



# THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

The Official Newspaper of the Church of God International

Vol. 39, No. 4

*"Put on the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:13) at*

Winter 2018

## Is Our Christian Example Respectful?



Bill Watson

*Years ago Aretha Franklin, the queen of soul, came out with a song appealing for some "R.e.s.p.e.c.t.," describing its importance within a relationship. And though it plainly was about the bonding between two people, the message was clear: in order for it to work, respect is important. Do we show respect to the relationships we have?*

by Bill Watson

**R**espect can be hard to come by, simply because sometimes our expectations are so high that we don't recognize when it's warranted.

Interestingly enough, in the book *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*, by John Gray, this fundamental gender difference in nature and outlook is described throughout the chapters. The book points out how men care about competence and achievement, while women care about feelings. He explores some details, explaining for men it's about respect and validation, compared to the more emotional needs women seem to have.

Generally, this is true in life. It's not uncommon for expectations to go unmet due to fundamental differences of understanding, or needs that each may have, but are not recognized correctly; instead, they are ignored, misread or misunderstood—and the result is, opportunities to connect and unify are *missed*. But how does *respect* play into this human interaction?

What I'm suggesting is, there are certain rules of *social behaviors* that all of us attend to that put particular behavioral patterns into play. We all strive and perhaps struggle, depending on how much of a "stretch" it may be outside our comfort level, or education, training, or familiarity, with the demands of the situation. But if we respect the situation or conditions, we will conform—or at least we should!

For instance, many of us would be unfamiliar with the etiquette involved in meeting and sharing a meal with royalty at Buckingham Palace unless we were trained or advised about it. Some of us would not know how to prepare for a five day combination hiking and camping trip in the wilderness, unless we were tutored or had someone coach or guide us through the preparation and experience.

There is much to consider when engaging in something that requires specifics to correctly function within the boundaries, unless of course, you don't respect the rule of *propriety* and *order*. In the case of the wilderness hiking and camping trip, depending on where it might be, you

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### The Meaning and Expression of Respect

What does the word "respect" mean in simple terms? According to the dictionary, it's defined as: *a positive feeling or action shown towards someone or something considered important, or held in high esteem or regard; it conveys a sense of admiration for good or valuable qualities; and it is also the process of honoring someone by exhibiting care, concern, or consideration for their needs or feelings.*

It can be a noun or a verb, and usually falls into three different categories, such as: 1) To feel or show deferential regard or esteem; 2) To avoid violation of or interference with; respect for the rule of law; and 3) To relate or refer to; concern.

In the areas mentioned above, it becomes plain to see that *respect* is very important when certain circumstances call for this kind of regard. Otherwise, due to the situation and the etiquette required for relating to the conditions, you might run the risk of embarrassing yourself and those you're with. This could be quite humiliating for yourself and those you care about, depending on the circumstances.

You can only imagine how you might feel arriving at a function and not being properly dressed, or not prepared with the appropriate information or gift, or lacking something that's expected from you upon your arrival. This would be rather awkward indeed, uncomfortable, and depending on just what it is, embarrassing, or possibly even shameful to you or others involved. At least you would think this effect would occur—assuming, of course, you care enough and respect the rules of *propriety* and the associated *etiquette* that goes along with it.

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## Open Church Policy

The *Church of God International* is an open church.

**W**e have many people attending who are *new* in the faith. Some will not always keep each of God's laws as they should, and some will not believe everything we teach. We pray that they may be strengthened through the services we render and the examples we set as they come to a closer walk with their God. **We request that you be neither judgmental nor base your standard for obedience on what you see your brother do.** Christ is our standard, not weak and sinful men. Always remember that you will be judged for what *you* do, not what others do. Your job is to pray for them, set the right example, and please the Father in all that you do. Ω

## — 2019 Holy Day Calendar —

### New Testament Passover

April 18, 2019  
(Observed at sundown)

### Feast of Unleavened Bread

April 20–26, 2019

### Pentecost

June 9, 2019

### Feast of Trumpets

September 30, 2019

### Day of Atonement

October 9, 2019

### Feast of Tabernacles

October 14–20, 2019

### Last Great Day

October 21, 2019

Holy days are observed beginning sundown the previous evening and end at sundown on the days listed. Passover is observed at sundown on the day listed.

## Notice!

- It is the desire of the staff to publish *The International News* quarterly. We can do this only if *you*, the reader, help by submitting timely articles, reports, and pictures.
- With few exceptions, submissions should be from 800–1000 words in ether .doc, docx, rtf, or .txt format.
- Submissions may be sent either to [vancestinson@cgi.org](mailto:vancestinson@cgi.org) or [lloydcary@gmail.com](mailto:lloydcary@gmail.com) or, preferably, to *both*.

**DEADLINE** for the *next* issue is  
**February 15<sup>th</sup> 2019.**



We look forward to seeing you soon... *in print!*

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“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19–20).

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**THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS**  
**3900 TIMMS ST., TYLER, TX 75701**

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could put yourself in harm's way by *disrespecting* the safety and survival demands of the conditions.

By the same token, you could embarrass yourself and those with you if you don't take into consideration the social etiquette that a particular event may call for. An example of this is funerals, which call for a different demeanor than how you might behave, talk, or dress when tailgating at a college or NFL football game. The way you dress and look will distinctly be different when attending your child's graduation, compared to what you might wear at the beach or to bed. I'm sure your behavior would be at its best respectful footing if pulled over by a law enforcement officer. I'm sure we'd all agree that this is all just *common sense*!

**Something to Ponder**

Yet, as hard as it might be to believe, some in God's church seem to occasionally lack good old *common sense*. How many times have I traveled to a church area, when attending services, to see eating and drinking going on while the song service or sermon is being conducted! How many times have you seen the appearance of certain brethren among us dressed in such a casual fashion that frankly, it's not only an embarrassment to them, but to the congregation they represent?

The question becomes, where is the *R.E.S.P.E.C.T.* for the *reality* of coming before God? Could it be that *maybe*—just maybe—the actual *reality* of being before God *isn't real enough* to compel those who can't seem to conform to the required social etiquette that a *worship service* demands? And if that's the case, could we actually suspect our demeanor, appearance, and of course behavior, or attitude has an effect on illustrating the *quality*, or *lack thereof*, concerning this spiritual characteristic called *respect* we should have toward God and His church?

Now I know this can be a very *sensitive* subject in this postmodern day and age of "moral relativism." Many will argue it's not the appearance of a person, or the things he or she has that makes him or her more acceptable to God, but what's in his or her heart. That's what matters, and we get that. There's no argument here! I have no doubt God looks upon the heart for His determinations and assessments of where we are in our relationship with Him (Luke 12:15 and 1 Timothy 6:6-7).

But in all due respect, that doesn't dismiss the fact "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). So, all I'm saying, could it be—is there a possibility—that there's something *deeper* going on that causes us to fail in exercising the *respect for decorum* when coming before the Almighty, the Living God of the universe? I'd like to ask us to be brutally honest with ourselves as we face new demands, which are actually opportunities, when growing in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ—as *suming* we are indeed *growing*!

Admittedly, the next verse in Jeremiah is interesting also, because it presents something else for our consideration. Notice: "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:10). Remember, *lacking respect* for the task, place, or person it demands, can jeopardize you in many ways, running the risk of embarrassment, unnecessary criticism, penalties, and perhaps risking harm to your health or life. Paul reminds us: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Corinthians 13:11). The real question is, can we improve on what we have been doing?

We are told, be renewed in our minds by the Holy Spirit. This is where change occurs, and new found "respect" for God begins. The catalysts of change in our lives comes from opportunities God places before us to serve our *growth* in spiritual awareness and character, which includes *respect* for things we didn't respect before! And when that happens, things should begin to change—hopefully for the better—both within and without!

What used to be first and foremost on our minds now begins to take a "back seat" because it's not about *our* will, but God's will in our lives being what's most important—glorifying Him in what we think, say, and do! Getting away from the "vain glory" that drove us before (Galatians 5:26). Notice what Paul says to the Christians at Colossae: "If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above... Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1-2).

He then continues and lists some additional items we need to change that are counterproductive to our Christian walk. But interestingly, embedded in

that list is something I want you to notice: "...Mortify [subdue, deaden] therefore your members which are upon the earth; ...and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5). Paul is appealing to us that we need to *subdue covetousness*, but why? Why is this so important, and how does covetousness become, or translate into *idolatry*?

**A Perspective For All to Consider**

*Covetousness* has many faces. It takes on many forms that can be very subtle and without us even knowing, *victimize* even the best of us. It's not hard to begin thinking we are something greater than that which we are. Life has a way of supporting and reinforcing our egos, which can lead to feeding our vanity, causing us to think *we* are what the people want, or it's what *we* do that is what the people need. And before you know it, we begin thinking it's about *us* rather than Jesus Christ *in us*.

Paul cautions us against this, notice: "For I say, through the grace given to me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

This is a most important *self actualization*, especially in light of the rise in narcissism. All of us should reflect on ourselves and be openly honest on just how much we want from life, and most importantly, the extent we will go in order to *get* what it is we want. We are by nature prone to covet. We want attention, to be liked, and in control, comfortable, and satisfied. And many will go to great extremes to get what they are after. The nuances of this type of idolatry that is driven by covetousness can potentially manifest some of the most unbelievable conditions and circumstances in people's lives and attitudes that if you weren't well grounded, you'd think you're living in "Wonderland." Vanity is one of Satan's favorite means that cause us to sin, because it's so easy to manipulate by exploiting our proclivities to covet.

What people will do to maintain control, power, status, or obtain the attention, recognition, or reputation they crave, is frankly and simply astounding, as to the extent certain individuals will go to gain the spotlight, or to accomplish their "end game" goal! Undoubtedly, it is so often clearly a *game* to those driven by this kind of covetousness, which is nothing more than idolatry—self adoration and attention grabbing, as Paul mentioned. But

sadly, people have a hard time recognizing it as such because they are blinded by their own vanity! Paul cautions us, notice: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory [self conceit]; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

The apostle John mentioned the "pride of life" (1 John 2:16) is indeed a stumbling block within our nature that blinds us to the godliness we aspire to. This pride, if left unchecked, can lead to a self-deceived outlook that can become delusional if personally allowed or enabled by others. Notice: "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But,

[instead] let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden" (Galatians 6:3-5).

What is Paul implying here? It's simple—it's all about results. Christ said you shall know them by their fruits. Are they genuine, or are they *performers*—people pleasers—looking for attention and admiration by stirring up reaction for their own glory, looking to be liked and accepted, while forgetting they represent Christ in every moment of their lives? When we depart from the *decorum of respect* where specific etiquette is required for God's glory, we need to ask ourselves *why*—what is it that makes us think the way we look, act, speak, or feel in this moment of departure, is pleasing to God?

Why are we doing what we're doing? Why would I go to church looking like I'm going to a football tailgate party? Why would I come before God unkempt, dirty, and smelling of body odor? Why would I take a drink or food into the sanctuary during the worship service? What is it that causes me to *resist* conforming to the etiquette of *respect* and subdue, mortify, my covetousness ways—my will—in the presence of God, who deserves my best appearance and behavior? Could it be, I'm thinking that I'm "something" when I'm not? Could it be we're searching for our own glory, or insisting on worshipping God on our own terms because our ego is out of control (Proverbs 25:27-28)? I'm just asking to consider some things—and of course there are exceptions to be considered. But I'm addressing those of us who are *not* exceptions.

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# My Journey to Christianity

by Jaheem Greene

I wasn't always a believer. As a matter of fact, it wasn't until just last year, 2017, when I decided to become a Christian.

When did my love for the Bible first start? When and why did I decide to become a Christian, and was it the right choice?

First of all, a bit about myself. My name is Jaheem Greene, I'm from a small Caribbean island called Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

When I was younger, I never really believed in God. I knew He existed, but I wasn't really a religious person. This may have come as a surprise for many members of my community, as every Sunday they would see me on my way to and from church. While my family believed and based their lives on godly principles, I, on the contrary, wasn't really a believer. I must admit I was negatively influenced by the Internet. There, I saw tons of articles such as *Top 10 Reasons Why God Doesn't Exist* or *God Doesn't Exist* and *Does God Exist?* I'm ashamed to say now that I read and believed those articles. At that young age I was gullible, easily persuaded, and believed anything an adult said. This, without a doubt, almost took the best things in this entire world from me, God. As the days went by, I started to believe that God did not exist and slowly stopped going to church, as I saw no point in going. Eventually, I stopped going completely.

One Sunday evening, my pastor visited my home to speak with me. He must have noticed I stopped attending church. His church is fairly large and often full, but I was one of the persons who would normally arrive to church very early. It's quite obvious he would have known when I stopped attending church. I told him that I no longer believed in God and explained to him my reasons. He was very understanding and considerate, something I honestly did not expect. At the end of our conversation, he asked me for one simple favour:

"I want you to do me a simple favour son, I want you to read the Bible, one chapter per day; let God's Word speak to you..."

From that day, even though my beliefs and faith were on shaky ground, I listened to him, as I respected my pastor.

I decided to sacrifice two hours every day to read through at least one chapter. I wrote down any questions that I had, and my pastor was always delighted to answer all the questions I asked him. He also clarified anything I did not understand in the passage. From that moment, from doing something as small as that, it changed my life.

I can't explain it, but after reading the Bible, I always felt good inside. I always used to view the Bible, when I was younger, as another boring book without pictures, but I never really knew the true power of this Holy Book until now. I started off reading the Bible because my pastor told me to read it, and I became truly interested. Of the Bible stories that I have read, the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) is by far my favorite. After his son wasted all his inheritance, the father still welcomed him back with open arms.

In the past, I was somewhat a trouble maker. As a child growing up, I always got myself into trouble. But ever since I started attending Bible Study groups, I now feel that I have a purpose in life, to serve God. This Bible really changed me for the better. I received tons of positive comments about how much I've changed.

As the days went by, I took another step and started to attend



church. I took what I learned at heart. I gave my heart to Christ on the 9th of June, 2017, one day before my birthday. It's the least I can do, He has done so much for me. He was beaten, spat on, and nailed to the cross. All this for me? If this is not love, then I honestly don't know what is. I can only imagine how terrible being beaten with whips that contain blades and being forced to carry such a big and heavy cross must have felt; a stubbed toe would have me wailing in pain. At times, I feel ashamed when I call God's name, since in the past I did not

believed in Him. After all He had done for me, after all the pain and suffering He had gone through just to set me, a sinner, free. But one thing I and every other Christian loves about God is that He is merciful, He will always be there with open arms to help you, once you believe in Him. After years of me turning my back to God, He was still there every step of the way with open arms to help me. After all I have done, I know God has forgiven me and I know He still loves me.

In the end, I must say that it was the right choice, the best decision I have ever made in my life. God is the light. I'm glad that He took me from the path of destruction and led me in the right direction. You are an amazing God, there is no word I know that can describe how powerful, forgiving, and awesome you are. I am so happy that God sent my pastor to lead me in the right direction. The Internet truly is one of the tools of the devil.

For those of you reading this, I want you to have a blessed and prosperous day. Ω

## Sparks/Ignite/Infuse News

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**H**ello everyone, just want to update you on what is happening with our children and young adult programs. The *Infuse* Leadership Team and the *Ignite* and *Sparks* Team held some online and face-to-face meetings to discuss plans for the upcoming year.

The *Sparks* program is still getting established, but we are planning to create a template for all our Sabbath School lessons. These lessons will be transferred to our websites, where they can be downloaded for all our church and fellowship groups to use. We are also working on Feast lessons for the coming year.

The *Ignite* program now has a website that we will be linking to our *Infuse* site and the national church site.

*Infuse* held their first meeting for the upcoming year in late October. *Infuse* intends on planning another retreat next year and having programs at some of our Feast sites. We are also looking for new volunteers for *Infuse*.

If you can help with any of these programs, please email [Mhames6043@yahoo.com](mailto:Mhames6043@yahoo.com). More details will follow in the next *International News*. Ω Submitted by Mike James



# Blessed Are They That Mourn

by George Roper

**I**n the body of Christ, we are all individually schooled and disciplined by God the Father through His spirit. Eventually, we reach a point in our training where the successive lesson plans of life culminate. No further tutelage is administered. Instead, as students of Christ, having been deemed to have completed our curriculum, we graduate on and await the resurrection. The learning trajectory that accompanies life is a process that we all undergo. Yet, coping with the passing of our friends and loved ones in the interim, is a learning experience unto itself. When those who are important to us pass away, we remain behind as we continue in the faith without them. In the days and years that follow, we are left to reconstruct and fortify our lives apart from our loved ones. We put many introspective and existential questions to ourselves until we reach a resolve that enables us to perform life's activities untethered by our loss. The allotted time for this process varies for every individual. Commonly referred to as the bereavement period, or simply as dealing with grief, this period is challenging, even for members of God's family.

The misconception that knowing God's truths somehow makes it so that life's experiences will not hurt can catch many of us off guard. Indeed, knowing God's truths does impart a degree of security and comfort that those in the world lack during times of crises. Although the degree of trauma to us may be mitigated because of our understanding, our adverse experiences still hurt. Adhering to God's truths ultimately leads to eternal life, but we will still experience constructive pain now. Operating on a similar premise would be the use of a bullet proof vest. A bullet proof vest protects the wearer from a bullet penetrating through the vest, into the body and ripping apart the internal organs. The vest will save the wearer's life. Yet, being struck with a bullet while shielded by protective body armor proves to still hurt. Some of the injuries sustained to the wearer when a bullet impacts the bullet proof vest are bruises, collapsed lungs, and broken ribs. Yet, the wearer's life is preserved. Likewise, pain from a personal loss, in spite of our spiritual heritage, remains for us to process.

One of the things we find during the bereavement process is that an overall adjustment takes time. How much time varies from person to person and the circumstances of loss. Whether it be our own impression or the opinion of others, we often entertain the notion that we should recover within an allocated amount of time. One account in nature that reflects the patience that we are to have with ourselves and those who have suffered a loss, is that of the Chinese bamboo tree. When planted as a seed, the Chinese bamboo tree requires consistent nurturing by way of fertile soil, water, and sunlight. Despite those provisions, no growth is immediately seen. One year elapses, with no foliage breaking ground. Two years proceed by, and still no vegetation is apparent. Three years pass with no evidence of any change. All the while, there is a continuance of fertilizing, watering, and exposure to sunlight. The fourth year advances in much the same manner. Yet, in the fifth year, the tree sprouts, growing 90 feet (27 m) in six weeks. In the span of five years, the tree, which initially appeared to be dormant, was actually developing a substantial root system apart from what the eye could see. The complex system of roots being established served to allow the tree to emerge. In like manner, over time as we grieve, we are implementing an infrastructure within ourselves that calibrates our loss. Although this abstract process is not visible to others, it should be allowed to take its course. In so doing, a reformed version of ourselves that is able to accommodate our grief can come forward.

This evolution in our grief is not a lone venture. Just as the bamboo seedling required the presence of fertile soil, water, and sunlight for the tree to manifest, so we, too, need ancillary support as we mend. Contributions of time and company to the bereaved are crucial in the wake of a loss. Assistance with carrying out mundane tasks is also of value. After a loss and the memorial services that follow, the initial outpouring of support tends to subside. It is at this point and thereafter, for the foreseeable future, that our benevolence is most needed. Tending to the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ is an ongoing affair. It should not be limited just to the immediate space of time following a loss. In implementing such a response, new relationships are formed and the dynamics of current standing relationships become stronger.

In the aftermath of a passing, we tend to take inventory of our relationships, both past and present. The relationship that often receives the most scrutiny is the one that we have with God. Particularly during a time of loss, we struggle to understand why God chooses to work with us in the way that He does. We attempt to itemize the occurrences in our life and ascertain why one course of action was followed as opposed to another. God addressed this concern when he spoke:

“Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth? Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me” (Isaiah 45:9–11).

Inevitably, we have questions. However, the scheme of life that we find ourselves in, which God governs, is too complex for us to adequately understand. In lieu of critiquing God's actions, we should instead have confidence that God knows what He is doing. Paul pointed out that our foresight should be based on our faith in God, as opposed to our own narrative.

“For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). We should trust our Father's judgement. Mark Twain, an American writer, once said of his father, “When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years.” Mark Twain facetiously recognized that he didn't understand his father's wisdom, but when he came into maturity, he saw that he was the one who had evolved through his own experiences. Presently, we may not be cognizant of the lessons we are learning. When we come into the fullness of what we shall be, then we will have a better grasp of our upbringing. Likewise, we must recognize that our comprehension is lacking, and our experiences, even the painful ones, are platforms for edification.

The learning curve of life is something that we all experience. Inevitably, grief is a part of that exposure. It is in our grief that we become ever more reflective and receptive to godly admonition. The writer of Ecclesiastes expressed this sentiment in saying:

“Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better” (Ecclesiastes 7:3).

The state of having a mindset that recognizes our need for God and a resolve that is unconditionally committed to God is crucial. Our life experiences are used toward that end. Thus, the ultimate conclusion to processing our grief, which we await, is being born into the family of God. Paul elaborated,

“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Romans 8:24–25).

As we seek to reach that primary goal, we also hope to attain secondary accomplishments en route. In our current afflictions, we patiently wait to become what we presently are not. We patiently wait to become one who has overcome their grief. We patiently wait to become one who has acclimated to their loss. We patiently wait to become one whose pains still in fact do resonate, but not as intensely as before. Christ spoke of this wait when he acknowledged,

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4).

In awaiting for these conditions to become our reality, let us take some comfort in knowing that we have these hopes to look forward to. Ω

## Notice!

- It is the desire of the staff to publish *The International News* quarterly. We can do this only if you, the reader, help by submitting timely articles, reports, and pictures.
- With few exceptions, submissions should be from 800-1000 words in ether .doc, rtf, or .txt format.
- Submissions may be sent either to [vancestinson.org](http://vancestinson.org) or [lloydccary@gmail.com](mailto:lloydccary@gmail.com)
- DEADLINE for the next issue is Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>. 2019.
- We look forward to seeing you in print!





## Be Ye Holy, For I Am Holy

by Murray Palmatier



Murray Palmatier

**A**s we complete another cycle of rehearsing God's great plan of salvation, pictured by the annual Festivals, we are busy settling back into our regular daily routines. Did this year's Festivals change you? Did you come away inspired to be different? To be better? To overcome a nagging character flaw? To serve God and your brethren a little better this year? To contribute a little more? To become more like Jesus Christ in character? This year, there is an extra month in the calendar, so the winter will seem a little longer before we gather for Passover and the spring Festival season. That just gives us a little more time to prepare ourselves for a more meaningful Passover! Allow me to share a lesson from this year's Feast of Tabernacles that impacted me.

Leviticus 23 is where we are introduced in a detailed way to the Sabbaths, both weekly and annual, that demand our focus and attention. When we go through this chapter, we see the word "convocation" used seven times. We understand this to refer to our gatherings to worship together each week, and each holy day. In addition to this, the Hebrew word also gives the connotation of "rehearsal." This makes sense to us when we consider that we are rehearsing God's plan and its various nuances whenever we gather.

"Convocation" is used seven times in Leviticus 23 and 19 times (either in singular or plural) in the Old Testament. Would it surprise you to know that every time this word is used, it is preceded by the descriptive word *holy*? As future kings and priests, God's "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people" (1 Peter 2:9), this should mean something to us. Furthermore, verses 2-4 in Leviticus 23 indicate that the *ENTIRE DAY* is a "holy convocation," not just the time we gather together. The entirety of the weekly and annual Sabbaths are rehearsals.

Exodus 3:5 serves as a clear reminder that coming into the presence of God is not something that should be taken lightly. We have just seen that the 24-hour Sabbath period is entirely *HOLY*, and belongs to God. When we "convocate," either together at a worship service, or in smaller groups of brethren or family, or even alone, on the Sabbath, we are coming into the presence of God, during holy time. How do we prepare ourselves to be in the presence of God? As part of a lengthy teaching, Peter, in 1 Peter 1:16, quotes from the Torah (Leviticus 11:45, among other places) with the admonition from God to "Be you holy; for I am holy."

If you were called into a meeting with your boss, teacher, professor, or business owner, how detailed would your preparations be? Would you be on time, or even early? Would you get enough sleep the night before to be sure you were alert and ready to interact? Would you dress appropriately to meet the expectations of the workplace? Would you be prepared mentally? Would your behaviour in the workplace reflect your appreciation for his or her time, and for the trust they place in you as a student or employee? Would you treat those you come into contact with in the respectful manner that is expected? The answers to these questions seem obvious. How much more so should our behaviour, manners, dress, and attention to personal details be when coming before God?

So often over the years, I have heard prayers inviting God to be present at the worship service. I know I have uttered similar sentiments. I think we have it backwards. God has invited us into His presence during these holy convocation periods. Are we prepared to come before God in a holy manner? How does our behaviour reflect our preparation for and observance of this very holy time?

This year, I urge you to consider what it means to "be holy." Study the account of Achan in Joshua chapter seven, and note how one person's actions brought a curse upon the entire assembly. Being holy matters. Preparing to come into God's presence matters. Your brothers and sisters are counting on you, and you are counting on them!  $\Omega$

**"BE YE HOLY"**  
1 PET. 1:13-16

HOLY-TH - SET APART FOR GOD, TO BE AS IT WERE, EXCLUSIVELY HIS. YOUNG - SEPARATE, SET APART.  
HOLINESS - TH - MORAL PURITY. YOUNG - SEPARATION, SETTING APART

WORLD OF SIN - LUST  
DISOBEDIENCE  
REBELLION  
CORRUPTION  
MILLIONS

2 PET. 1:4

**CALLLED**  
WITH AN HOLY CALLING - 2 TIM. 1:9-11  
OUT OF DARKNESS INTO LIGHT - 1 PET. 2:9  
UNTO HOLINESS - 1 THESS. 4:7  
BY THE GOSPEL - 2 THESS. 2:14  
SO NOT OF WORLD - 10. 15-19; 17:14-17

**CHRISTIANS ARE:**  
ELECT & HOLY - COL. 3:12, 13  
HOLY BRETHREN - HEB. 3:1, 2  
TO BE HOLY - 1 PET. 1:13-16; 1 JON. 2:15-17  
TO BE SERVANTS UNTO HOLINESS - ROM. 6:19-22  
TO BE HOLY & UNBLAMEABLE - COL. 1:21, 22; EPH. 1:34  
TO BE HOLY & WITHOUT BLEMISH - EPH. 5:25-27  
TO PRESENT BODIES HOLY - ROM. 12:1, 2  
NOT TO DEFILE HOLY TEMPLE - 1 COR. 3:16, 17  
AN HOLY PRIESTHOOD - NATION - 1 PET. 2:5, 9  
TO FOLLOW HOLINESS - HEB. 12:14  
TO PERFECT HOLINESS - 2 COR. 7:1  
TO HAVE HEART STABLISHED IN HOLINESS - 1 THESS. 3:12, 13



## Do We Really Need God?

by Horane Smith



Horane Smith

**O**ur desires become a problem when we start putting the cart before the horse, so to speak. We start to play our own gods and pretend we need nothing from our Maker because we can do it by ourselves. Sad to say, but this has been a trend we have been pursuing since the dawn of civilization.

It began first with the action of the archangel Lucifer, whose desire was, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:13).

Lucifer did not need God anymore. He wanted to be "like the Most High." That attitude has spiralled down the ages to our current situation. We see that behavioral pattern in our everyday lives—from governments to institutions, and from institutions to the home, and from the home to individuals. But there is a price to pay to the nations that forget God. Psalm 9:16: "The LORD has made Himself known; He has executed judgment. In the work of his own hands the wicked is snared. The wicked will return to Sheol, Even all the nations who forget God." Proverbs 14:34 says, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

As for individuals, the punishment is harsh: "These things you have done and I kept silence; You thought that I was just like you; I will reprove you and state the case in order before your eyes. Now consider this, you who forget God, Or I will tear you in pieces, and there will be none to deliver" (Psalm 50:21-22).

As for our leaders, much is expected. Second Chronicles 28:19: "For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD."

We have witnessed the good times, when economies are flourishing, when there is some semblance of peace in certain areas. People are living longer because of advances in medicine, and technology has made us forget how challenging life could be without the latest gadgets, but God is not in the picture. The God who sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die for the sins of the world, is often ridiculed more than how people praised Him during these "good times."

We can recall how people flocked to churches after the Twin Towers came tumbling down on 9/11. Once the immediate effects began to peter out, God was not in the picture anymore. But should there be a disaster of any kind, the often heard question is: "Where was God?"

Isaiah 59:1 answers those concerns: "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken falsehood, Your tongue mutters wickedness."

In times gone by, governments, institutions, and people would respect the God of the Bible, and sought to seek His guidance and direction; but in this politically correct world, they refrain from calling on Him. If they do, God is not called by name or distinguished from the others gods, but could be any person or thing.

The time is coming, the Bible warns, "...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in blazing fire. He will inflict vengeance on those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the penalty of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His might" (2 Thessalonians 1:7). In Jeremiah 10:25, "Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You. And on the families that do not call Your name." Isaiah 1:28: "But transgressors and sinners will be crushed together, And those who forsake the LORD will come to an end."

Those who are too proud to acknowledge God, the bright minds who believe they don't need Him, even if He exists; those who know Him and refuse to repent and surrender to Him, and those who behave as if they are gods, they will have to bow before the Eternal, whether they like it or not. The truth is, it does not matter what you believe, because Jesus Christ is returning to establish His everlasting kingdom soon, and nothing can stop it.

Romans 14:11-12: "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more..." We all need God! Life would be impossible without Him! In the fullness of time, humanity will come to realize that fact!  $\Omega$



# Are All Professing Christians Christians?

by Jimmy Meek  
Jackson, Tennessee CGI

**A**ccording to *Webster's Dictionary*, a Christian is 1) a person professing belief in Jesus as Christ, or in religion based on the teachings of Jesus; and 2) a decent and respectable person professing religion based on the teachings and qualities demonstrated and taught by Jesus Christ, such as: love, kindness and being humane. IS IT TRUE? Is this the *Bible* definition of a true Christian?

We *all* know people who demonstrate self respect, respect for others, love, kindness, generosity, etc. The society around us, including our fellow citizens, neighbors, and even our relatives claim to be Christian people. Our nation claims to be a Christian nation built upon the teachings of Jesus Himself, *but are we?*

First Peter 2:21 (KJV) says, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." To be Christ-like, we must follow His example.

He was kind, gentle, compassionate, and the essence of love in all things. To follow His example, we must do as He did and as He instructs us to do in His inspired word.

The Scripture tells us that followers of Christ were first called Christians in the Church of God at Antioch (Acts 11:26). These Christians assembled on the seventh day of the week, as all congregations of God faithfully practiced. The professing Christians of our nation today assemble on the first day of the week, regardless of the fact that there are no scriptures, commands, or suggestions stating that the seventh day Sabbath be changed to the first day of the week. The fact remains that true followers of Christ met and continue to meet on the seventh day. There is a difference between those who follow the example of Christ and those who go their own way. We are told in Proverbs 24:21, "... and meddle not with them that are given to change" (compare Daniel 7:25). Things different are *not* the same.

## Things different are not the same!

The seventh-day Sabbath is only one of the many differences observed as Christianity today, as an example set by Jesus and His followers.

In Leviticus 23, we find a list of annual holy days which God proclaims to be His days, and not Jewish inventions. The Scriptures proclaim these days belong to God. In John chapter seven, we find Jesus and the apostles observing the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. In John 7:37, we find Jesus observing the Feast of the Last Great Day. This is the eighth day spoken of in Leviticus 23:36.

In Acts 20:16, we find Paul in a great haste to get to Jerusalem to observe the annual Feast of Pentecost. Over and over again, we find the apostles and the early church observing God's holy days.

In Leviticus 11 and again in Deuteronomy 14, the dietary laws are given to God's people. God made a distinction between the clean and unclean animals. He explained how to identify the clean from the unclean. These health laws were observed by the people of ancient Israel, as well as Jesus and the early church.

In Acts 10, after Peter saw the vision of the vessel containing unclean animals and hearing a voice telling him to kill and eat, Peter replied (verse 14), "Not so Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." It is clear that up to that time, Peter was in obedience to the food laws. Again in chapter 11 of Acts, Peter retells the account to the Jews in Jerusalem. Peter states again in verse eight, "But I said, not so Lord, for nothing common or unclean has at anytime entered into my mouth." Peter, along with the Christian church, had always obeyed health laws, and he wondered what it was that God was actually relating to him.

In Acts 10:28, Peter was given the answer to the vision concerning the unclean animals. Peter said to them, "And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any *man* common or unclean." God was simply granting the opportunity for salvation to the Gentiles. The Church of God, which represents true Christians today, continues to observe the health laws given by the eternal God.

What is accepted as Christianity in the world today teaches that the law contained in the Ten Commandments has been abolished. This is a direct contradiction to what Jesus says in Matthew 5:18: "Think *not* that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew

5:17-18). The true Church of God today observes the Ten Commandments as well as the underlying principles contained in each law.

The professing Christians outside the Church of God today observe the first day of the week as their day of worship instead of the seventh day, as God instructs. Also, they observe traditional holidays: Christmas, Easter, Halloween, and so on (Mark 7:13). They reject the annual Feast days, which Jesus and the early church faithfully attended in their seasons. Also, they reject the health laws and eat unclean meats, such as catfish, pork, and seafood. These types of meats are not meant to be consumed by the human body. According to these deceived people, the seventh-day Sabbath, the health laws, and the Ten Commandments are no longer in effect. (Be sure to request our free publications, *Why We Keep the Law* [WKL], *The Ten Commandments* [TNC], and *How to Be a Real Christian* [REL].)

The distance between the one true church and many religions and denominations of professing Christian movements in the world becomes even greater when we consider the Gospel and work of the early church.

In Matthew 4:23, the Scripture states that Jesus was preaching the Gospel (the Good News) of the coming Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is not in a human heart, as some teach. The Kingdom will be on this earth as Revelation 5:10 teaches. The priesthood will rule and reign on the earth, under the direction of Jesus. Nowhere in Scripture is it stated or indicated that people die and go to heaven (see John 3:13), where God dwells.

The differences between the true Church of God and what is called "Christianity" outside the true church are so vast that we cannot begin to cover them in a short article. The point is, oil and water will not mix. When we attempt to mix God's truth with the religions and false Christian movements of the world, the end result will always be confusion and division. The Scripture tells us in Revelation 3:11, "Behold I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take your crown." God's truth must not be mixed, mingled, or watered down (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:56 and Revelation 22:18-19).

IN RETURNING TO THE QUESTION, ARE ALL PROFESSING CHRISTIANS CHRISTIANS? THE ANSWER IS CLEARLY... *NO!* Ω

## In loving memory...



## Bob Thomas

**R**obert (Bob) Thomas, a member of the Toledo, Ohio congregation, was born on October 26, 1946, and died on October 22, 2018 of cancer, just four days short of his 72nd birthday. Pastor Wayne Hendrix gave the graveside service.

Bob's first contact with the *Church of God International* came in the 1990s when he attended a public Bible lecture in Toledo, given by the ministry of the Ohio area. It was not long before he was baptized, and proved to be a keen student of the Bible. He eventually began delivering sermonettes, often leaving the congregation laughing, and always further enlightened.

Bob was everyone's friend, and was always smiling, even through the many trials he endured. We miss you, Bob, and look forward to seeing you again in God's Kingdom. Ω

Submitted by Lloyd Cary



# The Vending Machine God

by Lloyd W. Cary

**L**ittle 10-year-old Tommy knelt down to pray. “OK, God,” he said, “I’m going to give You a chance to prove Yourself. I really *want* to believe in you, God. So when I wake up in the morning, if there is a million dollars under my bed, I’ll know You’re real and I’ll never doubt You again.”

Guess what? Tommy didn’t get the million dollars! But why not?

Perchance it was because he wanted the money more than he wanted God. Conceivably, too, it was because he expected it in one dollar bills and it couldn’t fit under his crowded bed. Perhaps Tommy assembled several out-of-context texts and misapplied them.

Almost certainly, though, the reason Tommy did not get the million dollars had more to do with a mistaken idea about God. Tommy imagined God to be like a coin operated candy machine—you deposit a prayer, push the right buttons, and *poof!*—your wish is fulfilled. He imagined God to be some kind of a Father Christmas figure who waited somewhere in space just waiting for Tommy’s prayer. Perhaps Tommy thought if he prayed enough and believed hard enough, God would deliver the goods.

That’s plausible for a child. Unfortunately, many people carry their “Vending Machine God” concept into adulthood with even greater expectations. “God, raise my deceased mother to life.” “God, let me win the billion-dollar lottery.” “God, give me a new car, a new home, and, oh yes, the perfect mate.” “Gimme, gimme, gimme” and so on. These kinds of prayers usually go no higher than the ceiling. The apostle Paul asks, “Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour” (Romans 9:21)?



## Spiritual Prayer Coins?

If our prayers were spiritual coins, how big a “prayer coin” should you use, for example, for a new bicycle or car? Would 10 or 15 minutes of prayer be enough to receive an answer? A week? A month? Be assured, it does not work that way.

God usually answers prayers in one of three ways: Sometimes, God says “Yes” right away. Sometimes, He says “No, that would not be good for you.” And sometimes He will say, “Not yet. *Wait* awhile; that will be fulfilled later”—perhaps in the Millennium.

Sometimes our perspective of God can be a bit skewed. To some, God appears to be like a gigantic vending machine, casually dispensing spiritual gifts and talents by our requests. But God is much more than just a vending machine!

God is not an automaton. Prayer is not currency. It is more than wishing. Prayer is a father/son or father/daughter relationship. Some may quote Jeremiah 33:3, “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” We must consider the *context*.

God loves to answer prayers. He even promises, “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear” (Isaiah 65:24).

But prayer is not a “magic coin” to be inserted into a spiritual vending machine, and faith is not a button you push and hope for the best. God is not your personal butler who submits to your every wish and whim. What is the balance? No matter how hard 10-year-old Tommy prayed for a million dollars, no matter how fervently he believed, he would not have found it under his bed the next morning. But not because God doesn’t love him. Not because God doesn’t answer prayer. Not because there was no room under his bed. The million bucks never came because Tommy was not really praying; he was coveting and wishing. Contrary to the “Father Christmas” myth, God is not some heavenly vending machine for the dispensing of gifts and favors.

Our heavenly Father transcends our petty wishes. He is Almighty God. He is love incarnate. He wants us to love *Him*, not things. He does not want to give us things that would not be good for us.

God has a *Plan* for you and for all people. It is revealed through His Sabbath and holy days. (Send for our free booklet, *God’s Seasonal Plan* [GSP].)

In the meantime, God has a *purpose* in your life. He has demands and expectations of you. He may be testing your patience, your obedience, or your faith. As His begotten son or daughter, He wants us to *grow, change, and overcome*, to put on the mind of Christ—to develop godly character. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:” (Philippians 2:5).

## Knocking Off the Rough Edges

Do *we* sometimes have a few “rough edges” in our character that need to be refined? God knows just how to knock them off. Why? “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 8:7, KJV). We need to allow God to form and shape us after *His* image. “But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand” (Isaiah 64:8). God is not finished with you yet! David was a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22) and wrote, “O how *love* I thy law! It is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97). There are those who would label this “legalism.”

False premise! I *want* to be legal with God, don’t you? “For this *IS* [Bible definition] the love of God, that we *KEEP* his commandments: and his commandments are *NOT* grievous” (1 John 5:3). Do love and obey God’s commandments? All *ten* of them?

God’s Word tells us, “EXAMINE YOURSELVES, whether ye be in the faith; *prove* your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates (2 Corinthians 13:5)? Request our free reprint article, *Which Old Testament Laws Apply Today?* [OTL] and our free CD, *Is the Law Only for the Jews?* [C915].

We need to divest ourselves of the childish “Vending Machine God” concept and “STUDY to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). “Watch ye therefore, AND PRAY ALWAYS, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36).

Some people would like prayer with NO CONDITIONS. They prefer God to be some kind of a celestial genie—a “Vending Machine God”—who, when summoned by prayer, *must* grant any request they make, and the sooner the better, or He is not God at all! In effect, they want to control God, making Him *our* servant.

To learn more about God and what your part can be in His plan for man, be sure to request our free booklets, *Twelve Things God Cannot Do*, and *Things To Do While Waiting For Jesus to Return* [WFI]. You’ll be surprised!

## Avoid the Vending Machine God Mentality

Don’t let your perspective of God be skewed. One man angrily thumped his Bible and declared, “God *owes* me!” He acted as though the vending machine cheated him out of his money. But God is *not* a vending machine. Prayer is not spiritual currency. Our relationship to God is not a matter of master and machine.

There are certain *conditions* we must meet before our prayers will be answered!

### The Seven Conditions to Answered Prayer

1. **Seek God’s Will (Matthew 6:10; Luke 22:42)**
2. **Believe God (John 14:1; Matthew 21:22)**
3. **Be Fervent (James 5:16; Acts 18:25)**
4. **Be Fearful and Humble (2 Chronicles 34:27; Isaiah 66:2)**
5. **Be Persistent (Psalm 55:17; Luke 18:5)**
6. **Be Obedient (1 Proverbs 28:9; John 3:22)**
7. **Correct Use of Christ’s Name (John 15:7; 16:23)**

If you follow these seven conditions consistently and from the heart, you will find that many more of your prayers will be heard and answered by a loving, caring, considerate divine Being who wants to grant our prayer requests!

Be sure to request our free booklet, *How To Be More Effective In Your Prayer Life* [YPL]. It contains sections on *Communicating With God*, *Why We Do Not Pray*, and contains *Seven Tools for a More Effective Prayer Life*, *God’s Promises*, and a handy *Daily Prayer Outline*. Ω

**“If ye love me, keep my commandments”  
(John 14:15).**



## Feast Report, 2018

### Feast of Tabernacles at St. Petersburg (Pinellas Park), Florida

**B**eautiful warm weather and great fellowship were abundant during the 2018 Feast of Tabernacles this year at St. Petersburg, Florida. Services were once again held at the newly renovated Pinellas Park Performing Arts Center, where for eight days we heard inspired and instructional sermons and sermonettes.

Due to the cancellation of the Myrtle Beach site because of Hurricane Florence, many brethren from South Carolina and Georgia joined us this year. During the Feast an average of 170 like-minded brethren attended services, with 193 being the highest attendance. All services and Bible Studies were also live streamed for the benefit of those who could not physically attend.

All throughout the Feast, inspiring presentations were given by Eliezer Flores, Alex Fontao, Dwight Harrison, Nelson Moreno, Mike Nolan, Morgan Pinkerman, Jeff Reed, Michael Roy, Larry Sharp, Bill Watson, Ray Wendle, and Kyle Wilkes. In addition, Jenna Boyd, Cole Granise, Beth Hester, Miriam Moreno, Mike Rogers, Jennings Pinkerman, Brenda Pinkerman, and Marge Watson performed a variety of songs for special music. The Feast Choir was superb, performing two beautiful songs.

This was complemented by three informative Bible Studies presented by Morgan Pinkerman, Jeff Reed, and Bill Watson.

Over 28 children attended a fun filled and instructional Bible Sabbath School program during the Feast. They also performed a beautiful and lively song during Youth Day services. Jayden Hendricks did a great job leading the services, while Zephaniah Henriques and Preston Collins did the opening and closing prayer, respectively. The Blessing of the Children was performed during the Youth Day service by the ministry. A special thank you to the Sabbath School teachers for all their hard work: Pam Barnes, Patty Fontao, Eileen Gonzalez, Stacey Harrison, Beth Hester, and Jennifer Moreno.

Activities included a *Senior Luncheon*, a *Family Bowling Night*, an afternoon of games and rides at *Celebration Station*, a *BBQ Cookout at the Park*, and a very fun *BBQ and Water Park Party* at the Holiday Inn. The main highlight of the social activities was the *Dinner Dance*, with lots of music, fellowship, good food, and of course lots of dancing. A last minute but very well attended *Fun Show* spotlighted lots of talent from all the performers. During the show, a variety of beautiful baskets full of wonderful gifts were raffled, with all the proceeds going to the *Church of God International's Infuse* program. It was a great spiritual Feast filled with love, fellowship, and opportunities to worship together, celebrating with brethren from different Church of God organizations in unity, as one body, which also included a baptism and two "Laying on of Hands" ceremonies.

Thanks to all who contributed and volunteered their services in so many capacities, especially to Alex Fontao and Larry and Richard Sharp for their technical expertise. And to all who attended at the St. Pete site, a big THANKS to all of YOU for making this Feast of Tabernacles one that will truly be remembered! We look forward to seeing you next year again. Ω

Submitted by Eliezer Flores

*Respect, continued from page 3*

#### R.E.S.P.E.C.T. Is the Least We Can Extend

Recently, President Trump retorted to reporters on the front lawn of the White House, when departing on a recent trip to Europe, how they were acting *disrespectfully*. He appealed to these reporters to *respect* the office of the Presidency because they were breaking rules of etiquette. The questions asked were designed to insinuate he was of a certain opinion, or view on something, when in fact he wasn't, by his own admission. In other words, he was being accused of something he didn't agree with, or share in the way the question was framed.

Now right or wrong, as an individual, if we are accused of something we think is a mischaracterization of our position, those doing the accusing should respect the position we hold until proven otherwise. Accusations, insinuations, and suspected imputations as though they are true without any substantiation, or proof, is a disrespect of the rule of "innocent until proven guilty." And sadly, this is exactly what has been going on.

The most recent Supreme Court candidate, Justice Kavanaugh's hearings, spotlighted this misappropriation of jurisprudence. The whole procedure lacked the respect for truth and justice—instead, it included a *sordid* display of disrespect of the legal system where "truth" didn't matter. This was disrespectful toward the courts and legal system where truth should be the only thing allowed in the proceedings. And now the truth has recently come out that one of the women made up the whole accusation because she wanted attention! Well, shame on her for such disrespect! Yet, so many got on the bandwagon, and sadly embarrassed themselves during this disrespectful proceeding.

Respect for the things that merit honor is something every Christian



should be willing to recognize and conform to without any resistance. It should be a "no brainer" for those of us who hold God in high esteem. After all, He is the Almighty, the living God of the universe, the One who hangs the planets and stars in their place and has made man to become something potentially remarkable and ultimately destined to be considered sons of the God Family!

He claims, "I am YHVH, and there is none else, there is no ELOHIM beside Me: ...I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create adversity: I YHVH do all these things" (Isaiah 45:5-7). "All nations before him are as nothing: and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare unto him? ...It is he that sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretch out the heavens as a curtain, and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in: ...To whom then will you liken me, or shall I be equal? Says the Holy One" (Isaiah 40:17-25).

If we have a healthy grasp of just who our God really is, it shouldn't take much to be sure we take the time to "prepare" ourselves physically and spiritually for the weekly Sabbath and holy day worship services He commands and expects us to attend. It should be compelling and motivating to get into our "zone of worship" when realizing we are going before the very God that is responsible for everything, including being the beneficiaries of His salvation program. It shouldn't be difficult, or even a struggle to put down our food and drink for this worship time and put on our best for Him and those we fellowship with. After all, it is to His glory and out of due respect *for Him* we take the opportunity to express our deep appreciation and gratitude in our worship services. Let *His* will be done as opposed to ours in our life, lest we find ourselves falling victim to the *idolatry* of *covetousness* and *vainglory*. Ω



## Feast Report, 2018

### Feast of Tabernacles in Harrison, Arkansas

**W**e had beautiful weather in the Ozarks for the Feast of Tabernacles in Harrison, Arkansas. The Durand Center was the perfect place for the Feast, with plenty of space to fellowship. Sunday evening started with a short opening service and a “meet and greet” in the lobby of the Durand Center. It was good to see old friends and get acquainted with new ones.

Throughout the eight days, we had inspiring and uplifting sermons, followed by a lot of fellowship and breaking bread together. This year we asked the ladies from some of the congregations to prepare or buy special cookies for the coffee table, which was a big hit for all those arriving early for services each day.



The activities included our traditional *games*, *movie night*, and *picnic*. Near the end of the Feast, we always have *pizza* and the *raffle*. Everyone looks forward to seeing what’s been handmade by the brethren, the many decorative baskets, and of course how big the “Texas” basket will be.

We received many comments this year from people who felt at home in Harrison with the brethren and looked forward to next year’s Feast.

If you want to know more about the Harrison Feast, you can stay informed by signing up on the Harrison Feast website and get updates sent directly to your email; or you can just check the Harrison Feast website for next year’s updates, as we will begin posting updates as we prepare for 2019 activities.

We can’t end this article without recognizing that it takes many people for a Feast to be successful, and it wouldn’t be the same without those who participated. A special “Thanks” for all those who volunteered to help. We are so thankful for all of you, and hope to see many of you next year. Till we meet again! Ω

*In loving memory...*

### In Memory of Bonnie Klein

**B**onnie Lucille Klein, a dear friend to and a part of the Morehead, Kentucky family, passed away August 28, 2018. Many years prior to meeting with the Morehead congregation, she was a member of the *Church of God International*. She played piano and sang in the choir. I remember singing with her in the Feast of Tabernacles choir until her health prevented her from climbing the stairs. She passed away peacefully in her sleep ten days before her 79th birthday. Bonnie was a sweet and quiet person who enjoyed a good laugh, even if it was on her.

Although Bonnie had been ill for several years, undergoing dialysis three times a week and being hospitalized at the time, family and friends did not expect her passing. In fact, her family was seeking arrangements to move Bonnie from the hospital to another care facility.

Bonnie is survived by her husband of 58 years, Robert Klein, Jr., a brother, two daughters, two sons, 12 grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

We miss Bonnie and always will. She leaves a lasting memory. I will especially remember and miss Bonnie each time I sit in my rocking chair. It was at our first Feast of Tabernacles together at Land Between The Lakes with Bonnie where she gave me that beautiful blue Kentucky Wildcats pillow. That pillow comforts my back each time I sit. Thank you, Bonnie. Ω

*Submitted by Alice Edwards Lauria*



**The Story of the Bible for our youth and the young at heart—Installation Four**

**The Covenant With Abraham—a Turning Point for Mankind**

**W**elcome back! Throughout the course of history, we find many events that could be described as turning points. You probably can look back in your personal lives and reflect on such times. As we continue going through the story of man’s history, as told by the Holy Bible, we left off last time with the introduction of a man named Abram, a descendant of Noah’s through his son, Shem. We first find Abram living in what would be modern day Iraq, in a place called Ur. Abram was a wealthy man, married to his wife Sarai. Genesis 12 details for us a turning point in the life of Abram—which, in retrospect, becomes a major turning point in the story of God’s redemption of man. God’s unconditional promise to bless the entire world through Abram’s family is short, to the point, but far reaching in magnitude.

*Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Genesis 12:1–3).*

When you read the story of Abraham (God changed his name, as He would for several of His servants), take note of the many incidents that reflect his faith in God as a “keeper of covenant.” From his settling in the land of Canaan (after allowing his nephew Lot to choose his settlement first), to his rescue of Lot who was taken captive during a rebellion, we see Abraham’s faith played out. After he helped finance and provide fighters to end the warfare, he encountered a High Priest named Melchizedek. Much later in the book of Hebrews, we are told this High Priest was none other than the one who became Jesus Christ—and Who sealed the covenant through sacrifice, which likely occurred around the time of year that would later be known as Passover.

However, Abraham and his family were still human beings, subject to sin, fault, and failure like the rest of us. Rather than wait for God to provide a son to him and Sarah (whose name was also changed), they took matters into their own hands. Abraham had a son named Ishmael with Hagar (Sarah’s handmaid), but this was not the Son of Promise. Later, God fulfilled His promise by blessing the much older Abraham and Sarah with their long awaited son, Isaac. Later on, when Isaac was a little older, Abraham was faced with one final test of his faith when God told him to take Isaac into the mountains and sacrifice him. A bewildered but obedient Isaac, while his dad was preparing the sacrifice, asked where the lamb was. Faithfully, and prophetically (which you’ll see when you get through the entire biblical story), Abraham answered simply that God would provide one. When God watched Abraham raise the knife in the air, that was all He needed to see. God was assured that Abraham would never betray Him, and neither would God betray Abraham. As the story continues to unfold, we’ll see that “And in thy [Abraham’s] seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Genesis 22:18).

The torch of the covenant passes on to Isaac, the Son of Promise. He and his wife, Rebekah, have twin boys named Esau and Jacob. Despite being twins, they could not have been more different. The older and more rugged Esau loved the outdoors, and was closer to his dad. Jacob was younger and closer to his mom. As brothers sometimes do, they became competitive as they grew. This came to a head when one day, Jacob caught Esau in a moment of extreme physical weakness and traded a bowl of stew for Esau’s prized birthright. For a second generation in a row, a younger brother would receive inheritance blessings that typically go to the eldest. In both cases, history shows that this would lead to millennia of never ending conflict. Before Isaac died, the transfer of birthright was confirmed with even more deception, as Rebekah helped Jacob trick his dad.

As you are likely coming to see, God is faithful to His plan. He ensures it moves forward, and does so in spite of our human limitations, mistakes, and sins—all to His honor and glory as Creator and Almighty God. We’ll continue next time with the account of Jacob’s family. The story will pick up the pace, and involve more characters, beginning with Jacob’s 12 sons. Until then, keep reading the greatest story ever told—it will not disappoint! Ω

*Submitted by Murray Palmatier*



# Feast Report, 2018

## Feast of Tabernacles in Collingwood, Ontario

**Cool, crisp air, changing colours, falling leaves...the tell-tale signs that fall has arrived.** For the people of God, this scene brings to mind a much more anticipated time of year: the Feast of Tabernacles! But amidst the tell-tale signs of the Feast season, something else was in the air: the buzz of God's people gathering together to celebrate His annual Festival. Nothing signals Feast season louder than that!

This year, 156 brethren gathered together in Collingwood, Ontario for the Feast of Tabernacles. Most Feast-goers came from the surrounding cities, but we also had members traveling from Ottawa, Kawartha Lakes, the East coast, West coast—even as far as Texas and North Carolina! On opening night, the room was filled with warmth and joy as friends and family greeted each other, some who haven't seen each other since the Feast before! There was a good mix of ages: young, old, and many children and young adults, the youngest just one month old, and the oldest close to 90! There were a few celebrating their very first Feast, and of course our church veterans who had been keeping the Feast for 40-plus years.

Every morning, brethren enjoyed church services, which were filled with exuberant hymn singing and inspiring special music from brethren and the Feast Choir. Much spiritual feasting took place as we were fed with the Word of God through powerful sermonettes, sermons, and Bible studies. We had guest speakers John Reedy from Texas, Roger King from North Carolina, and Anthony Wasilkoff, pastor from the *United Church of God*. How wonderful it was, seeing all of God's people working together in unity! Many of the messages focused on the theme of this Feast, which was *Learn to Fear the Eternal*.

We were also blessed with a great number of children, youth, and young adults. Sabbath School was booming, with many little ones, eager and excited to learn about God with their friends every morning. On Youth Day, the young people did an excellent job of leading the service, and the Sabbath School children performed a song for special music, something they had worked hard on all Feast long. The CGI young people also had the opportunity to share two activities with the UCG young people, who were celebrating the Feast in the neighbouring city of Midland. They enjoyed an afternoon of bowling, and on another day, explored the Blue Mountain Caves together—and for those who were brave enough, zip lining!

While there was much spiritual feasting, there was certainly physical feasting as well! As a tourist city, Collingwood had no shortages of restaurants where brethren could enjoy meals together. But those weren't the only places members were feasting. Many brethren also opened up their temporary dwellings to host other brethren for meals and get-togethers. The spirit of hospitality and fellowship was alive and well in Collingwood!

Everyday there was a great variety of activities after services, something everyone could enjoy: *pottery painting, walk and worship in the park, rock climbing, Bible Trivia, a scavenger hunt, karaoke*, and even a *boat cruise*! Some of the highlights were the *Blue Mountain Scenic Caves and Zip-Lining*, the *Family Dance* where we saw brethren "let their hair down" and have some good, wholesome fun, and the *Senior's Luncheon*, where our older members were honoured and entertained by our younger folk. And who could forget the new and exciting feature this year: *The Soiree of the Arts*! Many brethren enjoyed this evening of musical and theatrical performances, and visual arts displays by members of the church, many of whom were sharing their "hidden talents" for the first time! Who knew the church was blessed with so much creative arts talent! As well, fellowship really is an activity all its own, as it seemed every moment, brethren indulged in conversations, catching up, and sharing laughs, testimonies, and encouraging words. With all the activities and fellowship, there were certainly no shortages of opportunities to bless and be blessed.

On the second to last day of the Feast, we rejoiced as we witnessed two individuals join the family of God. They made the decision to publicly display their commitment to God through baptism. What a joyous moment!

Of course, just like every year, the Feast had to come to an end. On the Last Great Day, brethren came together one last time, and parted in traditional fashion as we sang *God Be With You 'Til We Meet Again*. It was a bittersweet moment, knowing the Feast had come to an end, but also knowing that one day, tabernacling with God will be a reality for all those who learn to fear the Eternal. Praise God for another blessed and memorable Feast, and *May God Be with You 'Til We Meet Again!* Blessings, Ω

Submitted by Lori Delacruz



On the Last Great Day



John Reedy speaking on opening night



Horane Smith speaking on opening day



Al Davidson performs a lasso at Senior's Tea Party



Carlos Delacruz speaks on Youth Day



Soiree of the Arts  
A display of art and talent performance  
(Jorie and Raychel McLaughlin)



Part of the audience on opening day



## Feast Report, 2018

### Feast of Tabernacles from “Down Under”—Beautiful Queensland, Australia

**A**nother wonderful Feast of Tabernacles which God blessed us all with, and once again held in Redcliffe Queensland.

This year we had a lot of visitors, quite a few were from interstate. It is always one of the highlights of the Feast to meet and greet new people, and also to once again meet up with friends from the past.

The lead-up to this year’s Feasts (Trumpets, Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles) was quite a challenge for Herb and myself. I broke my wrist and had the plaster taken off the day before Trumpets. Not a great deal I seemed to be able to do during that first six weeks in plaster, then the weakness and pain in my wrist and arm after the plaster came off was quite a shock for me. My expectations of doing everything for the Feast of Tabernacles in two weeks was quite a challenge, but yes, with God’s help, we did manage to get the brochures, hymn lists, etc., all done. During this time Herb was very unwell. (He spent quite a lot of the Feast in a wheelchair.) Satan will not keep God’s people down.

We had wonderful Feast teachings. Herb managed to give a couple of very good Feast sermons, plus two sermonette/offeratories; also a very informative Bible Study. We all enjoyed many wonderful sermons, some live and some of last year’s (DVD) Feast sermons from the USA. On the first day and Last Great Day, we all enjoyed our Feast meals together. That is one of the highlights of the Feast, when we can all eat these two very special meals together.

One lunch time we all enjoyed fresh fish from the *Trawlers at the Scarborough Fish Market*; also, we had a lovely *Chinese* meal together one evening. This year we visited the *Redcliffe Museum and Botanic Gardens*. The Museum this year was showing the “first fleet” and the convict ships and artifacts from those times. (Those people really had it bad.) We had a few wet days, which meant we couldn’t do some of the activities which were planned. But not to worry, we all seemed to thoroughly enjoy our times out together.

One highlight of this year was having a superb violinist play special music and accompany us while we sang. Thank you, Alana, for sharing with us your talent. Herb and I would also like to thank the many who helped us both before, during, and after the Feast, from wheelchair pushing to arranging meals, transporting bits from church to Redcliffe, the organizing and setting up of the hall, and generally lending a hand when you saw a need.

Our congregation, small compared to many others, pray and hope that you all enjoyed God’s Feast as much as we did.

Now is the time that we start planning for *next* year’s Feast.

May you walk and talk with God everyday.

Ω

*Submitted by Tui Haupt*



Alana sharing her wonderful gift of music



Beautiful color cover of Feast brochure painted by Tui Haupt



Group picture from the Feast in Redcliffe, Australia



## Feast Report, 2018

### Memories Of Feast Of Tabernacles In Ghana

**H**ave you ever wished to celebrate the Feast in an exotic tropical location, rich in history and cultural traditions? Well, you needn't wish any more. Your brethren in the *Church of God, International* in Kumasi, Ghana are waiting to welcome you. Four members (Yvette Ford, Alphonso, Carla James, and Cheryl Walsh) from the CGI Toronto congregation joined with Kenroy and Marie Allen to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles with about 150 Ghanaian brethren at the Mount Olives Retreat Centre in Kumasi, Ghana.



The theme this year was "TABERNACLES—THE FEAST FOR EVERY NATION" (Zechariah 14:16–19). Each day services started with lively Praise and Worship sessions, which included young and old praising God in song and dance.

We had some very inspiring and interactive sermons given by CGI Toronto pastor Kenroy Allen, CGI Ghana pastors Nicholas Boakye and Matthew Agyin, as well as youth leader Michael Hanson. Scriptural references given were read aloud by one of the brethren in Twi, one of Ghana's official languages. All sermons were interpreted in English and/or Twi, depending on the speaker, which made for somewhat longer but nevertheless spiritually enriching services.

The first holy day sermon was an overview of the Feast days given by Pastor Nicholas Boakye, who delivered his message in both English and Twi for the benefit of local brethren and visitors.

Later that evening we all had dinner together sitting in a circle outside under a huge almond tree. Following dinner, we went back to the Centre for a discussion on the challenges of the Christian walk in Ghana (including keeping the Sabbaths and the Festivals of God).

Some other topics covered in the sermons were *Taking Hold of the Promises of God*, Paul's charge to Timothy based on 1 Timothy 6:14; *Songs of Ascent* based on Psalms 120–134, and *The Tabernacle in the Wilderness*. Pastor Allen, who had planned to have images of the tabernacle furnishings (mentioned in the book of Exodus) projected on screen, had to shift into innovative mode, as there was no projector or screen available to do this. Just before he started his message, he got some help in gathering materials in the room such as boxes, table, linen, and a loaf of bread. For the golden lamp stand he had one of the youth stand with hands pointed upward in a "Y" formation. Two young boys with arms outstretched and touching in an arch-like fashion while standing on a speaker box completed the image of the Ark of the Covenant with the two covering cherubim. This natural visual representation did much to engrave the points of that message on our minds.

A wonderful custom was the daily welcome song. During the singing of a song, the brethren (young and old) went around shaking hands and greeting each other. This did much to break the ice and promote brotherly affection and unity.

Youth Day service was highly anticipated, and we were not disappointed. It started as usual with Praise and Worship, and the worship dances. It also included a dance routine performed by the teenage boys and a dramatic presentation on the importance of remaining faithful to Christ and not denying Him even if faced with the threat of losing our lives. The sermon given by Michael Hanson on the topic of *Contending For the Faith*, based on Jude 3, was well received. Several of the youth participated to make Youth Day a success.

For the Allens, who have been keeping the Feast with the Kumasi brethren for over ten years, were impressed to see how much some of the youth had grown in confidence and their ability to demonstrate their faith and assume responsibilities.

Another highlight was our trip to *Lake Bosomtwe*, the largest natural lake in Ghana. Reminiscent of the miracle of the two small fish and five barley loaves, we somehow managed to transport almost 150 adults and children in three mid-size buses, one regular minivan, and a car to the lake and back. Swimming, volleyball competition, and boat riding were all part of the various activities that took place during our visit to the lake. Everyone had a great time!



During the Feast, we also had some roundtable discussions specifically geared to the youth. This was generated by presentations on the uses and abuses of social media and free online tools for effective Bible studies, given by Alphonso James from the Toronto church. The other members of our visiting contingent also contributed much to the Feast. Yvette and Cheryl hosted a *Health Seminar* and provided blood pressure testing for attendees. Carla hosted the activity for the young children and presented them with gifts from the visitors. The brethren were also delighted when Marie provided special music by doing a song in Twi.

We had the unforgettable experience of visiting the *El Mina and Cape Coast Castles*, where slaves were held and later shipped in the infamous Middle Passage across the Atlantic to America and the Caribbean. You never know who you might meet in your travels. So it was quite surprising when we ran into some *United Church of God* brethren from the USA and Vancouver, while visiting the *Manhyia Palace* in Kumasi, official residence and seat of the Ashanti king.

The Last Great Day ended on a high note with jubilant singing, dancing, and waving of palm branches to signify the end of the Feast. Our host, Pastor Nicholas Boakye, reflecting on the Feast, commented that it "continues to leave unforgettable memories and abundant joy and blessings in our lives."

I (Cheryl) can still remember how to say *Good morning, Good afternoon, Good evening, Good night, and How are you?* in Twi. Going back to work, I was able to greet my Ghanaian colleague in Twi. Was she ever surprised!

The Feast in Ghana, while it may not offer all the luxuries and creature comforts of a typical North American site, will definitely transform your life as you experience the culture, history, and genuine warmth and friendship of the Ghanaian brethren. We hope that more of our brethren from North America and other areas across the globe will consider making Kumasi, Ghana their next Feast of Tabernacles destination. See you next Feast of Tabernacles in Kumasi, Ghana! Ω



Contributors: Cheryl Walsh, Kenroy Allen,  
and Nicholas Boakye



## Feast Report, 2018

### Jamaica (Ocho Rios) Feast 2018 Saw 328 Attendance, 10 Baptised

**T**he Feast of Tabernacles in Ocho Rios this year, at its peak, had 328 attendees and ended on a high with 10 new converts being baptized on the morning of the Last Great Day.

Since its inception in Jamaica in 1982, the *Church of God International* has held the Feast of Tabernacles in obedience to God's command, in the beautiful garden parish of St. Ann on the north coast of the island. The only difference on this occasion, was that for the first time, the pilgrimage did not include the late Pastor Ian Boyne who passed away at the end of 2017.

The opening night began with a rousing round of hymns and choruses to the Lord Almighty. Guests from around the world were given a warm Jamaican welcome, and the participating local congregations of May Pen, Maroon Town, Ocho Rios, and Kingston were acknowledged. Pastor George Ramocan delivered the opening address where he reminded the church of the significance of the Feast of Tabernacles. This was followed by a resumption of songs of praise as the scores of brethren departed the St. John's Anglican Church hall to their temporary abodes in high spirits.

The spirit of love and unity circulated in the air, as *everyone* was greeted warmly at the entrance by the "Welcome Ambassadors" who left no person without an embrace or a holy kiss; this would turn out to be a daily feature at the Feast this year. The praise and worship was as vibrant as ever, as Deacon Hendricks and the praise team went through a catalogue of melodic song selections. Pastor Adrian Davis, visiting from Canada, expounded on the spirit of Cain, which is self-centeredness, and showed how that spirit permeated through civilizations and manifest itself even in the physical structures we know today as "cities," continuing even until the return of Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords to re-establish the Holy City.



Pastor George Ramocan delivering the sermon at the Feast site in Ocho Rios, Jamaica

On Day Two, Pastor Ramocan reminded the church of the failures of Israel in their wilderness journey and warned against making the same mistakes they did. Pastor Davis returned on Day Three to remind the church of its mission, to spread the *euangelion*, that is good news or tidings, which is inseparably linked to the destiny of the people of Israel and city of Jerusalem. Indeed, the rich variety of sermons and sermonettes by all the speakers over the eight days brought teaching, inspiration, and transformation. There was even an unexpected blowing of the shofar, which, by the way, happens to be a lot more difficult that one would imagine. There was everything! Inspirational songs, poems and dances were offered up in honor to the Lord as a sweet aroma.

The *Church of God International* in Jamaica has been growing; as such more servant leaders were needed. With the laying on of hands and prayer, Pastors Ramocan and Davis appointed two new deacons, Elgin Fowler and Eliud Ramocan, and a new deaconess, Lorna Campbell, to serve in the Kingston congregation. This was coupled with the announcement that Deacons Christopher Hendricks and Stephen Scale would be embarking on the MAP (Ministerial Apprenticeship Program). All these appointments were met with a resounding applause by the congregation.

The social events were remarkable, from the *Jamaica Night Cookout* with its live entertainment by a professional mento band, to the *Family Fun Show* dubbed "Make Fun Show Great Again" and were all well attended and thoroughly enjoyed. The *Family Beach Trip* to the newly renovated Puerto Seco beach was overwhelmingly supported and was a resounding hit, not to mention the *Single Ministry's Hawaiian Party*, the intimate *PALM (Peace and Love in Marriages) Luncheon* by the Seaside Restaurant and the *Sports Day*, where the House of Israel retained their championship for the third year running—fourth time's a charm, House of Judah! The Youths, not to be left out, had their very own *Youth Night Out and Pool Party*.



Brethren enjoyed fine Jamaican cuisine at the Feast!

Pastor Adrian Davis hosted a Friday night *Bible Study*, where he commended the Jamaica church for the tremendous work and growth, but cautioned the church against complacency, doctrinal error, and sexual immorality, especially amongst the young upcoming generation. The Bible Study was followed by an inexpressibly powerful *prayer meeting*. Prayer after prayer was offered up for various concerns and persons within the body of Christ. A visiting pastor from the *Covenant Church of God* was moved to the point that he could not help but comment about a dream he had about the revival of the Church of God movement, and how he was led to come to Jamaica for the Feast.



Say CHEESE!!!

Everyone had a fabulous time at the beach trip

The Feast of Tabernacles represents a time when the vast majority of mankind will hear the true Gospel about the Kingdom of God for the first time. In this spirit, the Church of God embarked on an *Evangelism Outreach* during the Feast, where members were given flyers and invitations to distribute in neighboring communities, inviting persons to visit services on the 7th day of the Feast. Brother Ricardo Hall expounded on *God's Plan of Salvation For All Mankind*, fundamental truths hidden from the world's churches, but revealed by the Holy Spirit to the elect!

The annual *Herbert W. Armstrong Memorial Speaking Competition* was nothing short of electrifying. Three speakers, Rosan Reynolds, Trevor "the teacher" Murphy, and Jonah Lewis took on the challenge to defend the church's position on the topic *The Trinity—The Holy Spirit is NOT a Third Distinct Member of the Godhead*. Lots were cast to determine the speaking order. Speaker after speaker explicated their points in what would turn out to be one of the most keenly contested apologetic battles in recent memory. The three judges were at a deadlock for what seemed like all night, engulfed in a debate of their own to determine a winner. Eventually two members of the Kingston church's IOR (Institute of Religion) had to be called in to assist with the adjudication, such was the caliber of all the presenters. In the end, a winner had to be declared; Brother Jonah Lewis nicked it by the thinnest of margins.



Pastors Ramocan and Davis and ministers-in-training Hendricks and Scale along with the 10 newly baptised members of the body of Christ

The Last Great Day culminated with the baptism and laying on of hands of 10 new members to the body of Christ, most of whom were young adults, hungry for the Word, turning their backs against the world to follow Jesus Christ. Pastor Ramocan closed the Feast with a thought provoking message about the significance of the 8th day.

Almost everyone would agree, the Feast of Tabernacles 2018 was a resounding success! This was due in no small part to the spiritual warfare fought by the few faithful prayer warriors who diligently met on the beach every morning from the second day onwards, to pray under the theme "More Elijah." The old cliché, "This was the best Feast ever" was a fitting description. Whatever the case might be, it was certainly up there with the very best. To God be the glory! Ω

Submitted by Stephen Scale



## A Message Received at the Feast “Down Under” — GOD IS A FAMILY

“**A**nd will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:18).

Each Feast has its own special memories. It is a time to catch up and speak to old friends, to meet new ones and enjoy getting to know them, and to listen to encouraging messages that nourish and recharge the spirit. It is a special time to relax with those who are like minded—God’s family, our sisters and brothers. Feast sites around the world share the same sentiment, looking to the future when the family of God can enjoy the freedom and unity for which the Creator, our Father, intended it to be.

One message that hit home for me during this year’s Feast of Tabernacles was a sermon titled *God is a Family*. It was conducted by Mr. Bill Bradford, who coordinated UCG’s Feast site at Kawana Waters. Once again our congregation enjoyed fellowshiping with God’s extended family in the beautiful surroundings of Queensland’s Sunshine Coast, where for some years the *United Church of God* has opened up their Feast sites to all those that God calls. It is truly a blessing to gather with other brethren from other groups. There are so many of God’s people around the world who travel from various parts of the globe to rejoice with other brethren. Groups converging to be as one at many sites to take in God’s Spirit and listen to the GOOD NEWS.

The message Mr. Bradford gave was that God is a family, starting with the Father’s only begotten Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. God the Father is calling many sons and daughters to glory. This could not be more evident than in the opening verse of 2 Corinthians 6:18. God’s plan for mankind has always been about family, regardless of what organization or group we may say we belong to. God reads the hearts and minds of man, and He knows His children. He chooses them in His time and those who hear His call are added to His family.

*Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God (John 1:12, NIV).*

It is the Father who calls us. It is His doing, His design, not ours. He is the potter; we are the clay. “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father” (John 6:65, NKJV). It is His plan, His creation, His story. He is the potter; we are the clay. The question is, will we let Him mould us, or will we let the world mould us and therefore break?

God allows man to sort out his own affairs as he sees fit. We marry and start our own human families. We form friendships and businesses. We establish groups and organisations to place order in our lives, and so it is in our worship services, too. Do we do a perfect job? Far from it, but as we send our own children out into the world once they have grown with the knowledge and hopefully the understanding we bestowed upon them during their tender years, so too our Father allows us to work out our way upon this earth.

God is a family—this could not be more true—but every day I am made more and more aware that God’s family has issues, not unlike the issues we have in our very own (human) families. We who are called are still very much carnal, and with that we are burdened by our carnalities. We want and hope and strive to be all that God wants us to be, but our walk in Christ is pelted daily with the arrows of sin. Our egos and human ways are not God’s ways, and the paths we tread can take many twists and turns. For many in the world, it appears that God’s light shines ever too far in front, always out of reach. And so stumbling blocks are always befalling them along the way. To His called-out ones, His light is not just a beacon, but it is what should sustain us, burning in our hearts with hope and faith. His Spirit dwells within us, steering us on in aid to keep us on the right path.

*Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19–20, NIV).*

Christ, before His sacrifice, prayed to the Heavenly Father for all believers:

*My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me (John 16:20–21).*

A very important part of this message related to Christ’s marriage to the church. In Ephesians 5, verses 21–33, God is talking about Christ and the church through the human marriage. This is a great mystery to many. It is well worth going over these verses.

*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ... After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of His body....This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.... (Ephesians 5:21–33).*

Christ left His Father for a short time to be on earth with His wife-to-be, to guide and counsel her, to make her ready for that special day.

It was God who devised marriage first. Revelation 19:7 (NIV) says, “For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.” The human family and all that our lives can be, if followed God’s way, is like a shadow of the blueprint for His Kingdom.

Angels are immortal by design, by creation. Their role is to minister. They don’t need aid, but we do. We must be guided if we are to be ready for the Bridegroom. God created us perfectly to grow in our mistakes. He knows how many wrinkles need to be ironed out before the glorious marriage supper of the Lamb.

Man seems destined to work things out. It seems woven in our design. It may not always look the case, but if we don’t, we will perish. Will we do it our way, or God’s way? That is the question, and that is the choice. God is giving us the time to work things out. He needs no time; only we do. He has all the answers; we don’t. We fumble and fall and slip and stand up over and over again like a baby trying to take his or her first steps. So much potential is within us. Our Father designed His plan perfectly. He knew we would need to struggle with our human nature, to reach for the goal of His perfect gift. Everything about our connection with our fellow man and the world around us makes us deal with decisions that will ultimately hone our skills for what our Father has in store for us as kings and priests in His eternal Kingdom. This process involves our marriage, our children, our work, our friends, our brethren, our neighbourhood, our country, and our world.

We cannot exist without God. His children need to be totally committed to Him and have a daily relationship. Angels don’t need help as we do. They were created immortal. If they sin they are removed from God. But we need help; we need God. He wants to know that we are committed. That is why He made us human and not angelic, so we would ask for help in this evil world.

God’s family has many wonderful and gifted people who are all praying for the same thing—His Kingdom come. Unity is our goal through all of our individual uniquenesses. The key is LOVE. It is all about love. God’s plan cannot work without love. Love is more than just another word that denotes an emotion and a feeling; it is an act of your will. It carries with it a huge responsibility. First Corinthians 13:4–7 puts it so perfectly:

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

For a wedding to take place, everything is made right and proper for the ceremony. A wedding always waits until the bride is ready. The Father knows when that time will be. What kind of wedding would it be without the bride? Christ is waiting for His bride to make ready, for her arrival and walk down the aisle. He is there at the altar, waiting patiently in anticipation of His marriage to her.

God’s people, His church, Christ’s bride, regardless of what organization we belong to, must make ready for the marriage. We must be as one to be joined with our Bridegroom. Ω

*Submitted by Dianne Prather-Tuskes*







*In loving memory...*



Pansy enjoyed playing the piano. She was a church accompanist for 70 years. She volunteered at Orange Elementary as a teacher's assistant. She also enjoyed cooking, baking, gardening, and playing ping pong. She was devoted to serving God and her family. She and her husband Bob, a pastor for the *Church of God International*, served the Waterloo, Iowa congregation.

Pansy is survived by: one son, Allen (Angie) Alcorn of Waterloo; one daughter, Shari (Darren) Cary of Waterloo; two grandsons, Dylan and Jesse Alcorn; and one sister, Janice (Roger) Vaughn of La Porte City.

In addition to her husband Bob, she was preceded in death by her parents; one brother, Marvin Larsen; and one sister, Deloris Moffitt.

*Submitted by Darren and Shari Cary*



Robert J. "Bob" Alcorn  
(Feb. 19, 1948–June 22, 2018)

**P**ansy Sena Alcorn, 83, of Waterloo, Iowa, died Monday, November 19, 2018 at Friendship Village (Lakeview Landing) of natural causes. She was born February 3, 1935 in Hampton, the daughter of Martin and Addie Simonsen Larsen. Pansy was a 1953 graduate of Franklin Consolidated High School and received her B.A. from Drake University. She married Robert J. "Bob" Alcorn on February 5, 1972 in Hampton; he preceded her in death on June 22, 2018.

She taught 3rd grade for 17 years. Most of her time was spent teaching at Ramsey Elementary School in Albert Lea, Minnesota.



**THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS**  
3900 TIMMS STREET, TYLER, TX 75701

Published by the *Church of God International*

**NON-PROFIT ORG.**  
**US POSTAGE**  
**PAID**  
**Texas 75701**  
**Permit No. 254**

**Winter Issue**

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