



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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"Put on the whole armor of God"

2004

Chicagoland CGI moves forward with 'stunning success'

By Duane E. Nicol

When I turned in my resignation to an independent fellowship on August 9, 2003, I had been negotiating to find another place of worship for those who wanted to fellowship under the Church of God International banner. My goal was to not let a single week go by without having a worship service. Hotels, motels, and even another church's facilities were investigated. I had been talking to Brian Whidden, pastor of the Bethel Assembly of God congregation for a couple of weeks. They had their council meeting on Monday, August 11, and agreed to let us use their building. I mailed out the notices of our new location on Tuesday, August 12, and we conducted our first service on August 16, the very next week.

During that time frame, and after much investigation and talks with Dan Stanton, we purchased a camcorder. Jim Paterson and I also opened a bank account in Lisle, IL. So when we opened for service we had a bank account, a camcorder for taping services, a cordless microphone that Jim had purchased, and a complete full-service church building for our services.

I am pleased and amazed at how quickly things fell into place. We later negotiated the full use of their "technology booth," where all the controls for sound, camera, and access to cassette and CD are all implemented. After just a few short weeks we have a complete full-service church up and running with stunning success. It has taken the faithful attendance, prayers, financial support, and God's blessing to bring it all about.

All our members are faithful tithe payers. Even one of the teens who makes \$30 per week found out that \$3.00 would be her tithe. A few generous donors blessed

us initially with their financial support, which ensured our success. Our camera cost around \$4000.00, cordless mic was about \$550.00, and the flowers that are behind the lectern, tubs for materials, and assorted items were an additional \$350.00 or so in cost, along with the initial payment to the church and money to pay on a continuing basis, another \$1500.00.

Jim tells me that we are in sound financial condition at this time. Well no wonder; if you tithe God will pour out a blessing that you will not be able to entirely contain, along with muzzling the devourer!

I can preach passionately about tithing—or any subject, for that matter—and I do not get whining, threats, dart-like stares, and intimidation. In fact just the

opposite occurs. The teens use the sermons for their discussions, and many positive comments come from the congregation. This is especially noteworthy because of the denigration and vituperative comments from other organizations that I have served in the past.

Our audio and video list has grown, and we have solicited the generous support of Tyler and Roy Geddes in our tape program. I feel we are a "Church State," just like Rome was a City State long ago. We are complete in that we work hand-in-hand with Tyler. We do not intend to use all our tithes and offerings on ourselves. The council members (on their own volition) believe that we should tithe to Tyler when we are free of our indebtedness. We may even be a financial help to others who need help in the future to do as we are doing. "Pay it forward" is the operative principal!

We are breaking new ground in the church, because it has always been a central church operation. Many have gone independent and have failed miserably! We are supportive of the *Armor of God* program, local church growth, and an outreach through our weekly tape program, which is at times put on the CGI national program. Sounds like "win-win" to me! We invite Bronson, Charles, Ben, Bill, and anyone we can use to enhance our local growth, which contributes to the larger goal of preaching to all the nations. It is like Vance Stinson so eloquently stated in our June 28 seminar this past summer, any organizational structure can be bad. It takes the Spirit of God and a willingness to trust and God will show us how to really walk on water! It is my personal desire and the desire of our council and our congregation to show anyone who is willing to

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Left to right: Sharon Thomas (Council President), James Patterson (Treasurer), Jerry Fink (Secretary), and Duane E. Nicol (Minister). Sharon also has the duties of being President of the "Women's Ministry." She drives all the way from Milwaukee, WI, every week along with her daughters Rebekah and Rachel. Her group created the gift baskets for newcomers, and she sends out a newsletter to women all over the country. The women created our welcome table, and they organize all the food preparation and weekly potlucks. They are also in charge of the Sabbath School and Youth Group and are planning a Youth Day. Jim is keeper of the money. He also oversees the camera operation with Cornell, and gives sermonettes on a regular basis. Jim is a vibration control engineer and works for a German company called Gerb. He is from Canada. Jerry is new to the congregation. He was recently awarded a one-million-mile award by his trucking company—quite an honor for Jerry. His wife Regina has been helping with the Sabbath School along with booklet table set-up and food preparation. Jerry and Regina were baptized this past April.

In joyful service to God's people

Marangs visit brethren in Iowa, Winnipeg, and Calgary

Our trip to Waterloo, Iowa, was a nice one and a disappointment. When we arrived at Robert and Pansy Alcorn's home, they told us they had gotten a phone call from Alleta Nelson's cousin telling them that she was too ill to see anyone. This was Tuesday, October 28. We stayed until Thursday, October 30. We enjoyed their company plus their little grandson, Dylan, who was 8 months old.

We left Waterloo on October 30 and drove to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. We stayed with Alex and Shirley Kennedy.

We arrived at the Kennedy's on Friday, October 31. We called Bertha Crothers from there and found out Norm Crothers had died the night before. She wanted Frank to come and officiate Norm's funeral, which was scheduled for Monday.

We flew from Winnipeg on Sunday morning, arriving at Calgary, Alberta, two and a half hours later.

Bertha Crothers' nephew and his wife, Douglas and Marina Francis, from Northwest Territory, were our chauffeurs

the next two days we were there. They drove ten hours straight through to get to Mr. Crothers' bedside. They arrived ten minutes before he passed away.

On Sunday, November 2, Frank baptized Bertha Crothers in her hot tub. We had a Bible study before the baptism.

Norm Crothers' funeral was held at the Pierson's Garden of Peace Chapel in Calgary, Alberta, on Monday, November 3. We walked across the driveway for the graveside service, which Frank also officiated. Then a luncheon was held in the chapel.

We caught our airplane the same night and flew back to Winnipeg. Alex Kennedy met us at the airport at 10:00 p.m.

In Calgary, it was snowing all the time we were there. It got up to two feet before we flew back to Winnipeg and drove on home the next day.

On Tuesday, November 4, we were on our way home. We arrived at Coffeyville, Kansas, at 5:30 p.m. on November 5.

Frank and Margie Marang



Top, left: Alex Kennedy and Frank Marang singing "I Need Thee Every Hour" for special music at Winnipeg. Top, right: Megan Kennedy playing "Joyful, Joyful" at Winnipeg. Second row, left and right, and third row, left: Bertha Crothers and Frank Marang, from Bible study to baptism to congratulations. Third row, right: Frank Marang and Rozalia Mandl, the two oldest persons at the meeting in Winnipeg. Bottom: The youngest person at the meeting in Winnipeg, five and one-half month old Colin, son of Eric and Andrea Leader.

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...and MUCH MORE!

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

A Voice in the Wilderness

Would you like to have had the job of John the Baptist? His active ministry lasted about six months. His inactive ministry was about two and a half years, and then he was executed by having his head cut off. "Preparing the way of the Lord" is dangerous work. We might ask the question of ourselves, How are we doing as disciples of Christ, in "crying out for repentance, because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"? What kind of a John the Baptist would we of this modern world have made? Could we possibly be likened to Christ in our day as John was in his?

By Loren Chamberlain

No man in history ever served better, served more faithfully, or lived more uprightly than John the Baptist. Yet, Jesus said, "I assure you, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the most insignificant person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he is" (Matthew 11:11, NLT). No person ever fulfilled his God-given purpose better than John; yet, despite his stature, the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John.

Jesus was teaching His listeners a lesson about the significance of the Kingdom. We should not conclude that John was excluded from that Kingdom. John functioned as a prophet of the Old Testament, and Jesus was explaining why John was perplexed. John only *foretold* the saving and baptizing work of Christ. As the herald of Jesus Christ, John was the connecting link between the Old Testament and the New.

The ministry set before John the Baptist was extremely difficult. Up until his time, the only revelation of God available to people came through the Law of Moses and the messages of the previous prophets. Now John's transitional ministry ushered in Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God, a change of monumental proportions. "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it" (Luke 16:16). Jesus pointed out that His Kingdom fulfilled the Law (the Old Testament); it did not cancel it. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). The same God who worked through Moses was working through Jesus.

John the Baptist was so successful in his service to God, yet remained so humble; it brings to one's mind the saying in the faith chapter of the Bible, "Of whom the world was not worthy" (Hebrews 11:38). Truly, the world was not worthy in John's time, and did not respond to his ministry, as they should have. It is doubtful that the people of today would receive his message with greater sincerity.

In the strictest sense, John the Baptist was a prophet of the Old Testament, even though he came to usher in the New. Jesus said of him, "But what went ye out to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:9-11).

Some Political Background

Our story of John begins "in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea" (Luke 1:5). This was Herod the Great, confirmed by the Roman Senate as king of the Jews. His rule extended over Galilee, Samaria, and considerable territory east of the Jordan

River. Therefore, as king he was able to oppress all the land of Israel.

Herod was not a true king of Israel; he was neither a Jew nor a descendant of David. Actually, he was an Idumean, an Edomite, which would make him a descendant of Esau. These were dark days for Israel, for nothing could be more insulting to the Jewish nation than to have an Edomite sitting on the throne. It was contrary to God's Word, a reverse of His plan. Jacob should rule, not Esau. But Israel had forsaken God. Sin brings judgment, and it was judgment to have an Edomite ruling them.

The kingly title "king of Judaea" was given him by the Roman Senate on the recommendation of Anthony and Octavian about thirty-five years before the birth of John the Baptist. He gained it by political savvy. Though he was called a king, still he was just a vassal of Rome.

Herod had ten wives, and he was bloody and brutal. He killed his friends, family, competitors, and enemies without hesitation. He killed wealthy Jews of the day and confiscated their wealth. He executed people through violent means such as strangulation, drowning, poisoning, and stabbing. One of his wives, some sons, relatives, and numerous other people were executed simply because they were in his way and were perceived as a threat to his rule. His most famous act of brutality was when he ordered the extermination of all the children two years and under in Bethlehem after the wise men had visited the Christ child.

"Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under..." (Matthew 2:16).

With such beastly brutality as this, we should not be surprised when we read that one of his sons, Herod Antipas, ordered the beheading of John the Baptist some years later. For the Jews this was a time of oppression. Although they were not in slavery, they were not completely self-governing either. Herod had expanded and beautified the Jerusalem temple, but he had also placed a Roman eagle over the entrance. In addition to this, he built pagan temples. He only helped the Jews if it was politically advantageous to do so. Herod the Great ruled from 37-4 B.C.

Even in the darkest of times, God has His remnant. Not many were godly in John's time; but still, there were some, such as Joseph, Mary, the aged Simeon and Anna, some shepherds, and an elderly priest and his wife, Zacharias and Elizabeth, the future parents of John the Baptist.

There were about twenty thousand priests throughout the country, and Zacharias was one of them. He worked at the temple, managing its upkeep, teaching the people the Scriptures, and directing the worship services. Priests were divided into twenty-four separate groups of about one

thousand each, according to David's instructions (1 Chronicles 24:3-19). Zacharias was a member of the order (or division) of Abijah. Each division served in the Jerusalem temple twice each year for one week.

Elizabeth descended directly from Aaron, brother of Moses and Israel's first high priest. "And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office" (Exodus 28:1).

As a priest, Zacharias would have been required to marry a virgin Israelite, but not necessarily one from a priestly family. Both of them were righteous before God. Not that they were sinless, but that they loved, obeyed, and served God. "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6).

Sadly, they had no children. "And they had no child, because Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years" (Luke 1:7). In the times they lived in, to be barren was a great reproach. Not only that, but they were now well stricken in years. Children were considered a blessing, and childlessness was seen as a curse. The reproach was such a humiliating thing in their lives that the first thing Elizabeth said after she conceived was, "Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein He looked on me, to take away my reproach among men" (Luke 1:25). God was just waiting for the right moment to encourage them and take away their disgrace.

The trial of John the Baptist's parents reminds us that righteousness does not exempt one from painful trial. Righteousness prevents many trials, especially those trials that are a result of sin, but it does not prevent them all, for Scripture tells, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous" (Psalm 34:19). To have troubles and trials does not always indicate one is a lesser saint. It just means God is giving some saints a little more polish to bring out more of their beauty.

The religious life of Israel revolved around the temple and most conspicuously around the priesthood. If the priesthood demonstrated good morals, the people would respond and do the same. When John the Baptist came into the world, the priesthood was corrupted. How did the priesthood become so corrupt? It became corrupt in two major ways. The position of high priest was a political appointment. Herod chose the high priest. Secondly, he constructed a very impressive temple in Jerusalem, thus ingratiating himself to the Jewish people. Therefore, the people felt indebted and obligated to him. This gave him the influence over their religious life. This gave him political power over the people, and that was his main goal.

The position of high priest was for life (Leviticus 21:10; Numbers 35:25,28; Ezra 7:1-5). Only those of the line of the eldest descendants of Aaron could serve as high

priest, and a man's position in the hierarchy of holiness and cult was determined from birth. In Numbers 25:10-13, the descendants of Phinehas (Aaron's grandson) are promised a "covenant of eternal priesthood," which apparently refers to a right to the office of high priest.

Because the position of high priest was now a political appointment, thus bypassing God, the high priest could seek favor by flattering Herod, overlook his evils, and encourage and influence the other priests to do the same. Therefore, the corruption spread throughout the whole priesthood. The overwhelming corruption of the priesthood is what caused the great opposition to Jesus Christ, and their leading of the people to call for His crucifixion.

The domination of Herod over the priesthood, the temple, and the people was so great that he was able to put the Roman eagle on the main entrance of the temple.

No doubt, when John began his ministry he was well aware of the corruption and degradation of the priesthood—probably from his own observation and his father's reports. Therefore, when he began his public ministry, he would say to the religious leaders, "And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire... whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with

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unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:10–11).

The Revelation

Zacharias' division of priests was on duty in the temple during this particular week. Each morning one of the priests would enter the holy place in the temple to burn incense, which was burned twice daily. The priest who would burn the incense in the holy place was determined by the casting of lots. He was not allowed to draw the lot a second time in the same week, and since the whole number of the priests at that time was on the order of some twenty thousand, it is doubtful that a priest would get this opportunity more than once in a lifetime. Many priests never had the opportunity. It seems beyond chance that Zacharias was on duty and that he was chosen that day to enter the holy place. It would seem more like the will of God.

While the chosen priest was inside offering the incense, the other priests and people would wait outside for the chosen priest to offer the incense and pray for the welfare of the nation. When they would see the smoke from the burning incense they would pray. The smoke rising heavenward symbolized their prayers ascending up to God's throne. "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense" (Psalm 141:2). While faithful believers had been praying in this manner since their captivity in Babylon six hundred years before, it was not until now that they received a very special answer.

When Zacharias was fulfilling his duty of offering incense in the holy place something very unexpected happened. The angel Gabriel appeared unto him "standing on the right side of the altar of incense" (Luke 1:11). And when Zacharias saw him, he became overwhelmed with fear (verse 12). Angels are quite powerful beings, awesome in their appearance, so Zacharias' fear is understandable.

Because the visit was not judgmental but was to inform of blessing, the angel put Zacharias' fears to rest. So the angel's first words to him were, "Don't be afraid" (verse 13). The same thing was also said to Mary (Luke 1:30) and to the shepherds (Luke 2:10). The same message was also spoken to Gideon (Judges 6:23), and Manoah's wife rightly reasoned with Manoah that he should not fear either (Judges 13:23).

Zacharias must have been praying while he was performing his duty of offering incense on the altar, praying for Israel's deliverance and the coming of the Messiah. He must have been astounded by the angel's words. "God has heard your prayer." The angel went on to say, "Your wife, Elisabeth will bear you a son." The angel even went so far as to state what to name the baby. The name John means, "the Lord is gracious." Certainly, God was gracious to Zacharias and Elisabeth through the birth of this son, but He was also gracious to all people for that matter, for this son would prepare the way and the hearts of the people for the Messiah:

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 3:1).

It is worth noting that John the Baptist's birth was the result of the prayers of Zacharias and Elisabeth. John was also desired. You don't pray for a son when you are beyond the childbearing years unless you really want a child. Therefore, his

coming was also going to be a miracle. But Gabriel said they were going to have a son anyway. Like Abraham and Sarah of old, these two saints of God would experience a divine miracle. The delaying of God in answering our prayers demonstrates God's wisdom and power.

Considering that the number seven in Scripture is considered a number of perfection, we should be aware that John was one of seven people that Scripture records as being named before they were born. The other six are Ishmael, Isaac, Solomon, Josiah, Cyrus, and Jesus.

John's Role and Mission

The role that John was called to fulfill was very similar to that of an Old Testament prophet. He was to encourage people to turn away from sin and back to the Lord. Gabriel explained to Zacharias that John would go before God with the spirit and power of Elijah. Notice that he did not say that John was Elijah.

The book of Malachi gives an explanation of the mission John is sent to accomplish. Malachi's message is one of practical guidelines about commitment to God: We should give our best to God; we must be willing to change our wrong ways of living; we should make family a lifelong priority; we should welcome God's refining method in our lives; we should not fail to tithe on our increase; we must eradicate pride. For those who are committed to God, the final day of judgment will be a day of joy. Those who will not turn to God will be stubble. To help people prepare for that day, God will send a prophet like Elijah (John the Baptist) who will prepare the way for Jesus, the Messiah:

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5–6).

John's message of repentance would most likely have the immediate effect of unifying broken family relationships, helping fathers in their parental responsibilities, and changing the attitudes of disobedient children. However, Malachi's message could also have reference to the patriarchs (fathers), great men of faith who would be disappointed with the faithlessness of their descendants toward God. So John the Baptist's message of repentance could have the effect of turning those of his time back to the wisdom of the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

With Malachi's death, the voice of God's prophets would be silent for 400 years, until John the Baptist, who would come in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Zacharias' Response

Zacharias was not satisfied with the words of the angel Gabriel. He had the audacity to ask for a "sign." The most likely reason he made this request was because he and his wife Elisabeth were beyond childbearing years, so by asking for a sign he was reminding the angel of this fact. "How can I know this will happen?" (Luke 1:18). This was borderline doubt of God. Bad move.

Then the heavenly messenger explained to Zacharias that he was sign enough. After all, "I am Gabriel," he exclaimed, "I stand in the very presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings" (Luke 1:19).

It was a mistake for the old priest to doubt anything the angel said. His doubting resulted in punishment. Zacharias

asked for a sign, and he received it. However, he would be unable to speak until the child was born. Luke 1:62 appears to give the impression that Zacharias was deaf as well as mute. Whether Zacharias believed or not, the angel's words would certainly come true at the proper time: "And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season" (Luke 1:20).

While Zacharias was receiving the good news from Gabriel, the people were anxiously waiting outside and wondering what could be keeping him so long in the temple. When the priest came out of the temple he would pronounce the customary blessing: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Numbers 6:24–26). However, there was a problem. When Zacharias came out of the temple he could not pronounce the blessing because he could not speak! Already the words of the angel were coming true. All the old priest could do was to make gestures to the people. The people surmised that he must have seen a vision. It was now apparent to Zacharias that God was moving forward with His plans to bring the Messiah to His people.

Zacharias completed his week of service in silence, and then returned to his home in the hill country south of Jerusalem to await his promised son's arrival.

The Birth of John the Baptist

Families rejoice when a baby is born, and it is usually a time of great excitement. All of the circumstance surrounding the birth of John made his birth much more exciting than the usual birth of a child. To begin with, John was a miracle child. His parents, Zacharias and Elisabeth, were beyond the years of childbearing. The fact that Mary, Elisabeth's cousin, was also pregnant and came to visit her added a beautiful interweaving of God's grace into the lives of Elisabeth and Mary before their children were born. What wonderful conversations they must have had, wondering at what God was doing in their lives and what He was planning for their very special children.

Elisabeth had not even yet been told that Mary was pregnant. She spoke words given to her by the Spirit as she recognized Mary's blessed condition.

"And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy" (Luke 1:41–44).

Just as the angel had said, Elisabeth gave birth to a boy. All of her neighbors and relatives, when they heard the news, were very kind to her and they rejoiced. They assumed that when the baby was named he would receive his father's name or at least a family name. Therefore, they were very surprised when Elisabeth said he would be named John. So they went to inquire of Zacharias. Zacharias and Elisabeth knew what family and friends did not know—that "John had been given his name by God," and that he had a God-

given mission to fulfill.

Apparently Zacharias had been stricken deaf as well, because they had to communicate to him by making gestures, asking him to name the child. In writing, Zacharias agreed with his wife in naming their son "John." Instantly after fulfilling God's command to name the child John, Zacharias could speak and began praising God with his first words after months of silence. Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit, gave a prophecy of the coming of a Savior who would redeem His people. The Messiah was already being "sent," for God had begun to set His plan into motion. The "royal line of David" refers to the ancestral line through whom the Messiah was to come, as God had said through His holy prophets (see, for example, 2 Samuel 7:11–13, 26; Psalms 89; 132:17; Ezekiel 34:23–24; Amos 9:11–12; Hebrews 1:1).

Zacharias, speaking of his son John, said, "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day spring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel" (Luke 1:76–80).

John's parents were already old when he was conceived, so to presume that he grew up on his own would not be far from the truth. He became "strong in spirit," possibly referring to his moral development, but could also point to his strengthening in God's Spirit. As he prepared for his ministry he was isolated from people, being in the wilderness.

God gave John the title of "prophet of the Highest." All the titles men grasp for on earth cannot compare to the heavenly titles given by God. John's title emphasizes the deity of Jesus Christ. "Prophet of the Highest" reveals to us that John is a prophet of God, for "Highest" can be no other than God. Since we know that "Highest" refers here to Jesus Christ, there is, therefore, only one conclusion we can arrive at: Jesus Christ is indeed God.

It was necessary for the ministry of John the Baptist to precede the ministry of the Messiah because the idea of salvation had been adulterated in Israel and had to be corrected before salvation could be realized. The idea of a political deliverance had been substituted for that of a moral salvation. In Luke 1:71, the words "saved from our enemies and from all who hate us" indicate what was happening in the society of that day. Zacharias prophesied that the Messiah would bring deliverance. The Jews were awaiting the Messiah, but they thought He would deliver them from the powerful Roman Empire. They were ready for a military Savior, but not for a peaceful Messiah who would conquer sin.

Therefore, there was need for another person divinely authorized to remind the people that perdition consisted not in subjection to the Romans but in divine condemnation; and that salvation, therefore, was not temporal emancipation, but the forgiveness of sin. To perform this task and implant once more in the heart of the people this understanding of salvation was to prepare the way for Jesus, "For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways" (Luke 1:76).

FEAST REPORTS 2003

Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada

The Feast of Tabernacles 2003 in Niagara Falls proved to be a memorable one. In its second year, it has proven itself to be very successful due to uplifting and encouraging services made possible only through God's provision of inspiration.

With an abundance of activities came togetherness and unity, which made our time there even more special.

Hopefully this article can attract even more interest to this wonderful site and help those who have never attended grasp an idea of what it's like.

Saturday, October 11

For our morning service, John Coish gave a sermon titled "Hear It and Do It." We were reminded that we, the members of the church, must represent God. Just as God loves us, so should we love each other, expressing that love through our actions out of genuine concern for each another.

Our afternoon sermon was delivered by Dr. Don Deakins and was entitled "Our Inheritance." Dr. Deakins explored the history of the Feast of Tabernacles, what it meant to the Israelites, and what it symbolizes in our future.

On the second night of the feast we had a real treat. Thanks to Ray "Sinatra" Doyle of Hamilton, Ontario, we had a karaoke night where many were treated to amusing, energetic, and stunning performances by fellow CGI members. This included a sidesplitting performance by John Coish and Jim French with their rendition of "The Lion Sleeps Tonight." The event lasted for hours, and everyone had a good time.

Sunday, October 12

The sermonette by Jim Patterson was named "Let Your Light Shine." Using an excellent correlation with the hymn "Lower Lights," Mr. Patterson explained how we should always have our lamps burning to guide others out of the darkness of this world.

The sermon was given by Dr. Don Deakins and was titled "God's Waiting Room." In this sermon he explained to us that we have to have patience and to wait for God, for our reward would be to inherit the earth; and that we must trust Him,

that He will do as He promised in His time.

The activity of the day was the trip to Marineland, where participants got to go on rides, play games, and interact with all the variety of animals there. It was fun for all ages, as this event remains a popular one.

Monday, October 13

Alex Kennedy provided the sermonette while Robert Alcorn gave the sermon for this day's service. Mr. Alcorn's sermon was titled "Putting God Above All Else." This title was self-explanatory, as we were taught to love our enemies and our fellow man, to become more like God.

Family Day was the event for the third day of the feast. This all-ages event could be described as the "highlight" of the feast. A high turnout of partakers attended, as was expected. Many games, sports, and activities were available for all. Basketball, volleyball, three-legged race, and the lemon-in-spoon race were just some of the events there.

It was truly a uniting day for the congregation, where new faces were introduced, and friendships were kindled. Turning into a new tradition, this is a day most look forward to during the feast.

Tuesday, October 14

On the fourth day of the feast, we had a split sermon between Doug Coish and Horane Smith, titled "Investment and Interest" and "Imagine" respectively.

Mr. Coish's message reminded us that our top priority is serving God and nothing else. He also provided us with an interesting acronym: **Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth**.

Mr. Smith's message sparked our imagination, allowing us to visualize the eternal life to come, and to let our patience for this endowment strengthen us.

Wednesday, October 15

This day's sermonette was given by



The Children's Choir

Robert Pereira, called "The Bible Effect." Mr. Pereira showed how effectively the Bible has transformed us in the past, how it powerfully affects now, and how it will affect us in days to come.

John Coish's sermon prompted us to remember the obligation of parents, as well as grandparents, to teach their children the ways of God.

On this, the night of the fifth day of the feast, the Variety Show was the event of the day. We were treated to a lineup of very talented performers, both young and not so young. There were many musical treats—on piano, guitar, and also singing.

There were also non-musical performances with poems, skits, and comedy. Jim French did a great job of hosting the event, which was a huge success. It was obvious on this night to see just how God has blessed his church with a variety of talents. The night was capped by an electric performance by Stephanie Chin and Jasmin Scarlett singing "Shackles" by Mary Mary.



Festival director John Coish

Thursday, October 16

On the sixth day, Dwight Chin gave the sermonette, and Wayne Hendrix delivered the sermon, "Supporting the Work."

The Children's Play was put on by all the youth and children. With artistic props, lighting effects, and a wonderful script, the children made a lasting impact on the crowd. Based on the land of Babylon in the time of King Nebuchadnezzar, the stories of Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego as well as Daniel in the lions' den were told. The children's efforts were well rewarded with an impressive and well executed performance.

Friday, October 17

On this, the last day of the feast, the sermonette was done by George Gibson and was named "Lights on the Hill." He dealt with how we should be using our talents to serve God, and told us that whatever we do, we are to do it for the Lord.

Bill Watson's sermon took us back to the time when Jesus celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles to show us its significance and importance.

Later that evening we had a Bible study conducted by Wayne Hendrix. The theme of this study was the qualifications for ministers in the church, what is required of ministers, as well as their roles and responsibilities.

Following the Bible study, we had a baptism service directed by John Coish. The baptism service was for two women: Karen Cahill and Jasmin Scarlett, who are from Rochester, New York, and Toronto, Ontario, respectively. It was a very touching service, attended by over a hundred witnesses. Afterwards the entire church got a chance to congratulate and greet each of God's new children into their new family.

Saturday, October 18

On the Last Great Day, Bill Watson delivered a message guiding us on how to get back to the basics: Bible study, meditation, prayer, and fasting. After services, we said our saddening goodbyes and headed back to our homes, spiritually uplifted and recharged, ready to face another year.



Doug Coish



Dr. Don Deakins



A group of brethren visiting Marineland

Wagoner, Oklahoma

I'll start by acknowledging our sorrow and sense of great loss with the death of our beloved servant Don Mitchell. Don died due to a fall just three days after the feast. Don served us well every year at the feast by leading our song services, coordinating special music, and giving sermons. Don was a deacon and served his brethren for many years in the Willow Springs and Springfield, Missouri, churches. He will be missed for years to come.

This year's festival activities began October 10 with opening night hospitality. Refreshments were served and fellowship abounded. Many of us have attended the feast here at Wagoner for ten or fifteen years and have grown to know and care for each other deeply. Yet we're always eager to meet and make welcome the new people God sends each year.

The next morning our best-laid plans seemed to unravel: our sound system hadn't arrived and neither had our piano player. We had the staff at Western Hills crank up their P.A. system, and with the assistance of some of our brethren we were up and running. We later had Douie Marten volunteer to play the piano (what a relief!). A little later in the week we found out our piano player and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. T.L. Kuffner, had been in an accident and were a little bruised up but, thankfully, not seriously. They were able to make it for the last half of the feast.

Vance Stinson served up spiritual nourishment at our morning service. In his message, he explained that the Feast of Tabernacles is a time of revival. After a break for lunch many brethren gathered for our afternoon service. Ron Elkins conveyed how frustration is a component of preaching the gospel; yet, as a work of God, we are bearing fruit now and will bear more as God allows.

The afternoon and evening were open for all to use as they so desired.

Sunday morning our youth and teen Bible classes began in earnest. The theme

for our youth this year was the Beatitudes. For services later that morning we had 190 in attendance. Carl Fritts served spiritual sustenance entitled "Social Security or Life Insurance?"

Our young people and their parents were afforded an opportunity to tour the park on a tractor-pulled open tram vehicle. This included a visit to the nature center, games, and a picnic lunch. Our teens met across the lake at 7:30 p.m. at the Pizza Port to fellowship and play pool. Pizza and drinks were free for all. We were pleasantly surprised and blessed to have approximately twenty teens join in our rejoicing at God's feast this year. Some of our teens served us this year with special music, monitoring audio and visual equipment, printing our name tags, producing and editing our photographs, and so on. For their service to God's people we are genuinely thankful.

Our third day began with Vance Stinson eliciting our remembrance of God's great faithfulness. At 2:00 p.m. our tournaments began with fervent competition. One of our young ladies, Danielle Crister, won the basketball shootout (you go girl!). If memory serves me, our reigning horseshoe champion, Ron Stephen, was "dethroned" by a team of Gerald Saul and John Muelman. Ron Stephens won at ping-pong, dethroning Gerald Saul, so all evened out. Drew DeJarnette won the chess tournament. Congratulations to all our champions.

Early evening began our outdoor cook-out. The staff at Western Hills set up tables and chairs outdoors on the point that extends along two sides of beautiful Lake Fort Gibson. The weather was delightful with slightly overcast skies, a good breeze, and temperature in the lower 70s. There were hamburgers and hot-dogs, baked beans, potato salad, and fresh baked cobblers (yum-yum), all cooked by the staff at Western Hills, who also provided the clean-up operation afterwards. Some 20-



Those baptized at the Wagoner feast site include (from left to right) Ester Burmingham, Matthew Kline, Jill Kline, Gerald Saul, and Roland Baus.

25 energetic souls cranked up a game of volleyball that extended until well after dark. Needless to say, fellowship filled the air.

On the fourth day Max Davis expounded the need for endurance to make it into God's coming Kingdom. That afternoon a few brave adults took a float trip at a local river.

Wednesday morning we viewed the DVD of the work. This was postponed from opening day. Bill Watson produced the DVD, which explained what is involved with the production of the good news. Our sermon message by Charles Groce explained the need for some to get their spiritual priorities right or get left. We had our ministers' dinner that afternoon and Charles was late so we ate without him. However, we saved his plate and he joined us later and filled us in on other feast sites and the latest events of the work. Charles left that afternoon for another feast site.

On Wednesday afternoon we also had pontoon boat rides touring the lake. The teens were pulled behind the barges on wake boards. The evening was filled with a boot-scooting country-western dance. Refreshments were served and many prizes won by those purchasing tickets. Proceeds from the ticket sales helped several folks with needs.

Thursday morning's spiritual meat was provided by Duane Nicol. His sermon, "Putting God First," was given with such energy and zeal that our ushers forgot to get an attendance count. At 2:00 p.m. many brethren met at the Seminole campground pavilion for our annual potluck picnic. There was so much food, and again the weather was perfect. This same afternoon out teens took the float trip on rafts and canoes. The annual fun show began at 7:00 p.m., and everyone enjoyed the entertainment.

Friday our youth conducted services with song services, announcements, ushering, and opening and closing prayers, as

well as special music by our younger children. Sermons were split with our beloved Don Mitchell presenting the first message. He spoke extensively on the wonderful knowledge God has given us of His Son and His coming Kingdom. Don called to remembrance our duty to tell everyone including our children and grandchildren of man's awesome destiny. Frank Marang instructed us on the need for a rededication within the church membership.

At 3:00 p.m., we began to bring into the Body of Christ five new members. Our baptism ceremony began with Frank Marang leading in song. We had prayer, and then Frank read scriptures on instructions for laying-on-of-hands. Ron Elkins and Max Davis baptized Roland Baus, Gerald Saul, Esther Burmingham, and Matthew and Jill Kline. Max Davis, Duane Nicol, Carl Fritts, Frank Marang, and Ron Elkins took turns praying for the gift of the Holy Spirit to be given to these new babes in Christ. It was good to see the fruit of God's work evidenced in these five new creatures in Christ. At some point during the ceremony a butterfly lit upon Gerald Saul's hand and remained there for a good while. Guess he didn't feel threatened in the hands of one of God's children. Our day concluded with singing hymns and a Bible study conducted by Frank Marang and Don Mitchell. The subject was "Do you think you're special? God does!"

The Last Great Day we sang songs, took up the holy day offering, and then made it official by ordaining Max Davis to the ministry of Jesus Christ. The ministers remained on the podium and the newly baptized members came up and photographs were taken. Frank Marang and Suzanne Loomis sang special music. Duane Nicol preached on the prenuptial agreements with Jesus Christ—i.e., fear and honor God; do the will of the Father; be wheat and not tares; don't lose your first love; and remain faithful to the end.

Well the end came—to our services, that is. We closed with "the song" and prayer. Everyone said their goodbyes and most left for home.

During the course of the week Kelly Meyers, Wayne Elledge, Suzanne Loomis, David Andrews, Frank Marang, and our Bible class youth performed special music and played music during our offertory.

Thanks to you all and to our youth ministers for their continuing dedication to teach our children God's truth. Thank you Tammy Cottingham for directing our teen program again this year. I truly appreciate all of God's servants. May God bless you all till we meet here again next year.

Ron Elkins



Above: The Youth Choir sang special music on Youth Day. Left to right: Daniel Gilbert, Marley Gilbert, Erica Wherry, and Mark Roberts. **Below:** Ron Elkins (left) and Max Davis (right) prepare to baptize Jill Kline.



Above: This common sight at the Wagoner festival site enhances the "millennial" setting for those who attend the feast here. **Below:** Ray Epperson as "Grandpa Jones" at the Fun Show.



Ester Burmingham and Roland Baus look on as Ron Elkins and Max Davis prepare to baptize Gerald Saul.

Jekyll Island, Georgia

Jekyll Island, Georgia! What a beautiful island to spend the feast on. Even when rain-filled clouds dropped their contents to the earth, it was counted as a blessing. Nothing could spoil the upcoming Feast of Tabernacles, but only enhance our anticipation of its arrival.

The hospitality room slowly began to fill with tired, but happy, arrivals. A table of plenty was awaiting them, with sandwiches, tea, coffee, and water. Nothing like finger food, something to drink, and a



bit of catch-up conversation to enhance the mood of yet another festival.

The first day was most interesting, as Charles Groce presented a DVD showing of the home office and its responsibilities here and abroad. Afterwards, Mr. Groce showed letters of those who sent in money to the work and mentioned how important the widow's mite was in a spiritual and giving way. He reported that a 93-year-old lady had sent in a check of over \$100,000 out of love for God and His work.

Loren Chamberlain spoke on having a good attitude toward rejoicing, even in bad times, because good times are coming. Frank Marang showed us the importance of rededicating our lives by action more than words. It was Paul's job, and it's our job also.

George Crow explained the deception behind our troubles, such as 9-11 and Satan the devil. He also pointed out that we live with the truth by recognizing its negative and positive influences and giving it over to God.

Gene Morris related an idea on how to turn a lemon into lemonade. No matter the pain or the problem, he said, we *will* have help in our lives. God the Father is always there for us.

With visual aids, Mike James brought a question: "Why doesn't everybody get it?" He noted that some will not but some will, and pointed out that judgment begins at the house of God—with *us*! What an emotional wake-up it is to realize that this is our time.

Frank Denman asked what we thought Jesus Christ wanted of us. The explanation given was in Genesis 22. What He wants is

for us to fear the Lord and withhold nothing from Him. God *is* in control and His Son *is* coming back.

Bob Tackett spoke on the lessons of the fig tree: 1) With faith in God, all things are possible. 2) When we forgive those we're angry at, God will forgive us. 3) And do not become hypocrites as the scribes and Pharisees were.

"Are we nuts?" asked Howard Nixburg. Some might think so, since we leave home with bills and other problems to be at

something called "the Feast of Tabernacles." He explained that we're here because we love God and His Son Jesus Christ and don't serve false gods. He pointed out that we are to live like the world depended on us—and it does. And we are to take care of ourselves spiritually.

Mike Nolan pointed out how the world was very attractive to many, especially to young people. We, along with young people, need to avoid those things that attract in the wrong way and are harmful to us. We are not to be in bondage; we are to be free. Paul learned to be content in whatever situation he was in, stating that through weakness he was strong.

Loren Chamberlain, in his second message, spoke on the importance of programs for teens and children. As he pointed out, we live in a different society and we need to approach it that way. Parents and other individuals need to get involved with our youth.

Ferrell Vincent showed how Peter never gave up but did temporarily take His eyes off Christ when doubt set in—and apparently learned from the experience. Mr. Vincent spoke of how hope is in Christ, Who was sacrificed for all of mankind; of how God will destroy the veil of deception that covers all nations; and of how death will be swallowed up in victory.

Morgan Pinkerman gave us the "Secrets



of Happiness," showing that those who do not walk with the ungodly are blessed and not like the chaff that the wind drives away. Remember that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

Orville Bumgardner talked about bumps in the road of life. He explained that young people were on an adventure as never before. He told how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego stayed focused even though they were thrown into the fiery furnace, and pointed out that putting on the whole armor of God is the same as putting on safety equipment. He also noted that this nation will have problems, but those who love God *will* be protected. He ended with a reminder that God has a plan and we are a big part of it.

Bob Simmons urged us to hold fast to the hope that is in us and never let it go. He spoke of the first resurrection and the White Throne Judgment.

As you can see, there were many wonderful sermons and speakers. *Inspirational* is the word for the Feast of Tabernacles 2003.

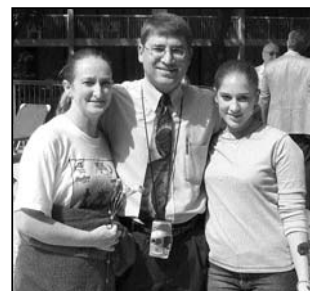
The senior picnic was held outdoors and food was abundant. There were cameras flashing and people talking. Everyone had a great time.

The teen dance came off without a hitch. Karaoke seems to be a favorite with everybody.

The talent show was filled with poets, singers, comedians, and musicians. It was a wonderful evening.

The family dance had great music, and little children were on the floor showing off their talent with their parents guiding them. Many teens were into playing volleyball and eating pizza.

Two were baptized and 265 attended the Feast of Tabernacles 2003 at Jekyll Island.



The Last Great Day was filled with tears of sadness and tears of joy, knowing that we would see each other again in God's place and in His time.

Jo Morris



Ocho Rios, Jamaica

With a high attendance of 258, the CGI feast site in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, besides the local church, had brethren arrive from the southern side of this sunny tropical island as well as from the USA and Canada to both learn and rejoice. Through powerful sermons that aimed to convict the hearers to live lives of radical self-sacrifice and doctrinal messages on correct salvation theology, the main speakers served the brethren a well-balanced diet of spiritual food.

A remarkable congruence between the native Jamaican and imported American speakers occurred, with the messages during the first half of the feast mainly dealing with self-sacrifice and truly living the Christian life. Speakers included Ian Boyne, the local pastor, Duane Nichol, an elder from the Chicago area, and George Ramocan and Glenford Smith, local deacons.

During the second half of the feast, including the Last Great Day, doctrinal messages that discussed true (and false!) salvation theology (soteriology) predominated, coming from both Mr. Boyne and Vance Stinson, one of the presenters on the *Armor of God* telecast. Mr. Boyne gave a

particularly important theoretical sermon on the last day (Friday, October 17) of the feast.

Widely ranging over such subjects as imputed versus infused righteousness, how the greatness of God's plan for us justifies His allowing the enormous quantity of evil in the world, and how Paul's application of Greek terms derived from sporting contests to the Christian life refutes "once saved, always saved." The latter message brought us back to Mr. Boyne's running theme of the Christian's need to give up physical desires and choose to willingly suffer in this life (when God requires it) in order to enter the next life.

Although services typically lasted three hours or more, the consistently very high quality of most of the speaking and singing made this nearly effortless; by contrast, most two-hour services in America I've attended in the past have been more taxing mentally and physically!

But besides the many "heavy" messages, the brethren attending this site had many fun activities also. As Pastor Boyne himself noted during the feast, God created us as whole beings, with both spiritual and physical natures, and a balanced

approach to the feast will satisfy both parts of man's nature.

Organized activities here included a quiz competition with two sets of two teams (youth then adult) answering biblical and non-biblical questions, a "singles' mingle" featuring panel presentations by various singles on various practical aspects of life, followed by music and dancing, an organized visit to Dunn's River and its famous climbable falls, a rap session for couples, a Jamaica night that featured various native kinds of food and entertainment (synchronized dancing, public reading, etc.), a family fun show of singing, public readings, organized dancing, and a sports day.

One striking spiritually oriented organized activity was an interactive workshop session that considered the subject of radical self-sacrifice for God. Led by Deacon Ramocan, this session allowed regular members to speak their minds on the issue in question, in keeping with Mr. Boyne's general principle of "participative hierarchy" in church government.

Featuring five speakers allotted twenty minutes each to defend some special doctrine of the Church of God, the Herbert W. Armstrong Memorial Presentation was a

spiritual activity unique to this feast site. This year the assigned subject was making a case for a strict definition of the one true church, a subject the speakers all did careful research on before writing up their speeches. The only ones allowed to present are non-ordained people who don't normally address the congregation, including women. Triumphant for the third year in a row, Sandra-Mae Robinson claimed a prize worth about US\$175 in Jamaican dollars.

In the morning of the Last Great Day, in a particularly emotionally moving ceremony because the gathered brethren sang hymns befitting the occasion, Pastor Boyne and Deacon Paul O'Connor baptized five people in the ocean by the main beach in Ocho Rios.

If you wish to attend a feast site with a young, growing, and dynamic church, featuring powerful sermons and emotionally moving music, Ocho Rios, Jamaica with CGI is the place to be!

I wish to give thanks to all, including Mr. Boyne, for helping make this truly "the best feast ever" for me spiritually.

Eric V. Snow

Ballina, Australia

The 2003 Feast of Tabernacles was a most uplifting and adventurous experience for Roger and me. We began the first leg of the trip to Australia (approximately 10,000 miles) on Wednesday, October 8, and spent the next 18 hours alternating between changing planes and flying.

The trip began in Raleigh, NC, with a one-hour flight to Memphis, Tennessee. From Memphis, we flew to Los Angeles, CA; then to Auckland, New Zealand; then after 12 continuous hours in the sky, we ended the flying madness in Brisbane, Australia, just in time for a three-hour drive (on the left side of the road) to the feast site in Ballina.

Was it worth it? Absolutely!

The church in Australia did a great job coordinating the activities and made everyone feel special. Herb and Tui Haupt hosted the festivities at the Tropical

Gardens Recreation Center in Ballina. The center is set in a lush tropical landscape that is nearly hidden from the street by overhanging shrubs and palm trees. Approaching it, one sees a well-kept lawn with interesting tropical flowers and a breathtaking lake with a cross bridge and fountain. The interior of the center is elegantly furnished and able to accommodate approximately 100 people.

Services began each day at 10 a.m., and special Bible studies were conducted on Sabbath afternoon and the following Friday night.

Herb Haupt opened the feast with a sermon explaining the meaning and importance of the holy days. His sermon demonstrated his great depth of appreciation for God's plan for man.

Roger King gave five sermons on various topics, such as the "The World Tomorrow," dealing with the millennial reign of Christ; "Prayer Changes Things," emphasizing the importance of prayer in the lives of people of faith; and "Music, a Method of Praise," demonstrating how music was used to praise God as well as upbuild and encourage God's people. One of the Bible studies was devoted to discussion of music and praise from a biblical point of view.

Catered meals were served on the first and last days of the feast. Between eating all of that wonderful food, Tui planned a Sunday of games and fellowship, followed by a

"bring your own meat" barbeque, which was enjoyed by all.

A trip to the animal park was scheduled for Tuesday, but a bad virus kept most from making it. One at a time, at least four out of twenty in attendance, fell victim to what was believed to be a "bug."

Most evenings were spent fellowshiping in dwellings, sharing ice-cream and games, taking long walks under a moonlit sky, or dining out.

The last night of the Feast of Tabernacles in Ballina was somber. We all realized that, as "strangers," we had come together in the Spirit of Christ, abided together, trusted each other, and ended up acknowledging that due to the bonds in Christ, we were not strangers at all. We were brethren, bound together at a given time in a given place for God's purpose. Tomorrow we would separate and re-establish the 10,000-mile distance between us. What would we each take with us as a lesson for life? If we can show love and concern for our distant brothers, we should be committed to do the same for the ones we see weekly.

On a personal note, Herb, Tui, Zelton, Dianna, Peter, Michele, Shere', Marie, Alex, and Mercy, as well as all the others whom we did not get to spend enough time with, we'd like to thank all of you for your very special gifts, your hospitality, and your Christian kindness.

After the feast in Ballina, we spent two nights in Sydney, Australia. All that this country girl can say is "WOW!" The contrast between Ballina and Sydney is incredible. Ballina is lovely, quiet, and peaceful with a focal point of beautiful calming blue water. Sydney is more like a 24-hour amusement park. There is nothing calm about it.

Once we landed, a shuttle took us to our hotel in the heart of Sydney, which was in walking distance of Darling Harbor. Our balcony overlooked the entire harbor and the numerous shops and nightlife. Since we arrived at night, it was easy to see that lights lit up the darkness for as far as the eye could see. Day and night the city is



Standing, left to right: Zelton and Roger. Seated, left to right: Herb and Alex

crawling with people—not only on the ground and water, but even in the sky by means of skyscrapers and tramcars. We made the most of our short time in Sydney by taking a tour bus all around the most famous sites.

The bus allowed us to get on and off all day long for one price. We strolled among thousands of diverse people viewing the Opera House, notorious parts of the downtown areas, and spent a good deal of the time in China Town.

Later that evening, we dined in the hotel dining room to a festive international buffet with elaborate gourmet deserts and champagne.

We finished the Australian experience by sitting on the balcony observing the harbor lights below and the heavenly lights above, and reflecting on the adventure that God had permitted us to take. With rejoicing hearts, we thanked Him and we thanked the Church of God International for being faithful stewards over His flock.

Landing safely again in Raleigh, NC, it was business as usual, but with a greater understanding of and appreciation for God's plan for mankind and His promises for the future as demonstrated by the Feast of Tabernacles.

Mary King



Above, left to right: Zelton and Dianne, Tui and Herb, Roger, Alex, children, and Mercy.

Below, left to right: Alex, Mercy, Dianne, Mary, Tui



Land Between the Lakes, Kentucky

I love, love, love the Feast of Tabernacles! It is a "last hurrah" of good weather for those of us who live in a four-seasons zone. The scenery in the Land Between the Lakes, Kentucky, was, as usual, painted with gold, red, yellow, and green. This area is so serene. It sets a beautiful scenario for the Feast of Tabernacles, which ultimately pictures the millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

The busyness of all who attended was highlighted with the fellowship of present friends along with old friends and new acquaintances.

Mr. James Pollitte, our festival coordinator, opened services with a pep talk. Mr. Pollitte and his wife Carol work hard, are so kind and have so much of God's Spirit. The feast took on the theme of unity, a kind of "We're all in this together" attitude. We had several Churches of God in attendance. The camaraderie was invigorating, as we met in one accord. Our stage was elegantly adorned with fall colors, thanks to the staff at the convention center. Mrs. Nancy Miles created a beautiful display enhancing the decor of the auditorium. It was a very learning experience, as you will see below:

Day One: Clint Mahoney kicked off the feast in a roaring "HALLELUJAH, PRAISE GOD!!!" As a matter of fact, we are approximately one in 30,000 people on this planet who have been called and have chosen, through understanding, to follow the rules God has given us. This feast is all about salvation. God expects our unwavering devotion. The plan of God is like a treasured photograph we look closely at every six months at the spring feasts and the fall feasts.

Eugene Leuka, in a synopsis, encouraged us to "Have Vision and Look to the Future." He reminded us that we are spiritual Zion. We are going to repair, replace, and rebuild this world together with the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Wayne Hendrix was scheduled to kick off the feast, but he had to preach a funeral of his very good friend and fellow saint, Steve Mesco. He gave the afternoon sermon, urging us to stay ignited with God's Holy Spirit and to stay passionate about this work because this is our job. He reminded us that the work started by Mr. and Mrs. Herbert W. Armstrong still needs being done. We are a hodgepodge of people and we need to be "in love" with our brothers and sisters. Be loyal to this cause. Stay in one church fellowship and be loyal. People need to be able to count on you. We have been anointed. Mr. Hendrix pricked our conscience as he reminded us what Jesus Christ asked: Will He find faith on this earth when He returns?

Day Two: Bobby Whitt said we have to be made to rejoice. Genesis 1:26 (the creation of man and woman) is the reason the whole Holy Bible was written and the whole basis of man. He reminded us to consider that things seen are temporary and things not seen are eternal. Mortality will be swallowed up by life eternal.

Wayne Hendrix continued the theme of this feast when he told us Jesus Christ came to reveal the family relationship. We are to be born into that family of God and be very God with life, love, and intellect. Jesus Christ desires that we be one with Him—this is the sweet pleasure of God. Again, Mr. Hendrix implored us to be together in Sabbath services for nourishment spiritually. We cannot get this feeling of love if we neglect going to church

EVERY Sabbath Day. We are being judged now. Satan is infecting us by the ways of this world. We are also being warned, "DO NOT PLAY HEAD GAMES WITH GOD." We will be in the royal family of God. Your response to God's calling is your choice. We must consistently do works no matter how inconvenient. Our conduct must be above board! Do not act like we want to act, but like Jesus Christ would act. We need God and each other. Food for thought: What would it take for you to go away from God and His people? The reward is the Kingdom of God for life eternal; the only alternative is eternal death?

Day Three: Mark Swartzkof told us to be prepared by study, study, study. Also we were admonished to clean up our life because the example of the life we lead is the best way to witness.

James Pollitte reminded us of how much Satan is responsible for the human misery on this planet and that he hates us and wants to have his way with us as God's people. Satan has programmed this world to draw us away from God. We need to make choices based on intellect, emotion and volition/will. These choices determine the development of our character. We need to bring all aspects of our fleshly body into subjection. God wants a commitment mentally so we can do the right thing physically. When we follow the laws of God, we become a blessing to all those around us.

Day Four: David Bumgardner got our attention by saying we cannot keep part of the Feast of Tabernacles. We are a family here in the Body of Jesus Christ. God teaches us little by little. We have to get our actions under subjection so God can use us.

Marvin Wyke moved us mentally into the "Time of Restitution." This will be the 1,000-year rule of Jesus Christ when, if anything is wrong in any facet, it will be corrected. The twelve disciples will rule over the twelve tribes of Israel. Satan will have no influence over humans during this time, as he will be bound. We need to work through our faith so we will be a part of that first resurrection and strategically help our Elder Brother and Savior Jesus Christ usher in this period.

Day Five: Lloyd Cary asked us about our spiritual revival and what it means. Let's rid ourselves of our secret sins and animosity. Be more accepting of correction by those in charge in our everyday way of life. Human nature fights against revival. Check out the problems with each of the seven churches of Asia listed in Revelation 2 and 3. Encourage each other in our quest to become perfect. Leave the past in the past. Right now we are in a fight for our lives, so attend Sabbath services and keep God's holy days; pray, study, fast, and meditate. Don't straddle the fence with your loyalty between God and man. Choose God today. Don't tell God what you will do, SHOW HIM!

Hal Bryant saluted us as saints of the Most High God and consecrated beings. God gives us the titles because we are learning to follow His laws and walk as Jesus Christ walked. Disciples were first called Christians at Antioch in A.D. 41, which was ten years after the birth of the Church of God. It was not always good to be a Christian in society's eyes. Jesus Christ will install you in your position in His Kingdom. There is room at the top in God's Kingdom. We are going to be in God's Kingdom for only one reason and that is to serve our Creator.

Day Six: Eugene Leuka told us that we are expected to increase in faith. We are consistently going to be increasing in the Kingdom of God as the increase of His government; there will be no end—forever (see Isaiah 9:7). We are the pioneers for God's Kingdom. We have to keep going forward.

Bronson James gave a tribute to the Armstrongs. This is the first Feast of Tabernacles since 1927 that there was not an Armstrong (either Herbert W. Armstrong or Garner Ted Armstrong) in the pulpit. We have all been touched by the work of these men. As a note of respect, we should remember the good impact they have had on our lives! Live in memory and honor of those who have died.

Bronson James announced "The Kingdom Come." We need to enlarge our thinking about God's Kingdom. This Kingdom will permeate the whole world and beyond. He urged us to double our effort to get those we love into God's church; acknowledge our sins and get rid of them. We will be as heat and light to all men when we are Spirit beings—very Gods. Once again, in the theme of unity, we are instructed to be a witness of reconciliation. We can't sit on the sidelines. We must be in the limelight and be ambassadors for God's Kingdom. We are not bound by laws of man that try to override God's laws. We need to have "aerobic animosity" as we work up a sweat in obeying these laws of God. Be resolved; put your hand to the plow and HOLD ON! The Kingdom of God was prepared for you from the very beginning (Matthew 25:31–34). Pray "The Kingdom Come."

Day Seven: Bill Russ asked the question, "Flesh Only You Say?" We were cautioned that we are held responsible for what we hear. God reveals what we need to hear to His prophets and they, in turn, tell us. God made an image of Himself out of dirt (a Kodak moment if ever there was one). He gave us a human spirit, which separates us from the animals. Mr. Russ recounted the story of King Nebuchadnezzar and how he ate grass like an animal because God removed the human spirit from him for seven years because of his sin. We receive God's Holy Spirit, which bonds with the human spirit at the baptism and laying-on-of-hands ceremony. We can have the fruits of the Spirit, which come from the Holy Spirit that dwells within us through this baptism.

Wayne Turnbull entreated us to "OBEY." The attribute of obedience is a sign of true friendship to God. When Adam and Eve sinned, the picnic was over. There is nothing to hide when you obey, and there's the added benefit of no guilt. Obedience brings freedom; but even with freedom we have restrictions. When we do wrong, God chastens us. He has a goal for us, and He will finish the work He has begun in us. God is watching you, and no rebellion will be tolerated. Even if we don't always understand, we need to obey. God will help us understand in His time. Obedience challenges us to go beyond and away from conformity. Obedience is also an act of love. Be God-centered and not man- or self-centered. As Christians, people watch us because we do stand out in our beliefs. Even though we are *in* this world, we cannot be *of* this world. We must, as Christians, take action in obedience to God because we are the salt of the earth, and salt can lose its flavor.

Last Great Day: Bronson James specif-

ically mentioned that this day is a day of solemn assembly. It does not mean to be silent, but to have an attitude of introspect, soberness, serious-mindedness, reverence, earnestness, and respectful consideration. We need to make this year our year of release in that we let go of hurt, anger, animosity, hate, grudges, and so on. Jesus Christ's blood dripped from the stake on which He was mutilated, and that blood covered these and all of the sins of man. We need to get our lives pure and keep them pure. We must put time into prayer, study, fasting, and meditating so we can qualify.

In addition to the wonderful sermons, we had two Bible studies. Clint Mahoney gave an overall picture of how the holy days outline the plan of God and how the Holy Bible gives the clear picture of salvation. Tom Kauffung outlined in story flow the book of Ephesians.

I have to muse over the beautiful weather God granted us. One day it sprinkled, but for the rest of the feast the weather was beautiful. I personally was invited on a cruise of the Lakes. What a treat!

The special music was stupendous. I have to applaud Frank Klett for the enormous amount of sound he was able to get out of eight to twelve people in the choir. I did not realize I could hit those notes. There were many moments that I wish I could have been in the audience to hear the selections performed by the choir. I hope the congregation enjoyed our music half as much as I enjoyed singing it. Thank you Frank and all those who served in the choir. What a treat to serve with all of you.

What can I say about our seniors? What a treasure of knowledge and years of experience in God's church. We had a Hawaiian theme with flowered leis for everyone. There was a lot of conversation and stories aplenty. The family dance was a masquerade party. We had a nun who made Mother Teresa look pretty. As Bill Russ said, "And I thought Mother Teresa was an ugly nun!" We had the "King of the Hill," a redneck and his wife, along with a very unrecognizable man dressed as "one ugly woman." We also had a very large butterfly. There was music and dancing and fellowship for all and cash prizes to boot.

We had a talent show directed by Bobby and Ann Whitt. We had musical talent presented by many of the brethren. We still have "wannabes" galore.

To top off the feast activities, we had our Youth Day. Mrs. Vicki Bryant, along with many volunteers, headed up the youth program this year including Sabbath School and a Youth Day program.

As a special treat during the feast, we were blessed with a concert by Kateena LeForge. What a treat listening to her sing for a 90-minute program. She has offered to be back again next year. Her CD is filled with wonderful spiritual music. When she sang "How Great Thou Art," she left chill bumps on me. She hit notes I did not know existed.

Just want to send out a big THANK YOU to all of you who made my Feast of Tabernacles 2003 a grand and glorious time. I hope in some way I helped you also because we are all in this together.

All in all, the feast was filled with so much activity, fellowship, and fun. I can say I am rejuvenated for action for the coming year. See all of you next year, and may God bless you...TILL WE MEET AGAIN.

Goldie Davis

Harrison Hot Springs, British Columbia

We have enjoyed our fourth year at the Feast of Tabernacles in this beautiful location that God had provided for His people.

The setting is on the Harrison Lake surrounded by beautiful mountains. Since the feast was a little later in the year, we had the pleasure of snow-capped mountains to look at almost every day. Even some rain didn't dampen the enthusiasm the brethren had.

Attendance on the first day was 55, and on the last day we had 58. What a blessing—since we can look back four years when we had

12 attending.

The fun show, with Bob Swimm emceeing, was what a fun show is supposed to be—fun for everyone. Some came pre-

pared; others just felt the spirit of the evening. All seemed to enjoy the "talent" and the fun.

A big thanks to all who came from dis-

tant homes to share this wonderful feast. Hopefully we will have a larger room for next year (we were nearly wall-to-wall this year).



A small but happy group gathered to observe the Feast of Tabernacles at Harrison Hot Springs, B.C., this year. Attendance was 55 for the first day, 58 for the last day.

We want to thank Bronson James, Bill Watson, and Bob Swimm for the inspiring messages of our hope for the future as we look forward to the Kingdom of God.

It was also inspiring to see the DVD of the CGI working to fulfill the commission Christ gave us.

We all left the feast feeling well-fed and looking forward to next year.



Left: The men at the Harrison Hot Springs festival site

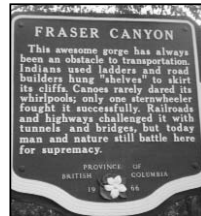
Right: The women at Harrison Hot Springs



Mr. and Mrs. Gibson of Victoria, B.C., won a prize in a drawing at the fun show.



Roy Geddis from East Texas is headed for Hell's Gate.



A sign at the entrance of Hell's Gate



Bronson James, CGI minister from Detroit, MI



Bill Watson, CGI minister from Brunswick, OH



Bob Swimm, CGI minister from Southgate, KY



At the pub, from left to right, are Daniel De Jarnette, Ken Register, Bob Swimm, Pat Snyder, Ruth Trent, Ken Trent, and Merv Snyder.



Judy Foulks "paints" a tree on fun night. Some of the participants were limbs, some were leaves, and some were birds.



Oceanna Gabrielle, Xandra Dovina, and Baylee Raymond, grandchildren of Rod and Susan Healey of Chiliwack, B.C., were blessed on the last day.



Bill Watson (left) with (left to right) Judy Foulks of Montrose, CO, and Bridgetta and Bruno Jergenson of Powell River, B.C.

Salt Lake City, Utah (Sandy, UT)

We were in high hopes that we might see some 130 people here in 2003, based on a continuing growth rate of 30 percent per year. In 2001 we registered around 70 attendees, then about 100 came in 2002, so we planned on 130 for 2003. Such was not the case. We registered around 95 with a high attendance on the Last Great Day of 86. Some of the brethren did not come to every meeting; some went to other feast sites, and some may have thought the weather in mid-October would be quite cold. The weather was absolutely beautiful, usually in the 70s, with a small sprinkle one day. High in the Wasatch Mountains one could see some snow.

Perhaps it was just too optimistic on our part to continue to expect so much growth! But, as a result, we will plan on an attendance in 2004 of about 100. Consequently, we will still be using our Room 400 in the South Towne Exposition Center for the normal meeting facilities, and try to give up our separate children's room of 300-D to save unnecessary expense.

Everyone enjoyed the accommodations. King bedrooms were being rented at \$59 a

night (plus taxes), while many brethren enjoyed the Extended Stay Hotel with their own kitchen facilities for an incredibly cheap eight-day stay. There are plenty of motel and hotel rooms in all price ranges within easy driving distance to the Exposition Center. The major Salt Lake City International Airport is just a short twenty-minute drive away.

Every aspect of the feast was excellent in 2003: sermons, song service, activities, and meals were well received and enjoyed. Indeed, this is a warm festival group!

Our speakers this year included Bill Watson, Bronson James, George Ramocan (deacon from Jamaica), Charles Groce, Fred Weed (deacon from Arizona), and Ben Chapman.

We started out with an informal get-together on Friday evening with lots of conversation and a bit of a snack of crackers, cheese, fruits, and veggies, washed down with a little wine, soda pop, or ice

water. All of the services were accompanied with songs presented on a large screen for easy viewing of the manuscripts. All music was on CDs (we don't have the services of a pianist). Our song-leaders did a great job. From Sunday (the second day of the festival) through the Last Great Day we had a single morning service, followed by activities each afternoon through Friday.

Sunday was karaoke and games day at our assistant festival coordinator Richard Kennedy's home in nearby Murray.



Ben Chapman in the meeting room at the Sandy, UT, Exposition Center

Monday found many of us on a wonderful luncheon cruise on the Great Salt Lake. Tuesday many of us took the TRAX streetcar downtown to the Planetarium to see a spectacular 3-D show on the construction of the space station. Wednesday caught us on a bus tour to downtown for shopping and sightseeing, especially visiting the Mormon Tabernacle and beautiful grounds of the LDS Church. We stayed near Room 400 on Thursday so we could all re-enter the room for a complete roast turkey dinner and an exciting bingo afternoon. Friday was Kids Day for all our youngsters to enjoy a luncheon at Wendy's and a swim in the Hampton Inn's indoor pool! The children had worked hard during the week to prepare their play, which was presented Sabbath morning to a very appreciative audience!

Yes, it was a busy week! Every year brings many wonderful sermons, with adventures of fun and travel, for what we hope will be spiritually and educationally fulfilling. We encourage all of the readers of this article to consider Salt Lake City your choice of feast sites in 2004!

Benjamin R. Chapman

A True History According to Holy Scripture

By Benjamin R. Chapman

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The importance of beginning at the beginning

To make a study of ancient history, especially to specialize on the ages-old history of the beginning of the world as contained in the Bible, it is appropriate to begin at the beginning—Creation.

It seems that most historians like to start in the present—or even in the unknown future! Many prefer to begin their studies with the unknowable subject of the return of our Savior Jesus Christ, then attempt to trace back to Creation. Many “prophets” have tried to establish this date by vain attempts at understanding mysterious scriptures, or by simply guessing, or listening to “a prophet” about a date that God’s Word tells us no one can know! Some scholars have figured 4004 B.C. (Bullinger), 4008 B.C. (Ussher), or 4026 B.C. (Hoeh) as the date for Creation, or some other magical date. The latest paper I have read on this subject doesn’t speculate on the beginning date but the date Jesus is coming back to this earth: 2028 A.D.! Who really knows?

Of course, these “starting dates” or “return dates” are based on belief in a divinely established master plan that will take seven thousand years to complete. The Bible clearly talks about a thousand-year period—the Millennium—during which Jesus Christ Himself, as King of kings and Lord of lords, will rule righteously with a strong hand. Since man was given six days in the week to work and do all his pleasure, and then to rest on the seventh day to worship God and study His Word, some believe that the first six thousand years of human history are for man to do his work—form his governments and societies—and the seventh period of one thousand years is for God to show those who are left of mankind after the terrible events of the Great Tribulation how to be really happy and prosperous, with happy marriages and families, worshipping the one and only true God! This common belief is based on what we read in 2 Peter 3:8, Exodus 20:8-11, and Revelation 20:2-7 (all scriptural quotations in this series are taken from the King James Version of the Bible; any emphasis mine):

“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that *one day* is with the Lord as a *thousand years*, and a *thousand years* as *one day*” (2 Peter 3:8).

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. *Six days* shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the *seventh day* is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates: For in *six days* the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the *seventh day*: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:8-11).

“And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a *thousand years*, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the *thousand years* should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the work of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a *thousand years*. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the *thousand years* were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a *thousand years*. And when the *thousand years* are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison” (Revelation 20:2-7).

So why does puny man not want to believe the

Editor’s note: This is the first installment of a series by Benjamin R. Chapman on the history of the world according to the biblical data. Mr. Chapman has already completed several chapters and plans to eventually publish the entire series in a single volume. Until the volume is completed and made available, we plan to run segments of the work serially in the *International News*.

Scriptures? We read in Matthew 24:31-36 these very informative words:

“And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*”

End-time events

Of course, not many people believe that Jesus is coming back to this earth even though He said so Himself in John 14:1-3:

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in me, God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions [offices]: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again*, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Acts 1:9-11 confirmed this fact to Jesus’ early disciples:

“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, *shall so come in like manner* as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

Jesus came to understand His great calling, what He had to do on earth, and what was in His future. Read John 17:3-5:

“And this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, *glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*”

As end-time catastrophic events take place, man may realize that Christ’s return is close, but it has not been revealed to mankind the exact date of our Savior’s return! Only God the Father knows when this is going to be! So why waste time trying to second-guess God? Why not start discussing the beginning *with the beginning*, not the end!

Perhaps in the years since His resurrection back into the God Family, Jesus and His Father may have discussed this all-important topic, but there is absolutely no biblical evidence that any human has been informed of this fact! Not a one of the so-called prophets has even been close. Maybe in the future some *true* prophet of God will be given some important facet of this truth, but only if it is necessary to accomplish some great responsibility outlined by the Eternal God.

You might say, Surely the apostles and early church knew about His Second Coming. Not so, for we can read the attitude of the first-century church in Acts 1:6-8, 15:

“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power,

after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.... And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty....”

One hundred and twenty disciples had no definitive idea when Christ was to return! They thought His return was to be in their lifetime. They understood very little about their job! They had no grasp of the great plan of God, which was to take seven thousand years.

Nor did the apostles! Only later in life did they fully come to understand that there was going to be lots of time before Jesus’ return. They did think His return was eminent in their lifetime. Notice 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17:

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then *we which are alive and remain* shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Here, the apostle Paul thought Christ was coming in his lifetime! But later he wrote an epistle to Timothy in which he showed his increased understanding:

“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

I wonder if Paul realized it would be several millennia later? The time was not the important thing in Paul’s mind. He knew he had a job to do. In that same chapter, he tells his readers about the coming New Testament, a work to which he was to contribute:

“Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable for me for the ministry. And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, *but especially the parchments*” (verses 11-13).

The entire Old Testament and New Testament canonization was thoroughly covered by Dr. Earnest L. Martin in his doctoral thesis *Design and Development of the Holy Scriptures* in 1965. I do not plan to cover this subject at all, since Dr. Martin has already done such a masterful job!

Indeed, the Bible does outline many end-time events which, to those who believe in the true God and His Son Jesus Christ, will make it very apparent that Jesus’ return is near. For instance, when we see the Great Tribulation mentioned in Matthew 24 begin or the incredible heavenly signs foretelling the Day of the Lord shining brightly in the skies, the world will know that the Lord’s long-awaited return is near. How can anyone miss these great events? Read Matthew 24:15-22, 29-30:

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be *great tribulation*, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.... Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the

heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and *they shall see the Son of man coming* in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

We know that many different awe-inspiring events will occur even before we see the heavenly signs. The apostle Paul warned the first-century church about false teachers and false apostles who would deceive Christians. Notice:

"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that *man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition*; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4).

We need not worry. There will be plenty of signs telling mankind that His day is near! Our responsibility is to be ready!

Indeed, the apostles didn't even know. So how could puny men know? Answer: They don't! The best they can do is make guesses—and so far they have always been wrong.

My goal in this study

So, what is my goal? It is *not* to start with some unknown future date about Christ's return to this earth. Rather, my plan is to start with the beginning—with the Creation of our world as we know it today. I will start with God's Creation that He specifically formed for man. Many years later Christ came to this earth to reveal His Father and to show man how he could receive the Holy Spirit as a begettal and qualify for membership in God's Family. But that's many years after Creation and a world of chapters about how man has failed to make the grade. But we will see that occasionally a righteous man has qualified for the ultimate reward of being born into the very Family of God.

The obvious way I'm going to do this is with *dates*. So I will start with the Genesis 1 Creation as *Year 0*. I will use the A.M. dating scheme (which means in Latin *anno mundi*, or year of the world). Who could argue with this? In older editions of E. W. Bullinger's famous *Companion Bible*, Appendix 53, the first column of dates in devoted to "A.M. Dates." He, of course, starts with Creation as *0 A.M.* It is not necessary, nor important, at this point to argue about the age of the earth? Is it a "young earth" as some propose, or is it billions of years old as geologists and paleontologists maintain? The age of the world is not my concern now.

All events in this study will begin with a definite, unarguable, date: Genesis 1 Creation at *0 A.M.* I will use biblical information whenever available since the basis of this study is God's Word. We read in John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: *thy word is truth*."

As a Christian and biblical scholar who firmly believes in God's Word, why would I want to start with any other source? All historical facts must agree with the Bible.

Next, works written by biblical scholars will be used, especially Dr. Herman L. Hoeh's *Compendium of World History* and *The Works of Flavius Josephus*. Then secular historians may help fill in the gaps, but any conclusions they may present must agree with the Holy Bible!

Groundwork and a master plan are important to begin any project. Some hard-to-understand historical events may be difficult to grasp; some may even be impossible to get right! But certainly starting with the return of Jesus Christ is not the way to go!

I will logically go through the Bible in its original inspired order in each of my chapters, occasionally branching into other histories as they concur with the Bible. I have not even begun to dream up all the subjects I will be covering in each chapter. But to me it is an exciting undertaking, and I hope will be a profitable and informative work to all Christians.

From My Little Corner of the World

My Happy Feast in Kentucky

By Nancy Miles

Hello everyone! I hope all of you had a joyous and happy feast this year! Mine was a bit of a challenge for me because of health problems and other glitches. However, sometimes things don't go the way we expect in God's church; yet because of the love of God in each of us we can work together to make things better. With the help of my brethren, everything was accomplished. So, despite some problems, I still call my feast a happy one!

I wasn't able to attend every event, though I wanted to. However, I did manage to do fairly well by resting each afternoon. The only problem was that I missed the afternoon activities. The weather was beautiful for the most part. I think it may have rained once, but I barely noticed because I was having such a good time attending the services each day and hearing the Word of God preached in season. We had some wonderful sermons, but what stood out for me was Mr. Hal Bryant's greeting, "Welcome, saints of the Most High God!" Wow! What a greeting, and he did it more than once! I especially enjoyed the beautiful music from the choral and special music from different brethren. I also enjoyed the congregational singing and the other functions that had been arranged for us. Bronson James spent several days with us and, as usual, had some profound things to say to us. We love and appreciate all of our ministers!

The first event I attended was the Kentucky Opera on Saturday night. I even received a hug from Clay Campbell for advertising his show. Actually, I was advertising Kateena LeForge, who not only sang at the Kentucky Opera on Saturday night, but also at a concert in our auditorium on Tuesday night. She did a splendid job and the brethren thoroughly enjoyed the event. She received a standing ovation for her rendition of "How Great Thou Art!" I suspect the standing ovation, for the most part, was for our Creator, as well as for Kateena. Knowing her as I do, she would

be very happy that we gave God the glory. She has a sweet and humble spirit and beautiful voice. Her voice is of the type that sends shivers up and down one's spine, especially when she sings traditional gospel.

On Sunday evening, we attended the family dance. My husband Benny loved the barbequed buffalo ribs that were served along with other delicious finger foods. (He always checks out the food first.) Some of the brethren dressed up as different characters. There was even a BIG firefly there and I didn't recognize Mr. Pollitte at all. I kept wondering why he wasn't there and who was that stranger sitting by Mrs. Pollitte. Ellsworth Werline won first prize for the most unusual costume. There was a lot of laughter and a chance to unwind. Everyone who attended had a good time.

On Monday, we attended the beef hamburger cookout and songfest at the pavilion behind the convention center. Bobby and Ann Witt sang a song together. It was a fine day for enjoyment with our brethren. There isn't anything better than fellowshiping with people who have like minds. It is wonderful, and it's something I always look forward to throughout the year. There is a certain loneliness in being scattered, but joy when we come together at the Feast of Tabernacles.

On Thursday, it was time to go to the Lodge for the senior luncheon. Now, since I am definitely old enough to attend this senior function, I made a special effort to be there. We were served a delicious meal, and the fellowship was tops. This year, the luncheon was hosted by Goldie Davis, who chose a colorful Hawaiian theme and presented each of us with a lei made of flowers. Several had a red dot on them, which entitled their owner to receive a silver dollar. Guess what? I was one of the winners! Then, I noticed my husband looking at me with new admiration. I understood why, though (he collects silver dollars). Of course, I gave it to him, but, after all, I am his heir!

That same evening (Thursday), after the senior luncheon, we attended the talent show, where I sang a song from my new children's book, "Little Chicken and Mrs.

Heartfelt." The name of the song was "The Crowing Song." I also gave two readings entitled "The Lamb and the Dove" and "Jesus is My Hero." Last year at the feast, I started giving the "Lovebird Award" to the couple I deemed to be most in love. The award consists of two ceramic doves. Last year, the award went to one of our ministers, Mr. Roger King, because he was such a happy newlywed. His wife wasn't in attendance, but Roger took the award home to her. This year, the "Lovebird Award" went to Bobby Witt and his wife Ann. (Bobby calls her Shy Ann.) Bobby and Ann renewed their wedding vows recently. They sing together, and she is always hugging him. I thought they were the perfect couple for the award.

The Sabbath School was a huge success and was co-coordinated by Vicki Bryant, who did a fine job. Mary Jane Beaty was in charge of the primary class and was assisted by Fannie Owens, a very sweet lady who was loved by the young people and parents alike. The primary class consisted of Katy Burchett, Tara Clifton, and Dalton Tilley. Brenda Evans was in charge of the intermediate class and was assisted by her daughter, Amanda Andrzejak, and niece, Becky Jo Geisler. The intermediate class consisted of Meagon Keith, Davarous Garrison, and Candace Andrzejak. Matthew Geisler, assisted by Justin Hetrick and Anita Taylor, headed up the teen class. The teen class consisted of Lee Cosby, Shrona Cosby, and Virginia Andrzejak.

On Tuesday afternoon, the teens provided a special ice-cream social for the membership with about fifty of the brethren in attendance. Matthew and Becky Geisler were in charge, with Lee Cosby serving.

On Youth Day, all of the young people teamed up to sing together. They were directed by Brenda Evans, and sang two songs. The one that caught my eye (and ear) was a rousing rendition of "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands." It was wonderful!

They also sang "The Beatitudes," a great teaching song. Virginia Andrzejak and Shrona Cosby sang a duet entitled "I Need Thee Every Hour," while Lee Cosby served as the announcer. It was a most enthusiastic performance.

Our youth are very important in God's church, and we need to pray for them and help them as much as we can. They are precious in God's sight.



Nancy Miles with a friend. Nancy's nature display is part of the "Songbird Series," a spin-off from the CGI Sabbath School Advocacy Program.

While the Bible study was in progress on Friday night, I was privileged to be able to read my new book, "Little Children and Mrs. Heartfelt," to the children. They loved it, and I was able to hold their attention until it was all read. (Of course, I had to make barnyard sounds a few times.)

I also presented coloring books, which I had made ahead of time, to the children. We had a snack of cookies, chips, and box drinks.

I enjoy working with young people, and all in all I think I did very well in being able to attend more functions than I expected to. God is good, that I know. Perhaps next year I will be able to attend everything.

I would like to give a special thank you to the Church of God International for the interesting, informative, and well-done film presentation about the work. Also, a grateful and appreciative thank you to our brother, friend, and feast coordinator, James Pollitte, who always does a great job.

A special thanks to Vicki Bryant, who so graciously allowed me to read my new book to the children. Also, thanks to everyone who worked at the feast and to the brethren who cooperated so beautifully.



Kateena LeForge

BAPTIST

Continued from page 3

The Lifestyle of John

God's call came to John when he was living in the Judean wilderness. This area was the desolate waste country south of Jericho and along the shores of the Dead Sea. It was a rugged, barren wasteland filled with rocks and snakes and the occasional shepherds and their flocks searching for what few bits of grass were there. Desert living is hard living. One who must have every convenience of life will not survive well. The desert will test the character of one's faith, as it did John's.

John, as a man of the desert, knew what it was to practice self-denial. A Nazirite from his birth, he developed self-reliance and spiritual strength as he prayed and worshiped God in the desert solitudes he knew so well. John was set apart for special service to God (Numbers 6:1-8).

John's clothing was of the coarse rough texture of woven camel's hair. Zechariah 13:4 indicates that a hairy mantle was a symbol of the prophetic office. John's appearance would remind those listening to him of the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:8). John's clothing was quite a contrast when compared to "long clothing" of the scribes (Mark 12:38) and the gorgeous apparel of those in King Herod's court (Luke 7:25).

The appearance of John was as a prophet, severe, ascetic, possessed by a sense of his mission. His eating habits left much to be desired. His diet consisted of edible locusts classed among the flying, creeping things the Israelites were allowed to eat (Leviticus 11:22). His diet also consisted of the wild honey gathered from the trees in the wilderness and the rocks in the dry riverbeds.

His speech was plain, but being familiar with the Old Testament, he made frequent use of its picturesque language (Luke 3:17; Isaiah 66:24; Amos 9:6). Brooding over the need and peril of his time, he came forth to speak of barren trees fit only for burning—vipers fleeing before the flaming scrub. John saw in his desert surroundings much that symbolized his nation's calamity and that lent color to his solemn warnings of impending doom.

John's Ministry Begins

The word of the Lord came to John in the wilderness. The time of this mandate given to John to begin his public ministry was in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the High priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness" (Luke 3:1-2).

This list, while dating the time of John's ministry, tells us something else about the society of the day. All five rulers were evil and were only known for being immoral, cruel, bloody, ambitious, and vain, oppressing the people unmercifully. The priesthood was hardly better. Notice that there are two high priests mentioned when there should have been only one. The position of high priest was a lifetime position determined by his relationship to Aaron. Now it was nothing more than a political tool of the Roman rulers.

With all this corruption in society it was now time for John the Baptist to cry out against the sins of the day. Sin was the problem then as it is now. Rulers can talk

about improving the economy, about national security, about jobs and education and health, as they do today. The number-one problem was and still is a sin problem, and until it is dealt with, all other problems will continue to vex society.

The public ministry of John the Baptist was a great ministry, but it was a short one, which should not surprise us considering what the message he was delivering contained and how foul and corrupt society was at that time.

Not one of the rulers mentioned in the list of important world leaders at that time was given the word of God. Luke tells us "the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness" (Luke 3:2). John's public ministry began with preaching. "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea" (Matthew 3:1). The message of John can be summed up in this way: "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). This message was the same identical message that Christ would later preach. "From this time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). The theme of John's ministry was repentance, and all of the Synoptic Gospels emphasize this theme. His message made it clear that just to be sorry for one's sins was not enough. The repentance John preached was a message of change, a forsaking of one's sinful life and a complete change of one's attitude about sin. John's message of repentance said plainly that Israel was living in sin. The religious leaders of the Israelites prided themselves as being especially holy because they kept their religious rituals meticulously. But John's message of repentance exposed their religious practices as a disgustingly whitewashed religion, a totally worthless way of life that needed to be repented of.

John's message of repentance was quite appropriate to prepare a people for Jesus Christ. They needed to see themselves as sinners in need of a savior. John gave his listeners a very good reason to repent. The reason was, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." If they desire to gain entrance into this marvelous kingdom, they must repent of their sins.

With the kingdom at hand, the message of repentance becomes an urgent command. It warns against delay in repenting, for the opportunity may pass them by. This was certainly true of the ministry of John the Baptist, for he had a short, very short, public ministry.

The message of John was not a message that was anticipated by most Israelites. While they were not surprised at the kingdom part of the message, they were looking for a Messiah who would come and restore Israel to its former glory among the nations and establish a physical kingdom on earth. They wanted a prince who would destroy their oppressors not a prophet who would rebuke their iniquities. They wanted to conquer people, not passions. Instead of being told to repent, they expected to be told to take up arms and revolt.

The people were excited with the news that a prophet had appeared on the scene. But John's baptism was new in that he was telling the Jews themselves to be baptized as a sign of repentance. They considered themselves "clean" as descendants of Abraham. As far as they were concerned it was the Gentiles who were "unclean" and needed baptism. John explained that sin makes everyone "unclean," and they all needed cleansing and forgiveness. For baptism, John needed water, so he

remained in the region around the Jordan River.

When the news spread that there was a prophet preaching in the wilderness, crowds came out to hear him, and many were baptized. John's message of repentance even brought the Pharisees, Sadducees, and other distinguished men out to see what was going on. When John saw the Pharisees and Sadducees, he literally exploded in anger at the hypocrisy of these religious leaders. The Pharisees separated themselves from anything non-Jewish and carefully followed both the Old Testament laws and the oral traditions handed down through the centuries. The Sadducees believed the Pentateuch alone (Genesis-Deuteronomy) to be God's Word. John denounced them. "You brood of snakes," he exclaimed. Jesus also used this term (see Matthew 12:34; 23:33), which conveys how dangerous and cunning they were and suggests that they were offspring of Satan (see Genesis 3; John 8:44).

In John's day, when a king would make a trip numerous messengers would tell those he was planning to visit to prepare the roads for him. Preparing the way for the King was John's job! John was busy telling his listeners to make their lives ready so this great King could come to them.

The prophet Isaiah, in a similar fashion, called people to repentance. In the latter half of the book of Isaiah, the prophet focuses on the promise of salvation—the coming of the Messiah and the arrival of a man who would announce this coming. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isaiah 40:3). John the Baptist was, in fact, that voice shouting in the wilderness.

John Baptizes Jesus

John's baptism with water was done by complete submersion and symbolized the washing away of sins. His baptism coordinated with his message of repentance and reformation. Water baptism was an outward sign of commitment. To be effective, it had to be accompanied by an "inward" change of attitude leading to a changed life.

This baptism of John did not give salvation. Its purpose was to prepare a person to welcome the coming Messiah and receive His message and His baptism. John was the first genuine prophet in four hundred years, but Jesus the Messiah would be much greater than he.

The coming of the Spirit had been prophesied as part of the Messiah's arrival. "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." This fact identifies the promised Messiah (see Isaiah 44:3; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Joel 2:28-29). Also, the Old Testament promised a time when God would demonstrate His purifying power among people (Isaiah 32:15; Ezekiel 39:29). Even the prophets looked forward to a purifying fire (Isaiah 4:4; Malachi 3:2). This looked ahead to Pentecost (Acts 2).

One day when John was baptizing many people, Jesus also came to be baptized. It was then that John the Baptist uttered his most famous statement: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Many have asked, If John's baptism was for repentance from sin, why was Jesus baptized? Obviously, Jesus did not need to be baptized, for He was sinless (John 8:46; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John

3:5).

There are numerous reasons for Jesus to submit to baptism. He did it to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15), to confess sin on behalf of the nation as Ezra and Nehemiah did (Ezra 9:2; Nehemiah 1:6; 9:1), to accomplish God's mission and advance God's work in the world, to inaugurate his public ministry, to bring the message of salvation to all people, to show support for John's ministry, to identify with the repentant people of God, thus with humanness and sin, therefore giving us an example to follow.

After Jesus was baptized the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on Him (Matthew 3:16). The descending Spirit in the form of a dove marked the arrival of the Messiah. This was His royal anointing. "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD" (Isaiah 11:2).

Matthew 3:17 states, "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Father takes great delight, pleasure, and satisfaction in the Son. The status of Jesus is both described as the Servant who would suffer and die and as the King who would reign forever (see Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1).

What people believe about Christ will certainly affect how they will worship Him. What John believed about Christ helps us understand why he worshipped Christ so well.

Numerous times John stressed that Christ was superior to himself. The other Gospels report his statements to the crowds in which he said Christ was "mightier than I" (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16) and that he was not worthy to unloose and remove the shoes of Christ. At that time John was considered very great by the people, so to say Christ was mightier than himself really called attention to the importance of Jesus. Removing the shoes from one's master and washing his feet was one of the very lowest tasks of a servant in those days. Yet John said in recognition of the greatness of Christ that he was "not worthy" to do this lowliest of tasks for Jesus.

John believed in the preexistence of Christ. In two verses from the Gospel of John, we have the testimony of John the Baptist that proclaims Jesus Christ's preexistence. In both of these verses, he is recorded as saying of Christ, "He was before me" (John 1:15,30). John was born six months before Christ (Luke 1:36), so how could Christ be "before" John chronologically? The answer is that Christ was God and existed before His coming to earth.

John's Imprisonment and Death

John was a prophet with a special mission and he spoke with a fiery voice, not mincing his words. While John proclaimed the Good News and warnings of judgment, he apparently expressed his no-nonsense attitude toward the morality of the day, and that included the lifestyle of Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee. Herod had married Herodias, his brother's wife. Besides being his brother's wife, Herodias was also Herod's own niece. So Herod was committing both adultery and incest. When John publicly protested these sins, as well as many other wrongs, Herod and Herodias became very angry. Therefore, Herod put John in prison, presumably to silence him. The Herods were well known

for their cruelty. We must remember, it was Herod the Great that ordered the murder of the babies in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16).

John the Baptist had his own disciples who were keeping in touch with him during his imprisonment. They told him about everything Jesus was doing—healing people, raising some from the dead, and teaching about a coming Kingdom. This caused John to wonder, so he called two of his disciples and sent them back to Jesus with a question, “Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?” (Luke 7:18–19 NLT). John was confused because the reports he received about Jesus were unexpected and incomplete. John’s doubts were natural, and Jesus didn’t rebuke him for them. Jesus responded to John’s question by telling him about the accomplishments expected of the Messiah and that they were being done as Old Testament prophets had reported. “And when He comes, He will open the eyes of the blind and unstop the ears of the deaf. The lame will leap like a deer, and those who cannot speak will shout and sing!” (Isaiah 35:5–6; cf. Luke 7:22). You can bet John got the message.

After the messengers sent by John had left, Jesus spoke clearly to the crowd about John. Jesus proceeds by asking three questions and giving three answers. “Who is this man in the wilderness that you went out to see? Did you find him weak as a reed, moved by every breath of wind? Or were you expecting to see a man dressed in expensive clothes? No people who wear beautiful clothes and live in luxury are found in palaces, not in the wilderness. Were you looking for a prophet? Yes, and he is more than a prophet. John is the man to whom the Scriptures refer when they say, ‘Look, I am sending my messenger before you, and he will prepare your way before you.’ I tell you, of all who have

ever lived, none is greater than John. Yet even the most insignificant person in the Kingdom of God is greater than he is” (Luke 7:24–28). Tax collectors and the common people heard John’s message and repented, but the religious of the day rejected his words.

Of all people, no one fulfilled his God-given purpose better than John. Yet in God’s Kingdom, all who come after John have a greater spiritual heritage because they have clearer knowledge of the purpose of Jesus’ death and resurrection. John was the last to function like the Old Testament prophets, the last to prepare the people for the coming Messianic age. Jesus was not contrasting the man John with individual Christians. He was contrasting life before John with life in the fullness of Christ’s Kingdom.

Herod hated John but was afraid to kill him because the people considered him a prophet (Matthew 14:5). For Herod to put to death one of the Jews’ prophets could have caused a revolt in his territory. John in prison was not enough for Herodias; she wanted him dead and continued to nurse her hatred against him because he publicly spoke out about her sins.

Herodias bided her time, and her opportunity for revenge came by way of Herod’s birthday party. The birthday party was a sumptuous feast. Food would be in abundance, and wine would flow freely. With Herod, surrounded by high officials who were notable men from governmental, military, and civil positions in Galilee, whom he was anxious to impress, it would be difficult for him to make a decent moral decision of any kind.

No state occasion like this is without entertainment. Knowing Herod’s character, we can be sure it would be lewd, sensual, and immorally exciting. Herod would treat his guests to a dancing exhibition. The dancer was Salome, the daughter of

Herodias. She was a young woman in her middle teens. Herodias sent Salome into the banquet hall to dance. She performed a dance for Herod and his roomful of probably inebriated dinner guests. She pleased them all. Afterwards, Herod Antipas promised with an oath to give her anything she wanted up to half his kingdom (Mark 6:22–23). Now that is a rash promise. Herod and his guests knew that Herod had no kingdom to give. All his power came from Rome. While this rash promise wasn’t meant to be taken literally, it did let the young woman know that she could ask for practically anything and receive it.

The young girl left the banquet to confer with her mother. She returned in a triumphant manner with the gruesome demand for the head of John the Baptist. “I want the head of John the Baptist, right now, on a tray!” (Mark 6:25 NLT). Herod, being weak in character could not stand to be embarrassed in front of his guests. “Then the king was very sorry, but he was embarrassed to break his oath in front of his guests. So he sent an executioner to the prison to cut off John’s head and bring it to him. The soldier beheaded John in the prison, brought his head on a tray, and gave it to the girl, who took it to her mother. When John’s disciples heard what had happened, they came for his body and buried it in a tomb” (Mark 6:26–29 NLT).

There is every reason to believe that the severed head of John the Baptist haunted Herod day and night. When he heard word of Christ’s mighty works, he could only think it was John raised from the dead. “At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, this is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him” (Matthew 14:1–2).

Secular history tells us other experiences of Herod and his family. Herod was

urged by Herodias to ask Rome for the title of king (though called “king” in Mark 6:14, it was not an official title then but needed approval of the Roman senate to be official—the most fitting title for Herod was “fox” the one Christ gave him in Luke 13:32). To gain the title “king” Herod and his family went to Rome. But instead of gaining the title of king, the Roman senate banished him to France. There he and Herodias “both perished miserably.” Tradition says that Salome died a unique death by falling through the ice and being nearly decapitated. It certainly seems true, “the way of the transgressors is hard” (Proverbs 13:15).

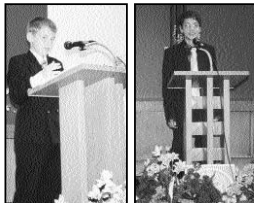
John, an Example for All

What a magnificent complement for John to be confused with Christ. Whether people thought he was Christ or whether they thought Christ was John, it was a high honor to John. To be likened to Christ, John must have walked as Christ walked. His life was as virtuous a life as any human ever lived. To be associated with Christ says it all.

Though we fall far short of being like Jesus now, one day all the redeemed will indeed be like Jesus Christ. That is the promise of the Scriptures. “We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). Let the identity confusion of John the Baptist with Jesus Christ encourage us to live and walk as Jesus did. We can then be sure we will be standing with John the Baptist in the Kingdom of God.

CGI Toronto Congregation holds first ‘Youth Day’

Children, youth—yet another of the many loving blessings from our Lord. Isn’t it wonderful that children have their place in the Kingdom of God? After all, “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb...the calf, the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.” That being the case, it was indeed a privilege and a pleasure for the Toronto congregation to have its first kick-off Youth Day and to allow Sabbath services to be turned over to the hands of the children.



Several roles were turned over to the children, and it was very rewarding to see them execute their responsibilities. Keven Heraldo (far left) was song leader, and Derek Heraldo (near left) opened with prayer.



Above: All the precious gems that make up the Toronto congregation Sabbath School class. Right: Samar Smith and Jackie Alexander give announcements. Far right: Katie Alexander plays ‘Ode to Joy’ on the violin.



bilities very adequately. Two lovely young ladies, children that is, Landon McLaughlin and Katie Alexander, presided as ushers and gave a warm welcome to churchgoers on that Sabbath day. To see the young, handsome worship leader for the day, Keven Heraldo, lead the congregation through songs and praises was uplifting indeed. Another young gentleman, and Keven’s brother, Derek Heraldo, lead the congregation in a beautifully delivered opening prayer. The congregation further enjoyed watching another two well-grounded lovely young ladies, Jackie Alexander and Samar Smith, present this day’s announcements.

Looking into the pews, I could sense the feel of fulfilled and proud parents emanating around the room. Though I’m not a parent, I know that others also felt the same sense of pride in our youth. Sheyu Smith delivered the closing prayer.

The children filled the first two rows, and looking at all the children from aback was a nice sight indeed. To have the fruit of the womb among you reminds us of God’s great love and blessing for all mankind.

The congregation was also greeted with warm exhilarating music. We listened to an exquisite piece on the violin played by Katie. The split sermons were messages tailored just for the children.

There were many bits and pieces that children could take away with them that Sabbath. Solomon Jones spoke to them about how Joseph, a young lad at 17 acted very responsibly in refraining from sinning by not allowing himself to be seduced by Potiphar’s wife. And then Carlton Smith did a second message that showed how God too uses children. He taught them how Samuel was dedicated to the Lord as a child and how “Samuel ministered before the Lord even as a child.”

The CGI Toronto congregation would like to say thank you to all the children in participating in and presenting a wonderful Youth Day. God be praised for the children, our future, and may there be many more Youth Days. The Toronto congregation plans on having quarterly Youth Days—so come join us one Sabbath if you can!

Noel Scoburgh

The Armor of God program is aired weekly on these stations...

RADIO

JAMAICA—Kingston: RADIO JAMAICA, 4:45 a.m., Thursday (Local)

TELEVISION

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PACIFIC TIME (CANADA)

ON, Toronto: VISION (national cable Canada), Sunday, 3:30 a.m. PST, 10:00 p.m. PST

AUSTRALIAN TIME

AUS, Brisbane: Briz 31, 7:00 a.m., Sunday

EASTERN TIME (USA)

The Word Network: Sunday, 10:30 a.m.

CENTRAL TIME (USA)

The Word Network: Sunday, 9:30 a.m.

MOUNTAIN TIME (USA)

The Word Network: Sunday, 8:30 a.m.

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CHICAGOLAND continued from page 1

listen that we can have local churches that work effectively. We need the folks at Tyler as much as they need us! It is as God intended that we work together and all use their talents to the edifying of the entire body.

I am personally humbled by the positive responses that I get from our local congregation as well as those on our extended tape list. We pray and work toward the goal of brotherhood and unity. Teamwork is a constant byword amongst all of us! I hope that our openness to all the brethren is a positive thing. We are striving to share, not strut! To give generously, not be tight-

wads! To promote our co-workers in Tyler, not denigrate and castigate them! We remember well what Jesus said: "In as much as you have done unto one of the least of these my brethren you have done it unto me!" We believe earnestly that everything we do is to Jesus—worship services, tithing faithfully, working in close concert with Tyler, and inspiring God's people through stressing that we are going to live with each other forever!

God bless the Church of God International, and God bless the brethren of the Chicagoland area! We are sojourners together in a monumental work of telling everyone on this planet about Jesus Christ of Nazareth!



Left to right: Marcia Nicol, Sharon Thomas, and Karla Kretsinger. These ladies are working in the kitchen, which includes a double sink, double refrigerator, stove, microwave, and coffee pots for coffee and tea.



The technician's booth. Cornell Findlay operates the Canon GL-2 Camcorder from this booth. The entire service, including song services and choir performances, can be recorded for the tape program.



Left: Ryan Harrold, son of song leader Ron Harrold, is practicing on the "Baby Grand" piano. **Right:** Ron Harrold is leading the congregation in singing. Rebekah and Rachel are in the background.



Right: Rebekah Stephens, as the Youth Group leader, is leading the congregation through the weekly food line. During the meal, she discusses the lesson of the day with the youth.



Above: Marcia Nicol and James Matthews showing the congregation's new weekly bulletin. **Right:** Duane Nicol with Lester and Karla Kretsinger, who recently refinished the lectern.



Left: Stanley Adams is receiving one of the newly created "new member welcome baskets." Sharon Thomas is presenting the gift. **Above:** Duane Nicol and Lester Kretsinger showing the offering box that Lester hand crafted.



Left: Trinidad, Maria, Cristian, and Noel. The parents were baptized last April. The family is very active in service to the congregation. **Right:** Patty Lark with her three daughters for the baptism of Ariel this past April. Patty works with the Women's Ministry and assists with the weekly bulletin.



Above: Ryan Harrold and Karla Kretsinger are showing off the congregation's literature and tape table, which is set up every week. **Below:** Rose Whiteside with her flowers and baptismal certificate. She was baptized on August 26, 2003, in Lake Michigan.

Sabbath School teacher outlines program

Hello, my name is Rachel Stephens. I am 15 years old and am a sophomore at Custer High School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. My current role in the Chicagoland Church of God, International is to teach Sabbath School class.

Throughout the class we will be working with the Sabbath Keeping Youth program, better known as the SKY program, used by the majority of the CGI churches.

My main goal is to teach the kids a new lesson every week and try to make their weekly classes educational yet fun.

Class will begin directly after song services and continue through the entire church service. The children will be directed to the back entrance door after the last song and I will take

them to the classroom.

During Sabbath School, I will read the lesson to the children; then I will have an activity page for them to color. For the remainder of the time, a snack will be provided, as they will be allowed to play in the playroom.

I am thankful for the opportunity to teach the children in our group. They are truly a delight. I look forward to the many weeks ahead as I teach them.

Parents are asked to remember to help them throughout the week if a memory verse is to be memo-

rized. A good time to practice is at the dinner table when all the family is gathered together.

Rachel Stephens



Left: Rachel Stephens with the Sabbath School children. The girls are the daughters of Jerry and Regina Fink and the boys are the sons of Trinidad and Maria Barrios.

Death Announcements

Velma Cook

Funeral services for Velma Cook, 85, a long-time member of the Church of God and one of the original members of the Tyler congregation, were December 29, 2003, at Eubank Memorial Chapel in Mabank, TX. Burial followed at Payne Springs Cemetery. Charles Groce, pastor of the Tyler congregation, officiated.

Velma died Saturday morning, December 27, 2003, at her daughter's home in Mabank.

The local fellowship suffered loss with Velma's death. She was a pillar of the congregation; she loved God, His teachings, and His people. Even though she was "up in years" and had an hour's drive to church, she was unflinching in her faithfulness. More often than not she was the first to arrive and one of the last to leave.

Her personal "ministry" was devoted to those who were new or needed extra care. She helped transform our members from a "room full of strangers" into a family. Although she is missed, the memory of her goodness lingers.

Mary Lou Stephenson

Funeral services for Mary Lou Stephenson, 69, of Chesterfield, IN, were Monday, January 12, 2004, at Parson Mortuary in Muncie. Burial followed at Beech Grove Cemetery.

Mrs. Stephenson died on January 7 following an extended illness. She died peacefully with her husband and children by her side.

Survivors include her loving husband of twenty years, Jack Stephenson; two sons, Michael (wife, Milly) Smith of Orlando, FL, and Jeffrey (wife, Karen) Smith of Warsaw; a daughter, Teresa (husband, Larry) Webb of Royerton; three stepchildren, Vikki, Carolyn, and David; and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her parents, two brothers, and two sisters.

Mrs. Stephenson was born September 16, 1934, in Farmers, KY, the daughter of Joseph and Nell Hamilton Ward. She attended Muncie Community Schools and Ivy Tech State College. She was a homemaker and member of the Indianapolis congregation of the Church of God International.

She loved camping, fishing, shuffleboard, crocheting, and participating in arts and crafts shows around central Indiana. She is remembered for her Raggedy Ann and Andy dolls. A very giving person, she often made crocheted afghan blankets and gave them away.

She will surely be missed.

Louis J. Martienz

Lou, as he was known, died October 21 at the Springfield, MO, Hospital after an automobile accident.

Lou has been a member of God's church since the late 1950s and attended the Worldwide Church of God in the Los Angeles area.

He was very active among the Spanish-speaking brethren and translated the booklets into Spanish. He took special classes in counseling at Ambassador College to help him better serve others.

Lou was an excellent mechanic and was willing to help the members keep their cars running. He had his own auto shop at one time and taught young people how to work on their cars.

At one time, Lou was employed as a draftsman by Lockheed Aircraft.

He was also employed by the Ambassador printing plant in Pasadena doing layout and graphic art for the *Plain Truth* magazine.

Lou was a music lover and was a talented player of the guitar, violin, and harmonica. He also wrote some of his own music.

He had been attending the CGI for several years. This talented man will be missed by his many friends.

Don Mitchell

Lee Donald "Don" Mitchell, 70, of Springfield, MO, died on Wednesday, October 22, 2003, in Rogersville. Funeral services were on October 25 at Praise Assembly of God in Springfield, with Ken Register and Billy Burris officiating.

Don was born February 13, 1933, to William and Loretta (Clark) Mitchell in Willard, MO. He lived all of his adult life in the Springfield area working as a contractor. He served his country as an active combat veteran in the Marines during the Korean War. Upon returning home, he attended SMS, where he met his future wife and lifelong soulmate, Donna June Dickerson. They were married on August 21, 1959.

Survivors include his wife, Donna June; daughters Bobbi Beard and Kim R. Mitchell, both of Springfield; two brothers, Herschel Mitchell of Republic, MO, and Delvan Mitchell of Nixa, MO; two sisters, Louise Parrott of Republic, and Donna Daniel of Springfield; four grandchildren, Krisi Coleman, Kari Coleman, Mitchell Beard, and McKalee Beard; and many other family and friends.

Don was an avid reader, especially enjoying the book of Proverbs and military history.

Don had been a member of God's family since the mid-1960s. He visited Ambassador College in Pasadena, CA, where he first heard and felt the calling of God.

He began attending services with the CGI in 1985. He was a deacon and faithful servant to God's people. He assisted Mr. Ken Register by speaking at services in Springfield and Willow Springs.

He was a caring person, always mindful of the needs of God's family. He was a special person with others foremost in his mind. Many of his family and friends looked to him for wise counsel.

The brethren of the Springfield and Willow Springs congregations are heartbroken over the loss of our beloved brother—but he has won the battle and fulfilled his duty as a servant.

He is greatly missed by his friends and family.



Lou Martienz and wife Janet



Velma Cook



Don Mitchell at 1994 Feast of Tabernacles in Oklahoma

Morehead Winter Social 2003

In an attempt to outfox "Old Man Winter," Senior Pastor Bob Tackett and Pastor James Pollette moved the winter social from December to November, and guess what happened? It snowed on us anyway—but not enough to greatly disrupt the festive occasion.

Except for song leading and giving announcements, the Morehead pastors deferred all the speaking to the visiting elders.

Pitch hitting for Middletown's Tom Kauffung, Fort Thomas pastor Bob Swimm presented a Bible study on Jude, the "little book with a big bite," to about twenty brethren on Friday evening.

As happens so often without any collaboration among the speakers, all four messages on Sabbath flowed in a sequence that looked orchestrated—and *maybe* they were.

Local Contact Morgan Pinkerman from Barboursville, WV, addressed the "Unthankfulness" that permeates this land of unparalleled prosperity, and its efforts to oust any mention of the great Creator God. Indianapolis pastor Frank Denman went "Browsing" through the Scriptures admonishing not to let unthankfulness, lukewarmness, and too much of Satan's world into God's church.

Special music at the A.M. and P.M. ser-

vice was aca pella.

Brenda Pinkerman performed "I Will Never Leave You" in the morning; Toledo's Israel Evans sang "How Great Thou Art" at the second service.

Bob Swimm and Louisville minister Ferrell Vincent shared split sermons at the P.M. convocation. Their messages again flowed in sync with the morning themes. Mr. Swimm addressed how to avoid hearing Jesus say, "I Never Knew You"; Mr. Vincent instructed on how to succeed in building a "House of Character."

As always, the ladies, with an assist from the "Colonel," fed us well at lunch and dinner.

The evening talent show, emceed by Mr. Tackett, included the music of Ferrell Vincent, Knoxville's John Brown, and Indy's Bobby Whitt. They sang as well, as did Brenda Pinkerman, Ann Whitt, David Shoemaker, and his mom Betty. Bob Swimm performed to pre-recorded CDs. The surprise of the evening was Mr. Pollette leading a group reprising "A Man of Constant Sorrows" from the movie *O Brother Where Art Thou?*

As always it was a delightful day of spiritual and physical feasting, fun, fellowship, and thanksgiving to our heavenly Father and elder Brother Jesus.



Bob Swimm (left) and Bob Tackett

Bob Swimm



Morgan Pinkerman

Eternity's Children

By Nancy Miles

How precious are your thoughts toward me,
Oh, Father God of all eternity...and yet,
Oft times my timid soul desires to flee,
And run away, from being near to Thee.

Sometimes we go through pain and grief,
And years of suffering without relief...still,
Our stabled hearts doth long to trust in Thee.
Oh, Father of all eternity!

You bear long with your children made of clay,
And have planned for each a brighter day.
You are waiting patiently for us with you to be.
Oh, Father of all eternity!

So, hold us in the palm of Your great hand,
And help our hearts to full understand...how
Precious we really are to Thee...then raise
Us up someday, that we may be...
YOUR CHILDREN OF ETERNITY!

Henry's Golden Day

Gold is arguably the most precious of all the metals, but it is surely the most beautiful, and so is a marriage that endures for fifty years. On August 1, 2003, Mr.



Bob and Thelma Henry with two granddaughters

and Mrs. Bob Henry reached that memorable milestone. The following day, Sabbath, Pastor Bob Swimm preached a sermon about character of gold and its many applications—not only to a fifty-year marriage, but the character all of us are to build as well. Originally, Thelma balked at having a second "marriage," but while serving as worship leader, Bob asked before the entire congregation if she would take him as her husband *again*. Squarely on the spot, she acquiesced.

That renewing of vows took place at the home of one of their daughters. Brethren from Middletown

and Morehead, including elders Tackett, Pollette, and Kauffung attended.

After the outdoor ceremony, there was a banquet of freshly fried chicken and lasagna, with all the appropriate trimmings, followed by a square of wedding cake.

Bob and Thelma have been attending the Fort Thomas church since 1992, and were baptized on the same day in February 1993 by Bob Swimm.

They are the parents of six and grandparents many times.

Congratulations Bob and Thelma!

Bob Swimm

The homosexual marriage decision by a few judges in Canada has made a couple of things abundantly clear for any who truly wish to examine the situation. First, the totalitarian viewpoint to silence churches has become an open, obvious, and hostile one. Second, the media, teacher unions, and politicians are quickly bowing to the historically illiterate viewpoint of "separation of church and state," stating churches should keep quiet on this public viewpoint and just "preach" in church instead of sticking their nose in matters of the "state" and the courts. Finally, these changes are all dressed up in "protecting" rights and freedoms for all individuals. These points have been made abundantly clear in every newspaper in Canada over the past several months.

One of the biggest news stories on the subject and the one that brought some open discussion came from the Vatican. The Pope encouraged all Catholic politicians and leaders to stand up for their faith and oppose recognizing homosexual marriage. This statement brought strong reactions from media and politicians alike, including Catholic politicians, who stated that *the Catholic Church should stick to preaching and keep its nose out of the affairs of the state.*

Who would have thought just five years ago that a church speaking on marriage would be accused of trespassing on "state" (secular) territory?

However, "the state" has inserted itself in health care, education, and social services in an ever-increasing way. It is almost impossible, and sometimes illegal, to operate in any of these fields without state involvement. More importantly, whatever field the state decides to enter it is imperative that all "religiously based viewpoints" be removed. Separation of church and state is the biggest reason given to force this consequence.

Some may ask why I state that this use

How 'Separation of Church and State' is Being Abused

By John Coish

of separation of church and state is historically illiterate. Separation of church and state was instituted to protect religious freedoms from state coercion. The courts and state are **taking** the right to redefine marriage themselves. Any who oppose them must be silenced, and the churches must retreat from that field too! Separation of church and state would be great if the state hadn't decided to enter every aspect of life, including what is right and wrong. It is ridiculous to think in Canada that churches are protruding more and more into state fields when, for over a hundred years (for most of the Western World since the French Revolution), the opposite has been taking place.

Until 1982, Canada's justice system was comprised of common law rules—rules designed to punish you if you acted improperly towards your neighbor. These rules did not punish you for not treating your neighbor in a positive manner. In 1982, we enacted the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. While it does mention God in the opening paragraph, much of this charter is against God, rights, and freedoms. No longer do families and churches (over 90 percent Judeo-Christian at the time) create the moral underpinnings of society. The courts, a handful of judges, and government (no balance of power by the office of president in Canada) determine rights, thus placing the Charter of Rights and Freedoms before God in our society.

Some may think I am being radical here since the charter guarantees religious freedom. But the courts have regularly overruled religious freedom when it conflicts

with any other right or freedom. One such example is the Catholic school system being forced by the courts to neglect their beliefs and allow a teenage student to take his homosexual date to the senior prom.

At first glance you seem like a moron to be opposed to a Charter of Rights and Freedoms—until you understand what actually occurs. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms takes away the rights and freedoms of individuals, families, and churches to declare what is morally correct before God, and gives the state the prerogative of declaring what is politically correct. From that point forward the state declares what is right and wrong and begins to become God for the nation.

Just this week, October 2003, the Canadian government has sent the Supreme Court of Canada proposed legislation and arguments to redefine marriage. One such question they asked was, Does the charter protect the rights of churches to determine who they marry. This is a compromise, a benevolent act for some, so that churches will not be forced to marry homosexuals. I think most churches and ministers are not very grateful that the state has, at this time, decided not to massively tramp on basic religious liberties. For a while the state did contemplate doing what no communist state has done and tell the church who it has to marry or bless.

In the meantime, all churches and religious people, especially those who are "fundamentalist" and believe that old archaic collection of books called the Bible or Word of God, are told quite frequently they are not welcome in the public square—butt out of our social revolution.

The only religious voices that are to be heard are those in support of the totalitarian agenda, for they are politically correct; the rest are queer.

Last month Canada added sexual orientation to hate legislation. The fact the government had to state, *repeating some sections of the Bible in the proper context is exempt*, tells you again how far the state has protruded into the lives, the churches, the morals of society.

Unfortunately for the world, Canadians (a few socialists) have been leaders at the United Nations in drafting a Charter of Rights for Children. This charter, when accepted, will again attack the family, the church, and lawful behavior before God. Recently the United Nations has turned back to Canada and said that the law allowing parents to spank their children in Canada is wrong. (Remember the United Nations is one of the strongest bodies fighting for abortion as a woman's right.)

In 1991, Pope John Paul II said that a "democracy without values turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism." Many thought him an alarmist at the time. Yet we are already seeing that when religious freedom is devalued, the impulse of the state to control more areas of life begins to threaten the freedom of the churches.

For now, all religious voices—fundamentalist voices in particular—are being told to shut up.

What will happen when they don't?

"Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:16–19).



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