

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 8, No. 3 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be May/June 2002

The Spirit of Reconciliation

by Wayne Schatzle

I have been active in promoting the Christian Faith and Bible reading for many years now. I have also relied on prayer for guidance. Recently, as I was bothered by the lack of new people in our local churches, I prayed to God because He is the One that sends people. This time I prayed a little differently, instead of asking for direction in evangelistic efforts, I asked, "What is wrong with us?" Remarkably, this verse popped into my mind: "if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you—leave your gift there... first be reconciled to your brother and then offer the gift" (Matt 5:24). Immediately I understood what message the Lord had for me.

I wondered if I was overreacting or reading more into that verse than should be until I checked a trusted commentary: "This is as much to say, 'Do not attempt to bring any offering to God while you are in a spirit of enmity against any person; or have any difference with your neighbor, which you have not used your diligence to get adjusted.'" It is our duty and interest, both to bring our gift and offer it too; but God will not accept any act of religious worship from us while any enmity subsists in our hearts toward any soul of man, or while any subsists in our neighbor's heart towards us which we have not used the proper means to remove." (Adam Clark, p. 775). Very strong words indeed, and I feel compelled to agree with them.

Our tradition of Faith is a web of ugly divisions in the body of Christ and those splits are still festering with hard feelings. In spite of the smiling faces on the brethren, resentments continue. No one admits to harboring ill will towards former brethren, yet their actions belie the lip service. This is the

The Vine and the Vinedresser

by Toli Bohonik

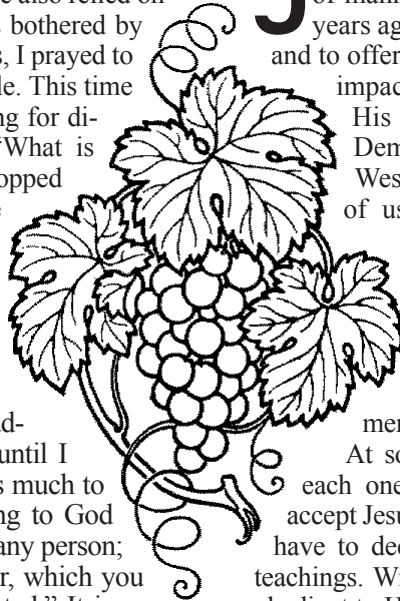
Jesus is the Messiah. He alone is the Savior of all of mankind. He came to this earth almost 2,000 years ago to save men and women from their sins and to offer them salvation. He has had an enormous impact on all nations, a worldwide impact. But His influence is especially strong in the Democracies of the Western World. In the Western Christian World each and every one of us will have the opportunity to choose whether to believe in Jesus or not. We can't avoid the question or the person of Jesus Christ. There are Bibles everywhere, there are preachers everywhere, and He is preached everywhere.

Jesus Christ is the one most fundamental element of Western culture.

At some strategic point in each of our lives, each one of us will have to choose whether to accept Jesus as our personal Savior. And we will also have to decide to what degree we will follow His teachings. Will we follow in name only, or will we be obedient to His words?

Most of us are born into Christianity. Our parents were Christians and so we too become Christians. We grew up in some form of the faith, in one of many denominations. Some of us grow up very devoted to the denomination of parents, and others of us become converted and we move to a new and different denomination.

This normally happens when we mature and move into adulthood. It is as adults that we generally choose to follow Jesus. We accept Him as our personal savior, we repent of our sins, and in the Churches of God we are baptized into Jesus Christ. We follow the pattern set by the apostle Peter in the book of Acts, "And Peter said to them,



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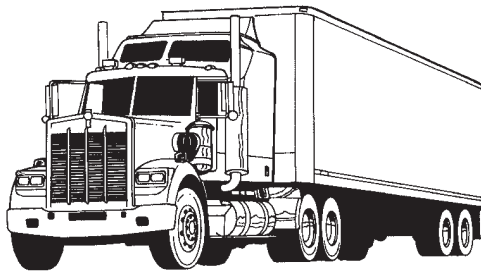
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Truckers Bible Study

Oak Grove, Mo.
#100-102



The Trucker's Bible Study is conducted weekly at the Texaco truck stop on I-70, Oak Grove, Missouri, by Arlo Gieselman, often assisted by Lenny Cacchio, the writer of this series.

March 31, 2002

We accomplished something today. One of the drivers came early, and we had a nice conversation about a few of his views. He says that his father was a preacher who believed if you weren't a part of his church then you were condemned to hell forever, which he himself does not believe. There were several other issues he had concerns about such as use of musical instruments that he had questions on, but was willing to change his mind if he could find proof in the scriptures. I complimented him on his willingness to go to the Scriptures as his authority. Based upon the doctrinal questions at hand I guessed that his background is Church of Christ, which he said he would not verify until after the study.

I began the formal study today with John 13 and footwashing, covering such topics as the meaning of this, that Jesus washed Judas' feet, that Peter refused, and that none of the disciples would get off their horses and wash each others' feet at that time. I asked if there were any others there who performed this ceremony, and the lady driver said that she had, and we were able to discuss the emotions and lessons we have learned from this.

The driver I mention in the first paragraph wanted to discuss Acts 2, and he read part of the chapter and asked about the speaking in tongues, pointing out that the people were hearing definitely meaningful languages. Are tongues therefore really languages? We went through this verse by verse and talked about how the miracle was as much in the hearing as the speaking. One of the guests today pointed out that this symbolically reversed the curse of Babel, where languages were all confused. At Pentecost, rather than confusion, everyone heard and understood.

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In addition to the normal printed copy edition which can be received in the normal post, you can also receive *Servants' News* by e-mail in Portable Document Format (PDF), which can be read using the free Adobe Acrobat Reader (www.adobe.com), which looks the same as the printed copy.

You can also receive an e-mail notification for when the latest issue is available on the website (www.servantsnews.com). Thus the four options are:

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3. link to website sent by e-mail;
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Vol. 8, No. 3

May/June 2002

The purpose of Church Bible Teaching Ministry is to continue the work of the Church that was started by Jesus Christ (Yeshua the Messiah) and His Apostles in the first century. This work involves expounding the truth of the Bible by means of preaching, teaching, writing and music as well as taking positive action to help and serve other believers and all people of the world. CBTM and those people who work within it are just a few of many parts of the Church, which is the body of Christ. *Servants' News* is a publication of CBTM.

The gospel should be given freely—you may copy this newsletter and give it to others. CBTM has nothing to sell, but is supported by free-will offerings of individuals. We do not have IRS 501(c)(3) status, but Churches are tax exempt without this status (see IRS Publ. 557, Nov 1999 ed., p. 15). Please make offerings to *Church Bible Teaching Ministry*.

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News from Local Congregations



This column includes information sent to us from a variety of groups. Servants' News does not necessarily agree with the teachings or practices of these groups. Please ask about them before attending their functions.

Van Sickle-West Wedding

Richard Paul Van Sickle and Karmi Joy West were married on May 5th, 2002 in Webberville, Michigan with over 100 guests in attendance. The bridal party consisted of Keely (West) Salisbury and Mary Ann Van Sickle and the Groomsmen were Robert Van Sickle and Kevin Van Sickle. The ceremony consisted of several songs, a brief message about the the history and meaning of marriage by Norman Edwards, scriptures by each member of the wedding party, the reciting of vows written by the couple, a prayer for unity by Darrell West (the Bride's father), the guests' group reading of Numbers 6:24-26 and a blessing from two grandfathers. A reception followed.

The ceremony was largely designed by the couple being married. This type of ceremony is much more like one would have found during the time of Christ. The tradition of having a church or government official "pronounce a couple 'man and wife'" is less than 600 years old and not mentioned in the Bible. (The legal aspects of marriage can be, and in this case were, handled after the ceremony.) I hope that independent congregations everywhere will realize that they can have weddings without the elders of a church hierarchy. More detailed information about this is included in *Starting a Local Congregation* (see page 2 for contact information). We also have a paper in progress which was partly used in preparation for this ceremony entitled *Wedding Ideas*. It is not finished, but we will keep track of requests for it and send them when it is finished. If someone is desperate for a copy now, we can send the unfinished version.

— NSE

Dr. Alfred Harrell Presents at Perry Pentecost Service

The Church of God Fellowship (Lansing area) met at the Perry Township Hall for Pentecost services on May 19. Dr. Alfred Harrell of Christian Leadership Academy was the invited guest speaker. He gave a message and led a discussion—each lasting a couple of hours—regarding what individuals as well as our congregation could do to serve others in the name of God.

One of the best points he made was that the fourth commandment is not just the Sabbath commandment. It is a commandment to work six days and to rest the seventh. There are numerous New Testament scriptures showing us that Christians must do the work of God. One of the difficulties some Sunday-worshiping Christians face when they discover the Sabbath in the Bible is that they often must give up their six days of Christian work if they want to join a group that meets on the Sabbath.

These Bible-studying Christians usually know that Christ will personally lead them into truth and that they should not join a hierarchical group where they must profess belief in a humanly devised doctrinal statement. It is that very belief that allowed them to understand the Sabbath while attending a Sunday-keeping church. That leaves them to look for independent Sabbatarian groups, many of which seem more interested in debating the fine points of doctrine than in preaching the Gospel or serving in their local communities. Many Sunday congregations have extensive programs for helping the poor, comforting the sick, encouraging troubled young people, visiting prisoners, distributing Bibles, preaching to the unconverted,

etc. Again, these people ask, "Must I give up Christian work on six days in order to worship on the seventh?"

In the past, the Christian Leadership Academy has conducted local evangelism campaigns and considered offering leadership training courses at its facility in Benton, Arkansas. However, the difficulty for most brethren to be away from their jobs for many weeks at a time has caused them to plan to teach courses on a local or regional basis. Mr. Harrell, who has several advanced degrees in communication and education, has outlined a seven-level course plan:

- 1. Leadership Theory.** Defining leadership and exploring the characteristics that make up leadership. A general overview of humanity's attempt to influence others.
- 2. Applied Leadership / Interpersonal Communication.** The practical application of the principles covered in level 1. Special attention is given to developing effective interpersonal skills.
- 3. Theory of Logic/Psychology.** The ethical and unethical use of logic is covered in this level. The study of psychology will help explain why we do the things we do.
- 4. Research Skills / Pursuit of Truth.** Developing the proper skills needed for effective research. Understanding how prayer, meditation, studying, and fasting work together. A proper pursuit of truth.
- 5. Project Management / Evangelism.** Selecting and planning projects for servant leadership. Developing the proper spirit for evangelism.
- 6. Community Involvement/Spiritual Gifts.** Developing as a light in your community. Understanding the gifts God has given you and how to serve with those gifts.
- 7. Field Experience / Stewardship.** Opportunities for stewardship are explored in this section. Field experience in mentoring and discipleship will be provided.

Alfred Harrell is willing to teach these courses now, one night per week for 12 weeks, at various regional locations around the country. Teleconferencing has also been discussed. He is also making them into a series of cassette tapes and matching work-books, though only the first of the seven is complete at this time.

Some may look at this course outline and say, "These are just a lot of higher education methods applied to Gospel preaching—where is the Spirit of God in all of this?" But we can say the same thing about most "works" through the past hundreds of years. The WCG grew large from mass media advertising principles being applied to Gospel preaching. The Gideons placed Bibles in nearly every hotel through a combination of mass-production methods (low cost Bibles) and door-to-door selling. In the 1500s, native-language Bibles were smuggled into many European countries using the same methods that smugglers used to bring in other illegal goods. Smuggling tactics were still used to get Bibles into communist countries in the 1900s. The Seventh Day Adventists have used modern medical practices to build hospitals all over the world and preach their version of the Gospel to millions who were served by them. Numerous missionary groups have used good-old American farming methods to feed the hungry and preach the Gospel in Asian and African nations.

Christ clearly said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father." Each of the above groups reached more people than Christ did in his lifetime. Just because their works were not done as "miracles" does not mean that they were not Christian works. Christ did not always miraculously create food, but often received it from others (Luke 8:3). In fact, most miracles in the Bible occur only when normal human efforts are insufficient to do the job. There are numerous commands to do good to others by sharing the physical substance that we have within our power (Luke 3:11; 2Cor 8:14; 9:5-9; 1Tim 6:17-18; Heb 13:16; Jms 2:16; 1Jn 3:17). Why should Christ grant us mir-

acle-working power if we are not using abilities we **already have** for Him?

The courses from Christian Leadership Academy are probably not a one-size-fits-all solution for local congregations needing to learn to work in the name of Christ. But on the other hand, they may well be a **big help** to a congregation whose members have Bible knowledge, but lack the skills to communicate it to others. If nothing else, they can help turn a congregation from one with no particular goals to teach or serve its community into a congregation with clear goals.

This is a big issue and not something that will be "solved" or "settled" by a single article. But it is an issue that many independent congregations should not ignore. For more information contact Christian Leadership Academy, 406 W South, Benton, Arkansas 72015; 888-776-0002 or 501-776-9900; e-mail info@cl-academy.com.

Evangelism Opportunity: Work at Home!

Alan Ruth, webmaster for www.BibleStudy.org occasionally receives Bible questions from the hundreds of people that visit that site every day. Some of the questions are very basic; some are complex. A lot more questions will likely be received when he adds an icon specifically offering to answer Bible questions. The current questions vary from simple to complex. Some can be answered by referring them to an article on the site, others should be answerable by any well-grounded Bible student, and some may require a little research. Yes, there may be a few where there seems to be no good answer.

If you would like to dedicate a few hours per week to answering the Bible questions of others, Alan Ruth would very much appreciate it. This seems like an ideal service opportunity for someone who has been studying the Bible most of their lives. If you feel you would like to answer questions only in certain areas (Bible history, Christian living, New Testament, Old Testament, etc.), your help would still be appreciated.

Desired qualities for those serving are:

1. Personal commitment to fol-

lowing God as described by the Bible.

2. Love for others and desire to help them as they study the Scripture. Willingness to commit up to five hours per week answering questions.

3. Ten or more years experience studying the Bible and living by its teachings.

4. A computer readily available with Internet and e-mail access.

5. Some familiarity with the articles on www.BibleStudy.org and a few basic Bible study web sites of your own choosing. This is to be able to refer individuals with extensive questions to appropriate material.

6. Independence from church groups that teach that they are the only or main group that God is using. The purpose of answering Bible questions is to help individuals understand their specific questions and let the Holy Spirit guide them. The purpose is **not** to build up a "following" for Alan Ruth or oneself.

7. Wisdom to know the difference between biblically clear issues that you have really studied, and issues that you have not studied or that are unclear in the Bible. Those who answer questions should steer clear of dogmatic prophetic statements unless they have a solid track record of predicting world events before they occur, without errors.

Anyone who feels they have a spiritual gift for answering Bible questions and would like to serve others in that way should contact Alan Ruth at: webmaster@biblestudy.org.

— NSE

Help Put Companion Bible On-Line

Well, for over two years I have had this idea to somehow create an electronic version of the Companion Bible (or at least the side notes). By its nature, the Companion Bible cries out for inter-linked html files.

At first I considered cutting up an entire Companion Bible in order to scan it into my computer and do so-called "character recognition" on it. But my preliminary "character recognition" results demonstrated that it would require just about as much editing time to produce quality results as it would to just type them in.

When I calculated the amount of

time it would take me to accomplish such a task, it actually made me lose interest in the whole project (50 years if I work 1 hour per week).

It then occurred to me that there are probably many people who would be willing to help. Also, quite conveniently, I was about to take a course in webpage development. For my final project in the course, I wrote a website that allows multiple users to assist in this project. This website now exists: www.thecompanionbible.com.

My purpose for writing this is to recruit interested parties to help in the "electronifying" (for now) the side notes of the Companion Bible. If we could get 50 people to set aside one hour per week, the entire Companion Bible could be made into an electronic version in a year. Of course, this electronic version will be free to everyone.

What is in it for you:

- To know that you were a part of a meaningful project.
- To learn about the Bible as you type.
- Credits in the final product, if you wish.
- An electronic, interlinked version of the Companion Bible!

So if you are interested, go check out the site. You can see the proposal and what part you can play in the project. Check out the "Main page" as well as the "Side notes" page. If you are interested in becoming a member, there is a link on the Main page, near the top, called "Become a member".

Remember, the more people that help out, the faster we will have an electronic version of the Companion Bible!

If you have any questions, comments, or anything else, please feel free to email me.

Thank you,

— Erik Hartenian

administrator@thecompanionbible.com

www.thecompanionbible.com

[This is not a "Church of God" effort, but neither was the writing of the Companion Bible or any of the other major Bible helps and reference works that we so frequently use. Many CoG headquarters writers and field ministers made extensive use of Bullinger's Companion Bible. It is now public domain material, but not yet available on-line. You can be a little

part of history by helping with this project.
— NSE]

Stanley Rader, 71, Dies

Stanley Robert Rader was the chief legal counsel for the Worldwide Church of God and personal advisor to Herbert Armstrong from 1968 to 1981. He traveled with Mr. Armstrong on many of his overseas visits. Mr. Rader was born August 13, 1930 in White Plains, New York and died July 2, 2002 in Pasadena, California. Only two weeks prior, he had been diagnosed with metastasized pancreatic cancer. He died surrounded by his family and friends, whom he loved and who loved him very much.

Memorial services were held July 5 at Mountain View Cemetery in Altadena, California. The prelude was played by Ross Jutsum, who had directed many WCG musical groups. The opening prayer was given by W. Jack Kessler Jr., a former law-firm partner and WCG member. Mr. Kessler's daughter, Abigail Laine Kessler read *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* by Robert Frost. Joseph Tkach, Jr., present head of the Worldwide Church of God gave the eulogy and benediction. Two of Mr. Rader's children, Stephen Rader and Carol Little also spoke at the service. Janis Rader, his daughter, played the recessional. Mr. Rader is survived by his wife, Niki, his sister Joan Klein, three children and five grandchildren.

— NSE

Jack Hines Dies at 69

Jack Hines was the pastor of Church of God of Colorado Springs, an independent congregation and the publisher of Churchlight magazine. He was born Aug. 29, 1932. and died May 12, 2002. Jack had been hiking, and he and his wife, Evelyn, were awaiting a table for brunch today with their son David when Jack slumped over on Evelyn. He never regained consciousness.

He is survived by his wife, Evelyn Hines; three sons, Richard, Timothy and David; and a daughter, Janice Smith. He was buried in Evergreen cemetery. Evelyn may be reached at PO Box 9901, Colorado Springs, CO 80932-0901.

I remember speaking with Jack Hines on the phone and corresponding with him on a few subjects. I remember receiving great encouragement from him when he asked if he could reprint the front page articles that I wrote for the first issue of *Servants' News*. At the time, I thought it was because they were "really good". In retrospect, I think I would do a much better job today—and quite likely Jack knew that he was giving a young writer encouragement.

I received a number of comments about Jack Hines via e-mail. Here are some excerpts from them:

— NSE

I had never gotten to meet Jack personally, having only conversed with him via email, but I have heard nothing but saintly good ever spoken of him. Surely his crown is laid up for him. I look forward to meeting him face to face one day.

— Brian Hoeck, brihoeck7@aol.com

Jack Hines believed in the independence of each congregation and sought to help the independent groups by making available several booklets that could be distributed locally. His magazine often reprinted some articles from other Sabbath observing organizations. I spent time with Jack during the Feast of Tabernacles in 1981, 1982, 1983, and 1984. I will always remember Jack's loving politeness, his desire to simplify complexities, and his efforts to seek brief explanations that are easy for the vast majority to comprehend. His soft touch and devotion to the Kingdom has been an inspiration to tens of thousands around the world. He promoted an active faith as did those in Hebrews 11 and sacrificed much of his time to help others, whether directly or indirectly. He hosted the Feast of Tabernacles for many years which was another sacrifice of his time. I look forward to being with him in the resurrection and feel a sense of loss now.

—Herb Solinsky, herb_so@yahoo.com

What I admired most about my Brother Jack was his **humbleness** and **devotion** to God's work and ministry. His **zeal** to keep his hands to the plow.

Continued on page 9

First Love Lesson



It is amazing how often God uses metaphors or other human proclivities to depict spiritual conditions and to correct His people.

We read in Revelation 2:4 “Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your **first love**.”

Clearly God does affix quite a value to the first love. In the human side, what makes the “first love” so special? It generates passion, for starters; it fills the lucky (or hapless) human being with such emotional excitement hardly comparable to anything else. It usually propels him (her) to go at all lengths to fulfill the attainment. Success brings previously unknown ecstasy and exhilaration, failure means agony and despair. There can hardly be any other state or condition that translates in either agony or ecstasy. However the human mind is not capable of maintaining that kind of feeling perpetually. It eventually simmers down, at best.

God has placed in the human soul this potential capacity to love, generally expressed in feeling and emotion. Spiritually, God urges the early converts to return to their “first love”, the love of the first discovered truth. We **know** what God is talking about as we have **experienced** it when we discovered the Truth.

We felt like telling it to everybody as it “permeated out of our skin”. It was just wonderful knowledge, precious, or, as the Scripture so eloquently depicts it, “...when he had found a pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Matt 13:46).

However, there is another peculiarity, not described above, that the “first love” displays: **mental blindness**. Could you try to convince either of the two that they are not suited for each other or that there is some fault with the “beloved”? It would do as much good as trying to make a hole in the water! **Nothing** could ever be wrong!! How many parents have found this to be a hopeless case?!

Even if the scarce chance would permit for one to see something wrong with the other, it would be overlooked or minimized as unimportant.

Did this “first love” romantic condition apply to us, when we came into the Church? Very much so, I dare say! Particularly for people, like myself, who came from a non-biblical background, the “first love” was “pure and faultless”. No possible error or wrong could be seen.

Eventually we could begin to “see” some inconsistencies between the Writ-

ten Word and the Church practices, but “love” would prevail so as to overlook certain things. (I use the word “Church” instead of “Assembly” because it fits better with the subject. “Assembly” gives the impression of a local congregation.) Apostle Paul instructs on Church services when different people speak, prophesy and speak in tongues, just to mention few. In the WCG this would have been as alien as an Eskimo in Saudi Arabia!

God instructs to “Prove all things” (1Thes 5:21), but the “first love” effect is such that the Scripture doesn’t register, at least not for a certain length of time. So some people jumped off the boat sooner than others. I must hasten to say that by no means do I imply that God caused us to be blind, but wants us to be **zealous**. That **is** the significance of Revelation 2:4. Undoubtedly God has always been aware of the problem connected with the “first love” and will allow it as part of the human experience.

I do **not** intend to discredit HWA either. I do respect the man and appreciate his great, lengthy and dedicated work, and the great amount of spiritual knowledge he brought about. Yet, like everybody else he was human.

The Church that we initially loved became gradually “diseased” and, to every effect, became defunct. People left at different times, because some of the “love” still remained and...sort of remarried. They joined some of the larger splinter groups.

Here we go again! Some, like myself, **saw** the new Church as the **restoration** of the “First love”. (Some cunningly named the new Church with that catchy word).

What do they say? Men never learn from history? Unwittingly the first error was repeated by many, myself included.

If, at first, the whole Truth didn’t catch us, we eventually caught up with the Truth and began to “prove all things”, as we should have.

Someone wrote a long article for *Servants' News*, an excellent article, where he says that we were responsible for what went on and we allowed it. I agree to a point there. Really and truly, if we could go back in time, not knowing nor understanding what we do now, and would do it all over again, **I can't see how it could be any different**.

Now, what about in the Early Church? What effect did the “First love” have on them? I mean besides being

zealous, or actually, as the result of being zealous, did they make their mistakes?

You can imagine the zeal they would show, many of them having seen Jesus in person, all of them having some direct contact with the apostles. Miracles and wonders were performed. The Truth was new, exiting, vibrant. They expected the Kingdom of God to be imminent, or, at least very close. Can you imagine how electrified they must have felt?

But this I say, brethren, **the time is short**, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none (1Cor. 7:29).

Zeal also carried them away. The “First love” had prompted them to sell their properties: “Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.” (Acts 4:32,34-35).

Obviously the end didn’t come, and, as some in our time, some years back, that sold their properties anticipating an imminent end of the age, were greatly disillusioned. Many in the early Church lost faith, much the same with many of us in the twentieth century.

God knew all along, both the conditions of the early and twentieth century Church and, I must say, of the Church in the middle ages. That very long, greatly trying period of which we know little about and we talk even less. He has been aware all along and didn’t prevent the mistakes we have made. I guess it is part of the hard knocks we need to take in our journey to salvation. And that assessment may not be correct, after all. Rather than second-guess God I would quote His Words:

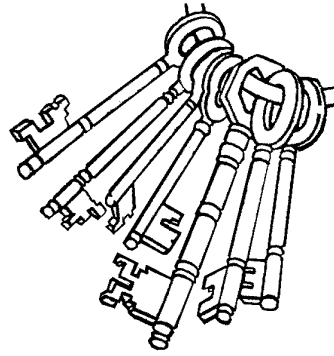
“The secret things belong to our God...” (Deut 29:29).

We trust Him and cheerfully continue plowing and learning. We can learn from the “First love” lesson.

— Adriano Borean

Understanding the Keys to the Kingdom of God

by John Eastman



Purpose:

This article covers the true gospel message that Christ brought to mankind from the Father. The proclamation of a God's physical kingdom with a king, laws, territory and subjects is not enough. Nor is the

proclamation of end time prophecies and the great Tribulation coming before the Kingdom of God. Those messages have been proclaimed by a variety of groups for centuries, and most people who heard them died, disappointed that they did not come to pass in their life time. But other believers, from the time of Christ until now, have understood the Gospel message and have rejoiced in what God has done. We hope this article, and the one about the Kingdom of God beginning on page 10 will clearly explain the true gospel message and help you to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

— John Eastman & Norman Edwards

The Church I used to attend taught that if you left their membership then they had the power to remove your name from the Book of Life in Heaven. This article will prove that no church has the authority to grant or take away one's salvation.

This false belief comes from a lack of understanding Matthew 16:18–19. In these verses, Christ said to Peter, "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (KJV).

Some churches have used these verses to claim that when they remove a person's name from the church membership, then Christ will remove that person's name from the Book of Life. This instills enough fear that most people will not dare to leave the congregation, even though they may know there are false ministers or teachings in the church. Students of the Bible know that only Christ is worthy of judging, granting or denying our salvation. In *Today's English Version* (TEV), Acts 4:12, "Salvation is... found through Him (*Christ*) alone; for there is no one

else in all the world, whose name God has given to men, by whom we can be saved."

So, what was Christ telling Peter (and therefore the Church) in Matthew 16:18–19? In order to understand these verses, it is of vital importance to understand what Christ calls the "keys" and in what context Christ authorizes the Church to "bind" or "loose" someone.

We must learn who holds these keys, what they are, and what they do. This article will reveal the answers to these important questions.

Who originally received the "keys" and who holds them today? Matt. 16:18, *Phillips Modern English* (PME), "Now I tell you that you are Peter the rock, and it is on this rock that I am going to found My Church, and the powers of death will never have the power to destroy it." Peter was the one whom Christ chose to found His church. When Christ gave Peter these keys, He was in essence giving them to His Church. Just as Moses was the founder of the Church in the Wilderness (the Old Covenant Church), and was given the law, the direction on priestly services, and a copy of the tabernacle design from heaven, so was Peter the founder of the spiritual church (New Covenant

Church). Peter, likewise, received from Christ the things necessary for the spiritual church, such as the keys to the Kingdom of God. In both cases, no one has ever replaced these two because of their unique calling as founders. However, the services and work of God were continued after their deaths by the priesthood and church membership.

What do these "keys" do? Matt. 16:19, *The Living Bible* (TLB), "And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; whatever *doors* you *lock* on earth shall be *locked* in heaven; and whatever *doors* you open on earth shall be opened in heaven!" Another translation (TEV) reads, "...what you *prohibit* on earth will be prohibited in heaven; and what you *permit* on earth will be permitted in heaven." Brethren, these "keys" open the door to the Kingdom of Heaven!

What are these "keys"? The "keys" to God's Kingdom are the gospel message that brings one to Christ, and through Christ we receive eternal salvation. Christ is the "door" to the Kingdom of God. In John 10:9 (TEV), Jesus said, "I am the door,

Matt 16:19—Binding & Loosing

The Greek for Matthew 16:19 is difficult. Almost any interlinear will show that there are words in the Greek text which do not have any corresponding word in most English versions. Most translations make it sound like God must bind whatever Peter says, whether He agrees or not. However, Young's literal translation is more clear: "**whatever thou mayest bind upon the earth shall be, having been bound in the heavens, and whatever thou mayest loose upon the earth shall be, having been loosed in the heavens.**" This version gives Peter permission to bind and loose things on Earth, as long as they are bound or loosed in heaven. This exact same wording is given in Matthew 18:18 where the same power is given to all of the disciples (not just the 12 apostles).

— NSE

whoever comes in by Me will be saved; he will come in and go out, and find pasture [spiritual food]." Christ gave the Church, through Peter, the "keys" that can lock and unlock a door on earth. I believe the keys are the entire gospel message preached by the Church, so that people receive the understanding that salvation is only through accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior.

It is interesting to note that in Revelation 3:7 (NKJV), Christ talks about the key of David that also opens and closes a door, "...These things says He who is holy, He who is true. 'He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.'" This key of David is also spoken of in Isaiah 22:22 (NKJV), "The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; So he shall open, and no one shall shut; And he shall shut, and no one shall open." The key of David is the same key as that key that Christ gave to Peter in Matthew 16:18-19. These "keys" are simply the gospel message that tells mankind that salvation is through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ received the promises of salvation given to Abraham, David, and ultimately passed down to Christ through David's lineage. Luke 1:32-33 reads, "...and shall call His name Jesus... the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Also read in Gal. 3:16, 29, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made... and to your seed, which is Christ... and if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The salvation that God offered Abraham was only possible through Jesus Christ. If Christ had not succeeded as our Savior, then no one, including Abraham, would have ever received eternal salvation. Brethren, the salvation of mankind is on Christ's shoulders, He and He alone is responsible for making our salvation possible and for judging who will receive eternal salvation. Christ is the "door" that leads to God's Kingdom in Heaven, and the "keys" on His shoulders are none other than the gospel message to be delivered by the Church.

There are basically two reasons why

some people will not receive the "keys" to the Kingdom of God, and therefore the "door" to the Kingdom of God will not be opened to them. The first reason is that God must draw and select a person before they can understand the gospel message. Christ said in John 6:44 (NKJV), "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me, draws him..." As you can see, the Father selects those who are called to Christ. The rest of the world remains "blinded" to the gospel message because they are not called at this time (these "blinded" will later be offered salvation at the second resurrection, Rev 20). In Mark 4:11-12, "And He said to them, 'To you [the disciples] it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand...' Unless God calls someone, they will remain 'blind' to the truth about salvation. In fact, Satan perpetuates this blindness, 'Satan, who is the god of this evil world, has made him blind, unable to see the glorious light of the gospel that is shining upon him, or to understand the amazing message we preach about the glory of Christ, who is God' (2Cor. 4:4).

The second reason why some people will not receive the "keys" to the Kingdom of God is because they are not worthy to receive them. Christ explains in Matt. 7:6, "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces." Christ is talking about those people who understand that Christ is the only way to salvation, but who reject following Him. For example, the Pharisees and Sadducees knew who Christ was and that He was from God. In John 3:1-2, Nicodemus said, "We know you are a teacher sent from God... no one can do these signs You do, unless God is with Him." In Matt. 3:7-8, "But when he [John the Baptist] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers; who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance...' These were not worthy of the "keys" or the gospel message

until they repented. Christ told the Pharisees also in Matt. 23:13, "But, woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for you shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in." There was a way for these to go through the door to God's Kingdom because they knew who Christ was, but they rejected this truth. They refused Christ's message, the gospel message, and anyone else who was a follower of Christ was greatly persecuted by them, even put to death. And, these are the ones who ultimately put Christ to death, knowing Who He was.

This article would not be complete without pointing out that there are also ministers who have a false gospel message. These are ministers of Satan whose intent is to kill or spiritually destroy God's true sheep. In John 10:1, 10 (TEV), "I tell you the truth: the man who does not enter the sheepfold by the door [Jesus Christ], but climbs in some other way is a thief and a robber... the thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy..." These false ministers come and try to steal Christ's sheep and to take them through another door, or gate, that is opened with a false gospel message (a counterfeit key) and leads to their destruction. Some will gain a following through theatrical warnings on prophecy and end-time events, rather than spending their time preaching on the true gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ. The end-time message about the Tribulation is not part of the true gospel message that Christ brought to mankind. We must always hear the voice of the true shepherd, Jesus Christ, which counsels us in Matthew 7:13 (TEV), "Go in through the narrow gate, because the [other] gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to hell, and there are many who travel it." The true gospel message originated from the Father, John 8:28 (TEV), "I do nothing of my own, but say only what the Father has taught me."

The word "gospel" in the Greek Dictionary #2097 means "good news", which is the good news about the Kingdom of God.

It is a gospel of *grace*, (Acts 20:24) "...the gospel of the grace of God".


It is a gospel of *salvation*, (Eph 1:13 and 2 Tim 1:10), "...the gospel of your salvation... Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

It is a gospel of *obedience*, (2Thes 1:8), "In flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." It tells us how we can enter (and be a part of) the Kingdom of God. We can be born into God's spiritual family as His sons and daughters by obeying the gospel. *What can we do to obey the gospel?*

- Repent of our sins (Acts 2:38)
- Accept Jesus Christ as our Savior (Acts 2:38)
- Be baptized (Acts 2:38)

- Receive the "laying on of hands" to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17)
- Obey the Ten Commandments —includes the 7th Day Sabbath (Luke 18:18-22, Ex 20, Rev 3:5)
- Observe the 7 Annual Holy Days (Col 2:16-17, Lev 23:1-44)
- Live by every word of God (pray, fast, study the Bible, give offerings to help preach the gospel, live by the faith of Jesus Christ) (Matt 4:4)
- Overcome sin through Christ's strength and help so we bring forth fruits (Gal 6:22-23)
- Take the gospel message to the world (Matt 24:14). We are not fully clothed with the "armor of God" unless we wear the "shoes" that carry the gospel to the world (Eph 6:15).

Christians will continue to grow in their understanding about the gospel message as time goes on. In 2Pet. 3:18, "...grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ". We are also promised this growth in 1 John 2:27, "But the anointing [Holy Spirit] which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things..."

In conclusion, the "keys" to the Kingdom of God is the gospel message. This message opens the way to Jesus Christ, who is our only "door" to God's Kingdom and salvation. Although no man or church has the authority to add or remove our names from the Book of Life, we have a responsibility as Christians to obey this gospel and to proclaim it to the world! 

"News from Local Congregations" from page 5

When someone asks me what I first think of when asked, "What Jack was like?"—my thoughts were always clear as to what he meant to me: He was a Saint of God that had a conversion of heart that was the most **gentle, meek, humble**—exactly what Christ expects from His Servants.

To me personally, Jack was a confidant to whom I felt so close. Even though I was not blessed to be around him as much as I would have hoped for, I actually felt so at ease and safe around him, that I felt closer and more able to confide in him than my own earthly Father. That was the way Jack was—because of his **loving, meek, humble, gentle** spirit, he made you feel at home & comfortable. I never heard him ever say a cross or judgmental word against anyone. He may have not been in agreement with many other preachers, ministers, or church groups and their doctrines, but his attitude toward them was not one of self-righteousness nor judgment. If someone was in error or misunderstood scripture, his attitude was one of concern and compassion.

My respect for Jack grew as I got to know him. The more time I spent communicating with him, the more respect I had for the wisdom God had granted to him. His dedication to searching the scriptures, learning Greek, Churchlight

Publications, tape ministry, computerized live church services, e-mail correspondence, letter writing, phone calls of encouragement, music ministry, Feast Hosting, road trips of long distances to baptize or marry someone, are just a few examples of a man that gave his life for Christ. Jack was never blessed with a large number of people for weekly physical church attendance, but his ministry stretched out much farther and should be an example to us all. Numbers did not seem to matter nor did the lack thereof quench his spirit of devotion, dedication or zeal to reach out to mankind. It seems that his human effort to touch people spiritually was never ceasing.

He always signed his letters, e-mails, and publications as "Your Humble Servant". To that he was a living example. Jack always put others above himself. His understanding of what it takes to be a true servant of God and the way in which he put it into practice was a mirror of what the scriptures define. God used Jack in a mighty way for His will here on earth. Jack was the most dedicated man I have ever known.

I do know of one blessing that Jack did receive while here in this earthly state—his blessing of a beautiful wife. Not only is Evelyn beautiful inside and out, her example, set forth as a helpmate, and a Proverbs 14 & 31 woman, helped keep Jack in tune and on beat. She is also an example of the right-

eousness and blessings of the fulfillment of God's promises to us. If I have ever witnessed a biblical example of the unity of marriage and true proof that we can become "one flesh" through the covenant of marriage, they radiated this example. I cannot even fathom the loss that Evelyn must feel. Let us all daily keep her in prayer cover. I personally cannot even begin to think of my feelings that will surface when I see Evelyn again since this loss. The two were just inseparable in my mind.

I never knew Jack to take any credit for what God gave to him. He always gave the glory to God. And from the remembrance of Jack and his desire and enthusiasm for jogging and hiking I draw now from the Word of God in which is stated:

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart (Heb 12:1-3, NASU).

— Mike Kirk, mikeyk@charter.net 

God's Kingdom: Spiritual Kingdom Now? Physical Kingdom Later? or Both?

There are many verses about the "Kingdom of God", or the "Kingdom of Heaven" (as Matthew refers to it). Some clearly show a distant event, something that people will enter into later—when some of the fathers have risen from the dead. But there are also scriptures that speak of the Kingdom being presently existing. The "Gospel of the Kingdom" was preached at the time of the Apostles all the way through to our day. Even though many have predicted a literal return of Christ during those times, which turned out to be false, the gospel of the kingdom being available now was also preached, and its message received.

The **multiple parts** of the Kingdom of God may be best illustrated by the following parable and explanation:

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "**The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed** in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir,

did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."' (Matt 13:24–30)

The field is the world, the good seeds **are the sons of the kingdom**, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one (Matt 13:38).

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and **gathered some of every kind**, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. **This is how it will be at the end of the age.** The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. "Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked. "Yes," they

replied. He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been **instructed about the kingdom of heaven** is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom **new treasures as well as old**" (Matt 13:47–52).

These verses compare the **entire process** of sowing seed, removing tares and harvesting to the Kingdom of God. They **are all a part of the Kingdom of God**. The final harvest, when Christ and His saints rule, is an important part of the Kingdom—it is often referred to as "**inheriting the Kingdom**", but it is just one part. Jesus taught that correct understanding of the Kingdom involves both "new" (future) and "old" (present) aspects of it.

The following study was made by searching the Bible for verses about the Kingdom. I did not consult any other reference works to bias me about what the Kingdom of God is. Many verses about the Kingdom of God equally make sense if the kingdom of God is either present or future, so I did not include them. When more than 1 of the 4 Gospels had the same account, I included it once. —NSE

Spiritual Kingdom Now Verses

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matt 3:1–2)

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17)

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom [how could the kingdom be "good news" if it were not to be implemented for another 2000 years?], and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Matt 9:35–38).

And as you go, preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 10:7).

Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is [present tense, not future] least in the kingdom of heaven is [present tense] greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force (Matt 11:11–12).

Physical Kingdom Later Verses

Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:19–20).

And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (Matt 8:11).

Then the righteous **will shine forth** as the sun in the **kingdom of their Father**. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! Again, the **kingdom of heaven** is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the **kingdom of heaven** is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it (Matt 13:43–46).

Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants (Matt 18:23). [The rest of this parable emphasizes on settling accounts and judgment—largely in the future, but judgment is beginning now on God's household 1Pet 4:17.]

The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who

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But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you (Matt 12:28).

He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the **mysteries of the kingdom of heaven** [the complete nature of it was not fully known], but to them it has not been given" (Matt 13:11).

When anyone **hears the word of the kingdom**, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was **sown in his heart**. This is he who received seed by the wayside (Matthew 13:19).

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches" (Matt 13:31-32).

And I will give to thee the keys of the reign [kingdom] of the heavens, and whatever thou mayest bind upon the earth shall be[,] having been bound in the heavens, and whatever thou mayest loose upon the earth shall be[,] having been loosed in the heavens (Matt 16:19, YLT).

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, **unless you are converted and become as little children** [something they could do in this life through the Holy Spirit], you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child **is** the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 18:1-4).

For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard (Matt 20:1). [The Kingdom is compared to the hiring working, and the payment (judgment) at the end.]

...Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots **enter** [present tense in Greek!] the kingdom of God before you (Matt 21:31).

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in (Matt 23:13).

Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom (Matthew 25:1). [Notice that the Kingdom is likened to the entire story, not just to the groom (Christ) returning.]

For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them (Matt 25:14). [In this lengthy "parable of the talents", the servants left behind to do the Master's work are clearly part of the Kingdom.]

And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power" (Mark 9:1). [This verse may have been fulfilled in the "transfiguration" that immediately follows in this chapter; or the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2), is also possible.]

"To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings

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arranged a marriage for his son, (Matt 22:2). [While the wedding is certainly a future event, the parable does not compare the Kingdom only to the wedding, but to the entire process of arranging it.]

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and **then the end will come** (Matt 24:14).

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, **inherit the kingdom** prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt 25:34).

And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you **to enter the kingdom of God** with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire (Mark 9:47).

Assuredly, I [Jesus] say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day **when I drink it new in the kingdom of God** (Mark 12:25).

Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself **waiting for the kingdom of God**, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus (Mark 15:43).

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God (Luke 13:28-29).

Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" (Luke 14:15).

Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and **because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately**. Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.' But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' And so it was that when he returned, **having received the kingdom**, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading" (Luke 19:11-15). [Verse 11 shows no literal kingdom would appear right away, but Christ went on to explain that His servants would be doing His work till He returns. His return is pictured as "receiving the kingdom", (like the inheritance promised to believers).]

Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near... So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the **kingdom of God is near** (Luke 21:27-28, 31).

For I [Christ] say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God... For I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes (Luke 22:16,18).

He [Joseph] had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God (Luke 23:51).

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to

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and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "**You are not far from the kingdom of God.**" And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions (Mark 12:33–34).

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go... "And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'" (Luke 10:1, 9). *[The works that these 72 men did, without Jesus physically present, were part of the Kingdom.]*

The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it (Luke 16:16).

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." Then He said to His disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. Men will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other" (Luke 17:20–24). *[This passage illustrates both aspects of the kingdom of God. The first cannot be seen by observation, the latter part will be obvious to everyone.]*

Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus (Acts 17:7). *[Jesus is presently King.]*

And he *[Paul]* went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning **the things of the kingdom of God**. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but **spoke evil of the Way** before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples... (Acts 19:8–9). *[The Kingdom of God is the main subject of three-moths teaching and appears to be synonymous with a way of life here.]*

For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, **but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit** (Rom 14:17). *[We can have these things now.]*

But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. For **the kingdom of God is not in word but in power**. What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness? (1Cor 4:19–21).

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and **conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love** (Col 1:13).

Beloved, **now we are children of God**; and **it has not yet been revealed what we shall be**, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1Jn 3:2).

[In conclusion, it seems that the first century Israelites looked for a physical Kingdom to depose the Romans, but Christ said it would not happen at that time. Rather, He is choosing leaders for His Kingdom now and letting them use some of the benefits of it now, but His Kingdom will be inherited yet in the future

— NSE 

"Physical Kingdom Later Verses", from page 11

you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"... Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, 5).

Jesus answered, "**My kingdom is not of this world**. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that **I am a king**. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice" (John 18:36–37).

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to **restore the kingdom to Israel?**" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:6–8). *[Note that the phrase is "kingdom to Israel", not "Kingdom of God". Christ said they would not know the times, but seemed to affirm that the coming of the Holy Spirit would be the part of the Kingdom that they would experience.]*

Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not **inherit the kingdom of God**? 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).

Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power (1Cor 15:24).


Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot **inherit the kingdom of God**; nor does corruption inherit incorruption (1Cor 15:50).

Envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not **inherit the kingdom of God** (Gal 5:21).

For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any **inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God** (Eph 5:5).

And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers **unto the kingdom of God**, which have been a comfort unto me (Col 4:11, KJV). *[The Greek preposition eis, translated "unto" here means going toward, not already in.]*

Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and **heirs of the kingdom** which He **promised** to those who love Him? (Jms 2:5).

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "**Now** salvation, and strength, and **the kingdom of our God**, and the power of His Christ **have come**, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down" (Rev 12:10). *[A future time.]* 



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.

Learned Sabbath at Home

LETTER: February 24, 2002
My husband and I were convicted of Sabbath-keeping in our living room 15 years ago. Our search for fellowship led us to Seventh Day Adventists, CGI, and back to our living room. Our initial calling came from the Holy Scriptures, not from anyone named Armstrong. We have learned much from many and continue to seek truth but especially love.

— Mr & Mrs Warren Stevenson, Kentucky

RESPONSE: Thank you for your request to receive *Servants' News* and information about your background. Our readers need to understand that there are many people like you who learned about the Sabbath by looking to God, and only became involved with organizations for fellowship, not to look to them as a “final source” of doctrine or leadership.

— NSE

Christians Must Participate

LETTER: May 25, 2002

This is the first time I have written concerning a published article. I just read your article “Christ leaving us an example” I fully agree; my philosophy is if you don’t vote you have no right to complain about what the government does and I do complain, sometimes calling and voicing my concern. I don’t do this often enough however, but I try. Keep up the good work I enjoy your paper very much.

— Marcia Gunderson, Wisconsin

RESPONSE: I agree that people should not complain if they do not vote, but I am wondering how Christians who do not vote will explain it in the Judgment. God told the Israelites to make local governments (Deut 16:18–20). Most Christians are involved in most other aspects of our governments: they pay taxes. They use emergency services, public roads, public schools, state parks, etc. Some of them actually work for the government for businesses that do

mostly government contracts. Most follow government laws, even if they disagree. If Christians are preparing to rule with Christ (Rev 20:4), should not they be involved in the decision-making aspects of governments? This is especially true in countries like the USA where the people, as a whole, are the highest level of government.

Many people believe that the Bible shows God will punish the Western democracies for their national sins. If “not voting” is the righteous thing to do, then will God spare the Christians along with the 50% of the apathetic electorate that typically do not vote? Or will God spare only those people who voted for honest candidates and just laws, and then punish those who voted for evil? Will then God give the non-voters the same judgment as the corrupt minority that did vote? After all, the technical effect of non-voting is to affirm the decisions of those who do vote. Whereas, voting for a “third party: candidate who stands for righteous principles, no matter how little chance of winning he may have, adds to the permanent record of people who disagree with the way a country is being run.

— NSE

Government Article Valuable

LETTER: March 22, 2002

Dear Norm,

We are enclosing [omitted] to help you in your service. Any more we are extremely selective in contributing money to any Christian ministries. Our efforts to help and serve our neighbor (fellow man) is much more direct and personal than it used to be when we dumped our hard earned money into the hands of a corporate church and trusted them to use it wisely and effectively. As you well know, this empowered men of greed and lust, but often did not help the truly needy.

I wanted you to know that access to your initial paper *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?* came to us at a very crucial time in our lives. It shed a tremendous light for us to begin to understand certain lies

the church had used (most all churches use the same lies) to enslave us to them and exert an incredible power and dominion over us. Our lives have moved a long, long way from where we were when we depended on “the church”. Truly, freedom and independence are very closely tied together. Our forefathers did **not** put together a document called the *Declaration of Dependence*, but rather the **Declaration of Independence**. The Master declared, “If, then, the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” Paul attained to this freedom the Master spoke of, and in this freedom he said, “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more.”

May the Most High Mighty One, through His Son, strengthen and guide you to perform His will in all of your coming and your going.

Sincerely,

— Steve Shrock, Mississippi

RESPONSE: Thank you for your continued encouragement. I think Christians of all ages will shake their heads in the judgment and say to Americans: “you mean you were born into a country with that much freedom and that’s all you did with it?” They will go on to tell their tales of difficulty simply meeting together, obtaining scripture, teaching others, etc.

— NSE

Sabbath Keeping in Orbit

LETTER: November 9, 2001

The following is from an article in a magazine called *The Week*:

“Rabbinical scholars are puzzling over a space-age dilemma: When does an astronaut orbiting the earth celebrate the Sabbath? Israeli Col. Ilan Ramon, who joins the crew of the Columbia space shuttle in July, will see the sun rise and set every 90 minutes. He’s supposed to mark the Sabbath when the sun sets on Friday night. He has asked for guidance, but so far the rabbis are stumped. ‘Do you do it every seventh

orbit?' asks Rabbi Zvi Konikov. —*The National Post*"

Is it God's will that man creates situations for himself that call for impossible solutions?

— Ken and Arlette Omick, Wisconsin

RESPONSE: If we look at the Scripture we see that God makes allowance for all kinds of exceptions and difficult situations. The point is not to avoid these situations or to try to use them as an excuse to avoid obeying God, but to determine how we can best obey God in an unusual situation.

For example, Numbers 26 explains how Israel's land would be allocated among the tribes and men of Israel. Then in chapter 27, the daughters of Zelophehad say that their father had no sons, but ask if they can have some land anyway. Now, a self-righteous Pharisee (or modern day Bible teacher) might say, "God spoke of giving land only to men, so since your father is dead and you have no men, you get no land; we must obey God—end of story." But Moses took the issue to God and found that indeed they could have land, as long as they married within their tribe.

Also, in 1 Samuel 21, David and some of his men came to the priest and asked for food. The scripture indicates that one should feed a hungry neighbor, but all the priest had was the bread of the tabernacle which was supposed to be eaten only by the sons of Aaron (Lev 24:9). Yet this command had to be balanced with the command to help people in genuine need (Deut 15:7–8). Many religious teachers, left to themselves, would probably reason, "God's tabernacle is more important than man, so we must obey the command to give the 'holy bread' only to the priests, and let these men go hungry." Yet, the priest decided to give the bread to David and Jesus upheld this decision (Matt 12:3).

Yes, even God creates exceptions to the Sabbath Day as he had the Israelites march around the city of Jericho seven days in a row (Josh 6:1–4). One of those days had to be a Sabbath!

So how should one deal with the Sabbath if one is orbiting the earth every 90 minutes? We can take an obvious clue from how astronauts work in space. Do they go to sleep for 30 minutes after the sun sets, then get up when it rises and work for an hour, only to repeat that cycle again? Of course not. They keep some kind of schedule where they can be awake for an extended period of time: 16 hours or so, and then sleep for a while. It makes the most sense to

synchronize these artificial days—periods of 24 hours—with the time of the main group of people who are working with them from the ground. Yes, they can and do communicate with people all over the world, but there is one main group of people on the ground responsible for planning and controlling the flight, and it makes the most sense to synchronize their schedule with them. If most of the people in the space program were keeping the Sabbath, they could all keep the Sabbath together.

God based the Sabbath on the sun so that almost anyone who can count to seven can determine when the Sabbath begins and ends for themselves. It is obvious that there is not some universal "blessed" period of 24 hours, because the place where the Sabbath first begins on earth and the place where it last ends can be 48 hours apart—sometimes more. The Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:27). When men live in the arctic or antarctic regions, there are times when the sun never sets or never rises. They could use this as an excuse not to keep the Sabbath, but some have rightly set a fixed time to observe the beginning and ending of the Sabbath. Someday, if men travel to other planets, there will be no sunrises or sunsets at all for long periods of time. But modern technology would certainly enable the astronauts to keep a 24-hour day and 7-day week schedule synchronized with some part of the earth—and allow them to keep the Sabbath.

Space travel and satellites have benefited our earth greatly. Many people who see the earth from space report profound religious experiences. If men can figure out how to do these complex things, they can also figure out how to obey God while they do it.

— NSE

Church of God Jerusalem Acres

LETTER: August 19, 2001

Hello. I am the webmaster for The Church Of God Jerusalem Acres in Cleveland, TN. I am also a member of the church and would like to point out some errors in your listing of our church as Sabbath-keepers. We do observe the Sabbath and Holy Days but not the dietary laws as listed. We are in the lineage of the Church of God having split from the Church of God of Prophecy in 1957. Restoration Fellowship is an independent organization that left TCOGJA several years ago. They have Hebraic emphasis similarities but doctrinal differences. They do not follow

dietary laws either. For more info you may visit the web page at www.jerusalemacres.org.

Thanks,

— James Ludwig, Tennessee

RESPONSE: Thank you for making this correction. Our readers are quite familiar with church divisions and doctrinal variety. They should be able to understand the things that you have gone through.

— NSE

Melchizedek Priests Today?

LETTER: December 19, 2001

Dear Norm,

I know you are busy and have serious time constraints, but I wonder if you could find the time and energy to answer a question or two for me. I personally know of two men who pastor two small congregations of the Church of God in Florida who claim and teach that they are Melchizedek Priests. You also know one of these men. They teach their congregations that they are **now**, present tense, literally Kings and Priests. They use Rev 1:6 and 1 Peter 2:5 & 9 to prove their teaching. I have challenged them on this teaching, believing them to be deceived and also deceiving.

My questions are:

Is there anything in God's word that proves what they claim is true—that men are Melchizedek Priests today?

Is there anything in God's word that **disproves** what they teach?

Is there such a thing as a "Melchizedek Priesthood" functioning in the Body of Christ today?

— Mike Pepper, New York

RESPONSE: Melchizedek is one of those relatively easy subjects to study in the Bible. The name appears only 11 times, 9 of which are in Hebrews 5, 6 and 7. (Be careful when using a King James Version concordance—the name is spelled "Melchizedek" in the Old and "Melchisedec" in the New Testament. Most other Bible versions are consistent.) "Melchizedek" comes from two Hebrew words meaning "king" and "righteous". It can mean "king of the righteous" or "my king is righteous", maybe both.

In Genesis 14:18, Melchizedek is introduced as "king of Salem [peace]" and "priest of God Most High". He shares bread and wine with Abraham, blesses him, and receives a tenth of the spoil of the war Abraham fought. That is about all the Old Testament says. There is no record that any-

one ever spoke to him at other times or that he ever had a successor.

The other Old Testament reference is Psalm 110:4: "The LORD has sworn and will not relent, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" We know from Hebrews 5:6–10 that this is a prophecy of Christ. However, we need to be careful about the word "order". The Catholic Church uses this word to describe the different levels of hierarchy, as well as different groups of its monks and nuns. But is this concept what the Bible teaches?

The Hebrew word translated "order" in Psalm 110:4 is *dibrah* and means "reason" or "purpose". It is used 4 other places in the Old Testament and translated to the **bold** words here: "And to God I would commit my **cause**" (Job 5:8); "I said in my heart, '**Concerning** the condition of the sons of men (Eccl 3:18); 'Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, **So** that man can find out nothing that will come after him (Eccl 7:14); "Keep the king's commandment **for the sake of** your oath to God. With these things in mind, Psalm 110:4 does **not say** "You are a priest forever according to the Melchizedek class", but **says**: "You are a priest forever because of Melchizedek". In Hebrew, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish proper names from regular words, maybe it means "You are a priest forever because my King is righteous".

There are nine references to "Melchizedek" in the New Testament, all in Hebrews 5, 6 and 7. The Greek word, *taxis*, used for "order" in "the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11; 17) does not imply a special religious rank, but a "logical arrangement". The same word is used in 1 Corinthians 14:40: "Let all things be done decently and in **order**". The chapter is about things that brethren do in services, not about priests. Also, Colossians 2:5: "rejoicing to see your good **order** and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ."

Hebrews 6:20–7:3 says: "...even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated 'king of righteousness', and then also king of Salem, meaning 'king of peace', without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God,

remains a priest continually."

Here we see that Melchizedek and Christ are kings forever and live forever. **There is no mention anywhere of mortal men being Melchizedek priests.** The rest of Hebrews 7 explains that the Priesthood descended from Levi worked with "the flesh", but that Christ descended from Judah, and His priesthood was for the purpose of spiritual perfection toward eternal life. Many church group leaders are thinking physical and want a Melchizedek priesthood that receives **tithes**, but Hebrews 7 does not say that.

The Bible shows that all believers are now priests (1 Peter 2:5, 9)—this is not restricted to the "ministry". Are they "Melchizedek priests"? Someone might say, "Yes, what other kind of priests could they be?" Do priests have to have a "kind" or "order"? The Bible does not say so. There are promises of God's people being priests from Exodus 19:6 to Revelation 20:6, and they do not say exactly what "kind" of priests we will be. The Catholic Church may have their priests neatly arranged into a hierarchy of "orders". But if God has done such a thing, he has not made it clear in the Bible. Since the Bible never mentions any "Melchizedek priests" other than Melchizedek and Christ, I could not teach that anyone is a "Melchizedek priest" unless God had miraculously revealed it to me and told me to teach it.

And as I conclude so many other letters, in the judgment, God is not going to ask us a lot of questions about what kind of priests we and our ministers were, but about what we did with the knowledge and ability that we had.

— NSE

Coulter's *The Christian Passover*

LETTER:

Jan 10, 2002

Dear Norman,

Many thanks for the *Shelter in the Word* and *Servants' News*. We have a new e-mail address and so sorry we did not let you know sooner, we had that "love virus" and so this is the first time we (my wife Kay and I) have got back on the Internet. I will have a go at trying to get it downloaded as you point out on page 2 of *Servants' News* you have a lot of food for thought and we thank you for that. I thought that was a good article on the May/June *Servants' News* on that blue paper especially no.3 April 25th 2000. We do listen to a lot from Fred Coulter, we do find his tapes encouraging. I will be interested to read "Mature Literature" on the

Passover Controversy by Beattie. I don't know what you feel about Fred Coulter. I would be interested to know.

Till next time we will pray for you all.

Your friend In Christ

— Ron Whitford, Victoria, Australia

RESPONSE: Fred Coulter has served as an independent minister for many years. He has been a blessing to many people who left the WCG and other groups. He certainly works with original languages and history much more than the average CoG minister. A lot of his work is also useful to people who have not been in the Church of God Groups. He is against hierarchy and does not insist that members in his group attend only with him. However, he does discourage people who are members of other groups from attending his Feasts—he specifically asked me not to list his sites in *Servants' News*. He does not often recommend the works of others that are not in his group.

The biggest difficulty I perceive is that his isolation has allowed him to make mistakes and carry them on for a long time. He took a certain approach to the complex issue of the Passover, and every time he ran into a scriptural obstacle, he wove an elaborate web to get around it—hence the large size of his book, *The Christian Passover*. Readers frequently accept his arguments, not because they are simply and clearly true, but because proving or disproving his vast amount of writing is an exhausting task that few have the time to complete. In other places, Mr. Coulter deliberately avoids quoting parts of scriptures or other sources that disagree with his teaching. I sent him a copy of Mr. Beattie's *The Passover Controversy* and received a letter back from him saying that he read it and all of the answers to our questions were in his book. He chose not to respond to any of the inconsistencies and misquotations that the paper pointed out in his book. I cannot judge if this is an oversight, or if he is actually being dishonest.

Sometimes, as in the case of Deuteronomy 16, he simply claims that the scripture must be wrong because it does not fit his teaching. He cites no old manuscripts that have a different wording in the chapter—he just disagrees with what it says and claims that the Jews must have changed it.

Fred Coulter needs to realize that God will still love him and that he can still serve the brethren if he admits these mistakes.

Much of his other good work is quite valuable. It would be even more valuable if it did not promote his own group so heavily. He needs to realize that other teachers also make mistakes, but God still uses them.

May God help all of us to work together more effectively.

— NSE

Coulter's Sea of Glass Doctrine

LETTER: January 6, 2002
Dear Sirs,

I am not able to send an offering at this time. But, please send me *The Passover Controversy* by Mr. Beattie. I was with Fred for 2 or 3 yrs. I am also disturbed by his "Sea of Glass Doctrine". Isn't it just another form of "Secret Rapture"? I suppose he still teaches that they are going to the throne at the last trump on Pentecost, 3½ years into the Tribulation to marry Christ, to be taught for rest of the Tribulation and return with Christ at the seventh trump. First of all, it has to be an extra resurrection—one can't look at or marry Christ if human.

God's people have always suffered through tribulations but He didn't take them to heaven! They are supposed to have extensive training there. I maintain that we are in graduate college now and if we don't get it in this world, we may not get a chance to get it in the next.

Thanks so much. I really enjoy the *Servants' News* and appreciate it.

— [name withheld], Florida

RESPONSE: I will send you *The Passover Controversy* paper that covers Fred Coulter's *The Christian Passover*.

Many church organizations have found that membership and money increase when they teach a doctrine that promises divine protection to their members, whether it be a rapture, "place of safety" or some other means. Some church groups unashamedly teach that only members of their organization will be protected. Others teach a doctrine that is so specific that no other group teaches it (the "sea of glass" doctrine might be such a thing), and so their members logically conclude that they will probably be the only ones protected because only their group has the "true understanding" of "how God will protect His people".

I find it very difficult to accept such specific prophetic interpretations from anyone unless they have a clear track record of direct inspiration from God. If there was a Bible teacher who had shown me a

prophetic interpretation of the Scriptures many months ago explaining why I should avoid Manhattan Island and air flights in September of 2001, I would be very interested in listening to some of their other prophetic interpretations. Most of the prophets of the Bible demonstrated miraculous signs in the present, as well as showing things to come. I have a hard time accepting someone's extremely specific prophetic interpretation when they have either no claim or no proof that God has specifically shown it to them.

That does not mean that all such prophets are deliberately deceptive—they may completely believe their prophecies. Some are arrogant enough to think that everything they teach is truth and if their prophecy was not true, that God would stop them from teaching it.

I cannot prove that Mr. Coulter's prophetic understanding is **untrue**. If Christ wants to take a certain group to heaven to marry and train them, He may. I would like to go. But just thinking it or getting a million people to believe it does not make it true. If nearly everyone in the Christian Biblical Church of God accepts this *Sea of Glass* teaching without question, I think they are following a man. I know that God loves everyone and works in the best way for each one. I do not wish trouble on anyone and I am not prophesying. But if present trends continue, I think it is likely that Fred Coulter may die before Christ returns, and those in his group will divide up along various doctrinal lines, one might be the *Sea of Glass* doctrine.

May God strengthen all of us and help us look to him.

— NSE

With Whom Will We Work?

LETTER: January 7, 2002
Dear Norm,

Last month or in the most recent issue of *Servants' News*, you wrote about "Pastor" **David J Smith** of Waxahachie, Texas. When I lived in Buffalo, we got one and sometimes two hours of him weeknights on the radio. I'm not a genius, but I can't imagine any reasonably intelligent person following this man. Granted, he did offer some truth occasionally but mostly Mr. Smith offered hair-brained speculation night after night. Frankly, I could not understand how the local radio station allowed him to remain on the air.

Just wondering. Why do COG people like **Richard Nickels** involve themselves with

something like *The Sabbath Sentinel* which seems freely to embrace a relationship with **Adventists** with their heretical views and allegiance to Ellen G. White? I mean, as believers, aren't we supposed to stay away from people who preach false teachings? Just because they believe in the Sabbath doesn't make it okay.

Thank you for *Servants' News*.

— David Cavall, NC

RESPONSE: I am glad that the local radio station allowed David J. Smith to broadcast—that is part of what "freedom of the press is about". Let us face it, a message of "laying down your life for your friend" may be considered insane in a selfish world. As long as he pays his bills and does not commit crimes against others, he should be able to broadcast. But if he is preaching nonsense that is deceiving people, maybe more of us should follow Galatians 6:1–2:

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

I think the above principle also goes for the Seventh Day Adventists. I think they have a lot of truth, but they are also wrapped up in some false teaching of Ellen G. White just like we were (maybe still are) wrapped up in some false teachings of Herbert Armstrong. I certainly would not try to judge which leader was better or worse, the way God sees it. I have visited Seventh Day Adventist congregations and found the people honest, kind and loving. I think we should love, fellowship with and try to help these people as long as we do not get caught up in their mistakes. I have not seen Richard Nickels accept Adventist doctrines, so he may well be doing a good work by being among them.

But I also understand your point. We should not help another group perpetuate false doctrines, and if we are being affected by them, we definitely should flee them. There are many factors involved in deciding "with whom will we work". We should always apply Biblical principles and pray for guidance.

— NSE

Learned Sabbath & Feasts by Own Study; Calendar; Offerings

LETTER: June 4, 2002

Dear Norman,

I received your "care package" in the mail late last week. Thank you very much.

The first thing I did was re-read (in the 3rd edition) your article entitled *Biblical Calendar Basics*. You did a really nice job of laying things out in a balanced fashion. All who read it should appreciate your efforts.

Then I started reading the two copies of *The Journal* that you had enclosed. Wow! I had no idea that this calendar thing was such a big issue. My immediate reaction was to put my two cents worth in, too, but I decided to wait a little because, while I believe I have something to add, I want to make certain I fully understand what others have to say about it first.

One quick question along that line—in most articles (like the ones I read in *The Journal*) are the terms "Hebrew Calendar" and "Traditional Jewish Calendar" (TJC) used interchangeably?

RESPONSE: To most people, I think they mean the same thing. However, some people will say that "Hebrew" means son of "Eber" (Gen 10:21–25), and go on to say that the "True Hebrew Calendar" is the calendar that they were using at that time—which is not the "Traditional Jewish Calendar". There is no end to the debate as to whether words mean what most people understand them to mean, or whether they mean what they originally meant. It seems that harm can come from always taking either view.

LETTER: Now concerning my thoughts on the calendar I will say this: When one thinks about the calendar issues, think about the following: What was the calendar the Israelites were using just prior to the Exodus and why did God change it? My research leads me to an understanding that the answer to the first part of the question is the Israelites were using a three hundred and sixty day (yearly) calendar of the Egyptian comprised of twelve thirty-day months.

RESPONSE: I have heard and read other people's conclusions as to what calendar the Egyptians were using. I remember one said they started the month when the moon was dark. Another said that they used a ten day week. I do not remember any that clearly laid out a list of primary sources upon which they based their conclusions. Furthermore, we cannot utterly prove that the Israelites did not maintain their own calendar while they were slaves in Egypt. Could this be possible? As evidence, I

offer the strange things that exist in today's calendars:

1) The names of our months and the days of our week correspond to pagan deities ancient leaders and incorrect counting systems that most people today know nothing about. Yet we maintain those traditions and almost nobody complains.

2) Most Christians have no idea how to calculate the dates for Easter, Lent or other "Christian" days, yet they observe them.

3) Many partially-observant Jews have no idea how to calculate Rosh Hoshana or Yom Kippur, yet they continue to observe them.

To me it does not seem unreasonable that the Israelites, living separate from the Egyptians, may have had a separate calendar from them. I do not have any proof either way.

LETTER: Why then did God change the "beginning of months" from the fall to the spring? The answer to this would involve a discussion of one of my favorite "biblical" subjects—that of what is known commonly as "Joshua's Long Day". I think that God knew in advance that the length of the year was about to change and he wanted his people to have their beginning of months at such a time that there would never be any confusion (yet look at what we got!) as to when God's appointed times were to be observed. When "Joshua's Long Day" occurred, a necessary consequence of God's seemingly causing the sun to stand still in the sky was that the orbit of the earth around the sun was affected and the length of the solar year increased by a little over five days.

RESPONSE: Hmmm. Lots of people believe that there was once a 360-day year—this comes from the 150 days that equal 5 months in Genesis 7 & 8 and the fact that the Egyptians divided the circle into 360 degrees. However, leaving Egypt was at least 40 years before Joshua's long day. If there really were only 360 days in a year at that time and God gave them a new calendar then, the calendar would get away from the seasons by 210 days (40 years × 5.25 days/year). The seasons would be more than reversed during those 40 years. While it is possible that God made one calendar change when they came out of Egypt and another one at the time of Joshua's Long Day, one can hardly say that the Bible proves this.

Also, I think it is important to say that we really do not know how God produced

Joshua's Long Day. God could have just slowed down the Earth's rotation; He could have bent the light of the sun so that it reached the Earth on the night side; He could have caused time to slow down only on the Earth; He could have moved the Sun. The first three of these methods could have produced the desired effect without changing the orbit period of the Earth around the sun. While it is possible that Joshua's long day involved a change in the Earth's orbit, there seems no requirement that this be the case.

LETTER: When these five days suddenly appeared "tacked on" at the end of their "regular year" (they actually show up between the constellation Aries and Virgo but wouldn't have been readily apparent until the subsequent fall equinox).

RESPONSE: I do not understand this.

LETTER: The Egyptians were astounded and they, the Egyptians, individually named them and commemorated them (my unpublished hypothesis). These five days are referred to as the epagomenal (spelling may not be correct here) days. Boornstein, in his book, *The Discoverers*, talks about them in the very early part of his book, but he mistakenly identifies them as simply the names of five days of the week as the Egyptians had named them and states that two of the names for the seven days of the week had simply been lost. This is incorrect. The Egyptians never named the days of the week; they were always referred to by number. Thus the development of my thinking as to why they were so special to the Egyptians.

RESPONSE: This is very interesting; I have never heard it before. Certainly, if God did suddenly expand the length of a year by 5 days, almost any people who keep a calendar would notice it in just a few years. Spring (including the Spring Equinox) would appear to arrive 5.25 days later each year, catching the attention of farmer, seaman and scientist.

LETTER: So, knowing what I know and believing as I do, I was truly astounded that so much time and energy had been spent (and apparently is still being spent) on this calendar issue. I must confess, too, that some of the discussion actually made me laugh.

RESPONSE: O.K., I'll confess, too. I do get some laughs out of some of it, though

most of the people who study it are very serious about trying to obey God.

LETTER: For religious purposes, I am not certain God even wants us to follow a calendar! The "beginning of months" does not occur with a month named Abib following one or perhaps two months named Adar and Adar II. Rather, the first month of the year, for the Israelites coming out with the Exodus, was simply the month in which they could regularly expect abib (young tender green ears) to appear. Here in Michigan, you could look at it in a similar fashion. The "moonth" [sic] in which tulips bloom in Holland over by the Lake, is our month of May. It very well could have been designated the "month of blooming tulips" (as determined by the phases of the moon) instead of May and most people would still have known the proximate time period you were referring to. Compare this with "the month of tender green ears". "Tender green ears" of barley do not determine the month. The time period in which "tender green ears" can usually be found in abundance (not simply first sighted) determines the "moonth" [sic] of Abib, not the reverse.

RESPONSE: While many writers are in agreement with you here, I certainly disagree. It is very clear to me that the Old Testament calendar was unified for the entire country. The High Priest went into the Holy of Holies once per year, not several times based upon when the barley was ripe in varying parts of Israel. Herb Solinsky is putting his finishing touches on a paper showing that the various stages of barley varied considerably throughout Egypt and Israel and that there was no consistent way that it could be used by everyone to begin the calendar year. I will send you Herb's paper when it is ready.

LETTER: What I find interesting, from a personal standpoint (and notice that I have not revealed [purposely] exactly what I believe, yet, although I am certainly willing to) is how in my practice of observing the holy days (especially Tabernacles) how the local weather always seems to cooperate even when tabernacles falls early and or when it falls late.

RESPONSE: Yes. I am grateful that God has blessed you with good weather for your Feasts. However, I have heard this claim made for Jewish Calendar Feasts, and the Feasts for a number of other calendar systems. Yet, I have never seen one scientific study where someone has charted their own

Feast days or compared the Feast days of various calendar systems over a 20-year period and added up the total number of pleasant days from available weather records. (One could define a "pleasant day" as one with less than .01 inches of rain and a wind-chill factor over 55°F—or however else one wanted to define it, as long as it was consistent.) However, this leads me to think of another question. When evaluating Calendar systems for "good weather", one should attempt to determine if the whole world's weather is always better during the Feast Days of a particular calendar system, or if God simply grants good weather in the particular places where people are keeping the Feast by that system. If you have ever seen any objective study like this, I would like to see it and maybe publish it.

LETTER: Which brings me to a question for you: Do any or some COG followers stay outside in "booths" (sukkoths) during Tabernacles?

RESPONSE: A few do. Our Feast this year will feature a camp without central heat or plumbing in the cabins—a bit more like sukkoth than a motel room. But some of the brethren will probably want to stay in motel rooms.

LETTER: And if not, why not? And if not, what is the basis of this doctrine?

RESPONSE: The WCG taught that sukkoth meant "temporary dwellings". They emphasized the temporariness of it, not the humbleness of it. They would tell people who lived near a Feast site that they should either move to a motel or someone else's house for the 8 days—to be in a temporary dwelling. They also taught that the Feast of Tabernacles pictured the Millennium, so everyone ought to live in a wealthy life-style like they will in the Millennium. While the Scriptures do not condemn these ideas, I do not think they are the main emphasis, either. I have explained my view of the Feast of Tabernacles in the Jan/Feb 2002 *Servants' News*, page 1.

LETTER: In an earlier e-mail to me, you asked a number of questions. I do not have that e-mail handy where I am right now, but let me answer one question I remember. When in high school, when I first started observing the "appointed" days, I would simply observe on the same day as my Jewish

schoolmates would observe. I then learned by self-study and inspiration that sometimes this was correct and sometimes it wasn't. The days the Jews observed were their New Year (our Trumpets), Yom Kippur (our Atonement), Tabernacles, Purim and Hanukkah, Passover (as the Feast of Unleavened Bread for either 7 or 8 days, depending on the person) and I think, that's about it. I never did celebrate the rabbinical holidays (Purim, Hanukkah) and it wasn't until later in life I understood that Passover was not the Sabbath.

Changing subjects, I expect to send you some money this week. Please let me know to whom to make the check to.

RESPONSE: Church Bible Teaching Ministry or a gift to Norman Edwards is fine.

LETTER: Initially, I will simply send you some monies in my name to offset your expenses for what you send me. If I find that it becomes something more, my tithes and freewill offerings will be anonymous as I explained earlier. I want you to know up front that I have specific ideas as to what this is all about, too. One thing I decided early on was that the giver's responsibility and the receiver's responsibilities were totally separate in God's eyes. Each had different obligations.

RESPONSE: The WCG and many other groups have taught this. Have you considered 2 Corinthians 8:14–22 where the Corinthians appoint a person to go with a financial gift to make sure that it is spent correctly? Paul commends them for doing that. Also, 2 John 1:7–11 says that we should learn to detect deceivers and not support them in what they do. I certainly agree that if a person accepts money in the name of God and does not do God's work he will be held accountable in the Judgment. I doubt God will accept an argument like: "the givers knew what I was doing, or didn't care what I was doing with the money they gave to God, so the waste was their fault, not mine." If a person is accepting money to "do God's work", I believe they are responsible for doing what they understand to be right, not what will gather the most money. Some people would say that I am foolish for writing a long letter that partly disagrees with somebody who is trying to give me money, but people with that attitude are not spiritually mature enough to be accepting money for doing a ministry (1Tim 6:5).

However, I also see some responsibility on the part of the giver to give to something

that God is doing. You seem to be very interested in knowing what I teach and how I operate before you send me anything and I think that is wise and good. I would guess that you would not consider giving to a ministry that sponsors Easter-egg hunts for children. And I would further guess that if you found out that a ministry that claimed to be Sabbatarian was secretly sponsoring Easter-egg hunts, you would stop giving to it. I think that is the way to do it. 1 Corinthians 3:10–15 shows that each person's work will be "tried by fire". If a person has primarily a gift of giving, and he gives to something that bears no fruit, what will be left when the fire comes? I do not think "good intentions" are the same as "good fruit". Because so many people are willing to give to an organization that they know little about, a great many of them are phonies and keeping a large part of the money for themselves.

I do not think that a giver must prove that every cent of the money he gives is well-spent. He cannot prove that every word taught by a group is all truth. However, he can verify that the majority is good—and should. In other words, there must be tangible fruit. I will send my tract, *The Gift of Giving*.

LETTER: Since what I will be sending you is neither a tithe nor a freewill offering in my eyes, you may consider it to be simply a quasi-payment in support of your work. No receipt is necessary.

RESPONSE: Thank you for helping us. We are able to continue our work, but at the expense of eating into investments of many years ago. At this point, we will probably not be able to help our children go to college, but we have prayed that God will make a path for them and I am convinced He can do more than "all the money in the world".

LETTER: I did subscribe to *The Journal* today. I learned a lot from digesting the two issues you passed along to me. Thank you again.

RESPONSE: Good. I think it is an excellent paper for diverse information.

LETTER: Finally, I would like to ask you a question, as a sort of test of your thinking. I am not interested in church doctrine here, but your thoughts. And this may develop into an article by either you or me sometime in the future. "What do you think the purpose of removing leavening from the home prior to

celebrating the Feast of Unleavened Bread is all about?"

RESPONSE: I have always understood leaven to represent sin (1Cor 5:6–7), and the Feast symbolizes putting out sin and taking in Christ, who is without sin. However, I have not made a thorough personal study and would be very interested in other biblical approaches.

LETTER: As always, I know that you must have many demands on your time. Whatever and whenever you answer will be fine.

Thanks again.

— Michael Zaeske, Kalamazoo, Michigan

RESPONSE: I am quite behind on my issues. But I am up late waiting for my wife to return from a trip and did not quite feel up to starting something new, so I am answering it soon.

— NSE

Changed Mind on HWA

LETTER: June 12, 2000
Dear Mr. Edwards,

The first time I read that you would not want to trade places with Mr. Armstrong in the Judgment it didn't sit well with me. And with other things you've printed or said about him, I thought, "what a shame?"

After reading the *Ambassador Report* on the net I can understand you and your *Servants' News*. What I read made me sick. But my faith and what I believe has not changed. I know it was Mr. Armstrong who angered me enough to blow the dust off my Bible and prove all things 15 years ago and I haven't stopped since. To put on paper all my feelings now isn't possible.

Just wanted to let you know I don't feel you are doing more harm than good anymore.

— Missouri

RESPONSE: Thank you for your honest opinion. I agree that Mr. Armstrong challenged a lot of people to study. I have also met people who were challenged to study by Billy Graham or other similar evangelists—who eventually ended up in a Sabbatarian congregation. It seems that God works as He wants and that we ought to be happy with however he worked with us. If we have emotional scars from the way God worked with us, then it seems that we ought to go to him about them and ask for healing. He should be very interested in healing dif-

iculties caused largely by our lack of understanding at the time.

I also have to think about how my life might have been without God. Before committing my life to God, I did not value the friendship of others and was almost totally self-centered. I would have had to learn some lessons the hard way, or end up being a very lonely individual.

— NSE

WCG Not A Big "New World Order" Conspiracy

LETTER: May 2, 2002
Hi Norman,

Are you familiar with this web site? www.home.datawest.net/esn-recovery

Have you read the OIU newsletters? Could the scenario they relate be true?

RESPONSE: The website you mentioned is for Exit and Support Network. I corresponded with Lin Stuhlman, who worked for them, several times in 1995–1997. We shared some things in common, but had two largely different paths. She apparently intended to get anyone out of the WCG and major offshoots that she could. Doctrine seemed almost a non-issue to her, she did not mind people continuing to keep the Sabbath, Feast Days or other doctrines, but she did not seem to mind if they became mainstream Protestant either. I never experienced her trying to teach doctrines of her own. Also, I found her somewhat uninterested in determining if accusations against WCG leaders were actually true or not. A story against them seemed good enough for her, she did not seem to have much in the way of standards for evidence. She stopped getting SN in 1998 because she had not corresponded and did not respond to the postcard I sent her.

I have since read some of the OIU newsletters and found that their overall historical account is true, but they made a lot of assumptions about details and why people did certain things that are completely false. Some of the seminars they said were started to make a lot of money made almost none. Some of the people they accused of being involved in a conspiracy certainly were not—they were doing what they believed to be right.

LETTER: Is there evidence to support the accusation that HWA was a communist and using WCG as a front for NWO agenda?

RESPONSE: By NWO, I assume you mean “New World Order”—a name applied to a group of wealthy people who are secretly trying to gain control of the world. **I think I have seen enough evidence to believe that such a group exists, but I certainly do not believe everything that is written and said about them.** Many of the people who claim to be exposing the New World Order seem more interested in selling books and tapes and gaining their own following than they are in painstakingly documenting facts. One person once wrote that I was part of the NWO because I encourage diverse Christian groups to work together. (I encourage individual believers and congregations to work together, but I am not part of any NWO. I am against the merging of denominations into a single church mega-hierarchy.)

Anyway, I have heard some accuse the WCG of being a NWO front. I have never seen any real evidence for it and certainly do not know of anyone who was close to HWA who believes it. HWA taught people to look to God and himself (“the Apostle”) instead of national governments. He preached the destruction of the main part of the civilized world and the need to flee to a place of safety, possibly in the face of persecution. He preached that the US & BC were Israel and responsible for setting a Godly example, and that people would need to resist “the mark of the Beast”—none of these doctrines sit well with NWO-types who want us to visualize a man-made “global community” with people who will do nice peaceful religious things and submit to their civil government.

I think HWA was originally serious about God, but after he got to be “important”, the power went to his own head. I cannot see what the NWO would have had to offer him. He had as much money as he could spend from his Church (did not need more). He was able to see world leaders on his own merits—he did his best to look and act like one of them, but he came demanding little and buying great gifts, so they continued to see him. I know workers who went on some trips with him—they say he preached his mild religious message, he did not talk about plans to take over the world when he saw leaders. HWA had the undivided loyalty and respect of thousands of people (WCG members)—that is something that few politicians have. I see no reason for HWA to work for outside money-powers, nor any evidence that he

did. Of the many changes in teaching and church policy over the years, I do not see a NWO agenda, but a HWA agenda—doing what he needed to do to keep his work large and prestigious.

I can completely assure you that Rod Meredith is not working for the NWO. I was there when he got started and he did not have any outside help or money to do it—and he really could have used help. He was obviously concerned that his work might not survive. He did not know the computer/ mailing aspect of running his work well at all. He openly admitted that he could not have started it without me in several sermon tapes. To his credit, I would also say that Rod Meredith was not the kind of skilled liar that a person needs to be in order to do a deceptive, NWO-style work—he would often “give himself away” and say what he was really thinking when he meant to be discreet.

I think if UCG, LCG, CGI and other groups were working for the NWO, they would not have all of these splits, problems with their boards, etc. These problems and the fighting among the groups have driven old members out and caused very few new members to come (this is what my Hierarchical Leader Letter articles are about). The actions of these splinter group leaders are what I would expect from men who are used to hierarchy (WCG) and who are trying to be the top man in charge. The NWO could not possibly be in favor of the thousands of members who are leaving the splinter groups for independent, unincorporated congregations responsible only to God.

LETTER: Do you know if Stanley Radar is a 33rd degree Mason?

RESPONSE: I have heard people say this, but the problem with secret societies, such as the Masons, is that they are secret. They do not publish lists of their members or their goals and plans. Anyone could be a member and we might not know. Anyone can accuse anyone else of being a member, and we still don’t know. Public records show that Stanley Rader received a lot of money from the WCG. But he was a very private person and said little about his goals and plans to others. A few times, I remember him making statements that I regarded as intentionally misleading, such as saying that he really desired to be a local church pastor someday—he seemed to have little interest in getting to know the

brethren, visiting the sick, teaching the Bible, etc. I think he was a brilliant man and very capable of carrying out a complex plan, but I have never heard any hard evidence that he was still leading the WCG or its offshoots after he officially left them. I’ve never heard of a meeting he attended with them, saw a paper he signed or even heard someone who left one of those groups say, “Stan Rader was still giving us orders”. Unless he discussed his plans with somebody who is willing to talk about them, I do not see how anyone will ever know what they were.

LETTER: Even you have written that the UCG movement was planned as early as 1986. Can you back this up?

RESPONSE: I remember saying that major WCG doctrinal changes were planned in 1986. That information came from Doug Horchak. I have various emails and comments from individuals that said Vic Kubik and others were talking about a UCG-like group in the early 90’s, but I do not remember all the way back to 1986. Do you have a specific article in mind that I wrote?

If the UCG were some kind of NWO conspiracy, I am sure that only a few are involved. Its voting-type of government certainly leaves the door open for all of the old leaders to eventually be voted out. It makes little sense to me.

LETTER: I feel silly even asking these questions, but I’m learning.

RESPONSE: I have asked them. I have learned that we are not responsible for knowing everything, but responsible for doing the right thing with what we know, and for continuing to try to learn—not to hide our eyes and say, “I’m comfortable, don’t tell me about that bad stuff and spoil my nice little environment.”

LETTER: “Things are seldom as they seem Skim milk masquerades as cream” (from Gilbert & Sullivan).

RESPONSE: True.

LETTER: Could the whole WCG experience have been an experiment in controlling the masses? I hope I’m way off base with this question.

— [name withheld], Florida

RESPONSE: Who had HWA start the Radio Church of God in 1934 and was then still continuing to work with it in 1986? Couldn't the NWO have prevented the near-disastrous WCG receivership in 1979? If Stanley Rader worked for the NWO, why did the NWO let HWA fire him? Why couldn't the NWO have kept the WCG going after 1986? They could have installed almost any WCG minister that would go along with HWA's teaching, and the organization would have stayed together for years. Breaking it up caused more of those people to think and look to God for themselves than almost any other event.

We must also realize, that when anyone tries to secretly control anything, plans do not always go the way they would like, and there is often little that the "controller" can do to change anything. For example, I have seen good evidence that wealthy Europeans helped to fund the communist revolution in Russia. Yet, by the time Joseph Stalin consolidated his power, I believe he did whatever he wanted—he answered to nobody. On the other hand, I think there is evidence that Mikhail Gorbachev may well have sold out to wealthy international interests—he lives in the US now and openly works for world government.

I have seen much anti-NWO literature where they claim that nearly everything that happens is planned by the NWO and works out just like they plan. I don't believe it. Satan certainly has a plan and is trying to carry it out, but he cannot go against what God is doing. I would think it is possible that some wealthy interests (the NWO, maybe) planned to break up the WCG because it was too big of a group that was too independent. However, I cannot prove that. The idea that someone is controlling all the major splinter groups is wrong. I have heard Joe Tkach, Jr. explain how he did not like the WCG and their rules when he was growing up as a boy. I believe he had other bad experiences with them as a young man. I think he was glad to simply undo what HWA did.

Ultimately, Satan is the master conspirator and he tries to get individuals from many groups to do his bidding. Sometimes they work together, sometimes they fight each other—Satan does not care as long as his purpose is accomplished. Satan tells his followers that God would have gotten rid of him long ago, but he cannot, so there will always be a struggle between

Satan and God. Satan claims that if you join him, you can do whatever you can get away with, but to join God you have to obey His laws. That, of course, is one of Satan's big lies. He still can only do what God will let him do. People who follow Satan suffer greatly at the hands of Satan and his demons, as well as sometimes receive punishments from God. The truth is, Satan and his followers are going to "lose it all" someday.

Unfortunately, there are far too many "conspiracy theorists" who do not diligently seek for facts, but who try to explain everything as a part of their particular "conspiracy theory". So, if the WCG went bad, it "had to be" the New World Order that did it. Some of these theorists will actually say things like: "Have you ever missed some of a good sermon because somebody's baby was crying? That baby probably had chemicals placed in his food by the NWO so he would cry so you couldn't hear the sermon. Maybe the baby is even mind-controlled by the NWO to wet his diaper and cry on command!" While occasionally, some incredible-sounding things turn out to be true, there are many incredible sounding things that are just nonsense. Not to mention that this is a very expensive way to cause somebody to **maybe** miss a few minutes of a sermon.

Over the past few years I have come to see that we will be judged by what we do with what we know in this life, not by simply how much we know. I see a lot of people trying hard to understand current events, conspiracies, doctrines, prophecies, etc., but very few trying to serve and teach others—the things that we should be doing whether the end comes next week or next century.

It is not a mistake to study these things that you mention, but after a while you must ask "which of these things can I really prove?" "What difference do they make?" and "What does Christ really want me to accomplish with my life?" I have hundreds of books and articles in my files that prophesied or predicted some great event to occur within the next years—but these events did not happen as claimed. Their prophetic understanding, or their accurate inside knowledge of the NWO turned out not to be so good after all. I am just a lot more slow to accept somebody's assertion now—especially when they seem to be collecting a following or selling their thinking. But on the other hand, I

have read some well-prepared information, that has turned out to be true and has been a great help to me. I certainly do not always believe the TV news or what I read in the papers.

— NSE

Sabbath & Feasts for Eternity?

LETTER: March 8, 2001
Dear Norman Edwards,

I have been receiving the *Servants' News* for two or more years and enjoy it very much.

You have good insight and discernment in the articles you write and the response to letters that you answer.

The question that I have for you may not be worthy for the *Servants' News*, which is okay, but I would appreciate a brief private response to the following Sabbath and Holy Day problem:

2001_____x Christ Return_____x
1000 years_____x eternity_____.

Out in eternity, will there be days, weeks, months, years, and centuries? Just like today? Will we always for eternity be keeping the Sabbath? Will we always for eternity be counting 50 days for Pentecost? Will we always for eternity be keeping the Passover, Atonement, Feast?

If the Sabbath and Holy Days are spiritual laws and cannot be broken or done away with, then for all eternity we will have to keep them. Is this true?

Thank you,

— Fred Brettell, Ohio.

RESPONSE: I hope that I will not upset anyone, but I think the answer to all of your questions is, "No". All of the time elements you describe are a function of our Solar System. Our sun is using up its hydrogen, and in some number of billions of years it will no longer be able to function. Revelation 22:5 seems to address that problem: "There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever." Exactly when and how this will come about I do not know. But if there are no nights, then it seems there would be no "days" either. Therefore, all of the countings of days that we do would no longer be meaningful. Jesus said: "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (5:18).

So, does the fact that these laws may

not be kept for all eternity mean that we do not need to keep them now? No. God has a specific purpose for us here now. Notice these two scriptures:

Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it... Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen 1:28; 2:24).

"For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven" (Matt 22:30).

If people throughout history had decided that they did not need to marry in this life because they would not marry in the resurrection, the population of earth would have died out and God's plan would have come to an end. I believe that spiritual principles such as loving one's neighbor as oneself are eternal. However, things designed to teach us and to deal with our present physical world may change.

I believe that God instructs us according to what is best for us and that He will show

us the truth we need when we are ready. I will not try to outguess Him and pretend that I know more than He does about what is best for me.

— NSE

Reason to Stop Receiving SN

LETTER:

Feb 27, 2002

Yo Norman :

I was reading your papers not chucking (throwing) them away. I just finished your latest ones. Do you recall me telling you (way back when) I was in the WCG for about 2 years and left just before the split? Was also with the SDA & left them, read booklets from PCG, GCG, LCG & checked out other COG's web sites. They all claim to be the true church for one reason or another, be it they keep the 10 commandments to they have a prophet, keep the testimony of Jesus to a special message. I am tired of hearing it Jesus said I will build my church—those who accept Jesus as their saviour, been baptized, and have His holy Spirit are in His church. Some may never come to the full truth (as others may see it). My family still kept

Christmas & if I had some from the WCG in my home they did their best to keep their eyes averted. If you look at a tree or a house with colored lights on it, will you face hell fire? Why do people live in such fear? I have nothing against your views and am in agreement with some of them. I can still check out your web site now and then (save you the cost of mailing your papers). The truth is I want to do my Bible studies for awhile with only the Holy Spirit's guidance. Hey, wow, if I sound a little mean or what ever I don't mean to. I used to travel to church with one guy. He forgot to get gas on Friday & got it on the way to church on Sabbath. Well says I, I thought you don't believe in Sabbath work, why are you asking this man to pump and sell you gas? His answer! Well he is not saved anyway so it don't make any difference. Give me a break eh. Guess I said enough, eh? Hear from you soon? The Lord Bless and Keep you.

— Robert, Nova Scotia, Canada

RESPONSE: May God bless you in your studies, and provide you with fellowship with brethren of His choosing.

— NSE 

"The Vine and the Vinedresser" from page 1

"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself." (Acts 2:38, New Authorized Standard Version)".

We are the "children" and we are the ones who were "far off".

That is how a Christian society works. There is no getting around this most fundamental of all choices in our Western Christian Democracies. We will all have to choose whether to become a Christian and to what extent we will live a good Christian life.

Once we accept Jesus and embrace Christianity our choices continue. We are then compelled to choose whether to live as Jesus taught us to live. We must choose to what extent we literally follow Jesus. There are varying levels of commitment in Christianity and there are varying levels of commitment to follow Christ.

In the Churches of God we have tried, to some degree, to embrace first

century Christianity. We have embraced the Sabbath, Feast Days, clean meats, and other customs that they kept, but Church of God groups typically get their format for services and gospel preaching methods from modern-day churches. But most of us in the Churches of God have made a life-long commitment to follow Jesus Christ.

That commitment changes us.

If we are truly committed to follow Jesus, to live as He lived, we become a new person in Christ:

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2Cor 5:17-19, New Authorized Standard Version).

As committed Christians we have a relationship with the very Family of God, with God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son. We are tied to both of them through the Holy Spirit.

God the Father has reconciled us to Himself by and through His Son. It took Jesus' death and the forgiveness of our sins to allow us to come before the Father and to allow us to be accepted by the Father. The entire world is slowly being reconciled to the Father. As Christianity continues to spread, as people accept Jesus and have their sins forgiven, the world continues to be reconciled to God the Father. This is still Satan's world. He is still its present ruler.

We worship two divine beings. We worship and serve Jesus Christ and God the Father. It is important to remember that without Jesus we would not have access to the Father in the same way. We have been reconciled to the Father by the blood of Jesus.

After conversion, did you ever wonder what Jesus does for us and what the Father does for us? We have a special relationship with each one, but that relationship is different with each one. They both help us in different ways. They do different things for us.

Jesus explains the relationship that we have with Him and the Father in a very simple and easy to understand

parable. He uses the analogy of a vine. Jesus tells us that He is the vine, we are the branches, and the Father is the vinedresser.

In a wonderfully simplistic analogy Jesus tells us how He interacts with us and how the Father interacts with us. Jesus defines our relationship with each of them. We read the details in John 15:1-5:

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

We are the branches and we are attached to Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us in verse 4, we are to abide in Him, just like a branch is attached to a vine and abides on the vine. When you think about the analogy of a vine, you realize that the strength and life of the branch comes solely through the vine. A branch can not live apart from the vine. It will quickly wither and die.

The same is true for those in Christ. Our life, our strength, and our help come solely through Jesus Christ, just as the strength of the branches comes solely through the vine.

A branch can't live apart from the vine. The same is true for a Christian. He or she must abide in Christ. They can't live apart from His strength. When there are storms, when there are draughts, when there is any sort of tumult, the branch is safe as long as it is attached to the vine. The same is true for Christians. We are attached to Jesus Christ and we must stay attached to Him.

As Christians our strength comes solely through Jesus. Paul wrote "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:12-13, KJV).

Jesus is an ongoing Messiah, an

ongoing Savior. That is His function and role. He is the vine. He is our strength. We have life through Him.

The Father, on the other hand, is the vinedresser.

A vinedresser plants the vine. Then he watches it grow. He will occasionally prune it. He seeks to improve the vine and the branches so that they bear as much fruit as possible.

The Father does the same thing for us. Once we are reconciled to Him through Jesus' blood, He watches over us. He nurtures us. He allows trials to come. He corrects us. We are His very sons and daughters, and He makes us better sons and daughters.

The vinedresser does very different things than the vine. The vinedresser has a very different role than that of the vine. The Father and Jesus both love us, but they each help us in different ways.

When Jesus walked upon the earth He was the vine and the Father was the vinedresser. Jesus suffered many things just like we do, "For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18, NASV). The Father allowed trials to come upon Jesus. The Father taught Jesus and Jesus learned.

Jesus learned many things when He walked this earth. It was the Father, the vinedresser, who was His teacher, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8-9).

The relationship of the vine and the vinedresser was the same in Jesus' day as it is with us today. It was the Father's intent to help Jesus grow, to teach Jesus, to have Jesus understand those things that Messiah needed to know. So Jesus went through many trials, just like us. Then He ended up dying on a cross. These were very difficult things to go through. The Father, the vinedresser, was teaching His Son.

When Jesus walked the earth the Father dealt primarily with the vine, our Lord Jesus Christ. Today there are branches. We are those branches. The Father deals with us in the same way he dealt with Jesus. Jesus provides for his branches through the Comforter,

the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you (John 16:7).


Today the Father, the vinedresser, is pruning and teaching us. We are being corrected, we are being taught, and at times we are even "scourged". Through all of our trials we must abide in Jesus and we must stay attached to the Him. He is the vine.

This correction from the Father can be quite hard. But Jesus is Messiah, He is there to help and strengthen us. That is the role of the Messiah once we are converted. He is our help and our strength. He is the vine and we must abide in Him.

The Father is the vinedresser who corrects us:

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? (Heb 12:2-7, KJV).

Once we accept the Christianity of our parents or once we are converted, if we truly want to be Christian we must abide in Jesus just as a branch abides on a vine. "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." (1Jn 2:28).

The Father is the vinedresser who loves, nurtures and corrects us. The process continues with us. We, as branches, hold on to Jesus and look to Jesus the author and finisher of our salvation. Jesus is our strength. Jesus provides the help and strength we need to weather any trial we may encounter. 

"Truckers Study" from page 2

He then read the rest of Acts 2 and asked whether baptism is required for salvation, to which I asked why wouldn't someone want to be baptized. The lady driver talked about how baptism pictures the burial and resurrection of Christ and how we are symbolically killing the old man and are resurrected to newness of life. We turned to Romans 6 and spent some time there.

The first driver then began to ask questions about the Holy Spirit. "What" is it? (Note the use of the pronoun "what" as opposed to "who".) So I turned to the other drivers again and asked them, "How would you answer him?" whereupon the lady said that the Holy Spirit is God's power. I then opened the discussion of what the Holy Spirit does and how it changes lives and opens understanding. It was a good, non-trinitarian discussion that offended no one.

I took this opening to talk about Pentecost and do a brief introduction to the Holy Days—"What is Pentecost?"—turning to Leviticus 23.

Finally, the first driver had never heard of the thousand year reign of Christ, so we reviewed the millennial scriptures in Revelation and some in the prophets of the Old Testament and he wants to learn more about this.

Now for the interesting part. Since the Bible Study was over, I asked the first driver what denominational background he was, reminding him that he said he would tell me afterwards. No surprise that he said, "Church of Christ," but then he said to me, "And you are either Church of Christ or Church of God." I answered in the affirmative, whereupon the lady driver said, "I'm in the Worldwide Church of God."

Minutes later I found her down in the store and talked to her for some time. She was born into the WCG, and she and her parents have accepted (or so she says) all the changes. The hard thing for her was the loss of so many friends. "We were like family," she said, and now those who departed from the WCG want nothing to do with her. I told her to make an effort to get back in touch with them. Further disappointing her is a sister and brother-in-law who became so disenchanted

with the changes that they left religion all together. My hope was to impress upon her that someone can hold fast to the basic historical church of God teachings and at the same time reject the cult-like attributes of the WCG. She understood that the exclusivism and control issues were at the heart of the problem there, but I'm not sure that people can bifurcate these cult-like aspects from the truth that WCG had. I think it was interesting that she was right with me on the various subjects we discussed today without missing a beat. So it's still in her head. She took a Ron Dart tape from my stash, and I suggested she get in touch with CEM.

Sure glad I went today.

[While I disagree with many of the WCG's doctrinal changes, one good very valuable change is that they are much more tolerant of their members attending other services and Bible studies—such as the Truckers Bible Study. No matter how "mixed up" a person's doctrine may be, if they are willing to study with an open mind and listen to a variety of teachers, and pray for the Spirit to guide them, there is hope that they will learn truth. Whereas someone who has a lot of truth, but listens to only one source, will rarely ever grow beyond the knowledge of that one source. —NSE]

April 21, 2002

We had a productive study today with our five guests. The theme today was "The Things that Make for Peace", taking off on Luke 19:41–44, where Jesus weeps over Jerusalem and laments that the people of his day did not know the things that would make for peace. What are the things that make for peace? That's a pertinent question for the city that has not known peace, indeed for a world that does not know peace.

The people of that day did not recognize their "day of visitation", that the Messiah was in their midst, but there is more to it. We reviewed Isaiah 59 and Isaiah 48:17–19, which show that God's laws make for peace, specifically His commandments.

Further study in Genesis 2–4 shows that most of the Commandments can be found early in man's history long before Moses, and that they are God's rules for making things go well. They all understand that the Law of God is important and has not been done away, but at the same time the concept of grace was not minimized. We had a nice discussion on how these issues inter-relate.

September 11 seems to still be on people's minds, and we talked some about how God might very well

have been trying to wake us up, and to some extent that has happened. One of the drivers was in the New York area when the planes hit, and it was obvious that this had a profound effect upon her. Some things are not important to her anymore, and she can see clearly the passing nature of temporal things.

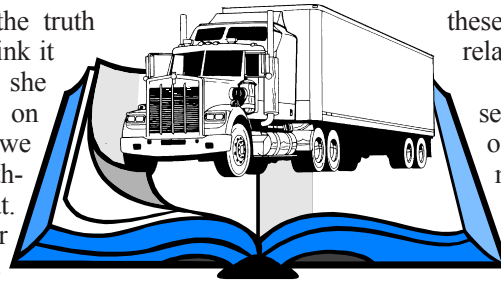
One driver floated the theory that the United States has been blessed because of the promise to Abraham, that whoever would bless his descendants would be blessed and whoever cursed them would be cursed. Since the US is the only true friend the State of Israel has, God has kept his promise to us.

It was good to go this morning and once again give these people a chance to talk and discuss, and also to share with them some of the truths of the Bible.

May 5, 2002

This morning we had five guests and covered some rather basic subjects, which is sometimes is all that's needed. Like anyone else, these people need to have a place to go to get grounded once again. It is not always necessary to reveal great new theological insights. Providing a place to gather with open Bibles and open discussion is often enough.

Among the discussions today was an exchange with one of the truckers who is French Canadian by heritage, but now lives not far from Toronto. Many years back he converted from Catholicism to evangelical




Protestantism, and he related the persecution that resulted from this change and the fact that many who converted in those days were forced to leave Quebec, where the Catholic church apparently had some political power. While I could understand his sentiments toward Catholicism, he and I had an interesting discussion about this because I after all am a former Catholic but experienced no such persecution. He made the point that the separatist movement in Quebec is primarily religious driven as opposed to politically driven, and I have no way knowing if that is true. My point is a different one. I believe Scripture shows that any time church and state get in bed together, both are corrupted. That's the lesson in my mind of history and of Revelation 17. In fact, history shows that Protestantism aligned with the state can be just as corrupt and intolerant. Look at Henry VIII as an example, and not just him but the intolerance and persecution in many Protestant countries during the Reformation.

The prohibition against the establishment of a state religion in our First Amendment was intended as a safeguard against such abuses, and it has worked well. The Founding Fathers knew their history and acted accordingly.

At the end of the study, one of the drivers asked me to write down all the scriptures we covered so that he could study them later. He and his wife also took Bibles with them.

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[The Founding Fathers were indeed wise when they prevented the USA from establishing a state religion. What they never imagined would happen was that their statements would be used to attempt to remove all mention of God from public life. The numerous prayers and references to God by the President, the Congress and courts in the 1700s show that the Founding Fathers had no intention of leaving God and the Bible out of the government—they just wanted to leave specific denominations and their hierarchies of our government. —NSE] 

“Reconciliation” from page 1

time to do some soul searching and ask God if there is less than a pure heart within you. Actually the verse I cited shows that even though you may harbor no ill will, but your brother does—it is up to *you* to remedy the situation. But why me you ask? Just this, “you who are Spiritual—restore such a one” (Gal 6:1–2). If you are the one that remembered it—you are the spiritual one and the task has fallen on you!


We may sear our conscience to put ex-brethren out of our minds—but make no mistake, God remembers, and He hates divisions. We identify ourselves by the church we attend or better yet, the man we follow. God desires that we be likeminded, no divisions, and have the same mind and judgment. When there are divisions, we must be treated as carnal because we are behaving like ordinary men and not God’s elect (1Cor 1, 3).

Looking at this problem from God’s point of view, should He send more people into a situation where people who believe the same cannot get along? Why would we think we could get along with strangers more than former brethren? Think about this: “if one says ‘I love God’, and hates his brother—he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him:

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that **he who loves God must love his brother also** (1Jn 4: 20–21). It is not an option for us to ignore others in the Spiritual Body of Christ.

But many will say that it seems hopeless to mend the hurt feelings of the past—and they are correct. “A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city and contentions are like the bars of a castle” (Prov 18:19). Just possibly your efforts will fail and the offended party will not hear you. You have done your job and God knows your heart. “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God” (Matt 5:9). That is a worthy prize for your effort!

If this message has touched your heart and brought to mind a problem in your congregation, I urge you to act and discuss these thoughts with your church. Instead of planning campaigns and advertising ploys, why not be proactive in restoring the church in your area? Plan a “Family Reunion” at a neutral site, and put away the denominational banter for one week. Invite all those who were once considered Family and enjoy singing hymns, scriptures, and a nice meal together. Set your goal to do this, not to create another organization because there is room for many efforts to proclaim the Gospel, but to show God we do have the capacity to be loving and forgiving. Who knows? You may even have a great time in the process. 

The Importance of Actually Doing It

It seems that the number of cross-group Sabbatarian activities has decreased during the past several years—both regional activities and those in local areas. If it is because brethren are harboring bad feelings about each other, then they indeed need to go to them and try to make peace. Even if the others don’t want peace, it is so important that we extend our hand so both we and they know that we are willing. In some cases, believers may not be getting together simply because they have grown weary of organizing combined events—or because they think very few might come. But it would be better to actually do it: organize one “last” event and either prove that others will not come, or be pleasantly surprised.

Also, realize that brethren who used to be friends in the same congregation, but who have seen little of each other over the last five years, may simply not be close enough to be friends anymore. They have different jobs, their children do not play together anymore, and they no longer share a congregation in common. If independent Sabbatarian groups intend to continue, they must learn to expand the number of groups with which they are willing to work, and they must learn to reach out and teach others to build the size of their own group. —NSE

Partial Literature List

All *Servants' News* back issues and separate literature items are free. Ask for back issues by year and month, and literature items by their order code (ex. LITLST).

Our goal is to bring worthwhile information to as many as want it at the lowest practical cost. The loose-leaf format used by *Servants' News* and most of the literature below is inexpensive and makes copying easy (most literature is public domain). You might wish to hold the pages together with a ring binder, staples, brads or a paper clip.

Items Recently Added to Our List:

Basic Literature:

CALLIT—Christian Action League Literature List by Al Van Dyk, 4 pages. List of nearly 200 Sabbatarian literature items from small tracts to large booklets. Good for evangelism. Small fee charged, but permission granted to copy.

Mature Literature:

CALSIT—Sighting of the New Crescent to Define the Start of a New Month Should be from within the Biblical Boundaries of Israel by Herb Solinsky, 8 pages.

EX9—Exodus 9 and the First Biblical Month by Herb Solinsky,

60 pages. Explanation of why the Hebrew word *Abib* cannot be used to determine the first Biblical month in the year.

Study Sources and Information:

SHRLIB—Sharing Library by John Crissinger, 12 pages. Hundreds of Christian books, pamphlets, CDs, audiotapes and videotapes you can borrow. Some are for children.

SOUNDS—Sound Systems for Services by Norman Edwards, 20 pages. Determine what kind of sound equipment you need and know how to use it—even with a limited budget. Very helpful for Feast-sized groups.

Items Featured This Issue:

Study Resources and Information:

BARNAB—Barnabas Ministries Bookmark Bunch, by Alan Ruth, 6 pages. Three 2-sided bookmarks on Bible basics, Plan of Salvation & Words of Comfort, and Worldwide Web Resources. Keep, carry or give away.

BSAO—Bible Sabbath Association Order Form, 8 pages. Sabbath books and tracts—some hard to find.

COGNEW—The Churches of God Newsletter, by Rick Beltz, 12 pages. Free Sabbatarian Newsletter.

DECLAR—The Declaration of Independence and the Federal Constitution, 10 pages. The Apostle Paul knew his rights under the law as he traveled and preached Christ (Acts 16:37-40; 22:25-30; 25:11,16). Let us know ours.

FELCOM—The Fellowship Commentator by F. Paul Haney. Sample 8 page issue of free quarterly newsletter.

HEROOT—Hebrew Roots, edited by Dean Wheelock. Sample 24-page issue of free newsletter with emphasis on the Hebrew roots of "Christian" belief.

HRPO—History Research Projects Order Form by Craig White. 4 pages. Hard-to-find origins of nations books.

INHIM—In Him Newsletter. Free every-2-month newsletter for teens & people working in youth ministries.

LEELET—Interdependent-Interactive, Church of God, Sabbath Services, Bible Studies, and Open Fellowship, Plus This Newsletter by Darwin and Laura Lee, 24 pages. News and articles from Bismark, North Dakota.

LRCOGD—Living Room Church of God Directory by Robert Bodkin, 16 pages. Find a place to fellowship!

LOCALD—Local Servants Directory, 16 pages. Names and contact info of believers interested in communicating and helping others in whatever way they are so gifted.

PRISON—Prison to Praise by Merline Carothers, 118 pages. Book reporting miracles that occurred as a result of praising God. Shows difficulty we can have telling others "they don't know God."

SABSEN—The Sabbath Sentinel Free sample issue of 16 page magazine—doctrinal & human interest articles. Comes with Bible Sabbath Association order form:

SCABRO—Scattered Brethren Contact List, 8 pages. List of cities of Servants' News subscribers & directions on how you can contact them.

FOT00B—Young Child's Bible Story Coloring and Activity Book, 2 pages. Coloring, questions and word search for ages 2 to 10. Ask for one for each child.

Mature Literature

ASABB—Assembling on the Sabbath by Norman Edwards, 16 pages. Explains the scriptures regarding our need to fellowship on the Sabbath and how to do it.

CALBAS—Biblical Calendar Basics by Norman Edwards, 26 pages. Explains Biblical and Hebrew calendars (beginning of months, years, postponements etc.)

HOWGIV—How Do We Give to the Eternal? by Richard Tafoya & Norman Edwards, 36 pages. Study of giving/tithing.

GOVHUM—How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans? by Norman

Edwards, 64 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.

EJUDGE—What Does the Bible Say About Eternal Judgment? by Norman Edwards, 83 pages. What happens to people after they die? What about "bad" people? "Good" people? Unbelievers? Diligent believers? Lax believers? Answers these questions from the Bible.

Study Resources and Information

FBIC—Freedom Biblical Information

Center Catalog by Wayne Schatzle, 12 pages. Free sources of literature and tapes.

GIVSHO—Giving and Sharing Order Form by Richard Nickels, 3 pages. Has many excellent free items, low prices on hard-to-find religious books.

JOURNL—The Journal: News of the Churches of God edited by Dixon Cartwright. One free sample issue. Best Sabbath-keeping group news source.

LITLST—Servants' News Back Issues and Literature List, 26 pages.

LITNDX—Servants' News Literature Subject Index, 56 pages. Everything by subject.

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