

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 3, No. 3

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

May 1997

Marriage &

Di vorce

— Part II —

The first part of this article appeared in the November 1996 Issue of Servants' News. We highly recommend that you read that issue first—it is available free for the asking. The main points in that article were:

1) *Man and Woman are equal before the Eternal. Men are given the leadership responsibility in marriages and are told to love their wives, rather than force them into submission. Men should try to make it possible for their wives to use as many of their talents and abilities as possible within their marriage. Wives should submit to their husband's leadership as long as such submission is not contrary to the Bible.*

2) *Clergy-performed or state-performed marriages were not common before the 1400's. When the Bible was written, marriages were handled as a contract between the partners or between their parents. It is the commitment to marry, and the consummation of a marriage that makes a marriage—not a piece of paper signed by the clergy or state. Nevertheless, in our present world, there are many legal aspects of marriage that must be handled, and the simplest is usually to obtain a standard marriage license.*

3) *There would be much benefit to couples today in writing a marriage agreement beforehand—addressing who will have what responsibilities and the basics of how the couple will work together. It also may cover what is to be done if one of the partners is not living up to their part of the contract.*

This article will deal primarily with divorce situations. When should a person think about the issues of divorce? When their marriage has gone sour? **No!** Couples need to think about divorce when they write their marriage agreement—before they get married! They need to include provisions that will help prevent divorce.

A Time to Think About Divorce

A great many marriages start out with couples “madly in love” with each other. They see no need to talk about divorce then, because they are pledging to live the rest of their lives with each other. But infatuation wears off after a while and in too many cases serious problems arise that “no one ever thought of” before the marriage took place. The divorce statistics for the Western democracies are terrible. While a proper application of Biblical teaching would save many failing marriages, **the roots of most marriage difficulties are unreasonable, un-thought-out expectations that existed before the marriage began.**

We will not go into the technicalities in this article, but some marriage agreements contain clauses that make divorce much less desirable than this world's courts do. Agreements may specifically give control of the accumulated property of the marriage and determination of the custody of the children to the “faithful mate”—an unfaithful mate may be defined as one who abandons the other, files for a state divorce without just cause, “cheats” on the other, or utterly fails to live up to his or her part of the marriage agreement.

The purpose of talking about divorce before marriage is simply “counting the cost,” as we see in the parable in Luke 14:28-32. You do not start a big undertaking without knowing what it will cost, what could go wrong, and whether or not you will be able to live with the

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Is *Servants' News* Too Controlling?

Within the last few months *Servants' News* received several letters condemning us for not printing "all of the articles we receive." We were accused of printing only what we understand the truth to be—and suppressing the truth that the Eternal wants to be printed. The answer to this is very simple: We receive about 50 times as much material as we actually print.

- 1) We read a lot of it, but do not have time to read **all** of it.
- 2) Of what we read, we have time to thoroughly study only a small part.
- 3) Of what we study, we have time to format only a small part.
- 4) Of the writings we format, we can afford to print and mail less than half of them in *Servants' News*. The longer ones we send only by individual request.

Since we have time and money to print only a small portion of what we receive, how do we decide what to print? We could pick out the articles that are easiest to proofread and format, or we could select articles at random. But we know that there is a greater condemnation on one who teaches error (Jms 3:1). We believe that we should print those items that we understand to be the most scripturally accurate, and not print those that have (to us) obvious scriptural difficulties.

We realize that we have only a tiny fraction of biblical and historical knowledge available to mankind, and even a smaller part of the true knowledge available to the Eternal. We do not do a perfect job of discerning, but we must try.

It is hard to believe that our refusal to print an article could be considered an attempt to suppress the truth of the Eternal. If *Servants' News* fails to see an important point of truth, are not there dozens of other ministries that also print articles from their readership? Is the great Creator of the Universe not capable of reaching His people with His message?

We are obviously not a controlling hierarchy for these reasons:

- 1) We have no control of local congregations—we encourage readers to live by their own understanding of the Bible, not by what we say.
- 2) We encourage our readers to learn from a multitude of present-day sources—*Servants' News* provides **access to** and **sample copies of** a great variety of religious publications.

Is *Servants' News* Too Indecisive?

We receive complaints about some *Servants' News* articles and/or writers who disagree with each other or with long-held "Church of God" doctrines. This is the opposite of the above complaint. Even though we believe the Eternal has given us understanding in some areas, there are many complex subjects where we are not completely certain what the truth is. We publish a variety of articles in the hope that they will stimulate learning and that together we will find the truth.

Some readers have said that anyone who publishes multiple viewpoints must be publishing some error and is therefore a "tool of Satan". We may be that when we do publish error. Suppose for a moment, you had a very kind friend, but your friend thought he was going to die. Would you do what you could to try to encourage and save him? When Peter tried to tell the Messiah that he would not have to die, the Messiah said "Get behind Me, Satan!" (Matt 16:21-23.) Peter meant to support Christ, but he was unknowingly wrong. Did Peter stop talking so he would never be a "tool of Satan" again? No! He learned from Christ, kept talking, sinned again, and repented again. The Gospel has been taught mostly through human instruments. Little would be learned if no one taught anything.

Before the Acts 15 conference, some men were teaching one approach to circumcision, and some were teaching another. After they had made their decision, did they decide to reject all those who had been teaching the wrong way as tools of Satan? No. They wanted them to teach the right way. There are other examples of where teaching on a specific doctrine changed over time—the eating of meat offered to idols is one example (Acts 15:29, 1Cor 8:4).

We do not know of any error-free publications. We think it is better to admit that we might have some error (so we can find it and change) than it is to pretend that we have no error. **Please realize, you do not need to agree with all *Servants' News*' articles in order to be served by it.** —NSE

Servants' NEWS

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Servants' News is a ministry to help others understand the Creator's will, obey Him, and teach others. We believe that the Bible contains the foundation of knowledge about our Creator and that He is actively working through people today. Our focus is to help the Sabbath-keeping brethren who believe Yeshua (Jesus) is the Messiah, but we realize that the Eternal works with many groups and individuals.

We believe the gospel should be given freely—you may copy this newsletter and give it to others. *Servants' News* has nothing to sell and has no financial ties with other organizations, but is supported by those who personally decide to help this ministry. We do not have IRS tax exempt status, but the IRS accepts some charitable deductions without such status (see IRS Publication 557, p. 16, col. 1).

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If I Were “God” . . . by Stephen Thomas

If I were God, who would I choose to share the rest of eternity with me?

Firstly, I would choose those who know and **love** me. They would show this by wanting to spend time with me (in prayer) and would listen to what I had to say (my Word). I would not want to spend time with those who drop off to sleep while speaking to me, or repeat themselves over and over, or who only ask for things.

Next I would want happy faces around me, not those who can always find something to be miserable about and focus on the negative. I would want **joy** around me.

Then I would want to have a **peaceful** eternity, not spent arguing, or with hurt feelings, or with wild mood swings, or offence all the time.

They would also have to be tolerant of my likes and dislikes, and be able to take things in their stride. Friends should be **longsuffering**, ie take all and come back friends.

If they took pleasure in unkindness, or in deliberately hurting and in doing bad things, then their company would just be obnoxious and annoying. I want **good** people around me.

I would want **meek** people, ie those who do not want to possess and control others, forcing their will on me and others.

They would have to be normal, ie not immoderate or unbalanced or perverted, overdoing everything. They would have to be **temperate**.

They would have to be trustworthy, and believe that I am too. They would have to have **faith** in me and what I say.

They would have to be nice people to be with!

What many do not realise is that the 10 Commandments are only **tools** or **means** to achieve the above aim. Take the Sabbath as an example. That command nor do we necessarily **forces** agree with every minor theological point here. But if we are developing the mind of Christ, this is a question that we cannot ignore: What kind of people would we want with us for eternity?

people to set aside time for God. Let us suppose that a person then spends half an hour, or an hour of the Sabbath talking to God (praying)—is that person keeping the Sabbath? Let us further suppose, that of the hour spent in prayer, 15 minutes of it was sincere, worth listening to, not repetitive, and not gimmiee. We are left with 15 minutes of value obtained out of that Sabbath. Has that person kept the Sabbath? If I were God, I would say “No”.

Even if that person goes to church, sings hymns, hears a sermon (that may be good, bad or indifferent) and reads a few scriptures, if I were God, would I say that that person achieved a closer relationship with me that day? In his chasing around, did that person meditate on what I as God want of him? Did he draw closer to me by falling on his knees and telling me how much he loved me, begging me to overlook any offenses he might have done, and assuring me of his loyalty and devotion. If I were God, and this did not occur, then I would say that although that person went through the motions of keeping a Sabbath, he might as well not have.

But let us suppose that there is a Sunday-keeper, who on Sunday, fell to his knees, and for 1 hour poured out his heart to me with tears, spoke to me as if I existed, discussed things of interest to me, and assured me that anything I commanded, he would do. Even though this person in all sincerity did not know about the Saturday Sabbath, I as God would know, that he would change the moment I told him (because everything else I tell him to do, he has done). This man is devoted to me, but ignorant of the Sabbath as yet. Even if the man died, I as God could resurrect him, and know, from his past record of obedience and devotion to me in other areas, that he would keep the Sabbath.

Other questions are—Will there be Sabbath-keeping when we are spirit beings? Will the command not to murder still exist, when we cannot die? Will the commandment not to covet have relevance, when we own all? Will the commandment against blasphemy have any relevance when we share that family

name? Will the command not to steal have any meaning when nothing can be hidden? Will the command to honour parents have meaning when parent-child relationships come to an end as spirit beings? Will the command not to commit adultery have meaning if we neither marry nor are given in marriage?

Do we see that the 10 Commandments are tools, not ends in themselves. The Sabbath was made to help man develop, but the godly person is the purpose of the Sabbath. To some of the Pharisees, keeping the law to the nth degree was all they aimed for and not being individually a nice Pharisee.

Can I write this without people saying that I am trying to minimise the 10 Commandments? For too long now I think we have boasted about our tools. “**I keep the Sabbath,**” we boast, “and **you do not.**” So what have we got to show for it? Are we nice to be with? I think God values **love, joy, peace, longsuffering, goodness, meekness, temperance and faith** as of supreme importance, and the 10 Commandments as means of getting us to these ends.

Can someone slip into the kingdom of God, as a Sunday-keeper? Can someone slip into the kingdom of God as a covetous person?

Are any of us not **covetous, idolaters, adulterers** (do you watch TV?), **blasphemers** (by being a disgrace to God at times), **murderers** (every time we go into a rage), **dishonorers of parents, distorters of the truth to our own advantage**, or even **Sabbath breakers** (how much undivided attention do we lavish on God that day)? If you are not, then you are a lot better than me.

The churches of God, and myself, remind me of a Bible-story. “Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Church of God member, the other a Sunday-keeper”. Luke 18:10. “And the Church of God member prayed with himself, God I thank thee that I am not as other men (outside the church) are”.

God bounced this prayer back.

The big question is, “If I were God, would I want the person I really am to be in the Kingdom of God?”



Sabbatarian Bible Teacher Speaks at Weekend Seminar

by Veronica Smith, Tyler, Texas

A gathering of people from nearly all the major WCG splinter groups attended a weekend seminar taught by Sabbatarian Bible Teacher, **Joseph Good**, on February 21 and 22 at the Hawkins Community Center in Hawkins, Texas. The seminar called *The Feasts of God*, covered an overview of the Festival celebrations during Temple times.

Six 90-minute Bible study sessions were held on both the Sabbath and Sunday, with a 90-minute potluck lunch each day. Each session began with a long, loud blast of a ram's horn, reminiscent of the blowing of the shofar that ushered in festivals at the Temple in Jerusalem.

Approximately 125 people attended over the weekend. Some came only on the Sabbath, others came only on Sunday, but most attended the entire event. Attendees included persons from all of the major local WCG/CGI splinter groups, except PCG. Other attendees included persons from the Baruch Ha Shem Messianic Synagogue in Dallas, a local in-home Messianic Jewish Bible study group, and a local Bible study group made up of former WCG members.

Music was performed during some of the session breaks: *As the Deer Pants*, a popular Messianic Jewish song sung by Gary, Veronica, Chrystal, and Leona Smith; *El Shaddai*, a saxophone solo performed by Jason Kelley of Hawkins; *The Holy City*, sung by Jacob Southerland of Gladewater; and *The Lord's Prayer*, a piano solo played by Chrissy Smith of Lindale.

The overall reaction to the seminar was positive. Rob Feith of Big Sandy, said, "The presentation was excellent. The guy has so much information. He certainly spurred me on to do more in-depth study regarding various issues."

"His enthusiasm is very inspiring and encourages you to search the scriptures yourself. He has a lot of biblical insight and shows you parallel themes that extend throughout the entire Bible," said Angie Kelley of Hawkins.

The seminar was so successful that planners are already scheduling another weekend seminar in May. The topic will be *Prophecy in the End Time*. It will be the first session in a three-part series with two more sessions to follow later this year, depending on Good's availability. For

more information on this seminar, contact Mitchell Smith (903)882-7446.

One man, who wishes to remain anonymous, "discovered" Good on a Christian cable channel program several years ago and requested Bible study tapes that Good offered on the program. The man found the information to be so helpful in understanding the Bible that he made copies of the tapes and passed them around to several friends. Soon, the interest in Joe Good Bible study tapes grew and spread across organizational lines around the nation. Listeners continued to request more tapes from the man who discovered him. Finally, many listeners expressed an interest in having Good speak in east Texas. As a result, the man who first discovered Good made arrangements for the teaching weekend at the Hawkins Community Center.

Good's teaching emphasis is on the "Hebrewness" of the scriptures. He stresses that the Bible was written in a Hebrew culture and language of centuries past that was commonly understood by the Hebrew people of that time. He also teaches that much of the Bible is misunderstood by people of the modern, 20th Century western culture. Good also has a working knowledge of the Hebrew language, so during his classes, he uses key Hebrew words to help learners understand the cultural context in which the scriptures were written.

One example that Good uses to teach students about the cultural/historical differences between the past and the present is how the New Testament term "crow" (KJV) was used by Christ in the statement "...before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." For people of that time, instead of meaning a literal "rooster," the term actually meant the temple watchman who sounded the "all clear" at the beginning of his Temple watch. Good explains that as a precautionary measure, chickens were not allowed within the city limits of Jerusalem during Temple times because they could enter and desecrate the Temple with their waste. This would have caused a serious disruption of Temple rites and the priests would have had to perform a complete purification of the Temple.

Good founded Hatikva Ministries approximately thirteen years ago. "Hatikva" means "hope" in Hebrew. It is

based in Nederland, Texas and is strictly a teaching and research ministry. It is not operating for the purpose of starting congregations or a centralized church. According to a key staff member, Good's "best teaching medium is the Bible study format with an active, live audience." He is kept busy teaching Bible studies and seminars at churches of various denominations around the nation.

The Hatikva staff consists of only six employees, including Good. Staff members spend most of their time doing Biblical research, keeping up with important news from Israel, reproducing Good's Bible study tapes, and preparing a Hatikva Ministries newsletter.

Good has an informative television series called *In The Footsteps of the Messiah* that was shown on the Trinity Broadcasting Network for about 4 years (though Good is not a Trinitarian). Now, the program airs on a new network, Prime Time Christian Television, originating from KLML in Midland/Odessa. It reaches most of west Texas and southeast New Mexico, but will soon expand to cover all of Texas. More expansion is planned. The broadcast series is currently covering Isaiah—discussing proofs of the Messiah from both the Old and New Testaments.

Good has also written several books. His most popular book is *Rosh Hoshanah and the Messianic Kingdom to Come*. Others are *Prophecies From the Book of Esther* and *The Non-Jew's Guide to Jewish Sources*.

In conjunction with his Bible study ministry, Good also conducts two tours a year to Israel, which he has done since 1990. His tour visits only "A" sites where biblical events actually occurred, and offers an optional excursion to Jordan.

As a result of his visits to Israel, Good keeps in touch with members of the Temple Institute in Jerusalem who are trying to reestablish a Temple there. He has also befriended many soldiers in the Israeli Army Tank Brigades and has occasionally purchased supplies for them.

For information on over 50 cassette tape studies on a variety of Biblical and historical subjects (and tours of Israel), contact Hatikva Ministries, 409-724-7601. The address is PO Box E, Nederland, Texas, 77627. 

Local Congregations



Evangelicals Accept Worldwide Church of God

Following is an article that appeared in the May 10, 1997, Los Angeles Times. Emphasis added in boldface by SN:

BELIEFS: Association grants full membership. Pasadena-based church has revamped teachings and apologized for 'false doctrine.'

by Larry B. Stammer,
Times Religion Writer

Marking a major milestone in its movement toward mainstream Christianity, the once cultish **Worldwide Church of God has been accepted into full membership by the nation's largest association of evangelical churches.**

Officials with the National Association of Evangelicals said Friday that they had voted overwhelmingly to admit the Pasadena-based church into the fold after a detailed examination of its doctrines.

Best known for its Plain Truth magazine and teachings of its late founder, Herbert W. Armstrong, the Worldwide Church of God has undergone dramatic changes in its doctrines over the past several years. The group once rejected the Christian Trinitarian doctrine of God in three persons as pagan, and taught that tithing and the observance of the Saturday Sabbath were necessary for salvation. Church members also did not observe the Christian holy days of Christmas and Easter.

"They have changed," said David L. Melvin, vice president of the National Association of Evangelicals, during an interview Friday from the association's headquarters in Carol Stream, IL. "It's not a new day of compromise and opening our arms on NAE'S part. They have become a different body. God has really transformed them."

In the past several years, the church has revamped its beliefs, even as the leadership apologized to mainstream churches and its own members for teaching "false doctrine" for so long. The Worldwide Church of God now believes in the Trinity and, like all evangelical as well as old-line Protestant churches, teaches that salvation is achieved by God's grace through faith alone. **Moreover, a number of its congregations have begun to celebrate Christmas and Easter.** Don Argue, president of the evangelical association, said Friday that other Christians had long been praying for friends and relatives who were Worldwide Church members. "We see the dramatic changes that have occurred among our friends as God's continuing efforts to bring renewal and revival for his glory," Argue said.

The evangelical association, which includes 43,000 congregations nationwide from 49 member denominations, has been closely following developments in the Pasadena church for a year and a half. **Formal examination of its teachings began within the past six months, and the Worldwide Church of God officially asked for membership early this year, Melvin said.**

The changes, instituted by Armstrong's successors, resulted in a major schism within the denomination. Tens of thousands of members broke away and organized splinter churches, precipitating a financial crisis.

Since then, the church has undergone dramatic cutbacks in staff and budgets, and its showcase campus has been put up for sale. The church reports 73,400 members worldwide, compared with the 104,000 it claimed before the doctrinal changes.

Greg Albrecht, director of church relations, lauded the evangelical association's vote, which took place April 15, but the announcement was delayed until Friday.

"It's historic...because we have

been an exclusive, separatist group not seeking any kind of affiliation or accommodation with what we've called 'the world,'" Albrecht said. "On our part it signals a new openness and a realization that we are not the sole body of Christ. We're simply by his grace a small part of it.

Albrecht said, however, that his church's acceptance does not mean it has completed its "transformation."

He noted, for example, that the headquarters congregation last month **marked Easter** in its first ever "Resurrection Sunday" service. He said a number of congregations are **beginning to meet on Sunday** as well as holding the traditional Saturday services.

"There's a dynamic journey that the Worldwide Church of God continues to be on," Albrecht said. "I think our journey is going to continue for some years to come as we deal with who we are and where we've been and where we're going. We don't have by any means completion right now."

Sermon Transcripts for the Deaf

Printed transcripts of some of Ronald Dart's sermons are available free of charge to deaf brethren. Also, people who can receive e-mail may receive a free electronic copy. Ten sermons have been completed, and many (but probably not all) of Ronald Dart's future sermons will also be transcribed. Ronald Dart is the founder and principal speaker for Christian Educational Ministries (CEM). Please write:

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Singles Meeting Singles

With smaller congregations and

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Meditation

by Sally Rollins

What is meditation? Do we meditate? Should we meditate? Webster's dictionary lists these definitions: (1) to reflect upon; study; ponder; (2) to plan or intend; (3) to think deeply and continuously; reflect; muse. Strong's Concordance concurs with these definitions: ponder, thoughts, thinking, think, consider, muse.

An important meditation scripture, perhaps, is in Joshua 1:8, "**Do not** let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; [you must] **meditate** on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it" (NIV). We see, as we prepare to enter the promised land, that we are to study, consider, think about and ponder, the laws that God has given us. Why? In order to walk worthy of the calling we have received (Eph. 4:1) and in order that our lives might be pleasing in God's sight, we must think on His ways, His wonders and His will for us. **As we think about these things we will move toward them.**

David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). It is interesting that nearly all of the words "meditate or meditation" come from the Psalms. What are some of the things that David meditated on? The things we are to consider, ponder, study and think about are numerous: God's unfailing love, His works, His mighty deeds, His precepts, His ways, His decrees, His wonders, His laws, His statutes, His promises, His works and what His hands have done (Ps. 48:9;

77:12; 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148; 143:5).

The first time the word meditate appears in the New Testament in the KJV is in Luke 21:14, "Settle, therefore, in your hearts not to meditate before what you shall answer." In other words, don't try to think in advance of what you will say, don't ponder your defence; but trust God to give you the words you need when the time comes.

The second time the word appears is I Timothy 4:15. After Paul had instructed Timothy, Paul tells him to "be diligent in these matters" (NIV). The KJV says, "meditate on these things". Again, as we think on these things we will move toward them. If we meditate, think and ponder on the instructions we receive, we will be diligent in carrying them out.

While the word "meditate" is not commonly used in the New Testament, and not even mentioned in the modern translations, the principle is there and it is a very important principle. "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take **captive every thought** to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5—NIV). We don't let our minds drift into fantasies or dwell on the negative things, or even get involved in thinking too much about the things of this world. But we are to control our minds and meditate on God, His ways, His

wonders, His laws, and the purpose and the position He has determined for us. "Therefore, holy brethren, who share in the heavenly calling, **fix your thoughts** on Jesus, the apostle and high priest Whom we confess" (Heb. 3:1). "**Set your minds** on things above, not on earthly things" (Col. 3:1).

We are admonished over and over to seek God. "If you **seek** the Eternal your God, you will find Him if you look for Him with all your heart and with all your soul... For the Eternal your God is a merciful God; He will not abandon or destroy you" (Deut. 4:29). "**Seek** the Eternal while He may be found" (Isaiah 55:6). "Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to **seek** the Eternal, until He comes" (Hosea 10:12). "**Seek Me** and live" (Amos 5:4). "But **seek** first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33).

How do we seek God? Is there some place we can go to find Him? Is there some pilgrimage we can embark on to locate Him? No! "...Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (That is, to bring Christ down) or "Who will descend into the deep?" (That is, to bring Christ up from the dead.) 'But what does it say? 'The Word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart'" (Rom. 10:6). We seek God through meditation, through "setting our minds on things above," through "taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). Why do we fix our eyes on Jesus? Because "He is the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6).

We have answered the question of what meditation is. **Why should we meditate? It is a method of seeking and coming to know God.** Why do we need to seek and know God? Because "...Christ, ...is our life" (Col. 3:4; see also I Jn 5:11, 20).

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble and honorable, whatever is right and just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, whatever is lofty and whatever is praiseworthy—think [meditate] about such things" (Phil. 4:8). 

Passover & Pentecost: A Lot More to Come—A Lot Later

We have received more questions on Passover and Pentecost. We believe we can answer nearly all of them, but many pages will be required. We are still learning some new things, too. Rather than allow this subject to dominate *Servants' News* for the next few months, we have decided to compile all of our research into a separate publication and make it available on our back cover.

We have not written on Pentecost at all yet, but there appears to be even more arguments on this subject than the Passover. We are aware of at least 5 different methods of counting Pentecost:

1) Sunday, fifty days after the Sabbath in the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

2) Monday, fifty days after the Sunday after the Sabbath in the Feast of

Unleavened Bread.

3) Fifty days after the First day of Unleavened Bread—always Sivan 6 for those using the present Jewish calendar.

4) Fifty days after the Last day of Unleavened Bread—a minority view, but held by some.

5) Fifty days after the Barley harvest is ready and the wave-sheaf is cut— independent of the calendar date.

Since it will be months before our papers on these subjects are ready, we pray that our readers will find a place to fellowship with other brethren on these holy days and that they will learn some of the lessons of His Sacrifice for our sin, the putting out of sin, the taking in of the life of our Savior, and the filling of our minds and hearts with His law and His Spirit. —NSE

We received the following letter in reference to the letters we printed on pages 22 and 23 of the Mar/April *Servants' News*. The issue seems to be one of UCG-AIA authority. Does the UCG-AIA headquarters have authority directly from God, or do they have authority from the General Conference of Elders that elected them? Does a local Pastor have authority directly from God, from UCG-AIA headquarters, or from a local church congregation that invited him to come?

Below, we reprint one UCG-AIA member's letter, the letter he received from Larry Greider (local pastor for UCG-AIA) which the member asked us to reprint, and our own thoughts. We believe Mr. Greider sincerely desires peace and unity in his congregation, but it is not working because he is attempting to combine spiritual consensus leadership with an unbiblical, hierarchical approach—and the brethren see it!

UCG MEMBER: May 12, 1997
Dear Norman,

We (the Kansas City church membership) received a letter from Larry Greider this last week. A copy is enclosed. Please look at the bottom of the letter. Any time that information can not be brought out in the open, something is wrong. What are they trying to hide? I think this letter should be made public. The *Servants' News* published a letter from Mr. Richard Pinelli in the last issue. It is my understanding that [name removed] were relieved of their church duties for sending this letter to you. I may be "dechurched" for sending this letter.

We enjoy *Servants' News*. Keep up the good word.

Sincerely,

[UCG member's name removed]

GREIDER: May 6, 1997
Dear Kansas City Brethren,

This is a private letter to discuss some issues that are vital to us all. We are having some tension that is affecting our ability to become a united, peaceful congregation here in Kansas City. I've been told that this area has had a somewhat troubled history at times and that there are some concerned about trust and having confidence in the leadership God has provided. It is my desire to work through this and build a strong and viable congregation that can worship God in

United Church of God—AIA

Authority:

Is It from God or from Men?

spirit and in truth in a peaceful setting.

SN: How can anyone prove that they have the "leadership that God has provided"? For many years, most of the Kansas City congregation were taught that God would provide the leadership in the Worldwide Church of God—and most of them decided to leave that organization because they disagreed with that leadership. A large number of the Kansas City brethren made that decision in spite of their local pastors.

GREIDER: My appeal to you, as a called out member of the body of Christ, is to reflect on what our calling entails. Christ asked if we are willing to leave our loved ones and follow Him (Luke 14:26). We must learn to submit to Christ and work together to build unity and dwell in peace.

SN: This paragraph is absolutely true, but its location at this point makes it appear that submitting to Christ and submitting to the UCG-AIA are the same thing. Does the Eternal require that each believer submit to every person who claims some kind of spiritual authority over them? No, they must use the scriptures and holy spirit to determine which teachers they will follow (2Cor 1:24, 1Jn 4:1, Rev 2:2).

GREIDER: The UCGaia has done much to safeguard the doctrinal process ensuring that our basic understanding given to us from God is not easily corrupted. Consistent with scripture we also have set in place oversight of the ministry and a procedure for appeal from members and ministers alike so that a fair and just administration is possible.

SN: We found this paragraph hard to understand. The UCG incorporated many doctrinal points into their constitution from Worldwide Church of God doctrine. However, some, like the nature of Christ and the Trinity, are so vague that it is hard to know what they believe.

Other doctrinal points, such as hierarchical government, they had to dismiss (at least temporarily)—otherwise, they would have no right to exist. If we admit that some error came through Herbert Armstrong, and acknowledge that most of our beliefs came through his teaching, not through divine revelation, it is difficult to talk about a collective understanding "given to us from God".

None of the UCG-AIA members we spoke with knew anything about an "appeal procedure" or how a person might invoke it if they believed they were mistreated. Nevertheless, if Mr. Greider acknowledges that such a procedure should exist, is not that an acknowledgment that the church leadership sometimes makes serious mistakes?

GREIDER: Local churches, according to our constitution, are shepherded by a trained, ordained pastor, assigned by the Home Office. He is assisted by elders and deacons/deaconesses and, where helpful, local advisory councils. This process was ratified in Cincinnati by an overwhelming consensus of the elders.

SN: All of the items listed above are examples of authority from men. It is the UCG-AIA's constitution and bylaws that empower it to train, ordain, and assign pastors. This constitution was approved by men, acting as they believe the Eternal wanted them to act at that time. If a "consensus of elders" from across the country can establish a big church organization, why cannot a "consensus of elders" in a local congregation establish local policies?

GREIDER: It is my desire to involve all in the local congregation who have interest and talent in the various social and business affairs of the Kansas City area. However, ecclesiastical governance in the UCGaia is from Jesus Christ and works through a church pas-

tor on the local level.

SN: This appears to be the opposite of the previous paragraph. How can a church organization be governed both by a constitution and directly by Jesus Christ? Does this mean that Jesus Christ is not allowed to do anything unless it is permitted by the UCG constitution? Or does he believe that the UCG constitution is so perfect that it will not stop Jesus Christ from doing what he wants to do? If it is that good, why is there a procedure for mere men to be able to change the constitution? In spite of the difficulties in logic here, Mr. Greider is apparently claiming his decisions in the local congregation have the authority of Christ, even if every other person in the congregation disagrees with them.

GREIDER: Any who feels uncomfortable with these relationships within the congregation should talk with me about it. If any are then still unwilling to work together in such a fashion, it would be best for all concerned for those of that opinion to fellowship somewhere else. As the Apostle Paul mentioned in 1Cor 11:16, "...but if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God."

SN: Apparently, this is saying that if brethren do not accept Greider's decisions as Christ's decisions, they can go somewhere else. What is even more amazing is that the United Church of God Kansas City existed months before it had a pastor from the UCG-AIA. It was by spiritual consensus of the board of that congregation that they asked a UCG-AIA pastor to come and serve them. They received a letter at that time from Richard Pinelli affirming that their board could continue to function (see *SN* last month). Now, the same people who invited the UCG pastor are being told that they must leave the congregation they started unless they give him sole authority.

If we examine the history of how the UCG was formed, and what occurred at its three conferences to date, we see a lot of discussion of a wide variety of ideas, and often disagreements. Apparently, though, Greider is labeling everyone that will not unquestioningly accept his authority as "contentious." The only other option he gives them is to leave their fellowship and all of their friends.

How long ago was it that these same people were told they had to

accept the new doctrines or leave the WCG? How long ago was it that UCG-AIA pastors were told that they either had to preach doctrines they did not believe in or leave their job? We would hope that many people would learn from these experiences.

GREIDER: Of course, it is not my intention to be contentious as the pastor, yet we must be able, as a congregation, to work together in a common way.

SN: (His way!)

GREIDER: It is my desire to settle in Kansas City as your pastor and promote the objectives of Christ and of His church as directed by the council of elders in conjunction with our General Conference of elders. If you feel drawn or compelled to participate with us in United, then you are MOST welcome. In order to accomplish this, however, we should all agree to support the constitution and bylaws and the due process approved by the UCGaia. As Paul mentioned:

SN: We noticed that the UCG-AIA is referred to as "His church" above. Does that mean that brethren leaving this organization are leaving "His church"?

GREIDER:

Romans 15:5-6, NKJ, Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2Cor 13:11, NKJ, Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

SN: The simplest way for a group to be of one mind, is for **only one person** in the group to use their mind, and the others not to use their minds. But does that train future priests and kings? No. Peace is available in a local congregation when **all** seek to have the mind of Christ, but deal humbly with each other, realizing that they might be wrong. Spiritual consensus can be used in a local congregation, just as it has been used at higher levels in the UCG-AIA. The system of governing by elders (older, stable people) was in place when the New Testament was written and never renounced by Jesus and his disciples.

GREIDER: It has been over two years since UCGaia has been established and we need to be moving forward. We are all learning as we go, but

for those who choose to be a part of the local congregation—we must work together in a common manner. It is my desire to promote peace and encourage those of like minds to bond together as spiritual brothers.

If you have any questions about the UCGaia, don't hesitate to call or write me.

Warm regards,
Larry W. Greider
Pastor—Kansas City

SN: We agree that the UCG-AIA needs to be moving forward. We receive many calls from people expressing similar frustrations. We also realize that working effectively in fractured congregations can be incredibly difficult. However, the area where the UCG-AIA most needs to move forward is in utilizing their thousands of long-time members to serve in their congregations and preach the gospel. Progress was made when men left the WCG hierarchical government and came to the Indianapolis conference. The re-establishment of a new hierarchical government does not seem like progress, but reverting back to old ways that failed.

GREIDER: NOTE [at bottom of page]: No part of this letter may be published or transmitted electronically or by any other means without the express permission of the author.

SN: Publishing letters sent to us for the purpose of editorial comment does not violate any copyright or privacy laws that we are aware of. However, we do wonder why this letter was intended to be kept "private." If this letter was inspired by and has the authority of Jesus Christ as Mr. Greider implies, than should not it be made public as an example for everyone to see? How will members know how to govern people in the millennium if they do not know how it is done now? On the other hand, it makes more sense to keep a letter like this private so that not so many people look at it and analyze it.

For a much more scriptural and positive approach, we recommend a paper by Craig White, a member of UCG in Australia: **Utilising the Members in the Local Congregations and In the Work: A System to ensure Fair Opportunity for All.** For a background on church government, we recommend our paper: *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?* —NSE

Ephraim and Manasseh Revisited

In the November 1996 *Servants' News*, we printed several articles about the current identity of the tribes of ancient Israel. The traditional view is that the British Empire is Ephraim and the United States of America is Manasseh. Our articles in that issue suggested the opposite might be true.

We received a lot of comments on these articles, and a lot more information supporting the “traditional view.” Some articles attempt to prove which country is which by tracing names of ancestors through various tribes—they do not rely on the “nation and company of nations” concept.

After reading much of this information, and realizing that there was much more available, this writer had to change his opinion and realize that he needs more study before reaching a conclusion. However, we must disagree with a letter that essentially said: “We cannot preach to the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel if we don't even know exactly who they are!”

Why? Exactly what prophecies are there that would cause us to preach a slightly different message to Ephraim than we would preach to Manasseh? Does one have sins that the other does not? Does the Bible predict a different blessing or punishment for each? From an evangelistic basis, does it matter who is Ephraim and who is Manasseh?

This is a fairly straightforward subject to study in the Scriptures, because an exhaustive concordance will show every occurrence of Ephraim and Manasseh. We had to weed out a number of references to the king named Manasseh, and we even looked up the names of their children. What did we find? **There were very, very few prophesied differences between Ephraim and Manasseh!**

As a matter of fact, there are **no references at all** to the nation of Manasseh in the latter prophets! Ezekiel 48:4-5 contains a brief reference to the territory of Manasseh in the Millennium, but there is nothing to preach about there. Ephraim is mentioned numerous times in the latter prophets, but in most cases he obviously represents all 12 tribes. Seeing the lack of the mention of Manasseh, it is hard to be sure that any of the Ephraim prophecies apply to that tribe only.

We do find specific references to the tribe of Manasseh regarding its genealogy

(1Chr 7:14-19), its inheritance (Josh 13:29-32; Josh 16&17), and a variety of stories about Manassehites (Num 27:1-11; 32:39-42; 36:1-12; Deut 3:13-15; Jud 1:27-28; Jud 6&7; Jud 18:30; 1Chr 12:19-23; 2Chr 30:10-11). Also, there were numerous verses referring to the half tribes of Manasseh living on either side of the Jordan, but none of them say anything specific about Manasseh. Yes, it is very difficult to write down many “Manasseh” characteristics from the Bible. The vast majority of prophecy about Joseph is about both Ephraim and Manasseh together (Gen 48; 49:22-26; Deut 33:13-17). There were only two verses where we found an obvious difference stated between the two tribes:

His glory is like a firstborn bull, and his horns like the horns of the wild ox; Together with them He shall push the peoples to the ends of the earth; They are the **ten thousands of Ephraim**, And they are the **thousands of Manasseh** (Deut 33:17).

The nation of Ephraim will be more populous than Manasseh. But what do we count? Just people who are genetically descended from Ephraim and Manasseh? All citizens of the nation? Or, do we count all the citizens and everyone else that the nation rules over? If we compare the British Commonwealth and the United States of America, we will get a greatly different answer depending on which method we use. However, it is unlikely that one group will have ten times as many people as the other, no matter what counting method is used. (But to be technical, 20,000 Ephraimites and 9,999 Manassehites would fulfill the above prophecy—by some measurement methods, one country could easily be twice the size of the other.)

The other significant verse is:

But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know. He [Manasseh] also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother [Ephraim] shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude [*melo*] of nations [*gowy*]” (Gen 4:19).

This verse also shows that Ephraim is greater than Manasseh in some way. It is interesting to note the last Hebrew words: *melo* means “a fullness” or “a filling” or “a bounty”. It is used 37 times in the Old

Testament and usually in connection with the “fullness of the earth” or a container full of food or water. The Hebrew *gowy* (*go'-ee*) is often translated “heathen” or “Gentiles”—it usually refers to non-Israelite nations. Could this verse mean that Ephraim will “fill or feed the Gentiles”? If so, this prophecy would certainly be accurate: the British Commonwealth and the United States of America have done more to feed the rest of the world than any other nations, both physically, **and spiritually**—by printing and giving away Bibles. Which of the two nations have done the most? That depends upon how you want to measure it—we will not try to answer that in this article.

Another Ephraim/Manasseh issue that we have not seen addressed is the question of **when** the prophecies of Genesis 48 and 49 are to be fulfilled. The only time element we found is here:

And Jacob called his sons and said, “Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in **the last days**” (Gen 49:1).

When are the last days? The Apostles seemed to believe that the last days began in their time (Acts 2:17; Heb 1:2). If we believe that the Eternal has a one-week plan for mankind with each day representing a thousand years (2Pet 3:8), then that **last three days** of the week began in the first century AD. Were the prophecies for these nations to be fulfilled beginning in the first century, or do they apply to only the time immediately before “Jacob's trouble” and our Savior's return? If they apply to the last 200 years before our Savior's return, how do we prove that from the Bible?

We still believe that there is very good biblical, historical, linguistic and other evidence that the ten northern tribes of Israel are now the USA and northwestern European nations. However, the exact identity of Ephraim and Manasseh are not quite as clear to me as I once thought. We have included several other short articles with other opinions, and a list of books for further reading. **We do not believe this issue is necessary for anyone's salvation**, but it can provide strong encouragement to repent of our personal and national sins, and to be more diligent about teaching others the way of the Eternal.

—Norman S. Edwards

"A NATION AND A COMPANY OF NATIONS"

by NORMAN ARTHUR

Many of us have heard this phrase and we have applied this to some version of explaining the whereabouts of Ephraim and Manasseh. We have seen many try to fit the "nation and a company of nations" to the United States and Britain in some way or another. But, where does this phrase come from and is it proper to link this phrase to Joseph's two sons?

Jacob's Understanding

Did Jacob think that the plural "company of nations" was the only part that applied to Joseph and his sons? If so, who would the singular "nation" apply to? Looking at the context of Genesis 35, it would seem that the singular "nation" would be better applied to Benjamin— after

After God changed Jacob's name to Israel, he promised something to him in addition to reconfirming an Abrahamic promise. "Also God said to him: 'I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; **a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body**'" (Gen 35:11). While this is really the only instance of the phrase "a nation and a company of nations", are there other similar ones connected with Jacob and Joseph's sons?

When Jacob was about to die, Joseph brought his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to his father for a blessing. Jacob then retold part of the story quoted in Genesis 35 above, "[God Almighty] said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you **a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession**'" (Gen 48:4). Here one notices that Jacob did not repeat the singular nation part of what he was told earlier.

Later on while blessing Ephraim he said, "But his father refused and said, 'I know, my son, I know. He [Manasseh] also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother [Ephraim] shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become **a multitude of nations**'" (Gen 48:19). Here we have the three places wherein it appears that this concept is referenced. Let's take a closer look at these three.

Multitude

In observing the Hebrew, the reference in Genesis 35:11 and in Jacob's retelling in 48:4 are very similar. The word for "company" in 35:11 and "multitude" in 48:11 are both the same—Strong's #6951: "qahal" which primarily means an assembly or congregation and, in fact, is almost invariably translated "assembly" or "congregation" (except in Ezekiel where it is "company" in an army or military sense).

However, the "multitude" in Genesis 48:19, when specifically speaking of Ephraim, uses a different Hebrew word—Strong's #4393: "melo" which means "fullness, what fills" (Brown-Driver-Briggs).

In looking closely at the context of the first reference we find Jacob on his way to Luz (Bethel). This was well after Jacob left Laban with his wives and eleven sons (Gen 31). They had already met Esau (Gen 32-33) and settled in the Shechem area (Gen 34). After the incident of the sons killing all the Shechemites, Jacob is told by God to go to Bethel (Luz) (Gen 35:1). It is on this trip where he is told that "a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you." A little while after this, Benjamin was born and Rachel died (Gen 35:17-19).

Now, at the end of Jacob's life (Gen 48), why did he tell Joseph an abbreviated version, only telling him that a "multitude of people" ("company of nations") was said?

all, he was born shortly thereafter. In fact, most Jewish commentators have, for thousands of years, understood this concept in this manner. It is only in the last couple hundred years where British/Israel proponents have adopted the application of "a nation and a company of nations" to Ephraim and Manasseh.

What about the specific prophecy about Ephraim being "a multitude of nations"? Remember, "multitude" here is better understood as "fullness". One translation even translates Genesis 48:19 as follows: "...his younger brother shall become greater than he, and his offspring will **fill the nations**" (Stone's edition of the Chumash [see also *The Darby Bible* and *Young's Literal Translation*]).

So, to sum this up, it seems that it would be less of a stretching of the scriptures to assign the singular "nation" to Benjamin and "the company of nations" to Joseph's two sons. However, it does seem to be further of a stretch to assign them to Manasseh and Ephraim as there really is no direct connection for this. It may also be worthwhile to note that Jacob gives prophecies regarding all of his sons in Genesis 49—prophecies for "the last days." He does not, in this section, give prophecies for Ephraim and Manasseh nor speak of anything related to "a nation and a company of nations". This in no way suggests that the general concept of the whereabouts of the Lost Ten Tribes is wrong—only that we may be misapplying one of our "proofs".

Excerpt from pages 369 to 370 of *"The Tribes"* by Yair Davidy.

The Ameyrgio Scythae and the Mercians derived their names from permutations of MACHIR [son of Manasseh, son of Joseph]. An interesting possibility is that the name MACHIR is also recalled in that of America!

The Phoenecians are believed to have visited AMERICA and named it "The Great North Country" and the Hebrew prophets predicted that in the end time the Lost Ten Tribes would return from the "North Country" (e.g. Isa 31:8) and they certainly were well acquainted with the Phoenecians. The Vikings attempted to settle in North America and named it "MARKLAND" which is believed to mean "Land of Darkness". Even so, Maruk (=Machir) and Mark ("in Markland") are not dissimilar. After the Vikings, the existence of America was realised by people in Britain including fishermen from the port of Bristol. Richard Ameryk, a Bristol merchant of the 1470's is now claimed to have given America its name. Ameryk was of Welsh ancestry and his family name originally was "Ap Meryk," possibly denoting "Son of Machir". The more commonly accepted explanation is that the name "America" comes from that of the Explorer, Amerigo Vespucci (1451-1512) also called "Americas" and (after 1507) "America" is said to have been named in his honour. All the events, the name Amerigo or "Americas" is similar to Medieval appellations (Aimerico, etc.) for a Jewish Prince of southern France whose proper Hebrew name (from which the appellations were derived) was MACHIR. It follows that the name AMERICA may well be understood to mean "Land of Machir", son of Manasseh.

Excerpt from pages 385 to 389 of *The "Lost" Ten Tribes of Israel...* Found by Steven M. Collins.

In an earlier chapter we saw evidence that Ephraim's clans formed the backbone of the tribes which united to form the Parthian Empire, while one of the dominant tribes of the Sacae Scythians was the Massagetae (Manasseh). Even as the term "House of Israel" included the rest of the tribes of Israel who remained associated with Ephraim and Manasseh, the term "Sacae" was also applied to the tribes of Israel which were led by Ephraim and Manasseh (Parthia and Scythia) while in Asia.

When the Scythians and Parthians migrated to Europe, the names "SACHse,"

or "Saxons," ("S a a c ' s s o n s ") remained upon them as they settled in the British Isles, but this name also remained on some related tribes who stayed on the mainland (i.e. "Saxony" in Germany and "Alsace" in France).

In Genesis 48:19, Jacob prophesied that Manasseh "shall become a people, and he also shall be great," but added that Ephraim's descendants "shall be greater than [Manasseh], and his seed shall become a multitude of nations." With these words Jacob prophesied that Manasseh and Ephraim would receive the blessing of Genesis 35:11 that the "birthright" promises would eventually include "a nation and a company of nations." Genesis 48:19 specifically foretold the descendants of Ephraim (the younger brother) would become the "multitude of nations" while Manasseh's descendants would become the single great nation.

The modern nations which descended from an Anglo-Saxon heritage are England, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. **These nations have perfectly fulfilled all prophecies about the birthright tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.**

They easily fulfill the prophecy about large population. When you combine the populations of the above modern nations, they are, by far, the most numerous nations of the modern tribes of Israel. They have uniquely fulfilled the prophecy about becoming "a great nation" and a "company of nations." The single great nation is the United States of America and the Caucasian nations of the British Commonwealth (Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) are the prophesied company of nations. Therefore, the "birthright" prophecies identify the United States as Manasseh, and the Caucasian nations of the British Commonwealth are identified as Ephraim.

Since Ephraim was to be the "greater" of the two, and received its birthright blessing first, we should expect that Ephraim would receive its inheritance before Manasseh. History fulfilled that expectation. Great Britain rose to international prominence before the United States, and was a major international power for cen-

Ephraim and Manasseh

Excerpts from Yair Davidy and Steven Collins

Editor's Note: We have some disagreement with some of the statements below, but do not feel that we could refute all of it. These authors make some valuable points that we have not seen elsewhere. —NSE

turies before being replaced by the United States in the post-World War II period. At its zenith, the British Empire also ruled over many more nations and a far greater geographic area than the United States ever has. For a time, it was true that "the sun never set on the British Empire" because the British Empire ruled much of the world! At its zenith, it ruled over Great Britain, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, many Black African nations, Egypt, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Burma, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, eastern New Guinea, and any islands in Oceania. It was without question, the most expansive empire in the history of our planet. According to the 1943 Edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the British Empire once ruled 13 million square miles of the earth's land surface. (And that was before British rule was temporarily extended over Palestine, Jordan and Iraq after World War II!) Britain's navies also controlled much of the world's sea surface as well. "Britannia rules the waves" was a common axiom in Britain's glory days. The British Empire inherited the "birthright" promises of controlling the "gate of its enemies" (strategic "chokepoints" such as the Suez Canal, Gibraltar, and the Cape of Good Hope). British ownership of the Falkland Islands controlled access around Cape Horn between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and its colony in Singapore controlled the strategic Strait of Malacca between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

The United States of America (Manasseh) inherited its "birthright" portion after Ephraim had inherited its dominant portion of the "birthright." At its height, Manasseh ruled the United States, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Alaska and Hawaii (which later became states), Cuba and various islands in Oceania. The United States long controlled the Panama canal, one of the world's most strategic "gates." While the United States is clearly more powerful than Great Britain in our modern world, the British empire was far greater in

a historical sense. While the British sought to expand its empire, the United States has exhibited an "isolationist" tendency in its history, and has not sought to rule a large empire. While the British used their armies to conquer and hold territory, America typically withdraws its armies quickly from conquered territory. In World Wars I and II, the Persian Gulf War, etc., America has exhibited no desire to create an empire out of conquered territory, even though it had the power to easily do so.

The above traits of the British and Americans were also exhibited by the Parthians and Scythians. The Parthian Empire began as a union of the clans of Ephraim, and Parthia was comfortable with ruling an empire of diverse nations, using its armies to conquer and hold territory. The British emulated this Parthian trait in the time of the British Empire, further cementing their identity as modern Ephraim. The ancient Scythians, however, preferred to live in the "wide open spaces" of the Russian steppe and were isolationist (content to "live and let live"). One of the dominant tribes of the Scythians were the Massagetae (i.e. "Manasseh"). After the Scythians conquered Mesopotamia and virtually the entire Mideast (circa 620 B.C., they completely withdrew their armies in a few years, disdaining to rule an empire when they could easily have done so. The Americans have emulated this Scythian trait. At the end of World War II, America could have enforced a "Pax America" on the entire earth! It ruled (or dominated) the Western Hemisphere, its armies occupied Japan, much of Europe and North Africa and most Pacific islands. Only America had the atomic bomb. Americans, like the ancient Scythians, disdained having an empire. It quickly withdrew most armies from conquered nations, mothballed much of its fleet and returned its soldiers to civilian life as soon as they could be transported home.

Even as the Parthians and Scythians were allied fellow kinsmen in the ancient world, the British and the Americans have had a "special relationship" in the modern world. When Parthia needed military help in the ancient world, the Scythians regularly came charging to the rescue. The British and Americans have repeated this Parthian-Scythian tradition. When the British needed military help in World Wars I and II, the Americans came charging to the rescue! These ancient and modern alliances are no accident. Ephraim and Manasseh are "brother" tribes (with a common culture and language) and their descendants have traditionally acted as

"brother nations" in the world.

At this juncture, a few readers may say: "Wait a minute, this sounds like British Israelism;" however, this book does not espouse that doctrine. "British-Israelism" was a doctrine that developed during the

For Further Study

The "Lost" Ten Tribes of Israel...Found!, 439 pages, by Steven M. Collins, PO Box 99735, Sioux Falls, SD 57109-1005. The most thorough book we know of. Discount price: \$12 + shipping (4\$ USA, \$5 Canada, \$10 Europe, \$12 Pacific Rim).

The Tribes, 480 pages, and **Ephraim**, 271 pages, by Yair Davidy, PO Box 595, Jerusalem, Israel 91004. Contact Davidy or History Research Projects, below, regarding availability.

America and Britain in Prophecy, 65 pages, by Raymond McNair. Free from the Global Church of God, PO Box 501111, San Diego, CA 92150.

Judah's Sceptre & Joseph's Birthright 1902 version, 368 pages, by J. H. Allen. \$9 postpaid from Giving and Sharing, PO Box 100, Neck City, MO 64849.

The United States and Britain in Prophecy (1945 version), 51 pages by Herbert Armstrong. (Note the many paragraphs of this book that were copied from J. H. Allen's book, above.) Free from the Philadelphia Church of God, PO Box 3700, Edmond, OK 73083.

History Research Projects Catalog, 4 pages, by Craig White. Many other books about origins of nations. Free from *Servants' News*

New book to be announced! In 1991, the Worldwide Church of God paid for John Halford and Rick Sherrod to visit the best libraries in the USA and England to research the origins of those nations. The WCG never published the research, but Sherrod has now written a 139 page booklet for the UCG, which may be published this year if money is available. In the next month or so, Sherrod will be making two 40-hour courses for IBLC. Contact IBLC at 7 Berean Way, Hawkins, Texas 75765, 903-636-4155. Contact Sherrod at HCR 51 Box 41, Stephenville, TX 76401.

Victorian heyday of the British Empire. It began with people who say (correctly) that the Anglo-Saxon people were exhibiting the characteristics of the "birthright" tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, and who say that the Christian British Empire was

expanding its power throughout the earth. They then came to believe (erroneously) that the British Empire was (or would develop into) the kingdom of God on earth. This doctrine was discredited when it became clear that the British empire would never become the millennial "kingdom of God." Although the Messianic nationalism of British-Israelism was proven incorrect, the evidence that the Anglo-Saxons were the modern tribes of Ephraim and manasseh remained as solid as ever.

Since their initial struggles in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, the British-American alliance has dominated world politics, fulfilling the Genesis 27:39 birthright promise that "nations would bow down to thee." This has been true in both war and peacetime. Many nations have "bowed down" to the United States and Great Britain in warfare over the last few centuries. In peacetime, a map of the immediate post-World War II world indicated that a large percentage of the earth's population was subject to either the British Empire or the United States (either as colonies, protectorates or occupied territories). This British-American alliance was typically merciful to conquered enemies, exhibiting a characteristic of their forefather Joseph. This attribute of wise and benevolent rule was also common among the Scythians, the Parthians and among the Goths who conquered the Romans. The example of America's mercy and magnanimous behavior in restoring the people and economies of its former enemies, Japan and Germany, after World War II is a marvelous example of this trait of the tribe of Joseph. After America and Britain conquered much of Germany in World War II, the Americans worked around the clock to feed Germans in "the Berlin Airlift" necessitated by Russia's grab for power over West Berlin.

The United States of America may be the most generous, magnanimous, and merciful nation in the history of our planet! Besides rebuilding and restoring Japan and much of Europe after World War II, the USA has poured mega-billions of dollars into nations everywhere (usually without repayment or even gratitude) in the form of Marshall Plan, foreign aid, the Peace Corps, etc. When natural disaster strike anywhere on earth, American agencies (public and private) rush to the scene to offer aid and assistance (even to enemy nations). When American TV sets show suffering and starving people in Ethiopia, Somalia and Rwanda (To name recent examples), it isn't long before American

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In the second chapter of the Book of Daniel we find the story of Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar who has a troubling dream which none of the wise men of the kingdom can decipher for him. He calls in the prophet Daniel who is among a group of Hebrews taken captive by the Babylonians. The king demands an interpretation of the dream. Daniel relates that the king has had a vision of a statue. The head, chest, belly and legs of this statue, Daniel reveals, represent successive world-ruling kingdoms.

Most Christian theologians agree that these kingdoms are in order: Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. We can be sure Babylon was the first kingdom because Daniel plainly tells Nebuchadnezzar: “you are this head of gold” (Dan 2:38). Historically, Babylon is the first of the great empires which following the destruction of the last of the Hebrew kingdoms: the southern Kingdom of Judah. God was able to work to some degree through these Israelite kingdoms. But since God had to send them into captivity because of their rebellion, we see how he began to work through other world-ruling kingdoms to accomplish His purpose. These four kingdoms will apparently dominate the world right up until the installation of God’s rule on earth at the coming of Messiah (Dan 2:34).

The last of these kingdoms appears to be some kind of resurrection of the ancient Roman Empire. Dan.2:42 mentions ten toes, an indication of ten nations in some kind of union. Since the Roman empire was historically a European empire, we expect this would be ten modern European countries. We know that Rome was anciently divided into two parts just as indicated by the two legs of the image: the western and

eastern parts of the Roman Empire which resulted from the dividing up of the empire by Diocletian in 285 A.D. for administrative purposes. The eastern empire became the historic Byzantine Empire of medieval history, while the western empire grew into the so-called Holy Roman Empire, so closely associated with the Roman Catholic Church.

That **Daniel’s fourth kingdom is Rome**—a modern-day revival of the ancient Roman Empire—linked to the Roman church is supported by Rev.17:9 (“the seven hills of Rome”). This prophetic scenario corresponds with modern attempts to bring about European integration via today’s European Union. If this view is correct, we can expect a final confederation of ten European nations, which will take on the character of the brutal, repressive, Roman Empire of old. The Kingdom of God will not come to this world until we have witnessed the rise of this great end-time power and its sudden destruction brought about by the returning Christ coming with his saints in the clouds of glory (Mat.24:27). That God’s kingdom destroys and **IMMEDIATELY REPLACES** the Roman kingdom is indicated in **Daniel 2:34: “As you looked a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it smote the image on its feet ...”**.

Now, when we look at a map of Italy, where the Roman Empire was located, what do we find? A leg and a foot! Does this correspond to one of the legs of Nebuchadnezzar’s image—the western Roman Empire? At the foot of the Italian Peninsula we find **the island of Sicily, pointed at the “toes”** of this peninsu-



la—ready to “smote the image on its feet.” When Daniel asked for an explanation of what he wrote, he was told: “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end” (Dan 12:9). Although maps of Italy have existed for many hundreds of years, highly accurate versions have not been available to the common people until this century. This writer cannot find any other geographical area on the planet that looks more like a stone striking a boot.

Obviously, though, we cannot be certain from geography alone that this is exactly what the Eternal meant. Daniel’s prophecy does not say to look for a geographical area. Even though we can see the foot, we do not find geographical areas elsewhere to form the other leg or the head or the body. Also, Sicily does not look like “stone cut without human hand” nor does it represent the Kingdom of God—it was historically part of the Roman empire.

However, the geographical shape of Italy may deserve some consideration as prophetic events continue to unfold. ☐

“Manasseh” from page 12
aid rushes to those affected areas. This world would be a grim place if Americans were not such a philanthropic people. Indeed, America is generous to a fault. So many nations which own so much to American generosity and help are frequently anti-American in their policies. Americans see this, but simply go on giving anyway. They can’t help it; its in their genes that date back to Joseph.

In doing so, the United States has fulfilled the birthright promise of Genesis 12:3 that “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” Whatever America’s faults are

(and there are many), America has historically been “a cheerful giver” to friends, enemies and neutrals alike. II Corinthians 9:7 states that “God loves a cheerful giver,” and Proverbs 10:12 and I Peter 4:8 mention a divine principle that “love covers a multitude of sins.” Perhaps herein lies the reason why God withholds due punishment from America for its various sins: God “covers” (pardons) some of America’s sins because of its unusually generous and merciful attitude toward other nations.

Great Britain has also fulfilled this promise, but in a different way. When Ephraimites formed the backbone of the

Parthian Empire, they ruled subject nations with wisdom, providing an environment of peace and stability. History record that nations fought the Greeks and Romans in order to live under Parthian rule. History repeated itself when the English (modern Ephraim) ruled an empire of many nations, providing an environment of peace and stability. In the wave of nationalism that swept the post-war world, many British colonies were granted an “independence” which proved to be a great curse. Many of these nations had so little capacity to govern themselves that they have been prey for despots ever since. ☐

“Divorce” from page 1

results. Our Savior was talking about the cost of following Him in this parable—the most important decision anyone will make. But “who you will marry” is probably the second most important decision, and the cost must also be counted. In many ways marriage is a more complex decision than salvation. For salvation, we have only one choice and He is reliable and perfect in every way—He will never leave us nor forsake us (1Kngs 8:57). For marriage partners, we have numerous choices, all imperfect. (Let us not forget that one purpose of both of these big decisions is to improve ourselves—and we are also imperfect.)

Before one can count the cost of getting married, and know the risks of divorce, we must find out what the Bible says about divorce. Even though there are only a few dozen scriptures on the subject in the Bible, finding out exactly what the Bible says on the subject is not easy. Why?

1. Most of these scriptures seem to presume the reader has a knowledge of the marriage customs of the time—something we do not have today.

2. Several different Greek and Hebrew words are used in the scriptures for divorce—they have different meanings, but those are often lost in the translation.

3. Most writing that has been done on the subject of divorce has been done to support the doctrinal position on divorce of a specific church organization or personal situation. (For example, if a church organization does not permit divorces, then writers in that organization will nearly all conclude that the Scriptures do not allow divorce. If a theologian wants to get a divorce personally, he may write a book showing that the scriptures allow it—and possibly start a new church organization for others who want divorces.) Most other articles that we have read on the subject of Biblical divorce have taken a specific point of view and have been rather condemning of other points of view.

4. Originally, the Eternal never intended any divorces, but He had to make some compromises because of the sin of man. He even had to divorce His own wife, Israel (Jer 3:8). We see this difficulty clearly expressed in our Savior's statement: “Moses, because of

the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so” (Matt 19:8).

5. Divorce and remarriage situations can be so complex that it is hard to have a “rule” for every situation. Even the apostle Paul had to differentiate between what our Savior taught him and his own judgment (1Cor 7:12,25).

Fortunately, we believe that the message of the Bible on the subject of divorce is understandable—especially when we look at the Hebrew and Greek, and consider what is available from history.

Before we begin our study of the Biblical Hebrew and Greek words relating to divorce, we need to define some English terminology so we can understand what we are talking about. Even after we give our definitions, there will be gray areas, because the state of a couple's marriage ultimately depends upon the attitude that is in each person's mind—which can change by the minute. As we define this terminology, we will note an important difference between the marital problems of our day and those discussed in the Bible.

Married: Husband and wife are to represent themselves to all others as being married. They are not openly seeking relationships with others, and are not seeking any kind of separation, desertion, or divorce. They can be happily married, or they can be miserable. Hopefully, they will be living together, the husband will be providing for his wife, and she will be submissive to him. Even if one or both of the partners is not living up to their marriage agreement (or vows), they are still “married” until one takes some action to break up the marriage. Even if a war or natural disaster physically separates a husband and wife, they are still considered married if they have a hope of one day finding each other.

Separated: Husband and wife *temporarily* separate so that they may come to realize how much they appreciate each other and so that they can pray to overcome destructive habits. The purpose of this separation is eventual reconciliation—though in some few cases the couple may choose to live out the rest of their lives separately (1Cor 1:7). Separated couples are still married—they are **not** free to marry others and they could come back together at any

time. Each spouse remains in communication with the other and they usually represent themselves to the community as married.

Deserted: One spouse has either “cast out” or abandoned the other. Being “cast out” refers to one mate (usually the husband) forcing the other to leave the family dwelling against their will—either by actual violence or threat of violence. Being “abandoned” refers to either spouse simply moving away from the family dwelling—sometimes without letting their spouse know where they are going. There has been no formal or legal end to the marriage, but there is no significant effort to continue it. This problem occurs far too frequently—both in our society and in ancient societies. Today, it is fairly easy for a deserted spouse to obtain a legal divorce—even if they do not know where the other spouse is. Most states in the USA allow a one-party divorce if a spouse has not been heard from for over a year.

Under Old Testament law (Deut 24:1), the man was required to initiate any divorce proceeding. This practice continued into the New Testament and is still common among Orthodox Jewish groups today. Marriage contracts often required that part of a woman's dowry be refunded or that the husband provide for her support if he divorces her. This caused selfish men to want to simply “cast out” their wives rather than write a bill of divorce. Furthermore, Old Testament law did not forbid a man to have more than one wife at a time, so a man could put out one wife without any “certificate of divorce”, marry another, and at a later time take the first wife back. A woman could not have more than one husband, so once put out she was “in limbo” until he either took her back or gave her a “certificate of divorce.”

The problem was worse if a man abandoned his wife and did not tell her where he was going. She cannot remarry according to the law, yet she will have no way of knowing if her husband illegally remarries or dies. These women (called *agunah*—“tied ones”) may have small children to raise but no significant means of support. This was a major problem in the New Testament and still exists among some Orthodox Jewish groups to this day.

Lest we think that the Eternal

designed his laws poorly, we must remember that originally He gave each man his own inheritance—land which was his without any taxes. That system provided a great incentive for a man to remain on his land. Also, most marriages took place among people living in close proximity. If a wife was mistreated, her father or brothers would make sure that the marriage agreement was enforced. Today, when it is common to have rental housing and a non-agricultural job, there is less to tie a man to his home. Married couples often live far from their families and have no agreement stating how husbands and wives are to conduct themselves. Since it is an embarrassment to be a deserted mate, many people in this condition will try to hide it from their community. Deserting a mate is a sin—even more so if the person goes elsewhere and pretends to be unmarried.

Divorced: Divorced people have ended their status as husband and wife. The marriage agreement or their vows are no longer binding. The woman (or her parents) collect any divorce rights specified in their marriage agreement or state laws. The woman is no longer under the authority of the man. The community is aware that the marriage has ended, and it is acceptable for them to be seen with others. It is a public statement of these facts, so that they will not have a bad reputation if they court or eventually marry others.

What Does the Old Testament Say About Divorce?

The Old Testament contains three words that are sometimes translated “divorce.” Various Bible translations render them quite differently. The KJV is better than most in this aspect, but we found no translation that always makes clear the underlying Hebrew words. You can use an exhaustive concordance or an interlinear to see the original words. We will give the Strong’s numbers, below, as you can use them to reference the words in most interlinears, exhaustive concordances, and lexicons.

The one word that means “divorce” and nothing but “divorce” is *k’riythuwth* (Strong’s 3748). It always appears with the word *cepher* (5612), which is some type of written document. Hence, we see the expression “bill of divorcement” or “certificate of divorce.” This expression

appears four times in the Bible:

When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a **certificate of divorce**, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a **certificate of divorce**, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, then her former husband who **divorced** [*shalach*—“sent away”] her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance (Deut 24:1-4).

Thus says the LORD: “Where is the **certificate of your mother's divorce**, Whom I have **put away**? [*shalach*—“sent away”] Or which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you? For your iniquities you have sold yourselves, And for your transgressions your mother has been put away (Isaiah 50:1).

“They say, ‘If a man **divorces** [*shalach*—“sends away”] his wife, And she goes from him And becomes another man's, May he return to her again?’ Would not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers; Yet return to Me,” says the LORD. ... The LORD said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: “Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot. And I said, after she had done all these things, ‘Return to Me.’ But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away [*shalach*] and given her a **certificate of divorce**; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also” (Jer 3:1,7-8).

This is all of the instruction we have from the Old Testament regarding the

certificate of divorce. We have almost no details about what is to be written in the certificate, when it can be given, and when it cannot be given. Jewish sources have preserved much information, but it is hard to prove which of their writings were inspired by the Eternal and which are the reasonings of men. The above passage in Deuteronomy is in great debate among Jewish as well as other scholars. The word translated “uncleanness” (Deut 4:1) is usually translated “nakedness” and therefore implies some kind of sexual misconduct. On the other hand, Deuteronomy 4:2 seems to say that a husband may divorce a wife if he “detests” or “hates” her. The Jewish “School of Shammai” understood that these verses meant a man could divorce his wife only for unchastity. The opposing Jewish view, the “School of Hillel” held that she could be divorced for nearly any reason. Our Savior was asked to explain these verses (Matt 19:3), but rather than concentrate on technicalities, He brought out other more important principles. We will discuss the New Testament principles later, but it is clear that the Old Testament provided for a man to give his wife a certificate of divorce in certain cases. Also, we find that the Eternal himself gave the nation of Israel a certificate of divorce.

Several times in the above verses, the Hebrew *shalach* (7971) was translated “divorced.” This word is used over 700 times in the old testament and usually means simply “to send,” “to send away” or to “go.” It usually has nothing to do with marriage and can imply either a positive or negative reason for leaving. For example, it is used when Adam was sent out of the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:23), and it is used to “let the oppressed go free” (Isa 58:6). It is used for quite common, ordinary situations such as when David sent a boy to get his arrows (1Sam 2:21). However, when referring to a marriage, it is not referring to one spouse sending the other to the store or something like that, but to a divorce or a desertion. How can one word have such a general meaning in one context and such a specific meaning in another? This is the nature of languages. It happens in English frequently. The words “let” and “go” have very broad meanings. But, you know that if someone has a bird in a cage and decides to “let him go,” the bird is receiving his freedom. Whereas if

a boss tells a worker he has decided to "let him go", it does not mean he is getting a day off, but that he is losing his job.

So what does the Hebrew *shalach* (7971) mean in the context of a marriage? It clearly refers to the breaking up of a marriage. Its usage in Deuteronomy 24:4 (above) shows it must include women given a certificate of divorce. But the Hebrew *shalach* (7971) is also used in cases of desertion when no bill of divorce was written. We see one example right after Amnon raped Tamar:

So she [Tamar] said to him [Amnon], "No, indeed! This evil of **sending me away** [*shalach*] is worse than the other [rape] that you did to me." But he would not listen to her (2Sam 13:16).

Since Tamar was probably Amnon's half-sister, he should have been cutoff from his people (Lev 18:11,29). But lacking that, the law required that Amnon marry Tamar and never "send her away." The same Hebrew *shalach* is used in that law:

If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not **put her away** [*shalach*] all his days (Deut 22:28-29, KJV).

This command says that he must neither give her a certificate of divorce nor put her away in some other manner. (If you read the rest of the story, you find that—like today—the sons of leaders often temporarily escaped the penalty of the law: David did not force Amnon to take care of Tamar, so after two years Tamar's brother Absalom killed Amnon.)

It is clear to this writer that Hebrew *Shalach* refers to any kind of marriage breakup—either by certificate of divorce or desertion.

Another example is the law for a man who falsely accuses his wife of not being a virgin when they were married. He is not allowed to desert her, abandon her, or divorce her in any way.

...because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not **put**

her away [*shalach*] all his days (Deut 22:19).

On the contrary, if a man betroths a woman to himself that was captured in battle, he may simply "let her go." (There is some debate as to whether he may "let her go" only before or even after having sex with her, but we will not spend time with this issue since it is not a problem confronting our readers at this time.)

If you are not pleased with her, **let her go** [*shalach*] wherever she wishes. You must not sell her or treat her as a slave, since you have dishonored her (Deut 21:14, NIV).

But what is the Eternal's opinion when a marriage breaks up, whether it be due to divorce or otherwise?

Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth (Mal 2:13-15).

For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth **putting away** [*shalach*]: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously (Mal 2:16).

So far, we have seen one Hebrew expression (*k'riythuwth*) used in "certificate of divorce" and another word (*shalach*) referring to any kind of marriage break-up, both divorce and desertion.

The third Hebrew word related to marriage breakups is *garash* (Strong's 1644). It is used about 40 times in the Old Testament, usually translated "cast out", "thrust out", or "driven out." It means "cast out, without particular care to what will happen afterward." The word *garash* is used when Adam is cast out of the garden of Eden (Gen 3:24), when Israel is cast out of Egypt (Ex

12:29) and when the Caananites are cast out of the promised land (Ex 23:28-31; Deut 33:27; Jud 6:9; Ps 58:75; etc.) It is also used when a husband "casts out" his wife or concubine:

Therefore she [Sarah] said to Abraham, "**Cast out** [*garash*] this bondwoman [Hagar] and her son [Ishmael]; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac" (Gen 21:10).

There was no "certificate of divorce" or any kind of property settlement given here. Even though Abraham was wealthy, he gave Hagar and Ishmael only a minimal amount of food—so little that they would have died without a miracle from the Eternal.

While the Eternal specifically told Abraham to cast out Hagar and Ishmael, that was not how a man was commanded to treat his wife in the Old Testament. In a chapter condemning the evils in the society of His people, the Eternal said:

The women of My people you cast out [*garash*] from their pleasant houses; from their children You have taken away My glory forever (Micah 2:9).

There are no scriptures giving any implication that a "cast out" woman could remarry. However, since the Eternal knew that this evil would happen, he did give some instruction regarding them:

But if her husband overrules her on the day that he hears it, he shall make void her vow which she took and what she uttered with her lips, by which she bound herself, and the LORD will release her. Also any vow of a widow or a divorced [*garash*] woman, by which she has bound herself, shall stand against her (Num 30:8-9).

The Hebrew *garash* ("cast out") is used instead of *shalach* ("put away") because the status of a woman who was put away (but had no "certificate of divorce") is the only one in question. **It was already clear that a man has no control over a woman at all once he has given her a "certificate of divorce."** This verse shows specifically that if a man also "casts out" or deserts his wife, he no longer has any say about her vows to the Eternal.

Another law gave a married but "cast out" daughter of a priest the right to eat from the offerings given to a priests

family (Lev 22:13). This was very important because a “cast out” woman without a “certificate of divorce” could not remarry. This allowed her to always eat with the rest of her family.

There are three other places in scripture where *garash* is used in relation to marriage. They all show specifically that a priest was not to marry a *garash* (“cast out”) woman. The high priest was required to take only a virgin for his wife (Lev 21:10-14). Other priests were required not to take harlots or “cast out” women, but could marry widows of other priests (Lev 21:7; Ezk 44:21-22). Could a priest marry the wife of another priest that had been given a “certificate of divorce?” The Bible does not specifically say, but most Jewish (and Christian) scholars would say “no.” This writer has an opinion, but it is not essential to this article.

What is important is that the Old Testament Hebrew speaks of broken marriages in three different ways: women who have been given a “certificate of divorce” (*k'riythuwth*, Strong's 3748), women who have been “cast out” (*garash*, Strong's 1644) and a general any-kind-of-separation (*shalach*, 7971). If a woman were “cast out,” she would need a “certificate of divorce” in order to remarry.

Would a man need a “certificate of divorce” in order to be remarried? No, because a man was allowed to have more than one wife (Deut 21:15), but a woman could not have more than one husband (Deut 22:22; Rom 7:2-3). Understanding these concepts is important to understand what was in the minds of the people hearing the words of the New Testament. (If any man thinks that these scriptures give him the right to have more than one wife or a “concubine”, please realize there is no mention of any righteous person in the New Testament with more than one wife—and there are scriptures indicating it should not be done: 1Cor 7:33, Eph 5:33; 1Tim 3:2; Tit 1:6).

What Does the Messiah Say About Divorce?

There are four words used in the New Testament in connection with marital breakups. Unfortunately, few translations render all of them consistently. Nearly all of our Messiah's recorded words on the subject use only two of

those Greek words.

The simplest to understand is the Greek word *apostasion* (Strong's 647) which means “certificate of divorce” or “writing of divorcement.” It is found in three places (Matt 5:31; 19:7; Mark 10:4). It is identical to the “certificate of divorce” found in the Old Testament—we found no source that disputed this fact.

What is greatly disputed was under what conditions a divorce could be granted. As we mentioned previously, the rabbinic teachers of the day were greatly divided on the issue—The “School of Shammai” accepting only a few reasons, the “School of Hillel” accepting many. Many used this uncertain understanding of the law to simply do whatever they wanted—they could probably always find at least one rabbi that could agree with them. They “put away” their spouses—deserting them or “casting them out” and not giving them a “certificate of divorce” at all. Women who wanted to follow the law felt they could not remarry, yet they had little or no support. The same problem exists among Orthodox Jews today. In Matthew 19 and Mark 10, our Savior was directly asked about when a wife could be put away. Since these accounts are similar, we will quote only the one in Mark 10:2-12, KJV:

And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to **put away** [*apoluo*] his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a **bill of divorcement** [*apostasion*], and to **put her away** [*apoluo*]. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man **put asunder** [*separate—chorizo*]. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall **put away** [*apoluo*] his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a

woman shall **put away** [*apoluo*] her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

In this passage, we immediately see that the Greek word *apoluo* (Strong's 630) is the primary one used. It means to “put away” or to “send away” and is used 89 times in the new testament—sometimes in relation to marriage but more often not (Matt 14:23; 15:23; Mark 6:36; 8:9; Acts 13:3). As we will see, it refers to any split-up in a marriage, not specifically one where a “certificate of divorce” was given. The Pharisees were not even asking about when they could write a bill of divorce, but when they could simply “put away” a wife. It was the Messiah who had to ask them about what the law said. The problem was, most of the men did not want to write the “certificate of divorce,” because that meant they would be financially responsible for returning part of the dowry as specified in their marriage agreement, and it meant that the husband could never change his mind and take her back (Deut 24:1-4).

When our Savior responded, he gave the answer that has been needed throughout all time: **the purpose of marriage is not to find out what is required to divorce, but to learn to live peacefully together.** He showed them His Father's purpose from Genesis. Yet, he did not come to destroy the law (Matt 5:17)—he did not cancel the law of the “certificate of divorce” given by Moses. Almost none of the people had the holy spirit, and there were still many with hard hearts—people who were impossible to live with. The Eternal gave the “certificate of divorce” for a reason, and that reason was still in existence.

But, our Savior labeled the “putting away” as clearly wrong. We can be sure that He was not condemning “certificates of divorce” when He condemns “putting away” because He says “if a woman shall put away her husband”—there was no provision in the Mosaic law or rabbinic law at that time for a woman giving a “certificate of divorce” to her husband. Our Savior was condemning the reckless “illegal” marriage break-ups and remarriages that were going on in His day—and ours. We find more in Matt 5:31-32, KJV (Luke 16:18 contains a similar idea):

It hath been said, Whosoever shall **put away** [*apoulo*] his wife, let him give her a **writing of divorce** [*apostasion*]: **But** [*de*] I say unto you, That whosoever shall **put away** [*apoulo*] his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is **divorced** [*apoulo*—should be “put away”] committeth adultery.

Why the KJV translators decided to translate *apoulo* as “divorced” here, instead of “put away” as they normally do, we cannot be sure. Nevertheless, the meaning of the Greek is clear: **A remarried person who is simply “put away” is committing adultery.** Many people interpret these verses to condemn all divorce and remarriage. That interpretation is understandable—especially if Bible readers are using a translation that renders all of the various Greek words as “divorce.” But even with the translation shown above, the verse may sound as if our Savior is **replacing** the “certificate of divorce” with the crime of adultery except in the case of “fornication.” In English, we get the idea of “replacement” from the word “but” which usually contrasts two different thoughts. However, the word translated “but” here is the Greek *de*—it is translated “but” 1237 times and “and” 935 times. It does not imply contrasting thoughts but continued thoughts—it is also sometimes translated “also”, “so” and “moreover”. The Greek *alla* is used where ideas are opposites such as: “I did not come to destroy **but** [*alla*] to fulfill” (Matt 5:17).

Our Messiah is pointing out the hypocrisy in the approach of that time: People were arguing about **when** a certificate should be granted, but were not trying to make their marriages work. They were arguing about the technicalities of “certificates of divorce” while they were committing adultery because they had no certificate, but were only “putting away.” Today, we have a different form of hypocrisy. Some conservative churches do not allow members to divorce and remarry, but they take little action against pre-marital affairs or ongoing adulterous relationships.

Furthermore, we can be sure that our Messiah was not making obsolete the “certificate of divorce” because of the exception that He cited (both here and in Matthew 19:9). He said “except for for-

nication [Greek *porneia*]”—which generally means sexual involvement **before** marriage or some kind of perversion. The penalty for adultery (sexual involvement with a non-spouse by married people) was “death” (Lev 20:10)—a divorce was not necessary to end the marriage. **However, when a couple was betrothed and one admitted to previous sexual involvement, the partner could simply be “put away” with no bill of divorce.** (This case and Deut 21:14 are the only apparent cases where a man may “put away” his wife without a bill of divorce.) This is exactly what Joseph was going to do with Mary before the Eternal showed him what to do through a dream:

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to **put her away** [*apoulo*] secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”

When a woman informs her husband-to-be that she is “with child” by someone else, he may simply “put her away,” as if the marriage agreement never took place. Why did not Joseph try to have Mary killed according to the provisions in Deuteronomy 22, verses 21 or 24? Because Joseph was a “just man”. Verse 21 applies only to women who claimed to be virgins but were later found not to be so. Verse 24 does not apply if a woman is impregnated against her will. Joseph did not believe her “angel story” at first, but having no proof of any wrong-doing on her part, he simply intended to “put her away” secretly. This is the only kind of “putting away” that was consistent with the Old Testament law and the words of our Savior. The only acceptable way to end a marriage was through the death of one of the parties or through a “certificate of divorce.”

What does Paul Say About Divorce and Remarriage?

Except for the last word of Mark

10:9 or Matthew 19:6, the words Paul uses for marital break-ups are completely different than those used by our Savior. This may be because Paul was writing to a partly Gentile audience who were not as familiar with the Biblical laws and Jewish customs of divorce. Paul never mentions a “Bill of Divorce” directly, but he does speak of the contractual nature of marriage. His writing is understandable and gives the Body of Believers all they need to know about what to do with their marriages.

The Greek *chorizo* (Strong’s 5563) is used 12 times and means “to depart” or “to separate” (Matt 19:6; Mark 10:9; Acts 18:1; Rom 8:35; 1Cor 7:10,11,15; Phlm 1:15). The sense implies a physical removal. It does not seem to imply any specific marital status as “legal separation” does in English, but it is apparently used by our Savior to refer to any kind of separation, and by Paul to refer to people who are physically separated in the hopes of being reunited.

The Greek *aphiemi* (Strong’s 863) is used 133 times in the New Testament and means “to leave” or “to forgive”. It has the sense of “to give up attention and responsibility” (Matt 4:11; 4:22, 5:24; Mark 10:28; Rom 1:27; Rev 2:4). In only three places does *aphiemi* apply to a marital break-up: 1 Corinthians 7:11,12,13. It appears to mean any kind of dissolution of a marriage.

At this time, it would be helpful for you to read the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 11. We will only quote parts of it to save space in this article, but it is all very important. Pay particular attention to the several times where Paul states which items are “commandments from the Lord” and which are his own opinion.

But unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord, That the wife **depart** [*chorizo*] not from her husband (but should she **depart** [*chorizo*], let her remain unmarried, or else **be reconciled** to her husband); and that the husband **leave** [*aphiemi*] not his wife. But to the rest say I, not the Lord: If any brother hath an unbelieving wife, and she is content to dwell with him, let him not **leave** [*aphiemi*] her. And the woman that hath an unbelieving husband, and he is content to dwell with her, let her not **leave** [*aphiemi*] her husband (1Cor 11:10-13, ASV).

These verses illustrate the difficult nature of marriages. Paul tells wives not to depart, then in the next verse says what to do if they disobey the first instruction. Nevertheless, Paul is clearly talking to “believers” here, and he says that if believers must depart (be “separated”), they should not remarry but work to be reconciled. If they cannot, they should remain single. **This is a higher standard than the Old Testament teaches. There is no need for a “certificate of divorce” if people have only one mate.** Through the power of the holy spirit, converted couples should be able to live together in peace. This higher standard is an essential test of character for those who are a part of the “body of Christ.”

Most converted people have little difficulty accepting this higher standard given to them. The difficulty begins when someone has a previous or present marriage with an unconverted person. Under what conditions can a person remarry if they had a marriage with an unconverted person that broke up? Paul answers that directly in verse 15:

Yet if the unbelieving departeth [*chorizo*], let him depart [*chorizo*]: the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us in peace.

There are two vital points here:

1) If an unbelieving mate seriously wants to depart from the marriage, do not try to stop him or her. (Later, we will deal with the question of, “What is an unbelieving mate?”) We have heard of cases when a believer tried to force or entice an unbelieving mate to stay against their will. We do not know of any who were successful. If a spouse wants to end a marriage, and is not willing to be governed by the marriage laws of the Bible, there is virtually nothing that the believer can do.

2) The term “under bondage” is translated from the Greek *douloo* which is a contractual term for making a person a slave. Paul is saying that if the unbeliever departs—the contract of service to them is over. This is the exact purpose of a “certificate of divorce,” which ended the marriage contract. The Old Testament law could not be followed to the letter in cases where the unconverted mate was a Gentile and/or simply refused to cooperate with it.

If a person is no longer “under

bondage,” does that mean they are able to remarry? Fortunately, the answer is made clear a few verses later where Paul has a section on dealing with the difficult times they were living in.

I think therefore that this is good by reason of the distress that is upon us, namely, that it is good for a man to be as he is. Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. **Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. But shouldest thou marry, thou hast not sinned;** and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Yet such shall have tribulation in the flesh: and I would spare you (1Cor 7:26-28, ASV).

Again, we find the contractual “binding and loosing” terminology here. It is very clear that a person could be “loosed from a wife,” marry, and not sin. The Corinthian converts certainly would have had the same problems that many of us do today: They have learned the Eternal’s law and want to live with one spouse from now till the end of their life, but past or current spouses may not cooperate with this idea. There is sometimes a need to end relationships with the unconverted and to start over with a believer.

Are there other reasons that a person can remarry? Yes, Paul did not want to leave this one out:

A wife is bound for so long time as her husband liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is free to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord (1Cor 7:39, ASV).

Does this verse say that death is the **only** way to end a marriage? No. If a marriage contract has been ended by a “certificate of divorce” or by the departure of an unconverted person, the man and woman are no longer husband and wife. But as long as they remain husband and wife, they are bound until one of them dies.

The Symbolism of Marriage

Many women, and some men have wondered why the Old Testament law gave so much control and authority to the man. If a man made his wife miserable, there was little she could do. But if a wife made her husband miserable, he could write her a “certificate of divorce.” The reason this was done is because marriages symbolize the relationship between the Eternal and his

people. Husbands have control not because men are inherently better than women, but because they symbolize the Eternal—the one who sets the laws and standards for his people (symbolized by a woman).

Originally, the Eternal had a marriage covenant with nations of Israel and Judah. When Israel misbehaved, the Eternal wrote her a “certificate of divorce” and put her away (Jer 3:8). Today, that marriage relationship continues with the assembly of believers. We should be subject to our Savior and learn to do things His way. This is well explained in Ephesians 5:20-32:

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. **In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.**

The above scripture gives us the formula for peace in a marriage, but both must work toward this goal. Notice that it does not tell a husband to try to force his wife to submit, not does it tell the wife to try to nag her husband into being the kind of person she thinks he should be. We can see from history that our Messiah has not forced those claiming to be “His Church” to obey Him—churches have done many unbiblical things, and the Eternal’s reputation has suffered greatly because of it. Also, we see churches today trying to portray the Eternal as something He is not—a “trin-

ity” or a God of “love” without law—none of which has changed the way that the Eternal really is.

There is much we can learn from this symbolism, but difficulty arises because the Spiritual Husband is perfect, but human husbands are not. Is it fair that women have to suffer under the misused authority of their husbands? No. Nor is it fair that children have to suffer under the misused authority of their parents. Nor is it fair that anyone has to suffer under the misused authority of evil rulers or powerful criminals. But human experience has been the story of suffering due to the misuse of power and authority. Does everyone suffer the same? No! Some people suffer a little, some a lot—our Savior certainly suffered a lot. It is difficult to compare one person’s suffering to another’s, but it may well be true that wives (as a whole) suffer more than husbands. If so, it may also be true that wives are more perfect than husbands (Heb 2:10, 1Pet 5:10). The important thing to realize is that women have the same access to the Eternal and salvation: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

Summary of Marriage Laws for Believers

The following points summarize our present understanding of the verses listed above. We ask that you make your marital decisions based on **your** understanding of the scriptures—not solely on this summary:

1. The Eternal intends for a virgin man to marry a virgin woman and for those to stay married until one of them dies. Anything less than this involves sin on the part of someone. Once you are converted, you must adhere to this law as closely as your situation allows. (We use the term “**converted**” for brevity, but anyone who understands what the Eternal expects of them is responsible for living by it, even though they may not have been baptized yet.)

2. If you had been married prior to conversion, you need to handle those marriages appropriately. If your most recent marriage is salvageable, you should try to revive it—especially if your spouse or children want you to. See

point **3** below for the rules governing an “unconverted mate” to determine if you should get back together or stay apart. Your most recent marriage (if not revivable) and all previous marriages must be formally terminated. Whether these marriages were by state marriage license, contract, or just a live-in relationship, they should all be formally terminated—the equivalent of a “certificate of divorce.” If you have a state license, you should have a state divorce. If you had a marriage contract or a verbal agreement (not a good method of marriage), then you should write out a document declaring you are no longer husband and wife, keep a copy, give it to the other person, and make it known in the same manner you made the marriage known. Marriages and divorces are statements to the community. If you have lost contact with the other person—it would still be good to write the document, so that you know in your own mind that you no longer have any relationship with that person. We see no need to write anything to previous sexual partners where no lasting relationship was intended, but you need to talk to the Eternal and repent of all of this. When your last marriage broke up, if you were the primary cause of it, and if you understood what the Bible teaches about marriage at that time, and if reconciliation is no longer possible, then you probably should remain single.

3. Converted people should only consider marrying other converted people. Who is a converted person? For people in large church organizations, the answer is usually simple: someone who is a member of that organization. However, the Bible shows a converted person is one living by the spirit of the Eternal and His word. History shows us that individuals can be “pillars” in church organizations for years, yet have a disgusting private life, and then after many years completely give up on all religion. There is no simple test that can be performed to determine conversion nor any specific list of doctrines that someone must accept. So how do you decide if your prospective mate is converted? You must pray for wisdom and make your own evaluation, but people who are anxious to marry have difficulty making unbiased decisions. You would be wise to seek the counsel of older, stable brethren who have known

your prospective mate for several years. Hopefully, this will include your parents and your prospective spouse’s parents—but if parents are unconverted or plagued by their own selfish interests, they may not be of genuine help to you. If you do not have any such common friends, be careful—you may want to delay your marriage a number of months so common friends can form an opinion. It may sound cold-hearted, awkward and judgmental to ask your friends “do you think so-and-so is converted enough for me to marry?” But, it is **so much better** to ask that question to many friends before marriage than it is to be asking it to yourself after you have married.

4. Be the best partner you can be! Among converted people, no-fault divorce does not exist! You need to pray and work at being the best husband or wife you can be—as if your salvation depended on it. When our Savior was on earth, he did not sin, even though he suffered under abusive authority. Now, He is faithful to his bride (the Church) even though she has many sins and difficulties. Nevertheless, one person cannot make a marriage if the other wants to destroy it. Since there are still “hard hearts,” there is still a need for divorce—just be sure you are not the cause of it. Nearly all divorce cases fall into one of the categories below:

a) Your obviously unconverted spouse wants a divorce. It is obvious to nearly everyone that your spouse is no longer living by the Bible. (Your spouse may have renounced religion, have an ongoing affair, etc.) If the spouse wants to leave, you cannot stop them. Try to retain child custody and a fair (neither too much nor too little) share of the assets of the marriage. You can remarry—if you have small children, you probably should. But get **more and better council** before you do; do not marry someone with the same problems that your ex-mate had.

b) Your spouse is miserable to live with, but does not want a divorce. Your spouse may be failing in any number of areas: communication, supporting the family, sexual relations, etc. First, use the principles of Matthew 18:15-17 to communicate these difficulties to your spouse. If your spouse will not hear members of

your congregation, but will listen to professional marriage counselors, use them as your "witnesses". If your spouse fails to hear your communication or fails to take any action, a separation is the next step. Write a letter to your partner indicating that this is not a divorce or the first step toward a divorce, but a time for you to realize the importance of your marriage. **Also, a separation is a statement that a marriage is having difficulty**—one that a spouse cannot simply ignore. You *should not* be looking around for a new prospective mate during your separation! **Your hope and goal should be that your spouse repents and changes.** If your spouse makes significant changes, you should get back together. If, after many months of opportunity, your spouse refuses to change and still does not want a divorce, you may have to take some other action. We know of cases where people hated their converted spouses, ignored them completely, but refused to file for divorce in order to prevent the hated spouse from remarrying. Even though your spouse may claim to be "pleased to dwell with you," his or her actions may indicate the opposite. We do not recommend that you decide on your own that your spouse is unconverted and "not pleased to dwell with you"—there are too many emotional forces pulling on you to make a just decision. However, if a large number of older, stable brethren all agree that your spouse is unconverted and "not pleased to dwell with you"—even though your spouse claims otherwise, then we do not see why you should not initiate a divorce. This is especially true when small children are involved and/or when a financial settlement is essential. Please see the cautions at the end of this article.

c) **Your spouse claims you are miserable to live with and wants a divorce.** Your spouse may claim that he or she is converted and that you are not. The first thing to ask yourself is, "is my spouse right?" Your reaction will typically be something like "I have problems, but they are not so bad that my spouse should want a divorce." All marriage difficulties involve some combination of problems created by both husband and wife. However, in some cases, one

person causes the vast majority of them. If you are the major cause, you need to repent, pray, fast, and probably repent some more. Your sins are not automatically ignored or forgiven just because you know some definite sins of your spouse. On the other hand, your spouse may be the cause of most problems and is simply blaming you for them. In any case, you should try to use the steps in point b), above: Matthew 18 communication, temporary separation, and reconciliation. If you changed the parts of your life that bothered your spouse, and if it is clear to you as well as **nearly all of the people who you counseled with** that your spouse is wrong for asking for a divorce, then let the spouse get the divorce and treat him or her as unconverted—you may remarry. If you believe your spouse is converted or that you are the cause of a significant part of the problem, you would be better to remain separated or divorced than to remarry.

Who Determines Who Can Marry and Divorce Today?

In the previous section we encouraged individuals with marriage difficulties to seek a multitude of counsel, but ultimately, we said that they would have to make the final decision. Is this safe? Will not that allow people to simply marry and divorce whenever they want to? If the people have no real respect for the Eternal and his law, the answer is yes! Even the Eternal realized that He could not stop hard-hearted people from divorcing, so He gave them instructions on how to do it! The biblical principles we outlined are for converted people.

The individual, with the aid of counselors, must make their decision before their Creator. **What many people do not realize, is that they can prove their unconversion by their choices in divorce and remarriage:**

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (1Tim 5:8).

The word "infidel" here means and is often translated "unbeliever". Paul leaves little room for doubt: a person who seeks a divorce rather than supporting his or her household is clearly worse than an unbeliever. Marriage and divorce decisions should be the most

carefully thought out thing we do in our lives. If a person decides wrongly, it is sin. Clever and persuasive people may be able to convince themselves, a multitude of counselors, any number of ministers, as well as courts of law that it would be best for them to divorce and remarry. But ultimately we will all "stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom 14:10, 2Cor 5:10). If a converted person unjustly leaves their spouse, it is an on-going sin. The sin needs to be repented of and corrected:

Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge (Heb 13:4).

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb 10:26-31).

Making a decision to divorce or remarry is no light thing. It is **easier** to do when your spouse refuses to talk about the subject or accept counsel. A person who refuses to talk about problems is not following the principles in Matthew 18 or the Old Testament: "Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt" (Lev 9:17, NIV). You can be more sure that you are right if the other person refuses to talk meaningfully, but do not mistake a quiet personality for sin.

But should these important divorce and remarriage decisions be left to a minister or at least a professional of some kind? At least would that not provide some kind of uniformity in decision making? The entire process of conversion and growth is not about ministers

telling people exactly what to do, but about people learning to do what is right and being responsible for the decisions they make. Elders and ministers should be available to give counsel to those who seek it. (For a detailed study of this subject, write for the Servants' News article, "How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?") Some bad decisions will be made along the way—no matter who makes them.

So then, some will argue that if each person has the right to interpret the marriage scriptures for themselves and decide whether they can divorce or remarry, then people will do whatever they want and we will have chaos. The truth of the matter is that we have had chaos for a long time. Even in church organizations that attempt to make divorce and marriage decisions for their members, resourceful people usually "get what they want" anyway. If one minister would not grant a divorce, another might—especially if you could do a favor for him. Some people declared "ineligible to remarry" by church organizations simply got married quietly and moved to another part of the country—the new minister did not know their history and accepted them into his congregation. Also, couples would get divorced, quit the organization, remarry, and then ask to be re-admitted. The church organization has the choice of "taking the remarried couple back," or losing their membership and contributions forever. Now that there are many similar Sabbath-keeping groups, individuals can simply look for one that will grant them the divorce or remarriage they are seeking. This author has seen and heard of all of these things happening many times.

The worst danger of ministerial-controlled marriage and divorce is that people feel assured that what they are doing is approved by the Eternal because the minister (and presumably the church) has accepted it. It is so much better when people know that the all-seeing great Creator will be judging their motives and actions. **Converted people will be much more diligent to do what is right. Unconverted people will be more quickly exposed.** The purpose of the *ekklesia* ("church") is not to prevent people from sinning, but to teach and encourage those who **want** to live by the leading of the holy spirit.

I know someone who was personally devastated when their church-sanctioned marriage broke up. The person and their parents knew about the prospective mate's problems before the wedding, but since

the minister approved the marriage, they thought it would be all right. The Bible makes no promises about church-approved or minister-approved marriages—and we certainly do not see any church organization that produces all "good" marriages.

There are times when a congregation may need to refuse fellowship to someone who has made a clearly wrong marriage choice. The man who married his Father's wife, is a good example (1Cor 5:1-5). He was a terrible example to others and the correction helped him to see his problem and repent. It is interesting to note that no correction was given to the Corinthian church for letting him "marry" in the first place. Why? Because at that time, churches realized that they had no such authority.

Brethren should not seek to judge the biblical soundness of every marriage and divorce in their congregation—especially if they do not know all of the facts. They should only be concerned when it is a stumbling block for others. It is better to judge your own marriage. This even applies to parents: while there are examples of arranged marriages in the scripture, there is no command for parents to pick mates for their children, nor for children to marry whom their parents select. Provide help, if asked, but do not insist they follow

your decision. However, there are two scriptures that show that a leader in the congregation should be the "blameless, husband of one wife" (1Tim 3:2, Tit 1:6). When selecting leaders for a congregation, it is advisable to avoid a person who has a questionable divorce and remarriage record.

All of the Eternal's people are learning to be priests (1Pet 2:5-9). We all need to apply the Eternal's law in our lives. We all need to establish a relationship, to learn to pray and seek His will for our smaller decisions, so we can seek and trust Him in the big decisions. Marriages, and sometimes divorces, are the "big decisions" in our lives. Persons about to marry or divorce should consider all of the facts, study the scriptures for themselves, obtain much counsel, pray, fast, and trust the Eternal to give His answer. This writer knows of a number of people who asked for some kind of miraculous revelation to confirm their decision, and received it. Others have not so asked or received, but have been firmly convinced that they understood their decision was the will of the Eternal.

May the Eternal bless you as you seek Him in your decisions, and as you encourage others to do the same.

—Norman S. Edwards

From time to time we receive questions about whether it is acceptable to have secret sexual relationships—

will God recognize a marriage even though other people do not know about it? Most of the time, the purpose for keeping such relationships secret is because the couple is afraid of what other people (usually children or relatives) will think if they hear about the marriage. We strongly recommend against this type of marriage, as the people who were to be "protected" by the secret will usually be offended even worse when they find out about it. Also, if anyone discovers your secret sexual relationship, you will certainly not be avoiding the "appearance of evil" (1Thes 5:12, KJV). We have even heard of cases where a man believed he was married "in the eyes of God" to a woman who did not think she was married to him—these are not marriages, but adulterous affairs.

We know of a few cases where secret marriages might make sense. These usually involve a person who will lose an inheritance, pension, or some other type of

Secret Marriages and Divorces

benefit if they ever get another state marriage license. An example might be an older man who receives a small pension and an older woman who receives a larger one—but hers will be discontinued if she remarries and they both could not possibly live on his. Obviously, these are not marriage relationship problems, but problems with our legal and social systems. Any decision made must weigh the appearance of evil against the economic factors. An attempt to defraud someone or defeat the effect of a fair law by a "secret marriage" is a clear sin.

Secret divorces are usually desired by people who do not want their spouse to know they are divorcing them or who want to remarry before a state-divorce can be finalized. Both of these are mistakes. A divorce is intended to be a public statement of the end of a marriage. Without this, a remarriage is adulterous (Matt 5:31-32).



Letters & Responses

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

LRCOGs Serving Ex-Sunday-Keepers

LETTER: May 11, 1997
Dear Norm,

It was great to read in *Servants' News* about your research on the calendar. I wanted to be able to come to the conference, but funds did not allow it. I can remember talking to you on the phone about two years ago and then hanging up and praying that God would show the truth to you. It was thrilling to read the results of your research.

Then, to have the added blessing of seeing you come to an understanding on the Passover, I was ready to dance in the streets!!! Sometimes it is very difficult to be the minority opinion on these important issues.

I applaud your effort to strive for unity and perfection, and hope that now you will start to observe the things that God has shown you in your own life.

I also can't stress the importance of allowing others to have the freedom to follow their conscience. Even in our local congregation we have people observing Passover on the 14th and others on the 15th. We also have some who still follow the Hillel II calendar. This is not confusion but love for each other without condemnation and being grounded enough in our individual beliefs to not be afraid of a different conclusion.

The size of the congregation here has almost tripled in the last year, we have two hour long weekly radio broadcasts. Most of the people are not former COG, they are disgruntled ex-Sunday keepers. The Churches need to realize that the biggest

part of God's people are going to come from the fields, not other store houses that are already harvested.

Keep up the good work!

—Mark Carr, Knoxville, TN
<http://www.esper.com/jersent>

RESPONSE: Thanks for the encouraging letter. It is wonderful to see people who have studied a long time, come to believe they understand the truth on a subject, but still be tolerant of others with a different understanding. Some people believe that all of the various Sabbath-keeping groups must come to an agreement on doctrine and then they can begin preaching to others. I can prove that this will not happen in my lifetime. How? Because I cannot study every doctrinal article, book and tape that someone has suggested within my lifetime. And if I cannot study every issue, how can I either agree with or refute what a potential brother is saying? I believe that we must never quit studying, but that we will probably never all agree on everything unless the Eternal miraculously reveals all truth to all of his people.

I am glad that you mentioned helping "disgruntled ex-Sunday keepers." Many former WCG-members are now depressed. They put great efforts into a hierarchical organization that they thought had "all the truth" only to find out it did not. Was it all for nothing? No, there is a whole world full of people who have been attending hierarchical Sunday-keeping congregations that need to understand and deal with the problems of hierarchies. The problems of political control, and the emphasis on people paying and ministers doing are strong in Sunday congregations. Former WCG members can be a big help when these people leave their congregations and begin seeking truth.

We would appreciate a more detailed story sometime about your local fellowship and gospel preaching.

—NSE

No Opinions in the News, Please

LETTER: April 28, 1997
Dear Editor,

When you include News of the Churches of God in your *Servant's News*, I have noticed many times you also include a personal comment if something is not done in accordance with your personal belief. I would get more out of *Servant's News* if it was void of your agenda in that particular section. Thank you.

—a reader

RESPONSE: Thank you for your com-

ment. However, we hope you realize that all publications reflect the **personal beliefs** of the writers and publishers to one degree or another. We feel that it is better to plainly state the facts and also our opinion, rather than following the more common journalistic practice of communicating one's opinion by selectively reporting the facts.

As an abbreviated example, suppose that a Pastor Q resigns from the XYZ-COG, 120 members of his congregation plan to attend with him, 60 members plan to stay with the XYZ-COG, and 20 members are undecided. The XYZ-COG press might report like this:

Pastor Q resigned, but at least 60 of the members there are still faithfully holding on to the XYZ-COG. Numerous others are confused and will probably rejoin the XYZ-COG as soon as the confusion settles.

Whereas, Pastor Q may send out a letter that says the following.

What unity! Nearly 3/4 of our congregation decided to consider the scriptures and do what God says rather than just blindly follow the XYZ-COG!

This selecting and slanting of the facts could be applied to every point in the story. Sometimes writers do this consciously, other times they do it by accident—their opinion is simply coming out. Obviously, some publications and writers are much more objective than others. We will try to be more diligent to make sure that we separate the facts from our opinion, but we will continue to give our opinion as we try to base it on our understanding of the Bible. Also, everyone knows where we stand.

—NSE

Love, Peace, Joy and Mercy

LETTER: January 31, 1997
Dear Norm,

I have been thinking about these things for some time and this week two things have definitely moved me to put my thoughts on paper. If you publish this letter please don't use my name because I am not trying to correct any individual—just feel there is much to be considered. **Who is the enemy?**

I have friends in several of the Churches of God. We exchange ideas and encourage each other, share tapes and reading material on occasion. One thing that seems apparent in non-aligned groups is that while tolerant of all different views in their meetings, many will not accept that Global and United also seek to serve God as best they can. A comment in the

Christian Beacon really struck me as it stated a wish to "run rings around the hierarchies." Is this co-operation? Or is it revenge, strife, and vain glory?

I have been a baptized member since 1971, having spent my entire adult life in WCG until 1995. The church provided a way of life which I believe was basically correct. My children have been taught to build a relationship with God and this, I hope, will stay with them throughout their lives. Mr. Armstrong taught us much that is true while the society around us has become increasingly evil.

It seems many are now blaming Worldwide Church of God for all of their trouble. If **you** didn't study, is that someone else's fault?

Fortunately, God is waking us up to many weaknesses within ourselves and the church overall. What will we do now as the responsibility becomes ours?

Could God work through Global with the World Ahead Program? (Yes, I am aware of their position as the only true church.) Could United provide fellowship for those to whom government is not such a big issue?

Did all of the ministry fail to such a degree that these men and women should have no financial support in their old age?

Also, many readers of the "Good News" magazine are happy that it is available again. Naturally, members in their zeal to form groups, publish newsletters and greet new brethren are excited. When this settles, though, will there be **love, peace, joy** in our calling and **mercy** toward others?

One thing we must learn is that, as we were mistaken in many things before, we certainly do not know everything perfectly now.

Will we really follow Christ? Watch out for those ditches—on both sides! We should thank God more while spending less time commending ourselves. Please remember, **Satan is the enemy.**

To you at *Servants' News*, many thanks for useful, instructive, and uplifting articles. In my opinion, it is #1. May God continue to inspire you and provide for your family as well as means to publish.

Sincerely,

[Name Withheld], Texas

RESPONSE: Thank you for your letter.

Most Scriptures on judgment reveal we will be judged primarily on how we live our lives and treat our neighbors. While we believe that hierarchical government is a doctrinal error and stifles the working of the holy spirit, we have much evidence

that the Eternal has worked in hierarchies in the past and He probably will continue to do so to some degree. It is our hope that the Eternal's people will be served and the Gospel will be preached as much as possible in all congregations.

—NSE

Comments on WCG & UCG

LETTER:

November 12, 1996

More than thirty years ago, I walked away from a protestant church because I could see the difference between God's Word and what was taught by word and deed.

For several years, I read the Bible, did my own Bible studies and prayed for God to show me which of the many churches He wanted me to attend. I am not sure He ever did answer this prayer, although, I once thought He had.

Learning also that it was almost impossible for anyone to **stand firm when they are alone**. Circumstance certainly makes it hard to do when one has no support and they differ from the general concept. I sought a church home.

Eventually, because I understood the need to observe Passover. I took my list of doctrines or beliefs and measured them against the list of church doctrines; and joined the Worldwide Church of God.

I fairly soon learned that many of the members idolized Herbert W. Armstrong. To some extent, I also learned more of what God wants everyone to learn—the holy days and their meaning.

While there was some things I could not accept, there were others which I felt would not hinder my growth, so I accepted them even when **I did not believe that God was quite that picky**. Such things as the length of one's hair; being re-baptized; make-up. My attitude was "if that's what it took, I could live with it." Other things didn't really affect me—like the marriage and divorce issues. These had been decided on because of Bible verses earlier. I became stable.

In various ways, the church was good for me. I was blessed, even though I felt like I did not belong. I felt like an outsider. **I could and did regulate my lifestyle more in keeping with God's Way.** And I was content to live peaceably with other sabbath-keepers.

Then a wake-up call arrived in the form of a video.

I could not believe that anyone could repent for the entire church, especially concerning the trinity doctrine; something I thought I'd proven wrong before I joined

the WCG.

God could not be quite so fickle. Then I became more watchful of the sermon content, checking upon every scripture used. And I became convinced my current minister was including numerous lies into his sermons. Since God does not lie, this ended WCG for me.

As I am convinced one should assemble regularly (weekly) with other sabbath-keepers, I now attend with the United Church of God.

However, the fact that this church is so determined to follow the same form or pattern as the WCG, bothers me; and the never ending pitch of how wonderful or marvelously they (the ministers or elders) have done or are doing. **It's almost like brainwashing.** Repeat in one form or another, then repeat again endlessly.

Jesus said feed my sheep as often as He said go you into all the world and make disciples. **Whatever happened to feed my sheep?** Occasionally, there is a sermon one can see and appreciate in this light. But most sermons sound more like bragging than feeding. Maybe that's because we, being small in number, have had a series of different ministers. Still, I don't feel like I belong. I'm an outsider again and not appreciating it.

I'm not just checking the scripture to prove a sermon point or verify if it's been correctly quoted. I am again doing my own Bible studies and reading. This time, if anything falls by the wayside, (it's going to be the ever abundant supply of church magazine offerings); not the comprehensive type of Bible study, where all scriptures on a given topic are listed and then read all at one time to get a better understanding of the intent.) You have included several articles of this type in your *Servants' News* and such items are very valuable. I appreciate them.

I certainly believe God teaches here a little, there a bit more, precept upon precept. And **a review of basic doctrine—precepts or principles is a good way to feed God's sheep, now in their confusion.** One cannot believe at all times exactly as the church desires when the learning comes bit by bit. That's getting the cart before the horse.

Most lay-members are not lacking in mental capacity—they just have not been introduced to the source materials the ministry has, and have been conditioned to accept what is said verbatim.

—M.M.

RESPONSE: We agree with nearly all of this letter. People were encouraged to "read their Bible for themselves" when

they first began attending. Most of the early doctrines were easily provable, so people developed trust for the church organization. Later, too many people simply got used to trusting the organization, and (with the organization's encouragement) stopped insisting that they understand every doctrine from the Bible before beginning to practice it.

You are also right in that too few members knew about all of the various Bible study tools. Members who did their own research were told that any conclusions they reached that were contrary to church doctrine were certainly wrong because God would only reveal new truth to the Ministry—only the high-ranking ministry.

Someday, it would be interesting to ask our Father how many times throughout history truth has been rejected because an "unordained" person was the one that first learned it.

—NSE

Reply to "The Error of Racism"

LETTER:

May 19, 1997

In response to William Washington's letter, page 36 of Mar/Apr 1997 *Servants' News*:

Hey, am I missing something? Why should simply recognising that the Lost Tribes of Israel migrated to Western Europe and fulfilled some of the greatest prophecies recorded in scripture make a person a racist! Somebody please enlighten me.

—Dale Heslin, Canberra, Australia
dale@pcug.org.au

RESPONSE: Unfortunately, there are people who believe that the USA and Western Europe are Israel, **and** also believe that non-Israelites or non-whites are second-class people. However, just because some British-Israel believers are racists, it does not mean that all such believers are racists. It may well be that most of the British-Israelite believers who William Washington has dealt with have been racists. When a person has suffered at the hand of a person with a certain belief, it is hard for that person to accept that belief.

To use a different example, how much trouble would you have teaching a young Arab boy who's parents were killed by Jews to accept Yeshua (Jesus)? While it is true that Yeshua was a loving Jew, it is hard to convince a person who has suffered greatly to accept the people whom he has suffered under. These situations often require years of recovery or miraculous healing from the Eternal—just as a serious physical sickness or injury.

—NSE

UCG Minister Fired in Miami & West Palm Beach, Florida

LETTER:

January 24, 1997

Dear Norman,

I really enjoy *Servants' News*. It brings to our attention many questions about our beliefs that we had accepted in the past without proof. Asking good questions brings us closer to the truth. Keep up the good work.

Speaking of truth, I don't know how much true news on what has happened in South Florida has circulated among God's family, but I'd like to give my input about the reality of UCG government. I am a former member of UCG, West Palm Beach (WPB) congregation.

There are currently two mindsets in UCG: those who think a total rebuild of Worldwide is what is needed (pray, pay, stay and obey); and those who are asking questions, looking for deeper understanding of God's will. They do not co-exist in peace.

A little history first. The WPB congregation came out of Worldwide months before the forming of United. All of local WCG ministry in South Florida embraced the apostasy, except Ron Smith, who was fired early in 1995 for standing for the truth. He was asked by those who left WCG to become the leader of the group. He has taught us for the last two years and was hired as a minister in United in the summer of 1995.

A small group of "WCG mindset people" wanted to get rid of Ron, starting approximately a year ago. They brought false accusations against Ron and reported their accusations directly to HQ council of elders (personal friends).

I unknowingly added fuel to the fire, when, God forbid, I placed non-approved literature on the information table (*Servants' News*, *Giving and Sharing*, and *The Way*—on a week when the "regional pastor" was in town.)

HQ, through the "regional pastor" said they would resolve the problems with the members making accusations, but it was allowed to fester as the congregation split down the middle. Finally, rumor had it that something would happen around the time of the feast (96).

In November, Ron's "superior" (the regional pastor's own term for himself) came to WPB and stated that Ron was cleared of all charges brought by the few members. (During the entire time, no one came to talk to the "mere members"—again the Superior Regional Pastor's

term—about how effective Ron's leadership has been.)

One week later, David Hulme himself came, without approval of the council, without following the constitution, and fired Ron within 7 minutes of his arrival, being very vague as to the reason, and having Ron sign a paper saying he wouldn't sue the corporation!

Both the Miami and West Palm Beach congregations were outraged at this action, and wrote dozens of letters, pouring their hearts out to the council asking why they had never asked for the congregation's input and why he was fired, and even if they had the right to enter into the affairs of our congregation. No one received a response except for flippant form letters thanking them for writing. Several "HQ approved" ministers came over the following weeks to meet with the congregations and answer questions, but no answers came.

Finally, on January 11th, the "show-down at the OK Coral" (Miami Marriott) occurred. One of the council members, Richard Pinelli, came to answer questions. (Note: WPB congregation was not even invited to the meeting, but found out through the grapevine.) Frustrated members asked direct questions which he managed to avoid, dance around, bob and weave like a veteran politician. After an hour and a half of this, the only thing established was that they are hiding the real reason he was fired, standing behind "legal reasons" for why they can't disclose (if it was legitimate, why worry about a lawyer?).

A new "HQ selected" minister will be sent. The group said "we will not accept another minister." His response was along the line that we have that choice. In essence, blowing off both congregations.

What I see is that **the whole issue centers on control**. HQ has a big business (of men's making) to run, and they must control all dollars, and the people where those dollars come from. The only "consensus" that is allowed is the will of those in control on the council.

It is obvious from the way the situation was handled that the elite group of men in the council know what is best for the mere laity—whose opinions could not possibly have any use to the corporation. I know a corporate attitude when I see one because I work for a secular one (not that I'm saying this one isn't secular.)

There is no room in UCG Corporation for thinking people, unless you are thinking along lines that help the big business. **How could a group of men think they are**

doing God's will when acting like the organizations of the world? WCG modeled the Roman church, which modeled the Roman Empire, which is the Beast. Its government was the image of the Beast.

UCG hasn't improved very much from that form. It has been modeling a socialist police state in handling the South Florida situation.

In I Samuel 8, God told Israel that if they modeled the world's governmental system, then that system would yield similar results to what we see in society (v 11-18). I no longer wonder about what I see coming from UCG headquarters, as it can only act like what it is set up to do.

This organization would have done well to look to the United States government as the founding fathers originally set it up. They saw from history that human nature cannot be trusted, and so set out to **minimize the power of a central government**, leaving states autonomous except in only a few matters.

I am not bitter over the situation, I feel sorry for those who think they are doing God's work by modeling Satan's system of government. Also, for those who are not seeking to move where God is leading His people, choosing to believe the headquarters "truth".

As of January 18th, 30 of God's people have decided to begin a LRCOG in the South Florida area. We hope to follow God's lead, not men's.

Sincerely,

—Robert Sipsky, Stuart, Florida

RESPONSE: We are sad to hear this, but we know that it happens. Most of the people you named probably believe they are doing "the best thing to preserve the unity of the brethren." If God is working through their church organization, then supporting that organization must be the right thing to do? Right? **Not necessarily!** This is why the Eternal gave us law and not just an organization chart. If something cannot be accomplished righteously, then it is not His purpose! We hope people in organizations and living-room fellowships will learn this lesson.

—NSE

Jewish Influence, Tithing

LETTER:
Norm E.

May 21, 1997

A few comments on recent articles on tithing in SN:

I don't have the article with me as I type, but I recall you lean quite a bit on

Jewish interpretation. For me, what the Jews taught and believed matters less and less as time rocks along.

RESPONSE: I believe we should study Jewish interpretation because in some cases it is the background against which the New Testament was written. It makes little sense to view the New Testament with a Catholic, Protestant, or 20th century Church of God background, because nobody in the first century had heard of that yet. However, I believe the Jewish interpretation is similar to many other kinds of interpretation—it is a mixture of truth and error. There were devout people who were seeking the Eternal and had revelations from him when Yeshua (Jesus) was just a baby (Luke 2:25-38). On the other hand, there were corrupt Jews who were interested in manipulating the laws for their own benefit and to reduce their need to follow the Eternal—you give fine examples below.

LETTER: The WCG is fond of saying that Gentile converts were not required to keep the Sabbath. That may have been what the Jews said. But what did God say (in Isaiah about the Gentile who would take his foot off the Sabbath)?

RESPONSE: The Jews have a means whereby a person could completely convert and become a Jew: he was required to be circumcised and required to keep the law as all other Jews. They also recognized various lesser states for Gentiles who still "feared God" but were not converted—they did not believe that the Sabbath was necessary for them. However, it is obvious from both the New Testament and first century history that the early congregations kept the Sabbath (Acts 13:42; Heb 4:9; 1Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28). The only reason people say otherwise is simply because they want to keep Sunday.

LETTER: Didn't the Jews determine that it was okay to give away the leaven in one's house before the Days of Unleavened Bread, then buy it back afterwards?

Wasn't it the Jews who said it was permissible to neglect one's parents as long as one made a gift to the sanctuary (the matter of Korban, or whatever).

I'm sure there are many examples of this stiff-necked people who, nonetheless, bent over backwards to find ways of avoiding the intended effect of God's laws.

RESPONSE: The Jews said both of these things—they both violate the spirit if not the letter of the law. Of interest, the Jews had largely stopped the first practice you mentioned—probably partially because of the influence of our Messiah

and his followers. The Mishna records that a person should take care of their parents even if they needed to use items dedicated to the temple. The first practice, however, is still common among Jews today. Yes, Matthew 23 and other chapters contain many examples of bad teaching on the part of the corrupt Jewish teachers of that day. There is a good indication that this was the most evil generation of Jewish leaders ever (Luke 11:50-51; Matt 23:31-39).

LETTER: Now, concerning the idea that wage earners weren't required to tithe... You have written some articles on the Law that went into some detail explaining the wisdom of God. Please write an article explaining why wage earners would be exempt from paying tithes. Also, please explain why only farmers, in effect, were required to tithe.

RESPONSE: We explain that to some degree in our article, *How Do We Give to The Eternal?*, which I am sending to you. But the answer is fairly simple and makes good economic sense. Originally, the Eternal gave everyone land—something that would produce wealth with very little work. If the Eternal blessed them with the right weather, a person who owned land could buy a slave or pay someone else to work his land, and be able to live without having to work at all on a regular basis. The Eternal levied his tax (if we can use that term) on people with this wealth. If a person lost his land and had to sell his hourly labor for a wage, he no longer had to pay these taxes—a great contrast to what exists in most nations today: the wage-earners pay taxes, and those with great revenue-producing assets avoid taxes through various loop-holes.

Another advantage of this "single-point of taxation" was that it did not hinder the economic efficiencies of specialization. We can ignore wage-earners for a moment and, suppose that 100 people lived in a community and they all owned land. They could each farm their own land, build their own houses, make their own clothes, make their own tools, etc. The net tithe from the land would be 1/10 of all the produce. But now, suppose that half of the people liked farming and farmed both their own land and the land of one other person (for a fee). The half who were no longer farming would specialize in making tools, clothes, houses, etc. The farmers now buy clothes, tools, and additions to their houses from the tradesmen. The tradesmen buy food from the farmers and tools, clothes, etc. from each other. Under the Eternal's system, the only increase in tithe demanded is the increase that will likely occur due

to the increased farming efficiency of full-time farmers with good tools. But under man's taxations system, all the food is taxed, plus all of the incomes of the tradesmen as they produce items of value for each other.

We can bring this example home to our generation: Supposing I am a farmer and I figure my time spent on my farm is worth about \$10 per hour after all taxes paid. I need to fix my barn. It will take me twenty hours to do the job, or \$200 of my time. My neighbor specializes in fixing barns and has much better tools—he could do the job in 10 hours. He needs to charge \$10 per hour for himself, and \$5 per hour additional to help pay for his tools and education. Under the Eternal's system, it would make sense for me to pay him \$150 to fix my barn in 10 hours and for me to keep farming. Under this world's taxation systems, my friend may have to pay taxes at both the personal and corporate level, and will have to satisfy numerous government-imposed bureaucratic requirements. He must charge me \$30 per hour in order to take home \$10 per hour and the total job will cost me \$300. It is cheaper for me if I do the job myself. Obviously these figures would not be the same for everyone. If another person earned \$20 per hour or if it would take him 40 hours to fix the barn himself, then it would make sense for him to hire my neighbor to do the work in spite of the taxes. The lower the tax rate, the more people will be able to hire others. The greater the tax rate, the less sense it makes to use outside labor.

In our modern day world, there are many things that would cost a person hundreds of times as much to do themselves (e.g. assemble their own house, car or television), so there is a great deal of specialization in spite of taxes. The fact that there is so much specialization today is a testimony to the benefit of specialization. (Specialization also has some negative impact on society—we do not advocate a society where everyone only knows one narrow job, but we cannot discuss all of those issues here.) We wonder how much more wealthy our nations could be if specialization were not so heavily taxed.

LETTER: What does Malachi mean when he writes that the "whole nation"

was guilty of robbing God? Is this an accurate translation?

RESPONSE: Mal 3:8 says that they robbed the Eternal in "tithes and offerings." The majority of the nation was probably robbing Him of tithes—most had at least a garden. Everyone (the whole nation) was required to give offerings based on how the Eternal had blessed them (Deut 16:16-17). This same practice of offerings continued in the New Testament (2Cor 9:6-7). The word for nation here is Goyee—which usually refers to nations other than Israel (it is often translated "heathen" or "Gentiles"). Even the Gentiles who fear the Eternal are responsible for giving offerings. Some very specific things are mentioned together with the general giving of offerings: verse 10 mentions bringing "tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house." It was only the Levites' tithe to the priests that would be put into the temple ("My house").

LETTER: I must admit the issue of tithing is far from settled in my mind. I have long wondered what effect our high taxes should have on the amount we tithe. What exactly is the tithe for today (I think you have discussed this)? Not to mention 2nd and 3rd tithe, which I have always felt were difficult to justify.

RESPONSE: Please read *How Do We Give to the Eternal?*!

—NSE

Take Positive Action To Endure

LETTER: May 2, 1997
Dear Norm,

Thank you for printing my letter "Freedom To Think and Study" in the last *Servants' News*. It's a real blessing for us to have this outlet to share our thoughts and studies and feed one another as God would have us do.

I continue to share with the brethren the **importance of a prayer life**, with all the chaos around us and which will get worse as the tribulation draws near, God promises to give us His peace to endure if we will stay with Him in prayer (Phil 4:6-7).

Jesus said this is what it would take to endure through all that's coming (Lk 21:34-36; Lk 18:1-8).

Before I left CGI over six months ago, God gave me the opportunity to

share these things in sermonettes here in New Orleans. And, I tried to share these points at every opportunity God gives me.

The last time I spoke there was on the Feast of Trumpets last year. I spoke about Revelation 2 and 3 and how these were trumpet blasts to God's people. Five of the seven were warned to repent, the other two were told basically to hold fast not to let go.

I believe these messages are for the problems in the church today—because they apply. In my 22 years in the church, I have been in this Laodicean attitude many times—but thank God, He pulled me out of it, and I pray and hope not to drift into what God says is a very dangerous attitude again.

As I shared Matthew 25, where God says so many of His people will be asleep at His return, I asked this question, "In the light of Matthew 25 and other places that talk about so many of God's people in trouble at Christ's return—**should we be reminding one another of these warning messages in Rev 2 and 3?**"

Then I said, if your answer is yes, then you know why I'm speaking about it today.

If those that Matthew 25 talks about would have given heed to these messages, they would not be where they are when Christ returns!

Nothing is able to stop the least child of God who goes before God's Throne Room to do this. God puts it under the blood of Christ and once again we are spotless in His sight! I know of no other positive action than this, it's the best shot in the arm we can receive.

But the reason those messages get by so many, is because we don't think it applies to us; but the **safest ground we can stand on is to do this prayer and examination before God. The more we do this, the safer ground we will be on.**

When Jesus said He stands at the door and knocks (that is talking to those in the church), **He wants a close personal relationship with us**—but He will not force us—we have to reach out and open the door. When I started to center on these points in my relationship with God, that's when

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smaller feast sites, it is very difficult for Sabbath-keeping singles to meet each other. We know of two individuals who are trying to help this situation. The purpose of these services is to make new friends. Some relationships may grow into marriages, but please realize that neither the people who run these services, nor *Servants' News*, nor our Father in heaven are promising you that you will meet "the person of your dreams" from these services.

Most of the feedback about these services has been positive, though some people participating in them have received unwanted religious literature. While we have not heard of any problems worse than the above, we are aware that sexually immoral people or con-artists will also sometimes use this kind of service. We highly recommend that people who use these services do not go out alone with or send any money to people they have met only through these services. If you do start a long-distance relationship with someone that seems to be leading to marriage, we highly recommend that one (or both) of you move so you can live in the same geographical area before you decide to get married. This gives you a chance to establish several common friends who know both of you and can give you counsel. The biggest problem with pen-pal relationships is that there may be huge areas of life that the couple is ignoring, but they are blinded by their desire for each other **and they have no common friends who can see the problems and point them out.**

Please do not be fearful of using these services, but pray for guidance and wisdom from the Eternal. Part of spiritual maturity is learning to deal with "real people" situations such as these. This service is free, though donations are accepted:

Janet McMillen
RT 3, Box 129-A
Morgantown, WV 26505
E-mail: kljcmc@aol.com

The following service provides free introductory information, but charges \$24.00 per year for its main publication:

Sabbath Singles Connection
3229 Larkin Road
Biggs, California 95917

UCG-AIA Conference Results

The United Church of God—An International Association held its annual conference this March 8-10 in Louisville, Kentucky. All of the paid and unpaid elders were invited to attend the conference at their own expense. The purpose of the meeting was to vote on business of the church, hear messages from leaders and fellowship. Over 360 voting members were present, some connected via telephone hookup.

The results of the votes were:

YES	NO	ISSUE
333	9	Technical constitution amendments.
321	37	Measure to extend the provisional amendment process.
310	55	Strategic plan passed.
307	59	Operations plan passed.
208	156	Budget for 1997-98 passed.
194	165	Budget resolution passed.
190	170	Decision to move office to Cincinnati, Ohio.
154	210	Constitution amendment to Section 9.1 to prohibit officers from serving on the council.
125	241	Constitution amendment to Section 8.2 to impose council term limits.
122	240	"Sharing" resolution (affecting local-church involvement).

The first seven items were introduced from the home office. The first four passed by a large majority as expected by Home office. However, the budget votes were a much closer contest—27 changed minds could have sent them in the other direction. The last three items were introduced by elders using the UCG constitutional process to put items to a vote. While none of these items passed, the votes appeared close enough to make the amendment process "worth a try" in the future.

The seventh item, the decision to move to Cincinnati, went against the home office's desires. The budget contained only \$50,000 for the move—not near enough for a long distance move. Steve Andrews, UCG-AIA treasurer, prepared a study attempting to show the vote might be invalid because the technical definition of a member "present" and the fact that some voting members were hooked up via tele-

phone. News of this study reached the Internet and the rumor mill and was seen by many as a political attempt to change the consensus of the elders. Whether or not the point had technical merit, the UCG-AIA council of elders (12-member) passed this resolution:

"Whereas questions regarding the balloting procedures, conduct, and results thereof at the General Conference of Elders meeting in Louisville, KY have been raised; now therefore it is hereby resolved that the Council of Elders confirms the validity of the said procedures, conduct, and results of all ballots of the 1997 annual meeting of the General Conference of Elders of the United Church of God, an International Association as reported by the Secretary of the GCE on CC:Mail [the church's E-mail network] on 3/12/97 a copy of which is attached and made a part of this resolution."

Many "Church of God" leaders have been confident in the past that the Eternal would lead "through one man". It takes some time to get used to the idea that he can also lead through many. In both cases, we still must compare decisions made with the Scriptures and what the holy spirit says to us.

IBLC: New People, New Courses

The International Bible Learning Center (IBLC) produces college-level Bible courses for Sabbatharians. It was founded in June of 1996 by Dr. John Merritt, John Robinson, John-Barry Skidmore, and Dale Stogner. Dr. Donald Ward, former president of Ambassador University, was hired to manage it, having his first-year salary (\$48,000) paid as a one-time pledge by three individuals.

Lacking any such guarantee for the second year, Dr. Ward intends to depart from IBLC on June 30 in order to "earn a living for my wife and me." However, as it becomes possible he intends to continue to be involved in the production and distribution of Bible Courses, possibly starting a new organization tentatively called the "Center for Biblical Studies."

Present IBLC students need not be concerned as **all** of the courses made this first year will still be offered by IBLC (and by any new organization

Continued on page 29

Feast of Tabernacles 1997 Updates

More Housing Available for Burr Oak Feast

The Feast of Tabernacles hosted by *Servants' News*, October 16-23, at the **Burr Oak Resort in the Southeast corner of Ohio** now has more housing available. The meetings will be held at Burr Oak Resort and Conference Center, one of the many nice resorts in the Ohio State Park system. In previous issues we mentioned that additional housing in Athens might be difficult due to a weekend university football game. The problem has been solved. We checked in the other direction and found two establishments in McConnellsville that were eager to help us. One is very luxurious; the other is nice, as well as very affordable.

If you are even a little interested

in the Burr Oak Feast Site, please write or call *Servants' News* for a Feast brochure (517-543-5544).

Last issue, we mentioned the possibility of a less expensive northeastern feast site. We do not believe that it will be necessary because we have helped some people make arrangements to share, and because we now have less expensive housing. A very few may need some kind of assistance. If you would like to find someone to share with or need special help of some kind, please call us at 517-543-5544 or write to the address on the back.

See the previous issue of *Servants' News* for some additional feast sites.

Western Site

There was very little interest in a

site near Las Vegas, Nevada. We do not intend to pursue it any further.

Sis-Q Meadows, Oregon Site

Omega Praise Fellowship is planning to hold a Feast of Tabernacles again at Sis-Q Meadows in Cave Junction, Oregon on October 16-23. This promises to be another lively feast with plenty of praise music, messages and fellowship. Brochures will be mailed out in June. To receive one, call 541-855-7220 (Beattie's) or 541-855-7403 (Salmon's). Or, write to Feast of Tabernacles, PO Box 1742, Rogue River, OR 97537.

Comprehensive Listing

We hope to have a comprehensive listing of the Festival sites of many groups in the next *Servants' News*. ☐

"Church News" from page 28

that Ward might start). New IBLC courses are still being produced, and new instructors are still being added.

The latest IBLC course is **Marriage and the Family: Practical Training for Good Relationships**, taught by Dr. David Antion. Some items being taught in this marriage course: preparation for marriage including date and mate selection, assertive training techniques, stages of marriage, resolving marital conflicts, role of good health, qualities in satisfactory marriages, creative ideas for teaching children, ways to discipline, recommended readings, and much more.

Other courses now offered by IBLC:

The Book of Revelation:	Don Ward
World Religions:	Gary Antion
Life and Teachings of Paul, Part 1:	Ronald Dart
The Book of Daniel:	Donald Ward
Introduction to the Old Testament:	Mark Kaplan
Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ:	Donald Ward
Principles of Prophecy:	Donald Ward
Introduction to Paul:	Ronald Dart

Prophecy Seminars:

Church Eras:	Donald Ward
Place of Safety:	Donald Ward
Seventy-Weeks Prophecy:	Donald Ward

For Information Contact:

International Bible Learning Center
7 Berean Way
Hawkins, Texas 75765-0851
(903) 636-4155; Fax: (903) 636-4098
E-mail: IBLC@aol.com
web site: at www.iblc.org

"Letters" from page 27

my life really began to change, and the **peace** that passes understanding is there.

That is why I share the importance of getting your foundation down in Jesus Christ, and when all the organizations come tumbling down, you won't fall with them, but **will be secure in your relationship with Jesus Christ in your prayer life.**

With the present situations of God's people being scattered all over and so many confused brethren, this direction would help the wounded hearts and give the direction needed. Nothing can stop the least child of God who wants to grab hold of the hand of Jesus Christ and spend more time in the Throne Room with our Father.

I can see by some of the articles in *Servants' News*, how we are learning from all the things that have been happening in the churches the past few years.

Thank you once again for giving the opportunity for an outlet to share God's word; it is truly an honor to share God's word. May God continue to bless your efforts.

Your brother in Christ,

—Tommy Willis, Louisiana

RESPONSE: Our Father in heaven is like a good parent: He wants to be close to His children and He wants them to do right. Far too many Christians try to fulfill only one of His desires—they either become saturated with study and an effort to "do everything right" or they emphasize the relationship and nearly ignore Biblical teaching. He wants us to learn both and it is best for us if we do!

—NSE

Partial Literature List

All items are free upon request. All back issues of *Servants' News* are available as well as a **Complete Literature List**.

Our goal is to bring worthwhile information to as many as want it at the lowest practical cost. The loose-leaf format used by *Servants' News* and most of the literature below is inexpensive and makes copying easy (most literature is public domain). You might wish to hold the pages together with a 3-ring binder, staples, brads or a paper clip.

Items Appearing For the First Time:

Mature Literature

Burr Oak Feast Brochure for 1997, 8 pages.

Church Government? by Wesley B. Webster, Harry Curley and J. H. Allen, 36 page booklet. Former WCG/GCG minister from Guyana, a long-time member, and a voice from the past show danger of religious hierarchy.

Confirming Conversion: Can You Prove Christianity is True? by Alan Ruth, 18 pages. Helpful information for people influenced by Darrell Conder's teachings.

In Transition Dec-96 & Jan-97 Issues. This "Church of God" newspaper has ended, will send copies while supply lasts.

Remnant of Israel, An Analysis of G. G. Rupert and His Inde-

pendent Church of God (Seventh Day) Movement 1915-1929 by Richard Nickels, 36 pages. Teaching similar to WCG.

Basic Literature

Christian Bible Study Guide by F. Paul Haney, 4 pages. An overview of Bible study and 77 points to consider.

God, I've Got a Problem edited by Jerry Laws, 54 pages. Bible help for the depressed, tempted, guilty, worried, lonely, afraid, bored, disappointed, bitter, doubtful, proud and dying.

Hebrew Holy Day Calendar. (Business card size.)

International Bible Learning Center Catalog, 2 pages. Best source of Sabbatarian college-type Bible courses on video.

Items Featured This Issue (always available):

Mature Literature

The Apple of God's Eye by Jim Rector, 13 pages. God's love for us is far greater than we imagine, and we often take it for granted.

A Call to Arms by Jim Rector, 16 pages. Lessons for today from Revelation 2-3 including the oppressive doctrine of the Nicolaitans and the doctrine of Balaam.

Basic Bible Study Tools by Richard Nickels. 36 pages. An excellent summary of available Bible study aids and how to use them. Samples of many study aids included.

Christ's Birth—Hanukkah—and the New Testament Believer by Eric Paschall, 5 pages. Our Messiah was conceived near Hanukkah and born near Tabernacles.

Does the New Covenant Do Away with the Letter of the Law? by Eric V. Snow. 42 pages—revised Jan. 1996. A "must read" for those who feel it does.

Just What Does the New Covenant Do? by Joseph Chunko, 18 pages. Explanation of the difference between the law, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

Utilising the Members in the Local Congregations and In the Work: A System to Ensure Fair Opportunity for All by Craig White & others. 26 pages. Valuable ideas for working within a church organization.

Where Is the True Church Today? by Jack M. Lane, 18 pages. How can there be so many similar groups, yet one true church? What is required of members? Read and see.

Highly Recommended Items Listed Every Issue:

Mature Literature

Assembling on the Sabbath by Norman S. Edwards, 16 pages. An exposition of the scriptures regarding our need to fellowship on the Sabbath and how to do it.

Biblical Calendar Basics by Norman S. Edwards, 10 pages. Introduction to the issues about the Biblical and Hebrew calendars (beginning of months, years, postponements etc.)

Did Christ Reorganize the Church? by Herbert W. Armstrong in 1939, 8 pages. Very different than his later approach: Christ never set up a hierarchical government.

The Heart of the Matter by Jim Rector, 31 pages. Our calling is to spiritual growth, not just attendance, socializing, politeness or legalism.

How Do We Give to the Eternal? by Richard Tafoya & Norman Edwards, 36 pages. Biblical study of giving and tithing.

How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans? by Norman S. Edwards, 34 pages. How the KJV translators altered Scriptures about government to please King

James and an analysis of what the Bible says about how we should govern in today's congregations.

The Worldwide Church of God Splits: Their Triumphs and Troubles by Alan Ruth, 56 pages. Facts and analysis of the last 20 years of "Church of God" history.

Study Resources and Information

The Christian Beacon Sample 24-page issue of free quarterly newsletter of encouraging articles for Sabbatarians.

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

The Journal: News of the Churches of God edited by Dixon Cartwright. One free sample issue. Best single source of news about Sabbath-keeping groups. 16 pages.

Servants' News & Norman Edwards Statement of Receipts and Expenses, 2 pages. (Always sent to contributors.)

Servants' News Complete Literature List, 12 pages.