



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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“Put on the whole armor of God”

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“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:6–9).

Capturing God’s Visionary Plan for Humanity

With a world that is so filled with hate, and with troublesome conditions that could easily lead to massive destruction or warfare on a much wider scale, including potential circumstances that could ignite World War III, does humanity stand a chance of avoiding complete self-destruction?

By BILL WATSON

This is a question that weighs heavy on the minds of many people around the world. And a major reason for this is *complete self-destruction* is indeed *CURRENTLY* possible. The weapons existing today that are in the control of humanity is enough to destroy the world’s population many times over, let alone those weapons *we don’t know about*, which exist in

the “black ops” category. Yes, we are living in a time like no other—it definitely has the *correct label*—the **latter days!**

As a matter of fact, in Acts 2:15–21, Peter declares *at that time* the last days began (verse 17)—some 2,000 years ago! He pulls from the prophet Joel to explain why he believes this and proceeds to quote some scriptures proving this to be true. In addition, the Apostle Paul fully expected Christ would return in his day by indicating in 2 Thessalonians 2:1–5 that the false prophet, that man of perdition, would enter into the *EXISTING* Temple (in Paul’s day) and trigger the coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

Watching the Times of Trouble Develop

The Bible is filled with warnings about *times*

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Feast or Famine?

By JEFF FLANICK

Most readers may have seen the controversial display that took place on the river Seine during the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games in Paris this summer. Discussions pertaining to this pagan celebration have reverberated across the globe via the internet, the news, and the religious world in a very intense and emotional fashion. We now live in such a polarized world; it follows there would be a great divide among people’s opinions regarding the event. The most talked about scene included transgender drag queens dancing and cavorting on a bridge, and an obese female LGBTQIA+DJ. The angle of the camera shot projected on television positioned the DJ as a sort of “Jesus-like” figure taking the place of Christ in Leonardo Da Vinci’s masterpiece painting *The Last*

Supper. Many were offended by this scene and viewed it as a direct mockery of Jesus Christ.

The vulgar performance was succinctly summarized in one brilliant sentence by *Kim Dotcom*, a commentator on X (formerly known as Twitter): “The opening ceremony of the Olympics felt like the *CLOSING* Ceremony of Humanity.”

While many Christians (and even non-Christians) around the world were appalled that such a grotesque display would be internationally broadcast in prime time for consumption by a family audience, many of the woke and elite members of society embraced the show unabashedly. Jill Biden’s remarks on the opening ceremonies included, “So, last night, it was just spectacular...the rain did not dampen our spirits.... every step of the way, I was thinking

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Problems With Mormonism

By MIKE JAMES

Right from the get-go I would like to preface what I’m about to write with the fact we all have believed things at one time or another that we later found to be false. So, I’m not writing this to attack Mormonism or Mormons, but strictly writing this as outreach to our readers and any Mormons they may have the opportunity to talk to.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS, or Mormons) are known for their strong morals and family relationships. The church has grown since its early years (1830s) till now with about 14–15 million adherents worldwide. It is a very wealthy church and do several good works with that wealth. Now the other side of the coin: I believe they preach a false gospel about Jesus Christ, and I’d like to lay out just some of the evidence.

Before we launch into the problems with Mormonism, I’d like to quote from **Galatians 1:8**. Now this verse was not written 2,000 years ago in reference to the Mormon Church, but it definitely is relevant when we begin to discuss Mormon theology. The verse says: “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. Let God’s curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you.”

As we proceed, we will learn that the Mormons believe that an angel from heaven along with God has provided them with other gospels or books purportedly coming from God. The evidence will show that this is not the case.

As one famous Mormon (Stephen Covey) taught in his book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*,

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of trouble—described as the “beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:8)—in the last days. Yes, these *times of trouble* are expected to develop and *gain momentum* as we proceed toward the *birthing event* (a.k.a. *the resurrection*) of the sons of God!

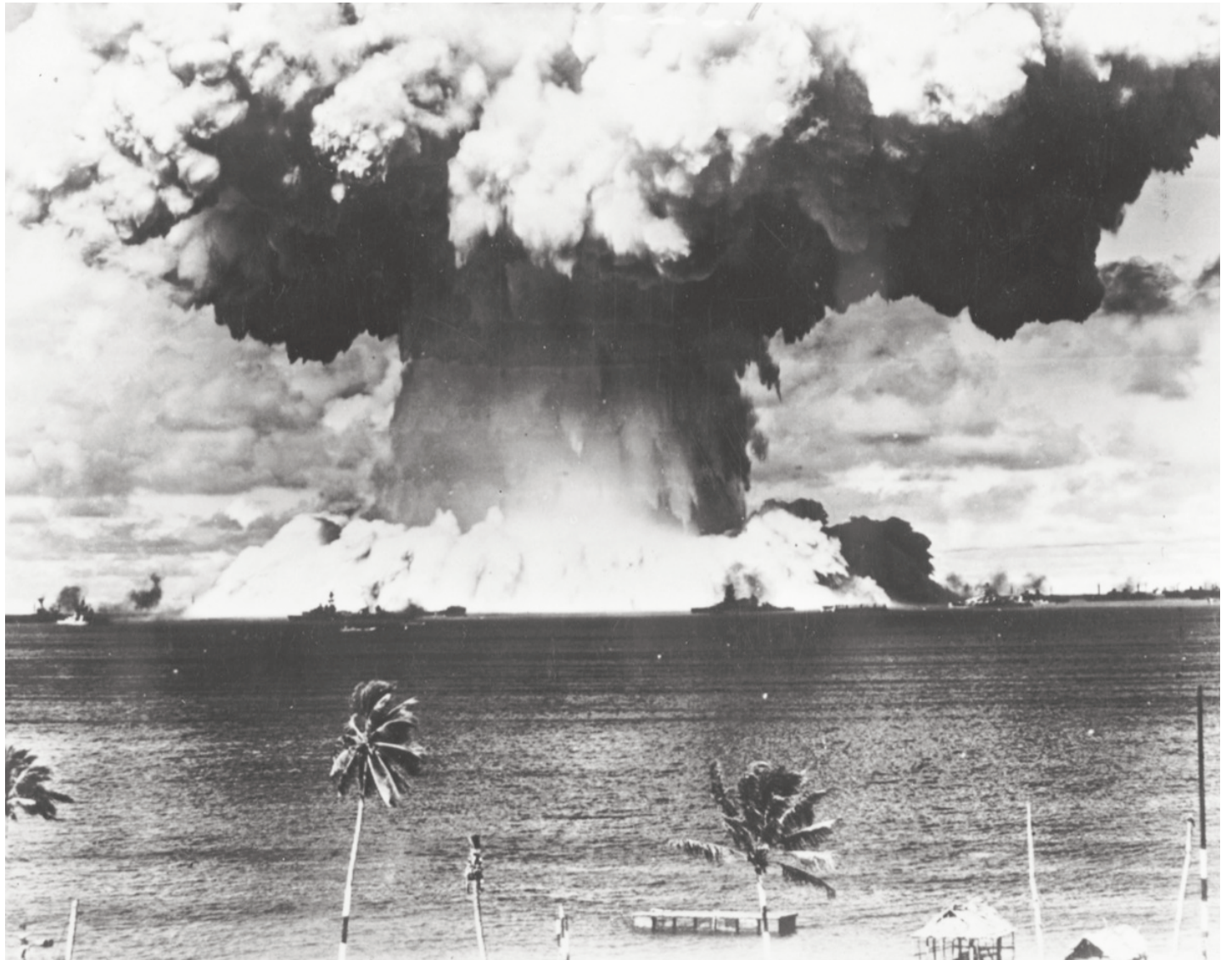
In Revelation 6:1–8, the description of the four horsemen portrays this *building momentum*. These riders and their steeds are directly related to the descriptions of conditions outlined in Matthew 24:4–8; Mark 13:5–8; and Luke 21:7–11. Read these scriptures slowly and connect them to the four horsemen. You will discover the *first horseman* represents false prophets and teachings. This has been going on since the commencement of the early New Testament Church. The *second is war*—nations rising against each other. Over the last two millennia, this has also been increasing with destruction commensurate to the development and sophistication of weapons man has developed.

The *third horseman* follows up with famines, earthquakes—natural disasters and pestilence—like virus outbreaks, deadly diseases, sicknesses of various sorts, and, sadly, bio-weapons. These horsemen will ultimately culminate in a war—depicted by the *fourth horseman*—that destroys 25 percent of mankind, as mentioned in Revelation 6:8. This describes a *horrific time of trouble* but, unfortunately, is just the *beginning* of much more sorrows to come.

This is what is so sobering about some of the prophetic descriptions listed in our Bibles. Interestingly, as has been described in the past, the book of Revelation outlines three sets of seven destructive prophetic categories that consist of seven events in each of those three categories—the Seven Seals, the Seven Trumpets, and the Seven Last Vials/Plagues. As you read through them, these *literal descriptions* depict devastating events resulting in so much destruction that if Jesus Christ didn’t return, “no flesh would remain alive” (Matthew 24:22).

Keep in mind, this kind of destructive devastation could never be accomplished until the development of the kind and type of weaponry we have today! The very fact this *weapon technology* exists lends enormous credibility to the identification of the day and age we live in being called *the last days*. Unquestionably, never in the history of mankind has weapons of such mass destruction existed, and they are now at the “finger-tips” of human beings. Just the push of a button and cities the size of Tokyo, London, Moscow, or New York City could collapse into total paralysis, or disappear in a bright flash of light! It’s a far cry from bows and arrows or catapults and cannons! It really is an incredibly dangerous time we find ourselves living in.

Clearly, there appears to be an *accel-*



eration of troublesome conditions that seem to be gaining momentum that is building around distinct and separate axes of power! These sovereign powers also *retain distinctly different ideologies* as well, which makes the situation more volatile, especially when considering the inventory of *weapons of mass destruction* some of these nations have in their arsenal!

So, it would appear, anyway you “slice and dice” it, the nations of the world seem to be hurtling toward a confrontation that, according to our Bibles, has the potential of *initially killing 25 percent of mankind!* Notice: “And I looked and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell [*hades/grave*] followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth [*25 percent*] to kill with the sword and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth” (Revelation 6:8).

This fourth horseman describes the culmination of the build-up of the previous three horsemen that results in the destruction of 25 percent of the human population. Immediately following this mortifying ruin, the *Fifth Seal describes* a horrendous outbreak of Christian persecution and martyrdom. Notice this *metaphoric description* of those Christians that were killed down through history: “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw...souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.... And they cried with a loud voice saying, How long...do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? ...and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren that should

be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” (Revelation 6:9–11).

The *Sixth Seal follows* or overlaps with the heavenly signs (Revelation 6:12–17) that mark the arrival of the *Seventh Seal* described in Revelation 8. This will introduce the Seven Trumpets, which describe more ravaging waste and painful events that continue God’s take down of mankind’s accomplishments. What we’re being told from the pages of the Bible is what will be used to “raze” humanity’s world of idolatry and its enmity toward the living God and

Jesus Christ.

Where Is All This Leading?

But regardless of the many waves and varieties of calamities, God will allow humankind to use its weapons of mass destruction and obliterate its material achievements. Nevertheless, His plan of reconstruction and restitution will not be thwarted! He has far too much invested in this plan of redemption. And though it may look gloomy and bleak at times, eventually the waste places will be rebuilt and new life will emerge upon the earth,

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Submissions may be sent to vancestinson@cgi.org

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The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

giving a whole new meaning to the cultural hegemony of humankind!

Clearly, the main cause for this “new meaning” will be the leadership and rule of the Son of God, Jesus Christ! He will be landing, when He returns, upon the Mount of Olives. Notice: “And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east.... And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one” (Zechariah 14:4–9).

Interestingly enough, one of the first pieces of legislation that will be passed throughout the world is to establish the *Feast of Tabernacles* as a Holy Day observance. Notice what the prophet Zechariah says: “And it shall come to pass, that everyone that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.... This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zechariah 14:16–19).

Many rebuilding projects will be initiated around the world, dedicated to repairing the waste places. Notice what Amos says about this time. “In that day [*the Millennium*] will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old.... Behold, the days come says the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper... and the mountains shall drop sweet

wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land...” (Amos 9:11–15).

Isaiah has similar prophecies. Notice: “And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations” (Isaiah 61:4). Notice what Ezekiel says about this same time and how things will be restored: “Thus says the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, where as it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced and are inhabited” (Ezekiel 36:33–35).

These are just some of the scriptures that claim a future restoration for planet earth. This culmination into the Millennium (*1,000-year rule and reign of Jesus Christ*) will be set up after Christ returns and establishes His government around the world (Revelation 20:4). It will include establishing roles of leadership of those Christians that were resurrected upon His Second Coming (Revelation 5:10). They will become the leaders of this new social order, with Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords!

It will be a time of world peace. Many of the weapons of mass destruction will be made into tools for peace.

Notice: “It shall come to pass in the last days... the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains [nations of the world], and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come you, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD.... And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:2–4).

Micah 4:1–4 says essentially the same thing as Isaiah, about how weapons will be remodeled into tools for peace. It will be a remarkable time in the historical saga of man’s legacy. Finally peace will be achieved and earth will be as the “Garden of Eden” (Ezekiel 36:35).

What an incredible time that will be!! All the tension, angst, animosity, and hate among the many ethnicities throughout the world will be eliminated; and under Christ’s guidance, unity and peace will actually be accomplished among all the nations! It will be a utopian event, all preparatory to the *climatic crescendo* of the *rest of the dead* being brought back to life for the purpose of being introduced to and accepting Jesus Christ as the Savior of mankind!

The Pathway to a New Beginning

This millennial rule that will commence upon Jesus Christ’s return will convert the world into a paradise of peace and unity. It will be a world where things that are now at odds will experience a change of nature and then be at peace; a world secured by the cares and concerns of others as much

as we have for ourselves. The *Royal Law* will be the rule of the land: “If you fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, you do well” (James 2:8). This will be reinforced by our love for God first and foremost, above all other things. Jesus said these were the greatest two commandments of the Law of God (Matthew 22:35–40). They summarize the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses that underscore the Torah.

The social order will be different. Everywhere you go, people will respect the value of life and learn to appreciate the ethnic difference between the many different families around the world. Even the animals will take on a different nature. Notice: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp [snake]; and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrices den [adder’s]. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [nation]; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:6–9).

What a time this will be. Earth will finally be at peace, and the Son of God will be at the helm of rulership, guiding all of mankind into a realm of contentment never before achieved. And at the heart of this is *an objective*, critical to the agenda of preparing the world for the second resurrection of

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the rest of the dead! Notice: “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished...” (Revelation 20:5).

This event is the climax that God intends for all of mankind to have—the *ultimate and clear opportunity to either accept, or reject His way*. Keep in mind, these people will be coming back to *physical life* and introduced to a utopian world, as it was in the Garden of Eden! It will be an obvious contrast to their memories of the world they lived in during their timeline in man’s history. They will be exposed to a set of social circumstances—a cultural condition—never

before experienced. It will be a real *cognitive dissonance* event for all of them, as they scan their remembrance of the time frame they lived in and the discomfort, jeopardy, danger, and risk they were surrounded by in their previous material life. It will be quite stunningly shocking for all of them.

But a major *point of this second resurrection* is to afford God to *exercise fairness* for all of mankind. This event will provide every man and woman that has ever lived, regardless of ethnic origin or religious belief, the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and King.

Clearly, with the help of those resurrected saints during the Millennium, Jesus Christ will have

remodeled the whole world into an undeniable condition of peace and unity that cannot be ignored. It will be there for them to assess and evaluate as to whether or not Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God, Savior, King of kings, and Lord of lords. You would think this would be an obvious and easy decision to make; but sadly, for some, it won’t be (Revelation 20:8–9)!

How about you? Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord, Savior, and King? Is He the template for your lifestyle? Does He have influence in your life? Are you taking advice from His Word and the stories in your Bible that illustrate the principles of Christian living? If not, perhaps you

should reconsider those obstacles in your life that are preventing you from answering “YES” to these questions.

Time is growing shorter for all of us. Every day is another day closer to the end of our lives. When considering death, which is inevitable, don’t you think it’s a good time for a mortality check and for seriously taking some steps to *secure our immortality* by accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior and example to live by?

If you have a clear understanding of what God is offering, you will undoubtedly agree that being a part of the coming world is well worth the sacrifice you’ll be required to make in this life (Romans 8:18)!

Did both or only one of the criminals crucified with Christ mock Him?

QUESTION: In Matthew 27:41–44 and Mark 15:31–32, it says the thieves who were crucified with Jesus mocked Him also. In Luke 23:39–43, it says the one did not mock Him, but reviled the other thief. Two accounts say they both mocked Jesus, and one has the other story. Which account should we believe, and why the difference?

L.S. (sent by email)

ANSWER: Apparently both criminals mocked Jesus at first, but something happened that caused one of them to have a change of heart. What might that “something” have been? It is likely that when the criminal heard Jesus ask His Father in heaven to *forgive* His executioners, he realized that Jesus was in fact the One many believed Him to be—the promised Messiah who would restore the Kingdom to Israel.

I conclude therefore that there is no contradiction between Luke’s account and the other two. We should believe all three.

Was Yeshua the Messiah a manifestation of God the Father?

QUESTION: The Greek phrase translated “and the Word was God” (John 1:1c) is *kai theos en ho logos* (“and God was the Word”). By inserting “the Father” after the word “God” in John 1:1, it becomes clear that the Word is not a second divine Person but is the divine *expression* of the one God: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God [the Father], and God [the Father] was the Word.” God the Father, by His Word—by *speaking*—caused things to exist. The Word, then, is the *divine expression*, or *utterance*, which is basically an *extension of God the Father*. As 1 Timothy 3:16 says, “God was *manifest* in the flesh [in the Messiah]” and “received up into glory.” Christ was to be called “Immanuel,” which means “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). Other names/titles include “Mighty God” and “Everlasting Father” (Isaiah 9:6). The Word that goes forth from God is really God expressing, extending, manifesting Himself in mankind’s world. John 1:14a—“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”—means that God the Father, by His Word (the Divine Expression), took human form in Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah. This was God the Father, the “only true God” (John 17:3), manifest in the flesh. As Deuteronomy 6:4 declares, “The LORD our God is *one* LORD.” There is but ONE GOD, and the one God says, “Before me no was god formed, nor shall there be after me” (Isaiah 43:10). The Church of God groups that believe the Word existed with God the

Questions & Answers

by Vance A. Stinson

Father as a second divine Person before the creation of the world are wrong and should repent of this unbiblical teaching. I would appreciate a reply.

Summary of “The Father and Yeshua are One,” a paper submitted by K.M. of Queensland, Australia

ANSWER: I went over your study paper, “The Father and Yeshua are One,” and, as you requested, am offering a reply. The following are three major mistakes I believe you make in drawing your conclusions. Please consider them carefully.

The first mistake you make involves your misunderstanding of Greek usage. There is a perfectly sound reason almost all English translations render “and God was the Word” as “and the Word was God.” The reason for this is that, in English, unlike Greek, the subject comes before the predicate. The definite article accompanying *Logos* (“Word”), along with the context itself, indicates that “the Word” is the subject, so it is appropriate to render John 1:1c this way: “and the Word was God.” Also, it is important to note that in John 1:1b, the word translated “God” has the definite article (literally meaning “the God,” or “the Deity”), so it tells us that “the Word was *with* the Deity,” the Deity being God the Father. In John 1:1c, however, the word translated “God” does not have the definite article, so it tells us that “the Word *was* Deity.” Note: the Word is *not* THE Deity, but the Word *is* Deity. In other words, this verse tells us *Who the Word was with* as well as *what the Word was*. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the Deity, and the Word was Deity.” If the Word and “the Deity” (Greek *ton theon*) were one and the same Person, then the Word would *NOT* be “with the Deity”!

The second mistake you make is your failure to recognize the use of a metaphor. Yes, of course “the Word” (*ho logos*) is God’s speech. In the Old Testament, the Word goes out from God and heals, creates, and accomplishes other tasks, never returning to God empty (without having done its job). The Torah is God’s “Word.” The Ten Commandments are the Ten “Words” from God. Scripture itself is the “Word of God.” This is all clearly understood. *But you’re missing the point!* In John 1:1, “the Word” (*ho logos*) is used as a title, or meaningful description, of the divine Person who would become Jesus Christ. It is a metaphor, just like “bread,” “door,”

“shepherd,” “light,” and “lamb”—all used in John’s Gospel to describe Jesus—are metaphors. Remember also that in Revelation 19, one of Christ’s names is “the Word of God” (verse 13).

The third mistake you make is commonly made by Trinitarians and Unitarians alike—you conflate authority (status, function) with ontology (nature). You fail to realize that the word *Elohim* (translated “God”) is *not* an ontological term—that is, it does not pertain to *nature*; instead, it pertains to *status*, *authority*, or *function*. If it were an ontological term, then Satan could not be the “god of this world.” Idols could not be “gods.” The angels and the judges and kings of Israel could not be referred to as “gods” (*elohim*). When Yahweh says that He alone is God (*elohim*) and there is no other, He is speaking in the absolute sense and has *function* or *status* in view. He means that He is the HIGHEST of all! He does *not* mean, however, that there is no one else who is *ontologically* equal to Him! Scripture reveals clearly that the Word has the same divine nature the Father has, but the Father is ABOVE the Word in authority, as He (the Father) is God Most High.

Which laws of the Torah are written in New Covenant believers’ hearts?

QUESTION: My question is: Do you believe that God writes any of the other commandments in Torah on the heart of Christians? In other words, do you believe that the Ten are the only commandments of the Old Covenant which are carried forward into the new? Moreover, you seem to have acknowledged in your remarks that the Two Great Commandments (which Christ drew from Torah) encompassed the Ten. Is that your position? If so, aren’t the Two enough? In other words, if we should be making all of our moral decisions as Christians based on love for God and each other, is it still necessary to delineate “Thou shalt not murder” or “Thou shalt not commit adultery”? Wasn’t it prophesied that Christ would magnify the Law and make it honorable? What does that mean to you? And, isn’t that exactly what Christ was doing in the “Sermon on the Mount”? Are you saying that the Law hasn’t changed? Are you saying that those “universal” tenets of the Old Covenant have been carried forward into the New Covenant? Are clean and unclean meats “cultic” or “universal”? Are the festivals “cultic” or “universal”? And, how do we differentiate between the “cultic” and “universal” more generally?

L.H. (sent by email)

ANSWER: Considering the volume of questions and the relatively complex nature of this topic, I realize that a thorough answer would require a series of

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to myself, oh my god, oh my god. How are we going to top this?" French President Macron said, "The French were very proud of this ceremony.... France showed its audacity and the artistic freedom that it comes with."

Despite the many rave reviews of this event, the outrage was so loud across the globe that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) felt the need to apologize. The IOC even took many of the questionable scenes off the internet and began to enforce copyright restrictions in an attempt to limit exposure of the controversial ceremonies.

In the wake of the tidal wave of criticism, there was also an *explanation*, a supposed *clarification*, of the matter. Suddenly, the official stance became, the show had **nothing** to do with the *Last Supper*, it was simply a misunderstanding! Apparently, everyone should have known the performance was simply a reenactment of *The FEAST of the GODS* created by artist Jan van Bijlert in the 1630s.

There is an element of truth to both views posited regarding the interpretation of this performance. Examining *The Feast of the Gods* painting, it is quite reminiscent of the grotesque display performed in Paris the other day. The promoters have tried to explain the sole intent of the performance was to bring to mind the pagan origins and traditions of the Olympics. I would like to believe this; however, this is not consistent with things said prior to, and shortly after, the broadcast. Thomas Jolly, the artistic director of the show, said in a conference following the ceremony that he wanted to convey that in France "we have a right to not be worshippers." The "star" at the center of the banquet scene, BarbaraButch, referred to herself as "Olympic Jesus" on X following the ceremonies.

Joseph Mattera, a New York City pastor had some interesting things to say about these ceremonies in an article called, *Unveiling the Symbolism: The Olympic Depiction of Da Vinci's Last Supper*. "In my view, the blasphemous depiction of drag queens mimicking the *Last Supper* was a bold statement by the Olympic producers...signaling their intent to reshape the world in their distorted image. This act symbolically declares that the new world order they envision seeks to systematically dismantle the Judeo-Christian values that have underpinned Western civilization for over a millennium. This strategic move highlights their agenda to overturn the moral and cultural foundations that have shaped Europe and the Western nations for centuries."

Todd Bennett of *Shema Yisrael* wrote in his

newsletter, "In what has already been a bizarre summer, the Paris Olympics thought it would be a good idea to reenact a painting called *The Feast of the Gods* using drag queens. It certainly did not offend me to see them represent Apollo as a drag queen with rays of light emanating from 'his/her' head. Why would I care, why would Christians care? The ceremony clearly did not represent the actual Last Supper where Yahushua and his followers likely sat on the floor in a circle."

Da Vinci's *Last Supper* is merely Leonardo's personal vision of one of the most important events of the Bible and, in fact, the history of the world. Along with the uncertainty that comes from the use of Da Vinci's "artistic license" employed in creating the setting, as well as the manner of eating during the meal that evening, there is much to question regarding the rendering of the Messiah's appearance in the painting. The image depicting Jesus with long hair cannot be accurate. First, it is inconsistent biblically:

1 Corinthians 11:14: "Does not even nature teach



Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God."
Revelation 19:9

you that it is a shame for a man to have long hair?"

Jesus was a Nazarene, but not a Nazirite, unlike Samson, who grew long hair as one of the requirements of the Nazirite vow. (The sixth chapter of Numbers gives insight into the concept of the Nazirite vow). On a more practical level, we know there were several times Jesus was able to escape from angry crowds; therefore He could not have had an unusual "hippy-like" appearance. It is important to note Judas had to betray Messiah with a kiss, as Jesus' hair did not look significantly different from the standard male hair style of His day!

We must be careful in our admiration of religious art and artifacts. There are reasons for Yahweh's prohibitions in Scripture of the use of religious objects in worship. This can pertain to the use of the cross (which is a subject for another day). Suffice it to say, if a loved one was murdered by a gun, would you revere a gun in memory of your loved one?

Mr. Bennett continued in his letter, stating that "Christians were furious that the pagans were actually acting like pagans.... it should be no surprise that the son of Zeus named Dionysus showed up for the festivities in Paris. So why all the fuss by Christians? It isn't a Christian event. It's a pagan event. Christians should be Set-Apart... most Christians are not grounded in truth... most don't know that the things they perceive as normal are actually pagan... they won't even reject the obvious ones like Christmas and Easter... they do not understand the difference between what YHWH considers holy (set apart) and what He calls an abomination."

We live in a world of confusion. Over the centuries



Satan, the Prince of the Power of the air, with the help of his demons, has tricked most of Christianity into accepting paganism using the deceptive ruse of syncretism (the surreptitious blending of Christian and pagan ideas into an indecipherable hodge-podge of beliefs).

There are many people who consider themselves to be Christian who support the shifting cultural norms and anti-God behaviors celebrated during the Paris opening ceremonies. These individuals are not grounded in the Truth of Scripture. God does not change.

"For I *am* the LORD, I do not change;
Therefore you are not consumed,
O sons of Jacob.
Yet from the days of your fathers
You have gone away from My
ordinances
And have not kept *them*.
Return to Me, and I will return to you" (**Malachi 3:6-7**).

The rise of secularism humanism, along with a return toward hedonistic pagan ways, is directly related to society turning away from God.

"Hear the word of the LORD,
You children of Israel,
For the LORD *brings* a charge against
the inhabitants of the land:
"There is no truth or mercy
Or knowledge of God in the land" (**Hosea 4:1**).

Our world today is reminiscent of the world described by the prophet Amos in the eighth chapter of his scroll.

"Behold, the days are coming," says
the Lord GOD,
"That I will send a famine on the land,
Not a famine of bread,
Nor a thirst for water,
But of hearing the words of the LORD.
They shall wander from sea to sea,
And from north to east;
They shall run to and fro, seeking the
word of the LORD,
But shall not find *it*" (**Amos 8:11-12**).

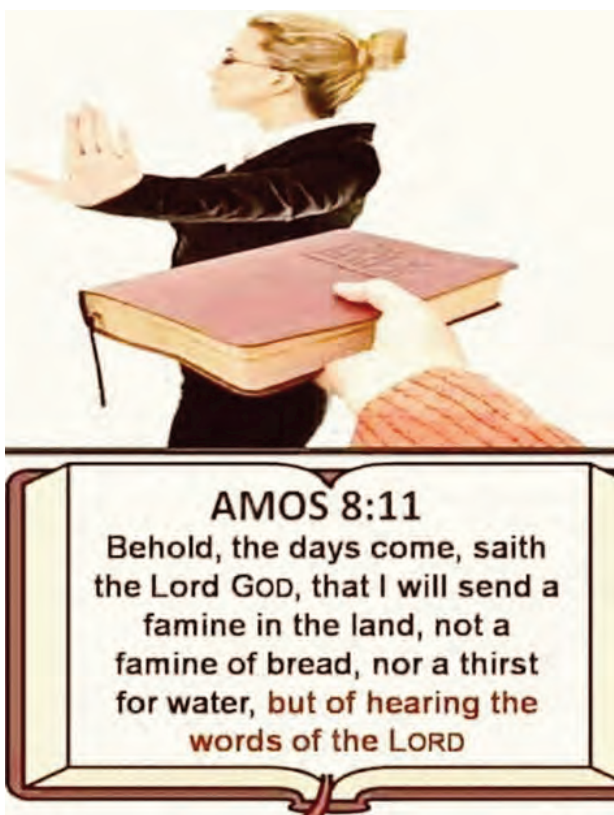
There is a famine raging across the world today. An insidious cultural famine in so many key areas of our society. Morality, respect, justice, peace, and truth are all disappearing from our midst. Most importantly, there is, as the prophet Amos wrote, a famine of the Word of the Lord.

As Paul told Timothy, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (**2 Timothy 4:3-4**).

As we approach the Feast of Tabernacles, may each of us Feast on the TRUTH of God and the TRUTH of His Holy Word. May we drink in His Truth with all our heart, soul, and strength, always remembering what our Messiah said in the Gospel of John:

"But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (**John 4:14**).

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Q&A, continued from page 4

essays—something we can't provide here—so we'll have to settle for the condensed version. The above communication is repeated below in sections, with my replies following each.

Q: My question is: Do you believe that God writes any of the other commandments in Torah on the heart of Christians?

A: The law written on the hearts is the law of love as stated in the Ten Words and summarized by the Two Great Commandments. This is the universal law; it is consistent with the law written in human nature (Romans 2:14–16). This *is* the Moral Law, and this is also the position the various Christian traditions have taken for centuries.

Q: In other words, do you believe that the Ten are the only commandments of the Old Covenant which are carried forward into the new? Moreover, you seem to have acknowledged in your remarks that the Two Great Commandments (which Christ drew from Torah) encompassed the Ten. Is that your position?

A: I am saying that the two Great Commandments *summarize* the Ten Words, which are themselves a ten-point summary of the Moral Law. The Ten deal with our most basic duties in regards to God and man, and each of the specific commandments represents a broader moral category. That's what Jesus was saying when he connected the Sixth Commandment with anger, name-calling, etc., and the Seventh Commandment with looking on a woman with lust in the heart.

Jesus said that the Torah and the Prophets are dependent on the Two Great Commandments. Decisions on how or whether other particular laws apply to us must be made in the light of these two overarching commandments (which summarize the Ten Words) and with an understanding of the original intent/purpose of the law(s) being considered.

Q: If so, aren't the Two enough? In other words, if we should be making all of our moral decisions as Christians based on love for God and each other, is it still necessary to delineate "Thou shalt not murder" or "Thou shalt not commit adultery"?

A: Yes, we need an *objective* moral standard because the "old man" is still within each of us and still has some degree of influence. The Ten Commandments (Words) provide that objective standard. Paul recognized the need for specifics, too. Otherwise, why would he have provided lists of sins (with warnings) to his fellow believers? Here is an example: "Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19–21). Paul taught love of God and neighbor, but he also saw the need for some do's and don'ts reinforced with warnings. Further, our message is also for the unbelieving peoples of the world, and they *certainly* need an objective moral standard. Give them a message of "love" without the specific delineations (Thou shalt...Thou shalt not), and they'll end up justifying immoral behaviors of all sorts.

Q: Wasn't it prophesied that Christ would magnify the Law and make it honorable? What does that mean to you? And, isn't that exactly what Christ was doing in the "Sermon on the Mount"?

A: Yes! Christ indeed magnified the Law and made it honorable (or "glorious")! That's what He's doing in the Sermon on the Mount. He made it honorable by stripping away the erroneous interpretations and traditions that had been added to it, thus restoring and making plain its original intent.

He magnified it by putting it under the magnifying glass, as it were, so as *to reveal what its true intent and meaning had been all along*. He was revealing what had always been, not replacing the old with something that had never been. The New Covenant Theology position I was taking issue with [in a sermon on the topic] stresses *discontinuity* between Moses and Christ. I believe that is a wrong approach. Christ was bringing to light what had *always* been true regarding various commandments in the Torah. His purpose in the Sermon on the Mount was not to change, abolish, or add new standards, but to bring to light what God's standards always had been and forever will be. Understanding this, I believe, equips us to properly recognize both continuity and discontinuity between Moses and Christ.

Q: Are you saying that the Law hasn't changed? Are you saying that those "universal" tenets of the Old Covenant have been carried forward into the New Covenant? Are clean and unclean meats "cultic" or "universal"? Are the festivals "cultic" or "universal"? And, how do we differentiate between the "cultic" and "universal" more generally?

A: When I say "cultic," I'm referring specifically to the Temple and its services. However, there are numerous other laws that do not apply directly to us. For example, laws pertaining to civil matters such as land inheritance, servitude, etc., did not pertain to nations outside Israel (though we can recognize underlying principles in most of these laws that should have universal application) and so do not pertain to us. We're expected to abide by the civil laws of the lands in which we live, just as an ancient Israelite traveling in a far country would have been expected to do. On clean and unclean meats, I think everyone would agree that there is a "cultic" feature here. By eating "unclean" animals, or even touching their carcasses, a person was ceremonially unclean and had to be "cleansed" before full rights of worship at the Tabernacle (Temple) were restored. The point that is debated is this: Are the clean-unclean dietary laws *also* health laws? Some of the other clean-unclean laws appear to be *both* ceremonial and public-health laws, so we can make the case that the laws concerning clean and unclean meats are both ceremonial and personal-health laws. Our position has always been that there is a health aspect to these laws, so we have concluded that we ought to avoid using unclean meats as food. Such laws obviously fall into an entirely different category than the laws of the Decalogue.

In discerning how or whether certain instructions from the Torah apply to us, we have to look for the purpose of any given law. The festivals were given for the purpose of helping the Israelites be perpetually mindful of God's great redemptive act in delivering them from Egypt and to remind them of the promises of the Covenant. Even for Israel, they were never an end in themselves but were a means to an end. They are not a part of the Ten Words (though the "time set apart for community worship" principle of the Fourth Commandment is central to them), and the commandments making up the Decalogue were in force before the festivals were instituted—so they are obviously in a different category than the Decalogue (the Moral Law, or Law of Love).

So should we observe the festivals? If not, then what will we observe as memorials and celebrations of the things we believe? *We WILL observe something—it's in our nature!* That's why the liturgical calendars of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches are FULL of festivals and holy days, some of which are "holy days of obligation." There are many days of fasting, days for honoring various outstanding saints, Passover (Easter), Pentecost, the Autumn Days of Ember (among other "Ember" days), Feast

of the Nativity, various Marian feasts, etc. Protestant churches observe fewer festivals, but most of them have special services for Lent, Easter, Advent, and Christmas. All of these help preserve the identities of the various churches, remind members of their spiritual duties, and encourage faith, hope, and love, among other benefits. In addition to what churches do, we find special memorials and celebrations in virtually every nation on earth. Our Independence Day, for instance, nourishes and strengthens the patriotic spirit and keeps Americans mindful of the sacrifices that gave us our freedoms. Days set aside in honor of outstanding leaders remind us of the good and bad things of our past, of how far we've come, and of what we as a nation need to do. And then there are our families. Birthday celebrations and wedding anniversaries are born of love and serve to nourish and enhance the same. All such memorials and celebrations, whether of families, churches, or nations, are important and have a positive impact in the lives of members and citizens of these communities. It is in this light that we should consider the festivals that God Himself established millennia ago, *especially as they are understood from a Christocentric perspective*.

I remember and honor Christ, celebrating His redemptive work in all its aspects, by observing the festivals. I advocate putting greater emphasis on the Person and work of Christ in our festival observance and perhaps less emphasis on prophetic aspects. Here is a general overview: Passover: Christ as "our Passover sacrifice." Feast of Unleavened Bread: Christ as "Firstfruits" of God's spiritual harvest and Christ as the Bread of Life. Pentecost: Christ as Life-giving Spirit. Trumpets: Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. Atonement: Christ as High Priest of a new and superior Covenant. Feast of Tabernacles: Christ as the Word made flesh. Eighth Day (Last Great Day): Christ as New Creation. Of course, this does not mean that I think we should abandon the "seasonal plan" view.

When considering the rich Christological meanings in the festivals, along with the fact that the need for memorializing and celebrating important events is wired into human nature, I conclude that the festivals are for the Church, and that there is much benefit in observing them. Many thousands of Christians outside the "Church of God" tradition have discovered the joy and spiritual enrichment that comes through observance of the biblical festivals.

Referring to the events surrounding the Exodus and Israel's experience in the wilderness, Paul writes, "Now these things took place as examples [*tupoi*, "types"] for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be idolators as some of them were.... Now these things happened to them as an example ["came upon them *typically*," Fenton], but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor 10:6–11). God had Christ and the Church in view when He intervened to shape the events surrounding the Exodus and when He inspired the written record of these and subsequent events. And, given the rich Christological meanings of the festivals, it is evident that God also had Christ and the Church in view when He instituted them for the nation of Israel. So I believe the festivals were also instituted "*for us...* on whom the end of the ages has come."

So, to summarize, the Law of Love is the law that is written in the believer's heart. Its two parts are an indissoluble unit, and it summarizes the moral categories contained in the Ten Words. The festivals, being memorials and celebrations of Christ and His redemptive work, nourish and strengthen the love that's written in the believer's heart—so they're not an end in themselves but are a means to an end.

LDS, Continued from page 1

“Seek first to understand than to be understood.” Let us start by first seeing what Mormons have to say about who they are and why they are. We will then address whether their perceptions can stand up under scrutiny.

Mormons believe they are the reestablished original Christian church. According to their founder and prophet, throughout history God has used different men to lead His followers. History has repeated the process of God setting up leaders and then the people fell away from the direction God wanted them to go.

Mormons will cite this in relation to God wanting to work with Adam and Eve, but they fell away. Later God begins to work with Noah to reconnect with man. This is followed by a falling away. And then Abraham, Moses, and Israel come on the scene, leading to the formation of the nation of Israel. The process repeats again. Israel and Judah fall away and God uses Christ and the apostles to reestablish His way, but the early Christian church falls away. Finally, Mormons believe Joseph Smith came along in about 1820 to reestablish God’s true church on the earth, which would lead to the return of Jesus.

What are some of the methods by which Mormons are able to convince people to join them? For some, the idea that the Mormons received a new revelation from God is a selling point. But Mormons also use some biblical logic to persuade others. For example, Mormons like to argue that the Bible talks about the offices of prophets and apostles, and most church groups today don’t speak about these individuals. The Mormons do. They make a lot about baptism being changed (baptism of babies and lack of immersion). They also argue against the doctrine of the Trinity (as taught by the historic creeds), which obviously is not mentioned in the Bible. The question of why there is no temple today comes up and the Mormons will assert they do have temples. Finally, they persuade some by pointing out the fact that in the church of earlier centuries was influenced by Greek and Roman philosophies.

At the age of 14 (in 1820) Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, reported he prayed to God for understanding on which church to join after attending a revival. Out in a grove of trees, the young Smith had a vision of two personages he reported as God the Father and God the Son. The personages spoke audibly to him. But wait, in **John 5:37** we read that God the Father has never been seen or heard. So that is a problem because Smith’s story right from the beginning contradicts Scripture.

A few years later, in 1823, Smith has another vision at his bedside from the angel Moroni. Moroni informs the 17-year-old Smith that he will be provided a book (Book of Mormon) with the



LDS temple in Salt Lake City, Utah

fullness of the gospel. Smith will later report of finding the book of Mormon buried in the ground on plates. As we will read later, this Book of Mormon contradicts the Bible and therefore cannot be a book from the same God found in the Bible.

In fact, the idea of an angel bringing a new gospel message is highly suspect when we read in **Galatians 1:8** not to believe any other gospel than the one given to and preached by Paul even if an angel from heaven were to bring it. Now I don’t believe Moroni was a real angel, and I wonder what Smith really saw that night in his bedroom—but another reason not to believe in Moroni is Mormons teach Moroni was originally a flesh-and-blood person living on planet earth who died and went to heaven. Once again, a false doctrine, because the Bible teaches the dead sleep until a resurrection (**1 Corinthians 15; Psalm 6:5; Daniel 12:2**).

The visionary experiences didn’t end there. In 1829, Smith reports that John the Baptist appeared to him and bestowed on him the Aaronic priesthood. But once again, John is dead and buried and waiting to be resurrected (**Hebrews 11:39–40; 1 Corinthians 15:23**). Then, in 1836 Moses and Elijah reportedly meet with Mr. Smith, giving him special authority in relation to the Second Coming of Christ. Moses and Elijah are dead and sleeping.

Historical reporting on Joseph Smith and his father and family cast doubt on

the validity of Mr. Smith’s reporting. Do the research. But let’s look deeper into Smith’s contention in the idea that the Book of Mormon is a message from the true God. In a quote from the book *Doctrines and Covenants* (another Mormon book of “holy Scripture”) we are informed that Joseph Smith, through the power of God, translated the Book of Mormon.

So, what’s wrong with the Book of Mormon? Among the numerous things we can discuss, let’s start with an original copy of the book from 1830. When we compare that original book to modern translations of the book we find up to 3,000 changes between a modern copy and the one translated by Smith. Examples of these changes include the following:

In the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, I Nephi 11:18 mentions Mary as the mother of God. The present edition mentions Mary as the mother of the Son of God. In I Nephi 13:40, 1830 edition, we read the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father. In the recent version of the book, this verse states the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father. It seems like Joseph Smith had some issues in his understanding of the nature of God that have been corrected by other Mormons. This along with the numerous other changes casts doubt on the authorship of the Book of Mormon.

Another major issue with the book has to do with the fact it was translated into something akin to King James English despite the fact Joseph Smith

was living over 200 years after the translation of the King James Bible. Why was it first translated from “reformed Egyptian” into a King James style of English? Maybe because Mr. Smith did not think of the issues that would arise when skeptics began to analyze Mormonism.

It is not just the Book of Mormon that is equated with Scripture—Mormons also have other scriptures (*Doctrines and Covenants* and *The Pearl of Great Price*) that they equate with the Bible. All of these books contradict the Bible in some ways, but the Mormons argue that the Bible has been altered over time and is missing some of what was originally in it. They have to make this assertion in order to deal with the contradictions between what the Bible says and what their scriptures say.

Here are a few examples. Mormons believe that prior to us being born on earth we were alive as spirits. When we are born, we lose our memory of our previous existence. This is like the belief Gnostics had which is a heresy Christianity had to deal with many centuries ago. Nowhere in the Bible do we read anything like this. In fact, in **Genesis 2:7–9** we read we were made from the dust of the ground. In **Genesis 3:19** we read that we return to the dust of the ground when we die. The breath of life God breathed into Adam is merely the animating principle (life) in man which comes from our respiration process. It is not some pre-existing spirit. Mormons also believe our spirits live on in heaven or hell until a future resurrection when we will be judged.

In the Book of Mormon (Alma 40:11–14) we read that at death the spirits of the righteous go to a paradise (state of happiness, rest and peace) until the resurrection. The spirits of the wicked are sent to hell (darkness and misery) until the resurrection. The Bible is clear we sleep until a future resurrection (**Psalm 115:17; 1 Corinthians 15:20; Deuteronomy 31:16**). The first resurrection occurs at Christ’s Second Coming where the righteous saints will rise to rule with Christ (**1 Corinthians 15:22–23**). The second resurrection occurs at the end of the Millennium on earth (**Revelation 20:4–5**).

In the area of the nature of God, Mormons do not agree with the concept of the Trinity, but their belief is not quite right either. The Mormons teach the Father and the Son have tangible bodies of flesh and bone but not blood. Part of their reasoning is based on the scripture stating that the resurrected Jesus mentioned He had flesh and bone, but the reason He said this was likely to prove to them He was resurrected from the dead and was not a spirit (**Luke 24:39**). Christ could manifest himself as He wanted once He returned to spirit. Does flesh and bone manifest out of thin air (**John 20:19**)? Remember God is spirit (**John**

Continued next page

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4:24) and Jesus returned to that way of being after His resurrection from the dead (**John 17:5**).

Joseph Smith is also quoted as saying this: “God was once as we are now, and is an exalted man.... we have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea and take away the veil so that you may see.... God himself the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ did” (King Follett Discourse pp. 8–10, from a Smith sermon three months before his death). Today official Mormon Church teaching is that they don’t have a lot of information about God before creation.

The LDS also believe that most of humanity will spend eternity in some state of life better than today. The ultimate reward will be in the celestial kingdom where God is. Mormons believe they will be able to achieve a state of godhood. Mormons believe they will achieve this level of salvation. The terrestrial kingdom is the next best kingdom, and many people from other Christian groups are likely to end up in this place. The telestial kingdom is the lowest division of glory for those who don’t believe in God or the gospel. Only those who commit intentional premeditated murder or those who had perfect knowledge of the Savior and then deny it will not achieve a reward. The Bible is clear there are not three different kingdoms for people; there is either the Kingdom of God or death (**Revelation 20–22**).

Another major historical concern about the LDS is their view on race relations. One example can be found in the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 5:21–25). In their scriptures, the Mormons suggest that some of their forefathers (ancient Israelites in America) were turned a darker color because they were cursed by God. One reason for the cursing is so they will not mix with the white people. This section of their scripture also calls white people as “fair and delightsome.” The darker skinned people were also described as “...an idle people, full of mischief and



Brigham Young, second president of the LDS Church



Image of the angel Moroni

subtly.” These scriptures were likely focusing on how American Indians came to be in America. Obviously, the writer of the Book of Mormon had some racist ideas.

In the “Book of Moses” part of the Pearl of Great Price, we read that Cain was cursed with black skin and became the progenitor of the black race. So, in two places in their scriptures the Mormons emphasize that people who are not white were cursed. This led to racist practices in Mormonism like rules against interracial marriage and disqualifying “colored” men from Mormon priesthood positions. All of this was corrected by 1978, but that change was behind the laws of the rest of the United States. Racist Christians have interpreted the Bible erroneously to support their racist ideas—the early Mormons took it one step further by actually writing the racism into their false gospels.

In the Book of Helaman 14:27, we read that Christ’s crucifixion brought darkness on the earth for three days. In 3 Nephi 8:23, we have a second source from Mormon scripture contradicting the Bible on this. 1 Nephi 19:10 also confirms this darkness occurred in the New World too, not just Jerusalem. Remember the Bible tells us (**Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44**) that when Christ died darkness fell over Jerusalem for three hours!

Another interesting idea the Mormons have about Adam and Eve is that sin was necessary in order to bring joy to mankind. Now, there is no doubt

we can learn valuable lessons from our sins, and God uses sin to teach us. But the Bible is clear God did not want humans to sin.

In 2 Nephi 2:23–25, we read that Adam and Eve could do no good if they did not sin. That they would have had no joy if they stayed in a state of innocence. They even say that Adam fell so men might be. Now God knew Adam and Eve would sin, and Christ was crucified from the foundation of the world. But that does not mean God wanted mankind to go into disobedience.

In **Genesis 3:16–19**, it sounds like God was upset—not happy at all!—that our original parents sinned. In **Romans 5:12**, we read that sin led to death, and we know death is not a

good thing. But because Mormons think most everyone can live forever, death does not have the same negative connotations for them. **Romans 8:20–21** tells us we fell into corruption, but it does not speak of that as a positive thing.

Mormons also believe that by sinning mankind could now procreate. This is another false idea. **Genesis 1:28** shows us procreation was part of God’s plan for mankind even before Adam and Eve sinned.

I could go on and on with numerous other examples of the dangerous doctrines and beliefs of Mormons, but I won’t. There is enough information in this short article to caution anyone about believing Mormonism is the final revelation of God to mankind. It is in fact a false system of belief that masquerades as Christian by its belief in Jesus. Remember, not everyone who claims to worship Christ is doing it in the right manner (**Matthew 7:22–29**).

There is nothing wrong with talking to Mormon missionaries who come to your door, but ask them some of the hard questions you can develop from what is written here. There is always hope for those who have been deceived.



Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism

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Of Magnetism and Metallurgy

Dealing Effectively With Temptation

By ARNIE FONTAINE

Oscar Wilde once said he could resist everything but *temptation*. The word has changed in meaning over the years. During the King James times, it meant a *test*.



We are tempted differently as individuals. What you struggle with may be no problem for me or some family member, so as we look at another's problem it may be hard to understand because, hey, that's easy for me. Whatever the problem/sin may be, it is an addictive behavior, no matter what. We desire to do something that we know is sin or could be made of great length illustrating the many sins possible. It is an inner struggle each of us has. We each have sin patterns. In this way we are not so different, are we? The process is the same, the "temptation" different. When you were baptized, did temptation go away? When we appeal to God does it seem He has a deaf ear at times? Please take away my attraction to gambling, breaking the Sabbath in some way, "little lies," envy, and on and on it goes. Well, where does temptation come from? Does God tempt us? Does He entice us to sin? How does temptation begin? Temptation occurs when our personal desires conflict with God's desires for us. We are pulled one way, and God's desires are pulling us the other way.

Let us see what James has to say on this matter.

"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you are beset by various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But let endurance have its perfect work..." (James 1:2-4).

So trials are to bring us closer to God and his mindset. A process, if you will.

Think back to your school days and the purpose of a test. It lets you know what you know and equally what you don't know, which in fact is more important in the long run. Now did you ever have a class with but one test at the end of the course? Of course not. It was time after that quiz/test to redouble one's effort to improve upon the weakness and prepare for the next test. What if you knew you weren't prepared and received that awful grade, or thought you knew the material but were shocked to realize that, well, maybe you didn't, after receiving a much lower grade than expected? The purpose of the test is to find out what you don't know so you can

learn what you didn't know.

With that, let's listen again to James: "Blessed is the man who endures trials because, after he has been proved, he shall receive a crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Do not let anyone who is tempted say, 'I am being tempted by God,' because God is not tempted by evil, and He Himself tempts no one with evil" (verses 12-13).

The keywords here are *trials* and *testing*, which are translated differently in various Bibles. Verse 14 adds, "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away and is enticed by his own lust."

And then, "after lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is completely finished, brings forth death" (verse 15).

So, we see that trials (tests) will come and a proving (grade) will occur and, as James says, there is an expectation of success eventually and attainment of the Crown of Life! But notice that endurance is required, and that implies effort. The test is external, but the desire/temptation is internal. Therein lies the battle. The teacher gives the test, but we decide the results. Which way we turn, towards God or away, is up to us.

Does the letter of the law deal with the sin and the spirit of the law the process by which one goes from thought to action, whether to godly character or sinful behavior?

There is a physical concept that illustrates this drawing force—magnetism. Have you ever played with magnets? The forces at play are invisible but very apparent.

There is the iron object and the magnet. If you simply place both on a table, say several feet away from each other, nothing much happens, but as you move them closer you will gradually notice a drawing force, unseen but very obvious. Depending on the strength of the magnet and its proximity to the iron, it will eventually almost grab the iron out of your hand. We are the iron in this exercise, and the magnet is that force—the sin—we are drawn to. As long as we stay away, we are safe; conversely, if we get close, we can feel the pull and either succumb or move away. It is this never-ending battle between our will and God's Will that we find ourselves.

There's an old country song saying, "I'm just a lump of coal but I'll be a diamond someday." Well, in my illustration we are iron to be turned to gold, for gold is not drawn to a magnet (sin). In God's continuing trials we are to become less iron and more God-filled gold. The qualities of iron make it tough to change without some force

applied. In the days of knights, the metal, be it sword or armor, was "tested" to see if it was worthy for combat, even as our metal is tested by God to bring us closer to that ideal state. How often have we read the following verses and realized their importance?

Ephesians 6:13-18: "Therefore, take up the whole armor of God so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having worked out all things, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girded about with truth, and wearing the breastplate of righteousness, and having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Besides all these, take up the shield of the faith, with which you will have the power to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And put on the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, praying at all times with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and in this very thing being watchful with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints."

We are in a spiritual battle daily.

There is another factor at work and that is curiosity—yes, curiosity. From our earliest youthful times to senior life human beings are sooooo curious. Will it hurt if I touch that stove? How close to that temptation (magnet) can I get and not be drawn in? Did we smoke that first cigarette to see what it was like? I did it in my teens. That didn't last long though, thankfully. How many spiritual lines of doctrine can I adjust? That curiosity is iron; it's not in itself bad, but it can draw us to bad things as well as great achievements. It must be "tempered."

During the World War II era the United States was working on the atomic bomb. Part of the process was to use massive magnets, so massive that lines had to be drawn on the floors near them that no one could cross with any metal. Well in a few cases an individual with iron objects on them edged over the line and wham! They were literally flying and attached to the magnet. To my knowledge, no one ever died, but they were sore after the experience. That's what happens when we get too close to that sin. Boom—we're involved.

Those lines, like God's Law, guide us safely past those temptations at a safe distance.

God our Father seeks success through a continual process of growth with testing—"progress reports," if you will. On the other hand, Satan seeks failure, total and complete.

"For this reason, when I could not wait any longer, I sent Timothy, in order to know your faith, lest perhaps

the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain" (1 Thessalonians 3:5).

Now, when we go back to Genesis, what do we find? A test and a tempting, one from God and one from Satan. God places Adam and Eve in a perfect world with an abundance of food available and instructs them to avoid but one tree out of countless food sources. This is the test. Will they pass or fail? They must have wondered why God would place a forbidden fruit amongst the good. What purpose could that possibly have? Will they be obedient in faith to believe God? He didn't try to trick them; He simply laid out the truth. God was, in the process of time, showing that if you do not obey, bad things happen. Consequences. Recall the repeated if-then statements in the Law. God tells us what to expect. God gives them and us free choice to decide. Along comes Satan to tempt and tantalize them, knowing what was going on. His approach was completely different. He appealed to their vanity and curiosity.

Let's look at Genesis 3: "Now the serpent was more cunning than any creature of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Is it true that God has said, "You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?"' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may freely eat the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has indeed said, "You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die."' And the serpent said to the woman, 'In dying, you shall not surely die! For God knows that in the day you eat of it, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be like God, deciding good and evil.' And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasing to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves" (verses 1-7).

The devil uses a three-part method of deception here that appeals to seeing, touching-desiring, and attaining to power through godly wisdom—the same method he used on Jesus in Matthew 4. He appealed to her desire to have something that was pleasant to see and to have. That in itself is not bad unless it is a sinful behavior. She and her desires, and Adam's, were the

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iron that was attracted to that magnet. They figuratively flew through the air and, *WHAM*, were stuck to the fruit and the consequences. The desire to “own” that fruit is the basis for so many problems in the world. It is, simply put, the greed to own or possess things. The problem is desiring in excess of one’s actual needs. Adam and Eve had everything they needed in abundance and yet....

Up to this point they had not experienced evil or its consequences. What is the result of wanting things in excess? Lying, stealing, cheating, etc. There is a difference between wants and needs. And then there’s the intellectual vanity Satan offers in verse 5. They will be godlike, knowing so much. We can fall into that trap as well, thinking we are so much smarter and wiser than whomever. Intellectual vanity? A little humility goes a long way to “temper” that desire. Three core concepts: physical desire, wanting things, and wanting intellectual “position.” These are the three big magnets that can draw us away from the godly path. Recall the World War II example. Someone without iron had to come and rescue the poor folks who were stuck to those huge magnets. Think of a Spiritual Rescuer for us.

John writes, “Do not love the world, nor the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him Because everything that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pretentious pride of physical life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (1 John 2:15–16).

Notice the three-part magnet. All the things that can get us in trouble can fall into one of these categories. This was the draw for Adam and Eve. They saw it was good to eat, they wanted to possess it, and the pride of life made them “wise.” These are things that can manipulate us into sin if left unchecked. It’s internal, and the magnets thrown out by Satan can draw us away. God constantly says in His Word, don’t do that! It’ll hurt; it’ll be destructive.

So, the solution? Well first the spiritual test is not the sin but how we react.

When desires conceive and give birth to sin, that’s to be avoided. The struggle is not a sin. The magnet is pulling, step back and resist and become stronger for the next time, for there will be a next time you can be assured.

Hebrews makes a strong case for the Godhead’s intent for us. Let us read it, in full context, in Hebrews 2:14–18:

“Therefore, since the children are partakers of flesh and blood, in like manner He also took part in the same, in order that through death He might annul him who has the power of death—that is, the devil; and that He might deliver those who were subject to bondage all through their lives by their fear of death. For surely, He is

not taking upon Himself to help the angels; but He is taking upon Himself to help the seed of Abraham. For this reason, it was obligatory for Him to be made like His brethren in everything that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, in order to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered, having been tempted in like manner, He is able to help those who are being tempted.”

You see, They understand through Jesus’ experience. The magnets were there; He felt the pull, but He never, never allowed Himself to cross that line. What do we do? We go kind of close? Bad idea. He put Himself in an uncomfortable situation by becoming human. He could feel the pull and stepped away again and again.

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:2–3).

God is working via the Spirit a smelting process turning our iron ways to gold. Recall that gold is not attracted to magnetic fields. Smelting requires heat, testing, to purge out the impurities.

In Revelation 1:13, a description of Christ in Heaven is given: “And in the midst of the seven lampstands [was] One like the Son of man, clothed in a garment reaching to the feet, and girded about the chest with a golden breastplate.”

Paul writes of a breastplate and its spiritual meaning: “Stand, therefore, having your loins girded about with truth, and wearing the breastplate of righteousness” (Ephesians 6:14).

And is not righteousness our goal? Paul exhorts Timothy on the steps to that goal: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for doctrine, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

So, we are melted down and our metal is tested. We are reshaped and the process is repeated. Each test has the potential to be more gold and less iron. He doesn’t give up on us.

In response to Satan, let us look at Luke 4:2 and notice something about Jesus’ ordeal. Jesus was in the wilderness “for forty days to be tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing in those

days; and after they had come to an end, He hungered.”

He was hungry? Well, that might be the greatest understatement. He was famished, weak, susceptible to that pull. Extreme hunger can get us depressed. He was alone. Satan gets us when we are most vulnerable. Jesus, as we, contained iron. Satan tempts Christ at the core of human motivation, and his exchange with Jesus demonstrates the three points earlier discussed.

“Then the devil said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that this stone become bread.’ But Jesus answered him, saying, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God”’” (verses 3–4).

Even now Satan doesn’t grasp the Divinity of Christ. Is it sin to desire

Continue: “Then he led Him to Jerusalem and set Him upon the edge of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, cast Yourself down from here; for it is written, “He shall give His angels charge concerning You to keep You; and in their hands they shall bear You up, lest You strike Your foot against a stone.”’ But Jesus answered and said to him, ‘It is clearly stated, “You shall not tempt the Lord your God”’” (verses 9–12).

No, Jesus didn’t fall for that. Satan says the Bible says this and that. Using Scripture, so it must be true! Jesus didn’t have to prove anything; He was secure in His knowledge and Self. Are we?

What, then, triggers temptations in our lives? Each of us is different. If you have an addictive sin that tempts you, that battle, that pull, is experienced by others with different pulls and temptations. Fill in the blank. The process is the same, but the temptation is different. In that way, Jesus and each of us can have compassion on other folks and their struggles. That is part of putting on the Mind of God/Christ.

We must literally step back when any sense of that pull happens. Christ did.

An example is recorded in the Old Testament showing what to do. Joseph’s temptation occurs in Genesis 39 with Potiphar’s wife. He was a handsome young man; she a beautiful woman. Joseph oversaw nearly everything. She repeatedly makes advances which he rejects and, finally, they are completely alone, and he will not be drawn in but flees. He didn’t say, “I’m strong enough!” No, he split. He understood the issues.

David and Bathsheba’s case is different, with devastating results. Men are wired to be attracted to women. Is that wrong? No. If the attraction leads to desire for someone that cannot rightfully be yours, then sin enters the picture. David was pulled by that magnet and caught. He felt that pull, that attraction, but became too close and, *WHAM*, he was stuck. The pull wasn’t sin; his allowing himself to get closer and closer to it was. When he first saw her and thought, *Wow!* and felt that pull was when he should have turned away and gone back inside. Results: death of a husband and a child, and unending conflicts. Paul’s admonishment in 1 Corinthians 6:18 rings true. Two men, two paths. To David’s credit though, he only blamed himself, unlike Adam and Eve. He didn’t blame Bathsheba. God always tells us the consequences. Christ never had to face every temptation humans throughout history have had to face, but He went through so many that He understood the process involved. Have heart that He understands us, and He will continue to test our metal, refining us until we emerge as all gold in the resurrection to life everlasting.

to eat? No. That is part of being human. Jesus is as hungry as anyone ever was during this period. The desire to eat. A “lust” for the flesh as Eve was tempted and John recounts. Was Jesus saying when God says to eat, I shall eat for I know He will not allow me to die here? Faith. Satan wanted control over Christ and us. He wants to control our lives.

Next, the lust of the eyes. “Then the devil led Him up into a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘I will give You all this authority, and the glory of them all; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I desire’” (verse 5).

Everything anyone could see and dream of having is yours if....

You want to control the Roman Empire? It’s yours. Christ, as human and iron, refused to be drawn in.

A little conjecture maybe? I guess we will never know, but, what if Satan was tempting Christ to just takeover then and straighten out the world then and forget the long-term plan? Play on Christ’s compassion for humanity. Well, just a thought.

Next, ego—ahh yes, a destructive force to prove something. “I’ll show you how wise and godly I am!”

Traits of a Godly Woman

Part 1

By JEAN DIONNE

The apostle Paul writes, “The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becomes holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the younger women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed.” (Titus 2:3–5).

This passage teaches us that we are not to be false accusers or given to much wine, but a teacher of good things. What comes after that is a list of nine godly traits that a woman is to model. God’s Word says much regarding behavior that is becoming to holiness. Now that’s a topic in itself—holiness. It goes without saying that in order to have these nine godly traits a woman would have to know God’s Word and truly love God with all her heart. She would have a desire to have a personal relationship with Him and would try to please Him with her conduct.

Conduct becoming to a godly woman would require that a woman not be a false accuser nor given to much wine. If she is to be a teacher of good things and to teach the younger women, those negative behaviors must first be removed and eliminated before going any further. We know that such behaviors are not pleasing to our Lord. No one is talking about a social drink here. We are talking about the tendency to lean upon alcohol or any substance abuse causing us not to act with soundness of mind. Also, the ability to teach good things would require knowledge of God’s Word and her willingness to teach.

What would she be teaching the younger woman? She would be teaching the younger woman to mirror the nine traits of a godly woman.

Trait #1: To Be Sober

To be sober is to do one’s duty, to be moderate, self-controlled, thoughtful, and to learn to make wise decisions and judgments. All of that requires common sense. What is your duty? What is it to be moderate, self-controlled and thoughtful? How do you make wise decisions and judgments?

Well, the place to start is in the study of the Bible. We know that there is a wealth of knowledge in His Word. “And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord is his treasure” (Isaiah 33:6). Since God is love and love never fails, then good judgment will follow the principle of love.

“Love suffers long, and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. LOVE NEVER FAILS (1 Corinthians 13:4–8, emphasis added).

In other words, a woman makes a commitment to be the best wife, mother, and manager of the home that anyone could be. She is dutiful and loving. Her most basic responsibility is to make her home run orderly and smoothly. She is the coordinator and manager of the household affairs. She considers the needs of her husband and her children and creates a healthy, peaceful environment and a refuge from the stresses of life. Does that mean she is so busy taking care of everyone else that she has no time to take care of herself? Of course, the answer to that would be *absolutely not!* She should be someone to be admired and a model of womanhood, as best she can.

Now is that easy? No! Can it be a goal? Yes! Does it always work? Most of the time it does. What about an insensitive or rude husband? Does God expect the godly woman to serve such a man? Yes. No one would dispute the wrongs of an insensitive mate, whether it was a he or a she. Especially if that mate is a professing “Christian” with a title to boot! But we are talking about your duty, your job, and what is in your best interest. Is it not to serve and respect your husband to the best of your ability for the Lord’s sake? Two wrongs never made a right or a good marriage. But it is amazing how one “right” can make a BIG difference in a marriage and possibly change that selfish old guy (or woman). She certainly has boundaries and is not a doormat. Remember, this was the person she chose.

When did the prince become the frog or did the princess become the witch? We are told to examine ourselves.

On a side note, it is important to mention that we are not talking about serious abuse here. Seek council if that is the case!

Let’s go back to our duties. If our duties are to our own household, then does it not make sense to plan ahead? There are a lot of things that go into the managing of the home. All of the work does not necessarily have to fall on the woman. Husbands can help. Children can help, too. Let’s face it, when we get older, everything seems like it takes so much longer and household chores seem never ending. Jobs can be simplified. If one can afford it, maybe outside help can be used. The word is to manage. A manager can delegate. However, a woman is responsible for the overseeing of the household. The principle of love and kindness must be her guide. An atmosphere of peace is the goal. If a mate will not help in any way, it may feel very insensitive and unfair. That is true. However, the principle of two wrongs not making a right should be applied. We all have to answer for our own behavior and to our God who will judge. Our job is to perform our duty and our assignments to create a loving home for our families. A caring husband will know when he can pitch in and help, especially during times of stress and sickness. How appreciated that is!

Good nutritious meals, clean appropriate clothing, a clean house (not a perfect one), good planning regarding finances, and the loving care of our children makes for a happy home. Did I

forget discipline? Of course we are talking about loving, but firm, discipline for our children. Good orderly direction should be our goal, along with a good attitude. (Good, Orderly, Direction...interesting.) Most important is the loving relationship with our husband with an attitude of service, affection, honor, and respect. This is pleasing in God’s sight and a good model for future generations.

Your relationship with your husband is the single most important role you will ever play. If you fail here, then you have failed at your life’s work and have missed God’s perfect plan. This is not a one-way street. God holds men accountable for the spiritual leadership in the home. I hope we are talking about a loving husband and a Christ-like person. But when things go wrong, as they often do, it is easy to carry a big, ugly chip on our shoulder. We’ve all done it at one time or another. We are human. A wise woman doesn’t let the little things stir her spirit to agitation. With a quiet and meek spirit, she will seek to make all things better and pursue peace.

“A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that makes ashamed is as rottenness to his bones” (Proverbs 12:4).

So let us not lack in biblical soberness. TO BE SOBER we must do our duty, be moderate, self-controlled, and thoughtful, and learn how to make wise decisions. May our God richly bless our efforts! Remember, it is progress, not perfection! I know it is hard to swallow, but he does not have to be kind in return for a woman to react in a godly way. Take it to the Lord!

Trait # 2: To Love Their Husbands

Loving him means putting his needs before your own. Our husband and our children *are our ministry*. We are to be a comfort, a blessing, a reward, a friend, an encouragement, and his right-hand woman. *Webster’s Dictionary* defines LOVE as follows: “a strong affection, warm attachment, attraction based on sexual desire, a beloved person, unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for others, to cherish, to feel a passion, devotion, or tenderness for, to caress, to take pleasure in.”

The Bible explains that there are three different kinds of love. The Greek word *agape* is God’s love for all mankind, especially for His children. The Greek word *philia* is used for brotherly love for each other, and the Greek word *eros* is used for physical and sexual love.

In Ephesians 5:31–32, Paul states, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a *great mystery*; but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” There is no doubt about the fact that God created sexual fulfillment for the marriage union. It is important for women to understand that it is a man’s most consuming



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passion. His entire ego is tied up in this sexual experience. God created him so. To him it is the ultimate expression of his deepest love for you, the fullest measure of intimacy with you he can imagine. His entire body, soul, and spirit are caught up in this one act of sharing that love with you, the very measure of his person. For a woman to ignore, discredit, or be indifferent to that desire would be a grave mistake.

God describes the marriage as “they two shall be one flesh” which is, their bodies coming together. Sex was not man’s invention. God created it. The great mystery of Christ and the Church is His all-consuming love for His Bride. This physical union between a man and a woman is so beautiful, so otherworldly, that God uses this as an example to illustrate our relationship with Him. A disinterested or halfhearted wife affects a man negatively. It is a matter of physiology. God created man with a regular need for a woman, and God commands the wife to see to it that his need is met. It is not right for a wife to defraud her husband (or a husband to defraud his wife).

First Corinthians 7:4–5 has a lot to say about this. “The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband; and likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time...that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” God grants the marriage partner full access to his spouse’s body for sexual gratification. Indifference and unwillingness is simply unloving. Love is giving up your center, your own self-interest. It is choosing another’s needs above your own.

It would be wrong and insensitive not to mention and understand that at various times during our married lives together there may be many factors that will interfere with this natural function. It is important to recognize that stress, the aging process, trauma, physical and mental illness, medications, along with many diseases contribute to this. Always strive to find ways to “rekindle” your love. Sometimes problems and hurt feelings can be cleared up with an understanding heart and with council and/or medical advice.

“Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled” (Hebrews 13:4). It is important to know that we are not talking about an abusive partner or sexual perversion of any kind, but a loving holy godly union. God’s Word has much to say against lust, sexual immorality, and vile affections. Satan’s influence and twisted view on sex has permeated the world and the media. The Bible rightly describes him as the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2).

God requires a woman to have respect and reverence for her husband. I know this can be very difficult if a husband is harsh or disrespectful to her. That is why we must choose carefully our mate and try not to be unevenly yoked. People and relationships can change, but our commitment to our vows should not. Since our topic is about women *loving their husbands*, we will not discuss the various problem areas that may occur during this union. We do know that God hates divorce, and that He hates injustice also.

“Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and let the wife see that she *respects her husband*” (Ephesians 5:33). To respect means to have a high or special regard for, to esteem, honor, and have deference for. Some translations of the Bible use “reverence her husband.” Wives are called to submit to their own husbands as fitting in the Lord (Colossians 3:18).

There are many wonderful examples of this trait of a godly woman in the Bible; let’s look at the following two examples: The love and submission of Mary, the mother of Jesus, to her husband, Joseph. Also, the example of Sarah’s love and submission to her husband, Abraham.

When Joseph had angel visitations and dreams warning him about danger and how to flee to protect his wife and the child Jesus who Mary was carrying, she did not argue the point, but honored, submitted, and followed. The whole world has been blessed because of her submission. When Abraham was instructed by God to leave all and was given covenant promises that would be passed down to succeeding generations, Sarah did not resist, but honored, submitted and followed. Again, generations have been blessed because of her submission. First Peter 3:5–6 states, “For after this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; as Sarah obeyed Abraham, *calling him lord*, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.”

Remember, Isaiah 54:5 states: “*For your Maker is your husband*, the LORD of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth.” *In Christ, whether we as individuals are married or single, male or female, we are collectively His Bride and the Lord is our Husband!*

Trait #3: To Love Their Children

“Behold, children are a gift of the LORD; the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth” (Psalm 127:3–4). One of the most important things a mother can do for her children is to create an atmosphere of peace and joy. The best gift a mother can give her children is to be happily married, to love their daddy, and work at being satisfied and content with life.

A good mother soberly considers the needs of her children before her own interests. She provides comfort and the daily necessities for their happiness and health. She invests time in training them how to do many things and teaches

them to be considerate of others. She educates herself in nutrition and health issues and is always mindful to protect her “little ones” and keep them safe. Even though God provides guardian angels, *you* are their guardian angel here on earth.

The home should be a created peaceful sanctuary, not a war zone where there is yelling, harshness, negativity, or abuse. A critical woman is one that cannot be satisfied and has a frozen bitterness about her that creates a hostile environment for the whole family. “Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman” (Proverbs 21:19). Be done with all the tension; forgive! If there is abuse being perpetrated on yourself or your child, get help! Do not stay in a dangerous situation.

We know that parenting is a team effort, but our topic is about a *mother loving her children*. Except in rare cases, such as abuse or immoral behavior, the better decision is usually for couples to work out their differences and not to dissolve the marriage. Live in accordance with God’s instructions for marriage and remain together for the sake of the children. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), and so do children. Did you ever hear this expression: “If you think marriage is difficult, try divorce”?

Look for ways to influence your children positively by spending more time with them. Have dinner together; discuss daily activities together, clean up together, etc. There are a lot of things you can do *together*. You should want your children to remember you as loving their dad, *loving them*, and enjoying life.

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8). Let this be your guide.

Think about this: Just because you happen to be the birth mother of a child does not necessarily make you the “mama” of that child. If someone else is drying their tears, feeding them, and taking care of them, and then they are being adopted out every day from one place to another, how does this help a child to bond properly with his or her mother? Children feel secure when they know they are loved and also have their mother’s presence. The same comforting, nourishing breast, the same room, the same blanket, sippy cup, and toys are so vital to a child’s emotional wellbeing.

This is a fast-paced world. Financial pressures can be great and our conditions are not always perfect. This is not meant for mothers to feel guilty. This is meant for them to recognize how important it is for a child to be raised and cherished by their own mother. There is an epidemic of single parenting today with an overwhelming number of them single moms. These are moms who have the extra burden of having to be both mother and father. They have to provide financially for their children. This is serious business!

Sometimes, however, there is only a perceived need for a greater income or a mistaken assumption that having a career is more important than rearing small children. Recently they tried to put a dollar figure on the value of a mother’s workload and responsibility in the home, and they came up with a figure over \$100,000! It is important for a small child to spend the vast majority of his time with his one true permanent “Mama” who God has ordained to love and care for that little life. Do all you can to be “keepers at home” to the best of your ability, taking into consideration your unique situation. Always keep this one thing in mind, your *God-given role as a mother*.

Mothers are very busy throughout the day and are also busy multitasking. *They are in need of encouragement*. Reading a few scriptures here and there throughout the day can add up to a lot of knowledge over time. Meditate on what you read as you work and sing to the Lord in your heart. He will provide you with all the strength that you need. “The LORD is the strength of my life” (Psalm 27:1). The Spirit of God is present with you as you wash the dishes, pick up the dirty

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clothes, and prepare the meals. He is there when you train up your little one, when you tie his/her shoe, when you read a book to your toddler, and when you tell them a simple Bible story. *God is right there* with you as you help and serve and give to your family, loving your husband all the while.

Take good care of yourself amidst all this work. Be kind to yourself and love yourself, too. God loves you, and we should love others *as we love ourselves*. Don't allow yourself to have the mentality of "the lonely hearts club" taking away your joy and your role as wife and mother. Be positive and focus your life on making your home happy. Seek to serve your family as you prepare your children emotionally, physically, and spiritually for life.

"TRAIN UP a child in the way that he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6, emphasis added).

God has honored mothers with the blessed privilege of being the daily trainer of their young children. To love your children is to devote yourself fully to their training. God says train up, not discipline up. Yes, discipline has its place. But to train up means to dedicate yourself and your time to your children. God's desire is for them to become a responsible and mature adult. "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself brings *his mother to shame*." When necessary, loving discipline directs their path with correction (Proverbs 29:15).

This is a full-time occupation. It means showing them how to: make cookies, ride a bike, make up a bed, put toys away, cook, read, show respect for others, and a thousand other wonderful things to learn and do. Training is not a chore for a loving mom; it's a passion! Children are worth all the time and trouble to a "dedicated" mother. Mom is constantly teaching and talking to her children daily as they discuss the "whys" of life in all that they are doing. You don't have to work alone; you have your "little buddy" with you. Check out this web site: nogreaterjoy.org.

One very serious thing mothers need to do is to protect their children! It is sad to know that this world is a hostile and toxic environment for children to live in. Be watchful, be aware, and be alert to the world and its dangers. The media sends out evil messages and it is important to monitor all the filth that is out there. In just a brief moment a child can be taken, sexually abused, traumatized with scars for life and sometimes by those who may have seemed "trustworthy." YOU are your baby's keeper. *Please keep them safe.*

Trait #4: To Be Discreet

Webster's New Dictionary defines DISCREET as "showing good judgment; capable of observing prudent silence. Also the definition of prudent: shrewd in the management of practical affairs, cautious, sensible."

Strong's/Vines Dictionary of the Bible defines the term this way: "sober-minded, temperate, understanding, sensible prudent."

To be discreet is to be wise in avoiding error and in selecting the best means to accomplish a purpose. A person with discretion has good taste, good judgment, and good understanding; is courteous, polite, and has honest dealings. Now that's a big order! Remember what it says in Proverbs 11:22: "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion." Wow! God's Word really tells it the way it is! A person without discretion is without honor. Man or woman, the principle is the same.

In Genesis 41:33, we find a little insight into Joseph's character, which put him in a leadership role. Notice who gave him all this and how discretion was so important: "Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt." Verse 39 adds, "And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art."

When you are discreet, wise, and kind in your dealings with other people, you will reap the benefits throughout your lifetime, and others also will be blessed because of you. You will be the head and not the tail. Proverbs has a lot to say about discretion. You can look them all up in your spare time (Proverbs 1:4; 2:11; 3:21; 5:2; 11:22; 19:11). Proverbs talks about discretion guiding you, preserving you, and keeping you sound and wise. Discretion makes one slow to anger. Understanding will watch over you. Always keep in mind Proverb: 1:7, that "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."

God's Word teaches us how to live. Jesus taught us how to pray. The following is a very powerful prayer—the "Serenity Prayer" (in its entirety):

GOD GRANT ME...
Not my spouse, my kids or my friends
THE SERENITY...
Remaining unruffled in spite of it all
TO ACCEPT...
Not just endure, suffer, and bear
THE THINGS...
As well as the people in my life
I CANNOT CHANGE...
Even though I've tried and tried
THE COURAGE...
Which can only come from you Lord
TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN...
Particularly about myself
AND THE WISDOM...
This is your area too, Lord
TO KNOW...
Not just guess or hope
THE DIFFERENCE!
Between your will and mine!

Now *that's* discretion!

To be continued...

In Loving Memory

Myra James

March 5, 1951 – June 19, 2024



Myra James, 73, fell asleep in Christ on Wednesday, June 19, 2024. A memorial service was held on Sunday, July 14, at N.J. Ford & Sons Funeral Home in Memphis, Tennessee.

Myra, a longtime member of the Church of God, was the wife of the late Pastor Bronson T. James. She lived with her husband in the Tyler, Texas area for several years before moving to Memphis. She worked at the Church's home office during the time she lived in the Tyler area.

Myra was a loving mom, a devoted member of the Body of Christ, and a dear friend to many people. We look forward to seeing her again when our Lord and Savior comes to gather His saints.

John Alfred Hughes, Jr.

October 19, 1931 – July 4, 2024



FORT WORTH, TX—John A Hughes, Jr., 92, passed away on July 4, 2024, at the age of 92. Celebration of Life was on Sunday, July 21, in Live Oak Chapel in Fort Worth.

John is preceded in death by his oldest grandchild, Darah Dameron Card (Bryan) who passed in February of 2020.

He is survived by his wife of 71 years, Janet Bolton Hughes; daughter, Debra Dameron (Dan) of Soddy Daisy, Tennessee; son, John A Hughes III (Linda) of Crowley, Texas. He left three grandchildren,

Dale Dameron (Heather), Nashville, Tennessee, Stephanie Hughes Russell (James) and Stephen Hughes (Jennie), both of Fort Worth. Also surviving are great-grandchildren, Lane and Grant Card, and Daniel and Luke Dameron of Tennessee, and Layla, Jack, and Shaylee Russell of Texas.

John was born on October 19, 1931, at Filer, Idaho to John A. Hughes and Mary (Smith) Hughes. He grew up in and around McPherson, Kansas, graduating from McPherson High School. He attended McPherson College and Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas. He is also a veteran of the Navy Hospital Corp. and the Korean War. He spent 50 years in the flour milling industry in quality control and Research and Development. He started at Rodney Flour Mill in McPherson, Kansas. When Rodney was purchased by Seaboard Milling, several transfers were made ending at Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he was responsible for creating and running a new lab. After 25 years, he made a career change, moving to Denton, Texas and joining Morrison Mills in Denton, eventually becoming Vice President of Operation. After 12 years there he made another career change; he and his wife became entrepreneurs in Holiday Island, Arkansas as owners and operators of a grocery store and landlords. After three years, the flour milling industry pulled him back. He sold the business and was again in charge of a flour mill lab, first in North Carolina and then in Roanoke, Virginia, where he retired. Retirement meant working half days at his son's business, Hughes Cabinetry, Fort Worth, working until almost a few months ago when dementia made it impossible.

All the years he was associated with the flour milling business, he was active in the Cereal and Grain Association, holding different offices in local chapters. While living in Chattanooga, Tennessee, he and Janet were very active square dancers. John was the Star Twirlers first president, but always continued being active in Chattanooga's overall square-dancing community. He was also active in forming a state organization that hosted a state convention.

Many thanks for all the prayers for John.

All Is Set for the Feast of Tabernacles 2024 in Kenya

A Dream Come True

What started as a dream is now a reality and it is only a matter of time. One year ago I was invited to attend LORD's Feast in Hot Springs, Arkansas, USA. It was to be a learning process how Feasts can be conducted which would include international guests. I am indebted to one Linda Benton and Elder Blake Silverstein, not forgetting Church of God International headquarters, for making it possible for my travel, and of course Mr. and Mrs. Mike Webb for hosting me.

After my lessons, I decided to host the 2024 Feast of Tabernacles in Kenya. At first I thought it was too far. I tell you, time flies; in a short while the Feasts will be here again. What a joyous time!

As I write this brief, all is now set, except for a few final touches. Remember to mark the date—October 17–23, 2024—and prepare to enjoy celebrating the Feast with us for a week or so. In a while I will take you through our program for the Feast.

This year's Feast of Tabernacles has drawn interest from far and wide, including guests from Malawi, Rwanda, Burundi, DRC Congo, Tanzania, Uganda, and USA, where at least 25 attendees have booked for their spaces. However, we still have room for just a few more remaining, so don't miss this opportunity to celebrate with brethren from all over the globe and most interested in seeing God's creation, more so the Big Five in the wild within the famous Maasai Mara game reserve.

The Feast site will be right within the outskirts of Maasai Mara game reserve.

We have prepared different speakers to break the bread with the congregation. Among them are speakers from the USA, Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya. We have as well invited local leadership to come and experience the LORD's Feasts. Some of my former pastor colleagues from the Seventh-Day Adventist Church are looking forward to have that experience.

We will have a moment to celebrate with the animals by appreciating God's creation by having a game drive within the Maasai Mara. I can't wait to have a meal within the Mara. What about coming into contact with the Big Five? I am sure you would not want to miss that!

"Feast," in my language, is accompanied by eating after a hard toil. We have planned to have different varieties of local food prepared by different countries. Tanzania will have their day to share their local staple foods. Uganda, Kenya, and the US, too. Remember, meals bring families together. If you cannot afford this, we still have your space reserved for you.

We will have night fire camps, roasting maize, singing, and listening to cultural stories from various countries. What a joy listening to the diversity of God's creation. We will be bonding and dreaming in the Kingdom.

We will have moments to interact with the Maasai community, which is believed to have preserved their traditional lifestyles, including dress codes; seeing and joining them in their jumping skills and perhaps watching Maasai traditional marriage ceremonies, which are still practiced.

We will enjoy wonderful spiritual songs and music to praise God from our team from Tanzania led by Pastor Emanuel Chagari. Emanuel, a high school teacher, was awarded a trophy for winning a Tanzania high school music competition. He is coming with a special church group he trains. I can't wait to see and enjoy praises.

We will have a display of talents from various countries. Come and see how Ugandans use their hand-made items for livelihood, how they train widows and the needy to earn a living.

I have very limited space in this column to share everything I need to pen down as I wait for your registration. Feel free to contact me, and you will be in.

Robert Onsando

Upcoming Holy Days in 2024

These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times (Leviticus 23:4).

Feast of Trumpets: October 3

Day of Atonement: October 12

Feast of Tabernacles: October 17–23

Last Great Day (Eighth Day): October 24

CGI–Canada's Feast of Tabernacles 2024 Expands to a Satellite Site in Ottawa

• **DATES:** October 16 (opening evening)–October 24, 2024

• **FEAST THEME:** Thy Kingdom Come...Quickly!

• **LOCATION:** You're invited to worship God with brethren meeting in the **Holiday Inn Express & Suites, Ottawa East-Orleans (Avalon Room)—zooming in services every morning at 11am–1pm from CGI's main Feast site in Collingwood Ontario.**

We offer a change of pace for all ages and tastes with activities and attractions across the National Capital Region! We expect about 10–25 attendees from Ottawa, other Canadian congregations, and beyond. *Welcome!*

Afternoons, cruise the famous Rideau Canal (sorry no skating in summer!), visit The Supreme Court of Canada for a mock trial, or for a tour and questions about Canada's history—our last stop for freedom; visit our National Museums of Civilization and History, Kids' fun places like Museum of Science & Technology, and much more! You choose!

We provide brochures about interesting excursion opportunities, local restaurants, and take-away food places for in-person delivery or pick up. You choose!

We are working on a Community Service Project to which some Feast-goers may wish to contribute some time, energy, and love!

We meet at 10:30 every morning for announcements and planning for the following day so that participants are able to collaborate on plans for food and for afternoon and evening activities, which may include taking a slow day resting and walking across from your hotel to the Shenkman Arts Centre to visit displays of art, pottery, and more!

You'll find restaurants nearby and take-aways easily accessible to enjoy either in the Avalon Room with other brethren or in your own room. You choose!

Evenings, you're welcome to join us in the Avalon Room right in your hotel for Bible conversations, quizzes, studies, prayer groups, movies, crafts, short presentations and discussions, and other activities, including, best of all, great fellowship over a hot drink and popcorn. Again you get to choose!

Music is big in CGI Ottawa, so we sing and play (please bring your instrument if that is possible) and enjoy music. Godly music blesses us daily!

Make this Feast a refreshing change of pace! And there will be opportunities to serve throughout the Feast! You choose!

Would you like more information? Ready to register?

Special hotel discount rate for Feast participants: \$169 per night, free breakfast, parking...super friendly staff!

Local Contact: David Townson
dwtownson@rogers.com or call 613-834-5091

Q&A, continue from page 6

What do "binding" and "loosing" have to do with conflict resolution?

QUESTION: What is the meaning of Matthew 18:18?

W.C., Millington, TN

ANSWER: In Matthew 18:18, Jesus states, "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

In the verses leading to verse 18, Jesus describes the three-stage procedure for dealing with a believer caught in some kind of sin: 1) Go to the person alone to tell him of his fault. If he persists in his sin, 2) go back to the offender, but this time take two or three witnesses so that the charges may be established. If that doesn't work, 3) the matter should be taken to the assembly. If the person continues in impenitence once the third stage is complete, he is to "be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector"—he is to be excommunicated. The individual can be readmitted to full communion once repentance occurs.

In verses 18 through 20, Jesus says, "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

This means that once the matter is confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses (verse 16), then it is settled, and the disciplinary action to follow will have divine approval (settled, or "bound" on earth and in heaven). The matter is brought before the assembly ("church") because the sin is obviously public in nature. (A private matter would not be brought before the church.) But if the offender repents even at this late stage, he will be "loosed" from the necessity of further disciplinary action.

Approximately 50 Celebrate Pentecost in Auburndale

On June 16, 2024, the Auburndale, Florida CGI hosted the Pentecost service with approximately 50 people in attendance. Some of our visitors traveled from as far as Georgia and Mississippi to be with us for this special day.

The offertory was given by Pastor Morgan Pinkerman, and the sermon was delivered by visiting pastor Ben Faulkner.

We had a wide range of music, including a guitar performance of an

original song from Caleb Collins for the offertory, and special music by a long-time friend and visitor from Georgia, Miriam Moreno.

The sermon was entitled “Some Ramifications of that Day” and provided much information about the aftermath from the events that occurred on that original Pentecost day so long ago.

After services we had a lovely potluck with much fellowship.

Pam Barnes



Two Ordinations—a Double Blessing—for the St. Petersburg Congregation

The St. Petersburg CGI Congregation was recently doubly blessed by the ordination of two servants of God. On May 11, 2024, Mr. Winston Byfield was ordained a deacon, and on June 8, 2024, Ms. Jenny Orgel was ordained a deaconess by the local pastor, Mr. Morgan Pinkerman. Mr. Byfield moved to Florida in October 2014 and started attending the CGI congregation in St. Petersburg, FL, that same year. He initially attended the CGI Church in

Kingston, Jamaica, in 1990, and was baptized at the Feast of Tabernacles in Ocho Rios in 1991. Ms. Orgel originally hails from Geneva, Ohio, where she started attending the CGI church in Bath, Ohio, in 1985 with her parents, Rita and the late John Orgel. She also was baptized at the Feast of Tabernacles during September 1994 in French Lick, Indiana. In 2019 Ms. Orgel moved to Bradenton, Florida, and started attending the St. Petersburg CGI

Congregation.

Each ordination was celebrated with food and fellowship by the St. Petersburg CGI Congregation. On June 8, however, there was a double celebration because it was Ms. Orgel’s birthday. As always, Ms. Orgel was helping to serve the brethren by recording the message and organizing the food. Mr. Byfield expounded on God’s Word in a sermonette and praised God with song and word. Mr. Byfield and Ms. Orgel

revealed some of their Godly inspiration through their favorite scriptures. Ms. Orgel cited Proverbs 3:5, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart...,” and Mr. Byfield quoted Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me...” The St. Petersburg CGI congregation is truly blessed by having these humble servants in the body of their church.

Brenda Pinkerman



Left to Right: Vicki Roy, Mike Roy, Winston Byfield, Morgan Pinkerman



Left to Right: Vicki Roy, Mike Roy, Winston Byfield, Jenny Orgel, Morgan Pinkerman



Mykala Buchanan, daughter of Clifton Buchanan, pastor of the Houston, Texas CGI congregation, was baptized on May 18, 2024. *Congratulations Mykala!*



What’s going on in your local church area? Combined services? Public Bible studies? Potlucks? Church activities? Celebrations? Memorials? Visiting ministers? Baptisms? Ordinations? Evangelistic campaigns? Birth or death announcements? Let us know, and perhaps we can publish it in *The International News*. We’d love to hear from you!

The Editor



Have a Wonderful Feast of Tabernacles!



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