

The

# Good News

MAY 1980

A Time to Laugh

We Are Ambassadors  
for a Foreign Power!

Should Christians Celebrate  
Birthdays?

Checklist for Christian  
Growth

'Occupy Till I Come'

The Most Common Sin—  
Are You Guilty?



## Prepare Now to Rule

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Let God Fight Your  
Battles!  
By Herbert W.  
Armstrong



# The Good News

May 1980

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**COVER:** Christ promises the members of His Church that those who overcome will be given rulership over the nations in the Kingdom of God, and He warns Christians to let no one take their crowns (Rev. 2:26-27, 3:11). Read about the destiny of God's true followers in the article beginning on page 4. Photo by Warren Watson.

## Letters

### Privilege to know about Work

This month's [January] *Good News* is truly fabulous.

Your [Herbert W. Armstrong's] "Personal" was very sobering and should be read and read again to firmly plant in our minds that there is but a short time.

And then your [Mr. Armstrong's] article on fasting and prayer gave me very valuable instruction on getting closer to our God. We tend to become embroiled in the everyday affairs, and then when we have been satisfied and gratified our feelings, we whip off a hasty prayer . . .

There are many people who don't even know that this Work is going on, so I do thoroughly realize it is a great blessing and privilege to be one of a few who do know.

Loren H. Westcott  
Jasper, Ark.

### Inspiring articles

I want to thank you [Herbert W. Armstrong] so very much for your articles in *The Good News* [January] about the 1,335, 1,290 and 1,260 days in Daniel. I have always wondered about the significance of those days and their meaning. They were very inspiring articles.

Perry Raddant  
Morrisville, N.C.

### Making Church ready

We especially want to say thank you to God and to you that He has inspired the most motivating articles ever in this latest *Good News*, January, 1980.

Each article seems to add to the next, and all of them are not only inspiring, but *moving* us to really examine and clean up our lives. It seems obvious God is inspiring you to show us what must be stressed to make the Church ready for the return of Christ and setting up God's Kingdom on this earth.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Garden  
Wichita, Kans.

### Bible-based literature

I have been reading your literature for some five or six years now. I enjoy it very much. I find all your literature very enlightening and as of yet I have never found anything you have sent me that the Bible won't back up.

Walter Wilson  
Alexander, N.C.



Personal from



## Let God Fight Your Battles!

**B**RETHREN, the world you live in today is a very *troubled* world. You not only have your own *personal* problems, but you also suffer from the deliberate **OPPOSITION** and **ANTAGONISM** of the world around you.

It is time you considered how to conquer these troubles — how to be **FREE** from them — how to let **GOD** fight your battles instead!

### One lesson not yet learned

First, *understand this*: If the **WORLD** today is not happy — if world conditions are in a chaotic state, if lives are empty and purposeless, if minds are filled with fears and worries, bodies wracked with sickness and disease — **THERE IS A REASON!** Conditions are *what we make them!*

Mortal **HUMANS**, groping in the darkness of confusion, have made conditions what they are. Humanity is **REAPING** what it has **SOWN!** Only the direct and all-powerful supernatural intervention of **ALMIGHTY GOD** can deliver this world from *all* its troubles.

What the world doesn't know is that God will not cause *its present ways of wrong living* to bring any *human* utopia. Rather, **GOD ALMIGHTY** WILL SOON HAVE TO STEP IN AND **RULE** OVER THE **WORLD** — bringing it INTO THE **WAYS** of His just laws, which *alone* can produce this happy **TOMORROW!**

Brethren, **WE, TOO, HAVE LESSONS TO LEARN.** Even though stubborn and rebellious mankind brings upon the world even **DARKER** days in the immediate future, **REMEMBER** — it's

**DARKEST** just before **DAWN.** Take hope in the **SURE** knowledge *that* the *new* world of **GOD's** making — and **RULING** — is **VERY** near today!

But in the meantime, what about **YOU** and your own private life and problems? Let us consider some of *your own private*, personal **TROUBLES.** I know that you have them! And I want to *tell* you something — I want to tell you **GOOD** news. You are carrying a lot of worries and fears and troubles *that you don't need to carry!*

Life is simply filled with private, personal battles. We have to battle fears and worries. Sometimes it seems we have to battle **PEOPLE** who appear to be enemies — often it's a husband, a wife or a mother-in-law — and whether you realize it or not, **YOU** also have to battle **YOUR-SELF!**

It is like having to fight a host of **ENEMIES** — all these **TROUBLES**, these **CIRCUMSTANCES**, these adverse **CONDITIONS**, these **TEMPTATIONS!** But there is a way you may **FREE** yourself from these troubles that confront you. There is a **WAY OUT!** You can be **FREE** from fighting all of these enemies except just **ONE** — your own self, and you can receive a lot of **HELP** and **KNOWLEDGE** and **POWER** in doing that!

Here's where that help can be found!

### Jesus Christ is the Deliverer

The Eternal Creator-RULER of the universe — the God who gives you the very air you breathe — sent His own begotten **SON**, Jesus Christ, into this world more than 1,900 years ago to **BRING YOU BRETHREN THE WAY OF DELIVERANCE** from all your trials, your worries, your problems. **WHY,**

then, do some of you not **LISTEN** to the way He taught us? And **WHY** do so many people think of Him as a dead Christ hanging on a cross? **GOD ALMIGHTY** RAISED HIM FROM THE **DEAD!** Jesus Christ is our **LIVING Savior** and High Priest, just as the Creator is a **LIVING RULER** OF ALL THE **UNIVERSE!**

**DO YOU REALIZE THAT JESUS CHRIST, THE LIVING, RESURRECTED CHRIST, TO WHOM IS GIVEN ALL POWER, HAS A PRESENT MISSION TO PERFORM?** Do you realize that His present mission is to **FIGHT YOUR BATTLES FOR YOU** — to **DELIVER YOU** — to **FREE** you from all your fears, your **TROUBLES** and even the *circumstances that beset you?*

*Thousands* of you would come to *me* for help in your troubles if I had time to see and talk to you — you'd come with husband-and-wife troubles, funeral troubles — every kind of trouble. Yes, you'd come to *me* because I'm *human* — one you can *see* — whose voice you *hear*. But *because* I'm only human, I have not the ability, the strength nor the **TIME** to render such a personal ministry to so many brethren in different parts of the world.

Now think this over carefully, and **ANSWER THIS!** **WHY** do you fight your *own* battles, when **HE** — the **LIVING Savior** — is living in **ALL POWER** to fight them for you?

He's **REAL.** He's **DIVINE.** **WHY** do some of you brethren go on worrying, when **HE** is right there in **ALL THE POWER OF THE DIVINE CREATOR** to **FREE** you from all your worries?

**WHY?** There is one of two reasons. Either you have not fully **KNOWN** of this great, all-encompassing **DIVINE SOURCE OF POWER** that **YOU** can call

(Continued on page 27)



# The History of the Beginning and Growth of the Worldwide Church of God

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By Herbert W. Armstrong

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**T**HE BEGINNING AND growth of this era of the true Church of God is the story of a beginning amid the very depth of the worst economic depression within the memory of man today. Its beginning was humble and small beyond compare. Its growth unmatched among institutions and organizations of our day. Its methods unique in a modern world.

This entire Work has belied human experience. It has reversed accepted procedures. Yet I must hasten to add, none of these were of my devising.

In a word, it is the story of what the living CHRIST can do — has done, and is doing — through a very average human instrument, whom He had brought to humble submission and whose eyes He opened to amazing TRUTHS!

Chapter 1 showed how God always has done whatever He has done with and through mankind by and through ONE MAN at a time. Chapter 1 explained how the living Christ prepared His chosen apostle of this time.

The time was the autumn of 1926 to spring of 1927. My conversion and baptism was in the spring of 1927. But the parent church of the present

Worldwide Church of God was not established until autumn, 1933 — in the very depth of the worst depression of the century.

In my business as a publishers' representative in Chicago, Ill., I had made, while still in my 20s, an annual income equal to \$175,000 based on the 1980 value of the dollar.

He had been preparing me. Now He proceeded in further preparation. I had been vigorous, aggressive, successful. But this had made me self-confident, cocky, conceited. God had to reduce that to humility, and self-confidence had to be supplanted by FAITH in Christ.

So, in the flash depression of 1920, He took away my business — all but a most meager income. Customers such as the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., Moline Plow Works, Avery Co., Dalton Adding Machine Co. — others — all went into receivership. All my larger advertising contracts were canceled.

I held on for two more years, then went to Iowa, where I put on surveys of local business conditions for daily newspapers.

In 1924 we moved to Oregon. There I developed a successful advertising service for laundries. Every leading laundry from Eugene, Ore., to Seattle and Everett, Wash., and also in Wenatchee, Spokane, and Walla Walla, Wash., had become clients. The laundry industry was

11th largest in the nation, yet the most backward.

My service, combined with internal efficiency-management service, was doubling and tripling the business volume of clients. Then a cooperative national advertising campaign inaugurated by the Laundryowners' National Association took my business by forces totally beyond my knowledge or control. I came to know later that, in fact, it was God taking away my business, reducing me to poverty and even hunger, preparing me for the dual challenges and intensive biblical studies that resulted in my conversion.

It was while we were visiting my parents in Salem that a neighbor lady, Mrs. Ora J. Runcorn, opened my wife's eyes to the truth of God's Sabbath. I had no love for that neighbor lady at first.

But, once my in-depth study had proved to me that I was wrong, I was converted and baptized, my dislike for that lady turned to an affectionate warmth in which my wife and I looked on her and her husband as almost our "parents-in-the-Lord."

I was so filled with these new biblical truths — and thrilled — that immediately I began writing in article form various truths I had found.

The Runcorns — our "spiritual parents" — were members of the Church of God, Seventh Day, with headquarters at Stanberry, Mo. I had studied completely their *Bible*



*Home Instructor*, and I began submitting some of my articles for publication in their church weekly, *The Bible Advocate*. My articles began to appear, beginning on the front cover.

Through the Runcorns we met other Church of God brethren in Salem and farther south in the Willamette River valley.

However, I did not join with them. They were so small, so uneducated, except for their limited amount of "Sabbath-keeping" Bible knowledge — and their work, as I found, so ineffective and unproductive, I could not believe they could be God's one and only true Church.

I had learned in my biblical studies, how Jesus said the gates of the grave would never prevail against His true Church.

I knew that Church had to exist — but WHERE? I had learned it had to be a Sabbath-keeping Church. That limited it to this Stanberry headquartered Church, the Seventh-day Adventists and the Seventh-day Baptists. But also I had seen the NAME of the true Church 12 times in the New Testament, as the CHURCH OF GOD. And Jesus said He had kept His disciples in the Father's name and prayed the Church would be held together by that name.

Incidentally, I have never been a member of the Seventh-day Adventists — never even attended one of their regular Sabbath services. I mention this only because in the past the rumor had been spread that I formerly was an Adventist.

But my search for the one true Church was now narrowed to this one Church, the Church of God, Seventh Day, with a headquarters small publishing place in Stanberry, Mo. Yet I could not then reconcile myself to believing a church so small, so fruitless, with an uneducated ministry, could be God's one and only true Church. Of course, I was newly converted. I suppose I assumed the true Church would be a large and powerful Church. Yet I had noticed Jesus called His followers "the little flock," and I had seen two different churches depicted in the book of Revelation — one large, powerful, ruling governments and called a "great whore," and the other small and persecuted and having to flee for safety.

I later learned that this, in the late 1920s, was only the remnant of the formerly more effective Church of the "Sardis" era (Rev. 3:1-6).

I think it was in the autumn of 1927 the Runcorns invited us to go with them to a meeting to be held in a schoolhouse south of Salem in the Willamette Valley.

We went with them to this meeting. Lunch was served under a large tree outdoors. I was asked to give the blessing on the food. It was the first time in my life I had ever prayed before others — but God helped me so they did not know it was a first prayer before others.

I had been asked previously to speak before these people, but had declined. Being a preacher was the *last* thing I wanted to be. But now I had discovered a special Sabbath covenant, binding for ever, in Exodus 31:12-18. I knew this, as a binding covenant, was unknown to them. I could not withhold from them what I had discovered, so I accepted their invitation this time.

It was the first "sermon" — if it could be called that — of my life. But it met great enthusiasm from those brethren, and I was invited to another meeting a month later.

This is when the persecution — from their ministers — got into red-hot action. Their brethren all loved me from the first. But not their preachers. This time their nearest minister, stationed in Idaho, was on hand to refute whatever I said. It was an all-day meeting. This minister managed for me to speak in the morning, so he could refute me in the afternoon.

In August that year, 1927, my wife had been suddenly and completely healed by prayer and anointing, of quinsy (a swelled lump in her throat so she could not swallow food or water), blood poisoning, a dog bite and one or two other things. A doctor had said she could not live another 24 hours. She had not had any sleep for 72 hours, or food or water. As a result, I had thoroughly studied what the Bible revealed about healing, and I had the subject well in hand.

At this second meeting with these "Sardis" people, I preached in the morning about God's promise to heal. But in the afternoon, the minister from Idaho vehemently attacked

my sermon. He quoted the scripture saying many would come saying they had done many wonderful works in Jesus' name, but He would reply, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23). Of course he *twisted* this scripture out of context.

My first encounter with a Stanberry minister had been in the spring of 1927 — the first of their ministers I had seen. He, too, had little or no education, but a dominant and argumentative personality. He was staying at the home of another member in Salem, a Mrs. Gross. That was when I was studying the question of baptism. I had completed the Sabbath study, had learned of the annual Holy Days, the preexistence of angels on earth, the presence of Satan as the former Lucifer, the identity of the United States and Britain as the birthright tribes of the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" and other BASIC truths the Stanberry-based church did not know.

But I had been raised in the Quaker church, which does not believe in water baptism. Therefore I was studying the question of baptism, for I was ready to be baptized. I had gone to a minister of the Friends' Church (Quaker), and, with my knowledge of the subject from my very recent study, had caused him to admit his church was teaching contrary to the Bible on the subject.

But now I wanted to talk to a minister of the Church of God about it. I went over to the Gross home and told this minister I was a candidate for baptism and would like to talk with him about it.

"I haven't any time to waste on an unbaptized man," he said, insultingly. "I will be giving a public lecture on baptism at the Seventh-day Adventist church tomorrow afternoon. If you want to know anything about baptism, come to the lecture." I was taken aback at his gruff, insulting manner.

"Why, you talk as if I were some kind of a heathen and not a Christian," I said.

"I know you are not a Christian!" he retorted angrily. "Anyone who has not been baptized is not a Christian!"

"Well," I said meekly, "maybe you're right, but I would never say  
(Continued on page 22)



*True Christians are destined to inherit rulership of the whole universe, and their preparatory training is of the utmost importance.*

**H**is Royal Highness Charles Philip Arthur George, Prince of Wales and Heir Apparent to the throne of the British Empire, is profoundly conscious of his destiny. Some day he will be king.

The night of his birth, Nov. 14, 1948, wildly cheering crowds thronged Buckingham Palace until 2 a.m. The English-speaking world rejoiced at this addition to Britain's royal family. And at the age of 4, at the death of his grandfather, the beloved George VI, Charles became Heir Apparent to the world's most prestigious throne.

#### Training for kingship

It was then that an important period of training began for Charles, who was someday to inherit a gigantic responsibility, along with all the power and glory that goes with being the monarch of what was then the world's greatest empire. Charles' father, Prince Philip, planned his son's education.

It was obvious that Charles had inherited the shy temperament of his

mother and grandfather. Philip felt the need for a strenuous training program befitting a future king. He wanted his son "looked after without being spoiled."

So at age 8, Charles was enrolled in a London public school. This shocked the Commonwealth. It was the first time an heir to the British throne was to be educated alongside his future subjects. Philip feared too much "petticoat influence" at the palace. In this he was supported by his uncle, the vigorous and innovative Lord Louis Mountbatten. In addition, at age 9, Charles was separated from his parents and sent to a boarding school in Berkshire. All of this proceeded with his mother's consent, but his father, Prince Philip, was the catalyst.

Charles' report cards were, of course, international news. One instructor summed him up as "nervous, sullen, sometimes precocious." Like most schoolboys, he had a nickname:

"Fatty." He shared the same type of army spring bed and horse-hair mattress as his peers.

By age 14, the future Prince of Wales was ready for another major step. This time his father enrolled him in Gordonstoun, a special boys' school on the bleak northeast coast of Scotland. The curriculum came complete with a rugged regime of morning exercises, cold showers and, according to the school's founder, "character development."

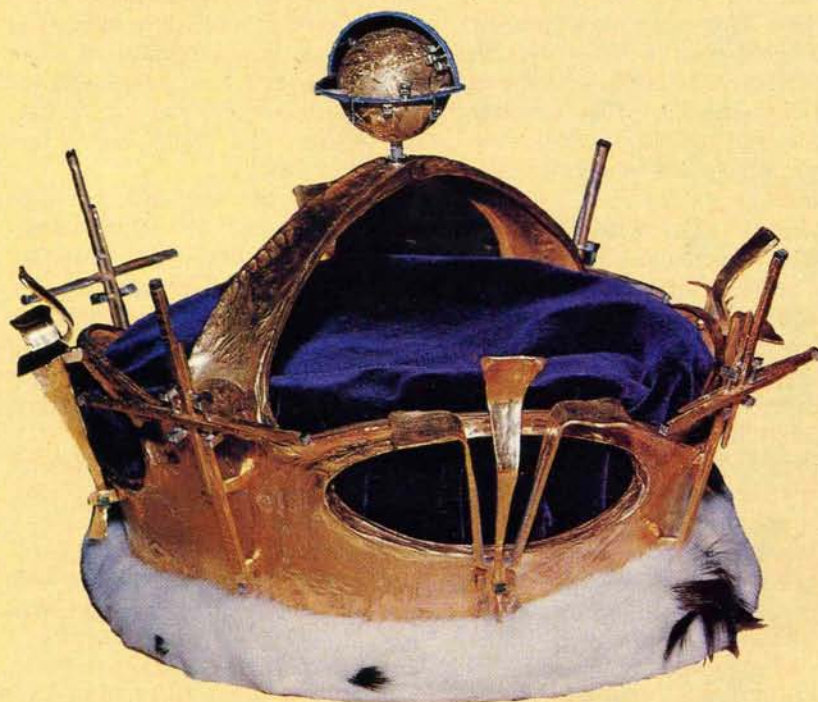
At Gordonstoun, every student had a work assignment. The first job for the destined king? Emptying dustbins. It was at this remote outpost that Charles was forcibly reminded of a valuable lesson in leadership: Leaders live in goldfish bowls.

Charles' awareness of what life was like in the public eye was crystallized in the notorious "Cherry Brandy Affair," when he was demoted for violating the school's rules after he shared a quick drink in a pub. His mentors quickly took him aside and explained that such behavior just simply did not befit a future king.

By age 18, however, Philip estimated that the young prince was ready for a year in Australia. Timbertop, another selective school for rugged young men, sped his personality development.

Evidence that Philip's patient, determined program was paying off came in July, 1969. At his investiture as Prince of Wales at historic Caernarvon Castle, Charles won the hearts of his Welsh subjects by addressing them in their own ancient

Photo by Ian Henderson



# Yes, You - Born to Be King!

By Neil Earle



tongue. His 300-word speech in the original Welsh language was more than most native Welshmen could manage. This bold feat showed, in the words of one authority, that "Prince Charles was not going to be beaten by anything or anybody when he set out to achieve a goal."

Next followed a degree from Cambridge, a stint in Royal Air Force jet trainers and a personal command of the Royal Navy's *HMS Bronington*. Much of this followed the careful steps outlined by his father.

Few people today understand the personal and emotional sacrifices, strains and stresses attendant upon the rigorous — and sometimes dangerous — job as chief of state for the British Commonwealth nations. The throne stands as the unifying link for millions of people of varying races, colors and creeds. In times of war, economic upset and other national emergencies, the British royal family has proven its worth. Even today the sovereign's example serves as a valuable moderating and stabilizing influence in a tumultuous age.

Perhaps Prince Philip's signal accomplishment has been helping the transformation of this basically reticent personality into a "man for all seasons" — the very popular and increasingly respected Charles, Prince of Wales. Prince Charles takes his motto, *Ich Dien* (I serve), very seriously.

Now hold your breath!

### The Christian destiny

You, too, if you have repented and been baptized, are destined to become a king, in God's Kingdom!

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:8).

"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" (Dan. 7:27).

True Christians are even called kings, already, "And [Christ] hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father" (Rev. 1:6).

When you repented, were baptized

and God's minister laid his hands on you, you received God's gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). You were begotten as an actual member of God's Family. At that time, the angels in heaven rejoiced (Luke 15:10), just as the English-speaking world did when Charles became Heir Apparent of the throne of Britain, because at that moment you began a training program that will culminate in your becoming a joint ruler, with Jesus Christ, of the universe (Rom. 8:16-17).

Christians are now preparing to, with and under Christ, exercise power over the nations and judge the whole world (Rev. 2:26-27, 20:4, I Cor. 6:2).

When you repented, were  
baptized and God's  
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Spirit . . . you began a  
training program that  
will culminate in your  
becoming a joint ruler,  
with Jesus Christ, of the  
universe.

What a spectacular set of promises! Truly converted Christians are destined to be given rulership with Christ upon His return from heaven. Thus Peter writes that members of the true Church are part of a "royal priesthood" (I Pet. 2:9).

### Essentials for rulership

Charles, the Prince of Wales, submitted to a difficult program designed by his father to fit him for the British throne. The sure knowledge of his *certain* future stiffened his resolve and helped him to stoically endure the constant glare of publicity, the antagonism to royalty from certain vociferous elements, the daily pressure of being a target for some crackpot assassin.

Our Father in heaven, Head of the Royal Family of this universe (Eph. 3:15), is calling His children to a far

more important prize than Britain's fabled throne. Our training program, then, must be even more vital than was Prince Charles'. The Bible outlines several areas God wants to develop in His children.

1) Among the indispensable qualities for ruling along with Christ in His Kingdom is strong, dependable character. Revelation 17:14 says those who rule with Christ will be "called, and chosen, and faithful."

Trustworthiness nets a handsome dividend even in this physical life. The irksome, unglamorous tasks that must be performed if our home, company or schoolwork are to succeed are sometimes small, but are nevertheless real tests of character (Luke 16:10). We can always take the pressure off ourselves and "cop out" from tackling the "must" jobs, but our character will have been weakened as a result. Our character is what we are. "Little things" like daily prayer, Bible study, church and Bible study attendance, tithing, visiting and being hospitable to others begin to add up to an unmistakable pattern over a lifetime.

For instance, on the job with fellow workers and employers, our character is showing. Paul admonished the Ephesians, "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ" (Eph. 6:5).

In the employment market, good, solid, dependable men and women are always in demand. With God's loving help and our own earnest striving, our sturdiness and resolve can be supernaturally strengthened (Isa. 40:31). God's Spirit overrules our human tendency to procrastinate and bolsters our flagging determination in the face of frustrating obstacles (Phil. 4:13). As we earn "our daily bread," then, we are learning valuable lessons of character that will last throughout all time.

2) Future kings also need to develop their minds, and more than mere I.Q. or scholastic ability, God is concerned that His children grow in wisdom, the most important mental attribute (Prov. 4:7).

Solomon, the wisest king who ever



lived, began his renowned career by lamenting his lack of wisdom in the clearest terms, "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in" (I Kings 3:7). This sincere admission helped convince His Creator that Solomon was a fit vessel for receiving the brilliant, startling, piercing insights only God can give (Prov. 2:6). Solomon's encounter with the two harlots (I Kings 3:16-28) is an example of dynamic wisdom in action — the divine insight needed to untangle many complicated situations, whether in the board room or in the living room.

Wisdom involves having the understanding to know what to say and, perhaps more importantly, *when* to say it (Eccl. 3:7). Through His Word, God answers the big questions in life. Which of us hasn't bewailed our lack of wisdom from time to time, or bemoaned the fact that we "dropped the ball" in certain of life's decisions, some of which we may be suffering for right now? If you feel this way sometimes, then take heart. Admitting our lack of insight is one of the first steps in receiving true wisdom. The entire book of Proverbs is written to the "simple," the person who "wanteth understanding" (Prov. 9:4).

3) Good rulers need sincere warmth of personality.

It is said Abraham Lincoln refused to hire a man once because of the look on his face. Mr. Lincoln's subordinates protested that a man couldn't help the way he looked. But Mr. Lincoln, wise president that he was, stuck to his guns and was proven right.

Proverbs 15:13 says, "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance." Stop and think: The people who influence us the most possess an extra measure of enthusiasm and spark. Buoyant optimism animates the personalities of most true leaders. A sincere, sparkling personality is a powerful force all by itself. "Infectious optimism" was one of Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's prized attributes of leadership. As Andrew Jackson said, "One man

with courage makes a majority." The same goes for enthusiasm.

Christ, our soon-coming King of kings, stirred the multitudes with the strength of His personality (Mark 12:37). His sincerity and generosity spread His fame abroad (Mark 5:20). Christ's strong, outgoing personality truly made Him "the Master."

4) Future rulers in God's government must have drive. Herbert W. Armstrong lists this as the fourth important law of success. Many of God's greatest servants were in superb physical condition (Deut. 34:7, I Kings 18:46). Some people have good

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Truly, the whole creation,  
past and present,  
"waiteth for the  
manifestation of the  
sons of God" (Rom.  
8:19). We dare not  
drift with the rest  
of this purposeless,  
confused world. We  
have a rendezvous  
with destiny.

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character, sharp minds and sparkling personality, but lack the staying power that gives outstanding leaders their winning edge.

Konrad Adenauer, the beloved *Der Alte* of postwar Germany, performed his greatest service to his fatherland between the ages of 73 and 87 when, as chancellor, he led West Germany back to a respected place in world affairs. Had he retired at 65, probably nobody would have heard much of him.

Jesus Christ's determination awed His disciples many times, but never more so than in the last few days before His death. He "steadfastly set his face" to brave certain death in the Pharisees' stronghold of Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). His quiet, concentrated will and purpose even strengthened the wavering disciples (John 11:16).

Certainly the kings who will rule with Christ will possess a good measure of that bulldog tenacity that characterizes great leaders.

5) This area of development — leadership — teaches us tact, patience and genuine mercy, which will stand us in good stead in working with people for all eternity.

Our families provide us with wonderful leadership opportunities. Are our families happy? If not, we are stifling our development into future kings.

God holds husbands responsible for cheering up their wives and loving them as Christ loved the Church (Deut. 24:5, Eph. 5:25). Wives are encouraged to submit themselves to their husbands and live up to the example of the virtuous woman (Eph. 5:22, Prov. 31:10-31). Children learn their first approach to authority figures in the home (Eph. 6:1). The attitude of being teachable, learned in a loving and disciplined family relationship, gives children a head start in school, where they can really learn from their teachers instead of becoming discipline problems. In this way children start out as early as possible on the road to success in life (Ex. 20:12, Prov. 20:11).

Paul emphasizes the relationship between family life and leadership in describing a minister's office, "If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (I Tim. 3:5).

6) Christians have to learn to handle God's Spirit wisely. Through the laying on of hands, God has given us the Spirit of power, which we constantly need to stir up (II Tim. 1:6-7). The word for "spirit" here is transliterated *dunamis* from which comes the English "dynamite" or "dynamic." This priceless force can help us make real progress in our personal lives if we continue to replenish it (II Cor. 4:16). Increasing and expanding the "earnest," or small amount of the Spirit we have now (Eph. 1:13-14), is the best insurance that Christ will completely con-

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# We Are Ambassadors for a Foreign Power!

By Dave Pack

**O**ur ultimate destiny as Christians is to become kings and rule along with Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God, but we also have an important diplomatic job here and now. We, as God's people, represent a foreign government, for "our citizenship belongs in heaven" (Phil. 3:20, Modern Language Version), and we all hold the office of ambassador.

Ambassadorships are critical appointments and are therefore conferred only on those who can rightly and positively represent the ideals, laws, people, culture, government policies and political ideologies of the countries where they hold citizenship. If ever they fail to uphold all these standards, they can automatically disqualify themselves from representing their governments and be recalled from their posts.

As ambassadors for God's future government, our lives are to exemplify God's way to this world. We are to represent the order, peace and abundant joy inherent in the spiritual government to which we truly owe our allegiance. We are, in Christ's words, to be lights to the world (Matt. 5:14-16). And the "Father of lights" (Jas. 1:17) will not permit us to hide our good examples under a bushel. We have been set on a hill for all to see, just as a light pierces the surrounding darkness *so people can see where they are going*.

Did you ever notice how people have a way of immediately categorizing anyone they meet or any idea with which they come in contact? If you meet someone from the southern United States, you automatically fit the person into the image you have of the South, even though you may have never been there. You may think of a Confederate flag, a steamboat, the Atlanta Hawks basketball team, humid weather or "Southern hospitali-

ty." You assign the person to a certain slot in your mind.

If someone drives a Cadillac, it means a certain thing in people's minds. Driving a Volkswagen also communicates an image. "Everybody knows" businessmen dress a certain way; models, playboys, bricklayers and athletes also have a certain uniform, in our minds. The way a person walks says that he is cocky, refined, shy, confident or relaxed.

People are categorized, and many times incorrectly, according to their religion, skin color, political party, manners, sports they like, books they read, friends, jokes they tell, entertainment they prefer or even the kind of dog they own.

Do you realize what this means to you as a Christian ambassador? People are analyzing your every word, move and habit. Thus you must set an example that will unmistakably identify just who you are and who you represent.

God intended that Israel be such a sterling example in their obedience to Him that all the surrounding gentile nations could not help but notice how they, too, were really intended to live life (Deut. 4:4-8).

Unfortunately, the Bible shows that never happened. Israel utterly failed their commission. As a matter of fact, they failed so miserably that in the New Testament Paul often referred to Israel's example to show how *not* to live our lives (I Cor. 10:6). How much better it would have been had Israel written a positive, righteous record!

One bright spot in Israel's history was King Solomon's early example of wisdom and understanding, which spread abroad so strongly that the queen of Sheba couldn't believe it. She decided to check up for herself (I Kings 10:1-10) and found out she hadn't heard the half of it (verse 7).

Solomon must have been setting quite an example. But though he was king, he was still just one man. What if the entire nation had been as wise and righteous as Solomon? It would have had that much greater impact on Israel's neighbors.

Even the early Church of God had a hard time learning to generate the right light. The apostle Paul must have had great patience as he dealt with the Corinthian congregation. He had much to say to them about their wrong conduct. He explained to them in II Corinthians 5:20 that "we are ambassadors for Christ." The entire reference was probably not to the ministry or apostles alone, even though they are ambassadors in the most direct sense. Paul was trying to get across to the Corinthians the importance of the examples we *all* set (verse 10) and stated that "if *any* man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (verse 17).

Paul instructed the Philippians to "Only let your conversation [conduct] be as it becometh the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27). That Gospel is of the coming government of God. Is your conduct "becoming" of that government or do you cast a bad light on it?

When Ambassador College was founded its name was not selected by accident. Those who are accepted have to really know *why* they want to go. And once they arrive, they are taught what it means to be an Ambassador. High standards are set so that high standards can be reached. Those standards touch upon all facets of student life: studies, finances, health, appearance, work, athletics, dating and spiritual growth. If anyone doesn't strive to reach those standards, he simply cannot remain at Ambassador College and be an "Ambassador."

Notice Colossians 4:5-6: "Walk in  
(Continued on page 10)



# The Most Common Sin— ARE YOU GUILTY?

*Your spiritual growth — absolutely vital for entrance into God's Kingdom — is measured in large part by the vital Christian quality of gratitude.*

By Dibar Apartian

**“W**hat a beautiful day!” I exclaimed. “Look at that clear blue sky and those snowcapped mountains on the horizon!”

I was in France, conversing with a Church member as we stood on the balcony of a hotel room facing the Alps.

“Yes, indeed,” he answered without the slightest hesitation. “It certainly is a magnificent day. It is breathtaking.”

All of a sudden, I felt embarrassed, rather ashamed of myself. My companion, a war veteran, was blind. But somehow, in my enthusiasm, I had forgotten it.

“Please don’t feel badly about it,” he assured me, sensing my embarrassment. “Even though I am unable to see, I can smell and hear. I can touch and feel what you sometimes only see with your eyes! I’m not so terribly handicapped after all, am I?”

No, he wasn’t. He wasn’t handicapped much at all. Actually, he could see more than I. There was no trace of sadness on his face, not a single word of complaint on his lips, no bitterness whatsoever in the tone of his voice. He was a grateful person — grateful to be alive, grateful to have friends and, above all, most grateful to be in God’s Church.

What a pity most people don’t

know how to count their blessings — how to appreciate what they have, how to be thankful and grateful.

## “Think on these things”

Does your mind dwell on all the things that you as a Christian have to be positive about, or do you have trouble thinking of things to be thankful for?

As the apostle Paul said, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

Did you notice that there is not a single unhappy thought in these instructions? No complaints. No gripes. No negative attitudes.

This truly is a commandment of God, but how many of us in God’s Church today respect it? A lack of gratitude can prevent us from putting this teaching into practice.

Have you learned to be grateful? Are your prayers to God filled with praise and thanksgiving, or do you continually bother Him with requests and complaints? Examine your heart next time you get on your knees to talk to Him in secret.

One of the most frequently quoted verses in the Bible, even by those who

don’t consider God’s Word to be inspired, is Romans 8:28, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

Do you actually believe that all things are working together for your good? You should if you fulfill the clearly stated conditions: You must love God and you must be called according to His purpose. This promise definitely applies to you.

Consider the story of the 10 lepers who begged Christ to have mercy on them. What happened after they were healed? Only one of them, “when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks” (Luke 17:15-16, Revised Standard Version). And he was a Samaritan, not even an Israelite. Strange, isn’t it?

Whether gentiles or Israelites, where were the other nine? Weren’t they also healed? That’s the very question Christ asked, saying, “Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” (verse 18).

## David’s example

What made King David a man after God’s own heart? Was it perhaps his courage? His willingness to



repent of his sins? His earnest desire to search God's ways?

Undoubtedly all of these were contributing factors, but one of David's greatest qualities was his gratitude toward God. Amidst sorrows, trials and persecutions, he constantly praised God; he always sang psalms of thanksgiving and appreciation.

Notice Psalm 100: "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with *thanksgiving*, and into his courts with *praise*: be *thankful* unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

How uplifting! Do you, as a Christian, actually feel this way? Do you share these sentiments? Are you grateful to God for everything? Be honest! What are your thoughts most of the time? When you get up in the morning? During your conversations each day? What's your attitude at work with the people around you? What thoughts do you generally entertain when you are alone?

If you are truly converted, the thoughts of Psalm 100 should be on your lips and in your heart, whatever the circumstances.

### Christ a man of joy

Suppose you were asked to count your blessings one by one? How would you go about it? What would be on top of your list? Your wife? Your husband? Your children? The health you may enjoy? The job you have? The country you live in?

Would you think of God's love for you as your greatest blessing? Are you grateful for your calling — for being in His Church with the tremendous opportunities it offers you to serve? Some aren't. They don't quite appreciate their calling.

But how about you?

Life is not always easy — for anyone. You may be having serious problems today — trying moments that are hard to understand, and for which you don't honestly feel that you can be grateful.

But can you name any man of God

who didn't encounter hardships and persecutions? Of course not. Life challenges us with circumstances that contribute to our growth. Did Jesus have an easy life on earth? Easier than yours? You know better: "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Heb. 12:3-4).

Yet Jesus was a man of joy. He told us to share His joy with Him. Trials, tribulations and persecutions are necessary in building Christian character.

On one occasion when Christ told a man that to be a true Christian meant to be willing to literally give up everything and follow Him, His own disciples were upset. They thought the conditions were much too harsh to allow anyone to be saved.

But Christ told them: "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands" — look what comes next — "with *persecutions*, and in the age to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30, RSV).

A Christian, therefore, is not only promised blessings, but also persecutions. That's part of your calling — part of your joy. Are you willing to accept your share of the covenant — and to meet life's challenges? Unfortunately, when persecutions come, some weaken and forget to be thankful. They forget their blessings and begin to count their sorrows.

Actually, all of us in God's Church, whatever our condition, are very blessed. All of us — whatever our problems — have more reasons to be thankful to God than any other human beings on earth.

James wrote: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (Jas. 1:2-4).

Do you really understand this teaching? You have to "count it all joy" not only when things go right, but also when they go wrong. Anyone

# WHY NOT PUT GOD TO THE TEST?

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can be happy and joyful when life is full of smiles. But only a true Christian can express gratitude when undergoing trials.

### Paul rejoiced

The apostle Paul perhaps suffered more than any other disciple of Christ. Yet his epistles are filled with thanksgiving and gratitude. He exhorts us to "Rejoice evermore" (I Thess. 5:16). You cannot possibly rejoice if you keep complaining and counting your miseries. And you cannot be in the right attitude if you forget the will of God. "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God," stated Paul (verse 18, RSV). Rejoicing, prayer and giving thanks are commanded by God.

Like King David, Paul too was a man after God's own heart. He too was courageous, obedient, repentant and wanted to learn God's way. And he had learned, as all of us must, to be happy in whatever state he was (Phil. 4:11).

Here was Paul's secret. He knew that God's Spirit in him strengthened him in all of his trials and actually enabled him to do "all things" in the fulfillment of his mission.

If you have this type of attitude, then no matter what happens to you — whether you be sick or in good health, poor or rich — you can always get on your knees and praise God, saying: "Thank you, God, for your blessings. Thank you for your love and mercy. Thank you for your patience with me."

### No temptation too great

You probably have read Herbert W. Armstrong's autobiography. You have learned the way God dealt with him and brought him down to his knees. After reading his story and seeing what he went through, would you say that Mr. Armstrong's life has been an easy one? Hasn't he suffered much hardship and adverse circumstances? But God has blessed him for enduring. Notice how much Mr. Armstrong's heart, despite all his trials, has continuously been filled with gratitude toward God.

God tells us He will never allow any temptation to test us beyond our endurance. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will

not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13).

Growth in gratitude is a sign of spiritual growth.

The moment you stop being grateful you put yourself on Satan's wavelength and become vulnerable to his attacks. Satan wants you to complain, because that's one sure way of making you turn away from God.

### Decide to be thankful

Here is a challenge for you: Make up your mind that for 12 consecutive hours, you won't complain. Don't allow any gripes or murmurs to enter your words or your thoughts, no matter what happens. Say to yourself, "All things work together for my good." You may be surprised at the result and the sudden fantastic change in your life.

In all probability, you may find this challenge rather hard to meet, because complaining could very well be a part of your daily life — a routine you follow, consciously or not. But try it — force yourself to try it. Set your mind, your eyes, your thoughts on the ultimate goal — on the purpose of your existence, on the opportunities you will have in God's Kingdom to help and serve. Discard from your mind any thoughts that may be a hindrance to your resolution. Like my friend who was blind, feel what you cannot see and be joyful and thankful for what you have.

If you don't succeed the first time, try it again until you succeed. And then make a habit of it. God Himself will give you all the help you need. The promise He made to the ancient Israelites also applies to you: "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will work for you today . . . The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be still" (Ex. 14:13-14, RSV).

What more encouragement do you need? God will fight for you if you stop complaining and only express gratitude.

Then you will fully grasp the deep meaning of Paul's words, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). □

## Ambassadors

(Continued from page 7)

wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." People outside the Church shouldn't be able to overlook our wisdom.

I Corinthians 6:2 shows the saints will judge the world one day. If that day were here and all those who knew you in this life *now* could see you as a member of the God Family, what would their reaction be? Would they, by remembering your outstanding example in your home, in your family and on the job, find it easy to accept? Or would they collapse in shock that you could have made it into God's Kingdom?

Would they remember hearing you and your wife or husband fighting? The disrespect, foul language and unkempt appearance of your children? Your uncared-for yard, your off-color jokes, your unfriendly, secretive manner, your unpainted house, your poor work record and on and on?

Christ gained favor with God and man (Luke 2:52). He set us an example (I Pet. 2:21). Are you found in favor with both God and man? A man or woman can convert his or her mate without "a" word or "the" Word (the Bible), but purely by conduct (I Pet. 3:1). People should notice that as a result of your beliefs your conduct is different from the average person's (I Pet. 4:4). Does your example convict them? You may be the only Bible some people ever read. Can people "read" you clearly? Do you even "abstain from all appearance of evil" (I Thess. 5:22)?

No error or fault could be found in Daniel (Dan. 6:4). His conduct was so outstanding in all respects that a whole group of cunning, carnal-minded politicians couldn't find anything of which to accuse him — unless it was "concerning the law of his God" (verse 5). He wasn't doing anything they could gainsay. Nothing!

This is what being the light of the world is all about. This is what it means to be an ambassador for Christ. □



# Checklist for Christian Growth

By Joseph Tkach

If you are unable to drive an automobile properly, you had better stay out from behind the wheel. Otherwise, you are going to create a great hazard for other motorists in addition to needlessly endangering your own life. You'll break the rules that make driving helpful and enjoyable — and reap the consequences for breaking those rules.

But what kind of a driver are you spiritually? Are you prone to break God's laws that produce happiness and good? How many spiritual traffic signs do you violate? How many spiritual citations have you had?

## The spiritual stakes

In our Christian lives, we are dealing with even more serious issues than the driver of an automobile going down the road.

But just as physical drivers can ignore traffic laws and take their own skills for granted, we can begin to overlook the flaws in our spiritual development and thus create deadly hazards for ourselves on our way to eternal life.

God only gives us one chance for salvation. That doesn't leave us any room to gamble. It's better to obey God's rules and submit to His purpose (Rom. 8:28) than to take a chance on failing to fulfill our incredible human potential.

We have just passed that time of year when, as Christians, we should have examined ourselves spiritually and rededicated ourselves to eradicating any imperfections from our character. But that process, pictured by the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, must go on constantly.

When you sow a thought, you reap an act. When you sow an act, you reap a habit. And when you sow a habit, you reap the whirlwind. That is where the biggest problem lies in

trying to develop spiritual character — when people refuse to see the error of their ways.

The biggest stumbling block in your path is not a *what* — it's a *who* — you. You need to stand in front of the mirror of God's perfect law, see your shortcomings and work on them. We all need to be wrestling to bring ourselves into control.

How many times have you reviewed the book of Jude? There (verse 3) we're admonished to never lose the original faith — the gift of God — that will lead to salvation by grace (Eph. 2:8).

## A sure foundation

For those who have legitimately been called by God, converted and given the faith to achieve salvation, there is only one chance. Unless we succeed with this only opportunity we will ever have for salvation (and the bonus of rulership with Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God), we will be like a driver who is seriously injured in a car crash for which he is at fault. That driver may find himself crying out to God for one more chance.

But we in God's Church are being judged now (I Pet. 4:17). If we do not now answer the great calling God has given us — if we choose to return to the hopeless condition from which God called us — we will not have another opportunity: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:26-27).

Thus it behooves us to build our spiritual lives on a structure that the trials of this life will only purify and not destroy (I Cor. 3:12-15). What building materials are we using?

What goals have we set for ourselves? We are living in a physical world that seems to crowd any awareness of God out of our minds. It seems our main interest and confidence are in material, and not spiritual, things.

## The proper emphasis

Christ showed us how to build a sure foundation, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (Matt. 6:19).

When we amass material things, we feel we have to guard them rather than invest them, spiritually speaking, with wisdom. But we needn't be that concerned.

Christ said, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (verses 20-21).

So the emphasis should be on spiritual buildings — individually and collectively. We must be concerned with our Christian reputations as future sons of God. Using Jesus Christ as our standard, here are four concepts we should never forget. If we do, we are in big trouble.

## ☒ Our Need for God

(1) *We must never forget our need for God.* Are we going to victimize ourselves by careless driving — take a wrong turn and slide down into the destruction into which this world is hurling itself?

The crown of righteousness is the most precious thing we can obtain in this life. We're admonished to hold



fast to that crown and let no one steal it from us (Rev. 3:11).

When we lose our awareness of our helpless condition — when we no longer feel we need God's protection or guidance — we have exceeded our position and will run into difficulty.

Have you ever been in a situation where you felt totally helpless? Imagine how the people who were aboard the DC-10 that crashed at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport last year must have felt.

When you're sitting in a plane, you have to rely on the pilot. You place confidence in his ability, his experience and his flying record. You trust the airline. You relax and enjoy the flight.

But, you see, when this plane took off and the pilot became aware that something had gone haywire, all confidence in those physical things was lost. The question became, "God, where are you?"

Although officials said there wasn't very much panic on that plane, I'm sure it must have been present in the minds of the individuals aboard.

I think this and other similar incidents define what a helpless condition really is. When we feel satisfied, self-sufficient, like we don't need anything, we are setting ourselves up for a great fall.

Generally, it was some kind of an emergency that first made us seek God at all. God probably used some crisis to bring us to our senses, make us examine ourselves and see the fruits of our lives and grant us the power of repentance.

"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time 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" (Eph. 2:11-12).

We were far away from God and had no way of reaching Him when He first called us (John 6:44).

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13). We shouldn't ever allow this attitude to slip from our minds —

that God reached out and, through no merit of our own, lifted us from the far-off position we were in and brought us into fellowship with Him and His son, Jesus Christ. We continually need the presence and help of God, for we are nothing without Him.

## ☑ God Loves Us Personally

(2) *God loves us personally.* We can know beyond a shadow of a doubt the extent that God loves us individually.

Notice God's depth of concern for us, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

How do we know personally that God has such great love for us? We can understand heroic deeds that take place like when a home is on fire. A person may become so excited because of the children in a burning building that he just unconsciously runs into the home and saves their lives. These things are done spontaneously — they happen immediately. On many occasions if we had time to think about what we were doing, we would not do it.

But you see, God planned all His actions. He planned the act described in John 3:16 from the beginning of the world.

Jesus Christ knew, when He was still with God, what He was going to have to go through. And then, as a physical human being living His life out from birth to age 33, He had to look forward to the fateful day He knew was going to come. It wasn't just a spontaneous act — something done on an impulse — but it was real love. And that is the kind of personal love God has for us, individually and collectively. Can we understand it?

God removed the heavy burden we bore as a result of being under the penalty of sin and He gave us rest (Matt. 11:28-30). He helps us handle our Christian responsibilities now. No matter how great the trial might be, He is there when we call on Him. We need to retain these points in our minds to keep from slipping. Otherwise we are losing sight of God, His

purpose and His plan. What Christ suffered reveals the tremendous love He has for us.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

"For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son" (Heb. 1:1-5).

We are called God's sons. God looks at future things as though they already exist. We are His children if we have His Spirit residing in our minds. That Spirit acts as a catalyst to help us perform all that is required of us as His sons.

"And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

"And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto thy Son he saith, Thy throne, O God is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom" (verses 5-8).

This is what God is offering us as He looks upon us as His sons. We are playing for large stakes indeed — so we shouldn't take chances. It should be a sure thing. We have a definite guarantee — with His Spirit — unless we abort ourselves.

Notice Christ's assurance, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

## ☑ Faith in God's Power

(3) *We need to have faith in God and His power to see us through to the end.* The apostle Paul said that



God will never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5), but what does that mean? The minute we find ourselves in a trial of some sort, we feel like we're all alone — deserted. But we should have the confidence that God will deliver us.

Read in the Old Testament the example of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

They said, in effect: "Okay, if God allows us to die, then so be it. Go ahead and throw us in the fiery furnace." That is real confidence in God. Yet many people can read that example and not apply it personally.

I remember when I was teaching my daughter to swim. She had never been in deep water before in her life or even in shallow water, for that matter, except the bathtub.

I had to build up her confidence that I would be there to insure her safety. I had to reassure her that I would bring her to the side of the pool if she would only slide down the slide into the deep water. As a result she had enough faith and confidence in her father to go down the slide.

She thought she couldn't swim a lick, but the second she hit the water, even though I was there, she began flailing her arms and legs and found out that she didn't need me — and she made it to the side of the pool. And lo and behold, years later she broke a number of swimming records in grade school and high school.

Review Psalm 91 and see the confidence we can have in God. Dwelling on this concept will bring us God's protection and blessing. He will fulfill His promise to make us God as He is God.

## **Unity**

(4) *We must have unity.* No one in the Church is an island to himself. We have been begotten into the Family of God.

A family consists of several members, so no one can be a loner. If you still selfishly feel that you would rather be alone, some faults do exist in your nature.

As the saying goes, blood is thicker than water, but it should not be thicker than God's Spirit. God's Spirit should be an adhesive that binds us together more strongly than anything else.

We should be concerned for one another. We need warmth and a sense of pulling together, especially when there are trials and hardships. We need real family love.

Paul admonishes us to live in the service of God: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3).

God is not the author of confusion. Neither is Christ divided.

In verse 4 Paul says, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." God hasn't sent part of His Family off somewhere else to start up another Work.

He says, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (verses 5-6).

If you don't experience this warmth, fellowship and unity, you must feel like you're on the outside — that you're not a part of the Body. If so, you need to come to grips with the problem.

Christ expressed the need for us to be unified as a family.

In praying to the Father He said: "And now I am no more in the world, but these [Christians] are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (John 17:11).

Christ prayed that we might have the unity necessary to accomplish the mission we have as the Body of Christ:

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (verse 21).

This kind of unity has far-reaching effects in the eyes of everyone we meet. When they see this kind of harmony — the kind of concern we show as the Family of God — it convinces them that Jesus Christ did come, sent by the Father.

Verses 22-23: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as

we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

We should be one in mind, purpose, will and deed — in everything. That kind of unity makes us willing to come to the aid of others. The presence of that unity, through God's Spirit, shows God's Church truly exists.

## **Growth our responsibility**

When Esau became careless about his relationship with God, he became willing to trade his rights as the eldest son of Isaac for a meal. And afterward, when he wanted those rights back, it was too late.

"For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. 12:17). Esau had wasted his only opportunity.

We need to build into ourselves solid character on a solid foundation, looking to God for help, and grow in grace and knowledge into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (II Pet. 3:18, Eph. 4:13).

Then our spiritual driving record will be perfectly clean, and we can avoid the ultimate result of infidelity to the loving God who has called us out of this world and offered us eternal, abundantly happy life:

"For if these things [the attributes of Christian character Peter listed in verses 5-7] be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" (II Pet. 1:8-9).

Remember again the four points in the checklist for Christian growth and the warning in Hebrews 10:26-27:

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." □



# Good News on the Canadian Work

## America's Northern Neighbor

Canada is known for many things, among them the Rocky Mountains, maple syrup, Mounties and cold weather.

Together with their Alaskan counterparts, the Canadian ministers experience subzero temperatures for much of the winter, an abundance of snow (it has been known to snow in Calgary in August) and the hazardous conditions that go with such weather.

Yet church services are rarely canceled and a real camaraderie exists between ministry and membership in the face of such weather. Alaskan conditions can vary as much as 150 degrees between summer and winter, from 95 degrees Fahrenheit (35 Celsius) down to 55 below zero (about minus 48 Celsius). Add the wind-chill factor and 120 degrees below (about minus 84.5 Celsius) is possible in places like Prudhoe Bay in northern Alaska. Even oil industry workers do not venture outdoors then!

God's Work in Canada is now in its 20th year, and they have been 20 years of great accomplishment on many fronts.

Canadians have felt the impact of the Work since the 1930s, when Herbert W. Armstrong could be heard on U.S. West Coast radio stations, but early listeners had to wait many years for a more powerful presence in Canada itself.

That presence finally came around 1960 when *The World Tomorrow* broadcast began to be aired on three Canadian radio stations in Ontario, Saskatchewan and Quebec. About 5,000 listeners became subscribers to *The Plain*

## The Canadian Office

Les McCullough directs the Canadian Work in addition to assisting Mr. Armstrong in supervising the International Work. His responsibilities necessitate a great deal of travel in Canada and around the world.

Fortunately, as he says, he has an able staff in Vancouver to back him up. Staff assistants include business manager Don Miller, media coordinator David Hulme and YES-YOU coordinator Larry Greider.

Senior field ministers Bob Fahey, George Patrickson, Charles Bryce, Colin Wilkins and Richard Pinelli are located across Canada in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec and Ontario, respectively, to serve the Church and ministry in those areas.

The office area was recently expanded to provide more space for the data processing center and warehouse facility. Appropriately, the expansion took place just before an all-Canadian ministerial conference in Vancouver.

The open-house sessions for the Canadian and Alaskan



Evangelist Leslie McCullough directs God's Work in Canada.

ministry proved successful. It was the first such conference in seven years, affording many ministers their first look at the Canadian Office.

*The Canadian regional headquarters of the Work, housed in this Vancouver facility, is manned by "an able staff," says director Les McCullough. The office area was expanded to provide more space for the data processing and warehouse functions.*



*Truth* and its French counterpart, *La Pure Verite*.

In February, 1961, an office was opened in Vancouver, B.C., to take care of the developing needs of the Canadian Work. Early staff members were Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Prather and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Pinelli. A Bible study began the same month with 40 in attendance, and 18

months later the first Sabbath services were conducted in Canada, Dean Wilson having been appointed Canadian office manager.

In the next several years the Vancouver office expanded greatly from its fledgling beginnings, through increased media exposure.

Today there are 69 regular church services and Bible

studies as well as 28 outlying Bible studies. Total church attendance in December, 1979, was 8,324 together with 671 in attendance at the outlying studies. Some 63 ministers and two trainees take care of the church congregations with the aid of 21 local church elders. The Work has come a long way in the past two decades.



## Providing Funds

Financially, 1979 was an excellent year for the Canadian Work.

The year closed with a 14 percent increase over 1978, with several individual months showing a 20 percent jump in income over the same month in the previous year. Expenses were down on the projected budget as well, and all these factors combined to produce a picture of financial health.



The Work's financial picture in Canada looks good.

The good Canadian financial picture has allowed the Work there to once again begin providing funds for several less developed areas of the International Work. Contributions have provided for more expansion in 1980 in the Philippines, the Pacific Ocean islands and Southeast Asia.

## Media in Canada

The year of 1979 saw the institution of a large-scale newsstand circulation program in Canada.

Currently, 400,000 magazines are distributed this way in major population centers.

The advertising campaigns of the last several months have met with great success, notably the newspaper flyer campaign through which 5.8 million inserts have been distributed.

A 1 percent yield has virtually doubled the circulation of *The Plain Truth* over a two-month period this year. The insert has appeared in German and French as well as



Canada has felt the Work's impact since the 1930s, when Herbert W. Armstrong could be heard on U.S. West Coast radio stations. Today Canada has 69 regular Church services and 28 outlying Bible studies. (Map by Gene Tikasingh)

English and continues to be most effective.

Another well-received campaign concentrated on several of the Work's booklets to help today's family with day-to-day problems.

Anticipating a response of 4,500 (based on previous performances), the staff was delighted at the 20,000-plus responses that were returned from *Homemakers* magazines for the publications *Dilemma of Drugs*, *How to Manage Your Personal Finances* and *Principles of Healthful Living*.

*The World Tomorrow* program can now be heard on 79 Canadian radio stations and one Alaskan outlet.

This January an all-news network, CKO, offered a one-year contract for Mr. Armstrong's program to be aired Monday through Friday at 8 p.m. Naturally, the network's offer was accepted, especially since it gives access to the major metropolitan areas of Vancouver, B.C., Edmonton, Alta., Montreal, Que., and

Ottawa, Toronto and London, Ont.

The subscription *Plain Truth* for Canada, the Philippines and the Caribbean is printed in Vancouver by Evergreen Press. The Canadian newsstand version and various documents in English and French are also printed there. Continued good relations with the printer and no foreseeable shortage of paper have contributed to this arrangement's success.

## A Bilingual Nation

Preaching the Gospel to a nation with two official languages, French and English, is a challenging task.

Six bilingual ministers serve Canada's French-speaking province of Quebec. Senior minister in the area is Colin Wilkins.

The circulation of *La Pure Verite* is approximately 25,000 copies, and an additional 50,000 copies are made

available for instant distribution in the major cities of Quebec each month.

Responses to advertising



Signs like the one above are common in Canada because the nation has two official languages, English and French. Preaching the Gospel thus becomes more challenging.

offers in French have been traditionally good, whatever literature was offered. Current cost-per-response figures for French booklet ads in magazines run between 98 cents (U.S.) and \$4.21 (U.S.) — all very acceptable costs.

—by David Hulme □



# A Time to Laugh

*Do you picture God as a cold, frowning Judge  
always on the verge of anger? You shouldn't —  
God is the very Creator of humor.*

By Clayton Steep

**G**od created the smile. So He knows how to smile. He created laughter. So He knows how to laugh. In fact, the Bible says our Maker is the "happy" God (I Tim. 1:11 — the Greek word translated "blessed" is *makarios*, which is just as correctly translated "happy"). In God's presence is "fulness of joy" (Ps. 16:11), and laughter is one way joy can be expressed.

Who can visit a zoo or an aquarium and not be impressed that God has a sense of humor? Penguins sliding down the ice, bears begging for a tasty morsel, ostriches strolling on ungainly legs, monkeys swinging by their tails, angler fish dangling their bait — from insects to elephants, from fish to birds, God's sense of humor is reflected in His creatures. The mere sight of a dog wagging its tail or a kitten playing with a string says, Smile!

And then there are babies. Any loving, attentive parent knows how amusing — yes, funny — a baby can be. The facial expressions, the sounds and the movements of an infant all demonstrate the warmth of a generous, all-wise Creator.

Adults, too, do many laughable things, sometimes on purpose and sometimes in spite of themselves. For many years various television programs and periodicals have capitalized on depicting the funny incidents in which people get involved.

## Biblical humor

But the creation we see around us is not the only indication that God has a sense of humor. The Bible, inspired and preserved by God, contains many passages that, if they are not expressly humorous, at least have a note of levity to them, if only in

their portrayal of human foibles.

The book of Daniel relates how King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords. They were drinking wine and having a real riot of a time.

Then Belshazzar thought it would be clever to have everyone drink wine in the cups and vessels that had been plundered from God's Temple. So the vessels were defiled, to the sound of uproarious laughter. But the mirth of this drunken revel was soon cut short by another clever joke — this one on Belshazzar himself.

Suddenly a hand appeared and began to write on the wall. "Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together" (Dan. 5:6, Revised Standard Version). Note the humorous picture God paints of Belshazzar's reaction to His intervention in this party.

How about the time pompous King Saul was humiliated by David (though David afterward realized he had done wrongly and repented)? Saul and his army were hunting for David in rugged country when the king stopped and entered a dark cave, not knowing that David was hiding in that very cave.

While Saul was most vulnerable David crept up and cut off a piece of the king's garment (I Sam. 24:1-5). The joke was on Saul!

Consider what happened to ridiculous Balaam when he was riding on an ass. Balaam wanted the ass to go in a certain direction, but the ass refused to move. The animal saw an angel standing in its path, preventing passage — an angel Balaam couldn't see. Balaam was frantically beating the poor creature, trying to get it to obey, when, to his astonishment, God caused the ass to speak and ask why

it was being beaten (Num. 22:22-28). Imagine the look that crossed Balaam's face and how he must have felt at that moment.

Sometimes God laughs in derision. As He looks down from heaven and sees vain, pompous mortals strutting around on the world scene like so many silly peacocks, God laughs — in pity. He beholds the feverish attempts of men to unite together in opposition to His holy ways, only to have their efforts crumble. He hears atheists proclaiming with lofty arrogance that He does not exist. Such foolishness must make God lean back on His throne, tilt His head up and let go a peal of laughter that causes the very pillars of His heavenly temple to quake (Ps. 2:4).

Notice in what colorful terms God pronounced judgment upon sinful Jerusalem: "Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. . . . I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipes a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down" (II Kings 21:12-13).

God, of course, does not laugh at man's ludicrous machinations out of cruelty. He merely looks ahead to the beautiful, glorious, perfect Kingdom He knows He is going to soon set up and sees how foolish it is for man to worry about this comparatively unimportant world. God is happy about the joy and contentment He knows will replace the sadness and strife in this world when He reestablishes His government on earth (Rev. 21:4).

## Jonah's adventure

It is difficult not to see humor in Jonah's story. God told this prophet to go to the mighty city of Nineveh and tell the people there to repent. Jonah didn't want the job. But he



knew God wouldn't give up. So he thought he would board a ship and go somewhere God couldn't find him. Poor Jonah. Did he think he could hide from the Almighty?

Jonah's ship set sail, and God sent a terrifying storm that tossed and heaved the little vessel until it was about to break in pieces. When the ship's crew found that Jonah was responsible for the storm buffeting them, they tossed him overboard.

But the story doesn't end here. A great fish came along and swallowed Jonah. As he was being sloshed down the gullet of this denizen of the deep and the immense jaws were closing behind him, Jonah must have thought his days were over. Instead, he found himself in pitch blackness — wet, tangled in seaweed, but alive. For the next three days Jonah did some fervent praying and repenting.

About this time the fish began to develop a monumental case of indigestion. And so a beleaguered but submissive Jonah was vomited up on dry land. Once again God told him to go warn the people of Nineveh that divine retribution was imminent. This time Jonah obeyed.

And, amazingly, the people of Nineveh were an exception to the rule: They believed and repented. But notice the humorous length the Ninevites went to in order to show their reformation: "And he [the king of Nineveh] caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God" (Jonah 3:7-8).

Imagine it: Every soul in the kingdom, from the king to the last lamb in the smallest herd, fasted, put on sackcloth and was supposed to cry out loud to God. That must have been quite a sight!

But that was the problem. The nation repented. And God in His mercy decided not to destroy Nineveh as Jonah had prophesied would happen. Jonah was hopping mad — mad at the Ninevites for repenting and mad at God for sparing them. Jonah was afraid his word would be worthless since what he had said did not come to pass. And besides, had he

gone through the episode of the ship and fish all for nothing?

So he put together a shelter not far from the city, sat under it and had himself a good pout. Poor Jonah. The story closes with God using a gourd and a worm to show Jonah how foolish his sulky attitude was.

### The Proverbs

The book of Proverbs contains different forms of humor, such as irony, sarcasm and analogy.

For example, a beautiful woman who is indiscreet is compared to a jewel of gold in a swine's snout (Prov. 11:22).

Great fun is made of a slothful person. He is too lazy to lift his hand to his mouth (Prov. 26:15). He just reposes in bed, turning from side to side like a door on hinges (verse 14), inventing absurd excuses for not going to work (verse 13).

It was probably Solomon's experiences with 1,000 women that helped him come to some conclusions not entirely lacking in humor (Prov. 21:19, 27:15).

### Joy part of God's nature

Jesus used humor when it was appropriate. He called two of His disciples the "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17). Perhaps they were unusually bombastic individuals. He had a name for King Herod, too. He referred to him as "that fox" (Luke 13:32).

Though Jesus was stressing seriously important principles, some see a hint of wit in His statements about not letting the left hand know what the right hand is doing (Matt. 6:3), the camel going through the eye of a needle (Matt. 19:24), the blind leading the blind and both falling into a ditch (Luke 6:39) or making some who were fishing into fishers of men (Matt. 4:19).

Jesus must have enjoyed impetuous Peter who, boldly trying to walk on the water, was overtaken with fright. He yelled for help as he began to sink below the waves (Matt. 14:28-31).

Then there was the time after Christ was crucified when Peter decided to forget all about his calling and go fishing. He was sitting in a boat when Jesus appeared to him. Peter was so flabbergasted that he

jumped overboard (John 21:3-7). He had to make sure he was really seeing who he thought he was.

The apostle Paul sarcastically referred to false teachers in II Corinthians 11:5 as "chiefest" (meaning "hot-shot" or "super-duper").

Jeremiah 1:11-12 contains another good example of a play on words used by God. Though it is not evident in the English language, in Hebrew the word for "almond tree" is similar to the word for "hasten." Jeremiah said, "I see a rod of an almond tree [*sha-qued*]." Then God replied, "Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten [*shoqued*] my word to perform it."

As you study the Bible, do so with the realization that God is not a stern, implacable, austere Being who never has any fun. Far from it. He is warm and loving. One of the fruits of His Spirit is joy (Gal. 5:22). Joy is part of God's nature.

### Our responsibility

God has given mankind the blessing of laughter. He says "a merry heart doeth good like a medicine" and "he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast" (Prov. 17:22, 15:15). Over and over again the Bible talks about how our relationship with God, once we have repented of our sins, should be joyful.

Of course, laughter and humor can be misused. There are times when levity is not appropriate (Rom. 12:15). Just as there is a time to laugh, there is also a time to weep (Eccl. 3:4).

To laugh and joke about things that are foolish, off color, indecent or evil is wrong. Notice Paul's warning:

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. . . there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity . . . these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving" (Eph. 4:29, 5:3-4, New International Version).

Animals can't appreciate humor. Human beings can, for they have been given that gift by God. Let us enjoy it properly. □



*What's wrong with such a "harmless" observance as marking the day of your birth? God's Word reveals the proper Christian attitude, and it's inextricably tied to the purpose of human life!*





# Should Christians Celebrate Birthdays?

By Kenneth C. Herrmann

**P**aper plates and party hats lay strewn across the kitchen table. Some plastic forks and a few napkins have ended up there also. A now-empty ice cream carton sits on the sink. On the table, crumbs on a large plate are all that remain of a chocolate cake. Eleven icing-smear, pastel-colored candles are stacked beside the cake plate.

In the living room, brightly colored wrapping paper lays crumpled on the floor amid several boxes of different sizes and shapes. New clothing is laying across a chair arm. In the chair sits a middle-aged woman wearing an exhausted smile as she watches her son and his friends through the window. Out in the street, the happy, excited cries of a dozen adolescents break the afternoon as they fight over who will have the next turn riding the new bicycle.

A joyous, harmless celebration? After all, it is only a child's birthday party. But would such a scene ever occur in the home of a member of the Church of God?

## The biblical record

Search your Bible! It reveals God's attitude as opposed to your own human reason or some idea you have allowed Satan to pump into your mind. How many birthday celebrations do you find in God's Word? Only two.

At the first, an Egyptian pharaoh marked the day of his birth by hanging his chief baker (Gen. 40:20-22).

At the second, Herod granted the request of Herodias' daughter and had John the Baptist beheaded (Matt. 14:6-11).

The children of Job may have been holding birthday celebrations when they partied together, "And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and

called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them" (Job 1:4).

Notice how perfect, upright Job viewed these "harmless" celebrations and reacted to them: "And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts" (verse 5).

It was at one of these very feasts that, by God's express permission, Satan caused a blast of wind to flatten the house Job's children were in, killing all 10 of them (verses 18-19).

Job himself actually cursed his own birthday, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived" (Job 3:3).

Notice the record of the first century historian Josephus:

The Jews in Christ's day knew God's attitude toward birthday celebrations, "Nay, indeed, the law does not permit us to make festivals at the births of our children" (Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, Book II, section 26).

## What about Christ's birthday?

But what about the most important holiday in traditional Christianity — Christmas — the celebration of the supposed "birthday" of Christ? Search your Bible again! You will find no mention of the exact date of Christ's birth anywhere in its pages — and no command from God Almighty to observe any such day. The traditional celebration of Dec. 25 does not come from the Bible, but from paganism, as any knowledgeable person must admit and any encyclopedia will show. (For more

information, write for our free booklet, *The Plain Truth About Christmas*.)

The day of Jesus' birth is unknown. But the day of His death is known (Nisan 14, A.D. 31), and His true followers are commanded to observe that day annually in remembrance of Him.

Christ instructed His disciples to show His death by keeping the yearly Passover and partaking of the symbolic unleavened bread and wine (Luke 22:19-20). Paul shows that, just as the original Passover lamb was slain as a type, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (I Cor. 5:7). Paul went on to explain the proper manner in which to annually observe the day our Savior died as our Passover lamb (verses 7-8).

But most of the world has utterly refused to keep the true Holy Days God ordained. The world has instead followed its own ideas, under Satan's deceptive influence, and produced the mishmash of confusing and conflicting religious beliefs we see around us today. (Write for our free booklet, *Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days — Which?*)

In response to man's Babylon of religious anarchy, God thunders: "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear" (Isa. 1:14-15).

That's what God thinks of worldly customs and celebrations!

## The Roman calendar

We live in a world that is geared to the Roman calendar. We remember the dates of our births, pay our taxes and have our tombstones engraved



with the day we die in accord with a pagan system of calculating time.

"But isn't our Roman calendar of Christian origin?" some in the world might ask. "Doesn't it have the approval of almost all the Christian sects?"

History answers: "Our [Roman] calendar is not Christian in origin. It descends directly from the Egyptians, who originated the 12-month year, 365-day system. A pagan Egyptian scientist, Sosigenes, suggested this plan to the pagan emperor Julius Caesar, who directed that it go into effect throughout the Roman Empire in 45 B.C. As adopted it indicated its pagan origin by the names of the months — called Janus, Maia, Juno, etc.

"The days were not named but numbered on a complicated system involving Ides, Nones and Calends. It was not until A.D. 321 that the seven-day-week feature was added when the emperor Constantine adopted [a false version of] Christianity. Oddly enough, for his weekdays he chose pagan names, which are still used" (*Journal of Calendar Reform*, September, 1953, page 128).

Men have even applied pagan names to the seven days of the week: *Sunday, Moonday, Tiwsday, Wodensday, Thorsday, Friggasday* and *Saturnsday*. The single designation given in Scripture was the term "Sabbath" to the seventh day of the week; all others were called the first day of the week, the second day of the week, etc.

In this present world, we are obligated to make use of the Roman calendar, but let's recognize it for what it is. The very calendar the world uses to celebrate its "birthdays" is erroneous to begin with!

### **Birthdays with God-given calendar?**

The calendar given by God to Israel in the time of Moses was not at all adapted to birthday celebrations. Have you pitied (or perhaps envied!) the individual who was born Feb. 29 and, technically, could receive gifts and congratulations only once every four years? This single irregularity of the Roman calendar affects only about one individual in every 1,461. But the irregularities of the calendar God gave would affect the birthday

observances of one person in every eight.

The calendar still in use by the Jews is fundamentally the same one God gave Moses for the children of Israel. But why isn't this calendar suitable for birthday observance?

The Roman calendar has a single month, February, that varies in length according to a simple one-year-in-four pattern. God's sacred calendar, committed to the Jews for preservation to our time, has three months that vary in length from 29 to 30 days after a rather complicated pattern. Three times as many people are affected.

A still greater deterrent to annual

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Instead of looking  
backward to a physical  
birth into this temporary  
life . . . Job understood  
the true values of life and  
looked forward to a  
rebirth into life eternal as  
a spirit being  
and member of  
the Family of God . . .

---

birthday observance is the insertion of a 13th month in the third, sixth, eighth, 11th, 14th, 17th and 19th years of a 19-year time cycle. Imagine the confusion of attempting to schedule birthday parties!

It is true that some Jewish people, following pagan customs, attempt to use this ancient calendar to observe their birthdays. A rather intricate set of human rules governs whether to move the celebration ahead or back one day, or back one month in the absence of the 13th month. Different regulations are applied and the practice is not uniformly followed by all.

What wisdom prompted God to give mankind such a calendar?

It certainly discouraged the practice of observing birthdays and other anniversaries. The net result was to deprive mankind of the opportunity to set aside birthdays. God's people

certainly knew the date of their births, but they kept track of their ages by calendar years, not birth dates.

However, for those who understood, the whole purpose of life was to prepare and look forward to a new birth — to a resurrection from the dead.

### **The correct attitude**

To this world, the day of a person's birth is important. But the Bible makes a seemingly cryptic statement that "the day of death [is better] than the day of one's birth" (Eccl. 7:1). How can this be?

Paul gives us the answer. Writing near the time of his death, he said, "I have fought a good fight [in overcoming in this human life], I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:7-8).

The day Paul began this life as a baby could hardly be compared in importance with the day he, at death, made certain his reward by enduring the problems and trials of a Christian life to the end.

Job looked forward to the time of his rebirth: "I know that my redeemer [Christ] liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth [referring to Christ at His Second Coming]: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25-26).

Notice chapter 14, verses 14-15: "If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee [referring to the time when Christ will call, and all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come forth in a resurrection]: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands."

Instead of looking backward to a physical birth into this temporary life where we are composed of dust, Job understood the true values of life and looked forward to a rebirth into life eternal as a spirit being and member of the Family of God in the Kingdom of God.

This is the event you should be looking forward to as well. □



# 'Occupy Till I Come'

By John A. Halford

**S**econd Lieutenant Hiroo Onoda had never thought of himself as anything special. And when he was conscripted into the Japanese Imperial Army in 1942, he expected only to do his duty. That was to fight — and, if necessary, to die — for his emperor and country.

He never achieved high rank. He never stood at the forefront of a mighty army. Yet this ordinary Japanese soldier's story is one of almost incredible courage, endurance and loyalty. There is an important lesson in it for us today.

In the latter stages of World War II, Lt. Onoda was stationed in the Philippines. In order to stem the Allied advance, the retreating Japanese left behind guerrilla groups, with orders to do everything possible to hold the territory and frustrate the enemy.

Hiroo Onoda was assigned to lead the guerrilla operations on Lubang, a small island off the coast of Mindanao.

In his book, *No Surrender*, Lt. Onoda tells of the moment he received his orders. "Then, with his eyes directly on me [his superior officer] said: 'You are absolutely forbidden to die by your own hand [Japanese soldiers in World War II would commit suicide rather than suffer the ignominy of being taken prisoner]. It may take three years, it may take five, but whatever happens, we'll come back for you. Until then, so long as you have one soldier, you are to continue to lead him. You may have to live on coconuts! If that is the case, live on coconuts. Under no circumstances are you to give up your life voluntarily.'"

"I said to myself, 'I'll do it! Even if I don't have coconuts, even if I have to eat grass and weeds, I'll do it. These are my orders and I will



**HIROO ONODA, A SECOND LIEUTENANT** in Japan's Imperial Army during World War II, was determined to do his job, no matter what it required or how long it took.

carry them out' " (*No Surrender*, pp. 50-51).

Hiroo Onoda and the men under his command took up their position on Lubang Island in late 1944. Within the next several months Japan was beaten, and the Japanese forces everywhere were ordered to lay down their arms. Surrender orders were dropped by plane to Lt. Onoda and his small force.

But he and his four companions refused. He had taken his orders at face value — he would not, under any circumstances, surrender. After all, he reasoned, had not his country sworn to fight to the end, until not a single Japanese was left alive? And so, Japan could not have surrendered — it must be an enemy trick.

Lt. Onoda explains: "When I became a soldier, I accepted my country's goals. I vowed that I would do anything within my power to achieve those goals. I did not, it is true, come forward and volunteer for military service, but ... I considered it my sacred duty, once I passed the army physical examination, to become a soldier and fight for Japan ... it was a solemn oath, and I was resolved to carry it out" (*Ibid*, pp. 136-137).

So Lt. Onoda fought on. One by one, his companions deserted or were killed or captured.

With the war ended the armies were demobilized, and the world picked up the pieces. But Lt. Onoda

fought on. The 1940s became the 1950s. The 1950s became the 1960s, and a new generation grew up in Japan, for whom the war was a memory. Japan rose from defeat and became a prosperous industrial giant. Japanese cameras and transistor radios replaced the invading forces all over Southeast Asia. Fashions came and went. Man landed on the moon. But on Lubang Island Hiroo Onoda fought on.

Of course, there were times when he became discouraged. His uniform rotted away and he was often hungry, cold and lonely. There were many things he couldn't understand. Why were the battle ships in the bay replaced by cruise ships? Where were the military aircraft? Why did the newspapers he found from time to time give no news of the war? And why were there no more orders — no instructions?

But he never lost faith. His country had sworn to fight to the bitter end — and his country still existed. According to the newspapers, it was growing in prosperity. So they couldn't have lost the war. And that meant they would come back for him. His commanding officer had promised that.

So Lt. Onoda saw his job as clear-cut, and continued to perform it, even though there were many attempts by the Filipinos, Americans and Japanese to entice him out of the jungle. Japan even sent his



brother to Lubang to plead with him. But Lt. Onoda would not come out of hiding and would never drop his defenses for an instant. He had been told, "No surrender," and no one — not even his own brother — would be able to deceive him.

Eventually, however, Lt. Onoda did surrender. A young Japanese photographer made contact with him, and asked him under what circumstances he would give in. Lt. Onoda's answer was simple — send the man who told him *not* to give in. Let him rescind his order.

Back in Japan, Lt. Onoda's commanding officer was located. He was now a middle-aged book dealer. He was issued with copies of the original surrender orders and sent to Lubang, where eventually he was able to contact Lt. Onoda.

And so, March 9, 1974, nearly 29 years after his country had surrendered, Hiroo Onoda emerged from the jungle. In spite of his tattered uniform, he looked every inch a soldier. His weapons were in top-notch condition. He was still a fighting force. And as the last warrior of the second world war surrendered, he at least had the satisfaction of knowing that he had fulfilled his calling — he *occupied till they came*.

You will probably already have begun to see the lessons in Lt. Onoda's story for God's Church today. Like Lt. Onoda, we did not volunteer, but were conscripted or called into this Work of God. Christ sets us in the Body, not perhaps doing what we want to do, but as it pleases Him (I Cor. 12:18). There is a Work to be done that is bigger than a single individual's aspiration.

At present this earth — the territory of the coming Kingdom of God — is occupied by a hostile and alien power — Satan, the god of this world.

But Christ said He would not take us out of the world, but leave us in it *to do the Work*. He told us, "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13). Like any commander who understands men, Christ has not left us without a structure or a chain of command. A soldier, fighting for his king and country, must be under the command of a general and other officers. Otherwise, a coordinated effort cannot be made.

The soldier does not appoint the general — the king or president does

that. Christ called Herbert W. Armstrong to be His human leader in this age. Then He called the rest of us to assist Mr. Armstrong.

Like Hiroo Onoda, we are told our life is not our own. We are not to consider surrender or quitting. We are to live in the enemy's territory and bear witness to another way of life. We must tell the good news that deliverance is coming to this unhappy, wretched world.

Christ warned that since we would be in enemy territory, the mission would sometimes be hazardous. The enemy would attack and persecute us and do his best to persuade us to surrender to him. He would try to discourage us and make us feel abandoned. He would try to discredit our leaders. He would try to make us feel that the fight was futile and the weapons inadequate. "The sword of the Spirit? The shield of faith? The breastplate of righteousness? Aw c'mon, this is the 20th century. Nobody fights with that stuff anymore."

But the orders are clear, no matter how long it is — occupy till Christ comes back. He promised He will come back, and when He does He expects to find us "so doing" (Matt. 24:46).

Lt. Onoda expected to be on Lubang for only two or three years at the most. The early apostles expected Christ to return for them within weeks of His ascending to heaven. Only later did they come to realize that it was going to be much longer.

Some of us in the Church today may feel we have been waiting a long time. Now we are entering a new decade, and this may be the one. Each week, world events seem to make Christ's return more likely.

Jesus Christ must certainly come soon. But we can't set dates or give Him ultimatums. Whether it is 1990 or 2000 or some other date, it makes no difference. The instruction is still valid.

Fight on. Don't let enemy propaganda wear you down. Stay loyal to your King and His appointed leadership. Do the work of a soldier of Jesus Christ. This is our reasonable service — it is what is expected (Rom. 12:1).

An ordinary soldier, fighting for his physical emperor, showed that he understood this. Hiroo Onoda endured to the end. How much more should we, fighting for the King of kings and the Lord of lords? □

## The History

(Continued from page 3)

such a thing about you or any other man, and I'm glad that you are not my judge."

I attended his lecture, but learned nothing new. I had no occasion to speak to the man at the meeting. The Adventists had given him permission to use their church house for a week-day meeting.

Late in 1927 a young minister came to Oregon from Stanberry. He called on me, since my articles had been appearing as lead cover articles in *The Bible Advocate*. He seemed friendly, yet there was a definite hostility underneath. Soon my articles were rejected at Stanberry.

Meanwhile I had learned of a small group of about 10 members that met together for Sabbath-school study each Sabbath in Oregon City. They were poor, uneducated, except for one man, elderly Mr. G.A. Hobbs, 82 years of age. He was 82, stern and peppery, strict for orderly procedures. Yet despite his peppery exterior, he had a heart of love and became very fond of me.

I had begun attending with this tiny group in Oregon City, and they had asked me to be their teacher. I did not preach, but just in ordinary conversation expounded the Scriptures to them.

When Mr. Hobbs heard *The Bible Advocate* had rejected my articles on recommendation of this young minister, he wrote them a scorching hot letter of protest, and my articles were reinstated.

However, this young minister, Roy Daily, and I did, over the next few years, especially in 1931, work together. He had become more friendly as we got to know each other.

Things continued about as I have described for the next three years.

Our firstborn son, Richard David "Dick," was born Oct. 13, 1928. That was the happiest day of my life. I had waited 12 years for a son, though God had given us two daughters.

Things were getting tougher for me and my family through 1927 and 1928 and 1929. God knew I needed much more humbling, and He did it economically. I had not realized it,



but my false god, from 18 years on, had been to achieve SUCCESS in business. I did not crave money as such. I did want to be a SUCCESS — and this world measures “success” by what a man accumulates, as well as by accomplishment.

But meanwhile, my Bible study continued, and I was accumulating much more knowledge and Bible UNDERSTANDING. The year 1928 had been a year of great progress in my life SPIRITUALLY!

The year 1929 was a crucial year! It was a year of tremendous activity in WORLD EVENTS. On June 7, 1929, the papal state in Rome, extinct since 1870, was revived as a state or nation — the Vatican. The great stock market crash occurred Oct. 29. That was the start of the most severe economic depression the United States had ever experienced. It was a year of going actually HUNGRY for us. It was in late January of 1930 that I learned the lesson of FASTING and prayer, with such miraculous answers to prayer. I have published this before and will not take space for it here.

Our second son, and fourth child, was born Feb. 9. And to THINK! Garner Ted has now passed the HALF-CENTURY mark — past 50 years of age! Unbelievable! And today, as I write, is his 50th birthday. I pray very earnestly for him every day, and God is going to answer my prayers! He was born on a Sunday.

During these years, my FAITH had increased, the faith OF Jesus Christ, which God GAVE me through His Holy Spirit. There were many miraculous answers to prayer, especially just before Ted's birth, and his healing of being born dumb, by prayer and the laying on of my hands after he was past 2 years old.

It was in November, 1930, that the Runcorns asked my wife and me to accompany them to a business meeting of the Church down in the Willamette Valley, at the home of Mrs. Ira E. Curtis. The Church in Oregon was being divided. One group, in which were the Runcorns and Mr. Hobbs, were opposing Andrew N. Dugger, who had been the head minister at Stanberry.

At this meeting, they asked me to act as secretary and take down the minutes of the meeting, though I had never joined the Church.

At this meeting, the strife between the two divisions became heated. Tempers were flaring. It was rapidly moving into an angry fistfight.

Quickly I rose to my feet. In a loud but calm voice I asked if I might say a word. I was but a guest, but I said we were all Sabbath keepers and Satan was angry. I was going to drop to my knees and ask God to restrain Satan from our midst, and said they could kneel too, if they wished. I knelt immediately, and beseeched God to give us peace and rebuke Satan. When I rose, all the fight had gone out of them.

They asked me, before leaving, if I would conduct an evangelistic cam-

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Plainly, in these  
tumultuous last days,  
God would raise up  
one who would  
KNOW he is  
of THE HOUSE OF  
DAVID, as Christ's chosen  
apostle and messenger  
to the KINGS OF THE  
EARTH, to carry . . .  
Christ's Gospel . . .

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paign for them in a church at Harrisburg, Ore. I told them I would have 11 nights free beginning Sunday night, Dec. 21. But I had never preached before the public. I said I would do it if they would agree to each spend ONE HOUR in solid prayer for these meetings, beginning then, until the meetings were over.

I don't think they had all spent that much time in prayer daily, but it was too embarrassing for them to refuse.

The ones who wanted to withdraw their tithes from Stanberry proceeded immediately to incorporate as the Oregon Conference. Mr. G.A. Hobbs was president and Mr. Runcorn vice president.

I held the 11-night campaign. The small church they hired for the 11 nights seated about 150, and we had about 100 in attendance. I designed a

good-sized circular, had it printed, and brethren circulated it throughout a 5-mile radius of Harrisburg.

God gave me four new conversions in the 11 nights' meetings.

But what would I do about baptizing them? I was not yet an ordained minister. Yet I knew Jesus had said, in the great commission, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them . . .” Those who did the teaching were to baptize. The young minister, Roy Daily, was at the time in a hospital. I conferred with him, and he agreed I should do the baptizing.

Good old peppery brother Hobbs scolded me real good for the baptizing, saying it should have been taken up “with the authorities.” But my wife silenced him and we all laughed.

That was my first evangelistic effort, and first preaching to the public.

God did not induct me into His ministry as an imposing pompous figure of superior position in the ministry. Rather, I was a good deal like the apostle Paul, who wrote to the Corinthian church: “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom . . . and I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling” (I Cor. 2:1, 3). I was no VIP entering Christ's ministry.

From the very first, in my association with these Sardis brethren, I was treated by their ministers as the greenhorn tail-ender. The Sardis brethren all loved me. But their jealous ministers used every device constantly to humiliate me and persecute. God blessed my efforts to produce “fruit,” but their efforts produced none! But all this was what God knew I needed. I did not come into the seat where God has now put me by playing politics or jerking the rug out from under one higher up than I. Yet I have seen this type of politics played in God's Work ever since my conversion, 53 years ago.

In the early summer of 1931 a former Seventh-day Adventist minister, Robert L. Taylor, moved to Oregon from Southern California. The brethren of the Oregon Conference were swept off their feet by him. They said he was a better speaker than any from Stanberry. The Oregon Conference brethren wanted to team Mr. Taylor



and me together to hold a tent meeting in Eugene. Mr. Taylor welcomed the idea. I had now been preaching for 3½ years and my whole heart was in it. Being ordained by the Oregon Conference was the most momentous occasion of my life.

I was ordained at an all-day meeting in June. I do not remember the date, but it could have been at or very near Pentecost.

This, as I wrote in the *Autobiography*, brings us to a series of almost incredible facts! Certainly this strange chain of circumstances was not of my planning.

First, Jesus Christ began His earthly ministry at about age 30. The year was A.D. 27. That was the time when He began calling and training His first apostles.

When I was 30 Christ began His call to me by taking away my business in Chicago. All my principal clients went into receivership. Christ was to put me into His service later, but He began taking my business life away, in preparation, when I was 30.

Second, Jesus began the actual teaching and training of the original apostles in that year, A.D. 27. Precisely 100 time cycles later, 1927, I was baptized and my intensive study, following baptism, for Christ's ministry, started.

Now what is significant about 100 time cycles? God set the earth, sun and moon in space, among other reasons, *to mark out spaces of time!* One revolution of the earth, measured by the sun, is *a day*. God counts a day as ending at sunset on the earth. One revolution of the moon around the earth is a lunar month, according to God's sacred calendar. One revolution of the earth around the sun is a solar year.

But the earth, moon and sun come into almost exact conjunction every 19 years.

Nineteen years marks off one complete time cycle, as God measures time!

The actual ordination, or endowment of power for the Gospel ministry of the original apostles, occurred after 3½ years, at the time of Pentecost. A.D. 31.

Also, after 3½ years of preliminary ministerial training, 100 time cycles later, A.D. 1931, Jesus Christ had me ordained and for the first

time put full time into the Work of Christ's Gospel, at the very time of Pentecost, June, 1931.

One fact more.

God has said: "The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first [in the latter days — now just ahead of us], that *the glory of the house of David* and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. *In that day [now soon to come] . . . he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God*, as the angel [messenger] of the LORD before them. . . . And I will pour *upon the house of David . . . the spirit of grace*" (Zech. 12:7-10).

Plainly the apostle (one sent forth — or messenger of God) God would use in these perilous last days would be of the HOUSE OF DAVID. The house of David is NOT one of the tribes — but those individuals descended from David.

I have mentioned that some years ago I was contacted by a foundation, formed for the purpose of maintaining the genealogy of a certain family. My great-grandfather Armstrong, who had a biblical name, father of my grandfather Nathan Armstrong, had married into this family. So the foundation has my genealogy back to the kings of France, and King Edward I of England. The genealogy of the royal family of Britain carries every generation back to King David of ancient Israel. THEREFORE GOD HAS PRESERVED MY ANCESTRY EVERY GENERATION FROM DAVID, AND I AM *OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID!*

Plainly, in THESE tumultuous last days, God would raise up one who would KNOW he is of THE HOUSE OF DAVID, as Christ's chosen apostle and messenger to the KINGS OF THE EARTH, to carry the TRUE MESSAGE of Christ's Gospel, which was suppressed from the world from midcentury 1 to the middle of the 20th century.

While I began proclaiming the true Gospel in 1931, it did not reach Europe and Britain until 1953, on Jan. 7.

So, ONE MORE ASTOUNDING FACT — IT WAS PRECISELY 100 TIME CYCLES — A.D. 53 to A.D. 1953 that THE TRUE GOSPEL WAS SUPPRESSED!

But even that is not all!

In Haggai and Zechariah, Zerubabel was governor and BUILDER of the second temple in Jerusalem to which Christ came at His first coming. But read again in chapters 2 and 3 of Haggai and the first four chapters of Zechariah! The real MESSAGE is about OUR TIME, NOW — the LAST DAYS! The time when God will "shake all nations," Haggai 2:7 and verse 9, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former" (Solomon's temple). The physical temple built by Zerubbabel was nowhere near as glorious as Solomon's temple. It is speaking of the TEMPLE to which Christ shall come at His SECOND COMING — soon now — the SPIRITUAL Temple, the CHURCH, which Christ shall marry at His coming, when the Church shall be made SPIRIT and IMMORTAL in GLORY!

John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus' first coming. He was the messenger in the PHYSICAL wilderness of the Jordan River, preparing for the HUMAN Jesus coming to the MATERIAL temple of stone and to the PHYSICAL people of Judah, ANNOUNCING that some 100 time cycles later, He would establish the immortal KINGDOM OF GOD on earth. But read, in Malachi 3, not only verse 1, referring to John the Baptist typically, but verses 1-5, speaking of His SECOND COMING. WHO is to be the messenger in the SPIRITUAL wilderness of the 20th century religious confusion — spiritual confusion — who was to prepare the SPIRITUAL temple, the Church, for the coming of the glorified SPIRITUAL Christ of all POWER AND GLORY — coming to His SPIRITUAL Temple — the Church of God — and not to announce, but to actually ESTABLISH on earth the spiritual KINGDOM OF GOD?

All these things shout a message to God's Church today!

There definitely IS a 19-year time cycle. It CANNOT be used to prognosticate or foretell future events, but it is a *fact* that *has HAPPENED!*

Read this over again. Think this over soberly! It gives you PROOF that we are the one and only true Church of God for these latter days!

More next month, as I continue with my experiences with the Sardis Church and the foundation of the WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD! □

(To be continued)



# MINI STUDY

## God's Great Master Plan

MASTER PLAN

*The Good News*, in conjunction with the Correspondence Course Department, presents brief monthly excursions into the study of the Bible, delving into topics relevant to the development of future members of the God Family. Bible study is one means by which Christians are renewed daily (II Cor. 4:16), so let's refresh ourselves with more of the precious truths of God's Word!

**Instructions:** The format of these ministudies is similar to that of the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course. Look up and *read in your Bible* the scripture references given in answer to the questions. Comments following the questions elaborate on the scriptures just read. That's all there is to it! (These studies are based on the King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise stated.)

— Prepared by Richard H. Sedliacik

God has a master plan by which He is bringing about the fruition of His awesome purpose for mankind. And His Son, Jesus Christ, plays the central role in God's little-understood plan for man. God's plan is outlined in the form of *seven annual* festivals, which Christians are to observe for a vital purpose.

Just as the weekly Sabbath pictures the Christian's goal of entering into eternal "rest" as a glorified, Spirit-born member of God's Family, these annual observances give the step-by-step overview of how God will *work out* His master plan for man. Each festival vividly portrays a great event in God's plan, and the yearly observance of these special days further impresses the knowledge of His plan on God's people, *reminding* them of their part in it.

It was not until just after the Israelites were delivered from Egypt that God revealed His annual festivals. Through Moses, God formally introduced these festivals to His nation Israel — His "*church* in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38).

Since throughout most of human history man has been close to the soil in providing his sustenance, God originally used the yearly agricultural harvests of Palestine as symbolic types of His *spiritual* "harvests" of mankind.

In the "promised land," which came to be known as Palestine, there was a spring harvest followed by a much larger fall harvest. Today, we can understand from the teachings of Christ and the apostles that God intends the spring festivals to illustrate to His Church yearly the fact that all of those He has called to become His Spirit-begotten children since Christ's first coming are only the "firstfruits" — only the relatively *small beginning* of His great spiritual harvest of human beings into His immortal Family.

Later, as pictured by the festivals of the much larger autumn harvest season, God will call the rest of the *billions* of humanity to salvation and sonship in His glorious Family!

A summary of these annual festivals is found in Leviticus the 23rd chapter. Let's commence this three-part introductory study of God's annual festivals and learn exactly what they signify for us today.

1. Who does the Bible say originated these annual festivals? Lev. 23:1-2, 4.

Notice that these are *not* the "feasts of the Jews" or "feasts of Moses," as some have erroneously assumed. They are *God's own feasts*, which He originated and gave to His people to keep year by year.

2. Did God specifically say that His annual feasts were to be observed *in addition to* the weekly Sabbath? Lev. 23:37-38.

3. What is the first festival to be observed each year? Lev. 23:5. When did God institute the very first Passover? Ex. 12:1-14.

The Festival of the Passover begins God's great master plan for mankind. Although the original Passover was to be a memorial to remind Israel of God's intervention in delivering them from slavery in Egypt, it also pictured, in *advance*, the great sacrifice — the crucifixion and death — of Jesus Christ ("our Passover lamb" — I Cor. 5:7, I Pet. 1:19) for the sins of mankind. After His death, the Passover became a *memorial* of that sacrifice, for Jesus became the reality that the Passover lamb had foreshadowed.

4. What new way of observing the Passover did Jesus institute shortly before His death, and



# MINI STUDY

as He ate the Passover lamb with His disciples? Luke 22:8, 14-20.

While instituting the *new symbols* of the wine and bread — the wine picturing His shed blood for the forgiveness of our spiritual sins, and the bread symbolic of His body, which was broken for our physical healing (I Pet. 2:24) — Jesus gave a command, "This *do* in *remembrance of me*" (Luke 22:19). The Passover was now to become a memorial of Christ's sacrifice for our sins. And He wanted Christians to especially "remember" it once every year of their lives.

5. What completely new ceremony did Jesus also institute in connection with this New Testament Passover observance? John 13:2-17, especially verses 14-16.

Notice that this ceremony of the washing of the disciples' feet had nothing whatsoever to do with the Old Testament observance of the Passover. It was then being instituted for the very *first time* by Jesus Christ Himself. He took this last-minute opportunity to institute an observance that His disciples were to keep annually from that time forward. But why?

Foot washing depicts the attitude of *humility* and *service* to others that Christ always exhibited, and which He desires that every Christian should strive to imitate (verses 16-17).

6. What observance follows immediately after the Passover? Lev. 23:6-8, Ex. 12:15-20.

7. Were the first and seventh days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread "holy" days on which the people were to assemble themselves, much the same as they would on a weekly Sabbath day? Ex. 12:16, Lev. 23:3. Were the people to rest on these two annual holy high days of unleavened bread? Lev. 23:7-8, Ex. 12:16.

8. Did New Testament Christians observe this Festival? I Cor. 5:7-8. What is the obvious meaning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Verses 1-2, 6-7.

A study of these passages in I Corinthians 5 shows that the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which the Corinthian Christians were observing, pictures the *putting away of sin*. Leavening, therefore, is a biblical type or symbol for *sin* (verse 8), because sin, like physical leavening used in bread to make it rise, not only can cause a person to *swell* with vanity and become *puffed up* in God's sight (verses 2, 6), but can also *spread* throughout a group of people.

Paul warned the Church of God at Corinth that they should put out of their fellowship the person whose sin was known to all (verse 1). Paul urged decisive action because, as he reminded them, "... a

little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (verse 6).

Permitting sin to continue unabated and openly before all the congregation would, in time, cause others to gradually let down and begin slipping back into former sins.

We saw that the Passover is to remind us that Jesus paid a tremendous price for our past sins. He offered something more valuable than anything we could even collectively offer — the sacrifice of His perfect, sinless life.

Then the Days of Unleavened Bread, which immediately follow the Passover, remind us that we must strive to put all sins *out* of our lives. This Festival pictures putting the "leaven" of sin away from us and our renewed resolve to live in harmony with God's laws henceforth.

9. What is the next annual Festival that God ordained? Lev. 23:9-16. Was this another Holy Day of rest on which the people were to assemble themselves? Verse 21.

10. What new name was given in the New Testament to this Old Testament Festival of "Firstfruits"? Acts 2:1.

*Pentecost* is a Greek word which means 50. This is the only annual Sabbath whose exact calendar date is determined by counting. The first New Testament Pentecost occurred on the 50th day after Christ's resurrection.

11. Shortly after His resurrection, did Jesus promise His disciples they would soon receive the Holy Spirit? Acts 1:4-5. Are Spirit-begotten Christians therefore the "firstfruits" of God's great master plan? Jas. 1:18, Rom. 8:23.

The New Testament Festival of Pentecost is observed in *memory* of that momentous first arrival of the Holy Spirit from God (Acts 2) to beget repentant believers in Christ. Thus this first Pentecost marked the beginning of the New Testament Church of God. It was the first time God made the Holy Spirit available as a begettal.

It was on this first Pentecost that the "firstfruits" of God's small spiritual "spring harvest" began to be "planted." These new Christians were *begotten* by the power that was to help them grow spiritually, thus preparing them to be born into God's Family at Christ's coming.

God knows that for us to overcome our human weaknesses, to be thoroughly and successfully "unleavening" our lives, our puny human willpower and abilities are not enough. We need the supernatural strength of His Holy Spirit to help us overcome. This is the third step in God's plan to help us fulfill life's glorious purpose.

(This subject to be continued.)



# PERSONAL

(Continued from page 1)

on at will — you have not REALIZED what ALL-CONQUERING HELP you can have — or else you have, through lack of faith or neglect, FAILED to CALL ON that supernatural HELP in your times of need!

Brethren, CAN I open your eyes to see that God is a God of LOVE — that God in all His supreme power wills above all things for you to PROSPER and BE IN HEALTH and to find the way to the HAPPY, FULL, ABUNDANT LIFE? That Jesus Christ is a LIVING SAVIOR, to whom you can go AT ALL TIMES — a Savior to save you from your present everyday fears and worries, adverse circumstances, troubles, sicknesses and trials, as well as to save you from eternal DEATH at the end?

Notice what Scripture commands, "Let us therefore *come boldly* unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find *grace to help in time of need*" (Heb. 4:16).

## God is interested in your life now

God's salvation is NOT something you collect *only* after you die — IT IS A PRACTICAL, COMMON-SENSE, USEFUL salvation which starts in your everyday life RIGHT HERE AND NOW!

What *needless* pains some have been suffering. What NEEDLESS fears and worries you may have been carrying around. What WONDERFUL TIMES — what HAPPINESS you may have cheated yourself out of, just because you have not REALIZED and taken advantage of the very PRESENT and all-powerful HELP of your *LIVING Savior*!

Actually what is happening is that you may have found yourself faced with foes far more powerful than you. These foes may come in forms of troubles, of unforeseen circumstances, of worries, of sicknesses or even of other persons. These foes NEED not make your life unhappy.

## Old Testament illustration

Did you ever really think through the full meaning of I Corinthians 10:11 — that the incidents in the lives of God's people of Old Testa-

ment times were written into the Bible for *OUR* LEARNING AND HELP?

I want now to turn to the experience of a man who lived in that time. This man found that he could RELY on the Almighty GOD. This man was faced with a FAR more terrifying trouble than has ever beset you. He found the HAPPY SOLUTION. His experience will show you what YOU can do, this very day!

Once you UNDERSTAND, you will have to learn to TAKE GOD AT HIS WORD — TO CALL UPON GOD IN PRAYER — you will have to ASK GOD for what you need — and you may have to learn how to PRAY.

**The Eternal Creator-  
RULER of the  
universe . . . sent His own  
begotten SON, Jesus  
Christ . . . to BRING YOU  
BRETHREN THE WAY OF  
DELIVERANCE from all  
your trials, your worries,  
your problems. WHY,  
then, do some of you not  
LISTEN to the way He  
taught us?**

GOD ALMIGHTY will actually *intervene in your life* and help YOU and fight YOUR battles for you. Remember, God is no respecter of persons. He will not do more for one than another. He will do as much for YOU as for any person who ever lived. He will do as much for *you* — if you obey Him and *rely* on Him — as for any ancient king of Israel or Judah!

You may have a problem that completely overwhelms you. You may be at your wit's end — you may not know where to turn or what to do! It may be a family problem, a personal problem, a financial problem, a problem of sickness or disease.

But let me tell you now as Christ's apostle of a man who came upon a situation probably far more terrifying than yours — one that would throw fright and terror into the stoutest heart. The solution this man used

will solve YOUR problems — put an END to *your* troubles. The same God who heard and delivered him will hear and deliver you — *IF* you will obey Him and trust Him.

The fact that this man was an ancient king makes no difference. God is no respecter of persons — He will do as much for YOU. God is the SAME today and tomorrow as He was yesterday. This man was King Hezekiah of the ancient kingdom of JUDAH. He was an ordinary human mortal, the same as YOU today.

## God intervenes for a man

The vast armies of Assyria were marching westward and southward to invade Judah. The Jews were greatly outnumbered. They had no army or power to stand up against such a powerful foe. They were HELPLESS. They faced certain defeat — just as YOU may feel HELPLESS in the face of your troubles today.

If some of *you* brethren try to solve *your* problem or overcome your bad habits or resist sin in nothing more than your *OWN* power and strength, you, too, will find yourself outnumbered, overpowered and doomed to defeat! You must learn, as this ancient king did, that GOD stands ready and willing to fight your battles for you. Read his experience in II Chronicles 32, from the Moffatt translation: "It was after this, after all this loyal service, that Sancherib king of Assyria invaded Judah, besieging the fortified towns and meaning to seize them. When Hezekiah saw that Sancherib had come determined to attack Jerusalem, he and his nobles and his chiefs agreed to stop the water of the fountains outside the town . . .

"Then appointing officers over the citizens, he gathered them in the open space at the gate of the city, and encouraged them. 'Be firm,' he said, 'be brave, be not daunted nor dismayed for the king of Assyria or for all his host; we have with us One greater than all he has; he has a mortal force, but we have with us the Eternal our God, to help us and to fight our battles'" (verses 1-3, 6-8).

Continuing, "His officers said even worse things against God the Eternal and his servant Hezekiah. (Sancherib also wrote letters, insulting the Eternal the God of Israel and



attacking him thus: 'As the gods of the nations elsewhere in the world have failed to save their folk from me, so shall Hezekiah's God fail to save his folk.') The officers shouted aloud in Hebrew to the citizens of Jerusalem on the walls, to terrify them and scare them, that they might capture the city. They talked about the God of Jerusalem as one of the gods of the nations on earth, mere handmade idols" (verses 16-19).

Now notice what the king of Judah did. "King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz *PRAYED* over this and cried to heaven" (verse 20). They *PRAYED* for help. They did not know *HOW* God would intervene. But they knew God would *ACT*!

Here's what happened: "Then the Eternal sent an angel who swept off all the gallant fighters, the leaders, and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria, till he had to go home in disgrace. He [later] went into the temple of his god, and there his own offspring murdered him with their swords. So the Eternal rescued Hezekiah and the citizens of Jerusalem from Sancherib the king of Assyria as well as from all other foes, *protecting them on every side*" (verses 21-22).

That experience was written into the very *WORD OF GOD* for *your* learning and to *SHOW YOU BRETHREN THE WAY TODAY*!

Perhaps *YOU* are faced with a foe more powerful than you. It may be some *TEMPTATION*. It may be some circumstance or condition or trouble. Some serious *WORRY*. Then let me ask you, "*WHAT ARE YOU RELYING ON* to withstand the siege of this trouble — to deliver you from it?"

### **Rely on God and His power**

What do some of you do, brethren, when some fear, worry, trouble, comes up against you? Do you not first *FEAR AND WORRY*, and then either try to *RUN FROM* this trouble or else try to meet it in your *own* power and strength — with your *own* thinking and planning and doing?

Do *YOU* ever search your *own* heart and life to see if it is *YOUR fault*? In almost every in-law or marital trouble, for example, both are at fault.

Did you never realize that the very *CREATOR* who caused you to be born — who gives you the life you have —

who called you into His Church — is able and anxious to fight all these battles for *you* just as He did Hezekiah's — if you will only turn to Him and ask Him for wisdom and guidance, *RELY* on Him and *TRUST* Him with the result?

### **Two examples**

I know of a lady who, when in her middle 20s, had a problem that was *MOST SERIOUS* in her life. Three times this girl had been disappointed in love. She had at last been tempted to marry a man she had no right to marry. She brought her problem to me, as God's representative. I found she was looking *ONLY AT PHYSICAL*

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*APPEARANCES*. She reasoned that, so far as she could see, if she obeyed God and refused to marry this man, she might *never* be married. I counseled her to *OBEY GOD* — to stop looking at the material circumstances and using human reason to disobey God. I counseled her to do, first of all, *WHAT GOD INSTRUCTS IN THE BIBLE*, and then to *TRUST HIM* for the outcome.

But that girl did not *RELY ON GOD* — she relied on her human reason. She obeyed impulse and temptation and married the man. He left her to commit adultery with another woman on their very wedding night. Her life became miserable, terribly unhappy.

Then at another time, another similar case was brought to me. This young woman rejected the temptation — she obeyed God and *RELIED*

ON THE *ETERNAL* to work out circumstances — she *trusted* Him with the result. Her faith was tried and tested. God did not answer *AT ONCE* — but in due time, just the *RIGHT* man came into her life, they fell in love, they were married and *GOD HAS BLESSED THEIR MARRIAGE WITH SUPREME HAPPINESS*.

### **The experience of King Jehoshaphat**

Now I want to bring you one more case history — a *REMARKABLE* experience that will show you the way out of *all your difficulties* and troubles.

Brethren, if you will let *GOD* have His way in *your* life, then you will have begun to learn how to let Him fight *your* battles, solve *your* problems and deliver *you* from *so many* troubles you are suffering.

Now, notice the experience written for *OUR* learning and help today:

"It was after this that the Moabites and Ammonites, with some of the Meunim, made war on Jehoshaphat. Word came to Jehoshaphat that a huge host was moving against him from Edom, over the Dead Sea, and that they were already at Hazazon-tamar (or Engedi). *Jehoshaphat was afraid*" (II Chron. 20:1-3, Moffatt).

Is fear your usual reaction, too? But observe what the king of Judah did.

"He resolved to have recourse to the Eternal, and proclaimed a *fast* all over Judah. So Judah assembled to seek help from the Eternal; people came from every town in Judah to worship the Eternal" (verses 3-4).

Jehoshaphat did exactly what God wants *you* to do today when faced with any temptation or trouble — *HE TOOK IT TO GOD IN PRAYER AND FASTING!*

And as he continued to ask God for help, he said (verses 6-10): "O Eternal, the God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven, and ruler of all realms on earth? Such power and might is thine that no one can resist thee. O our God, didst not thou evict the natives of this land before thy people Israel, giving the land to the offspring of Abraham thy friend, for all time? And they settled in it, they have built a sanctuary in it to thine honour, thinking that if evil befell them, the sword in judgment, or pes-



tilence, or famine, they would stand in front of this temple and before thee (for in this temple is thy presence) and cry to thee in their distress, till thou didst hear and save them. Now here are the Ammonites and Moabites and folk from mount Seir, whom thou didst not allow Israel to invade, when Israel came out of the land of Egypt — no, Israel turned away from them, and did not destroy them!”

There was no reason for these neighbors to be enemies. Sometimes your own neighbors become your enemies, too, don't they?

But notice what the king said to God: “Look how they reward us, coming to eject us from thy very own country which thou hast given us to be ours. O our God, *will thou not deal with them? We are helpless against this mighty host* that is attacking us; we know not what to do, but we look to thee” (verses 11-12).

### God answers prayer

Now I want you to notice! — Jehoshaphat cried out for God to come to their aid. Here is God's answer (verses 14-17):

“Jehaziel... was inspired by the spirit of the Eternal in the midst of the gathering to cry, ‘Listen, all ye men of Judah, ye citizens of Jerusalem, and you, O king Jehoshaphat; *the Eternal's message to you is this: FEAR NOT, falter not before this vast army; it is for God, not for you, to fight them. March down against them to-morrow; they are coming up by the ascent of Haziz, and you will come upon them at the end of the ravine in front of the desert of Jeruel. You will not need to do any fighting; take up your position, stand still, and watch the victory of the Eternal, who is on your side, O Judah and Jerusalem. Fear not, falter not. Move out against them to-morrow, for the Eternal is on your side.*’”

And notice that Jehoshaphat obeyed after God instructed him. Verses 20-23 declare: “Next morning they rose and moved into the open country round Tekoa. As they advanced, Jehoshaphat stood and said, ‘Listen, men of Judah and citizens of Jerusalem! Take hold of the Eternal your God and you will keep hold of life; hold by his prophets, and you will prosper.’”

“After this counsel to the nation, he appointed the Eternal's singers to praise him in sacred vestments, marching in front of the army and chanting, Give thanks to the Eternal, for his kindness never fails.

“As they began to sing and praise him, the Eternal set men in ambush against the Ammonites, and Moabites, and the folk from mount Seir, who had attacked Judah, and they were routed. The Ammonites and the Moabites *turned on the natives* of Mt. Seir, determined to wipe them out.”

They turned against one another! That is how God answered Jehoshaphat. “And then, after destroying the natives of mount Seir, they all helped to kill one another. So when the men of Judah reached their post of attack looking over the open country, they saw the host were so many corpses stretched upon the ground; not a man had escaped” (verses 23-24).

Jehoshaphat did not merely leave this trouble with God and then do nothing about it himself. First, he prayed, and asked for wisdom, guidance and HELP. Then he DID WHAT GOD SAID. He had to do HIS PART — but the BATTLE WAS GOD'S, and Jehoshaphat did not try to fight GOD'S battle. He merely did *his own* part. But he BELIEVED God, and RELIED on God.

The point I want you brethren to REMEMBER is that YOUR battles are not really yours, but GOD'S. If you look to Him, He makes them His battles, and HE fights them for you. HOW FUTILE for you to try to fight GOD'S battles for HIM.

God says, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all” (Psalm 34:19).

In the New Testament we read, “By GRACE are ye saved through FAITH” (Eph. 2:8). Yes, but the FAITH that saves us is a *living* faith that is practical — it WORKS — it really RELIES on God! So PUT IT TO PRACTICE!

God does not promise us an EASY time during this life in this world. But He DOES promise to fight our battles for us — to deliver us from EVERY trouble and affliction. WILL YOU LET HIM DO IT, AND LEARN HOW HAPPY YOUR LIFE MAY BECOME? GOD HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND! □

## Born to Be King!

(Continued from page 6)

vert us to dynamic spirit substance at His return.

This supernatural power from God helps us get the true perspective on this human life. It really changes things. God is about to clean up the pitiful mess that is this world, and right now He is busily training a qualified, competent staff who will have the privilege to teach humans after the resurrection (Rev. 20:12). We will be the ones, along with Christ, to ensure that the tragic sadness that has characterized this world will never be repeated.

### Heirs Apparent to God's throne

The Kingdom of God is all about people. Billions of people. People looking for direction and guidance, people looking for healing and physical sustenance, people looking for real, practical help for their personal problems. Are we ready to teach and train the world (Dan. 12:3)? Probably not... yet!

Small wonder that Christ reveals the Kingdom will be entered only by violence (Matt. 11:12) — by those who are violent with themselves, forcing their naturally self-concerned and lazy human nature into the paths of true character, helpful wisdom, sparkling warmth, inspiring drive and right leadership, all motivated by God's Spirit of power and service.

Truly, the whole creation, past and present, “waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:19). We dare not drift with the rest of this purposeless, confused world. We have a rendezvous with destiny. We were born to be kings, kings who will be servants of the people they rule (Eph. 1:4-5, Matt. 20:25-27).

Our calling is much higher than that of Prince Charles. We will be inheriting the very throne of the universe — a high destiny indeed. We need to strive harder to be worthy Heirs Apparent to the throne of Jesus Christ, at Jerusalem, ruling the earth:

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my father in his throne” (Rev. 3:21). □



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