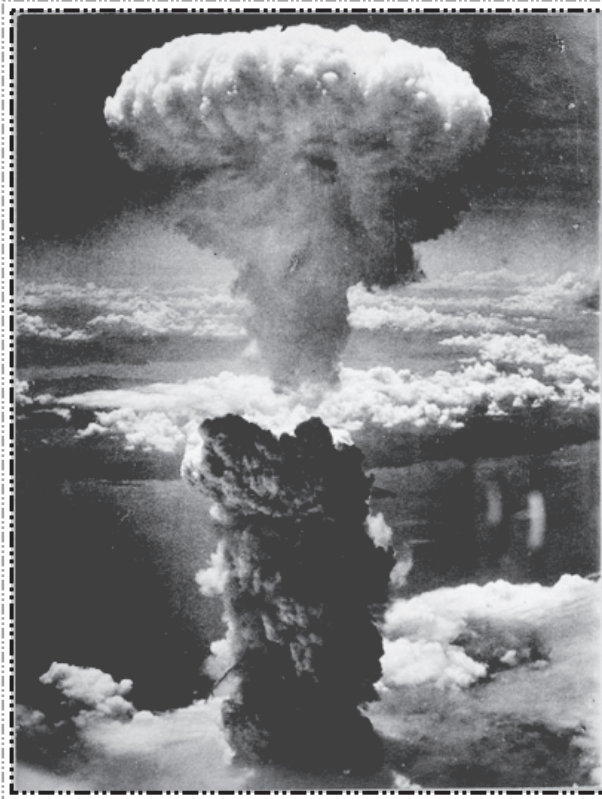
Bill Watson

In Luke's account of the "fig tree" analogy, Jesus adds this important exhortation: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36).

In Mark 13, Jesus privately tells Peter, James, John, and Andrew of events and conditions that will lead to the end of the age. He tells them

of many future events, some of which would happen in their lifetimes. Yet, none of them realized it would take many centuries before the prophecy would run its course.

We must remember that the relationship of time and prophetic events that are portrayed in our Bibles are often seen from God's perspective and concept of time as the standard. Therefore, remember a thousand years is as one day to Him (2 Peter 3:8), making it understandable as to why Peter would say, as he did on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, "Ye men of Judea, ...hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day



End-time scenario?

[approximately 9 a.m.]. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:14-16). Then Peter proceeds to take a *quantum leap* and quote Joel 2:28-30, which says, "And it shall come to pass in the **last days**." Peter further explains about the sun turning to darkness and the moon turning blood red right before the notable "Day of the Lord." And yet this *happened* two thousand years ago! **How can this be?** Keep in mind; as far as God was concerned, it was only *about two days* ago. In other words, if you were to ask Peter if we were in the end times, based on his initial presentation two thousand years ago, it's fair to say he would have told you unequivocally, YES!

"Never Before..."

As much as the early New Testament apostles thought they were in the end times, little did they know how many centuries would pass before mankind would achieve the capability to completely destroy all of civilization around the world. Jesus said, "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there

EVIDENCE, continued on page 2

CGI Clergyman Conducts Class on Cults in Kingston

by George Ramocan



George Ramocan

KINGSTON, Jamaica—**A class about cults and cultism** consisting largely of Evangelical students at Jamaica Theological Seminary heard recently that Worldwide Church of God founder Herbert W. Armstrong was more Evangelical on two central Protestant doctrines than many liberal Evangelicals.

Pastor Ian Boyne, of the Kingston and Ocho Rios congregations of *The Church of God International* (CGI), told the students that, on the central Protestant doctrines of the inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture and the deity of Jesus Christ, Mr. Armstrong, although criticized by many Evangelicals and other Protestants as a "cultist," was more Evangelical than many in the Evangelical movement.

Mr. Boyne was a guest lecturer at a seminary class that was scrutinizing *The Church of God International*, based in Tyler, Texas. Students had researched the CGI and made group presentations that day, followed by Mr. Boyne's lecture and question-and-answer session.

Child of the '70s

"I have long believed that the central doctrines of the Church of God movement are eminently defensible from a scholarly and biblical point of view and that we should expose them to the best and the brightest in the Protestant world," said Mr. Boyne, who has been a religious writer in the Jamaican press for over 20 years and the recipient of a journalism award for distinguished religion writing from the Press Association of Jamaica.

"I am a child of the 1970s, which I consider the greatest period of the intellectual and theological growth of the Armstrong movement," he continued. "The saddest thing to me is that the creative intellectual ferment which was facilitated by the Garner Ted Armstrong administration [of the WCG] of that period was hijacked and aborted by the ultraconservatives, who, and I say this respectfully and lovingly, did not possess the theological sophistication to properly develop the movement."

Mr. Boyne believes one of his tasks is to establish the credibility in theological circles of "reformed Armstrongism," which avoids what he calls "the ditch" of [ultra liberals] who, Mr. Boyne says, downplay Mr. Armstrong's "distinctive mission in this century."

CONTINUED on page 13

In This Issue...

Special Edition:

'06 Feast of Tabernacles Accommodations!

"Evidence of the End Times"
Bill Watson

"Class on Cults"
George Ramocan

"Church News"
Page 4-6

2006 Feast Accommodations
Pages 7-9

"A True History According To Holy Scripture," Chapter 5
Benjamin R. Chapman
Pages 10-11

"Questions and Answers"
Vance Stinson
Page 12

"Our God of Hope"
Lloyd W. Cary
Pages 14-15

"God's New Day"
Nancy Miles
Page 16

And much more...

EVIDENCE, continued from page 1

shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the *beginnings of sorrows*” (Mark 13:8).

However, since many of these mentioned events have occurred regularly over the passing centuries and humanity’s legacy is one of war, multiple calamities and assorted natural disasters, many modern day pundits scoff at the thought that mankind’s days are now **conclusively numbered**. Even the Apostle Peter saw this cynicism coming in his time when he described the attitude of some during the last days (2 Peter 3:3–10).

So, if these modern times are indeed any different, what is it that makes them that way? Are these the final days and times Jesus was talking about? And if they are, *how are they any different* from the many times before? Why shouldn’t we consider it just another cycle of violence, unrest, calamities, and more war and destruction?

It would do us well to consider the terminology of the Apostle Peter when he said, “But the day of the Lord will come as a **thief in the night**...” (2 Peter 3:10). This is an interesting characterization. The notion you’re given is that some of us will be caught off guard and taken by surprise when Jesus returns and the heavens and earth begin to pass away. This is why Jesus explains to us that we should *learn the parable of the fig tree*. He warns us to **WATCH!** Why? So we will be prepared physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. *Committed to never giving or letting up!* We should be like the good man of the house, who **if he had known** what watch the thief would come, he would **not** have suffered his house to be broken into. In other words, **BE PREPARED** because we are living in a day and age unlike any other time in the history of mankind; and *if we become complacent, we could suffer loss*. So watch and consider the following “buds of the fig tree.”

Never before has there been a time when the world has been so tightly knitted together by the “cyberspace highway.” *It is indeed a global community and growing world economy!* Exports and imports are shipped throughout most of the world in what can almost be characterized as a developing “seamless” social order. Even China, a country espousing a completely opposing political ideology with the West, is now one of the largest trading and/or investment partners with North America, Europe, and South America.

Never before have the economies of China, Korea, India, and many of the Asian countries exploded into such a frenzy of social commerce. The consumption of goods and services have become a force to be reckoned with in the last decade, even causing shortages of raw materials in some areas. Additionally, the competition to acquire raw materials is becoming more acute. The labor force in some of these countries has grown hundreds of percentage points producing trade deficits in the West that appear to be insurmountable due to this cheap available labor.

Never before has there been such international turmoil of the magnitude we have today over culture, politics, religion, energy, environment, and terrorism. “Nuclear energy management” is a central issue for much of the world’s paranoia regarding the security of the global community. Despots in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, parts of Africa, and South America continue to “saber rattle” and hold the world hostage while they periodically use the United Nations to forge their policies of nuclear development and uranium enrichment under the guise of domestic energy needs. It is a precarious situation at best among the G-8 nations to attempt to manage this extremely *hot issue* and find any sincere and truthful mutual concessions. Everyone seems to have their own agenda. It is impossible to satisfy all concerned. God’s Word says, “The way of peace *they know not*.”

Never before has Europe ignited into such a global powerhouse! Today, heralding the union of twenty-five nation states (*and growing!*) under a common European Union (EU), it is attempting to aspire to a level of geopolitical influence it hasn’t experienced since the days of the Ottomans, Hapsburgs, or Napoleon. Today, the EU is brokering peace accords in the Middle East and negotiating with both Palestine *and Israel*. It is also actively developing its own constitution so it can operate and construct policies more uniformly, along with a strike force and a common currency. Currently, the EU has interfered with corporate mergers belonging to the United States that were hoping to do business in Europe, while at the same time setting industrial standards for corporations around the world, and continuing to gain additional economic leverage throughout the globe by virtue of its currency, the euro.

The euro, presently worth more than the dollar, has acquired a prominent role as the world’s accepted *back-up currency* behind the dollar. As a matter of fact, that may change *very soon* as the dollar continues to lose confidence around the world and the OPEC nations seriously consider the euro as the *preferred currency for oil*. This potential shift stands to create far reaching worldwide economic effects that will impact many of the economies around the world, if and/or *when* it happens.

Europe persistently maintains being the driving force behind the globalization of the world’s community of nations. It is no secret that many of the

European leaders intend for the EU to become a type of “United States of Europe,” functioning in the role of a resurrected Roman Empire. Even the Catholic Church has recognized the emergence of this “**Euroclydon Power**” and is attempting to influence European opinion for its accepted place and role going into the future.

Never before have these European geopolitical “*assimilated conditions*” come together in such modern times, with technologies in place, political, economic, and religious prowess in line, and a grass roots acceptance from the populace. The potential of fulfilling what Daniel said is fast becoming a *practical matter*. Notice: “And in the **latter time** of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully [*by wonderful works*] and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people [*people of the holy ones*]. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace [*prosperity*] shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes [*Jesus Christ*]; but he shall be broken without hand” (Daniel 8: 23–25).

Remember, Daniel also prophesied that “the judgment shall sit, and they [*Jesus Christ and His resurrected immortals*] shall take away his [*a king of fierce countenance, the beast*] dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions [*earthly rulers*] shall serve and obey him” (Daniel 7:26–27). This is very good news! It is at the heart of the Gospel!

Never before have Israel and its neighboring countries been so outspoken about their intents to protect their own territories and policies. Though this area of the world has been a “lightning rod” of strife and animosity affecting the world since the inception of Israel as a legitimate nation state in 1948, recently the intensity appears to have turned a corner for the worse. Terrorism has exacerbated the conditions, causing them to become extremely volatile, with potentials of

endangering the rest of the world. The nuclear policies and intents of surrounding Arab countries continue to agitate much of the world’s community of nations with concerns of potential reactionary violence erupting from terrorist groups or irrational government military action. It wouldn’t take much to encircle Jerusalem with foreign armies (Luke 21:20).

Never before has there been an Israeli Sanhedrin in place driving ahead to construct a Temple. Currently, though without Israeli government recognition, this Sanhedrin is moving ahead to assemble engineers and architects for the development of detailed working plans to bring this project to an operational stage. The Sanhedrin is presently calling upon the Jewish people to contribute towards the acquisition of materials **for the purpose of rebuilding the holy Temple!**

As described in the 12th chapter of Daniel, it is clear that “daily sacrifices shall be taken away” (Daniel 12:11). That, of course, *presumes the fact* that there must be a sacrificial system in place **that will be stopped**. We understand that this happens around the time when “he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished” (Daniel 12:7). It is further clari-

**CONTINUED
on next page**



Islamic women: Islam is currently the worlds fastest growing religion.

THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS P.O. BOX 2525, TYLER TX 75710

THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS is the official newspaper of The Church of God International World Headquarters, Tyler, Texas, USA. Copyright © 2006 The Church of God International. All rights reserved.

Editor-In-Chief: Vance A. Stinson

Editor: Lloyd W. Cary

Contributing Writers: Ian Boyne, Gail Cary, Lloyd W. Cary, Benjamin R. Chapman, Rene D. Corpuz, Zion Hezekiah, Mike James, Alice Edwards Lauria, Nancy Miles, Mike Nolan, James Polittle, George Ramocan, Vance Stinson, Bill Watson

Production: Lloyd W. Cary

Executive Vice President: Charles E. Groce

Business Manager: Benny Sharp

NOTICE: The International News welcomes submissions of articles, features, church news, pictures, or manuscripts. However, it cannot be responsible for the return of unsolicited materials. All materials submitted should be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

FOREIGN OFFICES:

- The Church of God International, PO Box 171, Boonah, Queensland 4310, Australia
- The Church of God International 1299 Oxford St., PO Box 33034 London, Ontario, Canada N5Y 1A0
- The Church of God International, PO Box 776, Kingston 19, Jamaica
- The Church of God International, Makati Central, PO Box 2450, 1264 Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines.

CGI Web Site: www.cgi.org

CGI E-mail: info@cgi.org

EVIDENCE, continued from previous

fied that these things happen at the “time of the end” (Daniel 12:9). Additionally, with a temple built and the daily sacrifices stopped, conditions conducive for “the abomination that makes desolate” can be set up (Daniel 12:11; Matthew 24:15; Mark13:14). Remember, at some point even the Apostle Paul recognized that a man would come along “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (1 Thessalonians 2:4).



India's Taj Mahal: a symbol of growing prosperity

Never before has there been such an explosion of **anti-Christ** sentiment. Christian persecution, even among *Sunday-keeping* Christians, is on the increase around the world. The humanistic, secular culture of the West, especially throughout England, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, has reduced and/or diminished the name of Jesus Christ from any public influence and/or display except in the area of the Church. Currently, there are movements trying to rid the educational systems of any Christian influence, as it is in politics or on government buildings. Today lawsuits are targeted in many instances to confront Christian values with the growing humanist “*value system*” within our culture. The abandonment of the God of our Bible and Judeo-Christian values is fast becoming evident to many throughout the West.

Islam is advancing around the world today and enjoys the prominence of being the fastest growing religious faith in the world. If it continues at the current pace of growth, some have said, it will exceed Catholicism in Europe by the year 2015. Islam is an “anti-Christ” religion, as are many faiths around the world outside of Christianity. This, too, has **never occurred** in a day and age when science and technology have produced weapons with mind-boggling **destructive potential**.

Never before has there been such an outpouring of anti-American rhetoric throughout the globe. In today’s world, many nations want what the American economy and market, resources, and military have to offer. There are literally multiple millions of people immigrating to the United States, legally as well as illegally, attempting to share in the “American Dream.” However, at the same time they will criticize, ridicule, and deride anything they can about the exercise of its power or political influence and the freedoms American culture enjoys.

Never before has the United States enjoyed such exclusive role recognition, identified among the community of nations as the last remaining superpower of the “Cold War Era.” While the British had enjoyed their dominance, controlling at one time fourteen million square miles of planet Earth, it is apparent, **like never before, the sun is finally setting on the British Empire.**

However, today the United States is enjoying the apex of its material, political, and military prowess, serving in the prominent role as a “*balance of power*” among many terrifying conditions that could rapidly deteriorate into a massive global conflict. Many of us don’t understand just how fragile and dangerous these circumstances really are. Yet, it seems for many throughout the world, there is nothing they would like more than to see the United States failing in its role and attempting to be the counterbalance of an endangered world, threatened by so much irrational anger and militant behavior. Unfortunately, trends are beginning to indicate those gainsayers repudiating the United States will ultimately get what they are hoping for.

Never before has the United States been so vulnerable to collapse. There is the proverbial “*handwriting on the wall.*” In so many areas there are trends which, if they continue, will definitely conclude with the same result the northern ten tribes of Israel experienced. In 2 Kings, the record of why God took Israel down and allowed their land to be destroyed is clear. “Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah by all the prophets...And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant...and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them...And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God...Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight...also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God...And the LORD rejected all the seed of

Israel...**the LORD removed Israel out of his sight...**so was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day” (2 Kings 17:13–23).

The United States is morally bankrupt. Corruption runs rampant throughout politics, religion, and business. Private interest groups are tearing at the very fabric of the American culture. Families are in disarray. Divorce runs in excess of 60 percent of all marriages. And marriage itself is under attack, being redefined according to the homosexual agenda, while at the same time, the United States allows approximately two million unborn human beings to be murdered by legalized abortion. It’s a sad state of affairs—and God is *not* amused!

The United States of America was indeed framed by **imperfect men** God used who viewed this *new homeland* of “*the free and the brave*” through the paradigm of God’s Holy Word, both Old and New Testaments of the Bible. God has blessed the United States of America with so much wealth in so many areas—in spite of our national transgression; He now owes our nation nothing! The promises made of material wealth and affluence to the ancient patriarch Abraham and his descendents have been fulfilled. When properly understood, this is a most frightful truth!

The proof of this daunting realization of our current geopolitical distinction is: **NEVER BEFORE** has the United States enjoyed the *exclusive role* as the dominant **WORLD POWER!** And regrettably, America has been weighed against God’s Word and has been found *miserably wanting*. As the people of the United States stand before God, this nation is viewed to be in the process of “giving up” on Him and becoming more Epicurean and hedonistic in their ways as **never before**. As the nation moves away from God, so God will remove Himself. And along with His departure, so goes His protection as with ancient Israel. The pattern is the same, and God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. History has proven this to be true!

Much More Could Be Said

So much more could be said about geopolitical conditions, and much could be said about the weather, about the potential for major droughts and famines, earthquakes and volcanic activity, and deadly disease pandemics; but it’s apparent to those who have eyes to see that the “fig tree” is indeed beginning to **bud!** It is vitally **IMPORTANT** that we do not underestimate the perilous times we’re living in! We are consistently reminded that we **know not** the hour when our Lord will come. We are also reminded that the days will be shortened for the elect’s sake, because if they weren’t, no flesh would remain alive. God has assured us He won’t let that happen.

We need to consider there are conditions that could easily erupt into a rapid progression of circumstances igniting the world into catastrophic chaos. The book of Revelation explains that “power was given unto them [*the four horsemen*] **OVER THE FOURTH PART** of the earth, to kill with the sword [*second horseman*], and with hunger [*third horseman*], and with death [*fourth horseman*], and with the beasts of the earth” (Revelation 6:8).

The Apostle John is warning us that **25 percent** of the population of *the world* will be destroyed by the effects of these four horsemen contained in the **FIRST FOUR SEALS** (Revelation 6:8)! Then following right on the heels of these first four seals, is the fifth seal describing a *horrific Christian martyrdom*. Quickly following is the sixth seal, describing heavenly signs in the sky, with the seventh seal opening up thereafter to announce the “seven trumpets,” outlining the great day of God’s wrath (Revelation 6:17).

With that said, all true believers need to realize the prophetic events we know *are scripted to happen* in the Bible may occur by circumstances and conditions that **are not necessarily detailed** in our Bible. Remember, World Wars I and II are **not listed**, yet they have had major influence in setting the current geopolitical stage. So has oil, economics, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and the vast cultural malaise and the rise of computer technology and the Internet, all of which **are not** detailed in our Bible.

However, all of these items are factors contributing to the massive trends catapulting the world toward a “*new world order*” that will position three major powers to face off with each other in the latter days: the King of the North, the King of the South, and those powers to the northeast of Jerusalem (Daniel 11:40–45). Sadly, it is obvious the influence and military might of the United States and Britain will have been previously neutralized, eliminating them from any involvement as a nation during these **latter day conflicts**.



Osama Bin Laden: Terrorism has become the new menace of the global community.

Church News

Discovering Your Life's Purpose

The CGI Toronto congregation held its annual campaign on Saturday, May 13 at the Holiday Inn Hotel in Markham, Ontario. It was hosted by our pastor, Mr. Bill Watson, with the main message presented by Mr. George Ramocan from the CGI in Kingston, Jamaica. The campaign, accompanied by the presence of God's Holy Spirit, was undoubtedly a great success in spreading the Word of God to all those who were blessed to have been in attendance.

Prior to Mr. Ramocan's message, we were treated to a musical presentation from members of the Toronto congregation. Marie Allen, Stephanie Chin, and Jasmin Scarlett performed an inspiring song entitled "I Believe in a Hill Called Mount Calvary." This was subsequently followed by a stirring performance by the CGI Toronto Choir, conducted by Sister Euis Daniel, entitled "And Can It Be."

With a tough act to follow, Mr. Ramocan most certainly did not disappoint. The message entitled "Discovering Your Life's Purpose" was received by nearly 200 people, including the Toronto and Kitchener congregations, along with invited guests and others who were informed by mail, TV, and radio advertisement, or through our website.

The purpose of our annual campaign was to "bear fruit" (John 15:18) according to the Word, being obedient to God's will by spreading His Word to the unconverted (Matthew 10:32, Matthew 27:19). With this very timely message, Mr. Ramocan astutely put into perspective God's purpose for mankind. He spoke on the reason we were created, and with this knowledge, our definitive responsibility.



Throughout his sermon, Mr. Ramocan spent a considerable amount of time referring to passages in the book of Ecclesiastes. This book can be categorized as a collection of philosophical essays on the purpose of life. The book of Ecclesiastes serves a great purpose in acknowledging the fact that "all is vanity" and that one can live a happy and meaningful life by learning to discern good from evil. We learned that the United States of America ranks second among the world's countries in GDP (Gross Domestic Product), yet the US only ranks number fifteen in a "subjective well-being" test, testing the world's happiest countries. The conclusion drawn was that human beings were not created to be content with the limitations of material possessions and other vanities of this world.

What does it mean to be happy? Words like joy, cheer, bliss, smile, content, and the phrase "feels good" may come to mind. But what exactly constitutes happiness? Well, let's take a quick moment to examine various forms of human behavior: People smoke, drink excessively, curse, kill, steal, and commit fornication. Why? Because it creates for them a sense of happiness. It "feels good." Basic psychology and mere common sense dictate that people do what works. Where there is no benefit, consequently there is no action. The human demand for immediate gratification as opposed to long term benefit is prevailing more and more as we anxiously approach the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will set up His Kingdom on earth and begin the restoration process of all things good.

Mr. Ramocan stressed the fact that a Christian life also provides immediate, not just long term, benefits. Even if the Bible was wrong (although we know it is not), we would live a much happier and stress-free life by obeying God's laws and commandments as opposed to rejecting them. It is important to make the best of our physical lives, but not at the expense of the spiritual.

It was a very special presentation in which we were taught there is a deeper purpose for mankind here on earth (Hebrews 2:5). We were created in God's image (Genesis 1:26) with the purpose of becoming joint-heirs with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17). It was eloquently put into perspective the fact that we must make serving God our number one priority (Colossians 3:2, Matthew 6:33) for the mere reason that we are commanded to do so and also because there is no true happiness and no benefit outside a life of true Christianity (Mark 8:36).

As Mr. Ramocan fittingly stated, "Life is like a training ground with the promise of a great inheritance." We thank our Lord God for using Mr. George Ramocan as a vessel, allowing him the power to present to us a deeper understanding of our life's purpose.

May we as believers continue to lean on our Saviour Jesus Christ, through His Holy Spirit, that we may be blessed with the spiritual tools to inspire the hearts and minds of others. And for the unconverted who are reading this, we encourage you to pray for your

calling, that God will open your eyes to your life's purpose and the true way of living according to His righteousness.

Let us continue to fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man (Ecclesiastes 12:13). □

Submitted by Zion Hezekiah

Great Pentecost Celebration in Jamaica

Some 215 brethren met in Kingston for Pentecost celebration on Sunday, June 4, 2006, combining their voices in rapturous praise as they thanked God for their special calling as firstfruits.

There were special songs and poetry readings from the brethren, as well as a choir performance, as the brethren rejoiced in their calling ahead of the vast majority of mankind. In my sermon, I spoke on the *Da Vinci Code*, pointing out that indeed there had been a conspiracy against the truth, but that God had miraculously kept His church pure doctrinally.

Tracing the errors of Calvinism, Lutheranism, Marcionism, Ebionism, Gnosticism, and Pelagianism, I made the point that God had preserved the faith once delivered to the first-century church down to the twentieth century. "God divinely guided Mr. Herbert Armstrong into the fundamental truths of Scripture, and in human terms it is amazing how he avoided some of the major pitfalls and errors of churchianity," I told them. The brethren were literally on the edge of their seats as I went into church history, the process of canonization, and the heresies of the early centuries and post-Reformation period.

In the afternoon, George Ramocan spoke about the significance of the fifty days and why we needed to count the days. It was a fascinating presentation. At the end of the day the brethren were stimulated and reinvigorated for work in the vineyard.

Meanwhile, reports coming from our associated congregations in Spanish Town and Maroon Town were laced with superlatives as God moved mightily among the brethren there. Approximately 30 met in Maroon Town and 50 in Spanish Town. So approximately 300 CGI-affiliated brethren met here for Pentecost. All rejoiced to be a part of God's true church now preparing to be reaped at the first resurrection. □

Submitted by Ian Boyne

Armor of God on Local Cable Stations

We are attempting to place the *Armor of God* program on more television stations. One idea we have in mind is local public access cable stations. We need everyone's help in this endeavor. What you can do is listed below:

- 1) Find out if there is a local public access channel in the county, city, or town in which you live.
- 2) Find out if citizens who live within that county, city, or town can provide programs to be placed on that station.
- 3) Find out what the format (mini-DV, DVD, SVHS, etc.) of the program needs to be.
- 4) Contact Mike James ASAP at mhjames6043@yahoo.com or 301-916-6767 and provide him with this information.

The reason we have had to remove the *Armor of God* from some public access stations is because of the need for the program to be a certain format to air. We may soon have the capability of converting the DVDs to different types of formats so the *Armor of God* can be seen on more public access stations.

We need your help. Many of these stations will only air programs if they are sponsored by a local citizen of the community. Please join us in getting the message of God to as many places as we can. □

Submitted by Mike James

In loving memory...

Julia Crain

July 12, 1924—January 12, 2006

Julia "Rena" Crain, 81, of Denton, TX, died Thursday, January 12, 2006, at a nursing home in Texas. Julia was a longtime member of God's Church and attended the Charleston/Summerville, SC, CGI since the early 1990s. Health problems necessitated her move to live with her granddaughter in Denton. Mrs. Crain was born July 12, 1924, in Anniston, AL, daughter of the late Jeffery Davis Price and Essie McCard Price. Her local brethren will always remember Julia as a very compassionate and loving woman who loved her church and her extended family. Despite her own failing health, and with the help of her daughter, she found the strength to provide care for her only son who eventually died of brain cancer. Just two years later her daughter passed away of cancer, and Julia remained by her side until the end. Her steadfast determination, strength, and faith in God during the most difficult times of her life will always characterize this sweet woman in the minds of those who knew and loved her. Sleep in God's care Julia—until we see you again. □

Church News

Toledo Hosts George Ramocan Visit!



George Ramocan

On May 6, 45 brethren from Toledo, Detroit, and Canada gathered together for Sabbath services at the University of Toledo Scott Park Campus to hear guest speaker George Ramocan, deacon from Jamaica.

Bronson James, pastor of Detroit, sang special music, as did the Toledo Quartet. In addition, he offered many heart-felt and edifying comments to our church family gathered together. Wayne Hendrix, pastor of Toledo and official host of the day, introduced George Ramocan, whom most in this area had never previously met.

Mr. Ramocan’s sermon was entitled “Observing the Feast of Weeks—the Key to Being an Overcomer.” He pointed out that while we observe seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, we tend to overlook the task God gives us of counting the *fifty days* leading up to Pentecost and the significance of it! Within those fifty days are *seven complete weeks*, and we are not to sit idly by, but to give account of ourselves, overcoming methodically, keeping an eye toward “redeeming the time.” Referencing Galatians 5, Mr. Ramocan outlined seven categories of sin which, if each were overcome in “one week” of our lives, we would be growing to become more like Jesus Christ and ready for the resurrection of the firstfruits, pictured by the fiftieth day.

After services, a potluck meal and fellowship was enjoyed by all the brothers and sisters in Christ. We will hold these memories dear “till we meet again.”

Submitted by Gail Cary

Toronto Public Bible Lecture was a Colossal Success!

On May 13, approximately 195 people converged at the Holiday Inn on the north side of Toronto, Canada. George Ramocan was the featured speaker at this exciting event. The hall was originally set up for about 140 people, but the people kept coming and coming. At one point we thought we were going to have to open up the other section of the room. As it turned out, we had standing room only.

Opening comments by Bill Watson revealed that most heard of the lecture by the advertisements they saw on the *Armor of God* and the personal invitation letter sent from the home office out of Tyler, Texas. However, in addition about half of the 80 new people, (that’s right, approximately 80 new people attended!) were there because family members and/or friends from our congregations throughout Ontario personally invited them. This is a tremendously encouraging sign that the brethren in Ontario are excited about their part in sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It’s good to see so many working in this “work” and contributing toward the success of our mission to “witness and warn.”

Mr. Ramocan, visiting from Jamaica, presented many powerful points of consideration for all who attended. Speaking to the skeptics, he challenged them to ask the question of themselves, “If there is no God, but obeying His laws provides you a good and healthy life, why not take advantage of it? At least you will gain a good, healthy, and happy life now! Additionally, if there is a God you will also be rewarded with everlasting life. Either way you have nothing to lose and all that much more to gain.” He contrasted the riches of God with man’s, showing all God has to offer. He explained from Hebrews and Romans how God has promised man an eternal inheritance. Bill Watson closed the session with a few comments showing how God fully intends for us to be born again, but not just in attitude only, but a complete conversion, ultimately to be composed of literal Spirit, like Father, like Son.

All who were there were invited to attend a church service close to them. There was ample free literature for the taking. Lingering fellowship afterward indicated there would be new faces in attendance among the congregations. God willing, we will see in the coming weeks just how fruitful this campaign was. By all indications, the Bible campaign was an enormous success.

The campaign rounded off a whirlwind visit to North America for Mr. George Ramocan. The visit began with a stop at Toledo, OH, where he conducted Sabbath services on May 6. This was followed be a Bible Study in Bath, OH, on May 11, culminating in the Public Bible Lecture in Toronto, Canada. He returned to Cleveland, OH, about 2:00 Sunday morning to catch his flight home Sunday afternoon. It was an inspiring week for all in attendance and we are very thankful for Mr. Ramocan’s efforts, energy, and zeal for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ to all who were willing to listen. Mr. Ramocan is extremely committed to God’s mission and a very gifted, inspiring speaker. We eagerly anticipate his next visit to “the land up North.” Thank you Mr. Ramocan for your unwavering commitment to the work of Jesus Christ!

Incidentally, Mr. Ramocan wanted everyone to know that Jamaica remains a warm and welcoming location for those considering a Feast of Tabernacles that will long be remembered. Everyone has a standing and open invitation to Jamaica for the “best Feast ever”!

Spring Holy Days in Morehead, KY

As we were commanded in Exodus 12:14 to keep the Passover as a memorial and a feast to the Lord throughout the generations by an everlasting ordinance, 26 of us gathered at sundown on Tuesday, April 11, to obey. The solemn event was a reminder to all there that it was not a ritual we were taking part in, but a remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice, why He sacrificed, and our recommitment to be worthy of that sacrifice. Too bad we can’t get it right the first time. God knew we wouldn’t, and that we would have to be reminded annually. After all, we are only human.

The following evening, 40 came to observe the Night to be Observed with lots of food and fellowship.

On the First Day of Unleavened Bread, we were reminded to keep all the commandments and not to worship in vain, for we are the chosen who have been given the knowledge of what God has prepared for us through His Holy Spirit. It is this memorial that helps us understand the struggle we all experience when we attempt to remove all sin from our lives. Personally, I don’t eat a lot of bread, but I sure did want a buttered bread with a number of meals when I could not have it. Isn’t that just like life? You try to rid yourself of a bad habit, and when you are told you can’t return to that bad habit, that is when you crave it. Go figure! But, as the good seed is nourished with the Word, watered through baptism, and gathered together at the resurrection, we are finally rid of the tares and all they represent in this carnal life. And the Days of Unleavened Bread help us remember to keep our promise of getting ourselves prepared for the Wedding Day, and not to get impatient or to become lax.

On the Sabbath, Mr. Kauffung instructed 38 of us that it is “God’s Word” that stands forever and that we are to live by it because it is the light that leads us.

On the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, Mr. Politte urged those 39 present to persevere, be a doer, overcome and strive to stay in a sinless state. Although Christ, as our Sacrifice, removed all requirements for us to offer a blood sacrifice, He kept the holy days, and by His example showed us that we are to keep them as well.

We have such a loving God. He made atonement for our sins, has prepared for us a future home that is safe and free of any strife, and He will live with us in the Kingdom where He will be approachable, not somewhere we can only contact Him through prayer, and all we have to do to receive His many blessings is to show our love with respect and obedience.

Submitted by Alice Edwards Lauria

60th Wedding Anniversary!



CGI Elder Frank Marang and his wife Margie, of Coffeyville, KS, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary by attending the Centennial Ball at the Brown Mansion.

An anniversary cake was presented to them by their children, Kim Jones of South Coffeyville, Karla Thomsen, and Kent Marang of Coffeyville. They received phone calls and cards from their nine grandchildren and many friends.

Frank Marang and Margie Fortner were married June 12, 1946, by the Justice of the Peace in Independence. They have spent their entire lives in Coffeyville.

The couple have 15 great-grandchildren.

Church News

Pentecost in Ohio

TOLEDO/BATH, OHIO—One hundred people, including brethren from Toledo, Pittsburgh, and Columbus, gathered at Bath, OH, to observe the third annual holy day of the year—the Day of Pentecost.

And what a *wonderful* day it was!



Vance Stinson

Unfettered by a bout of recurring laryngitis, Wayne Hendrix led the assembled brethren in a rousing song session. Adding further to the joy, the Toledo Quartet (consisting of Jack Brunt, Gail Cary, Jenney Hetrick, and Frank Klett) sang “Balm of Gilead,” and Frank Klett sang “Come Holy Spirit.”

Vance Stinson (visiting from Tyler, TX) brought the sermon. He pointed out that the Day of Pentecost has several interrelated meanings. For Israel, it was both the memorial of the giving of the Law and a harvest festival. For God’s people today, this holy day is the “birthday” of the New Testament church. It reminds us of the importance of the present work of God and points prophetically to the day when the “firstfruits” of the present “harvest” will be presented alive before God.

On the preceding day (June 3), 45 people, including brethren from Detroit and Canada, turned out for Sabbath services in Toledo. For special music, Rene Shelly sang “Touch Through Me” and the Toledo Trio (Gail Cary, Jenney Hetrick, and Frank Klett) sang “I’ll Never Leave You.”

Vance gave the sermon. Using the Isaiah 13 description of the fall of Babylon as an example, he spoke on the importance of recognizing that the biblical prophets often described events that were near and events that were far away without reference to time intervals between the events. Once we know about these missing time intervals, he explained, we can better understand why the apostles could apply prophecies on the restoration of Israel and reign of Messiah to the events surrounding the “birth” of the New Testament church. □



Hear ye, hear ye! Calling all singers!

If you desire beautiful white beaches and crystal clear water, come to our newest Festival site at St. Petersburg, FL.

We have choir folders to send you plus a tape of your part.

If you have sung in a choir in the past and would like to sing this year again, please call me at (419) 787-5681 and tell me which part to send you (soprano, alto, tenor, or bass).

submitted by Frank Klett

FOOD FOR THOUGHT...

- If you want to convince others of the value of Christianity—live it!
- When tempers grow hot, Christianity grows cold.
- Satan is perfectly willing to have a person confess Christianity as long as he does not live it.
- Your willful absence from church is a vote to close its doors.
- The Christian who is pulling the oars doesn’t have time to rock the boat.
- When Christians feel safe and comfortable, the church is in its greatest danger.
- Satan is never too busy to rock the cradle of a sleeping Christian.
- Don’t knock your church—it may have improved since the last time you were there.

Horane Smith Ordained as Deacon in Toronto

Exciting things have been developing in the *Church of God, International* in Toronto, Canada. The congregation has been consistently growing since April 15, 2000, when 65 people attended a public Bible lecture sponsored by about 20 local brethren. Since then, 55 to 70 people now meet on any given Sabbath for services.

The evangelistic impact of the *Armor of God* television program, combined with the individual evangelism of the brethren, has produced a positive effect on the growth curve of this congregation. Recently, on May 13, George Ramocan, a deacon from Jamaica, conducted a public Bible lecture in Toronto that was attended by about 195 people. Approximately 80 people were non-attendees of a CGI congregation. The majority of these new people were there due to the personal invitations of the brethren. To see the congregation mobilized like this was indeed very encouraging.

The activity of the Toronto congregation has generated opportunities for the brethren serving in the area. Many are selflessly serving the greater whole, which benefits the “edifying factor” of this group. Consequently, we are pleased and encouraged to announce their recognition of one among them whom they believe, from the fruit exhibited in his personal life, family, and service to them, qualifies him for the deaconate. As a result, on February 18, 2006, Horane Smith was ordained a deacon serving the Toronto, Ontario, congregation.

Horane and Beverly Smith were married in September 1981 and have been members of the CGI since 1985. They were among the early attendees of about 12 in the Kingston, Jamaica CGI, which today is in excess of 250 people! They are the longest serving members in the Toronto CGI congregation. They have four children with the youngest being twin boys, Jordi and Codi. They also have a daughter named Samar. Their oldest son, Shey, is planning on getting married to Jasmin Scarlett on July 3.



The Smith Family: Beverly, Samar, Horane, Shey, and the twins, Jordi and Codi.

Horane works as a media intelligence editor and has quite an array of publishing awards. He is well educated and has occasionally worked in broadcasting throughout his career. Additionally, he is an award winning author and journalist with *six completed novels* to his credit. These novels have covered subjects from the underground railroad movement, lynching in the United States, Jamaican legends, pirates, and even reggae music. And while doing all this, he has been an immense help to the ministry and brethren in Toronto.

We are very pleased to have Horane and his family on our team. They bring to our Christian community a wonderful example of what our Lord Jesus Christ expects us to be as we navigate through life’s challenges. Congratulations to Horane for the evidence in his life that provides him with “a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 3:13). □

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* program on a free Public Access television station in your area? Let us know and perhaps we will publish it under “Church News.”

≡ Feast Accommodations, 2006 ≡

Myrtle Beach, SC Feast Accommodations

You are welcome to join God’s people in observing the Feast of Tabernacles 2006 at the Springmaid Beach Resort in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. This 27-acre resort is located at the quiet south end of Myrtle Beach’s Grand Strand with a quarter mile of spectacular beach extending through the State Park and features Myrtle Beach’s only privately owned 1060-foot fishing pier. In addition, Springmaid offers indoor and outdoor pools, two lazy rivers, a game room, fitness center, miniature golf, and Marlin’s Restaurant.

Springmaid Resort provides spacious oceanfront rooms and suites, which include microwave, coffee maker, and full size refrigerator. If larger accommodations are needed such as a condominium or house, you will find a list of optional accommodations at the bottom of this article, which are within a 5–12 minute drive to the Feast site.

The *Infuse* youth program will be located at Myrtle Beach this year. All youth are invited to join us in Myrtle Beach for sermons and discussions directed to you—the young adult. Interact with other young adults who have the same faith as you, enjoy uplifting music, and participate in activities of service.

Many activities are planned for all at Myrtle Beach this year, so prepare to enjoy eight days of fellowship, uplifting sermons, inspiring music, and spiritual revitalization at God’s Feast of Tabernacles 2006 in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.



Group Rates for Springmaid Resort:

IMPORTANT: Use group reservation code: **2913** or state you are with *The Church of God International* when making reservations to insure group rate.

- Standard Room — \$65.00
 - One Bedroom Suite — \$69.00
 - Hospitality Suite — \$69.00
- (Laundry facilities and elevators are available).

Springmaid Beach Resort & Conference Center
3200 South Ocean Blvd. - Myrtle Beach, South Carolina (SC) 29577
Direct 843-315-7100 | Facsimile 843-315-7237 | Toll Free 866-764-8501
Email info@springmaidbeach.com | Website Springmaid Beach

For those interested in a 1,2 or 3 bedroom condominium:
Myrtle Beach Resort
5905 Highway 17 South Myrtle Beach, SC 29575
Call toll free: 1-888-627-3767
www.myrtle-beach-resort.com/resort.htm
This resort is located in the Garden City area about 6–10 minutes from the Feast site.

Condotels South
Condotels offers several resorts in the Garden City area.
Call toll-free 1-877-777-0846 * local 843-357-4000
www.condotelsvacations.com

For those interested in beach house or Condo:

Seaside Rentals
12 South Ocean Boulevard
Surfside Beach, SC 29575
Toll-free: (866) 252-9930
Local: (843) 839-0099
www.seasiderentalsonline.com

Garden City Realty, Inc.
608 Atlantic Avenue
Garden City Beach, SC 29576-8104
Phone: (877) 767-7737
www.gardencityrealty.com
Dunes Beach Vacations
128 Atlantic Avenue
Garden City Beach, SC 29576

Local: (843) 651-2116
Toll-Free: (888) 889-0312
www.dunes.com

All the above offer accommodations that are within a 5–12 minute drive to the Feast site.

For more information, call Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce: 800-356-3016

Mike Nolan: 843-761-5211

Philippines Feast Accommodations

The Philippine Feast of Tabernacles site this year for the Manila and Naga Churches will be Tagaytay City, Cavite. It is located 50 kilometers south of Metro Manila, about an hour’s ride. The meeting hall where services will be held, and most activities, will be at the Phinma Training Center, Tagaytay City.

There are lodging accommodations available at the Phinma Center at P800 per person/day, excluding meals (roughly \$16.00 at the current exchange rates). Most members are expected to take the church-arranged accommodations at 5R Housing at very affordable rates (between P1, 200-P1, 500 per room/day, about 3–5 persons per room or about \$25–\$30) excluding meals.

There are other hotels and housing facilities available in the area, as it is a popular tourist spot overlooking Taal Volcano, a small volcano within a larger extinct volcano. But there is no need to worry over volcanic activity, as Taal has been dormant for a very long time.



Mt. Mayon, Philippines

For those of the Mindanao Island, the southernmost tip of the Philippines, the brethren will hold the Feast of Tabernacles at the Granaderos Resort, Maigo, Lanao del Norte. The Maranding church, the brethren at Cagayan de Oro as well as in the Bukidnon areas, are expected to meet there. Accommodations at the Granaderos Resort is P500–P800 per room/day (3–4 persons, roughly \$10–\$16).

The festival committees prepared a good set of sports and family activities, and we expect an enjoyable and well-remembered Feast. Those who need more information may inquire at +63-2-995-0294, Mondays–Fridays, 9am–6pm or send inquiry at info@cgiphils.org.

Notes:
P = Philippine Peso
\$ = U.S. Dollar
Exchange Rate approximated at \$1 = P50

Rene D. Corpuz □

Australia

The Feast of Tabernacles will be held this year in Ballina, New South Wales, Australia, in the Richmond Room. For further details, contact Mr. Herb Haupt at 61–7–5463–2949 □

“These are the Feasts of the LORD, even Holy Convocations, which you shall proclaim in their appointed times.” *Leviticus 23:4*

≡≡≡ Feast Accommodations, 2006 ≡≡≡

CGI Canadian Locations

Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada

We have decided to keep the Feast of Tabernacles at the Best Western Cairn Croft Resort and Conference Centre. This location has the added benefit of improved social interaction by having a huge atrium in the middle of 60 rooms for all to sit, play and fellowship together in. It is also a little less expensive for everyone.



The Best Western Cairn Croft Hotel is Niagara Falls, Ontario's more popular courtyard style hotel. The enclosed courtyard is a tropical paradise featuring towering trees, gardens and lush foliage. Here you'll enjoy the heated indoor pool, gazebo, kids playpark, and whirlpool hot tubs. The award winning Croft Garden Restaurant and the Croft Night Club are always popular with guests to Niagara Falls as well as locals.

Area Attractions

While the resort is in the City of Niagara Falls, you can still enjoy nature by viewing the beautiful fall colours at numerous parks in the area, including ones that overlook the Niagara Gorge, located minutes from the world famous thundering Falls and all of the spectacular attractions of Niagara. Some such attractions are: Marineland, Clifton Hill, the Butterfly Conservatory (children and adults love this place), IMAX Theatre, the Skylon Revolving Restaurant overlooking the city and Falls, Maid of the Mist Boat Ride, wine tours, great shopping, and so on.

Accommodations

The Cairn Croft Resort has contemporary guest rooms (featuring two queen size beds) that surround the atrium. The atrium is an ideal place for evening socializing, and yet these rooms are very quiet for sleeping at night. All rooms around the atrium will have a mini fridge included.

Amenities

Singles, couples, and families can unwind within the relaxed atmosphere and enjoy as much or as little activity as they choose. Families can spend time together or separately with the indoor pool, whirlpools, children play centre, video arcade, and so on. We will also have a hospitality suite available all week for groups to get together and play games, sing songs, and enjoy each other's company. The Cairn Croft has a restaurant on sight as well as a lounge where Karaoke is done a few days a week. There are a dozen restaurants within walking distance and malls just around the corner. For more information check out their website at www.cairncroft.com.

Church Services

Church services are held right on the grounds, and chairs are padded. Visitors to this Canadian feast site will realize it is home to some of the best special music available. At time of this writing, Jim French has committed himself to being the Feast Coordinator for this location working with an experienced committee of people to ensure all your needs are met. A variety of speakers will be available to provide you greater insight on God's Holy Days, God's Plan of Salvation and to help you put sound biblical principles to greater use in your life. This year one of our church services and one other presentation will be Youth/Young Adult *Impact* sessions where the focus will be on making a positive influence in the lives of our teens and young adults. The rest of the church should also be encouraged by these sessions and grow in appreciation and support of tomorrow's leaders. Sabbath School classes will also be available each day.

Location

Located at 6400 Lundy's Lane, Niagara Falls, the Best Western Cairn Croft Resort is easily accessible from the Queen Elizabeth Highway (QEW), and is just minutes from historic Niagara-On-The-Lake. Americans should bring proof of citizenship or a passport to enter Canada.

Rates (Significant Savings for the Church of God International):

Guest Room 8 nights Checking in on October 6th and out on the 14th.

2 Queen Size Beds

2 Adults \$69.50/night + 15%taxes (3 Adults-\$79.50, 4 Adults - \$89.50)

(Children 16 and under are free)

For families of 4, please call John at 519-741-0455 to arrange suitable on-site accommodations to meet your needs.

Rates are only guaranteed until August 31, 2006, so book early.

To book, call the Best Western Cairn Croft Resort at 1-800-263-2551 or www.cairncroft.com and state clearly that you are with the Church of God International.

Niagara Falls has hundreds of other motels and hotels for every price range should you wish to stay elsewhere, but we strongly encourage you to stay here and fellowship together each and every evening. □

Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

We have decided to keep the Feast of Tabernacles at the Victoria Days Inn Waterway Conference Centre.

Victoria is a beautiful location with incredible gardens, shopping, mountains, ocean, and harbour. It is a fantastic location for all ages and budgets.

Area Attractions

It's just a five-minute drive to downtown, the famous Inner Harbour and major attractions! The Days Inn is located near the scenic Gorge Waterway, which runs into the Inner Harbour. Also nearby are several scenic walking/biking trails, kayak rental places, and challenging golf courses.

Furthermore, we are close to great shopping at Mayfair Mall, Tillicum Mall & Hillside Center. While the Days Inn is in the City of Victoria, you can still enjoy nature by viewing the beautiful fall colours at numerous parks in the area, including ones that overlook spectacular water sunsets of the major shipping lanes to Vancouver. Some area attractions are: Butchart Gardens, Museums, Undersea Gardens, Blethering Place Tea Room, Whale Watching tours, great shopping, and so on.

Accommodations

The Days Inn has contemporary guest rooms featuring one queen size bed with a sofa, two queens, or one king. In addition, there are several suites set aside for family accommodations that are incredibly affordable and very clean. All rooms in our booking will have a mini fridge included. Full housekeeping service is provided twice a week and daily towel and garbage service. We strongly suggest you take a tour of the facility at www.victoriadaysinn.com.

Church Services

Church services are held right on the grounds, and chairs are padded. Visitors to this Canadian feast site will realize they are home to what will be a very fast growing feast site. At time of this writing, John Coish has committed himself to being the Feast Coordinator for this location working with an experienced committee of people to ensure all your needs are met. A variety of speakers will be available to provide you greater insight on God's Holy Days, God's Plan of Salvation and to help you put sound biblical principles to greater use in your life. This year two of our church services and two other presentations will be Youth/Young Adult *Impact* sessions where the focus will be on making a positive influence in the lives of our teens and young adults. The rest of the church should also be encouraged by these sessions and grow in appreciation and support of tomorrow's leaders.

There will also be Sabbath School classes daily for the children in the room that doubles as our hospitality room for informal meetings and luncheons. During the week there will be a couple of church luncheons provided.

Location

Located at 123 Gorge Road, Victoria, the Days Inn is easily accessible from Highway 1 and Douglas Street, and is also just a short drive from the Victoria International Airport. Americans should bring proof of citizenship or a passport to enter Canada.

Rates

Guest Rooms (check in October 6 and leaving October 14)

2 Queen Size Beds \$44.14/night plus taxes

1 Queen and Sofa \$44.14/night plus taxes

1 King Size Bed \$44.14/night plus taxes

(Children 16 and under are free)

To book the other rooms, call the Victoria Days Inn at 1-888-468-3514 or daysinn@victoriahotels.com and **state clearly that you are with the "Church of God International October Conference Block."**

NOTE: Family Units sleep six and are \$62/night. Family units include kitchens. Family units can ONLY be booked through John Coish at 519-741-0455.

Victoria has many other motels and hotels for every price range should you wish to stay elsewhere, but we strongly encourage you to spend time together here at the Days Inn to enhance the fellowship for everyone. Activity and Speaking Schedule will be posted on our cgicanada.org website well in advance of the Feast. □

≡≡≡ Feast Accommodations, 2006 ≡≡≡

Land Between The Lakes, KY Festival Accommodations

Festival Coordinators:

James Pollitte (606) 742-2222 jamespollitte@kih.net

Bob Tackett (606) 784-0451 bobtackett@kih.net

Kentucky is noted for its beautiful State Parks and the Convention Facilities found in them. The auditorium is inside the **KENTUCKY DAM VILLAGE RESORT COMPLEX**, located 20 miles east of Paducah, Kentucky just off of I-24 at the **KY LAKE DAM**. The Resort has hotel rooms and cottages for our reservation.

The **new** negotiated rates are very good and the facilities are very comfortable and appropriate for our needs. Reservation numbers are (800) 325-0146 or (270) 362-4271. **Discounted rates** have been arranged for members of *The Church of God International*. Be sure to identify yourself as a member of the church. Check-in time is 4:00 PM and check-out is at 11:00 AM.

Kentucky Dam Village State Resort Park rates (per night):

Village Inn rooms (hotel)—\$58.00

One-bedroom village cottages—\$68.75

Two-bedroom, 1 bath village cottages—\$75.00

Two-bedroom, 2 bath village cottages—\$97.15

Two-bedroom, 1 ½ bath village cottages—\$88.75

Three-bedroom 1½ bath cottages—\$106.00

Executive Cottages:—\$133.35

After you call in for reservations you will be mailed a reservation form. This must be returned with one night’s deposit at least 30 days prior to your arrival .

Note: This must be done to assure your reservation.

This year the Church has many *free* functions planned for the brethren:

For Example

There will be two *free* Luncheon Buffets. Also a Church Cookout/ Songfest and Pool Party for teens and young people (weather permitting). A *free* Senior Luncheon with program and prizes. Family Dance with catered party *hord’oeuvres* and beverages. *Two* Bible Studies, Talent Show, Concert and more. Please note that in order to make these functions free to the brethren, we will be accepting donations.

Camping: There are many campsites at the Resort and in the area. Sites range from developed family campgrounds to the ‘back country.’

Fishing, Boating and Biking: One of the largest inland lake marinas in the country with fishing, boat rides and sail boating. Over 200 miles of biking trails. Check out the beach on the lake (weather permitting).

Golfing: Also at the Resort is an 18-hole golf course, horseback riding and hiking trails.

There are many exciting things to do at the Resort and in the area. **The Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area** is set on 170,000 acres of protected nature preserve between two of the largest lakes in the region with hundreds of miles of shoreline. Also at LBL is an **1850’s Era Museum** and “**Working Farm**”, The **Elk and Bison Prairie** located along a gently winding road, **Woodsland Nature Station** and the **Golden Pond Planetarium and Observatory** to “gaze at the stars” and see a solar flare through a hydrogen refractor telescope. There are many fine restaurants in the area (**Patti’s 1880’s Settlement** at Grand Rivers and **The Brass Lantern**, for example), train rides, Antique Malls, Putt-Putt Golf, Forgotten Past Museum and **The Kentucky Opry Country Music Show**. There is much more, and if that is not enough, **Olde Paducah Historic City** is only 20 miles west on I-24.

PLEASE NOTE: If you have problems with your reservation at the State Park, please contact Mr. Bob Tackett or Mr. James Pollitte. □

St. Petersburg, FL

Services will be held at the Grand Plaza Hotel Beachfront Resort and Conference Center located at 5250 Gulf Boulevard, St. Pete Beach, FL 33706, Tel. (727) 360-1811 or Toll Free (800) 448-0901. Website www.gulfplazaflorida.com.

Among many attractions, the Grand Plaza Hotel has a rotating restaurant on the top floor.

Normal rates at the Grand Plaza Hotel (formerly Hilton), is \$200.00 per night, but we can receive a phenomenal discount rate of only \$99.00 per night for a standard room. Other rooms are available at additional prices.

NOTE: Mr. Tony Fontao and the Church of God, Miami are hosts. Be sure to mention that you are booking with the Church of God, Miami for your special discounts.

There are also many condominiums and vacation homes around the area. You can get further information from Capalbo Rental, (800) 237-5960. Contact person: Diane. Web site: www.capalborental.com

Gulf Gate is a condominium only one block from the hotel, with 1 and 2 bedroom condos available. You can contact them at (727) 367-5696 or toll free (800) 628-4692. Web site: www.gulfgateresort.com □

Wagoner, OK Western Hills Guest Ranch

Western Hills Guest Ranch continues to be one of our most popular resorts. So much so, that each year following the Feast, many make reservations for next year. Since we reserve the entire facility and housing accommodations, allowing brethren to be side-by-side neighbors, it's like one big happy family living and learning together for eight days. The facilities here allow a person everything he or she may need without ever having to leave the Feast site. In addition to our rooms, there is a restaurant and meeting rooms for our children’s and teen Bible classes, and daily worship services all under the same roof. Also under the same roof there is a recreation hall, lounge, pool table, and a variety of other games and music available. Outside there is tennis, volleyball, hiking, bicycle riding, fishing, skiing, etc. On the beautiful lake that affords gorgeous sunsets and surrounds the park on three sides, there will be pontoon boat rides, a float trip down a nearby river, a picnic or camp at one of several campgrounds here on this several-thousand-acre state park. Play golf on the beautiful course; don’t be surprised if your game is slightly delayed by a herd of white tail deer, flock of geese or turkey. There will be cookouts, hay rides, tournament games, and park tours for the little ones, with picnic and games at the nearby campsite. There is a swimming pool, table tennis, video games, board games, horse shoes, nearby Indian museums, malls at Tulsa, 45 minutes away. Well, you get the idea.

Due to the popularity of this site, please don’t delay in making your reservations. There are a limited number of accommodations available at the site. Once filled, rooms can be found in nearby Wagoner (6 miles), Tahlequah (18miles), or the larger city of Muskogee (25 miles). For information regarding these communities, write or call the following Chambers of Commerce at: Wagoner, 214 E. Cherokee, P.O. Box 247, Wagoner, OK 74477, (918) 485-3414; or Tahlequah, 101 S. Muskogee, Tahl-equah, OK 74464, (918) 456-3742; Muskogee, P.O. Box 797, Muskogee, OK 74402, (918) 682-2401.

For those who prefer camping or staying in a recreational vehicle (RV), there are a number of options available through the park service. The park service will be pleased to answer questions or give out directions to the various campsites located on the peninsula. Their number is (918) 772-2046. Rates and fees are as follows: Overnight Tent Sites: Primitive site \$7 per night, depending on the site location (Area 3–6), with water and electric, \$12 a night (Areas 1 and 2). Overnight RV Park: with water and electric hook-ups and sewage dump station, \$14 per night. Overnight RV Trailer Park: with water, electric, and sewage hook ups, \$16 per night. There are 28 of these sites and they are not available through reservations—they are taken on a first-come basis. Please note: for senior citizens (62 or older) and the totally disabled, there is a 50 percent discount on the overnight camping fee only—this does not apply to the utility fee. They do honor good Sam Cards. Reservations: there are a variety of rooms and cottages available. For information and reservations, call (918) 772-2545. Please mention your affiliation with the church. Nightly room rates are as follows: Regular Hotel Room: single, \$50; double, \$50; triple, \$65; quad, \$75. Cottages: for two, \$50 and \$55; for four, \$60 and \$70; for six, \$85 (prices vary since some units have kitchenettes). Cabana suites: \$80 (sales tax not included). An adult is considered to be anyone 18 years of age or older. Children under 18 stay at no additional cost. Some kitchenettes are available in the cottage units. Cooking utensils are not provided. Daily linen service is available. □

Submitted by Ron Elkins, Festival coordinator, (870) 653-6043

Park City, UT

The Feast of Tabernacles for the CGI will be held this year in Park City, Utah. The Feast, which starts October 7, 2006 and runs through to October 14, 2006, will be held at the Yarrow Inn and Convention Center. We will post information about housing and dining in the Park City area throughout the year.

The Yarrow has several rooms available for us at reduced rates. You can contact them at 800 927-7694 or at their web page at <http://www.yarrowresort.com>.

We have good news about some of the other hospitality facilities in the Park City area. The Holiday Inn and the Hampton Inn and Suites and the Best Western Landmark Inn have offered reduced rates for *Church of God International* Feast goers. Standard rooms at the Best Western start at \$59.95, and \$65.00 at the Holiday Inn. The Hampton Inn has rooms starting at \$69.00. The Holiday Inn and Hampton have suites that include kitchenettes for just \$20.00 to \$30.00 more per room, respectively. At the Best Western, their deluxe rooms start at \$69.95. Each of these hotels is located right off I–80 and Kimball Junction Exit 145.

There are many resorts in this area. You can contact any of the other resorts at the link <http://www.parkcityinfo.com>. There you will find a list of several accommodations to choose from. The above hotels, Holiday Inn, Hampton Inn, and the Best Western, have given us a special price break for the Feast if you mention you will be attending with the *Church of God International*. Use their links on our <http://www.cgi-utah.org/toc.htm> site to go right to their web sites. (Room prices quoted do not include taxes.)

Services will be held at the Yarrow in the Mountain View Convention Room. The Yarrow is located at 1800 Park Avenue, and Park City is approximately 35 miles from the Salt Lake City Airport. From the airport, take I-80 east up Parleys Canyon to Kimball Junction. Then take Exit 145. The Yarrow is about 5 miles south of the Junction on State Route 224. See the map at http://www.cgi-utah.org/image_map.gif.

We also have reserved another room adjacent to the main meeting room for the Children's Bible Class. We plan to have Bible Class every day except on the holy days. Classes will begin one hour before services.

The following fun activities are being planned for the Feast: Hot Air Balloon Rides, Hay Wagon Rides that include a Chuck Wagon Meal, Horseback Rides and the Heber Valley Railroad. We are also planning a Family Fun Night with Talent Show and a Bingo and Game Night, and a tour of Utah Olympic Park, home of 2002 Winter Olympics. □

A True History According to Holy Scripture

Chapter 5

ABRAHAM'S SON IN HIS OLD AGE—ISAAC

The Grievous Life of Isaac and Rebekah

by Benjamin R. Chapman



Ben Chapman

Truly, the father of the faithful had a most trying life! But by now God considered him a prophet (Genesis 20:7). (See the previous chapter of this *History*.) But his most severe test was yet to come! How? Through the birth of the long awaited son Isaac. Yes, an incredible miracle was about to occur in Abraham and Sarah's life! A child was to be born to Sarah when she was at the incredible old age of 90! The promised line of God's servants was to continue. God's government was to be returned to this earth. Our God has the awesome power to accomplish anything!

Abraham's family was to have a pronounced effect on the entire globe. Throughout this world we can see these promises everywhere. Not just in Israel and the Middle East where his grandson Jacob grew up and had a very large family, but also through the children of Ishmael, Abraham's firstborn son through Hagar, his wife's handmaiden, who grew up in the Middle East. To Ishmael's descendants, Abraham's promise of land was fulfilled through the large Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf region. The majority of oil and petroleum products come from this area. Oil is considered by many as "black gold."

We read of this promise in Genesis 21:13: "And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed."

The previous chapter of this *History* ended with Abraham's encounter with Abimelech and another "half-truth." We see a sinful deception (Abraham's fearfulness and deception, a weakness of character—not really a legitimate explanation—strongly contrasted with Abimelech's generosity). The father of the faithful had yet to gain a really genuine strong faith!

Isaac

God always keeps His promises! Isaac is finally born when Abraham is 100 years old.

"And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him" (Genesis 21:1-5).

Because Abraham and Sarah had attempted to

Editor's note: This is the fifth installment of a series by Benjamin R. Chapman on the history of the world according to Biblical data. Mr. Chapman has completed several chapters and plans to eventually publish the entire series in a single volume. Until the volume is completed and made available, we plan to run segments of the work serially in *The International News*.

"help" God (whom we should know doesn't need any assistance), problems in the family arose.

In Genesis 21:9-12 we read of some of the ensuing difficulties. "And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah has said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called."

Abraham rose up early in the morning, took bread and a bottle of water, gave them to Hagar and sent her and her son away. By the time they reached the wilderness of Beersheba, her meager supply of water was gone and most despondently she cast her young son under one of the shrubs, expecting him to die. She wept bitterly.

God heard the cries of the lad and sent an angel to comfort Hagar, promising her that her son would grow into a great nation. Then God opened her eyes to see a well of water. They were saved! Hagar's son Ishmael grew into a skilled archer and lived in the wilderness of Paran until he was old enough to have a wife, an Egyptian woman. Indeed, Ishmael and his entire progeny were to become as wild men, their hands against every man, even their own brothers (Genesis 16:12). Historically, there have been only short periods of time under very strong leadership that the Arabs have had any lasting peace! This continues among modern-day Ishmaelites today. God allowed it because He was going to work through Isaac, not Ishmael, to complete His plan.

Many years passed in the young life of Isaac. Bullinger's *Companion Bible*, Appendix 50, estimates that Isaac was 33 when his father was going to have to offer him as a sacrifice. Other commentators speculate a different, but still a fairly young age.

Abraham's Great Trial

The next step in God's overall plan of redemp-

tion was to put Abraham through his greatest trial to test his obedience to Him.

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt [try] Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Genesis 22:1-2).

Again, Abraham did not argue with God, but undoubtedly prayed long and hard the three days he trudged to Mt. Moriah to try to understand why God had commanded him to make this sacrifice. The parallelism between what Abraham was asked to do with Isaac and what Almighty God the Father allowed to happen to His Son Jesus cannot be overlooked. Remember, Jesus Christ lay in the grave after His crucifixion at age 33½ for three days and three nights, the same amount of time Abraham journeyed to Moriah! As noted, Bullinger, in his *Companion Bible*, Appendix 50, calculates Isaac was 33, which was the same age Jesus Christ our Savior was when offered in sacrifice for all of mankind's sins.

This great trial on Abraham reached its climax in Genesis 22:9-12:

"And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son thine only son from me."

Imagine! Isaac carried the wood on his shoulders to the altar, then allowed *himself* to be bound and placed upon the wood. Isaac was a very special young man who trusted his father implicitly, even to the point of death. When Abraham heard the voice of the angel calling him, he was so greatly thankful! Did he pass the great test?

Abraham did not fail! God now made His covenant with Abraham *unconditional*.

"And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22:15-18).

God promised this man Abraham that he would be the father of literally *millions* of human descendants, and that One of them would be Jesus Christ Himself! Truly, Abraham can rightly be called the father of the faithful.

Sarah's Death

When Isaac was 37 years of age, his mother Sarah died at the age of 127 in Hebron in the land of Canaan. Abraham, now 137 years old, and his son mourned for her. Abraham buried his wife in a cave in the field of Machpelah before Mamre in Hebron in the land of Canaan, which he purchased for 400 shekels of silver from the sons of Heth (Genesis 23).

Seeing that Sarah's death deeply grieved Isaac,

CONTINUED on next page

Is Jesus Really God?

The issue of the deity of Jesus Christ has been a hotly debated issue for centuries. In 256—336 AD an Alexandrian theologian named Arius popularized the view that the pre-incarnate Christ was a *created* being who was, both in Essence and in Person, distinct from God. His view came to be called "Arianism," and was condemned by early church councils. It is one of the Christological positions that fall under the label of "unitarianism." The orthodox position regarding the deity of Christ has prevailed through the history of Christendom, but unitarianism has never gone away. Today the doctrine of Arianism is once again gaining in popularity—even within the Church of God culture. What about the "agency" concept? How would you respond to unitarian "proof texts"? We need to be ready always to give an answer (1 Peter 3:15). You need to request our *free* booklet, *Is Jesus Really God?* by Ian Boyne.

Send your request to: **The Church of God International, PO Box 2525, Tyler, TX 75710** Or call (903) 939-2929. Our email address is info@cgi.org

CONTINUED from previous page

after three years Abraham made his eldest servant swear to find a suitable wife for his son away from the land of Canaan and to go to Abrahams's own country and kindred. Again, we see God's hand in directing the life of Isaac. The finding of Rebekah by Abraham's servant can only be considered miraculous!

The servant returned to the land of Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor (Genesis 24:10) and there, Abraham's servant met Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor, Abraham's brother. In modern terminology, Rebekah would be considered Isaac's second cousin, as would be Laban, Rebekah's brother, who would figure very significantly in the life of Isaac and Rebekah's son Jacob.

In many ways, it was love at first sight (Genesis 24:63-67). The heavy burden of grief on Isaac had been lifted. Although they married when Isaac was forty, (Genesis 25:20) it was twenty years before they had children.

Ten years after their marriage, when Isaac was 50, Abraham remarried at age 150 to Keturah, with whom he had a number of additional children, many of whom are considered the fathers of modern royalty in Europe (Genesis 25:1-4).

Abraham lived to the ripe old age of 175. His sons Isaac, now 75, and Ishmael, now 89, buried him in the same cave his wife Sarah had been buried 48 years earlier (Genesis 25:7-10).

After producing twelve sons who became great princes, Ishmael himself died at age 137 (Genesis 25:17).

The Grievous Life of Isaac and Rebekah

After twenty years of his wife's barrenness, Isaac entreated the Lord for her so she might have children. She became pregnant with twins! The two lads struggled within her until they were born into two quite different manners of people and became quite contentious, later causing much grief to their mother and father (Genesis 25:22-23).

The two boys grew. Esau became a cunning hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau, especially enjoying the venison he killed and prepared, but Rebekah loved Jacob. This was the cause of much of their grief. It is so important to treat all our children equally, especially in love and patience. One of the keys to good child rearing is to treat all your children *equally*.

Although the Bible does not record the time of Esau's selling his birthright for a bowl of soup, some commentaries speculate the boys were older teenagers, perhaps 20-some years old. Again Bullinger speculates in his *Companion Bible* that the boys were 24 at this time. At whatever age they were, Esau despised his birthright. And Jacob, called the "supplanter," bought it from his brother for a mere bowl of lentil soup and some bread! Some question why God "hated" Esau but "loved" Jacob by comparison. In His wisdom and understanding, God foresaw how these boys were going to turn out. In many ways both boys did wrong. Even humanly we can foresee the brewing problems between these two boys and how this grieved their parents.

There was still another famine in the land, and God directed Isaac and Rebekah to sojourn in the land of Egypt. They moved to Gerar in the Negeb where Isaac—not yet having enough faith in God nor learning the sad lessons of his father—told the men there that Rebekah was not his wife, but his sister. In actuality, she was his wife and his niece, the daughter of Bethuel, his first cousin.

Isaac became very prosperous and later moved back to Beersheba, still in the Negeb region.

At 40 years of age, Esau married Judith and Bashemath, two wives of the Hittites. Esau's marriage outside their family added to the grief of Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis. 26:34-35). Later Esau took more Gentile wives (Genesis. 28:8-9). Some believe this was done to spite his parents still further.

Isaac was now about 136 years of age and nearly

blind. When Jacob was about 76, his mother schemed to steal the firstborn's blessings by deceiving elderly Isaac into thinking that he was blessing his favorite firstborn, Esau. The ruse succeeded, and the younger Jacob received the majority of his father's blessings. Esau received practically nothing and cried bitterly, but God had already discerned his spirit. Through deception, the blessings were passed onto Jacob and his progeny (Genesis 27:38-40). Only through time would Esau break the yoke from his neck. Obviously, he hated Jacob for this and vowed to slay his brother after the days of mourning for his father Isaac were over. But Isaac lived another 44 years!

Word got to Jacob through his mother Rebekah, and after seeing his father once more, he fled to Haran and to his uncle Laban's clan. Neither Isaac nor Rebekah wanted their son Jacob to marry any of the daughters of Canaan. Through Esau they had already become a great grief to Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 27:46).

Laban's Clan

He was on his way from Beersheba to Haran when Jacob had his mysterious dream of a ladder whose top reached into heaven, and he saw angels ascending and descending on it (Genesis. 28:12). God appeared to him and promised him incredible blessings of offspring and land. The next morning Jacob took his "pillow stone" on which he had slept, built an altar and poured oil upon it, and vowed that the Lord would be his God and that he would tithe to Him.

Upon reaching Haran, Jacob met Rachel, Laban's second born daughter, fell in love with her and wept for joy. When Rachel reported to her father, he ran out to meet Jacob. Jacob abode with them about a month. Laban then bargained with Jacob to work for him for agreed upon wages. Jacob loved Rachel so much he proposed to work for seven years for her hand in marriage. "Tricky" Laban agreed (Genesis 29:20). Jacob's time of employment began when he was about 77 years of age. It is hard to believe that Jacob was an "old" 84 years of age when he married!

Some might think this is unusual. One scholar says he was 76, Bullinger has him as 77 or 78, and Ivan Panin records Jacob as 79. In the next chapter of this *History*, we will explore his age in much greater detail from numerous Biblical references. You will find this most fascinating. It is one of the great mysteries of the Bible. The A.M. dates given in Jacob's life will be further substantiated in the next chapter of this *History*.

When the seven years of labor were complete, anxious Jacob was ready for marriage. But after a somewhat intoxicating marriage feast, tricky Laban passed off his firstborn daughter Leah instead of Rachel. It was late and Jacob had too much food and drink, so he did not perceive Leah when she was given to him as his wife. He consummated the marriage, but the next morning, to his sorrow, he discovered Laban's deception. Needless to say, he was angry with his uncle who presented him a rather lame excuse about marrying off the elder first before the younger. That may have been the custom of the land, but Laban's deceptive lifestyle showed through many times later in Jacob's life. They agreed that if Jacob were to complete the marriage week with Leah and to promise *another* seven years of labor, he would give Rachel to him in marriage. What could Jacob do but agree? Thus, at age 84, Jacob had two wives! To each of his two daughters, Laban gave handmaidens to help them in their duties. They eventually become Jacob's concubines and bore some of his thirteen children.

For the next seven years, many children were born through Leah, Rachel's handmaiden Bilhah, and Leah's handmaiden Zilpah. Rachel herself was barren for her first six years of marriage. Genesis chapters 29 and 30 give the details of the children's births. Bullinger's *Companion Bible* has the first eleven children through Leah, Bilhah, and Zilpah, all born in the first seven years of Jacob's marriage. Finally, Rachel became pregnant and had her first child in the seventh year of her marriage (Genesis 30:22-24).

At age 91, Jacob had completed his fourteen years of service for his two wives and wanted to return to his homeland (Genesis. 30:25-26). Again, Laban, seeing the prosperity Jacob had brought to him, bargained

Twelve Amazing Christian Conundrums

At first glance, some precepts gleaned from the Gospels appear to be paradoxes and defy human logic. But through them God has revealed a wondrous revelation and miraculous design for believers who wish to enjoy a successful, overcoming life. In them God's Word reveals that we can do *all* things through Christ who strengthens us.

1. We can see things that are unseen. (2 Cor. 4:18)
2. We conquer through surrender. (Rom. 6:16-18)
3. We find rest under a yoke. (Mt. 11:28-30)
4. We reign by serving. (Mark 10:42-44)
5. We are made great by becoming little. (Luke 9:48)
6. We are exalted by being humble. (Mt. 23:12)
7. We become wise by being fools for Christ's sake. (1 Cor. 1:20, 21)
8. We are made free by becoming His bond servants. (Rom. 6:10)
9. We wax strong by being weak . (2 Cor. 12:10)
10. We triumph by defeat. (2 Cor. 12:7-9)
11. We find victory by glorying in our infirmities. (2 Cor. 12:5)
12. We live by dying . (John 12:24,25; 2 Cor. 4:10,11)

Need to know more about Church history?

- Why the church?
- How did it begin?
- What is its purpose?
- What is its destiny?
- Could you explain it to others?

Be sure to send for the 3-CD set "Church History" by Bill Watson.
Request your set *now*, before you forget.
Phone (903) 939-2929
Email: info@cgi.org

with him for another six years of labor in return for some of Laban's livestock (Genesis 31:38, 41). Through selective breeding (Genesis 30:41-43), Jacob arranged to get the best of Laban's stock, even though Laban changed Jacob's wages ten times! Laban's sons became quite jealous of Jacob, to such an extent that Jacob feared for his life. He decided it was time to leave (Genesis 31:17-18).

Three days later Laban learned of his son-in-law's departure, and because Rachel had stolen Laban's household gods, he and his sons pursued Jacob. In a dream, God warned Laban not to speak good or bad to Jacob (Genesis 31:24).

God's hand was very much in the life of Jacob, and would be to an even greater extent in his future!
(To be continued.) □

Questions & Answers

By Vance Stinson

Question: If Satan is confined to the earth, as we have traditionally believed, why does the book of Job record Satan visiting God in heaven?

Reply: While Scripture clearly teaches that Satan is active here on earth, I'm aware of no passage that says he is confined to our planet or its atmosphere. The descriptions of Satan appearing among the sons of God in their assemblages before Yahweh (Job 1–2) *could* mean that heaven is in some sense accessible to Satan. The description in Revelation 12:7–12, unless understood as purely symbolic, supports this possibility. However, there are other plausible explanations for these descriptions. In Job 1:6–12 and 2:1–7, the “sons of God” present themselves before Yahweh, and Satan (literally, *the Adversary*) comes among them. But the text does not identify the place of this assemblage. Yahweh and two angels appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mam're (Genesis 18). Why should we think the meeting described in the book of Job could not have taken place on earth?

Question: Why are angels often presented (in religious art, etc.) as women, though the Bible records no mention of any female angels? Is this another deception from Satan and the fallen angels?

Reply: The use of religious art depicting angels as women with wings can be traced to the fourth century, A.D., when Christian artists based their depictions of cherubim on imagery found in Greek and Roman art forms. This was probably more due to the artists' preferences than the devil's influence. Angels, being spirit beings, are neither male nor female, though they sometimes take the form of men when they appear to humans with messages from God. The Bible does not reveal whether or not angels have taken the appearance of women during their earthly visits. They *do* sometimes appear as a composite of creatures (Ezekiel 1:1–14; Revelation 4). It is certainly possible that some of those angels some have “unwittingly entertained” (Hebrews 13:2) appeared as women.

Question: Why do so many churches believe dead people are already in heaven, having left their dead bodies behind by going to heaven in spirit, yet when Christ was raised from the dead spiritually—actually the only spiritual resurrection recorded in the Bible that has already happened—His whole body was raised, leaving no evidence of a body still lying there in a tomb? Shouldn't Christ's example be proof enough that when a spiritual resurrection occurs, the physical body does not remain in the tomb?

Reply: The churches you refer to believe that death is the unnatural separation of the soul from the body, and that resurrection is the reuniting of soul and body. So, according to them, the dead in Christ are in fellowship with God but have not yet experienced resurrection. This is called the intermediate state, said to be the state between death and resurrection. According to this view, the souls of deceased saints are in heaven but cannot experience the fullness of heavenly glory until they are reunited with their bodies in the resurrection. The main difference between this view and the belief of the Church of God International is that the latter rejects the notion that the dead are conscious during the intermediate state. They have “fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:13) and presently “sleep in Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 4:14). At the return of Christ, they “shall awake [from the sleep of death]...to everlasting life” (Daniel 12:2).

The expression “spiritual resurrection” is probably best avoided, for it is generally taken to mean the *opposite* of “bodily resurrection.” But, as you have correctly noted, Christ's body was raised. It was an event that could have been photographed; it happened in this world, in history, not in some spiritual realm or merely in the minds of a group of hopeful though hopelessly ignorant—and highly imaginative—disciples.

It should be noted, however, that Christ's body was not merely resuscitated; it was *transformed* and could now pass from one state of reality to another in the blink of an eye. His body was a “spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:44)

in the sense that it was no longer confined to the material world or governed by the laws of physics. The risen Lord demonstrated His ability to appear and disappear at will, to change forms, and to circumvent the effects of physical law.

Question: What are the real reasons behind weather and natural disasters? When man causes the evil, such as with murder or terrorism, we know the cause is man-related; but with weather and nature...well, there sure are some huge debates on the why's. So what is your conclusion on this?

Reply: Nature itself was affected by the fall of man. The apostle Paul says, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now” (Romans 8:18–22).

The birth pangs of nature have produced some very loud groans—tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, and tornados, to name a few—that have proved costly in terms of human life and property. Does God generally *cause* these things through direct intervention? No. Does He *permit* them to occur? Obviously, He does. Is He capable of preventing them? Yes, that's for certain.

Now for the million-dollar question: *Why* does God, who is capable of instantly turning a level-four hurricane into a gentle breeze, permit the forces of nature to produce massive destruction and unspeakable suffering? Actually, this is but a variation of a question that has been asked countless times in the millennia of human history: Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?

Even our best attempts—our most thoroughly thought-out answers—do not fill *all* the gaps of mystery that lie between a benevolent God and a world filled with suffering. However, the things we *can* know about the nature and purpose of God will provide the materials needed for constructing a coherent theodicy. Here are the facts:

1) God loves humanity and “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4; John 3:16; 1 John 4:7–10).

2) God desires that humans love Him in return.

3) God wants children, not robots; therefore, He has endowed humans with free will, enabling them to freely choose to love Him. Love is by nature a choice, not a programmed response.

4) The freedom required for genuine expressions of love necessitates the possibility of evil. If people can freely choose to love God, they must also be free to choose *not* to love Him. If God stopped humans from making wrong choices, He would deprive them of freedom; and without freedom, love would be reduced to a programmed or forced response.

5) God, being infinitely holy and just, can have no fellowship with sinfulness. Thus man, through the freedom God bestowed upon him, made wrong choices and thereby cut himself off from fellowship with God. Once sin entered the picture, God withdrew His presence from man and man's environment, thus leaving humans with a God-shaped hole in their hearts and a natural environment subject to degeneration and decay.

6) This world of time and chance forms ideal testing and training grounds for humans, especially those enlightened and enabled (not coerced) by God's Spirit. Risk, loss, pain, heartbreak, fear, and even uncertainty, along with love, kindness, mercy, and compassion—the basic components of human life in a world of time and

chance—lead humans to search for a higher purpose for life, reveal human weakness and inadequacy, and stimulate and refine faith, love, and hope. Without the “training camp” of this world, God's “team” would never develop the strengths and skills necessary for winning the “game” of life. We would not become what God wants us to be.

7) While man, through sin, cut himself off from full fellowship with God, God did not completely abandon man. Throughout history, He has responded to human beings who have sought Him through faith, and from the beginning He determined He would provide a means whereby fallen man could be restored to full fellowship with God, and man's environment could become the paradise it was intended to be. All this will come about through a succession of predetermined dispensations, or stages of God's unfolding plan.

There are still some unresolved mysteries surrounding the question of why God allows bad things to happen to good people, but the above should give us the solid framework needed for further study and reflection and deeper understanding of the mysteries of God.

“For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away” (1 Corinthians 13:9–10). □



Vance Stinson

This world of time and chance forms ideal testing and training grounds for humans, especially those enlightened and enabled by God's Spirit.

CULTS, continued from page 1

Mr. Boyne is also critical of people he refers to as “right-wingers”—he lists several “who canonize Armstrong.”

“The 1970s revolution within the WCG, which produced such thinkers,” says Mr. Boyne “[who], if they had been allowed to continue, would have produced a movement able to withstand the doctrinal changes of the 1990s.”

Systematic Theology

“The finest hour in this movement theologically was when we produced the *Systematic Theology Project*,” Mr. Boyne said. The STP was “the most balanced compilation of Armstrongism, in my view. In my little way I want to continue the work of the STP and those ’70s theologians who cut away the excesses and baggage from HWA’s teachings but who retained the position—at least publicly—that his core doctrines represented biblical truth.”

The *Systematic Theology Project* was a 1978 compilation, promoted by Garner Ted Armstrong but criticized by his father, that attempted to document the beliefs and teachings of the Worldwide Church of God.

Mr. Boyne likes to talk to mainstream Christians, he says, particularly the bright and the schooled among them, “because they are best able to critique my reformed Armstrongism.”

Although he enjoys listening to what they say, they are “utterly incapable,” he claims, of shooting holes in the major doctrines of “reformed Armstrongism.”

So it was on the morning of June 9, when he used what he calls “first-rate material” developed by Eric Snow (a United Church of God member from Ferndale, MI) to show how the anti-cult movement grossly misrepresented Mr. Armstrong.

“Eric has assembled large numbers of quotes from HWA and others to show that some leading anti-cult writers had made false accusations against us,” Mr. Boyne said.

Regard for Scripture

He quoted to the Evangelical students from the writings of a woman whom he regards as the leading authority on the WCG, Evangelical Ruth Tucker.

In a July 15, 1996, article in *Christianity Today* magazine, Mrs. Tucker noted that Mr. Armstrong’s *sola Scriptura* approach was the reason his teachings have been so radically abandoned by so many of his followers.

“For all his heresies and errors,” she wrote, “he always insisted that the Bible alone was the foundation for his teachings. He never claimed additional revealed Scriptures such as the Mormons have.”

Mr. Boyne then quoted from WCG pastor Joe Tkach, Jr., who in his book *Transformed by Truth* acknowledged Mr. Armstrong’s passion for the Scripture, the centerpiece of Protestantism.

“Without the deep commitment to the Scriptures which God instilled in us through Armstrong,” wrote Mr. Tkach, “we would never have embarked on the journey we have taken. From his earliest to his last day Mr. Armstrong maintained a reverential respect for Scripture.”

The students sat in “rapt attention,” according to Mr. Boyne. So he explained to them two of the Armstrong movement’s most controversial doctrines: that man will become God and that the Armstrong movement is “the only true church,” which Mr. Boyne says he still passionately believes.

“One of the most painful things to me is to see the number of people in our movement who have become embarrassed by the fact that we are God’s uniquely called and commissioned people,” he said. “We don’t want to be considered narrow-minded, so we compromise our sense of a special calling.” Mr. Boyne went on to name several well-known ministers who seem to have fallen into this trap.”

Mr. Boyne referred to several scriptures he says prove what he refers to as the eventual “deification of man.” He also referred to the works of an Evangelical writer who talks about “man’s receiving the glory of Christ.” Mr. Boyne told the students that human beings receiving the glory of Christ must mean that man will be deified.

“How can you resist the conclusion that Mr. Armstrong came to in light of this from one of your own scholars?” Mr. Boyne asked the class.

Millions of Buddhists

Concerning religious exclusivism and the one-true-church concept, Mr. Boyne asked the students if they felt millions of Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims would be saved.

“No!” the class shouted.

“So why am I considered a bigot for excluding many persons when you have effectively condemned 70 percent of the world which is non-Christian?” he asked them. “Why aren’t you bigoted and narrow-minded too?”

He asked the students similar questions about Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons. Again the students shouted, “No!”

“Now, whose religion is more compassionate: mine or yours?” he asked. “My human leader, Herbert Armstrong, said eventually everyone will get the chance to accept Jesus. The Muslims, Bahais, Buddhists, and New Agers will not be left out. You cut off most of humanity, even many professing Christians, and don’t consider yourself narrow minded necessarily. Yet you consider Herbert Armstrong narrow minded because he believed that only those who accepted his

theology were right. You believe that only those who accept Evangelical theology are born-again, blood-washed Christians. Who’s kidding whom?”

Mr. Boyne then criticized the doctrines of the immortal soul and ever-burning hell.

“I often wonder,” he commented, “how you as Evangelicals can maintain a rigorous intellect and a compassionate heart and believe these abominable doctrines.”

The students asked him about the sovereignty of God.

“Ah, I am more Evangelical than you in that I insist, in line with Romans 10, that every single soul will get the chance to personally confess Christ, while you have more than one way of salvation,” he responded.

“You have God winking at people and allowing them into His Kingdom. I have one way: Confess Jesus as Lord and be saved. I say Jesus is the only way; He is the door; every lip has to confess Him.”

Mr. Boyne freely admitted to the students that Mr. Armstrong taught errors, some of which he corrected, some of which the CGI and others corrected.

“Some of Armstrong’s ideas were obscurantist,” he said. “He was not a trained theologian. He expressed some things badly.”

The regular lecturer in the class then commented that in 1985 he had heard Mr. Boyne give a lecture at the same seminary in which he admitted that Mr. Armstrong had dismissed even groups that agreed with him theologically.

“Then how can you come here and speak so glowingly of the man who rejected the very organization you were a part of?” he asked.

Mr. Boyne responded:

“I have already told you that the man himself said that Scripture was the final authority, and he himself used to say, ‘Don’t believe *me*, believe the *Bible!*’

“I took him literally, so I can quite easily disagree with him when he disagrees with Scripture.”

The class found the answer satisfactory, Mr. Boyne reported.

A student, after the class, admitted to Mr. Boyne that “It’s true. We Evangelicals cannot defend our doctrines.” □

EVIDENCE, continued from page 3

With the United States and Britain out of the way, a “*times of the Gentiles*” will ensue. Events leading up to and causing the downfall of God’s **birth-righted cultures**, resulting in enormous casualties and the death of thousands of Christians (Revelation 6:9–11), will certainly cause a mammoth geopolitical shift of unimaginable magnitude. This kind of turbulence, disorder, and anarchy would certainly give rise, providing a means for many of the prophecies outlined in your Bible to finally come to pass.

The point is, we are living in very volatile times that are definitely unlike *any* time before. The fragility of our day can be *splintered* by something as simple as “**one terrorist**” deciding to do some mindless act of violence. It no longer takes a whole country to initiate the death of tens of thousands. That’s how vulnerable we are to events that could send the global community of nations into a tailspin, throwing it headlong into the abyss of confusion, chaos, and global destruction. Brethren, **DON’T UNDERESTIMATE THE BUDS OF THE “FIG TREE!”** Beware and **WATCH** (Luke 21:29–36)! There is a storm brewing, and yes, there is a tremendous amount of turbulence among the inhabitants of our planet. We are definitely in the throes of change and mounting danger. So keep your eyes in tune with the “times of the season” lest you suffer loss at the hands of our Lord.

The Apostle Paul reminds us, “But of the *times and the seasons*, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh *as a thief in the night*. For when they shall say, peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you *as a thief*. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of the darkness. Therefore let us *not sleep*, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore *comfort yourselves together, and edify one another*, even as also ye do” (1 Thessalonians 5:1–11). □

Free Booklet!!!
“What Does the Bible Say About
Same-Sex Unions?”

Send for your copy today!

Church of God International
PO Box 2525
Tyler, TX 75710

Our God of Hope

We live in a skeptical age. All too often our youth are being taught to be cynical and to question everything—even God and the Bible. Is the Christian hope merely wishful or positive thinking? What is Bible-based hope? What apparently hopeless situation troubles you today? Be of good cheer! There is hope for the hopeless. Here is how to utilize your Christian-based hope.

by Lloyd W. Cary



Lloyd W. Cary

I dreamed a dream: and, lo, in my dream, *the Devil was having a yard sale!* And I saw legions of people there, greedily pushing and shoving to buy the Devil's wares. All his tools were fiendish and extravagantly costly. They were labeled hatred, vanity, jealousy, lust, greed, deceit, lying, and pride. But most expensive of all his wares, set apart in a gleaming silver and crystal display case, was his most used tool. The tool was stamped DISCOURAGEMENT. When questioned, the Devil answered, "Discouragement is more useful than

all the other devices in my tool chest combined. When I can't bring down my victims with any of the rest of these tools, I use discouragement, because so few people realize that it belongs to *me*."

Satan is never happier than when he sees people caving in and giving up to despair to become lost in confusion, hopelessness, and discouragement.

Have *you* ever felt like your whole world is caving in around you and there is absolutely no hope? When your troubles seem to rise up insurmountably?

Cheer up! There is good news. There is hope for the hopeless!

We've all used phrases like these:

"I hope it doesn't rain the day of the picnic."

"I hope my team wins the World Series."

"I hope he (or she) notices me."

"I hope I get that new job."

"I hope Daddy gets home early."

These kinds of hopes may be more accurately classified as *wishes* or *desires*. Hope differs from wishes and desires in that it implies some expectation of obtaining the item or event desired, with the possibility of possessing it. Hope always gives pleasure or joy; whereas mere wishes and desires often produce anxiety, disappointment, anguish, and hopelessness.

But what of the Christian hope? Is it merely a childlike wish? By no means!

We've heard many messages about faith and love; not many about hope.

Hope is the opposite of discouragement. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines despair as the "utter loss of hope." Clearly then, to conquer despair we need hope!

In Romans 8:24 we read, "For we are *saved* by hope...." *Read that again!* Many have focused so intently upon "we are saved by grace through faith" (Ephesians 2:8) they forget how *hope* enters into the salvation equation. Read on. "... but hope seen is not hope... we hope for what we do not see." Hope goes hand-in-hand with faith. Our faith is aided, abetted, assisted, and sustained by hope.

Hope means "To place confidence in; to trust in with confident expectation of good." The sense of the Greek term *el-pis* translated hope is the "expectation of good." Hope necessarily leads to a hunger, need, eagerness, and desire of fulfillment of the thing hoped for. Of course, humanly speaking, a person can easily cherish a *false* hope, or "pipe dream," one lacking a real basis. That is why we need to base our hope upon a firm foundation (1 Corinthians)—our God of hope.

A Town With No Hope

There was an account in a small town newspaper of a man who told of his experience in the little town where he lived. The town was soon to be flooded by a large lake, as part of a government dam project.

In the months before the town was to be flooded, all improvements and upkeep in the whole town stopped. Despair and despondency set in. What was the use of painting a house, repairing a roof, planting a garden, or mowing the lawn if it was to be covered with water in a short time? Why repair anything when the whole village was soon to be destroyed? So, week by week, the whole town became more and more bedraggled, more "gone to seed," more woebegone. It became a town of no hope.

The result, he said, was "Where there is no hope—no faith—in the future, there is *no power in the present*." Without hope for tomorrow, there is no incentive to change today. Isn't the same principle true for the Christian?

Proverbs 29:18 tells us, "Where there is no *vision* [no hope!], the people perish." According to God's Word, there are those who have *no hope*; those who have *false hope*; and those who have *true hope*.

True hope—the Christian hope—is more than a naive wish. It is a VISUALIZATION of coming future events. Athletes often employ visualization techniques in preparation for a sporting event—they have a "mental picture" of themselves winning the sporting event. Architects use visualization when drawing blueprints for a house or building—they can mentally "see" the finished product long before a single shovel full of dirt is unearthed. And Christians—although they may presently see only "through a glass darkly" (1 Corinthians

13:12)—"reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

Doubt and despair are the antithesis of faith and hope. Hope is the anticipation of good things to come. Hope is the *opposite* of depression. "*Hope* deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire [fulfillment] cometh, it is a tree of life" (Proverbs 13:12). In 1 Peter 1:13 we are told, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and *hope* to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

A World Without Hope

We live in a skeptical age. All too often our youth are being taught to be cynical and question everything—even God and the Bible. Most of us have to weather many storms in life—there are health problems, family pressures, financial anxieties, worries about crime, job problems, and countless other trials and tribulations. As predicted in the Bible, we see war, famines, and natural disasters on every side. Historians have reported that since the eighteenth century, the world has known only eleven years in which there have been no wars, and even that is questionable. Our families have lost their dignity; clothing

"Where there is no hope—no faith—in the future, there is *no power in the present*."

styles show all, ranging from sloppy to ultra revealing dress. Because of instant communications today, our world has been reduced to the size of a TV or computer screen. Our language has deteriorated to the point we have become nearly unshockable; what used to shock older adults is now taken for granted and flaunted by our children. Escapism seems to be the order of the day—escape by traveling, alcohol or drugs, hobbies, work, cell phones, or video games. No silence—no time to think. When things get tough, the common saying is, "I'm out of here!" Often, we can no more make such problems go away than we can stop the earth from turning. As a culture, we feel frustrated, ashamed, alone—in short, *helpless*.

To make matters worse, many have been taught in various churches that the future is indeed bleak for sinners; that they may even be destined to be punished forever in hellfire. As a result of false teaching, many become disillusioned, even angry, with God, asking, why *me*? Some perceive God as a harsh, unforgiving Father, eager to punish; others envision Him as being indifferent and uncaring, as though He created the worlds and then walked off into the universe leaving it to fend for itself; still others picture Him as weak and insipid, unable to handle the problems on the earth, perhaps losing in a perceived battle with Satan the Devil. Millions, no, billions, of people are in dire need of saving hope, yet have very little, if any. Unbeknownst to most, true hope is readily available to them in God's Word, the Bible, if they only realized it! The apostle Paul speaks of the time when, "ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, *having no hope*, and *without God* in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). Hope changes the way we feel about life, often in spite of our circumstances.

It has been said that a surefire formula for becoming anxious and depressed is to combine feelings of helplessness with hopelessness. Often panic sets in when we feel helpless. Our "fight or flight" impulses take over. But we can definitely remove one of those ingredients. None of us need to be hopeless. Hope itself may be the best weapon to ward off the other ingredient, those insidious feelings of helplessness. If we have the right kind of hope, we may endure life's storms with a confident degree of peace and contentment rather than struggling along in abject misery. Hope is a calm in the middle of a storm.

Without faith and hope, we would be *limited* to the very narrow world comprehended by the five senses—just as non-believers! (We'd be like Bob Hope's brother, No Hope!)

Unchallenged, the negative, cynical thought patterns so often thrust upon us will dash our hopes and destroy our faith! The *cynic* sneers, "What's the use? Why bother? Where is the promise of His coming?" as foretold in 2 Peter 3:4.

Some of the sources of *cynicism* are Satan, the world system of things, and yes, all too often, even our own spiritual immaturity. We *all* need to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

The theory of evolution—the alternative to Divine creation—is being thrust upon us from every avenue, including the schools, nature programs on TV, and the printed media. All atheists are religious *cynics* by nature. And we feel cynics' attitudes breathing down our necks at every turn: the school, the job, and perhaps even the home.

CONTINUED on next page

CONTINUED from previous page

The cynic's religion is humanism—the belief that given enough time and money, mankind can work out his own problems. Unlike the breath of God that turned dust into life, the cynic's breath turns life into dust! From God's perspective, the cynic is a blasphemer. He abandons God, saying, "there is *no hope* in Him."

We need never give in to the hopelessness of this dying old world. Only for the incorrigibly wicked does the Bible hold out no hope. They will perish (Psalm. 9:17; 68:2). But to all who love God and seek to know and do His will, the Bible gives unlimited hope. How vital that we study its pages and make the hope that it offers "an anchor for our souls"! Hope is there for the asking—both for our eternal future and for the solution of many of our immediate problems.

Like faith, Biblical hope is based on fact, reality, and truth. Biblical hope is the EXPECTATION of future good—it's the vision of what God has in store for us.

What Is Your Hope?

What is *your* hope? Will you take *hold* of hope? Do you *exercise* your hope every day? How? Our hope is strengthened from day to day when we express the hope within us. The more we talk about it, the more we treasure it and the stronger it becomes (Psalm 71:14–15; Malachi 3:16). The very nature of hope makes it something that can easily vanish if not constantly kept before the mind's eye. We make our hope stronger by *meditating* on God's Word. When you meditate upon God's Word, do you mentally "*see*," or visualize, for example, your own resurrection when Christ returns in power and glory? Can you imagine what it will be like when you have all the super powers of a Spirit Being? Do you "set your eyes upon" God's Kingdom and paradise on earth? Can you envision the blessed *reunion* of loved ones who have died—friends, relatives, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, neighbors, coworkers, and yes, even supposed enemies? If time were to go on, do you "see" your progeny—yours sons, daughters, grandchildren, and great grandchildren—there with you? Can you see yourself helping and teaching others? We need to bathe our minds daily in the light of God's Word!

Biblical *hope* is the EXPECTATION of future good—it's faith in the *future* tense! It is absolute *belief* in our "God of hope" (Romans 15:13).

Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the substance of things *hoped* for, the evidence of things not seen." Hope is necessarily joined hand in hand with faith.

Just as the human organism is dependent on a supply of oxygen, so man's psyche is dependent upon a lively supply of hope. There are no hopeless situations; there are only people who have no hope in what God can do (Luke 18:27). "Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his help, whose *hope* is in the LORD his God" (Psalms 146:5). It's all too easy to have a hopeless attitude about our fellow humans when we are angry or disappointed. Be careful in your appraisal! When we say a person or a situation is "hopeless," we just may be discounting what God can do!

But be of good cheer! There is good news! There is hope for the hopeless! There is a *cure* for doubt and despair. When you feel disheartened and blue or de-motivated, consider the following:

- The best way to build hope is to take note of its source, God and His Word. Study His Word, the Bible, diligently. Romans 15:4 says, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have *hope*."
- If you have doubts, confess them to God as lack of faith and sin (Hebrews 11:6).
- Pray for hope. Have you ever prayed for hope? Ask the Lord to help you grow in hope as you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Ask Him to help you inspire *others* to grow in hopeful thinking, attitudes, and behavior. Giving hope to others fortifies our *own* hope.
- Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God (Philippians 4:6; Ephesians 6:18). Build up a past *history* of answered prayer by keeping a personal prayer notebook, listing things you have prayed for and noting how your prayers were answered. This will help sustain you in times of trial and uncertainty. Send for our free booklet *How to be More Effective in Your Prayer Life* (code: YPL) for help in this area.
- Make certain of your salvation (Philippians 2:12). Are you active in your own conversion process: growing, changing, and overcoming in your Christian life?
- Faithfully study to show yourself approved of God (2 Timothy 2:15). Do a concordant word study on the word *hope*.
- Study the evidence for the Christian faith. Read such books as *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, Volumes I and II by Josh McDowell, which document historical evidences for the Christian faith.
- Further, if we have a "carnality clash" with a fellow Christian, we need to be reconciled to our brother (Matthew 5:23–24), remembering, after all, "love . . . *hopes* all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4–7).

Laboratory Experiment

A number of years ago researchers performed a laboratory experiment to see the effect of hope on those undergoing hardship. Two groups of laboratory rats were placed in separate tubs of water. The researchers left one group in the water and found that within an hour they had all drowned. The other rats were periodically lifted out of the water for a few seconds and then returned. The result was the second set of rats swam for over 24 hours! Why? Not, it was determined, because they were given a few seconds rest, but because they suddenly had been given hope!

It was concluded that those animals somehow *hoped* that if they could stay afloat *just a little longer*, someone—"a strong hand from somewhere"—would reach down and *rescue* them! If *hope* holds such power for unthinking rodents, how much greater should its effect be on OUR lives!

Our God of Hope

Can we, as God's people, not identify with this? Who among us has not from time to time felt the gravity of despondency, despair, and hopelessness? But *our* God is the God of hope! And His book, the Bible, is the book that gives hope, because it contains the promises of the Almighty, the God of hope. "Now *the God of hope* fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may *abound* in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:13). He is the God who inspires, or produces, the Christian hope.

Biblical hope not only *desires* something good for the future, it *expects* it to happen. And it not only *expects* it to happen, it is confident that it *will* happen. That's FAITH!

Real *faith* is faith in the God who keeps His promises and will not abandon His creation for so much as one nano-second before He has ultimately restored it to a utopian condition! He is in absolute control. We must "allow" God to *be* God and trust Him in all matters of faith, hope, and charity.

We've heard the saying, "God is *not finished* with me yet." Sometimes it appears He has *scarcely begun*...and has ever so far to go. We have the hope that "He who has *begun* a good work in you will *perform* [continue] it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). Once you are called, baptized, and receive God's Holy Spirit, *you're never the same again*; you are a begotten son or daughter of the Most High! Only *you* can abort your begetting by giving up, caving in to the Devil's discouragement, by turning around and walking away from the faith. There are no sins God cannot forgive. The unpardonable sin is a sin for which the sinner asks no pardon.

God will never leave us half-recovered or "half-saved"! To do so would be to liken God to a heart transplant surgeon who removes the patient's damaged heart...and then gives up on the surgery, leaving the patient with no heart! Is this how some would picture our merciful Creator God? A thousand times no! He who has *begun* a good work in us is going to *complete* it! He is giving us a NEW HEART (See Ezekiel 36:26; Jeremiah 31:33; 2 Corinthians 3:3)! And the good news is, He has promised to do as much for the whole creation at large, according to His plan!

Scripture links faith, hope, and love together (1 Corinthians 13:13). Hope is the middle term between faith and love. One can have no faith without hope or its fulfillment.

- *Hope* fortifies faith and forestalls spiritual collapse. Without *hope*—the *vision*—Christian faith collapses.
- *Hope* keeps *love* from dissolving under the acids of worldly and spiritual frustration.
- *Hope* keeps faith from deteriorating under the burden of disappointment and delay.
- *Hope* fortifies love and builds a resiliency in us—with hope we can, as the saying goes, "take a licking and keep on ticking."
- *Hope* assures we maintain that positive outlook that makes our experience in life so rich and full.

Further, we are *commanded* to hope toward God! "And have *hope* toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15). Paul said, "of the *hope* and resurrection of the dead I am called in question."

A Christian With or Without Hope

A Christian without hope will not remain a Christian for long. Without *hope* he will give up, quit—just like those in the little town without hope—just like those laboratory rats! A Christian with hope will endure to the end (Matthew 24:13).

Paul urged the Christians in Corinth, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be *steadfast, unmovable, always abounding* in the *work* of the Lord, since you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

First Peter 3:15: "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you for a reason for the *hope* that is within you, with meekness and fear."

Can you give such an answer? Do you have such a *hope*?

The best advice is: Don't go near the Devil's yard sale—don't buy into his DISCOURAGEMENT! Instead, go to the offer on the opposite side of the street—the one held by Jesus Christ. All *His* wares are *free*. They are called "the fruits of the Spirit." You can read His catalog listing in Galatians 5:22. They are labeled joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, and temperance. But in the center of them all, in a gleaming gold and crystal display case, are His three most precious: faith, *hope*, and charity.

We *hope* you now understand a little more about the Christian hope—your future hope—and our God of hope! □

GOD’S NEW DAY

by Nancy Miles



Jesus was born a little baby, born of a woman.
He lived his life on earth as a man of love.
He was a new covenant pioneer for His Kingdom.
Can we be less for our God above?
Though we are only human, we know we are God’s children.
We understand that God loves us so.
We want to sing His praises forever,
And do His will and work down here below.
Jesus was born a little baby, begotten of the Father.
He came directly from the bosom of love.
He gave his life and blood a ransom for many,
And He’s seated at the Father’s throne above.
So let’s be ready to meet our Jesus.
Let’s learn to worship, let’s learn to sing.
Let’s learn to tell the story of Jesus and His glory.
For He is our Prophet, High Priest, and King!

CHORUS:

There’s a new day dawning,
And it’s just around the corner.
It’s God’s new day, and it won’t be long.
The Kingdom is coming, Glory Hallelujah!
We’re going to sing and shout the victory song.
Yes, we’re going to sing, we’re going to shout,
We’re going to let our voices ring out.
We’re going to sing and shout the victory song...
ON GOD’S NEW DAY!

CHURCH BULLETIN BLOOPERS

THESE SENTENCES ACTUALLY APPEARED IN CHURCH BULLETINS OR WERE ANNOUNCED IN CHURCH SERVICES.

- Bertha Belch, a missionary from Africa, will be speaking tonight at Calvary Methodist. Come hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa.
- Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our church and community.
- Pastor is on vacation. Massages can be given to church secretary.
- Next Thursday there will be tryouts for the choir. They need all the help they can get.
- The audience is asked to remain seated until the end of the recession.
- A song fest was hell in the church basement Wednesday.
- The concert held in Fellowship Hall was a great success. Special thanks are due to the minister's daughter, who labored the whole evening at the piano, which as usual fell upon her.
- For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.
- The Pastor would appreciate it if the ladies of the congregation would lend him their electric girdles for the pancake breakfast next week.



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS
PO BOX 2525, TYLER, TEXAS 75710
Published by The Church of God International

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Flint, Texas 75782
Permit No. 777