

February 2024

THE
LANTERN



II Peter 1:19

OF THE SCATTERED FAITHFUL

“So we regard the words of the prophets as confirmed beyond all doubt. You're doing well by paying attention to their words. Continue to pay attention as you would to a light that shines in a dark place as you wait for day to come and the morning star to rise in your hearts.”

(II Peter 1:19 - GW)



FEBRUARY 2024

VOL. III - NO. 1

CONTENTS:

◆ Personal from the editor	1
◆ Christ's Last Day	2
◆ Fix This in Your Mind!	6
◆ The Talent of Time	10
◆ COG-SF Kenya Youth Camp 2023	16
◆ Ask...	17
◆ Three Levels of Counsel	23
◆ Bible Study – Born to Rule (Part 1)	28
◆ Excerpts From the Desk of Mr. Armstrong	29



The Talent of Time
(See page 10)

United States: Church of God, Scattered Faithful
P.O. Box 7480
Seminole, FL 33775

Treasurer:
Geary Whiting

Secretary:
Leonard Hatter

Editor:
Gary Liebold

Writers:
Gary Liebold
Geary Whiting

Erick Odhiambo
Victor Ochieng
(Special Contributors)

**PUBLISHED BY THE
CHURCH OF GOD – SCATTERED
FAITHFUL**

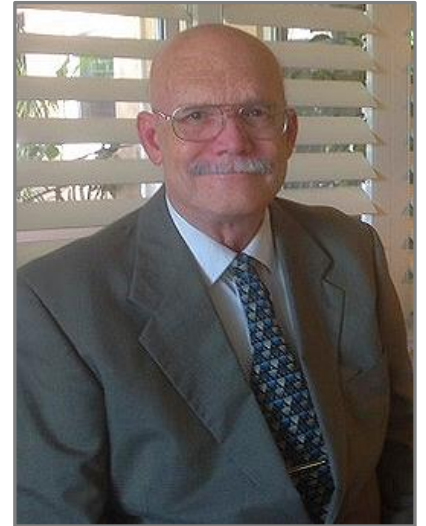
All scriptures used in *The LANTERN* magazine are from the New King James version of the Bible, unless otherwise noted.

Pictures courtesy of: *iStock*
(Except for the "Personal"
and page 16)

Request your **FREE** subscription to *The LANTERN* magazine by contacting us through our website (**cogsf.org**) or by writing to our mailing address.

The LANTERN has no subscription price. This magazine is provided free of charge by the Church of God, Scattered Faithful. It is made possible by the voluntary, freely given tithes and offerings of the Church membership, and others who have elected to support the Church.

Personal from the editor



OUR NATIONAL DEBT

I recently was looking at the U.S. NATIONAL DEBT CLOCK posted on the internet. It's almost mind-boggling to think about the amount of debt our nation has. Do you know what the nation's debt figure is? **It's over \$34 TRILLION!** That adds up to over \$101,000 of debt for every American citizen. What does all this debt really mean? After all, \$34 TRILLION is not just some meaningless number!

When President Ronald Reagan was elected to office, our nation's debt was \$1 trillion. That debt has grown significantly since then. As a nation, we could say, "**we're into debt up to our eyeballs.**" If you went out and started spending one dollar every second, it would take over 31,000 years to spend ONE trillion dollars. Yes, that's correct, over 31,000 years to reach \$1 TRILLION. Remember, our nation's debt is NOT \$1 trillion, it's over \$34 TRILLION and climbing. So, the length of time it would take to reach \$34 trillion (by spending one dollar per second), would equal over **1 million, fifty-four thousand years!** Those are quite staggering figures to think about.

For the United States, there will come a day of reckoning. It's inevitable! We will face a TOTAL ECONOMIC COLLAPSE at some point. In the booklet, "*The Modern Romans*" (a 1975 **Worldwide Church of God** booklet), we see a WARNING that hasn't been heeded in this modern age! On page 57 of the booklet, the chapter discusses one aspect of what led to the Empire's downfall. It parallels what we see today. "**The economic oppression of the later Empire increasingly ate the spirit, loyalty, and pride out of the citizenry, high and low, and fostered a rash of other ills. It tore away at community and national spirit. The costs of running a gigantic empire were massive. They caused a perpetual administrative struggle to maintain a stable economy.**"

A Spanish American philosopher by the name of **George Santayana**, is credited with making the following well-known quote... "**Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it!**"

Remember, what is happening in today's world also means we're that much closer to God's KINGDOM and the GOOD NEWS God has for us! OUR future is the Kingdom of God! The GREAT GOD gives His people a REAL and LASTING HOPE, not endless despair. God's ultimate plan for humankind is positive news! I will end tonight's letter with some encouraging scriptures on which to meditate.

Hebrews 13:5-6 "...For He Himself has said, '*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*' So we may boldly say: '*The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*'"

Psalms 62:7-8 "In God is my salvation and my glory; The rock of my strength, And my refuge, is in God. Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah."

Daniel 12:3 "Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever."

Gary R. Liebold

Christ's Last Day

Very soon, in the month of April, we'll be observing Passover. This day will be kept in the same manner as we see in John 13:2-17 and in I Corinthians 11:23-27. Christ's ultimate sacrifice is MOST meaningful. He literally gave His life for us by paying the DEATH penalty for all our sins. In this article, we will look at the events that took place on Christ's last day.

Gary Liebold

Several years ago, I read an article in the *Good News* magazine of May 1980, that had a most impactful sentence written. That sentence was, “...**only a true Christian can express gratitude when undergoing trials.**”

Our Savior, Jesus Christ suffered like no other human being who has ever lived! “**Compare him who steadily endured all that hostility from sinful men, so as to keep your own hearts from fainting and failing. You have not had to shed blood yet in the struggle against sin**” (Hebrews 12:3-4 - MOFF).

God the Father willingly gave His ONLY begotten son to die for us (John 3:16)! Yet, both God the Father and Jesus Christ were COMPLETELY WILLING to have Christ die for humanity. “**For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8).**

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong wrote in his book



Mystery of the Ages (page 211 -- hardbound copy), the following:

“Jesus Was God

Why was it necessary that Jesus be actually God in the human flesh? Why was it necessary that he be God? Why was it necessary that he be human? As God, he was the Maker of all mankind. In Ephesians 3:9 it is revealed that God created all things by Jesus Christ. When Jesus was born as a human, his life as our Maker was greater than the sum total of all human lives. Since it is humans who have sinned and come under the death penalty, God's law required human death as the

penalty for human sin. But, as our Maker Jesus was the only human whose death could pay the penalty for the sins of all humans. In no other way could the Creator God have redeemed a vast humanity condemned to the penalty of death."

It's ONLY through Christ's shed blood that we can be reconciled to the Father and have our sins forgiven upon our repentance. Jesus was God in the human flesh. He was a young man of about thirty-three years of age and in perfect health. But He also could feel pain, and suffered excruciating agony, just as any other human being could. Jesus did not die of a broken heart!

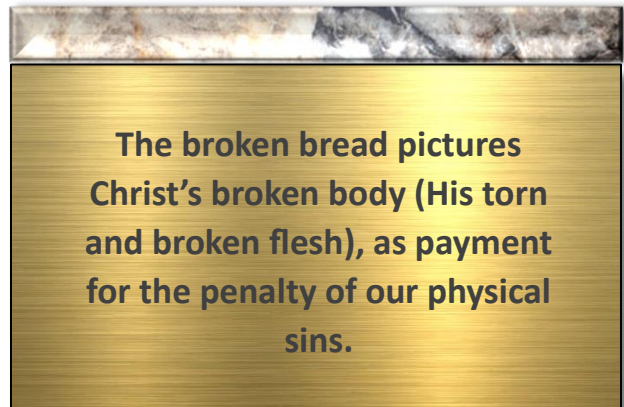
THE PASSOVER SUPPER

Beginning after sunset -- at the start of the fourteenth day of the month of Abib (the Hebrew Calendar), Christ kept His very last Passover with His disciples (**Matthew 26:18-21; Mark 14:17-18; Luke 22:14-16**), keeping a Passover supper (commonly called the "**Last Supper**"). During that supper, Christ instituted an ordinance of foot-washing (as a perpetual ordinance), teaching His disciples to do the same, as He had done for them (**John 13:2-17**). That ordinance still applies today. It's to be observed each Passover service, annually!

After the foot-washing, during the supper, Christ took unleavened bread, blessed it, then broke it -- sharing it among His disciples. **"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." (Matthew 26:26)**. The broken bread pictures Christ's broken body (His torn and broken flesh), as payment for the penalty of our PHYSICAL sins.

Next, after partaking of the BREAD, Jesus

had the disciples drink a small amount of wine, which pictured Christ's shed blood given as payment for the penalty of our SPIRITUAL sins. **"Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:27-28).**



These spiritual symbols (initiated at the last Passover, kept by Christ) replaced the Old Testament symbols for Passover. No more would there be a sacrificing of a small, young lamb, (from the sheep or goats), as the Israelites were commanded to do prior to fleeing Egypt. (**Exodus 12:5-8**). The sacrificing of that lamb in the Old Testament pointed to Jesus Christ -- the TRUE sacrificial Lamb of God (**Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29,36; Acts 8:32; I Corinthians 5:7; I Peter 1:19-20**).

After the New Testament Passover service was completed, Jesus and the disciples sang a hymn, and went out to the Mount of Olives (**Matthew 26:30**).

JESUS ARRESTED

During that night, Jesus was arrested and taken before Annas, a former high priest and father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. (**John 18:12-13**) Later, Jesus was brought before

Caiaphas (**John 18:24**) where the scribes and elders were assembled. (**Matthew 26:57**) The whole counsel, (the Sanhedrin), sought false testimony about Jesus, desiring to put Him to death (**Verses 59-68**). Early the next morning Jesus was brought before Pontious Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea (**Matthew 27:1-2**).

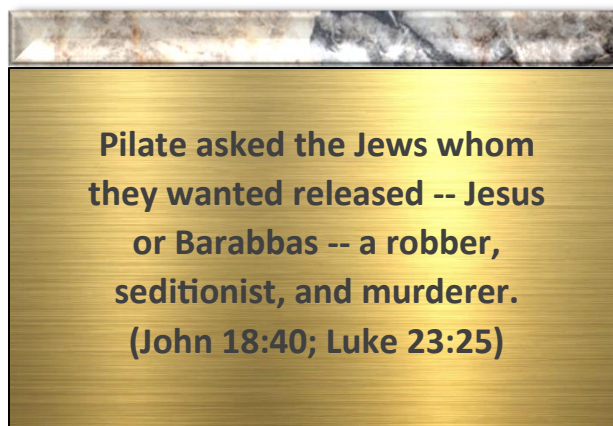
Continuing in **Matthew 27**, we see Pilate as the magistrate under whom Christ suffered (**1 Timothy 6:13**). Jesus had been up all night during the trials before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. When He was brought before Pontious Pilate, the priests and elders wanted Pilate the Governor to judge and condemn Him for saying He was "**King of the Jews.**" Such a claim would be considered treasonous, a direct challenge to the Roman Government, deserving of death.

"Now Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' So Jesus said to him, '**It is as you say.**' And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then Pilate said to Him, 'Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?' But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly" (**Matthew 27:11-14**).

Pilate asked Jesus directly if He was the King of the Jews. "**Then Pilate entered the Praetorium [judgment hall] again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" (John 18:33). "Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.'** Pilate therefore said to Him, 'Are You a king then?' Jesus answered, '**You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the**

world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." (**John 18:36-37**).

Traditionally, the Roman governor would release a prisoner convicted of crimes during the time of the Feast of Passover (**Matthew 27:15**). The chief priests and elders, however, stirred-up the crowds. They began to demand the release of Barabbas, desiring to destroy Jesus. "**Pilate said to them, "What then shall I**



do with Jesus who is called Christ?" *They* all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!" Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified" (**Matthew 27:22-23**)!

Though Pilate could find no fault with Jesus (**John 18:38**), due to the crowd, Jesus was sentenced to being scourged, and ultimately crucified.

Pilate had Barabbas released. Christ would then be brutally flogged with a whip commonly referred to as a "**cat-o'-nine-tails.**" This whip contained nine leather straps imbedded with shards of bone and jagged metal at the tips, a punishment used only on murderers and traitors of Rome. He was stripped to the waist, bound over into a bent position, and tied to a post.

CHRIST'S SCOURGING

The scourging itself was a life-threatening punishment. Jewish law restricted the punishment of scourging to forty lashes **SAVE ONE**, or thirty-nine lashes. (**II Corinthians 11:24**). But thirty-nine lashes were still exceedingly brutal! The use of this punishment, (often a prelude to crucifixion), would rip and tear the flesh -- causing disfigurement, severe trauma, and pain. It would often cause hypovolemic shock due to the loss of blood.

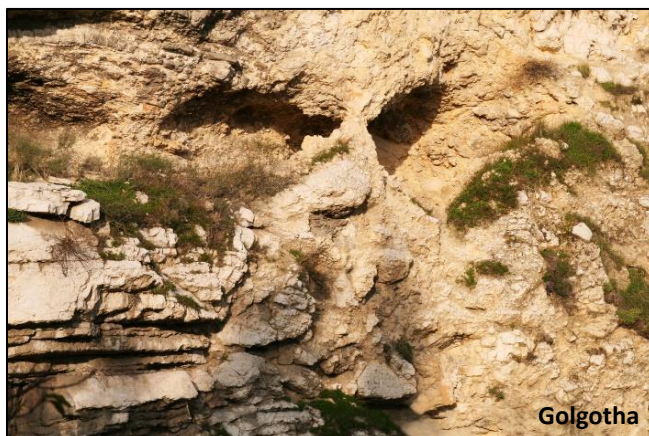
Flagellation was commonly known as the "half-death," and many if not most of the victims died shortly after they were beaten. Christ was beaten so badly that we read in the prophecy of **Isaiah 52: "Many were horrified at what happened to him. But everyone who saw him was even more horrified because he suffered until he no longer looked human" (Isaiah 52:14 - CEV)**. Jesus' body was ripped to shreds to the point that his bones were exposed. **"I can count all My bones. They look *and* stare at Me" (Psalm 22:17).**

Again, the brutal beating Christ endured was to pay the penalty for our physical sins -- for our healing. **"But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, He *was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).**

God desires to heal all our infirmities. **"Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases" (Psalm 103:2-3)**. When physical health laws are broken there are physical penalties we will pay. Christ's scourging (shown by the symbol of the broken bread at Passover) represented His ripped, broken, and torn flesh -- endured by Christ for our healing.

THE CRUCIFIXION

The soldiers of the Roman Governor ridiculed Jesus, dressing Him in purple, placing a crown of thorns on His head, and saluted Him saying, **"Hail, King of the Jews."** They struck Him with a reed and mockingly bowed their knees to Him. Afterward, He was seized and led to be **CRUCIFIED** at Golgotha, also called **"The place of a skull"** (**Mark 15:16-22; Matthew 27:33**).



Between the third and sixth hour (roughly 9:00 A.M. to 12 P.M.) Christ was crucified, being hung from a stake with spikes driven through His hands and feet. A sign was mockingly placed over His head with the charge, **"THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS"** (**Matthew 27:33-37**). Still, Jesus said, **"... Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do..."** (**Luke 23:34**).

About the ninth hour (close to 3:00 P.M.), a soldier came to Jesus on the stake and thrust a sharp, metal spear into His side, cutting tissue and organs -- severing blood vessels and flesh. Blood and water flowed out (**John 19:34**). This was a hideous, merciless, and brutal death!

Shortly after the ninth hour, Christ breathed His last breath and died -- dying for all of humanity by having His blood shed for us. Christ had paid

(Continued on page 16)



FIX THIS IN YOUR MIND!

“You must obey these laws that I will tell you today, so that all will be well with you and your children, and so that you will live forever in the land the Lord your God is giving you” (Deuteronomy 4:40 – TLB). So, what land has God given us as a gift? The United States of America! We, the descendants of Manasseh, were given this land, and with this in mind, here’s my question in connection with the admonition of Deuteronomy 4:40... “Just how are we doing?”

Geary Whiting

Recently, we had a brethren letter from Mr. Liebold where he discussed Deuteronomy 4:40. **“You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD your**

God is giving you for all time.”

TWO QUESTIONS

Before delving into the answers that lie before us, I have two more questions I will address. The first one is, **“Why should we keep God’s commandments?”** Well, there are all kinds of

reasons why we should, but we each need to examine OURSELVES, and ask that question. Again, **“Why should we keep God’s commandments?”** The second question to ponder is something we all probably hear from time to time from Protestant churches. They often ask the question: **“What would Jesus say?”** It’s kind of like little catchphrases many Protestant churches use, **“Jesus is love.” “You can come as you are.”** OR... **“All is forgiven.”** These two questions may seem unrelated in purpose, but in this article, we are going to answer the questions and address the connection between them.



Blessings

BLESSINGS AND CURSINGS

The answer to our first question above lies in **Deuteronomy 28:1-14**, which details specifically the many blessings God wants to bestow upon us. Starting in verses **1-2**, we read, **“Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God.”**

- Blessings in your city
- Blessings in your field
- Many children
- Ample crops
- Large flocks and herds
- Blessings of fruit and bread
- Blessings when you come in and blessings when you come out

God talks about defeating our enemies and how He will make sure our crops and our cattle are healthy, and that we would prosper in everything ... and we did! We became that single great nation and these blessings were given to us.



Clearly, if we fully -- and fully means without compromise -- obeyed these commandments of the Lord our God, the laws that are declared to us today in scripture, God promised to transform us into the greatest nation on earth. In a synopsis, these are some of the blessings that would come upon us:

But something happened! Now we are running amok -- in addition to all our crime and sick, shameful behavior -- now we have AI (Artificial Intelligence), attempting to replace human beings, resulting in making it even more

frustrating and even more of a curse. This is another example of Satan taking something God creates and trying to pervert it, with human beings embracing these designs and consciously going along on a downward spiral.



When we read further into **Deuteronomy 28, verses 18-20**, we see cursings from God listed. These curses came for not putting emphasis on the keeping of God's commandments, continuing to disobey Him. God makes it clear that if we won't listen to the Lord our God, and won't obey His laws given through His Word, then all these curses should come upon us:

- Curses in the city
- Curses in the fields
- Curses on your fruit and bread
- Curses of the barren wombs
- Curses upon your crops
- Curses upon the fertility of your cattle and flocks
- Curses when you come in and curses when you go out



Cursings

Deuteronomy 28: 20 reads, **“For the Lord Himself will send his personal curse upon you. You will be confused and a failure in everything you do”** (TLB). I think back to that statement right there. **“You will be a failure in everything you do.”** I have been told by many people that I am very transparent and that I can't hide anything. This is true! So, when I am lacking in my prayer time, I start to feel insecure, which I hope all of us do. I feel a little vulnerable, not being close to God. And so, I begin to apply **verse 20** to myself. **“You, Geary Whiting, will be confused and not have any confidence; I don't feel right.”** At this point, I hurriedly get back to my knees and cry out to God, saying, **“Help, help!”**

Continuing to read about the cursings God brings upon the land for failure to obey Him, we can see even more details in **Ezekiel 5:7-11**.

“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Because you have multiplied *disobedience* more than the nations that *are* all around you, have not walked in My statutes nor kept My judgments, nor even done according to the judgments of the nations that *are* all around you'-- therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Indeed I, even I, *am* against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations. And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations. Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments among you, and all of you who remain I will scatter to all the winds.

Therefore, as I live, says the Lord GOD, surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you; My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity.” ...and, why? Because we have failed to keep God's commandments.

The entire chapter of **Deuteronomy 28** contains valuable detailed information about God's

blessings and cursings. Take the time to read and digest this information more deeply than ever before! When we read through the blessings and cursings and see the things that God talks about, we see that He really does want to bless us. He prefers to bless us and give us the kingdom! But we need to keep our eyes open and be on our knees. Life around us is very precarious.

In this country, we talk about, “**God-given rights,**” many which are expressed in our founding documents, such as the Constitution. We believe that these are God-given rights, and they can't be taken away from us. But if you think about it, these rights belong to God and were given to us as a gift. God CAN take them back. That's where we are today... despite God's desire to bless this nation, due to our disobedience to His laws, we are having the blessings removed.

WHAT WOULD JESUS SAY?

When we hear that catchphrase, “**What would Jesus say?**”, we might want to retort, “**What do you think or feel He would say?**” But the actual answer to my second question, “**What would Jesus say?**”, lies in **John 1**. This is what I like to present, and this is what we can PRESENT to those who use this little catchphrase indicating that everything is going to be fine since, “**Jesus did it all for me.**”

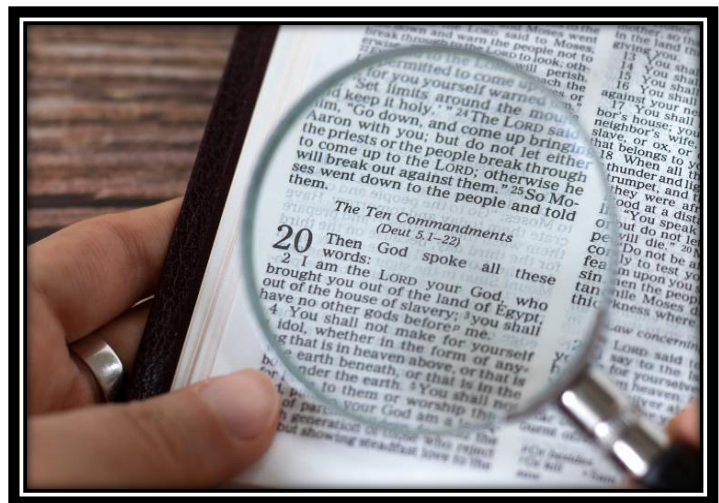
John 1:1-2 tells us that before anything else existed, there was Christ (the “**WORD**”) with God. “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.**” Well, wait a second, how can that be?

Let's read further into **verse 3**: “**All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made.**” Jesus Christ has always been alive and is, Himself, God. He created everything -- there is nothing that He didn't create. So, that puts a little bind in the thinking of the second

question, “**What would Jesus say?**”, as many people seem to think that Jesus Christ is totally separate from God the Father. **John 1** unequivocally proves that Jesus IS God. Therefore, what would He say about the Old Testament, since He is God? He would say, “**Everything expressed in Deuteronomy 28 is valid.**” God the Father does not change, nor does Jesus Christ. “**For I am, the LORD, I do not change...**” (**Malachi 3:6**). Do we get it? Christ tells us, “**I CHANGE NOT...**”

FIX THIS IN YOUR MIND

These prophecies in the Old Testament, (**Deuteronomy 28-31**), will continue to happen today. The Bible is written with duality in its prophecies. We can be sure these prophecies are going to come on the nations and the people who think that Jesus did away with His Father's Law. In the end, they are going to find out that NO, He does not change, and NO, He means business. We as God's people are VERY BLESSED to have been called now! We



have been promised safety and protection. With the removal of God's blessings upon the land, and with the advent of His cursings, it's going to get worse before it gets better. If that does not drive us to our knees, what else will? Think about my first question, “**Just how are we doing?**” We should ask ourselves this very hard question, affirming our resolve and staying close to God. **FIX THIS IN YOUR MIND!** ♦



THE TALENT OF TIME

There's another old saying that "time waits for no man"-- and how true it is! Think about it -- when someone is suddenly gone, the subject of life and death becomes painfully real to us. We think more seriously about it. For instance, the loss of someone very close to us personally is a reminder that life is, "... a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James. 4:14). But why should it always take a brush with the tragedy of death to make us stop and think about life and how suddenly it can expire?

Gary Liebold

Do we each realize how fragile and temporary this physical existence is? Do any of us *really* appreciate life? And are we using our time to the fullest for accomplishment, or are we wasting away the days, assuming life will go on forever, and we'll have one more day -- and then one more, and one more after that?

In the original *Poor Richard's Almanac*, published by Benjamin Franklin, the subject of time in the context of how we live and love our

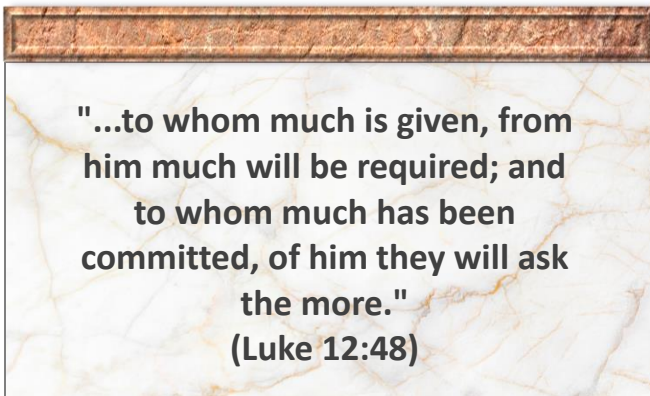
lives is addressed. **"Dost, thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of."** What a wise observation this is!

IT'S ALL ABOUT TIME

King David's contemplations about his own life in **1 Samuel 20:3** should help us realize what a fine line we walk in today's world. After Saul had made an attempt on David's life, he was forced to go into hiding, while still maintaining his friendship with Jonathan, Saul's son. While devising a strategy to try to overcome this

obstacle in his life, David, the young man who had fought lions and faced Goliath, bravely remarked, "**...as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death.**" David completely understood how brief life could be.

But what's the point of all this for those of us as members and co-workers of God's Church? It's very simple. Life can quickly evaporate while we procrastinate about accomplishing the important matters of Christian living. Let's face it -- God's people are the most blessed group in today's world, because we know the purpose of human existence, which is a unique blessing and opportunity. The rest of the world, in a blinded state, does not know why life exists. Today, the real purpose of life is kept from the world and is revealed only to those called by God. Called, chosen, and faithful (**Revelation 17:14**). Because of this knowledge, judgment is now on the house of God (**I Peter 4: 17**)! The knowledge of the true purpose of life includes much responsibility.



Using the parable of the stewards in **Luke 12**, Christ warned about those who would waste time before His Second Coming. This parable shows there would be some who would not faithfully use the knowledge of the truth and would therefore be cut-off from God's Kingdom. In **Luke 12:48**, Christ shows that, "**...to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.**" How are we using this time of judgment before

the return of Christ? Are we using the gift of life to produce fruit toward God's Kingdom?

THE UNIVERSAL TALENT

As an analogy, the time we have in this life is much like the talents that Christ spoke of in the parable in **Matthew 25: 14-30**. In this parable, the man who is traveling into a far country represents Jesus Christ. God's people are represented by those who are given the talents, or goods, to keep in trust until Christ returns. "**To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability**" (**verse 15**). Those who had received the two and five talents doubled what they had by trading and hard effort. They used their time and skills wisely to grow in grace and knowledge. The individual who had received only one talent went and buried it in the ground, making no effort to produce more than he had been given. Upon his return from his travels, the man (or Jesus Christ at His Second Coming), called his stewards in for an accounting of what had been given them. Those who had been faithful were rewarded for their efforts. But the person who had been given the one talent and did nothing with it, had his only talent removed and given to another (**verses 28-29**).

Have we ever felt that we have don't have even one "talent," and have wondered where we fit in this parable about Christian living? We should realize that we DO have at least one talent -- time! We must reflect on the truth -- that the one talent we all have, a universal talent shared by all mankind living -- is our TIME. God has given us all the gift of life, and our time is our most valuable asset. Are we a good steward of the time God has given to us? Do we find the time in our busy days to be a growing Christian -- time for quality prayer and Bible study, while setting aside time to devote to our marriages and family? Time to put the proper preparation into, and be refreshed by, God's Sabbath day? There's a lot to do, all

packed into one twenty-four-hour day. How can we possibly do everything set before us as true Christians?

THE KEY TO TIME MANAGEMENT

Proper management of the time we have is imperative. The Bible holds the key to using time properly. In **Ephesians 5:16**, Christians are admonished by the apostle Paul to use our time wisely, "...**redeeming the time, because the days are evil.**" Christian growth occurs during a set time span of our lives here and now. Every one of us has as much time in the day as the next, whether plumber or president, farmer or teacher, housewife or retiree. Think how differently people use their 24 hours every day! Think about how we are using our time!

Proper management of time depends on proper management of ourselves. We either use our time profitably or we let it pass us by. We are each in control of what happens. And time that we let go, slip through our fingers, is irretrievable.



Have we observed how quickly time passes when we are deeply absorbed in something and yet how slowly it drags along when we are bored? If we do not want to do something, we will find a dozen reasons for not doing it. Yet if we really want to do something, we'll find the time and the way to do it. Nothing stops us!

Those who properly respond to God's call at this time become God's elect. If we are truly

To be quality Christians, we need to maintain three priorities above all other personal needs and desires.

called and have repented, have dedicated our lives to God's service; if we have been baptized and have received God's Holy Spirit, we are part of that elect group. As Christians, we are given biblical priorities, and our time must be carved out to fulfill that calling. We must prioritize our time, and when there is a conflict of interest, something must go. A Christian will either live genuinely by what God requires or live superficially, doing a little bit of everything but not enough of anything. To be quality Christians, we need to maintain **three priorities** above all other personal needs and desires. Once we have these three important things in place, we can then weave in others. So, let's look at these three areas.

TIME WITH GOD

First, we must make time, quality time, for God. In this modern age, it's a constant, daily challenge to consistently make time for God. How on earth can we accomplish it and still meet our other responsibilities? Simple. We just DECIDE to! We make a commitment that God comes first in our daily allocation of twenty-four hours. Jesus Christ promises that if we seek God first, then the physical needs of this life will be supplied (**Matthew 6: 33**). In most cases it's best to decide that our first use of the day is with our Father in heaven.

Begin the day with prayer. Otherwise, we can become quickly preoccupied with our daily routine. We hop out of bed, wash, get dressed,

eat breakfast, and then exclaim: **"Oh, look at the time -- got to go!"** After work we come home and have a meal, do some chores, try to relax, and then it's bedtime and again we say, **"Oh, no, I haven't prayed yet."** This behavior results in giving God the leftovers of the day. If we give Him the first part, we will feel better, stronger spiritually, and have freer use of the rest of the hours for ourselves.



Then, what about Bible study? Decide that time must be set aside for Bible study each day. The first thing in the morning is ideal and some study subjects can work as an aid to prayer. But in some cases, it's best to wait until the time of the day when you can devote your concentration properly to God's Word. For example, nap time for the little ones is a prime time for Bible study for busy mothers of small children. Further study can always be included when we find we have extra time available. We just need to make sure that we are giving God the right time, concentration, and dedication He deserves!

TIME WITH FAMILY

Again, this world is full of distractions. We often find ourselves rushing about like whirlwinds, trying to keep up with all the demands upon our interests and time. But we should always find time for our

loved ones -- our families. God is a family, and He loves family. We should, too. One of the restored truths of this end time work of God is the nurturing of the family. And extreme preoccupation with careers, entertaining, service to others, and social media allurements will not be acceptable excuses before God for having neglected our vital family responsibilities. Paul wrote, **"If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (I Timothy 5:8).** What does "provide for his own" mean? Earning large amounts of money for that new house? Handing out money for school activities for the kids, or social engagements with friends? Making sure that proper meals are on the table every day? Much more than just providing care for physical and emotional needs, or financially "providing," this also means the giving of your time. Where does your family rate in these priorities?

Husbands and wives are sensitive about neglect caused by an unbalanced example on the part of one or the other. We must remember to set aside time to pray and study privately and find acceptable ways and moments to do so. Our conduct should be exemplary before our mates and family, to make sure that our actions do not negatively impact them or the rest of the



family. In other words, be considerate of our family members. Give freely and generously of our time to them while making sure we never neglect putting God FIRST.



TIME FOR YOURSELF

All humans need to slow down, rest and recuperate sometime. If we are workaholics, or an exuberant socialite or entertainer, we need to evaluate whether all our pursuits are spiritually helping our relationship with God, our mate, our family, or ourselves. Time for quiet reflection and meditation is needed by each of us. We must make and take personal time to be a Christian.

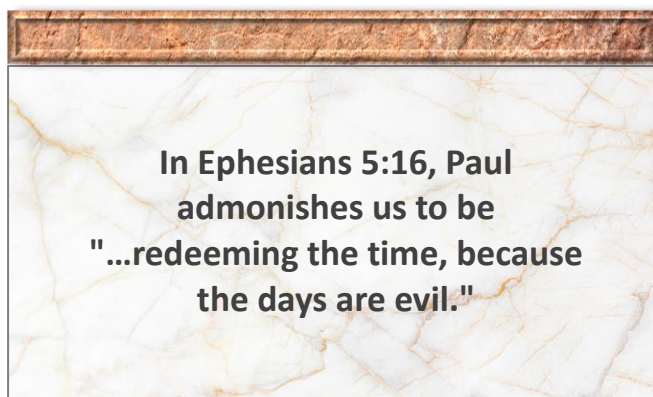
If we find that we just don't have enough time to meet all our priorities, then we must ask ourselves these questions:

- What are we doing now that really doesn't need doing? Eliminate the unnecessary.
- What are we doing that could be done just as well by someone else? Learn to delegate.
- What are we doing that wastes our time or the time of others? Evaluate our actions.
- Are we postponing the more important things in our lives?
- Do we know that often what we postpone

we end up abandoning anyway? Whatever our difficulties with time management, God must come FIRST. If He doesn't, then we really aren't serious about being a true Christian. Remember to choose priorities to use our time wisely. Here are some points to consider:

- Take time for prayer -- it is the source of Godly power.
- Take time for Bible study -- it reveals the mind of God.
- Take time for family -- each day is too short to let it pass without sharing it with those closest to us.
- Take time to laugh -- it lightens our hearts and lifts life's burdens.
- Take time to read -- it's a gold mine of wisdom and experience.
- Take time to reflect -- it unclutters the mind and enlightens our paths.

And above all else, **take time for GOD** -- it is life's only lasting investment! Our real treasure. **"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew. 6:21)**. Our time spent with God, the gift, or talent of time, is something we should truly treasure!



REDEEM THE TIME

In **Ephesians 5:16**, Paul admonishes us to be **"...redeeming the time, because the days are evil."** This is a warning to use our time profitably to produce the fruits of God's Holy Spirit! Many are called into God's way with little or no material wealth. Skills and abilities vary

among God's people worldwide. But the one talent we all hold equally is time. God is going to judge us all on how effectively we use our time in this physical life.

What accomplishments have we put off in our lives, thinking life would go on endlessly? Most of us put off until tomorrow decisions about our lives that require change or considerable thought. Necessary character changes are easy to put off when we carelessly assume our lives are progressing smoothly. **"After all,"** we may reason (since some of our problems haven't caught up with us yet), **"God must not be too upset with our conduct."** But does Solomon's observance about human character apply to you? **"Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes. 8: 11).**

DON'T WAIT -- DON'T HESITATE -- DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME

Perhaps we have known for years which day is the real Christian Sabbath, but circumstances and our reasonings have kept us from standing up and obeying God on this important test command. How much longer will we wait to act on the truth we know? How much more time in this **"...present evil world" (Galatians 1:4 - KJV)**, will we need before we turn our complete attention to the way of God? Will it take a brush with extreme suffering or even death to wake us up? Don't gamble that we might be as fortunate as King Hezekiah of Judah!

II Kings 20: 1-7 recounts Hezekiah's reaction to a sickness that would have ended his life. Evidently there were many things he wanted to do. Maybe he had put them off, thinking he would live much longer. But with death staring him in the face, he desperately appealed to God for more time. God granted Hezekiah's request and added fifteen years to his life.

How many years do we need to get our lives in

order? Will we continue to put off the day when we sit down and take stock of what we have done with our lives? Brethren, it's vital that we set the right priorities each day. God has promised us the Kingdom of God if we do. **"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).** Again, time is the same for everyone. It is twenty-four hours long. But how we use that time spiritually will determine our future as well. There is a short illustration found in **"A Treasury of Bible Illustrations,"** that gives a good example of the importance of "TIME" and the need to use it WISELY. It is entitled, **"Wealth of Time."**

"If you had a bank that credited your account each morning with \$86,400, that carried over no balance from day to day, and allowed you to keep no cash in your account, and every evening canceled whatever part of the amount you had failed to use during the day, what would you do? Draw out every cent, of course. Well, you have such a bank, and its name is "TIME." Every morning it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it rules off, as lost, whatever of this you have failed to invest to good purpose. It carries over no balances. It allows no overdrafts. Each day it opens a new account with you. Each night it burns the records of the day. If you fail to use the day's deposits, the loss is yours. There is no going back. There is no drawing against tomorrow. You must live in the present -- on today's deposits. Invest it to get from it the utmost in health, happiness, and success!"

Take some time to take a hard look at where we are and what we have done with our time. We can't let time keep slipping away from us. It is our most VALUABLE asset. Be a wise steward of the precious talent of time we've been given and let's begin now to achieve the truly important values of life. Decide now -- what will you do with your next twenty-four hours? ♦

COG-SF

KENYA YOUTH CAMP

2023

Victor Ochieng



As the world held its biggest holidays on December 25th, 2023, and January 1st, 2024, the brethren in Kenya had a blessed and wonderful Youth Camp in Ndhiwa, Kenya. Situated on the western side of Kenya, near Lake Victoria, 61 children from three congregations, Bumala, Mombasa, and Ndhiwa, were able to meet in Ndhiwa for the Church of God-Scattered Faithful Youth Camp!

Ranging in age from 3-17 years old, the children participated in activities that included football, volleyball, and netball; as well as games of tug-of-war using a rope. And, OH! How they could play those games! We could give some of the older children time to teach the other youth. The youth learned to teach other children by giving speeches, participating in special music, and singing several songs after every sermon.

All the youth really enjoyed the camp and although the adult attendants in the camp were providing guidance, we wanted to give the youths time to teach themselves and each other to live God's way of life. If we don't train the youth to grow and walk in God's way, then they may be influenced into doing what others who don't obey God do. Because we live in a very deceived world, we should train our youth to be closer to God so that we may one day be glad and rejoice when Christ returns to find us worthy to be part of His kingdom. **"But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14).**

The youth camp was good and wonderful. The children really enjoyed the opportunity to attend! We hope their number will increase even more in the future! ♦

Christ's Last Day...

(Continued from page 5)

the penalty for the sins of mankind -- the DEATH penalty! The wages of sin, (the breaking of God's law), incurs the death penalty (**Romans 6:23**). Every single human being has sinned, except Jesus Christ (**Romans 3:23**). That is why He alone could pay that death penalty for us -- for our sins, by the shedding of His blood (**I Peter 2:21; I John 2:2; Revelation 1:5**).

Christ was the perfect sacrifice, a **LAMB** without blemish (sin) (**I Peter 1:19**).

In just a few months, on Passover, we will be commemorating Christ's death, given for us. **"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (I Corinthians 11:26)**. We should be thinking on these things well before keeping the next Passover service. ♦

ASK...

The Bible is full of both inspiration and instruction, each working together in harmony to educate and uplift us as we go through our lives. There are many aspects to our everyday lives as Christians in this world, and prayer is an integral element that we must never overlook. Prayer is important in proving the Bible's inspiration for the direct, personal effect it can have on us. God literally uses our prayers to help us develop His mind and attitude.

Gary Liebold

Through the years, research indicates that man's speech and thoughts emanate from the same center. So, when a person prays, he, or she, is activating their thinking processes. And when a person believes the Bible and prays in a heartfelt manner, God's thoughts enter and work in that person's mind. The human mind can then become filled with God's mind!

Knowing this, we should strive to pray to God each day, and as we pray and receive answers - as we act on God's Word -- we will experience that God's Word, the Bible, is true. The Bible

works because God endows it with His power to make it work. There is power in the Word of God and His **"...exceedingly great and precious promises" (II Peter 1:4)**. The inspiration of the Bible is proved by God making His promises come to pass!

God carefully and accurately thought His Word out even before He even created the world or man. He knew at the beginning how He would handle every situation that would arise. As God said in **Isaiah 55:11: "So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish which I**

please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." And whether God is fulfilling prophecy or answering our personal prayers, the principle is the same. Think about it. If God can foresee thousands of years in advance and make prophecy come to pass, then surely, He is able to see into our personal futures for days, weeks, months, or even years. Before He made man, God assumed the responsibility of taking care of man's needs. In **Matthew 6:8**, Jesus assured His disciples, **"...For your Father knows the things you have need of, before you ask him."** This provision for man's needs is reflected in the Bible's promises. God repeatedly challenges us to try and test Him, to unquestionably prove that His Word is absolute (**Malachi 3:10**). He says in **I Thessalonians 5:21** to, **"Test [or prove] all things; hold fast what is good."** And He can make our requests come to pass in the same way He makes prophecy stand. But first, we must **ASK** for His help!

DO WE WORRY ABOUT A "WORST-CASE" SCENARIO?

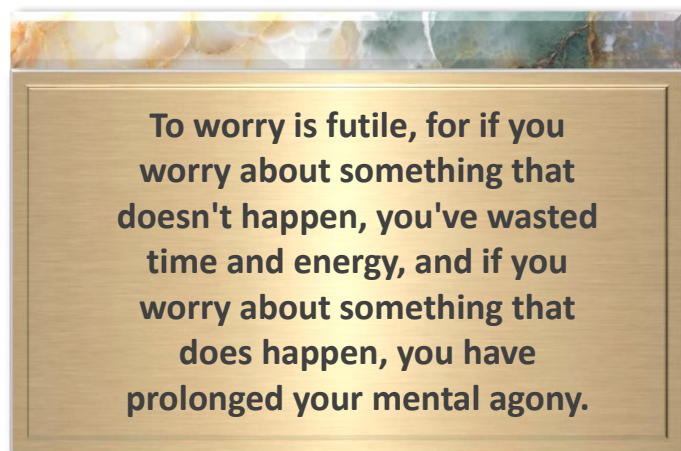
We humans have been given minds that can contemplate the future in detail, whether it be five minutes, five years, or five decades from now. Because we can conceive of the future, we are also able to worry about it, and be afraid that it may not turn out for our good. The element of the unknown -- something that has not yet happened -- will sometimes produce dread and fear in us.

Someone once said that to worry is futile, for if you worry about something that doesn't happen, you've wasted time and energy, and if you worry about something that does happen, you have prolonged your mental agony. How true! Most people would tend to agree with that. But simply acknowledging that worry is futile does not seem to help those who tend to worry often.

What kind of worries trouble us today? What bothers us when we think about tomorrow, or

next year, or many years from now? Problems that we all face during our lifetimes are many -- financial difficulties, health issues, employment challenges, personal security, even the impairments of advancing age. Almost everything we eat these days is tainted or polluted in some manner, so we even end up worrying about what consequences could occur because of our food consumption. And finally, do we worry about what would happen if we had to deal with cancer or some other catastrophic illness? Even death?

Multiple concerns can lurk in the background of our waking moments like storm clouds, sometimes growing to overwhelming proportions, sometimes receding, but always there, weighing on us, tamping down the feeling of joy and peace we know that we, as Christians, should be experiencing. Do we ever lie awake at night for hours trying to sort out the concerns that torment us? If only it were



possible to be in control of every circumstance, present and future, we might think, then there would be no need to worry about them.

But of course, we don't have that power. God does! Jesus advised His followers in **John 14:1**, **"Let not your heart be troubled..."**. What did He mean by that? Did He really mean what those words imply, that a Christian need not be troubled in heart or mind? **"Peace I leave with you..."**. He declared, **"My peace I give to you;**

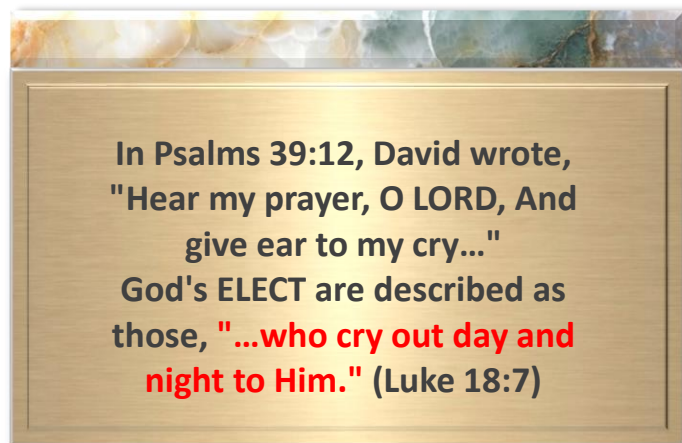
not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (verse 27). Jesus literally tells us that it is possible to be free from worry and anxiety if we use the power of prayer that God has supplied at our fingertips. We can simply go before Him and -- **ASK!**

ONE LITTLE WORD

Prayer turns on power in the mind. It allows God's Spirit to flow as the human mind reaches out to God in faith and belief. **Ephesians 1:17-19** explains, **"...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of himself: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power..."**

It is clear from the Bible (**Acts 1:14**), that a Christian should offer up both prayers and supplications. Prayer is heartfelt talking to God, and within that prayer, supplication is a special, moving appeal to God. It is done with an extra degree of intense feeling, often accompanied by fasting. In the Scriptures, various words translated supplication mean "entreaty," "petition," "earnest prayer," and "imploing." All of these are similar meanings in many scriptures where the English word "cry" appears, in the sense of crying out to God. For example, in **Psalms 39:12**, David wrote, **"Hear my prayer, O LORD, And give ear to my cry..."** God's ELECT are described as those, **"...who cry out day and night to Him" (Luke 18:7).**

Our heavenly Father has promised to supply everything we need (**Philippians 4:19**). That doesn't necessarily mean everything we desire or think we need, though. When it gets right down to it, we really have only one need in this



life, and that is to be more like God so we can qualify to inherit eternal life. Everything else is of secondary importance.

We can't know whether something in our plans will turn out the way we think it ought to turn out, but there is no reason to be anxious. Simply put the matter in God's hands and trust Him to do what is best. We have His unbreakable promise in **Romans 8:28** that **"...all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."** You can't lose with a promise like that! So why worry? Worry is a lack of faith that God knows what He is doing. And instead of worrying about something, simply apply yourself to heartfelt prayer and ask God for His help. It's a simple thing to remember -- just one little word -- **ASK.**

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him" (Matthew 7:7-11). Notice that first verse in **Matthew 7** contains three components -- like a

mathematical equation -- that lead to answered prayer: **Ask! Seek! Knock!**

ASK AND LET YOUR REQUESTS BE KNOWN

We might ask ourselves, "**Why should I pray to God if He already knows everything I need?**" It's true that God already knows what we need (**Matthew 6:8**). But He still wants to hear from us. He wants to know we will pray in earnest. For example, a parent may know a child wants something, but the parent will often wait for a child to ask for it. "...in **everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God;**" (**Philippians 4:6**). Asking is the first part of the **Matthew 7:7** equation: "**Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**"

So, tell God what you need. He is waiting to hear. He is not making it difficult for us to reach Him. God is "**...not far from each one of us;**" (**Acts 17:27**). He just wants us to put our hearts into it when we pray to Him. He wants us to ask Him for our needs (**Matthew 7:7**)!

Yes, we must put that heartfelt supplication into our prayers, seeking God's intervention or assistance in our lives. It's well worth the effort. "**For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly**" (**Psalms 84:11**). God has a full measure of the wisdom that is, according to **James 3:17**, "**...gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits.**" Remember, He is the God "**...who giveth to all liberally**" (**James 1:5**). Let's lay our troubles before Him and -- **ASK!**

SEEK GOD'S WAY

When we come to God in prayer concerning our worries or requests for needs (after we ask God to consider our requests, of course), we must then seek God's way -- His laws and righteous

lessons -- to solve the problems or issues troubling us. Since people do have problems, they have learned various ways to cope or deal with their problems. Most times, mankind's way of dealing with a problem is to simply deal with the effects. Some people try to escape these effects at all costs through devices such as drugs, alcohol, sex, or even criminal activity. And instead of learning any lessons, they try to find someone on whom to place the blame, be it God or others.

But God does bless those who seek Him first -- not always with great money and wealth, but always, in the end, with material prosperity they would not have had otherwise. **Matthew 6:33** describes God's promise to us if we approach Him in the right manner. "**But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness and all these things** [referring to material prosperity such as shelter, food, clothing, etc.] **shall be added to you.**" That is



"But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you"
(Matthew 6:33)

Christ's promise to us. God loves to see His servants prospering. He says so through King David and the apostle John. He corrects and chastens every son whom He loves. He allows His true children to suffer much -- to fall into troubles and difficulties, to face trials and tests - - for their strengthening. But if we endure these tests, hard though they might be, and if we seek first our God, His righteousness, and His Kingdom, putting material interests second in our hearts, then in His own due time God will

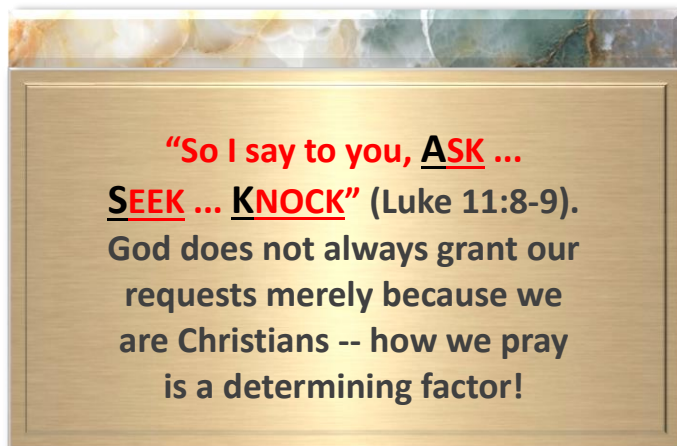
always prosper His children, even in a material way! When we receive bills we cannot pay, or an intimidating note from our child's school principal, or a notification that we have lost a job because we keep the Sabbath, or any other bad news, do we ever think of taking the document itself to a private place and spreading it out before God, asking Him to look at it? In **Isaiah 37**, we see that King Hezekiah was sent a letter threatening that there would be an attack on his kingdom by the Assyrian army. **"And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD" (Isaiah 37:14).** Listen to how Hezekiah prayed: **"O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim ... You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see;" (verses 16-17).** Hezekiah meant it. And God responded to him -- just as He will to us, too. We must not hesitate to -- **ASK**.

TAKE ACTION AND KNOCK

The very word "knock" implies action. The definitions of the word knock include, **"To strike something... to collide with something... to make a pounding noise."** And sometimes -- usually -- when we knock on something -- it takes more than one "strike" to achieve success. It takes perseverance. Persevering is an important part of praying fervently, as Jesus Himself instructed. One day, when He had finished praying, His disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray (**Luke 11:1-4**). Jesus first gave them His prayer outline that told them what to pray about. But it didn't tell them about every aspect of how to pray.

So, Jesus immediately explained to them about the man who, at midnight, needed to borrow some food from his neighbor. The man's first request had no results. But he continued to ask, to seek, and to knock. To knock upon his neighbor's door or wall. Finally, the neighbor

crawled out of bed and gave him the bread he wanted. **"I say to you..."** Jesus commented to His disciples, **"I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him, because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence, he will rise and give him as many as he needs. So I say to you,**



ASK ... SEEK ... KNOCK (Luke 11:8-9). We can see that God does not always grant our requests merely because we are Christians -- how we pray is a determining factor!

Again, in **Luke 18**, Jesus stressed how we should always continue to pray and not lose heart. He told a story about a widow and an unjust judge who finally granted her request because of her **"continual coming"** to him (**Luke 18:5**). Jesus pointed out that if an unjust judge would listen to a persistent widow, how much more surely will our heavenly Father respond to our needs? **"And shall God not avenge His own elect, who cry day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily" (verses 7-8).**

In other instances, we have seen that the Bible tells us about how Elijah had to pray seven times for rain, how the apostle Paul beseeched God three times about his **"thorn in the flesh,"** and how even Jesus Himself prayed fervently three times that His cup of suffering would pass from Him if it was God's will. All these are examples of how to display patience and perseverance -- how to actively "knock."

Know that though we may have to pray about some matters repeatedly, we shouldn't assume that we always must make a request more than once. The Scriptures contain multiple examples of prayers answered immediately. But we can know that if we pray once about a problem, and the problem continues to persist and we still need deliverance, we can feel free to pray again. If it takes one time, three times, seven times -- whatever it takes -- until we are no longer bothered by the problem (unless, of course, God should make it apparent, as He did with Paul, that we are going to have to live with the problem for the time being). God always knows what is best for us in the long run.

Know, however, that persistence does not mean nagging at God. It means being close to Him and talking to Him from the heart, praying always or **"without ceasing,"** as **I Thessalonians 5:17** describes it, keeping constantly in touch with Him mentally in between periods spent in daily prayer. Prayer does, in fact, require effort. But it is effort richly rewarded.

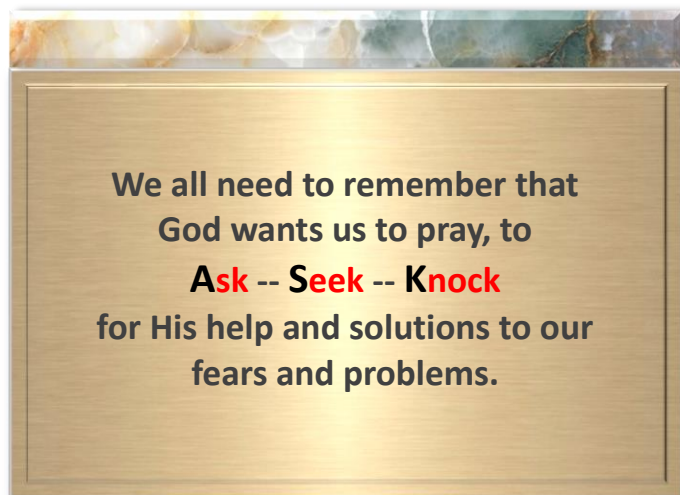
Jesus admonishes us to spend much time praying in private. He said, **"Keep on asking and it will be given you; keep on seeking and you will find; keep on knocking [reverently] and [the door] will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds; and to him who keeps on knocking, [the door] will be opened."** (**Matthew 7:7-8 - AMP**). Continue to -- **ASK**.

TRUST EACH DAY TO GOD

Day by day, our future is in God's hands. Let it stay there. If we do so, we won't need to worry about what is going to happen tomorrow, or the next day, or the next. In what is frequently called the **"Sermon on the Mount,"** Jesus addressed our human tendency to worry. He declared in **Matthew 6:25**, **"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life..."** Instead of being anxious about the things of this life, He said in **verse 33** of the same chapter, we should

concentrate on seeking God's Kingdom and His righteousness, and God will take care of our physical needs. He concluded His remarks about worry and anxiety by giving a vital principle: **"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble"** (**Matthew 6:34**).

Because God's character upholds His Word, we can take the Bible for what it says, believe it and act on it with perfect confidence. There is never a reason to doubt the promises of God. Since God knows what we need before we ask Him, He also knows exactly when and how to answer. The best answer may take several days, weeks



or months. But if we become worried, we may press for an answer too soon or give up on God altogether and try to solve our problems our own way. We then lose faith and God's blessings as well. We all need to remember that God wants us to pray, to **Ask -- Seek -- Knock** for His help and solutions to our fears and problems.

Then we need to trust Him as He carries out His promises to us. **"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or**

(Continued on page 27)

Three Levels of Counsel

Preparing
to be
Counselors
in the *World
Tomorrow*



We are supposed to be a light to the world and be wise counsel. This is why God's people study

His Word. We are preparing to be teachers, so we must start developing these skills now. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong instructed us to prepare to teach in the coming World Tomorrow. We are to learn how to effectively help guide people in the conversion process to eventually become members of the God Family.

Geary Whiting

Years ago, when I was at Ambassador College, in Pasadena, California, I had the opportunity to work in the Personal Correspondence Department. I have always had the problem of being more of a storyteller when expressing myself rather than being succinct, or “to the point.” When answering letters, my responses would be too long, and it took me forever to get to the point, so my letters needed to be edited. The department head, Mr. Miller, would ask the body of editors on staff, “**Who wants to edit Geary Whiting's letter?**”. He told me that after

he posed that question, what followed the dead silence was a mass exodus of editors who suddenly wanted to go home. My letters were so long; I just could not get to the point, and no one wanted to tackle the problem!

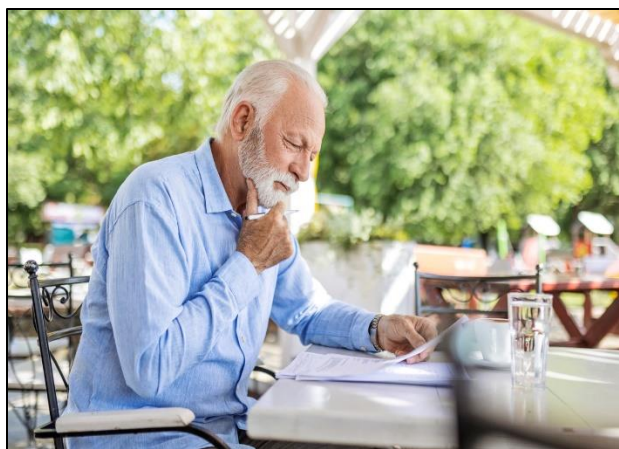
And when someone would take up the challenge, I realized time and again that when my correspondence was returned to me, that the editor was able to take what took me two pages to explain and concisely state it in **ONE** paragraph. It made me wonder how in the world they were able to boil all I said down into one tiny statement.

Fortunately, I was able to take a class from Mr. David Albert called, **“Service in the Church.”** The class became very valuable to me because it taught me how to recognize REAL important information and how to communicate with others in a clear and defined way. It took a lot of hard work, and to this day, it does not come easily, but thankfully, it is getting better for me.

So, what I'd like to share in this article is what I learned in this class, which I have entitled as **“Three Levels of Counsel.”** It is of utmost importance that we begin to understand, and even incorporate, these standards in our lives now, as we need to be preparing for our future roles in God's soon coming Kingdom.

THREE MAIN KEYS

In this class I took at Ambassador College, I learned that there are three main keys, or levels, in the art of effective counsel. The first one is **PARAPHRASING**. The second one is **SUGGESTING**. The third level is **CONFRONTATION**. Now if we take these levels out of order, by either making suggestions or confronting someone too soon, before we paraphrase what we are hearing from them, we run the risk of losing them before we are even able to help. Each of these components make up the act of counsel, critical to the success of helping the person or persons who come to us in the future. Any ONE of these without the others is simply ineffective and results in a



useless waste of time and effort on the part of both or all the parties involved.

So, let's take a moment to explore each of these steps for a more thorough understanding.

PARAPHRASING

According to the definition of “paraphrasing” in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, **“When we paraphrase, we provide a version (of an original statement or text) that can exist beside the original (rather than replace it). We paraphrase all the time. When you tell a friend what someone else has said, you're almost always paraphrasing, since you're not repeating the exact words.”**



So, if I am talking to someone, and they start sharing their thoughts, or irritations, with me, I will look for the bottom line of what they are trying to say and restate it to them in a concise way, so they know that I am listening.

For example, let's say a man who is clearly aggravated approaches me in one of my favorite places, perhaps a coffee shop, and joins me at the table. He starts the conversation by asking me, **“You know what is wrong with the world?”**. Obviously, he is distressed and needs someone to talk to, so I might then say to him, **“No, what?”**. This gives him the opportunity to open-up to me and share his concerns.

He then replies, **"Everything! People don't listen! The boss hates me, he is always on my case. I go home, my kids don't listen, my wife doesn't maintain her appearance -- she dresses sloppy! I just want to go home, sit down, and have a beer!"**

Wow! What a lot to absorb! But because I have listened to what he said, what all his words are conveying, I paraphrased what I have heard, condensed it down to what seemed to be the main point, and respond to him by stating to him, **"You don't feel respected."**

His next response to me was enthusiastic. He says, **"Right! If I was respected, my boss would like me, and my wife would be taking care of herself and greeting me, and my kids would listen to me. Yeah, you understand me!"**

We can see by the above hypothetical example that the man who approached me felt that I both heard and understood him, and thus a level of respect and understanding was reached between us.

So, the first step in counseling is PARAPHRASING. We condense what someone has said, taking it down to the simplest terms while setting aside the emotion. Although this is a challenge for me, I continually work on the skill of paraphrasing. So must we all, if we are to develop the skills we need for our future as teachers -- even counselors -- in the World Tomorrow. This first step is VITAL in the sequence of proper counseling to reassure someone that we are listening and that they are being heard. In **Proverbs 20:5**, we read, **"Counsel in the heart of man is like a deep water, But a man of understanding will draw it out."**

This is what we are trying to do when we paraphrase. We are trying to draw out what is really bothering someone within the process of counseling, with the end goal of successfully helping them.

SUGGESTING

After reassuring the person involved in the counseling process with us, they must know that we have heard them and understand what they are trying to say to us. We can then move forward in helping them, as they can trust that we know and care about their situation.



This can be done by incorporating the second level of counseling, that being -- SUGGESTING. Suggesting possible solutions through one's own personal experience or suggesting viable solutions through examples in God's Word (for one who acknowledges the authority of the Bible), can be helpful.

Let us continue with the example of the man who feels disrespected. For him, I might suggest a solution from personal experience. I could say to him, **"Let me share with you a similar experience that I have had. I had a situation where I felt my boss was treating me unfairly. I would complain about it and be miserable. But one day I heard the guys at work talking about how much the boss loved the Beatles. I went to the record shop and purchased 2 copies of the latest Beatles album, 'Abbey Road.' At the next opportunity, I presented my boss with a copy of it and asked him to educate me on the Beatles.**

After a while, the boss and I start to go out to coffee and lunch, and I begin to find out about

my boss and how much stress he was under, because of HIS bosses. I learned that our experiences were very similar, and I was able to make a connection with him which greatly improved our relationship and made work much more pleasant."

So, I can suggest, as part of the counseling process, using a personal experience for this man to start looking for ways to repair these relationships which are causing him grief.

"Where *there is* no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors *there is* safety" (Proverbs 11:14).

CONFRONTATION

Over time, I would be able to meet with this man and find out if he is taking any suggestions I had made or if he is coming up with ideas of his own to help his situation.

If he is seeing improvements in the relationships and situations in his life, then I could be confident that he will move forward with ideas of his own and a new attitude. I can feel that the first two levels of counseling may have helped and feel that there is no need to move into level three, which is CONFRONTATION.

But, if I do not see a changed attitude, or I see that there is a wanting to complain, or a petulant, discontented attitude; or if I see stubbornness or belligerence in trying to implement any suggestions I have made or any ideas of his own, then I may feel it is time to confront this man, a friend.

To do so, one must choose a comfortable, neutral place in which to meet with the person. Somewhere that is not intimidating and is thereby conducive to cordiality and seriousness of conversation. Somewhere to encourage listening.

Once we sit down together, I might inquire of him, **"So, how is everything going at work?"**

Unfortunately, his answer hypothetically could be, **"No different; my boss is a jerk!"**, spoken with a hint of anger and the flavor of self-pity. My next question could be, **"Well, did anything I say to you about the successes in my situation make any sense or help you see where you could help the situation?"** But again, he blurts out, **"Yeah, but he's not worth it!"**

Now I must apply the wisdom of **Proverbs 27:6, "Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful."**, which can also be translated in the Tyndale version, **"The wounds of a friend are better than the kisses (flattering tongue) from an enemy."** I must apply the third key component of successful counselling, confrontation. So, I could then say to him, **"You know what? I see now that YOU are the problem."**



Imagine how you might react if you were in this situation. Imagine now how he might react, considering the state of his attitude going into this conversation. He would probably say, **"How can you say that to me? I thought you were my friend!"**

And here is the opening I have been waiting for, once I saw his state of mind at this meeting: **"Because I am your friend, I am telling you that you are the problem. Your stubbornness, your pride, your ego, and whatever else may be, are getting in the way of your happiness. You don't seem to care about fixing this**

situation." This is what I would plan to tell this man when I confront him, knowing that the scripture plainly says that if I do not do so, then I am like an enemy. But, if I do not paraphrase, make suggestions, or give him time to act on it, I am doing him a disservice by confronting him prematurely. Too much advice too soon will cause me to lose this person. Sometimes we want to say what WE want to say, instead of caring about the person and choosing both our words and timing wisely.

TO LEARN, YOU MUST WANT TO BE TAUGHT

We were instructed by Mr. Armstrong to prepare ourselves to be teachers in the world tomorrow. Part of this responsibility is to be able to learn to take on one of the most difficult aspects of teaching -- the counsel of others. We must want to learn how to teach, just as much as we must learn to be taught. I personally feel that this progression of the three levels of counsel is effective in guiding someone to seek out solutions to their problems and may even be used in the conversion process to become members of God's family. In **Proverbs 10:17 (TLB)**, "**Anyone willing to be corrected is on a pathway to life. Anyone refusing has lost his chance.**"

David asked that the wise would reprove him. He saw it as correctional medicine -- medicine that would heal him and make him a better person. We should have this same attitude



too, and remember that not only will we be teachers, but also Christ is teaching and guiding us now, to become better counselors. He uses all three levels of counsel on us, too!

Remember, it's our responsibility to get all the facts. In **Proverbs 18:13**, "**He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.**" We must paraphrase to make sure we are hearing the situation clearly and correctly, and we must suggest ways to help people see a way forward. Finally, and only, when necessary, do we have to confront.

Once again, we first want to listen so that we can **PARAPHRASE**. Next, we need to **SUGGEST** and give them time to grow. Finally, if they are not growing, it's time to **CONFRONT** them. "**Let the godly smite me! It will be a kindness! If they reprove me, it is medicine! Don't let me refuse it...**" (Psalm 141:5 - TLB). ♦

ASK...

(Continued from page 22)

or peril, or sword?" No, a thousand times no! "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"

(Romans 8:35, 38-39).

The inspiration of God's Word can be proven by prayer. When we communicate with God -- when we believe and act on His Word and see its effect in our lives -- we unleash the power of God. That power is in the Bible, the Word of God (**Hebrews 4:12**). Prayer makes this Word a living reality in our lives! Remember to -- **ASK!** ♦

BIBLE STUDY

Born to Rule (Part 1)

The Bible reveals that we were born for an incredible purpose -- to ultimately help rule the universe with Jesus Christ after He returns to this earth! Just as surely as Prince William of the United Kingdom was born into the British Royal Family to be a king, once we are "born again" into the Family of God, we are destined to reign as an even greater, eternal ruling king.

1. The very first words of **Genesis 1:1** indicate to us that God is a Family. The Hebrew word for God here is Elohim, which is a uniplural noun that denotes a group numbered as two or more individuals in the current God FAMILY. In **John 1:1-2**, we see that the individuals presently composing the God Family, or Elohim, are God the Father and Jesus Christ, the Word of the Old Testament.

2. God is even now in the process of expanding His eternal, Spirit-composed Family. **Genesis 1:26-27** details to us that man was created in the image and likeness of God. God made man like Himself, the same form and shape, created after His own kind.

3. The word "image" (**Genesis 1:26**), refers to more than just the outward form and shape of God. "Image" also refers to the mind and character God intended for man, the ability to develop the mind and character of God. Simply stated, God is reproducing Himself!

4. The Spirit-Begotten Children of God are clearly being fashioned by God for a specific purpose (**Ephesians 2:10**). God's begotten Sons are His workmanship, created in Jesus Christ unto good works. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, given to His children after repentance, baptism, and the receiving of God's Holy Spirit

(**Acts 2:38, 8:17**), God is developing in His people perfect spiritual character -- individuals who will ultimately be capable of exercising the awesome powers of the God Family.

5. Man, the material creation, is only the first phase of God's creative process. God as the Master Potter is still in the process of forming and molding him (**Isaiah 64:8**). The clay model (man) must be fashioned by experience and the Holy Spirit into the finished masterpiece, possessing the very character of God.

6. God plainly shows it is His purpose to expand His divine Family by bringing many sons into it (**Hebrews 2:9-10; Revelation 21:7**). Since Jesus Christ is actively the first of many sons of God, we will be conformed to the image of Christ, and become like Him, as SPIRIT -- part of the divine Family of God as much as Christ is now.

Jesus Christ said we must be "born again," changed into spirit. Born again -- born as divine sons in the Family of God (**I Corinthians 15:49-53; John 3:3-8**). This incredible, wonderful truth is our DESTINY, and in the future, we will see what life as powerful spirit beings will be like, living and working with Jesus Christ and other spirit-born members of God's universe ruling Family. ♦

Excerpts From the Desk of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong...

For each continuing issue of our magazine, we will post various EXCERPTS from Mr. Armstrong's past writings, sermons, and Bible studies.

The Plain Truth Magazine (January 1985)

Personal From Herbert W. Armstrong

"What's Wrong With Government?"

"...Over the years I have been invited to personal conferences with numerous heads of state -- kings, emperors, presidents, prime ministers -- and others high in government under them, in many other countries.

I have said often to them that there are only TWO WAYS or philosophies of life, broadly speaking. And these travel in opposite directions. One will produce peace, universal prosperity and well-being. The other will CAUSE precisely what we have in the world today!

..."GET" is the way of self-centeredness, vanity, covetousness, envy, jealousy, hostility, resentment of authority' over one. "GIVE" is the way of outflowing LOVE -- concern for the well-being of neighbor equal to self-concern. It is the way of helping, serving, sharing, of kindness, consideration, goodwill.

GOVERNMENT is that organized authority over the people to ensure by law and order to each the freedoms and liberties that do not infringe on the lawful rights and liberties of others.

...If the public wants to "GET" from government, we must not suppose political candidates do not covet power. So in government we have the merry-go-round of people trying to "GET" from government, and politicians using every strategy to "GET" or retain power!

...But we *need* government. The alternative would be anarchy!

Governments of nations over the world do work for PEACE -- even fight and war for PEACE! And we still have wars. I know that the responsibility of the chief office in government weighs heavily on men in such high office. I have talked with many heads of state who admit privately that they face problems beyond human power to solve.

Some world leaders have said humanity's only hope lies in a single WORLD government over all nations, with only one military force. Yet in the same breath they admit the impossibility of man to produce it.

An editorial some time ago in *U.S. News & World Report* stated it a different way -- that it would now seem the only hope for human survival lies in the intervention of a "strong hand from someplace"!

The Plain Truth announces, believe it or not, both these solutions will happen in our lifetime. **MANKIND won't change human nature, nor set up the world government -- doesn't even have to believe it -- BUT IT WILL HAPPEN TO US!** And in this generation we shall see a new WORLD TOMORROW, with universal well-being for all."

(Emphasis above, by editor of *The Lantern* magazine)



COMING ARTICLES



II Peter 1:19

◆ The Marriage Supper

Soon, the most spectacular wedding EVER to occur, will take place -- The Church of firstfruits will marry Jesus Christ! **“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7)**. We will no longer be physical, but SPIRIT! Perhaps millions or more righteous angels will attend that wedding, an elegant, and glorious wedding, as we become the BRIDE OF CHRIST. Also, we will be coronated as KING-PRIESTS. In this upcoming issue, we will look at the subject of “The Marriage Supper”!

◆ Understanding the Wave-Sheaf Offering

Two harvests were reaped in Israel. In spring through early summer, the Israelites gathered a small harvest of barley or other grains. This harvest was called the firstfruits harvest. The Feast of Firstfruits occurred at the end of a 50-day harvest period which commenced on the wave-sheaf (Sunday), during the Days of Unleavened Bread. So, what is the “wave-sheaf offering”, and what significance does it have for us today, and the plan of God?

◆ Bible Study – Born to Rule (Part 2)

The Bible reveals that we were born for an incredible purpose -- to ultimately help rule the universe with Jesus Christ after He returns to this earth! Just as surely as Prince William of the United Kingdom was born into the British Royal Family to be a king, once we are “born again” into the family of God, we are destined to reign as an even greater, eternal ruling king.