

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 2, No. 6

A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be

July 1996

ANSWERING THE LORD'S PRAYER?

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." —John 17:20-23 (NIV)

Answered prayer—one of the greatest thrills in a Christian's life! Whether for the healing of a loved one, protection through a frightening situation, or wisdom for a difficult problem, we all love to get positive, clear answers to our prayers.

Yes, we want our prayers answered, and in that we are just like our Savior. He also prayed—He also wanted answers. We usually focus on those parts of scripture that describe the answers to His prayers—healed lepers, calmed seas, withered a fig tree. But the same night He gave the promise to the disciples that

prayers in His name would be answered, He prayed a prayer that has not been answered in almost 2,000 years. That prayer was quoted at the beginning of this article (John 17:20-23).

Notice that this prayer for unity is particularly "so that" the world may believe that the Father sent His Son, Jesus. In one sense, Christianity is the very **personal** relationship of one person with both the Father and His Son, Jesus. There is no such thing as "group salvation," riding into the Kingdom of God on the coattails of some religious leader or a "package deal" (being a member of a particular church organization). And there is a time in which every individual must "stand alone" for Jesus—a "witness of one" by the evidence of the Holy Spirit in that individual.

But we must also acknowledge that Jesus is here addressing the need for an additional witnessing—a witnessing of the "Body of Christ" as a whole. Perhaps His prayer was answered, in part, in the first century.

What about here and now, in the twentieth

century? Can the "world" look at **any** part of what is labeled "The

(Continued on page 12)

Servants' News Moves to Michigan

In order to do a better job of serving the brethren, *Servants' News* is moving from Arkansas to Charlotte (pronounced with accent on second syllable), Michigan. We have been praying and occasionally fasting about this for several months. We believe the Eternal has shown us that we should move, and the physical circumstances seem to make sense. Our planned move dates are July 18 & 19. **Please begin using this new address and phone number immediately, as they are already functioning.**

PO Box 220

Charlotte, Michigan 48813-0220

Tel: 517-543-5544

Fax: 517-543-8899

Same e-mail: 75260.1603@compuserve.com

Our old address and telephone numbers will work for some time, but we will have to pay extra for mail and call forwarding.

Charlotte is a town of about 8000 people located 15 miles south of Lansing, the capital of Michigan.

Our reasons for moving are three-fold: 1) More help, 2) More space and 3) Less cost.

As we have mentioned in previous newsletters, there has not been time to read all of the letters and articles that are sent to *Servants' News*. A few people have been waiting nearly ten months for a reply. There have been many weeks when we have had over 100 communications, (including letters, phone calls, faxes and e-mails). Most of these are requesting some kind of literature, some require a short answer, and some a more lengthy reply. Handling just the literature, short replies, and accounting is a job in itself. Then there is still the need for continual study, research, and producing the magazine.

(Continued on page 6)

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 2 International Biblical Learning Center
- 3 Oh, How I Love Your Law! Part 5
- 7 Letter to David Covington
- 9 Church News
- 16 The Answer to "The Lord's Prayer"
- 20 Letters
- 26 Feast Updates

International Biblical Learning Center

Servants'
NEWS

Vol. 2, No. 6

July 1996

Servants' News is published monthly except for combined March/April and September/October issues. Subscriptions are free to people interested in obeying their Creator as described in the Bible. We believe His law is the basis for living a life pleasing to Him and living at peace with our neighbors. We believe the holy spirit gives us the power to live such a life as long as we continually repent of our sins, accept the salvation provided through our Savior and strive to live "by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Deut 8:3).

We believe the gospel should be given freely—you may copy this newsletter and give it to others. *Servants' News* has no financial ties with other organizations, but is financed by gifts and donations to our ministry. We have not received IRS tax exempt status, but the IRS allows some charitable deductions without such status (see IRS Publication 557, p 16, col. 1).

Editor & Publisher: Norman S. Edwards

Production Editor: Norman A. Brumm, III

Associate Editors: Marleen Edwards,
Robert & Christine Feith, Jeanne
Ireland, Pam Dewey

Contributors: Many! "Thanks" to everyone
involved!

Servants' News accepts articles for publication. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope for items that you want returned. We do not publish items that claim the Eternal works through only one human organization. We are happy to print corrections for any significant errors. Address articles, letters and subscription or literature requests to:

Servants' News

PO Box 220

Charlotte, MI 48813-0220

Phone: 517-543-5544

Fax: 517-543-8899

E-Mail: 75260.1603@CompuServe.com

Subscription and literature requests may also be sent to these addresses:

Canada: Servants' News, R.R. #2,
Hastings, Ontario, K0L 1Y0

Scotland: Steve Little, 14 Roman Camp,
Broxburn, West Lothian EH52 5PJ
Phone: 01506 853822

Australia: Dale Heslin, 9 Alice Jackson
Crescent, Gilmore, ACT 2905

Most scripture quotations are from the New
King James Version unless otherwise noted.

This issue printed by: Just-Us-Printers, Inc.

John Merritt and Barry Skidmore, founders of Friends of the Sabbath (FOS), along with Dr. Don Ward, former President of Ambassador University, John Robinson, Publisher of In Transition, and Dale Stogner announce the founding of the *International Biblical Learning Center* (IBLC). They wanted to start an institution of higher learning where a high quality of Biblical education and training can be made available to **every member** of the spiritual body of Christ and at a price that most can afford. Dr. Ward is the President of IBLC. The others mentioned comprise the initial Board of Directors. Dr. Ward is not a Board member.

While a number of (primarily young) people did benefit from Ambassador University/College, it was probably on the average of 500 - 1,000 people per year. There were no correspondence courses of an in-depth nature that could benefit the brethren at large. The old Ambassador College Correspondence Course was good for what it did, but it is not the same as taking classes covering the different books of the Bible in depth. While training our young people was and is important, think of the benefits to the spiritual body of Christ, at large, if tens of thousands had been so trained. It goes without saying that an in depth knowledge of the Bible is immensely valuable to a Christian engaged in doing God's work. The days of the Greyhound Church of God (get on and leave the driving to us) are over. With 20/20 hindsight it did not make sense to only train an "elite" few.

By getting started with courses covering the entire Bible, IBLC will enable students to select those courses of particular interest to them: courses that will enable them to round out their personal character development and better prepare them to serve God.

IBLC is a virtual university, a place of learning where the faculty members, the students, and the Directors are all widely dispersed. They are not planning on having a physical campus. The courses will be either audio or video cassettes, with workbooks, and tests, where the students can use the Internet or a fax machine (or some other means) to contact the faculty members to get their questions answered. The audio cassette based courses will likely feature about 18 hours of audio tapes. The audio cassette version of courses will probably sell for \$99, plus shipping and handling. This is very inexpensive for a college level course.

This is not a course of study designed to create ordained ministers. However, the average age of the ministry in the Churches of God probably exceeds 50 years. Because of the splintering of the old WCG, it is not likely that any of the splinter groups, even the larger ones, have the funds to start a traditional college. This is an effort to use the talent of the spiritual body of Christ and modern technology to genuinely serve the spiritual body of Christ. "We are not starting a Church," says Dale Stogner, a founding member, "but are continuing in our existing fellowships. We do **not** want to control people. We love God's people and are simply trying to set up the best possible way (under the circumstances) to genuinely serve God's people and to empower them to help each and every one of them to become the best that they can be. We intend to serve across the different Sabbatarian denominations and are hopeful that we can be of service to the different splinter groups who cannot afford to start a college of their own. When there are multiple doctrinal opinions held by Sabbath-keepers on a subject, we hope to explain the varied viewpoints and not condemn others for seriously held beliefs." Nevertheless, instructors will be free to state which view they believe is correct and why.

(Continued on Page 11)

Oh, How I Love Your Law!

Part Five

“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

If every human being had the perfect love of the Eternal in their hearts, we would not need numerous laws and penalties to govern our affairs. We would all naturally take care of others every bit as well as we take care of ourselves (Mark 12:31; Phil 2:4). But we are all still human and do not yet behave perfectly (Rom 7:14-23, Phil 3:12).

For example, John, a poor man, wants to visit his mother so he borrows Mark's second car to make the trip. (Both men believe they have the “love of God” in their hearts that can solve all human problems.) While on the trip the car brakes down and it will cost \$1000 to fix it. John would like to pay to fix it, but he does not have the money so he thinks Mark should show love and pay for it. Mark has enough money but he was saving it for new carpets for which his wife had been asking for two years. He would not be showing love to his wife to ignore his promise to her. Mark thinks he was showing a lot of love to loan John the car in the first place, and that John should show love in return by honoring his promise to be responsible for the car.

The Bible solution to this problem was covered in Part Two of this series (July 1995 or see Ex 22:14-15). Had these men read and endeavored to live by the words of the Bible, rather than to just “have love,” they might have made different arrangements before the trip, and they certainly would know who is responsible for fixing the car.

The Bible is clear that we need the Eternal's law to tell us what sin is (1Jn 3:4). We can grow to have the love of God by doing things that define His righteousness (Psalm 119:172; 1Jn 5:3).

Anyone that has raised children realizes that simply telling children what to do is not always enough. As our opening quote from Ecclesiastes 8:11 states, there is a need for a speedy sentence or punishment in order to help correct people that are doing things that our Creator told them not to do. Indeed, because neither man nor the Eternal has enforced the punishments given in the Scriptures, there is an incredible amount of evil in the world today.

So, what should be done? Should the Eternal or human governments begin to enforce the Biblical penalties without warning? Should parents who have let their children use profanity all their lives suddenly start spanking them? No. People punished for breaking laws of which they are not aware usually do not learn very well. They usually blame the “punisher.” Our Father is more concerned about people disobeying laws that they **do know** compared to those laws they **do not know** (Rom 2:11-16; Luke 12:47-48). Nevertheless, people can be destroyed because of their ignorance of the Eternal's ways (Hos 4:6). **What is necessary is to first teach the Eternal's laws, then to enforce them!**

As previous articles have already covered Exodus 20-23 and Leviticus 19, we will continue in Leviticus 20. This chapter deals mostly with punishments. Many of them seem harsh—so harsh that they were often not carried out in the nation of Israel. Nevertheless, if people knew these punishments all of their lives, most of the sins described in this chapter would virtually never be committed—and punishment would be rare. The total

amount of human suffering would be infinitesimal compared to what happens today as a result of the sins.

Killing Babies for Personal Gain

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Again, you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘Whoever of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who gives any of his descendants to Molech, he shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. I will set My face against that man, and will cut him off from his people, because he has given some of his descendants to Molech, to defile My sanctuary and profane My holy name’” (Lev 20:1-3).

While there is scholarly debate on the exact nature of Molech worship, many scholars believe that some Israelites actually burnt their new-born children in the fire as a sacrifice to this false god. We learn in 2 Kings 23:10 that “he [Josiah] defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.” (A thorough treatment of Molech may be found in *Molech: A God of Human Sacrifice in the Old Testament* by John Day, Cambridge University Press, New York 1989.)

We know for certainty that Israelites did sacrifice their children to some false deity: “And they have built the high places of Tophet [probably the same place that Josiah destroyed, above], which is in the valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did

not command, nor did it come into My heart" (Jer 7:31). "They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and daughters" (Psalm 106:37-38).

Today, few people sacrifice their children directly to Molech, but millions sacrifice their children on the altar of convenience—the convenience of sex without commitment. We live in a bizarre world indeed. A woman could walk into a hospital nursery, see her tiny newborn premature baby of only six months gestational age, open its incubator, cut him up and throw him away, and receive the death penalty for her heinous crime. In an office next door, a woman can walk in with an unborn baby of **exactly the same gestational age**, let a professional doctor cut him up and throw him away, and not be in violation of any of man's laws.

The ancient Israelites sacrificed their children believing the false gods would give them prosperity for doing it. They recognized it as a sacrifice. Today, most parent(s) kill their children simply because they do not want to be bothered by them. Which do you think is worse? It is interesting to note that Leviticus specified a double punishment for this sin. The offender was to be put to death by the people, but, in case they did not do their job, the Eternal promised to cut the offender off from His people.

Is the solution for today to find every woman and doctor that has been involved in an abortion and put them to death? Some may have known what the Eternal said about it; others may really believe today's ideas and think that all they have done was remove a little extra "fetal tissue." The solution is to first teach the crime and its punishment—that will cause many that believe in the Bible to stop the sin. Implementing the punishment will have to wait until the millennium, but then it will certainly stop nearly all of the senseless killing of innocent babies.

"And if the people of the land should in any way hide their eyes from the man, when he gives some of his descendants to Molech, and they do not kill him, then I will set My face against that man and against his family; and I will cut him off from his people, and all who prostitute themselves with him to commit harlotry with Molech" (Lev 20:4-5).

It is interesting to see that the Eternal makes all of the people responsible, not just the leaders or a "police force." People

were not allowed to "cover up" this sin if they discovered it in others. Today, we are not responsible for administering the civil government, but we are certainly responsible for teaching our children, and those in our congregations the truth of this matter. If someone in our congregation—even in our own family has one of their children murdered, we should put them out of our congregations. Are they barred from fellowship forever? Probably not. We will cover that in a few paragraphs.

Avoiding Spirits and Mediums

"And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I am the LORD who sanctifies you.... A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them" (Lev 20:6-8,27).

The Eternal promises to punish people Himself for consulting with mediums. This sin would be too difficult for men to effectively prosecute, since there is rarely any witness involved, and two or three would be required to establish the guilt (Deut 19:15). Without witnesses, how can one prove that a "consultation" took place? By **not** specifying a penalty for those that consult with mediums, it is much easier to get witnesses to come forward to testify against the mediums. If two or three people that had consulted with a medium decide to testify against him or her, the problem can be ended.

Clearly, the Eternal intends us to look to Him and His law to provide a happy and meaningful life. When people fear the future—especially if they are sinning—they often turn to mediums for guidance or assurance that "things will turn out all right." As prostitutes give up their virginity—a part of themselves—for the temporary benefit of money, so people that consult mediums give up their close relationship with their Father in heaven for the temporary benefit (if it is a benefit at all) of demonic advice. Our loving Father wants us to be sanctified—set apart for His holy purpose.

Today, one can look in the phone book of any major city and find psychics, card readers, palm readers and spiritual advisors of all types. Some of these people are charlatans; they possess no skill at all but take

money for predictions and then move on before too many unhappy customers return. Others have great human skill to understand people and their feelings—they can discern things about people that they may not know about themselves. Still others, like the witch at Endor, are in contact with demons that may impersonate the dead or give advice in other ways (1Sam 28:7). Finally, some people are completely demon possessed and have access to much knowledge in the spirit realm (Acts 16:16). None of these four types of advisors can guarantee that they are telling you the truth. Our Father has more knowledge than all of them, always tells the truth and is willing to share His wisdom with us if we are willing to do what is best for ourselves—to put away sin (Isa 59:1-2).

Sometimes, people with Bible knowledge seek mediums anyway because they know they are sinning. They are afraid that the Eternal will not answer them, where the mediums do not really care if people are sinning. This approach places us "deeper into trouble" rather than getting us out of it. If we know that we are sinning, we must cry out to our Father and ask for forgiveness. Then He will hear and help us (2Chr 7:14, 1Jn 1:9).

Do Not Curse Your Parents

"For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood shall be upon him (Lev 20:9).

Human babies are helpless when born. Without their parents, or someone to care for them, they would soon die. Many thousands of hours and dollars are needed to bring a child to adulthood. While many parents today are far from the ideal that the Eternal intended, we are commanded not to curse those that made it possible for us to be alive.

The expression "curse" means a thought-out expression of long-lasting contempt. This does not mean that the child that argues with his parents or calls them a naughty name should be put to death. Nevertheless, a lot of cursing of parents occurs today. There is a great need for believers and everyone else to begin teaching and following this law.

Homosexuality and Bestiality

"If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them. If a man mates with an animal, he shall surely be put

to death, and you shall kill the animal. If a woman approaches any animal and mates with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood is upon them (Lev 20:13,15-16).

In today's society, the death penalty seems harsh for the above sins. After all, do these acts really hurt anyone as long as all parties are consenting? Are not some people simply born homosexuals? Are not others conditioned to be so by dysfunctional relationships in their own family? There is no doubt that some people have much greater tendencies to be involved in homosexual activity and that it is family related. The penalty of sins is often passed down to the children (Ex 20:5;34:7; Num 14:18, Deut 5:9). Children with violent or sexually promiscuous parents also tend to be the same way. So should we let a murderer or rapist go free in our society because their parents were the same?

Obviously, the Creator that made us knows what kinds of sexual relationships are good for us and which ones are not. According to one theory, the AIDS virus was first introduced to humans when they were "lying with" monkeys. The virus was certainly spread by homosexuals. When people with these perverted sexual preferences are without a willing partner, there is a great tendency to coerce or force a partner—sometimes children that cannot defend themselves. Animals that have partaken of relations with humans may try to repeat the behavior—with a human that does not want it.

In His love for all of His creation, the Eternal decreed that people and animals that have partaken of such deviant behavior should be killed in order to protect the rest of the population. The people that die are not lost forever but will have a chance to deal with their problems when they are raised from the dead and given the holy spirit (Ezk 37:13-14). Once these people learn that they have a sin to be overcome, rather than just an "alternative lifestyle," there will be hope for them changing.

...Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God (1Cor 6:9-10).

Various Sexual Sins Defined

"The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death. The man who

lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them. If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death. They have committed perversion. Their blood shall be upon them (Lev 20:10-12).

"If a man marries a woman and her mother, it is wickedness. They shall be burned with fire, both he and they, that there may be no wickedness among you" (Lev 20:14).

"If a man takes his sister, his father's daughter or his mother's daughter, and sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a wicked thing. And they shall be cut off in the sight of their people. He has uncovered his sister's nakedness. He shall bear his guilt" (Lev 20:17).

"You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister nor of your father's sister, for that would uncover his near of kin. They shall bear their guilt. If a man lies with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness. They shall bear their sin; they shall die childless. If a man takes his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing. He has uncovered his brother's nakedness. They shall be childless (Lev 20:19-21).

Most of the above verses are quite specific and fairly self-explanatory. They start by prescribing the death penalty for adultery—something no longer recognized as a crime by most Western societies. Too much of our population does not see anything wrong with it; some psychologists actually claim it is beneficial to a marriage. All we can do today is teach the truth, put major sinners—even if they are "high ranking"—out of our congregations that engage in the practice.

How do we know that we should put people out of our congregations today?

This section defines the very sin of marrying one's own mother that occurred in the Corinthian church (1Cor 5:1-5). Leviticus specifies the death penalty, but Paul instructed the congregation to put them out when they came together again. Later (some estimate about six months), Paul instructed them to welcome him back (2Cor 2:6-7). If we can generalize from this example, a person who sins a sin worthy of death should be put out of his or her congregation. The whole congregation will know (just like they all knew when the death penalty was administered under Moses). But, if the sinning person remains out of the congregation for some time,

appears repentant, and desires to return, then he or she should be allowed to return.

Why do we make a distinction between different types of sins? After all, if a person is guilty of breaking any point of the law, is he not guilty of it all? (Jms 2:10.) In a spiritual sense, any sin on our part brings on the death penalty; we can only obtain eternal life by our Savior's sacrifice (Rom 6:11, John 3:16). But we also have to deal with sin from the physical damage it causes. If a member of a congregation has a bad habit of stealing pens from the other members, he can restore two pens for every one he took, and continue in the congregation. He can repeat this problem several times, and still remain there. However, if a congregation has a practicing murderer, adulterer or homosexual, the damage he or she would do to the congregation often cannot be undone. The congregation is to put him or her out **for the protection and reputation of the congregation** (Matt 18:15-17, 1Cor 5:1-5, 2Thes 3:6 1Tim 6:5).

We can further note that many of the above Scriptures tend to deal with various forms of incest—a temptation that occurred more often when extended families lived in close proximity—sometimes in houses with very few rooms. The expression "uncover his/her nakedness" does not refer to the case where a person accidentally opens a door when someone else is dressing or bathing. These accidents do not bring the death penalty. "Uncovering nakedness" refers to a prolonged exposure with the possibility some sexual act of which the writer would rather not give specific details. In Genesis 9:22-24, Ham "saw the nakedness" of Noah, his father, but when Noah awoke he "knew what his youngest son had done to him." Obviously, Ham had done something more than just look at him, else Noah would have no way of knowing when he woke up.

"If a man lies with a woman during her sickness and uncovers her nakedness, he has exposed her flow, and she has uncovered the flow of her blood. Both of them shall be cut off from their people" (Lev 20:18).

The question of whether or not couples should have intercourse during menses has been debated by the medical community as well as the sexually active for many years. The women's liberation thinking is that women are little different than men and should be able to do whatever they want whenever they want. Other women (and some men) find the whole idea repulsive. Some medical research shows a greater chance of dis-

ease spreading during such intercourse. Other research refutes those claims.

Whatever men might say, we have to realize that our Creator knows what is best for us. This command is repeated in Ezekiel 18:6 and 22:10. Furthermore, there are many happily married couples that have practiced this principle for years. This writer knows of some cases where one spouse believed in it and the other did not. In no case was the practice of this principle ever considered a problem or a sore-point in the marriage.

Do Not Follow Other Nations

“You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them, that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out. And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they commit all these things, and therefore I abhor them. But I have said to you, ‘You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.’ I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples” (Lev 20:22-24).

This is a principle that applies to both nations and local congregations. We should not look to the customs and laws of other people or churches to decide how we will conduct our lives and worship our Father. We should look first to His instruction. We can learn physical things from other people: how to read, write, build buildings, etc., but we should never let these things replace the Bible instruction.

What is the punishment for following the customs of other nations? Being cast out of our land. This happened to ancient Israel and Judah on more than one occasion, and could happen again. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 indicate this is the ultimate end for disobeying the Eternal.

Eating Clean Food

“You shall therefore distinguish between clean animals and unclean, between unclean birds and clean, and you shall not make yourselves abominable by beast or by bird, or by any kind of living thing that creeps on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that

you should be Mine (Lev 20:25-26).

The difference between clean and unclean animals is explained in Leviticus 11. Some people look at the associated command to “be holy,” above, and use it as proof that unclean meats are part of a ceremonial law that was ended along with the animal sacrifices. However, the language in verse 26 is about the same as verse 7 where the subject is familiar spirits. Does anyone believe that the command to not seek mediums ended with the ending of the sacrifices?

The Bible shows us that the knowledge of clean animals existed long before Moses. Noah was told to take seven pairs of the clean animals but only one pair of the unclean (Gen 7:2). Isaiah 66 speaks of the millennium, a time when our Savior will reign on earth. Verse 17 tells us that it will still be wrong to eat unclean foods at that time. Modern science has confirmed that many of the unclean animals do create an increased risk of disease. But we do not have to wait for science to discover all of the reasons why the Eternal’s laws are good for us to follow. We can simply believe Him and obey Him now!

—Norman S. Edwards

(“Move” from page 1)

After finding *Servants’ News* on the Internet a few months ago, George and Pam Dewey contacted us and were amazed to find how similar their own understanding paralleled what they found in *Servants’ News*. The Deweys attended the Worldwide Church of God and the Church of God, International for years. Mr. Dewey served as the pastor of a CGI congregation until they realized that there were too many things being done at “headquarters” for less than righteous purposes. They could not continue to support organizations that were holding their own ways above the scriptures.

After withdrawing from the CGI in 1988, the Deweys continued to keep the Sabbath on their own and attended a variety of small congregations. Pam wrote down some of their understanding in the late 1980’s. I would have published some of this material as articles, but much of it was too similar to things we already had in print. However, this issue’s *Answering the Lord’s Prayer* article came from her writing of that period, with some editing and additions by myself and the staff.

How will we have more help?

George Dewey will continue to work in

his full-time job and help *Servants’ News* part time in editorial matters, with computers and in other technical areas. Pam Dewey will take on the tasks of phone answering, mail processing, filing and literature layout. Other brethren in the Michigan area will help with outgoing mail, and the indexing and cataloging of literature. Norman Brumm will continue to do the magazine layout from Oklahoma (it is transmitted between us by computer modem.) The other typists, proof-readers, and editorial assistants will continue to help from their respective locations—magazine correspondence is handled by fax and electronic mail.

How will we have more room? The *Servants’ News* office is now 210 sq. ft. in size and shelves are stacked nearly to the ceiling along two walls and down the middle. Too much time is spent simply moving boxes and literature so a specific task can be done. When more than two people are working, they continually get in each other’s way. In Michigan, we will have an office that is over 700 sq ft. That will provide much more efficiency in working and a place for more people to work at the same time.

How will there be less cost? All of

the skilled people that plan to help us in Michigan are willing to donate their time. In Arkansas, we simply could not find anyone that both had the computer skills and was able to volunteer their services. We made some attempt to find someone that we could pay to help us in Arkansas, but the arrangements never worked out.

Lastly, the cost of office space and housing is less in Charlotte, Michigan than it is in Fayetteville/Springdale, Arkansas. The entire Northwest Arkansas area is in a “boom” and office space is difficult to find anywhere—inexpensive office space does not exist. Many local construction companies have a year’s worth of work lined up. In Charlotte, we will be paying \$450 per month, utilities included.

Will *Servants’ News* Change? If anything, we hope it will get better. Our basic purpose and mission will continue to be the same. We pray that the Eternal will use us to serve Him and His people as He sees fit—that no one will ever look to us as **the source** of truth, but as one of many fellow servants working in the master plan that our Savior is working out here on earth!

—Norman S. Edwards

Response to David Covington's Letter

by Jeanette Cristoforo with "SN" comments by Norman S. Edwards

LETTER: June 20, 1996

Dearest Brother David,

I have just finished reading your letter of resignation from WCG, published in *Servants' News* (newsletter). I am deeply troubled and puzzled by much of what you have said in it. I am truly sorry you have felt unloved and unappreciated in your pastoral position. And to hear you say that other ministers have confided their same feelings of being unloved and "trapped" is unimaginable to me.

My association with the church these past ten years as an ordinary member has been totally different than what you describe. I came into the church at age 55, was warmly welcomed, and even received a wonderful, loving letter from Mr. Joseph W. Tkach, Sr. (then Pastor General) at that time. These have been the happiest ten years of my life!

SN: While we have not independently investigated each person's facts, we have heard many similar stories and believe that both Covington and Cristoforo are telling the truth as they see it. How can their impressions be so different? Because much of the WCG teaching is from the Bible and that truth produces a peaceful life—yet each person is free to ignore that truth and practice evil—even though he still may be preaching truth. Also, they were each exposed to different people: Covington worked with the top leaders of the WCG on a regular basis, where Cristoforo worked with a local congregation, a local pastor and interfaced with Joseph W. Tkach, Sr. only by letter. (Nearly all of Tkach, Sr.'s letters were written by someone else.)

We must realize that people can preach truth and righteousness, but not be righteous themselves. The first century Pharisees taught much truth and were considered righteous by most people, but our Savior warned: "Therefore whatever they [scribes and Pharisees] tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do" (Matt 23:3). Also, the Pharisees made a great outward show of righteousness: they blew a trumpet when they gave donations, they prayed in the streets where people

could hear (Matt 6:2,5). Today's shows of righteousness are much more sophisticated. Church organizations have video tapes, and letters reviewed by a great variety of people before publication to make sure that there is nothing in them that would offend their audience. Electronic editing today is so effective that it is impossible to tell where the off-color joke, haughty remark or facial sneer was removed from the real message.

LETTER: Early this last winter, when I was doing what I could to promote WCG participation in the May 2, 1996 National

Day of Prayer, I wrote a letter to Mr. Tkach (present Pastor General) and suggested that he ask a certain person at headquarters, who is a contributor to *The Plain Truth Magazine*, to attend the NDP Coordinator meeting in Colorado. I received a personal note from our Pastor General thanking me for the suggestion and saying that he had forwarded the materials and information I had sent him to the person I had indicated. End result? **Five** people from our upper echelon attended! And I have this beautiful, handwritten note that I have added to my correspondence collection. I am nothing more than an old grandma, yet I felt important and loved.

By the way, in case you are wondering, Yes...I went to my local state conference and coordinated with my own county with an evening Prayer and Praise Gathering with nine ministers from various denominations, (including my own minister from my local WCG congregation) each making a five minute prayer. There were two choirs, a vocal quartet, two vocal soloists, etc.. Am I so special or talented to do this coordination? No. But I was the only volunteer, and talented or not, and scared or not, when God spoke the words, "Proceed," to my heart, there was no going backward, especially when he saw I was ready to chicken-out, and had to speak, "Proceed," a second time a little stronger.

SN: We are happy that your service worked out so well. Years ago, the WCG did not allow this kind of individual effort. Covington is not saying that nothing works now, but he is saying that too many individual efforts and official corporate programs

are stopped by management before they get started. He gave some examples and he or we could give many more. How would you have felt if you were told not to participate in the meetings that you arranged only a few days or hours before they were to begin?

LETTER: In my ten years in the Church I've had only two ministers. Both of them are God-loving, God-fearing men. I can't believe either of them ever had a negative thought such as you describe in your letter. They always projected love, loyalty, and respect for all those at headquarters.

SN: It is wonderful that you had that experience. May the Eternal bless those men for doing a good job. Unfortunately, many brethren have not had the same experience. Local ministers can have the Pharisee's attitude—teaching righteousness but not doing it. A former director of the WCG ministry told me of "ministers" that were so vindictive that if any member ever "crossed them", they would "look for an excuse to disfellowship him until they found it." Some members had to quit their jobs and move their families to another church area so they could stay in the WCG.

LETTER: I don't understand why you are in disagreement with Mr. Tkach about the way the money from the Pasadena property sale is to be divided and spent. When I have had the money, I have contributed to the church as I was able. But there were also times when I had to request help myself. The help was always given...both financial and emotional. I find no fault with "the system" because I have seen it work well for many members.

SN: Again, it is good to hear that the men in your area administered assistance fairly. We have heard of many other cases where people who paid "third tithe" for years were denied assistance when they asked for it. From personal experience, I am aware of third tithe money being used to remodel minister's homes, buy airplanes and pay employee health insurance.

LETTER: I am concerned that you are "encouraging (WCG) members to leave and join healthy Christian churches where they can find help and healing." Perhaps you haven't noticed, but almost every Christian church of every denomination is having a share in the disputes and the shaking. Many are divided on many issues, including finances, doctrines, and matters of what is or is not morally acceptable in today's world. Some even deny the divinity of Jesus. I have

The author asked us to print this letter in response to David Covington's letter, published in our June 1996 issue. She has been a 10-year WCG member in one congregation; he worked with the many top leaders and ministers. We hope to reconcile these two honest attempts to do what is best for all.

found more "love" in WCG than in any of the churches I've previously attended. When I was sick, someone came and helped me with housework duties. When I was well, I helped someone else in the same way. In some other denominations the only time your absence is noticed is when your envelopes and money fail to show up in the weekly collection basket. But in WCG where I attend, the minister and other members notice and really care if someone is there or not. They call, write, or visit.

SN: Your congregation is an excellent example—one that should be followed. I attended in the Pasadena congregations for most of my adult life and people rarely ever noticed if I was gone. I have attended protestant churches and found some more friendly and some less friendly than the average WCG congregation. Covington's point is well made: if you are in an uncaring church, it would seem to be best to go to another Protestant church that is more caring. But if your local congregation is working for you, why not stay there?

LETTER: I like sending my money gifts to headquarters for redistribution because I know the fact of having money to contribute, or not having money to contribute, is more private between me and headquarters and does not influence how my minister greets me and responds to me. I feel "loved" for myself and for no other reason. I repeat: Every church denomination or group has its problems. There are almost always undercurrents people are not aware of. If you are looking for a "perfect" church, you will be greatly disappointed.

SN: We agree that there is no perfect church, just like there are no perfect people. Nevertheless, our Messiah had to warn of the religious leaders of his day that pretended to be righteous: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" (Matt 23:27). There are times when people must withdraw from religious leaders that are too far away from truth (2Ths 3:6, 1Tim 6:5, 2Jn 1:10-11). You mention one positive aspect of centralized money collection, but did you realize that at times the WCG has given local pastors reports of their members' contributions. At times, they have evaluated ministers by how much their congregation contributed. Also, I have personally seen doctrinal decisions and divorce & remarriage decisions altered when "headquarters" found that one of the parties involved was a "heavy contributor."

LETTER: As far as your accusation that there was "no love" from the one you

expected love from...Could it be something in your own attitude that prevents you from receiving (or feeling) the love that is there? Are your expectations of getting love exceeding your ability to give and project love to others?

On page nine in *Servants' News* you reveal a mistake you say our present Pastor General made in front of you and three other men. If the incident happened as you say it happened, it was indeed an error. But how do you know he didn't quickly wish he hadn't said it? How do you know he didn't confess it to God and be forgiven? His mistake was done in the company of four men he knew and trusted and felt comfortable with...only four. But you have broadcast it through this newsletter to many more. The Scriptures tell us "love covers a multitude of sins." So instead of revealing and spreading it, why didn't you cover it with your love? Which of you did the greater sin do you think?

SN: Why didn't our Saviour show love and cover the sins of the Pharisees and avoid offending them? **Because they were leading the people astray.** "Then the disciples approached and said to him, 'Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?' He answered, 'Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit'" (Matt 15:12-14).

Covington seems to have followed the principles in Matt 18:15-17. He took the issue directly to the leaders—both spoken and written. He involved other witnesses at times, yet he was not heard.. Now, he is taking the issue to "the church," the body of believers, in the best way he can. Unfortunately, there is no means whereby the brethren can constructively change the operation of the WCG. Their only definite effect they can have is to stop supporting and/or stop attending the WCG.

LETTER: You talk about "rest in Jesus." You speak of love, openness, respect, and honesty that you want from the administration. These are all qualities we hope to find in one another, but we need to be cultivating them in ourselves, too. If you were truly taking your "rest in Jesus" and "Standing up for Jesus," you wouldn't have, and couldn't have, written and published such a letter. It violates everything Jesus taught! We have no excuse to retaliate when ignored and/or wounded! We are taught to **forgive!** Unless you **do** what Jesus taught you to do, you are **not** "Standing up for Jesus!"

SN: "But Peter said to him, 'May your silver perish with you, because you thought

you could obtain God's gift with money! You have no part or share in this, for your heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and the chains of wickedness'" (Acts 8:20-23). Luke wrote this rebuke down for millions to read—not to condemn There is a time to **stand up for Jesus against evil men!** There are at least five other examples where apostles wrote the names of men that caused trouble for the brethren (1Tim 1:20; 2Tim 2:17; 4:10,14; 3Jn 9).

LETTER: I am truly sorry you have had the experiences you describe. As far as finding "help and healing" in any other Christian church, maybe you will...and maybe you won't. I tried a few others in my earlier days and then became so disillusioned I quit all churches altogether and stayed home studying the Bible and practicing Christ's teachings without minister, priest, or fellowship for several years. And then I found help and healing in WCG.

I'm sure everyone in my family would be able to testify what my last ten years as a member in the Worldwide Church of God have done for me...I am a better, more genuine Christian person as a result of those ten years.

I hope and pray you will find the help and healing you so obviously need and not just be entering a new round of endless power-plays. I pray the love from Jesus, and of Jesus, will touch your heart in a positive and direct way and heal and comfort you.

Your sister in Christ,

—Jeanette Cristoforo, Sterling,MI

SN: We agree here! When you experienced trouble with some congregations, you sought the Eternal and the Bible, and He placed you where you could grow. While we may not agree with all of David Covington's doctrinal understanding, we highly applaud his standing up for the Biblical principles of justice, mercy, and truth—rather than simply going along with the corporation to keep his paycheck. We believe the Eternal will grant him healing somewhere as long as he continues to look to Him. Every man will be judged by what he says, and the work that he does (Mat 12:35-37, 1Cor 3:11-15). We find no rewards in the Bible for being in the "right group" or following the right teacher. Even the famous letters in Revelation 2 & 3 address **individuals** 7 times with the same message: "**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**" 

Local Congregations



New Jersey Summer Sabbath Jubilee '96

The Church of God, New Jersey invites you to the "Renewing the Spirit Weekend," August 17&18, 1996, beginning 11:00 A.M. at the Woodbridge Sheraton, 515 Rt 1 South, Iselin, NJ 08830, phone: 908-634-3600.

Guest speakers include Ray Wooten, Jim Rector, and John Trescott. Topics include *Unity through the Holy Spirit (Ps 133:1)*, *Allowing Brethren to use the Gifts of God's Spirit (1Cor 14)*, *Why Hierarchical Government is Wrong (Matt 20:26)*, *Uniting the Church for Christ's Return*, and *Our Place in God's Church*.

Do you know what your role is in the church as the 21st century approaches? We would like to hear what you have to say about it. All are welcome to this family reunion. We will be discussing the different developments that have occurred in the Church of God in the last few years.

Friends of the Sabbath—Tacoma

You are invited to attend the *Friends of the Sabbath* conference at the Tacoma, Washington Sheraton Hotel, **August 3-5**, 9:00am to 5:00pm daily. The conference cost is only \$20.00 for all three days. The Sheraton is located at 13th and Market Street, Tacoma, Washington. Rooms at the Sheraton are \$79.00 per night, call 206-572-3200. Buffet luncheons (with vegetarian entrees) are \$15 including tax and gratuity.

The theme is *The Sabbath Facts of Life*, "a celebration of the Sabbath!" Sponsoring organizations are congregations from:

United Church of God
Church of God, International
Messianic Jews
Seventh Day Adventists

Church of God Seventh Day
Non-aligned Churches of God

Speakers include:

Rabbi Daniel Lapin: *Impact of God's Law on Society* (Lapin has a nationally syndicated radio show, *Rabbi's Roundtable*" and will be speaking before the Republican National Convention.)

Phil Arnold *Sabbath Friends and Enemies*. (Arnold is an expert on cults and testified before congress on the Waco tragedy.)

Samuele Bacchiocchi: *The Little Known History of Sabbatarians*.

Kenneth Westby: *The Mysterious 7-Day Cycle*.

Norman Edwards, *The Sabbath Service*.

John Merritt, Friends of the Sabbath founder.

Dennis Luker and **Larry Walker,** of the United Church of God.

Several other prominent clergymen and biblical researchers.

For information call Rick Richardson at 206-804-5593 or send e-mail to Toli Bohonik at Toli@prostar.com.

Sharashim Hebraic Roots Conference

You are invited to a conference on the Hebraic roots of Christianity, September 12-15 in Collinsville, Illinois (15 miles east of St. Louis). Registration, including seven meals, is \$150 (member discounts). Write Conference Department, Sharashim-Teshuva-El Shaddai, PO Box 804, Independence, KS 67301.

CEM Conference in Mississippi

The next Christian Renewal Conference will begin in Hattiesburg, Mississippi at 9:00 A.M., August 3. The faculty for this conference will include Ray Wooten, Larry Watkins,

Jim Rector and Ronald Dart. Everyone is welcome. For more information, contact Christian Educational Ministries, PO Box 560, Whitehouse, TX 75791, tel 903-509-2999, fax:903-5089-1139.

Assembly of Yahweh Unity Conference

A variety of independent Assembly of Yahweh groups will meet August 1-4 at the Assembly of Yahweh building, 1010 N. Gunnell Rd, Eaton Rapids, Michigan 48827. All believers in Yahweh and Yashua, 7th Day Sabbath and Feast keepers are encouraged to send a representative from their assembly. Pastor Samuel Graham may be reached for details at 517-663-3724. August 2nd will be devoted to calendar issues.

Birmingham Christian Conference

The theme of the June 7 through 9 Birmingham conference was *The Fruits and Gifts of the Holy Spirit*. The conference went according to plan and was apparently enjoyed by all. Over 350 people attended on the Sabbath, slightly less on Friday and Sunday. Those attending were about an even mixture of Seventh Day Adventists and people with a Church of God background. There seemed to be an unusual desire on the part of nearly everyone to understand the truth of the Bible even though it may conflict with long-held doctrines.

High quality video and audio tapes of each message are available. Video Tapes are \$10.00 for the first tape and \$5.00 for each additional tape. Audio tapes are \$4.00 for the first tape and \$1.00 for each additional tape. The messages and speakers were:

My Search for the Sabbath at the Vatican University, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness*, and *How I came to Accept the Holy Days* by **Samuele**

Bacchiocchi (3 tapes).

Spiritual Gifts and Church Government Parts I and II by **Ronald Dart** (2 tapes).

Freedom and Christian Responsibility by **Dale Stogner**.

Quenching the Spirit by **Jim Rector**.
I Would Not Have You Ignorant, Brethren by **Philip Mills**.

The Gift of Prophecy by **Norman Edwards**.

Walking as Sons of the Kingdom by **Art Ferdig**.

The Role of Grace in Spiritual Gifts by **Ray Wooten**.

Spiritual Gifts and the Church—Implementation, Problems, and Solutions. A panel discussion moderated by **Alan Ruth**.

If you would like to hear one tape that was representative of the conference, we recommend the last tape as it contains nearly all of the speakers. If you would like a little more, we recommend one Bacchiocchi, Dart, Rector, Wooten, and maybe an Edwards tape. Even though Samuele Bacchiocchi has delivered messages with these same titles at previous *Friends of the Sabbath* conferences, he always seems to add fresh anecdotes and insights each time.

Send tape requests and donations to:
United Church of God, Birmingham
PO Box 361334
Hoover, Alabama 35236-1334

WCG Continues to Wind Down

The Plain Truth Magazine, the Worldwide Church of God flagship publication was distributed free of charge for over 60 years. It will now have a subscription price: \$13 for 6 issues. While it will still be free to WCG members, it appears that less than 10,000 non-members are willing to pay for it. This is a vast change from the middle 80's when the magazine went to 8,000,000 households.

The WCG-sponsored Ambassador University, Big Sandy, Texas has only about 600 students planning to attend this fall. The campus was designed to handle up to 1800 students. This is placing a great financial strain on the college as costs cannot be cut in proportion to the decrease in student body size. Many teachers already have contracts. Some courses are required to maintain accreditation—they must be taught even if there

are very few students in them. Sources indicate that this will be the last year for Ambassador University unless a major new subsidy becomes available (possibly from the sale of the WCG Pasadena campus).

If the college closes, the Plain Truth magazine stabilizes at its new low levels, and membership continues its present rate of decline, the combined efforts of the 3 biggest WCG-split-off groups will exceed the WCG in nearly every significant area. Combined, the UCG, GCG, and PCG will have more total members, magazines, radio/TV time, congregations, ministers, etc.

While the Servants' News editors do not believe that these statistics are the main indication of where the Eternal is working, some of the people in these groups do. Brethren who disagree with an organization, but are staying in it because it is "the big work" will need to rethink their position. If there is no one group that is clearly "doing the work" more powerfully than the others, then the responsibility is clearly on each member to see the guidance of the holy spirit in knowing how to serve.

Attend College with Sabbatarians

You can attend a world renown institution and not get lost in the crowd. At Texas A&M, you can not only get one of the finest educations in the country, but also be around Sabbatarians.

Texas A&M has the largest undergraduate enrollment in the nation. Over 38,000 students live in the small community of Bryan/College Station just two hours north of Houston. The University includes 5,200 acres of land and a physical plant valued at more than \$1 billion. Texas A&M offers close to one hundred majors offering Bachelor's degrees. It also has a large variety of master's and Doctorate programs. many of these programs are among the best in the nation, and yet Texas A&M maintains its reputation as an affordable university. Every state and more than one hundred foreign countries are represented in the student body.

With these kind of figures most people can get lost in the crowd, but

that is where Aggie Sabbatarians comes in. We offer the most important dimension that Texas A&M has to offer: You can be around those who share your faith. The Aggie Sabbatarians is a new organization looking to grow as more people look for quality education among fellow Sabbath keepers. The Aggie Sabbatarians provide a venue for worship and fellowship among peers of like mind About 30 people attend the monthly Sabbath services at Texas A&M's riverside campus. Weekly services are being planned for next year.

—Greg Baker
Aggie Sabbatarians, 409-696-0599
2400 D Blanco, College Station, TX
77845
e-mail: gab3396@acs.tamu.edu

For decades, many Church of God young people grew up hoping to attend "Ambassador." Since many no longer consider AU an option, what else can they do? Some of the twelve Seventh Day Adventist universities are happy to accept Sabbath-keepers from different backgrounds. A student there will have no conflicts with classes or work on the Sabbath, but may find that there are few others of like mind with which to fellowship. Greg Baker presents another alternative: attend a huge university and create a community of Sabbath-keepers—enough to hold services and provide the social opportunities that college-age students seek. —SN

Magazine for Local Evangelism

I would be pleased to send you a free copy of the first issue of *Truth and Understanding*. This magazine is for all or any of the scattered groups who wish to use it as a local evangelistic outreach. Articles in the first 32-page issue include:

Is the Law Valid Today?

Did God Create Satan?

The Curse of the Earth and Restoration!

Jesus Christ will return!

Mama Spoke in Proverbs!

What is True Repentance?

The Real Gospel Revealed.

Our *Points of Truth* radio broadcast has produced a mailing list that stretches from California to New York in only six months. This presented a problem

because of the requests for literature. It became more and more difficult to keep track of what was sent to who and when.

So, I believed it would be better to put articles of basic subjects in a magazine format. This would simplify our mailings. And when people requested information on a specific subject we could send that also if it was not addressed in the magazine.

But this gives you the opportunity to use *Truth and Understanding* magazine as a supplement to your own outreach. And any of you that wish to present articles for publication are welcome. The articles should be directed to new, prospective converts. They must also be subject to editing. You should put them on a 3.5" disk in ASCII format if possible. If this is not possible, please send type-written copy.

Also, you are welcome to air the *Points of Truth* radio broadcast in your local area. It is a 15-minute program and the cost per airing will vary: as little as \$15 for a local station to over \$100 for big ones. The local station can add a recording of your own name and address to the end of the program, and you can offer the magazine if you desire.

The current issue is black and white, but if there is enough interest, we would like to start using a nice, color cover. If you decide to use *Truth and Understanding* magazine in your ministry, we will ask that you send \$2 per copy. This amount covers our cost and will decrease as the circulation expands. (We do not have the resources to fund everyone's local evangelism, so we ask that you pay for the issues you need and give them away free.) The

inside cover of the magazine has a place where you can put your own label or stamp—our address does not appear in the magazine. You will be completely responsible for teaching those people that the Eternal is calling through your efforts. If we work together, we can offer a quality magazine that all can contribute to and benefit from.

—Larry R. Lassiter
Church of God Fellowship
PO Box 102, Russellville, AR 72811
Phone: 501-890-2601

Little Rock Old Timer's Reunion

On June 30th, a sultry Arkansas Sunday afternoon (on the eve of a blue moon—a rare event), another rare occurrence took place. At Maumelle Park, on the banks of the Arkansas River in Little Rock, 200 or more friends gathered for an "old timers' reunion." The common bond for all of these people is that they were members of the Church of God raised up in Arkansas in about 1961.

People came from all over Arkansas and Mr. and Mrs. Kelly Barfield came from Texas for the event. Many brought photos and other mementos of Feasts, Church socials, float trips and other activities that brought back a flood of good memories. Some brought a few more pounds, some brought a little less hair, some were brought in wheel chairs, but everyone brought a smile, a handshake or an embrace and a glad heart.

In the shade of towering oak trees, a delicious meal of fried fish and potatoes was prepared. The attendees pro-

vided the other dishes including vegetables, salads, watermelon and delicious deserts.

The idea for the gathering came about from conversations that Jim Ussery had with members of the various groups now extant. Everyone that he talked to was enthusiastic about it and wanted to be involved.

The event was paid for by donations made that evening by those attending.

In expressing their thrill at seeing so many old friends for the first time in years, several compared the outing to a family reunion, which is exactly the atmosphere that the organizers had hoped for.

The reunion demonstrated the kind of warm, friendly hospitality and cooperation that we should have as God's people.

—Davy Crockett
Little Rock, Arkansas

The people at this reunion attend with a variety of groups. Sometimes, the headquarters of church organizations discourage such gatherings because "their members" are reminded that there are decent, Bible-studying, Sabbath-keeping people in other groups. Nevertheless, this reunion was a good example of the love that should be a sign that we are our Master's servants (John 13:35). —SN

Pen Pal in Wyoming

Hi, my name is Amanda Nickels and I am twelve years old. I would like to have some pen pals. It does not matter what sex or age you are. I'll write anyone who writes me. My address is 3316 Alberta Dr, Gillette, WY 82718.

("IBLC" from page 2)

Stogner continues, "When I was first called into the spiritual body of Christ, I was just completing my B.S. degree from a California State College. I immediately enrolled into Ambassador College and took, over a two year time period, various classes covering the entire Bible. Some of the classes were surveys, e.g., a panorama of the old testament. And some of the classes were a very detailed coverage of specific books of the Bible, e.g., the General Epistles, i.e., James, I & II Peter, I & II & III John, and Jude. All of these Bible oriented classes were immensely valuable to me. And, I must

tell you, that the in-depth study of the Bible, for these two years, was one of the happiest times of my life. I personally needed the teaching that was available at Ambassador College to help me learn more in a shorter period of time. And I know from personal experience that I may never have learned some of what I learned at Ambassador College had I not had skilled teachers."

Some of the initial classes that IBLC hopes to offer are as follows:

- ◆ Introduction and Origin of the Bible
- ◆ Introduction to the Old Testament
- ◆ Introduction to the New Testament
- ◆ History of Ancient Israel

- ◆ Hebrew I
- ◆ Harmony of the Gospels
- ◆ Acts
- ◆ Epistles of Paul
- ◆ General Epistles
- ◆ History of Biblical Festivals
- ◆ Typology of Biblical Festivals
- ◆ Biblical Prophecy
- ◆ Minor Prophets
- ◆ Revelation
- ◆ Sabbath & the Early Church
- ◆ Israel in Prophecy
- ◆ Modern Sabbatarian History
- ◆ Marriage & Family Relations

Some of you may ask, "What about

(Continued on page 25)

“Answering” from page 1)

Christian Church” and see a unity in the Spirit by the relationships among the Christians? It certainly can't see that unity if it looks at the various “Christian” denominations since the very existence of denominations denies unity. Nor can the “world” see that unity within any sect. The Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses and the Worldwide Church of God are among the exclusivist groups which tried to “enforce” such a unity through strong central authority and by disfellowshipment of anyone who appeared, to the leadership, to be threatening unity. They have failed. All those groups, and many others, have been rocked by internal dissent, large-scale defections and even scandal in recent years.

Where then, is the witness for which Jesus prayed? There are groups today who claim to be spreading a “witness and warning” message to the world through mass evangelism. They may deal with prophetic warnings about what Jesus said would happen and may proclaim special knowledge about the character and teachings of Jesus, but Jesus didn't pray on His last night with His disciples for an individual or small group to tell the world **about** Him. He prayed for a witness the world could **see**—the witness of Christians in unity and love.

J.B. Phillips defined the situation very clearly in his book *Your God is Too Small* (MacMillan Publishing; 1961):

“The thoughtful man outside the Churches is not offended so much by the **differences** of denominations.... What he cannot stomach is the exclusive claim made by each to be the “right one”.... If he were to observe that the Church which makes the boldest and most exclusive claim to be constituted and maintained according to Almighty God's own ideas **was** obviously producing the finest Christian character, obviously wielding the highest Christian influence, and obviously most filled by the living Spirit of God—he could perhaps forgive the exclusive claim. **But he finds nothing of the kind**...the outsider who knows nothing of the mixture of tradition, conviction, honest difference, and hidden resentment, that lies behind the divisions of the Christian Churches sees clearly the advantage of a united Christian front and cannot see why the Churches cannot “get together.” the problem is doubtless complicated, for there are many honest differences held with equal sincerity, but it is only made **insoluble** because the different denominations are (possibly unconsciously) imagining God

to be Roman or Anglican or Baptist or Methodist or Presbyterian or what have you. If they could see beyond their little inadequate god, and glimpse the reality of God, they might even laugh a little and perhaps weep a little. The result would be a unity that actually does transcend differences, instead of ignoring them with public politeness and private contempt” (pp. 39,40).

“May they be brought to complete unity...” **That** is the Lord's Prayer. But it is a prayer God, the Father, cannot unilaterally answer, because all people, including Christians, have free will. In a unique way, we must cooperate with the Father in answering Christ's prayer.

So, let's get busy. Let's call meetings. Let's organize unity committees. Let's write unity pamphlets to pass out at unity rallies and unity songs to sing at unity conventions. We'll pass unity resolutions and make unity speeches. We'll have a great time! However, the only thing we **won't** have is unity, because unity is not something people can “organize” into existence. Jesus said, “I will build my Church.” But most Christians haven't trusted Him with the job. Not satisfied with His progress, they have decided over and over again as the generations pass, **“We will build His Church.”**

In recent years the Christian community, at large, has had an increasing frustration with the reality that unity doesn't seem to exist anywhere (except, perhaps, within small local independent congregations.) We receive numerous newsletters and magazines from a variety of ministries across the country and the word **“unity”** is appearing more and more in their article titles. Yet, in spite of all the communicating about unity, it seems as elusive as ever. Perhaps one reason is the apparent “American spirit of Christian organization.” Whenever a group of individuals in this country becomes disappointed with what is (or isn't) happening in their current church organization, the typical response is to pull out and immediately reorganize.

This is certainly an understandable response and may well be the best for strictly human governments. Unfortunately, when it is applied to the church, it always ends up that Jesus is **still** not the builder, and unity is as elusive in the new organization as it was in the old. Changing doctrinal statements, church “governmental” structures, membership or ministerial criteria, or anything else men can “tinker” with, does not change the fundamental fact that men are still trying to be the builders, rather than just the tools or workers under the Master Builder.

How Satan Works to Divide

The first recorded example of unity on a large scale was at the Tower of Babel:

“Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech” (Gen 11:6-7 KJV).

God recognized a vast power available through unity among men. Without the Holy Spirit to guide that unity, God saw the potential for disaster and quickly put an end to it.

When Christianity first began, Satan recognized the even greater power of unity guided by the Holy Spirit, and likewise sought to put a quick end to it. At first, he dispersed believers through persecution. Later, he infiltrated through “pretenders or half-hearted followers,” and still later by dissension and by breaking up into factions around favorite leaders. Twenty-five years after the Church began, Paul had to write to the Corinthians:

“I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you be perfectly united in mind and thought...some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you...Is Christ divided?” (1Cor 1:10-13.)

By the time he wrote 2 Timothy (perhaps before 70 A.D.), Paul lamented,

“You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me...” (2Tim 1:15).

In the past 2,000 years of Church history, it appears that there have been fresh revivals of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by renewed unity among believers, at various periods.

Throughout the Middle Ages there were movements in opposition to the Catholic Church, such as the Waldenses, which promised change. Satan's primary tool at that time was persecution. By the time of the Protestant Reformation and the invention of printing, circumstances were again ripe for spreading the Gospel. Luther, Calvin, and later Wesley and others led reform movements, and there were many possibilities for a revival of first century unity. But they, too, fell to Satan's attacks. Sometimes it was persecution, but more and more frequently his other methods became even more effective (persecution can backfire and lead to increased zeal and proselyting.)

For an example in the last century, see the "Plymouth Brethren" box on page 15.

Three main methods Satan has used, and continues to use, to destroy simple unity in the Holy Spirit within Christian communities are:

1. "Wolves in sheep's clothing" (Or sometimes just goats in sheep's clothing):

In spite of the warning to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves," most real Christians are terribly naive. Not wanting to harshly "judge" anyone's motives, they are easily taken in by those pretenders with evil motives. You have probably met someone who seems to be a diligent Bible student. But how many of these people become hostile and divisive with others who do not see every doctrine their way? Brethren seem to have an even more difficult time discerning when someone is only half-heartedly interested in "religion"—not really committed to Jesus Christ.

It is one thing to expend considerable effort helping "babes in Christ" or "weak brothers", but it is something else when many Christian fellowships find their unity disrupted by their own attempts to deal indefinitely with a large number of totally uncommitted "religious hobbyists." These problems are particularly evident in religious movements that emphasize doctrinal agreement as a basis for fellowship. It does not take the Holy Spirit to either pretend to believe, or even actually believe, most doctrinal statements.

2. Legalism:

Belief in the reality of Jesus' atoning death leads to repentance and faith. The **result** is conversion with Christ coming to dwell in the new Christian. This indwelling leads to a new life style lived by the power of the Holy Spirit—a spontaneous **response** to the hope of salvation. In many such movements in the past, including the birth of the Church in the first century, Satan quickly moves to confuse cause and effect. Instead of introducing new people to Christ, movement leaders begin to feel it would be better to introduce

them to the "list" of how a new Christian should live, encourage them to imitate that list, and eventually require adherence to the list by human effort as evidence of repentance.

We are definitely commanded to obey God and we are not trying to minimize its importance, but if we regard our obedience to a humanly devised "list" (even if it's biblically based) while not really helping others and doing good works, then we're not hitting the target either. Obedience is not conversion. Some of these legalists tend to evaluate their lives in terms of their success in not violating this "list" and forget about helping others and doing the "greater works" that Jesus said He would do in us (John 14:12). The role of Christ is reduced to that of paying the penalty owed for sins

prior to "conversion" and the role of the Holy Spirit is reduced to "helping" the people obey the "list."

3. Follow the Leader:

Fresh movements of the Holy Spirit have frequently started among those without scholarly credentials. There is usually an egalitarian spirit (a brotherhood of equals) among all, with the only accepted criteria for positions of responsibility being "gifts of the Holy Spirit."

There is usually a simplicity in the belief system, minimal criteria for fellowship beyond simple acceptance of Jesus as Savior and evidence of the fruit of the Spirit. Our Savior can work powerfully in such an environment, but sometimes people begin to place great faith in the human leaders and not in Christ. They assume

Two Ways To Unify The Brethren: Which Misses the Mark?

Many people believe that true brethren cannot be unified until all submit to a single human government—their group's government. They often do not realize that such plans usually create the problem they were intended to solve. Unity can be achieved only among brethren who personally look to the Messiah for truth, obey what they believe, and do not condemn their brethren that understand the Bible differently.

	 Unity Under a Human Organization	Unity Under our Father In Heaven
Approach to Doctrine	Members believe that the Eternal holds them responsible for practicing the doctrines taught by their human organization. The average member does not need the holy spirit for understanding the scriptures, because new truth is permitted to come only from the organization's human leaders.	Brethren learn from the Bible and from others with the gifts of knowledge, teaching, etc. They are personally responsible for doing what they know. They recognize that the holy spirit will ultimately teach them all truth, but not all believers are at the same place in their understanding.
Approach to "Other Believers"	Believers in other groups are considered "second class" or "unconverted" and are to be shunned. Most groups say their doctrines are right and other groups' are wrong, though they make little effort to learn what other groups teach. To outside observers, the organizations create division among the brethren.	"Other believers" are considered brethren in spite of doctrinal differences. They can work together as long as everyone is growing, even though differences may not be resolved until the Messiah returns. If differences are too great, people can separate but still consider each other brethren.

that anyone with such great works would not believe any doctrinal error. Satan encourages the leaders of the movements to start emphasizing doctrinal details more and more. This soon leads to minor disagreements, then major ones—each point of view usually championed by a different leader.

The leaders become more zealous and/or more polished in the delivery of their arguments, and soon the average member is choosing sides. And, as the arguments become more complicated, a special clergy class again emerges as the only ones able to deal with all the intricacies of the belief system.

The Right Spirit—Not the Right Group

The word of the Lord came to me [Ezekiel]: “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Lord says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourself with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.... Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: “As surely as I live,” declares the sovereign Lord, “because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: This is what the sovereign Lord says: ‘I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them...I myself will search for my sheep and look after them....

I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.’” As for you, my flock, this is what the sovereign Lord says: “I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet?

Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet?” Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says to them: “See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered!”” (Ezk 34:1-12,16-22).

We believe that this passage, in addition to any fulfillment relating to the physical nation of Israel, symbolically refers to spiritual Israel, the Church—and that **this** is where we are in prophecy as it relates to the mission of the Church as the witness of Christ in the modern world.

The sheep that were in one flock in the first century were soon scattered. Note that they are still His sheep, even if they have been taken in by false shepherds, even if they are lost, injured, or abused by other sheep. Many Christians are “exclusivist.” They have a list of doctrines they consider essential to correctly identify fellow sheep. Unfortunately, they may not realize (1) that some true sheep of Jesus may be in organizations that are characterized by false doctrines, and (2) the exclusivists themselves may now be in such an organization, or may have taken in the false doctrines from such organizations in the past. There are two main identifying signs given in the New Testament for believers:

“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples: That you have love one for another” (John 13:35).

“If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ” (Rom 8:8).

There is no evidence of a “creed” in the scriptures which can be used as a yardstick to measure if someone is a Christian.

Consider this analogy: Imagine that you are a builder who specializes in building fine homes. Your firm has a wonderful reputation in your community for craftsmanship, and the homes built under your supervision command a high price. Whenever you are building a home, you place a sign on the lot proclaiming: “Another fine home built by (your firm’s name)” as advertising.

One day you are driving down a street in another part of town, you see a building sign that looks just like yours—just a tiny difference in the spelling of the name—in front of a tacky little pre-fab house, one that would

barely meet the city building code. You turn down another street—and there is another one! Everywhere you turn is a “shack” with a sign in front that implies you are the builder. You see, some other builders have decided you may build fine homes, but not everyone can afford them. You can’t build fast enough to keep up with the demand anyway, so they will just “borrow” your reputation with no harm done. Right? Well, the buyers **might** notice the inferior craftsmanship when they move in, and your reputation may suffer—but that’s all right. Isn’t it?

Men have insisted on putting Jesus’ name on **their** organizations down through the ages and then wondered why there is no unity of the Spirit within the organization. They have “recruited” members, just as they might for a club, given all of them the label “Christian”, and then wondered why some of them didn’t seem to have the Holy Spirit. They have created “spiritual litmus tests” (which are usually not even based on spiritual principles, but rather on superficial matters of doctrine or practice) to decide who is “ready” for admission, and wondered why so many in the organization are more interested in prophecy or hair lengths than in love or mercy.

It is good to reach out to everyone in love, to share the gospel freely with “sinners” and to serve the community, but that doesn’t mean that everyone who shows the slightest interest in one’s beliefs or accepts an invitation to come to a worship service is a “brother or sister in Christ.” The desire for “numbers” in organizations, coupled with humanly-devised “membership” criteria, have totally warped our understanding in the twentieth century of how Christ adds to His church. Even when by accident they “recruit” some who have actually been called by Christ, they try to “frame together” what Jesus said **He** would “fitly frame together”.

So, now what? Are we Christians doomed to keep repeating the same errors—succumbing to the same old tricks by Satan generation after generation? There is a time and method in which God intends to answer the Lord’s Prayer. We discuss this fulfillment in the article on page 18 titled, “Old Testament Prophecies and Holy Days Answer the Lord’s Prayer”.

In the meantime, we are admonished to “grow” in truth, not measure up to someone else’s definition of truth. This is why only Christ can build His Church, and why only He can go gather up the lost sheep—only He can recognize them in their scattered state as being part of His flock!

—Pam Dewey & Norman S. Edwards

The "Plymouth Brethren" Movement of the 1800's

One example of a movement which had all the potential of leading to a unity in the Christian community was the "Plymouth Brethren" movement of the 1800's. Its rise and fall is typical of such movements.

"[Edward] Cronin was a young dental student who had been brought up as a Roman Catholic, but had been graciously enlightened by the Spirit of God, and led to personal faith in Christ and into the knowledge of peace with God through resting upon the atoning work of the Lord Jesus...Like many another divinely-quickened soul who for conscience sake had turned his back upon the seeming unity of the papal system, [he] was greatly disturbed and perplexed by the many divisions of Protestantism. It grieved him much to find Christians of like precious faith divided into oftentimes warring camps, (for sectarian feeling was running high in the early part of the nineteenth century), and so powerless in the face of such desperate need. The argument that they were but like various regiments or battalions in one great army seemed valueless to him when he found them turning their guns, so to speak, upon each other instead of facing the common foe...Membership of denominations, as such, he could not find in Scripture, though he did see that there were local churches, made up of the one body of Christ gathered together for the breaking of bread and for prayer in local companies, but apparently one on the ground of the body, receiving one another as such and not as subscribing to special tests or forming minor organizations within the one great organism... He also found growing up within himself a feeling of repugnance to a one-man ministry, for it seemed to him that there was no place for this in the New Testament church...he thought he saw a different order for worship

meetings, where the Spirit of God might use whom He would to the edification of all, if believers were subject to His guidance." (From *A Historical Sketch of the Brethren Movement* by H.A. Ironside; Copyright 1985 by Loizeaux Brothers, pp. 10-11)

In 1825 Cronin and one other man were denounced by the local Protestant churches in Dublin for their opposition to the concept of the one-man ministry. They began meeting together for the "breaking of bread" and prayer, and thus began the Brethren movement. That little meeting grew, and word spread of this "new idea." Within a few years a number of other little groups had sprung up on a similar basis.

"There was no attempt at first to enforce uniformity of procedure in these meetings, and if I may be allowed to record here my profound conviction as to the chief cause of the apparent failure of the testimony of the Brethren and their eventual breakup into many different groups, I should say that it was through their failing to maintain the principle that unity is not necessarily uniformity. If the Brethren had been content to allow the Spirit of God to have [its] own way in each place, and had not made the attempt to enforce common methods of procedure and church order upon the assemblies as they did some years afterwards, they might have still presented a marvelous testimony to the unity of the Spirit" (p. 20).

John Nelson Darby was later to become one of the most noted leaders of the Brethren movement. In 1827 he wrote:

"...unity is the glory of the church; but unity to secure and promote our own interests is not the unity of the church...the unity of the church cannot possibly be found until the common object of those who are members of it is the glory of

the Lord... The Lord Himself says, 'That they may all 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. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are

one...that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (pp. 21,22).

The Brethren movement flourished throughout Great Britain and North America for a time in the 1800's. Although not great in numbers at any time, a "wealth of literature" poured from their leaders, and **many of their teachings on such topics as prophecy have been widely accepted, even to this day.** Groups descended from the Brethren movement exist today—scattered, divided and small. What happened?

"It will be readily understood that Satan would labor with unwearied energy to destroy so gracious a work of the Spirit of God...As long as the opposition to the truth came only from without, the Brethren prospered, and multitudes received the Word with gladness...but, as in the early church and in practically every movement of the Spirit of God since, Satan set himself to stir up dissension within...Jealousies among ministering Brethren, differences of views as to age-old questions like the subjects and mode of baptism, details as to prophetic events...soon came in to mar the peace and happiness of the little assemblies...A new line of tradition grew up to supersede the old views left behind, and at last divisions came in among the Brethren which have never been healed to this day" (p. 29).

And, the bottom line:

"...divided though the Brethren became, it has generally been leaders who have kept the sheep in the various separate corrals. Left to themselves they would soon flock together around the one Shepherd" (p. 145).

So, today, we have a different century, different people, and different organizations, but nevertheless, it is still the same gimmick! 

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES AND HOLY DAYS ANSWER THE LORD'S PRAYER

In the lead article on page 1, we pointed out that Christ's prayer was one for unity among His people and how that prayer has not yet been answered. This article will answer when and how that prayer will be answered.

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland...to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise...Do not be afraid, O Jacob my servant...for I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring..." (Isa 43:18-19,21 44:2-3 NIV throughout).

Old Testament prophecies to "Jacob"? What does this have to do with unity of Christians?

Many Old Testament Prophecies Are About the Church

The name "Israel" figures prominently in booklets and articles of writers on Bible prophecy in the Twentieth Century. There are two main "schools" of prophecy interpretation related to Israel. The standard "Evangelical" school assumes Old Testament prophecies mentioning Israel are referring to the modern State of Israel. Thus the events in world news that relate to that nation are watched eagerly for "signs of the times."

The other prophetic "school" embraces the British-Israelite theory. The common conception is that the modern nation of Israel represents only the "House of Judah," not the whole Old Testament Nation of Israel. Advocates of the British-Israelite theory postulate that the House of Israel, taken captive by the Assyrians around 700 B.C., was "lost" in history, and in a series of migrations from Assyria, the descendants of the captives ended up in western Europe. Thus the peoples of such nations as Denmark, England, France and the Netherlands are really Israelites. Further, the theory states that the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh

had the special blessing of the patriarch Jacob, and have the pre-eminence of the name "Israel." It is assumed that the British Commonwealth is Ephraim, and its "brother," the United States, is Manasseh.

Let us examine another possible interpretation for some of those passages in prophecy referring to "Israel." In some cases—perhaps many—they also can refer to the Church, the Body of Christ. There are many references in the New Testament picturing the Church as "spiritual Israel."

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God" (Rom 2:28-29 KJV).

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God..." (1Pet. 2: 9-10).

"Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ" (Eph 2:11-13).

"It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are His descendants are they all Abraham's children...It is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring" (Rom 9:6-8).

"If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:29).

This is not a "new" theory. Many writers have proposed a secondary application of some Old Testament passages as applying to the church. We want to share what we believe are some passages in the scriptures which can offer encouragement to the scattered members of Christ's Body if these passages are considered with the view that "Israel" may be a symbol for the Church.

But before covering those prophecies, it is important to establish another link in Old Testament prophecy with the Church—the Temple.

Temple: Symbol of the Church

The last temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD. Must the Jews rebuild it before Christ returns? Some feel this is an absolute prerequisite to the fulfillment of end time prophecy. This "Tribulation Temple," as some call it, will be the scene of animal sacrifices performed by a reinstated Levitical priesthood.

Others feel references to a temple in the "last days" refer to a temple to be rebuilt after the return of Christ. They believe He will reinstitute the Levitical system to serve as a "teaching device" for the people who survive the Tribulation and live on into the Millennium.

Perhaps many different interpretations have a portion of truth. But there is a possible "spiritual" application of some of the prophecies that may be an encouragement to the scattered members of Christ's Body:

"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph 2:19-21).

"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's build-

ing...Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple..." (1Cor 3:9,16). "For we are the temple of the Living God" (2Cor 6:16).

"...you also, like living stones are being built into a spiritual house..." (1Pet 2:5).

The repeated symbolism in the New Testament of the Church as the temple of God should be sufficient reason for at least taking a look at some of the temple prophecies to see if there is perhaps a partial fulfillment relating to the Church. The apostles definitely made a connection between the Church and the temple of God.

Jesus laid the foundation for the Spiritual Temple, His Church, in the first century, with His life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and with the sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Work continued under His direct supervision for a time, and there was great rejoicing and unity among His workers. People soon decided to reject His supervision and start building on their own. None of the edifices they have attempted to build have been His Temple.

Of course He hasn't ceased His Work. He has called people to be His own down through the past 2,000 years. In one sense, they have all become part of the invisible Body of Christ that will only truly be revealed at His coming. In another sense, there is still a temple to be completed, the one that will give the world evidence of Jesus **before** He returns.

Building God's Temple

We often speak of the Church as the Body of Christ. Do we get the full implication of that statement? When Jesus was here on the earth, "His Body" was His actual body. The works He did were done by His own body parts—His mouth, His hands, His feet. Now that He is at the right hand of the Father, the works He will do on earth must be done by His Spiritual Body parts—the Church. When we say that He is the "head," we imply that the body gets its direction and its control from Him through His Spirit. True Christian individuals throughout the world in the past 2,000 years have had Christ as their Lord—their "head." Individually many may have been responsible for leading other individuals to Christ. Is that all Christ had in mind? What of His prayer for unity? What of the examples in the first century, where it is said the disciples "turned the world upside down"? What of the comment quoted earlier that "all the believers"

were highly regarded, and **more** and **more** were added to their numbers in a short time? Are those days unique in all history, and are we to be satisfied with a pale shadow of those events?

"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb...These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9,14).

This passage is immediately after the mysterious description of the "sealing" of the 144,000 Israelites, "servants" of God. The inference many commentators draw is that the multitude was converted during the Tribulation by the 144,000. We believe that the multitudes indicate a mighty Work of Christ to be done in the latter days comparable to that of the first century and that it can only be done by a unified Body of Christ.

When and How Will That Unity Come?

If the "last days" are near, then we don't necessarily think that God has a pre-ordained date in mind. Rather, we believe that skeptical agnostics, or even atheists, are suspicious that very bad times are near just because man has brought himself to the brink of destruction by his own scientific "progress." God may have a time-table, but it may be flexible based on circumstances and his discretion.

We have no irrefutable "proof" to offer that we are living near the "last days." We are, however, convinced that that is a strong possibility. If you share our view, then perhaps you will see in the prophecies of Haggai the same hope.

Look around you at the Christian community in the world today. Examine your own experiences in denominations or cults. Look at the desperate need of most people to know the Good News of Jesus compared to the effectiveness of most efforts of evangelism. Consider the media reports about religious organizations that have flooded the airwaves since the "Jim and Tammy" story broke a few years ago. Ponder what effect this has had on the minds of the "unsaved" and on their mental image of the "Body of Christ." Now let's read the imagery of Haggai:

Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but

have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it." This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the Lord. "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the Lord Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. Therefore because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops" (Hag 1:5-10).

It is clear that there have been many people laboring greatly to build their "own church" and it has not worked very well. See what is prophesied of this "house" the Lord wants built:

This is what the Lord Almighty says: "In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and dry land. I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory," says the Lord Almighty. "The silver is mine and the gold is mine," declares the Lord Almighty. "The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house [Solomon's Temple]..." (Hag 2:6-9).

These surely cannot be actual predictions for the completed temple of Zerubbabel—that is, the actual physical "house" being built at the time this prophecy was written down. Some may say that these are references to the actual temple of Jesus' time, being filled with glory because Jesus was present there during His ministry. This seems unlikely. First of all, the temple in Jesus' time was Herod's Temple, not the temple of Zerubbabel. Secondly, the references to shaking the heavens and earth and sea and all nations certainly fits much better at the Second Coming. If **that** time is the ultimate reference, then the comment that "in a little while" this shaking will come, implies that the completion of the building of the "house" is near to **that** time.

It might be said that this "temple" is just the invisible, scattered church of all the ages that will be brought together at Christ's return and filled with His glory. That is surely an event that will also happen. But the imagery of this passage is that people have a responsibility in see-

ing that this "temple" is built so that God might be "honored." Going back to the history of the effort in Ezra, we see that the people **had** been involved in the building.

Do Not Seek Our Own Righteousness

During the same time period when Haggai was prophesying, just before work was resumed on building the temple, the prophet Zechariah had a vision.

Then he [an angel] showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! the Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?" Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you".... This is what the Almighty says: "If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here. Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to send my servant, the Branch" (Zec 3:1-4,6-8).

No doubt this vision has all kinds of implications. Certainly the reference to the "Branch" means Jesus, although commentators do not agree on whether this is at the first or second coming. There may be multiple layers of meaning, on both physical and spiritual levels. For the purpose at hand, we will focus on Joshua and his clothing.

Some have wondered if his "filthy rags" symbolized some personal sinful problem, with God purging him and giving him clean clothes as a sign that he is forgiven and will be restored to responsibility. It does say in verse 8 that he is symbolic of "things to come."

If, as it appears from Haggai, this is a condition near the time of the return of Christ, and Israel and the temple is a type of the Church, what does this imply about the state of the Church? Perhaps it could imply rampant open "sinning" among Christians. Given some of the religious scandals of recent years, this wouldn't be an unreasonable inference! However, this vision seems to be about more than that.

The passage says that Joshua is clothed in "filthy" clothing. The use of the word "filthy" gives a clue to the meaning, as this word is used in a well-known passage in Isaiah:

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags (Isa. 64:6).

Paul speaks plainly about such righteousness:

If anyone thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith (Php 3:4-9).

We believe that Joshua, in his filthy rags, portrays a Christian Church which has been permeated for centuries with the deception of legalism—men and women concluding that they are righteous because they believe a certain set of doctrines and follow a certain set of rules. The rules vary from denomination to denomination, sect to sect, cult to cult. But the result is the same—a body of believers ever struggling to measure up to the standards of the group. And they have all mistaken their body of doctrine for the Gospel. One of the "rules" is always to agree with all of the doctrines of the group. Individual Christians wander from group to group seeking the place with the most "true doctrine." It is somehow as if they feel "knowing" all the right things will bestow righteousness on them.

In Zechariah's vision, Joshua had his filthy clothes removed and was given rich, new garments. We believe that this is a symbol of what is beginning to happen throughout the Christian community now. It may eventually mean a vast exodus from the denominations, sects and cults as individual Christians are called by Jesus to see that neither legalism, emotionalism, churchism, nor a one-hour-per-week religion are the way to

righteousness. The only **way** is Jesus and His righteousness.

So, again, have we today been laboring greatly to build our own church or temple and neglecting God's temple?

"From This Day On, I Will Bless You"

If this temple is symbolically the Body of Christ which will be "fitly framed together" (Eph 4:16) under Christ's headship in the "last days," to do a unified Work for His honor and glory, is there any encouragement? Yes, there is and it is found in Haggai.

The people took Haggai's prophecy to heart and gathered to begin work on the temple. And God was very pleased. Almost immediately He promised them:

I am with you...Be strong, all you people of the land...and work. For I am with you...This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.... From this day on [24th day of the ninth month] I will bless you (Hag 1:13; 2:4,5,19).

Just about three and a half years later, the rebuilding was completed and the temple was dedicated. We believe the Lord has once again sent out the call, symbolized in this passage, that His temple is to be finished. And we believe that this will be the response:

...the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the prophet Haggai, because the Lord their God had sent him. And the people feared the Lord (Hag 1:12).

To that remnant, whoever they are, we believe God will say, "From this day on I will bless you." To clarify **why** we believe that call has gone out, we need to look at the significance of the Fall Holy Days.

Holy Days Also Answer

Most writers will agree that the **primary** typology (symbolism) of the Holy Days is to point to the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Their primary fulfillment was therefore bound up in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, and the relevance of these events to the Christian conversion experience.

Many writers also agree that there is a chronological secondary fulfillment of the Holy Days in the history of the Church as an institution. Their interpretation usually includes that Jesus died on Passover, appeared to His disciples and first ascended to the Father on the wave-sheaf day, and sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. After that, agreement on

details becomes more difficult. Most speculate Christ will return on Trumpets, and some feel the Feast of Tabernacles portrays the Millennium. A chronological equivalent of the Day of Atonement seems more of a problem for some.

It does not seem that the great harvests of the Church Age are over. While the Fall Holy days may well point to the Millennium in the representation of God's plan for mankind's salvation, they also appear to indicate a "latter" harvest in the Church. Zechariah 12 through 14 seems to be an unbroken prophecy about strength and repentance coming to Israel (and by analogy the Church) before the tribulation, day of the Lord and Millennium. There appears to be a type of fulfillment yet ahead, **before** the Tribulation of the "last days," of the Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles.

Consider the Feast of Trumpets. It does seem a **valid** conclusion that this would represent the Trumpets of Revelation. But is that the only conclusion possible? Consider the command of the Lord to Moses:

Make two trumpets of hammered silver, and use them for calling the community together and for having the camps set out. When both are sounded, the whole community is to assemble before you at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. If only one is sounded, the leaders—the heads of the clans of Israel—are to assemble before you (Num. 10:1-4).

Although there are many references in the scriptures to trumpets sounding the alarm of war, there are also many trumpets calling the people together for other purposes. Could there be more than one meaning to the Feast of Trumpets? (We will return to this question in two more sections.) Has the Trumpet call gone out yet? There does not seem to be any specific event that has occurred now that we could say "that represents the Feast of trumpets." But we have seen an unusual restlessness in the scattered Body of Christ recently which we can account for in no other way. There seems to be an incredible amount of questioning of the "status quo."

Has this happened in your life, and the lives of those you know?

Meanings of the Day of Atonement

The writer of Hebrews went into great detail to equate the symbolism of the Old Testament Day of Atonement with the entrance of Christ into the

"heavenly" Holy of Holies with His own blood.

Herbert Armstrong was the main proponent of a theory that it is fulfilled chronologically when Satan is "bound" before the start of the Millennium. Most of this speculation is not grounded in clear, detailed Biblical passages which give the interpretations, but on reasoning and analogies. This is not necessarily wrong. As mentioned earlier, the writers of the New Testament engaged in just such reasoning and analogy. (It may, however, be wrong to declare such extra-Biblical speculations as dogma.)

If one is convinced that the Hebrew *Azazel* is another name for Satan, then the scripture indeed says that. However, many Jewish and Christian scholars believe that linguistic argument to be in error. The wording of Leviticus 16:22, "the goat will carry on itself all of our sins," uses the same Hebrew words as Isaiah 53:12, "for He bore the sins of many." Isaiah 53 is obviously talking about Jesus. Furthermore, in the description of the binding of Satan in Revelation 20, there is **no** mention of the sins of mankind being put on him.

Have you ever thought of the fact that the symbolism of the Passover and the wave sheaf, and the symbolism of Atonement **both** point to the same death of Jesus on the Cross and His appearance before the Father to present His blood, His sacrifice, to cover the sins of Mankind? Even the image of "covering" is similar. In Passover, it would be appropriate to say the blood "covers" you, so that when God sees it He passes over you. And the very root meaning of the Hebrew word for "atonement" is of a "covering." If both days just recapitulate the same event, is there any significance in the repetition?

Consider also the nature of the activities carried out in ancient Israel in connection with Passover as compared to Atonement. The Passover sacrifice was very personal. Each family leader took an **individual** lamb for Passover. Although the later practice was for the priests to be involved in slaying the Passover lambs, on the night of the first Passover, each **individual** killed the lamb for his own family.

The ceremony of eating the Passover was also a private thing. Each family ate in its own home, or with a close neighbor. Just the opposite was true on the Day of Atonement: it was a commanded assembly, with all the people appearing as a group before the Lord. The sacrifice was

"congregational"—one goat for the whole group. Is there any significance to these variations?

Atonement seems to be a repetition of the facts of Passover, but with an emphasis on the entire congregation of Israel rather than just the individual Israelite. We believe the key here is the Lord's prayer for unity in John 17. It was Christ's desire from the very beginning of the Church Age that His Body be unified, "at one" with Him, with the Father, and with one another. That prayer was not answered right away. At the end of the symbolic harvest year, Atonement is a reminder again of the death of Christ with a special emphasis on the fact that His death reconciled us to God, made us "at one" with Him, which should make us "at one" with one another. Since man has been unable to "create" that unity, we believe that near the end of the Church Age, just before the last harvest, Christ will set His hand again to unify His Body to ready it to serve in that harvest, symbolically re-emphasizing His fulfillment of Atonement. And, finally, we believe Trumpets signifies the time when Jesus sends out the call (as the trumpets gathered physical Israel) to the scattered sheep of spiritual Israel that this work of "finishing the temple" is about to begin.

It is not clear if any specific "time periods" are involved in this scenario. The Bible seems to include numerous repetitions of themes involving time, so perhaps some analogies fit. Someone has suggested that the Great Tribulation will be so "Great" because Satan is furious at the threat he sees of the Great Work of God. He is said to come in great wrath because he knows his time is short. Could that be because he knows the prophecies of Jesus, that the end will come when the gospel is preached in all the world as a witness? Whatever your answers to these questions, can you honestly say that Satan should feel threatened by the "witness" of the Christian Church at large today, or the witness of any one denomination, sect, or cult?

Tabernacles: The Great Harvest

Some groups have called it the "Latter Rain," analogous to the Autumn rains in Israel—which are distinct from the spring rains (Deut 11:14, Zech 10:1 KJV). Others have referred to a "New Pentecost." "The Great Harvest" is in keeping with the type of the Feast of Tabernacles. Whatever you call it, Christian groups down through the

Continued on page 25

Letters & Responses

We print a representative sampling of our mail—both positive and negative. We do not include names unless we are fairly sure that the writer would not object. To avoid any difficulty, writers should specify how much of their name and address they would like us to print. We include our response to each letter in this type-style. We have selected a title for each letter for easy reference. If writers supply their own title, we will be happy to use it.

Answers to Questions & Anointing

LETTER:

April 28, 1996

Dear Friends,

By way of introduction, I am a baptized member of the Church of God. I have attended services since the summer of 1975. Like so many others who have corresponded with you, I left the branch of God's Work wherein I was originally called (the WCG) in late 1994 after over two years of witnessing that group's apostasy. I had proven (against my better judgment sometimes) every doctrine that I believed from the Bible. It was because of this that I was so befuddled by the mass deviation from Truth that occurred during the early 1990's. I was one who truly believed the Pastor-General was being fooled as the congregation was being deceived.

The purpose for writing this letter is to "vent some steam" which has been building up as I have sought answers to questions (thus far unanswered) from a larger of the offshoot organizations which has formed from the WCG. I fellowship and attend with a GCG group in this area, though I have plainly stated my decision not to be counted as one of their members. I was relieved somewhat in reading the March/April Servants' News (Pg. 22c.) to find that mine are not the only queries going unaddressed.

It seems to me that there is a need to have an autonomous government in the Church of God at the local level for the necessary administration of such matters as anointing the sick (per Jms 5:14) and ministering to the needs of the unfortunate and poor, (per Acts 6:1-3 & Deut 26:12-13). I see this as much more advisable than awaiting

an "anointed cloth" from a thinly stretched ministry, or hoping the needs of the poor among us will be handled by "headquarters." Personally, my days of awaiting an "anointed cloth" (which seems a dubious interpretation of Acts 19:11-12 at best), when there are elders present in the congregation to fulfill Jms 5:14, are over. Why are these simple instructions so difficult for "H-Q" to understand?

It is my hope and prayer that much of this uneasiness will be settled in the Churches of God. If those who picture themselves in authority would merely internalize the admonitions that they "preach at the laity" week after week, much good could be accomplished... Practice what you preach!

As I wrote to San Diego: "If you are given lemons, why not make lemonade, instead of waiting around and hoping God will provide some oranges?" (My paraphrase of an old HWA saying.) My other favorite adage being, "which college did Jesus go to...or Peter...or HWA for that matter?" (Per the desire of some for ministers with AC credentials.)

May God continue to bless your endeavors. Your fruits are evident in this area, and I hope elsewhere.

I remain—

Your brother in the Church of God, —

—Richard A. Heath, Ft. Pierce, FL

RESPONSE: It is understandable that a small ministry may not be able to respond to every letter. *Servants' News* is months behind in responding to some long letters and articles. But we are very different from hierarchical groups which will not allow their members to openly talk about or teach subjects unless they are approved by headquarters. If members write about their doctrinal understanding from the scriptures and cannot get an answer, then they are officially forbidden to discuss or practice what they believe is the truth of the Bible. On the other hand, serving ministries (like *Servants' News*) may take a while to study and answer questions, but we encourage people to learn from others and to practice what they believe the Scripture says—whether or not we ever agree or answer.

We agree with you about the "dubiousness" of the "anointed cloth" interpretation of Acts 19:11-12. There is nothing at all about the cloth being anointed in these verses (or any other verse). This was a tradition started in the Worldwide Church of God, which the Eternal honored. I remember cases where myself and others were healed in this manner, although the healing often took place when the person asked for the "anointed cloth," not when the cloth

actually arrived. We find numerous physical methods used in the Bible as a part of miraculous healing: a serpent on a pole (Num 21:7-9), washing in the Jordan river (2Kng 5:10), Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15) and mud made from spit (John 9:6). There is no more of a Bible command to send "cloths" to the sick than there is to send mud from spit. The WCG could have just as easily done that. In Matthew 8:8,13, the centurion's servant was healed at a distance by command with no physical sign at all.

Actually, we find no command in scripture to repeat any of these physical acts that the Eternal used in the process of some healings. Rather, we are told that the elders should be called, they should pray and anoint, and we should acknowledge our sins to each other (James 5:14-16).

Who are elders? Older, wiser, experienced people, usually men—though the Greek word, *presbuteros*, is used once for women (1Tim 5:2). How can we know that elders were not some office that men were "ordained to?" Since the time that the Eternal told Moses to gather 70 elders to help govern the nation (Num 11:16, Ex 24:1), it was understood that they were older men. These men have played a primary role in governing the Israelite nation and in local synagogues. The term is used dozens of times in the Gospels to refer to the leaders of the nation of Israel, and still used in that sense in Hebrews 11:2. It is inconceivable that such a well understood and often used term would be changed to an "ordained office" in a few decades. The sense of Tit 1:5 is to "set in place older, wiser men," not to "appoint a man to the "office" of elder.

With this understanding, it is clear that any older man can pray for and anoint another brother that is ill. James goes on to say, "Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective" (Jms 5:16)—not limiting this power to any age or sex.

This last verse contains a point that seems to be ignored by many—the confessing of **our** sins (not other's sins) to other brethren. Why is that necessary or important? First of all, because the Eternal says we should do it if we want to be healed. But it is a very hard thing to do—it is hard to admit to our friends that we are sinning. We would rather pretend that we are "pretty good." Nevertheless, when we become skilled at hiding our sins from others (like only yell at our family members when no one outside is present), we also become skilled at hiding them from ourselves. We all know that our Father sees everything that we do, but since

he does not comment on our everyday actions, we are often not embarrassed to do things that He sees, but we are embarrassed to do things that people see. It is easy to get comfortable with sins that are known only by ourself and the Eternal. But if we confess them to others; the need to make progress in growth seems much more urgent.

The mailing of anointed cloths from a central headquarters, or its authorized ministers, does tend to cause people to look to a church organization to dispense healing, rather than to the Eternal. If a sick person lives too far away for the elders to physically anoint him, he can still use letters, telephone or e-mail to ask them to pray and to confess his sins to his brethren. There is no scriptural command to send a cloth, mud, a snake on a pole or any other thing that has once been involved in a healing.

—NSE

Glad to Get the Facts on GTA

LETTER: May 10, 1996
Editor:

We have been searching various out-reaches that can help our newly formed fellowship we started due to the abuses in Ted's church. I am very impressed with *Servants' News* and the articles are sure to help us as we feel our way along without leaning on some "corporate church."

I enjoyed the letter by Mr. Paul Haney. He made a poignant observation—the way it really is! When our church [Church of God, International] split, it was "let's all be Christians—nothing personal—we can still see each other—no hard feelings." Within two weeks we had leprosy—locks changed on the building—my coffee cup winds up on someone's porch. Amazing study in character and group dynamics! You never know people until something like this occurs.

Regarding the letter that accuses you of gossip. Anyone who had taken a sociology course knows when information is suppressed, people must rely on word of mouth. People need to know the truth and "gossip" is the only way to find things out. By comparing various stories, the truth will come out. People under the heel of communist rule will testify to that. As far as the video—before I had seen it, I wasn't sure if it was true. All along people said, "Get the facts." The video is fact. Personally I had assumed CGI was adhering to the "church guidelines" they publish—as it turns out, GTA [Garner Ted Armstrong] is disqualified on about four points of their standards.

Anyway, the air is cleaner and the water is pure and fit to drink in our fledg-

ling little fellowship. Even though we don't have a **great** work going on TV, I believe God approves of us and will bless the new little independent groups and when the time is right will give us a job to do. Thanks for being a supporting friend in a time when we really need it.

—Wayne Schatzle, West Chester, OH

RESPONSE: Thank you for your letter. My Random House dictionary defines gossip as "idle talk or rumor, especially about the personal or private affairs of others." If Sally tells you about Martha's wild affair with Jim, and you do not know Martha or Jim well enough to help them, that is gossip—talk that should not have happened. But if Martha or Jim lives next door or are one of your children's teachers, then you may need to know.

If one of my children was regularly in the custody of a known pervert, I would certainly want someone to tell me as soon as they found out. I can forgive this troubled person and hope that he overcomes his sin, but I would still protect my children in the event that his overcoming is not quite complete yet. Similarly, if we are responsible for teaching some of our Father's spiritual children, we do not want to place them in the spiritual custody of a teacher that does not meet the Bible standard for a teacher.

Do not be concerned that you do not have a great work on TV, there are many other ways a work can be done. If, after several months, your group is not doing anything to reach out and help teach others, then I think it would be good to take some time to pray, study, and ask the Eternal to show you what to do.

—NSE

An Honest Exchange of Ideas

LETTER: March 12, 1996
Dear F.O.B.,

I really like what you're doing with *Servants' News*, and I like the way you're going about it.

Very commendable—I think.

It's a pleasure to see someone providing an objective and impartial open forum where an honest exchange of ideas/opinions/learning/etc. is taking place.

What a valuable service and work!

Please continue this task—with God's help and the blessings of His favor.

Well done/keep it going!

—Mike Sorgdrager, Sioux Falls, SD

RESPONSE: Thank you for your encouragement. There are now several other newsletters doing very similar things. Praise the Eternal! The world could use

hundreds, thousands, or even millions of people teaching the Bible and pointing to the Messiah as leader. But when a man is seeking a following after himself, he wants to be the only voice.

—NSE

Liked In Transition Article

LETTER: May 8, 1996
Dear Mr. Edwards:

We were members of WCG for 33 years, baptized in July 1962. We left WCG about three years ago—should have left that organization long before then.

Just read the article "*Servants' News* Marks First Year" in the April 22nd issue of *In Transition*. It is most interesting and it's great to see the study and hard work you are doing and publishing to help God's people. Would you please put us on your mailing list. [literature request omitted] We have been getting tapes from Jim Rector for some time.

God bless you in every way.

Sincerely,

—Mr. & Mrs. Edward D. Colston,
Taylorsville, GA

RESPONSE: We have received a lot of requests for *Servants' News* from the *In Transition* article. *In Transition* could consider *Servants' News* a "competitor" and ignore us, but they are committed to serving the Eternal's people by providing as much useful information as possible—even when that means writing about other similar publications.

[*In Transition* is a monthly publication available from PO Box 450, Monroe, Ind. 46772. \$10 for 6 issues, \$18 for 12 issues.]

—NSE

Point 6 for Passover Article

LETTER: May 6, 1996
Dear Mr. Edwards,

We are writing in response to the excellent article in the March/April issue of *Servants' News* entitled "The Lord's Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread." We were thrilled to see the Passover presented from God's point of view without human interpretation.

We would like to add point 6 to the article "Plenty of Passover Papers" which deals with the controversial issue of the events surrounding the Messiah's last meal with His disciples in the beginning of the 14th and the Passover on the following evening.

If anyone has any comments on this

point or would like to add more to it, please direct all correspondence to either *Servants' News* or our address, below.

Point 6. The Jews were keeping the Passover at the correct time and the Messiah was eating the "Passover offering for sin" with His twelve disciples in the beginning of the 14th of Nisan.

Supporting verses "emphasis added."

Ezk 45:21-22 In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. And upon that day shall the "prince" prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a "bullock" for a "sin offering."

Lev 6:25-26, 29 Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, saying, This is the "law of the sin offering:" In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall the sin offering be killed before the Lord: "it is most holy." "The priest that offereth it for sin shall eat it:" in the holy place shall it be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation. "All the males among the priests shall eat thereof: it is most holy."

Lev 7:7 As the sin offering is, so is the trespass offering: there is one law for them: "the priest that maketh atonement therewith shall have it."

Christ the "prince" had prepared a place for them to eat this meal. He was the "priest" who was offering the "bullock for sin" as well as the one who offered Himself as a Passover "lamb" the next evening at sunset, the time appointed by God for the "Passover sacrifice."

John 15:16...I have chosen you and "ordained" you....

Christ had "ordained" the twelve. They are the "priesthood" of the New Testament Church of God. (This also explains why only the twelve were at this meal as the Passover sacrifice in the end of the 14th is a family affair kept in small family groups with women and children included.)

—Kevin and Ada MacPherson

257 Fitzroy Street, Summerside, PEI
CANADA C1N 1H9

RESPONSE: Thank you for your additional understanding of the New Testament Passover. It is an idea that I have not heard of before. I have not studied it thoroughly, but it appears to be compatible with some of the other late-14th Passover positions. I will certainly give it much consideration in my Passover studies.

I do disagree with your last two paragraphs that state the twelve apostles were the New Testament Priesthood. **All** of the brethren are the New Testament priesthood (1Pet 2:5,9). The Greek word translated "ordain" in John 15:16 is *tithemi*, which

means "to definitely put something somewhere." It has no connotation of a religious ceremony or making someone a priest. The same word is used in these mundane circumstances: "put him in prison" (Matt 14:3), "took away his corpse and laid it in a tomb" (Mark 6:29), and "laid the foundation [of a house]" (Luke 6:48).

Actually, every place we find the word "ordain" in the New Testament, it is translated from a Greek word that has another, more often used, meaning. We are sending you a copy of our article that explains these mistranslations entitled *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?*

—NSE

Why Lambs Selected on the 10th?

LETTER:

April 10, 1996

Dear Norm,

Please make sure we're still on your mailing list as we never received the March/April issue of *Servants' News*.

Five households, about 25 people, attended our first fellowship on the First Day of Unleavened Bread. At least that additional number expressed support and the desire to attend in the future. Our format and purpose is quite different from the traditional churches. What is said from the lectern does not carry the weight of ecclesiastical infallibility. Every male has the right to make a twenty minute presentation on whatever he wishes. Immediately afterwards anyone in the group may briefly comment. We all have the right to speak up and to disagree. We have a song service and a Bible reading service.

We are not calling ourselves a church, but rather a fellowship. We encourage each other to visit the groups around us. We are assembling together twice a month late on the Sabbath in order to allow us to attend with other groups, engage more in Bible study at home, and spend more time with our families on the Sabbath. In the future we can always change the schedule. We are not competing with the churches but providing a structure whereby members have an outlet for open discussion that is not currently possible in the traditional groups.

We do not take tithes. Without clear Biblical instruction on how Christians are to use the tithe, we do not feel we should "add" to the word of God by specifying how attendees in our fellowship should use the tithe. Hall rental of \$45 is the only expense. In the future we want to advertise our fellowship in the community and we can use tithe contributions for that. We see a lot of potential in the local area.

We have a written code of procedure that ensures the rights of the people and prevents anyone from "bullying" his way over others. The person selected to preside over the fellowship is selected by lot from three members selected by all members. He serves a term of six months and his main function is to help ensure that the services are conducted properly and orderly.

We feel the trunk of the tree is the Ten Commandments and Jesus Christ. The other doctrines are branches and twigs. If we are going to discourage or encourage attendance on these branches and twigs, we are needlessly dividing ourselves. We encourage study, discussion, and conviction on doctrines classified as branches and twigs, but we insist that we each extend to others the same right to hold to convictions as the others extend to us. We can be totally dogmatic in our view, but we can't insist that our neighbor hold the same view. It's treating our neighbor as we would be treated.

I would like to add to what Richard Wiedenheft wrote in his excellent article, "Passover: Shadow of Our Savior." He wrote that the lamb was set aside on the 10th and kept until the 14th in order to observe whether it was healthy and for the children to become attached to it. I question whether these were the main reasons. What if the lamb was not healthy? There were no provisions to select another lamb the day before the Passover. What if certain Israelites had no children? Many of us make personal pets of animals, but was this the intent of the three days? I think there is a lot more to the three days. I would like to build upon Mr. Wiedenheft's brief connection of the keeping of the lambs to the ministry of Christ. Here's how. A careful reading of Exodus 10, 11, and 12 shows very clearly that the three days of darkness immediately preceded the Passover. The lambs were kept during this same three day period. Ex 10:21-23 states that a thick darkness that could be felt covered the land of Egypt three days and that no one arose from his place, but the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. Ex 10:24 through 11:8, not including Ex 11:1-3 which is a parenthetical insert, records the last conversation between Pharaoh and Moses. Pharaoh calls for Moses at the end of the three days of darkness. Pharaoh tells Moses to never see his face again. Moses replies that Pharaoh is correct that he will never see his face again because at midnight God will destroy all the firstborn of Egypt. Moses leaves Pharaoh in great anger. The Passover was that night. Ex 12:21 picks up the story flow where Moses commands the

elders of Israel to kill the Passover lambs. Ex 12:1-20 is an overview of the Passover festival. Thus, the Israelites selected a lamb on the 10th. Sometime on the 11th the three days of darkness began. Three days later brings us to the 14th. The symbolism is very rich. The Passover lamb pictured Christ. Egypt pictured slavery to sin, darkness, and death. Christ pictures light and life. Christ preached for three years, three symbolic days. (Christ's ministry lasted three years, not three and a half years as some mistakenly assert.) Matt 4:16 and Luke 1:79 quote Isa 9:2 that the people who sat in great darkness and the shadow of death had light. Christ, the lamb was that light. Christ told his disciples to walk in the light while He was present. Israel had light in their dwellings the three days they kept the lambs while Egypt was in darkness. John is replete with Scriptures showing Christ is both the Lamb and the Light: The Light shines in the darkness, but the darkness does not comprehend it, only spiritual Israel could see and walk by the Light. "Light came into the world but men preferred darkness because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). Christ said if anyone walked in the night, he stumbled because there was no light in him. Christ said He came as a light into the world that whoever believes in Him should not abide in darkness. At the end of Christ's ministry as that Light, He was sacrificed as the Passover Lamb.

We see that the three days of darkness symbolized the spiritual darkness and death that is Egypt. Israel had light in their dwellings because of the lambs which symbolized Christ. At the end of the three days the Passover Lamb, Christ, was slain to release them from Egypt and to show God's victory over Egypt.

I thought Jack Lane's article was an excellent example of the dilemma facing Church members between works and grace. I noticed several breakdowns in logic in his article. We definitely do not have the last word on law, works, faith, judgment, salvation, etc.

In Christian fellowship,

—John Sash, Eldon, Missouri

RESPONSE: You have made a good point about the lambs that we have never heard before. While your understanding seems far more significant, it does not appear to invalidate Wiedenheft's points. The Eternal gave everyone the command to teach our children His law (Deut 6:7), even though some that heard it did not have children. Also, if they found their lamb to be sick, they could simply share a lamb with another family. If they baked a little extra unleavened bread, everyone could be full

on half as much lamb. The decision about how many people a lamb would serve was completely up to the people (Ex 12:4).

As far as Jack Lane's article is concerned, I am sure that he would be glad to hear from you directly.

—NSE

Please Send *Servants' News*

LETTER: January 4, 1996

Friends of the Brethren,

I am a sad and disillusioned former member of the Worldwide Church of God. Please put my name on the mailing list for your newsletter, *Servants' News*.

Thank you.

—M.K., Hastings, Ont, Canada

RESPONSE: We will be glad to do so.

—NSE

Vertical & Horizontal Government

LETTER:

Norman Edwards-Editor,

I'm extremely excited to find unbiased publications concerning God's truths. Your comments concerning governance of God's people (everywhere) are interesting to me.

Please allow me to be a subscriber to *Servants' News*, and, if possible, to receive all back issues and future issues. Also a copy of *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans.* The subject needs (seems to me) to be made more clear... In an attempt to grow (spiritually) continually, I feel I need all the (godly) and physical input available. I would appreciate it if I could be a contributor to this work of God. Revelation comes from God in many phases and sources. Keep up the (exhaustingly) good work.

God's "true church" is not (in my mind) any one building (organization) but His elect who remain true in the faith. All organizations fall short compared to God's Kingdom and the rulership of Christ. The Jews once held the superiority attitude, yet God opened His Kingdom (through Jesus) to the Gentiles! All of His Commandments, etc. were for Man (Humanity). Question—If all the "Ours is the Only True Church" believers were huddled in one large place (like the place of safety), would there be room for other truth keepers, or would they be turned away? Governance is not salvation. Endurance in the Word, retention of God's Spirit, growing and bearing fruits, continual turning away and striving—Spiritual submission and the Love to please God is where it's at! Governance, Vertical or Horizontal? Bah! Be Vertical by standing up for the truth. Be Horizontal by

laying down our life for Jesus and seeking His Government.

—Ken Eary, Sciotoville, OH

RESPONSE: We agree with you. "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice" (Prov 29:2).

—NSE

Philadelphians = Scattered Brethren?

LETTER:

April 8, 1996

Dear Norm and crew,

I have just read your March/April '96 *Servants' News* and was quite astonished to see the article on miracles. You see for some time now I have been showing and telling the brethren at church to start looking closer at the healing, signs and wonders which were done preaching the Gospel in the N.T. It is becoming very obvious that this is going to happen again very soon since preaching the Gospel HWA-style no longer works. Also, today, at a "Friends of the Sabbath Seminar" over and over again, from several different groups, a sense of urgency was conveyed. Time is short and the only way the Gospel will be preached is through the power of God and not TV.

Something I would like to see is a study of the "brotherly love" era of God's Church.

I am beginning to believe this Philadelphia era is different groups cooperating, helping and loving one another. Having grown up in WCG and now attending UCG, I do not believe this has been fulfilled yet.

Please put me on your mailing list. Thanks a lot.

Your brother in Christ,

—Ray Sancho, Fowlerville, MI

RESPONSE: We have seen thick articles and even books on the characteristics of "Philadelphians" and "Laodiceans" and the speculation as to who they might be. This is amazing when you consider that there are only about two or three verses that really describe the characteristics of each.

In Revelation 3:8-10 we find that **Philadelphians** have:

- 1) an open door that no one can shut
- 2) a little strength
- 3) not denied His word
- 4) not denied His name
- 5) kept His command to persevere

There is an important connection with the "key of David" in verse 7 and Isaiah 22:22 where we find mention of opening and shutting, and the "key of the house of David." Some have said that this key is the knowledge of the "lost ten tribes" of Israel, but would not that be the "key of Jacob?"

David was of Judah and his descendants are well known today! But "He who is Holy, He who is True" has the key, **not** the Philadelphians, so let us look at the direct description of the Philadelphians.

From points #1 and #5 we can conclude that these brethren continued diligently to teach others (Acts 14:27, 1Cor 16:9, 2Cor 2:12, Col 4:3). Point 2 shows that they were not obviously powerful. Yet some church leaders, who have claimed to be "Philadelphian", also claimed to be "the most powerful work since the original 12 apostles." Hmmmm. Are not the Philadelphians a less powerful, humbler group?

To understand point #3, we must understand what is "His Word." The Bible is only **part** of the "Word of God." If we search the Bible for the phrase "Word of God," we find that it refers to many words the Eternal spoke that were not included in the Bible—that Brethren had the "Word of God" within themselves (Luke 3:2; Acts 12:24; 13:5,46; 1Thes 2:13; 2Tim 2:9; Heb 11:3; Heb 13:7; 2Pet 3:5). Not denying the "word of God" is not denying the Bible as well as not denying that He can still speak to us today. To those of a Jewish background, this probably means not denying the spoken words of the Eternal later written down as "oral law."

I am still studying the meaning of point #4. To many people this means we must not forget to use the "sacred names," Yahweh and Yashua, Yehowa and Yehoshua, or some other variant. It is unlikely that using the names "God" and "Jesus" helps to make one Philadelphian as nearly all Christian religions make extensive use of those names.

In summary, **Philadelphians** have only a little strength themselves, but do not deny His power to work through them and continue to teach others. They make few great claims for themselves, but keep working.

In Revelation 3:15-17 we find that **Laodiceans** are:

- 1) lukewarm; neither cold nor hot.
- 2) saying they are rich, wealthy and have need of nothing
- 3) wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked

Laodiceans obviously have the wrong impression of themselves; they are the opposite of the way they think they are. This would account for the lukewarmness—someone that thinks they are doing very well tends not to work so hard. What is wrong? They think they are rich—that they have everything they need. If we take this physically, we could look around to see which groups have leaders and ministers with nice, high-quality houses, cars and clothes.

But the second half makes little sense on a physical level, there are few people that are physically naked, blind and poor, but think they are rich. If we understand this to be a spiritual analogy, we would expect Laodiceans to claim they have nearly all of their doctrine correct and do not need to learn much more. Yet, we would probably find that if we asked these same people difficult Bible questions, that they would be unable to give a sensible answer. And they would be so convinced of their spiritual riches, that they would not even realize they could not give an answer.

Yet, they must be bearing some fruit because point #1 states that they are not cold, they have desire and are doing some good. If we want to find Laodiceans, we must look for people with an inflated opinion of themselves—maybe they will claim that they are the "primary group through which God is working."

But the good news about all of this is that we do not have to worry about "getting in with the wrong group." Every group is told that a reward will be given "to him [an individual] that overcomes." Even individual Laodiceans are told that the Messiah will come in and dine with them if they will simply hear His voice. Every letter tells every person to listen to every letter to every congregation. They are all examples to all of us so we can examine ourselves—and our congregation—and determine if we need to make some changes.

—NSE

Not All Messianic Jews Alike

LETTER:

April 23, 1996

Dear Norman,

Recently one of your readers wrote in and expressed an interest in corresponding with people who are interested in the "Jewish" aspects of our religion. In her letter, she wrote that she had met with resistance within the Churches of God when she tried to introduce these aspects. In your response to her letter, you suggested two Messianic groups that were close in doctrine to the Churches of God and had less of the Protestant teachings than most of the other Messianic organizations. Well, to continue the "conversation," I'm here to dispel a common misunderstanding about Messianic Jewish organizations.

The misunderstanding is that all Messianic Jews believe the same things. And, they are all too Protestant: they believe in the Trinity, the Immortal Soul, etc. While that is mostly true about what the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations teach that is NOT what all

Messianic groups teach or even believe. They, too, have splintering factions among them. As an example that most of your readers can relate to, look at the diversity between the Worldwide Church's splinter groups. Although they share many similar doctrines, there are major differences among them as well. And they continue to evolve and splinter. Such is the case with Messianic Judaism. Human nature is the same everywhere, is it not?

As for my personal experience with the Messianic movement, my husband and I (both have a WCG background) have visited the Messianic synagogue in Dallas several times which is a member synagogue of the Union that teaches the Trinity, etc. However, on a more local level, we have been meeting on the Sabbath with a local, independent, non-aligned Messianic fellowship group. They have no minister "assigned" to them from any Messianic group. In fact, they have no teacher at all; they teach themselves. The biggest surprise about this group: they don't accept the Trinity, they don't believe in an Immortal Soul, etc., etc. In fact, each person is on a different level of growth, much like their Church of God counterparts. They did not come into their understanding via Herbert W. Armstrong or any related church, either. They came into their understanding through an independent, non-aligned Messianic ministry in Port Arthur, Texas.

The teacher's name is Joseph Good. His story is also interesting; he was one of the original founders of the Union of Messianic Jews but resigned over doctrinal differences and started his own ministry. Does that sound familiar???

My point is simple: Messianic groups are as different as WCG splinter groups. And within these groups you have individuals who have different beliefs. My hope is that you and your readers will not put all of the Messianic believers in the same category.

In hope of better understanding among believers,

Veronica Smith, Tyler, TX

RESPONSE: We thank you for your thoughtful letter. We are amazed how church group "A" can proudly show how their organization accepted "new truth" as the Eternal revealed it, but then turn around and say church group "B" is "unconverted" because they have the same doctrine that church group "A" had until a few years ago. If we are mature in our faith, we must be able to accept and help believers that have less knowledge than we do!

—NSE



("Great Harvest" from page 19)

centuries have wondered why the miracles of the first century stopped, and if and when they would be manifested again. Of course, some claim their group **has** received the "Latter Rain," and point to "miracle healing revivals" as proof. There is no doubt that God does heal today, perhaps even sometimes at such a revival. Some unusual manifestations occur in some groups, including "speaking in tongues." As much as these groups may want to "wish" into existence a "New Pentecost," it hasn't really happened—not like the original event, such that "many miraculous signs and wonders" are openly performed among the people, attracting multitudes to hear the message of the Gospel. We know of **no** documented cases of the blind receiving sight, people lame from birth walking again or the "stone deaf" hearing again. A recent book, *the Faith Healers* by James Randi, documents Mr. Randi's honest attempts to solicit even **one** documented case of miraculous healing from any of the "healing ministries" in America. In the process, he was able to expose the deceptive practices of some of the more unscrupulous "faith healers," to

the point of forcing some such ministries to close down. In an exhaustive nationwide search for the "real thing," he received absolutely **no** evidence of real public miracles.

We believe miracles **do** happen. We have witnessed some unmistakable ones in our own lives, but they are "quiet" miracles, and done in private. Are we ever again going to see the kind of public miracles seen in the first century of the Church?

We do not know with certainty when "the Great Harvest" will come. We can, however, share some reasons we believe it has **not yet** come. The scripture says clearly that one of the main reasons for the miracles in apostolic times was as a "sign" to confirm the word of the apostles. (The usual description of miracles is "signs and wonders.") If **any** individual or group in our time could perform miracles, it would be accepted as a "sign" of God's approval on that individual or group. It wouldn't be just a "general" approval, but taken as reinforcement of all of their doctrines and teachings. The pure simplicity and living witness of the Gospel brought by the apostles has been

encrusted with centuries of "excess baggage" in the form of doctrines and customs of which the apostles knew nothing. We do not believe the Lord will **ever** confirm by signs a man-revised Gospel, even if it contains elements of the true Gospel.

The case is even stronger against the Lord giving signs to any "cult," no matter how much "truth" they may have. By definition, a cult is primarily centered around the teachings and work of one human. If the Lord were to allow "signs and wonders" in such a group, the glory would inevitably be given to the man at the top of the group.

When the Lord gathers His sheep from where they are scattered, when He becomes their only shepherd, when He opens their minds to the scriptures as He did the disciples before Pentecost, and when He knows their hearts so thoroughly that He knows they will give all the glory to Him—only then when these conditions exist can the "Great Harvest" come.

That is when the Lord's Prayer will be answered!

—Pam Dewey and Norman S. Edwards

("IBLC" from page 11)

making classes available to those who would like to learn, but cannot afford to pay the modest fee per class?" They are immediately setting up a scholarship fund where those wishing to help pay all or part of the cost of a course for another less fortunate can do so. As the funds come in, they will be earmarked into a separate bank account to be used to pay the course cost of those requesting to take a course, but who cannot pay all of the costs.

If the average member of the spiritual body of Christ took even one course each six months, over a ten year time period, they would have received the benefit of in-depth teaching covering the entire Bible. In other words, even a modest study schedule of two courses per year, over time, (in my example ten years), would add up to a total of 20 courses taken. This would represent a significant amount of Biblical teaching and training. The total cost to a Bible student would be less than \$20 per month.

IBLC is structured to be a nonprofit corporation and is applying for tax exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service. Any contributions to it will be tax deductible and you will receive the appropriate contribution receipt.

The Board of Directors are serving without pay, at least for the foreseeable

future. In fact, the initial Directors, have already pledged almost \$50,000 of support to IBLC, should that become necessary. And, several of the Directors will be making actual cash contributions of about \$12,000 just to get it started. Will IBLC succeed or fail? Stogner answers, "This largely depends on how well we actually serve God's people. We are trying to structure IBLC in such a way so it will achieve maximum results for minimum overhead. We will not need an \$8 million per year subsidy in order to teach only 500 to 1,000 students. For the first year, if we are fortunate enough to attract even \$250,000 in donations, we can probably do the rest through course sales. This is even though the price per course is very modest. We are hoping that we can eventually teach thousands upon ten thousands of students."

Starting such an effort is a daunting task. However, the upside is great. "We have faith that Christ is the head of the spiritual body of Christ. We have faith in God's Spirit working through the average church member. We have faith in freedom. We believe in the free market approach to this endeavor. If we do not deliver the services promised, then we deserve to go out of 'business'. We do not have, nor do we want, control over God's people," says Dale Stogner.

They have started a charter donor program for any of you who might be interested in supporting IBLC. Each donor who contributes at least \$250 in the next 90 days will receive a certificate of appreciation designating them as a charter donor of IBLC. (Of course contributions of any kind are valued and welcome especially in this start up phase). If any would like to make a tax deductible donation, you may send it to the below address:

**International Biblical Learning Center
27068 La Paz, #488
Laguna Hills, CA 92656**

They intend to have an annual audit of IBLC's books and records and offer to publish the results in *In Transition*. The financial reports will also be made available, on a periodic basis, to any donors or students who request them. Board meetings are open to the public, and minutes will be made available to those who request them.

More details will follow later. Stogner adds, "We will do the best that we can, with what we have to work with, in order to provide a heritage of training for God's people—**all of them!** It is a college-level learning center for the people of God. Please be patient with us and please pray for our humble efforts that some good might come of them." 

Updates for the Non-Aligned and Open Sites

For those who would like to attend a Non-Aligned or Open feast site, the form on the next page should be helpful in obtaining information from the sites as well as helping those at the individual sites have an idea as to who is interested in coming and serving. The next issue of Servants' News will again contain a complete listing of these sites and the major organizations' sites.

Calendar Issues

There are four calendars of which we are aware that are being used this year. In the listing of feast sites below, we designate which calendars are accommodated schedule-wise by the following codes: CAL-A, B, C, D as explained here. (For example, Lake Tahoe accommodates at this date Calendars A and B, hence a code of CAL-A,B.)

Calendar A

This is the calendar with which most of us are familiar. It is the traditional Hebrew Calendar with whatever

postponements are in use this year. The dates for the feast are Friday evening, September 27 to Saturday, October 5 (sometimes referred to as a Saturday to Saturday feast).

Calendar B

This calendar is one day **earlier** than the traditional Hebrew one. The basis for this non-postponed view is the astronomical conjunction of the moon as it occurs Jerusalem time. So, the dates for the feast with this understanding are Thursday evening, September 26 to Friday, October 4 (sometimes referred to as a Friday to Friday feast).

Calendar C

This calendar is one day **later** than the traditional Hebrew one. The basis for this non-postponed view is the visible crescent of the new moon as it occurs Jerusalem time. So, the dates for the feast with this understanding are Saturday evening, September 28 to Sunday, October 4 (sometimes referred

to as a Sunday to Sunday feast).

Calendar D

This calendar is approximately two weeks earlier than the traditional Hebrew one. The basis for this understanding is the definition of a new moon being when it is full, rather than when it is dark or at a crescent stage. So, the dates for this feast are Tuesday evening, September 10 to Wednesday, October 18. These dates are **approximate** and may be off by a day because it is dependent upon the actual observance of the new moon for that month.

Opportunity for Understanding

We, at *Servants' News*, feel that it is a good thing that some sites are accommodating more than one calendar. It provides an opportunity for all parties to grow in understanding of their brothers in Christ and how others can view things differently and yet sincerely. May our Father truly bless us all this feast. 

<p>North West Sis-Q-Meadows, Ore. NonAlign CAL-A. John Beattie, PO Box 1742, Rogue River, OR 97537, 541-855-7220. Sun River, Oregon NonAlign CAL-A. Al Murrey, 210 NW 14th, Pendleton, OR 97801, 541-276-1400. Vancouver, B.C. NonAlign CAL-A,C. Fred McGovarin, RR 2, Hastings, Ontario K0L 1Y0, 705-696-3111. E-mail: fredmcgovarin@oncomdis.on.com.</p>	<p>South Central Branson, Missouri Open CAL-B. James Russell, PO Box 2109, Corona, CA 91718, 909-737-0559. Cisco, Texas NonAlign CAL-C. Voy Wilks, RR2 Box 227, Cisco, TX 76437. 817-442-3962. Colorado Springs, Colo. Open CAL-C. Jack Hines, PO Box 9901, Colorado Springs, Co 80932, 719-637-1140. Colorado Springs, Colo. Open CAL-A. Jeff Booth, 806-352-8739. Dutch Mills, Ark NonAlign CAL-A. Assembly of Yahweh, Edward Hayes, 16113 S. Hwy 59, Cain Hill, Ark, 72717 Grand Lake of the Cherokees, Oklahoma NonAlign CAL-A,C. Norman S. Edwards, 517-543-5544, E-mail: 75260.1603@compuserve.com.</p>	<p>San Antonio, Texas Open CAL-B. Ted Phillips, PO Box 2735, Corona, Calif. 91718, 909-280-9046. North East Snowshoe, West Virginia NonAlign CAL-A. Jim Rector, 3802 Olive Street, Texarkana, TX 75503, 903-792-1352. South East Destin, Florida NonAlign CAL-D. Ken Tate, 501-426-5261. Gatlinburg, Tenn. Open CAL-A. UCG Birmingham, PO Box 361334, Birmingham, Ala. 35236, 205-444-5049. Kissimmee, Fla (Orlando) Open CAL-A. Ronald Dart, PO Box 560, Whitehouse, TX 75791, 903-509-2999. Lebanon, Tennessee Open CAL-A. L.A.M.B. Fellowship (Messianic Jewish). PO Box 3381, Lebanon, TN 37087 Myrtle Beach, SC Open CAL-A. The Cong. of God, 7th Day. John Pinkston, PO Box 2345, Kennesaw, GA 30144. 770-995-1622. Panama City, Florida NonAlign CAL-A. David Owen, 4213 Owen Rd, Dalton, GA 39729, 706-277-3433. Panama City Beach, FL NonAlign CAL-C. Charles Kimbrough, PO Box</p>
<p>South West Arcadia, California Open CAL-A. Bernard Kelley, 818-446-5211. Lake Tahoe, Calif. NonAlign CAL-A,B. Norman Brumm, 510 Gillespie St, Locust Grove, OK 74352 918-479-8111. E-mail: NonAligned@Prodigy.com</p>	<p>North Central Green Bay, Wis. Open CAL-C. John Purvins: PO Box 1, Little Chute, WI 54140, 414-733-5271, Rapid City, South Dakota Open CAL-A. Greg Lanager, 2801 Willow Ave, Rapid City, SD 57501. Holt, Michigan Open CAL-A. Faith Magazine Assembly of YHWH. PO Box 3381, Lebanon, TN 37087</p>	

Feast '96: Non-Aligned! Information Form

Please fill in any of the blanks you wish and then send this to the appropriate site of your choice to receive site information.

<p>Personal Information:</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>Home Phone #: _____</p> <p>Work Phone #: _____</p> <p>Fax Phone #: _____</p> <p>Email Address: _____</p>	<p>Festival Site Choice:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sis-Q-Meadows, Oregon</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sun River, Oregon</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Victoria, British Columbia</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Lake Tahoe, CA/NV</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cisco, Texas</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Dutch Mills, Arkansas</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Grand Lake of the Cherokees, OK</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Snowshoe, West Virginia</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Destin, Florida</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Panama City, Florida</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Panama City Beach, Florida</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other Open Site: _____</p>
--	--

Interest / Commitment Level:

Information Only.
 Might come, might not.
 Probably will come.
 Definitely planning to!!

(If you checked either the 2nd, 3rd or 4th categories, please give your best estimate of how many people may attend with you. Do not include people that have been included on someone else's form.)

Total people attending: _____ Adults _____ 13 - 20 yr olds _____ 12 and under

Service and Activity Interest:

<p><input type="checkbox"/> Festival Planning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Activity Organizer</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Parking Assistance</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Family Day Activities</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Singles Activities</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pianist (<i>Preferred Hymnal</i>) : _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Choir Director/Music Coordinator</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Choir (<i>Part</i>) : _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Special Music (<i>selection & area of skill</i>): _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Set-up</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Clean-up</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ushering</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Senior Activities</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Song Leading</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Variety Show (<i>Please describe act below.</i>)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Anointing/Counseling <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Message Presentation (<i>Please give topic synopsis, # of minutes, type of presentation, etc.</i>) :</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
--	---

Notes for Filling Out Form

Personal Information:
Please fill out your name and address. Feel free to include any other numbers at which you may be contacted.

Festival Site Choice:
Please be sure to check one and mail or fax this form to the address given on page 26 for your chosen site.

Interest/Commitment Level:
For the planning committees, please be sure to indicate the number of people who may attend with you.

Service and Activity Interest:
Some of these categories may not apply to all sites. Most of the Open sites may already have their planning personnel and do not have that need. Parking Assistance refers to handicapped and

similar situations that may need assistance. Regarding messages, some sites are "if you've got something worthwhile to say—we'll schedule you in." Others are not. Also, some sites may not be planning a variety show, but they might after receiving 20 acts.

Feel free to copy this form or request more from us if you know of other interested individuals.

Our goal is to bring worthwhile information to as many people as want it at the lowest practical cost. This loose-leaf format is inexpensive and allows this non-copyrighted publication to be easily copied. You might wish to bind it with a 3-ring binder, staples, brads or a paper clip.

Literature List

All items are free. New items are highlighted with shading. All back issues of *Servants' News* are available upon request.

Mature Literature

- The Apple of God's Eye** by Jim Rector, 13 pages. God's love for us is far greater than we imagine, and we often take it for granted.
- Assembling on the Sabbath** by Norman S. Edwards, 16 pages. An exposition of the scriptures regarding our need to fellowship on the Sabbath and how to do it.
- A Call to Arms** by Jim Rector, 16 pages. Lessons for today from Revelation 2-3 including the oppressive doctrine of the Nicolaitans and the doctrine of Balaam.
- Basic Bible Study Tools** by Richard Nickels. 36 pages. An excellent summary of available Bible study aids and how to use them. Samples of many study aids included.
- Biblical Calendar Basics** by Norman S. Edwards, 10 pages. Introduction to the issues about the Biblical and Hebrew calendars (beginning of months, years, postponements etc.)
- By What Authority?** by John A. Diffley, 16 pages. A brief overview of authority and its structure in the New Testament churches.
- Does the New Covenant Do Away with the Letter of the Law?** by Eric V. Snow. 42 pages—revised Jan. 1996. A "must read" for those who feel it does.
- Did Christ Reorganize the Church?** by Herbert W. Armstrong in 1939, 8 pages. Very different than his later approach: Christ never set up a hierarchical government.
- The Heart of the Matter** by Jim Rector, 31 pages. Our calling is to spiritual growth, not just attendance, socializing, politeness or legalism.
- How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?** by Norman S. Edwards, 34 pages. How the KJV translators altered Scriptures about government to please King James and an analysis of what the Bible says about how we should govern in today's congregations.
- Just What Does the New Covenant Do?** by Joseph Chunko, 18 pages. Explanation of the difference between the law, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.
- The Letter to the Galatians, a Paraphrase with Built-in Commentary** by John McCauley. 18 pages. Lively vernacular paraphrase with some notes on book of Galatians.
- Where Is the True Church Today?** by Jack M. Lane, 18 pages. How can there be so many similar groups, yet one true church? What is required of members? Read and see.
- The Worldwide Church of God Splits: Their Triumphs**

and Troubles by Alan Ruth, 56 pages. Facts and analysis of the last 20 years of church history.

Basic Literature

- The Bible Sabbath: Seventh Day or First Day?** (From the Bible Sabbath Association) 2 pages. Basic Sabbath tract.
- God's Purpose for Your Life** by Fred McGovarin, 40 pages, half-size booklet. A "first booklet" for people just becoming interested in the Truth. It introduces Hebrew names (Yahweh and Yashua) for God and Jesus.
- The Key to the Book of Revelation** edited by Tom Justus, originally by Herbert Armstrong. 12-page 9"x4" booklet.
- Lazarus and the Rich Man** edited by Tom Justus, originally by Herbert Armstrong. 16-page 9"x4" booklet.
- The Resurrection of Christ—Is It a Fact?** by Don Hudgel. 2 page tract for those skeptical of the Bible & resurrection.
- Why Do You Observe Sunday?** edited by Tom Justus, originally by Herbert Armstrong. 16-page 9"x4" booklet.

Study Resources and Information

- Barnabas Ministries Mission Statement** by Alan Ruth. 2 pages.
- The Christian Beacon** Sample 24-page issue of free quarterly newsletter "for the shared ministry of the Royal Priesthood."
- A Church of God Ministry Order Form** by Lon Lacey & friends. 1 page. Free literature on nature of God & Satan, Biblical law, prophecy, history, church government, etc.
- Commonwealth Publishing Order Form** by Kirk Gearhart. 4 pages. Religious books, including Darrell W. Condor's.
- The Fellowship Commentator** by F. Paul Haney. Sample 8 page issue of free quarterly newsletter.
- Giving and Sharing Order Form** by Richard Nickels. 3 pages. Has many excellent free items, low prices on hard-to-find religious books, and fine literature on floppy disk.
- Hebrew Roots** Sample 24-page issue of free newsletter with emphasis on the Hebrew roots of "Christian" belief.
- History Research Projects Order Form** by Craig White. 6 pages. Hard-to-find books on the origins of nations.
- The Modern Church, Divine Institution or Counterfeit?** by Peter Kershaw. 24 page booklet. We do not agree with all of it, but it has good legal info on unincorporated churches.
- In Transition** One free sample issue of 16 page newspaper. Best single source of news about Sabbath-keeping groups.
- The Sabbath Sentinel** One free sample issue of 16 page glossy magazine—doctrinal & human interest articles. With Bible Sabbath Association order form: Sabbath books & tracts.
- Servants' News & Norman Edwards Statement of Receipts and Expenses**, 2 pages. (Always sent to contributors.)
- The WAY** Sample 24-page issue of free quarterly newsletter of doctrinal articles relating to the Biblical way of life.

We want to send this newsletter only to people who want it! If you are not interested, please send us a postcard or give us a call: 517-543-5544, fax: 517-543-8899, eMail: 75260.1603@Compuserve.com