

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 4, No. 6

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

August 1998

Feast of Trumpets The First Trumpet Blast

by W. L. Schneider

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ (1Cor15:57).

Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:32).

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with **the trumpet of God**. And the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words (1Thes 4:16-18).

...I am God and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning... (Isa 46:9-10).

How caring is our God who shows us the triumphant outcome of his plan long before it comes to pass. Victory is assured! We see the end from the

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Day of Atonement How to Overcome Sin

by Toli Bohonik

Do you remember when you were baptized? Do you remember when you accepted Jesus as your personal savior and all of your sins were forgiven, all of your sins were washed away?

I do.

How about where you were baptized, do you remember the place? For some it was in a river, for others it was a swimming pool, and for still others it may have been a simple baptismal tank stored at a friends home.

I remember very well.

After thirty years the details are still fresh in my mind. I was baptized in an indoor swimming pool. The water was cold and smelled of chlorine. I was the only person baptized that afternoon. But what I remember best are my emotions. It was a very emotional experience. There was anticipation, excitement, and there was genuine joy.

Afterward, as I stood by the pool dripping wet and shivering (not from the cold water but from the excitement), I remember thinking, "Now I have been given salvation... and my salvation is certain". I was truly happy!

I also remember a unique and won-

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Feast of Tabernacles Don't Appear Empty

by Pam Dewey and Norman Edwards

It is the common custom in the Sabbatarian churches originally affiliated with the Worldwide Church of God (which observe the annual Holy Days) to take up an offering during each of the Holy Day seasons. Just before the offering is taken up during a church service, the following passage is usually read:

Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty: Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee (Deut 16:16-17, KJV).

The phrase "they shall not appear before the LORD empty" is rendered in the NIV as "empty-handed". The clear implication is that one should "bring a gift" to these gatherings "before the Lord".

But what kind of "gift"? It is usually money. We see nothing wrong with

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The Third Issue of *Shelter In the Word*

is included with this issue of *Servants' News*. We will continue to include it with *Servants' News* for several more issues. However, subscriptions to just *Shelter in the Word*, are available to anyone who would like them. Please see our back cover for the address to write or number to call.

Also In This Issue:

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Trucker's Bible Study

Oak Grove, Mo., Part 5



The Truckers' Bible Study is conducted weekly at the Texaco truck stop on I-70 in Oak Grove, Missouri. Arlo Gieselman, a member of the Church of God 7th day started the study. He is often assisted by Lenny Cacchio.

August 23, 1998: A man and wife came on their way to Daytona, Florida. They heard about our study in a pamphlet that lists various truck stop ministries. Neither Arlo nor I knew about this, and it is possible that one of our previous customers is trying to help us out. Who knows? It listed the study as starting at 8:30 instead of 9:00—but we still got together with these people.

The man has a sister involved in what most of us would consider to be a cult, and one that has taken her for all her money and is controlling her life, and he asked for some help in dealing with it. We let that request pass and went on to doctrinal things. He brought us back to his request for help, and we got off on a tangent again.

Two ears are better than one mouth.

We finally were able to address his request for help, but we had to be beat over the head to get there. I hope we were able to get him to see that there are two questions involved with his concerns. Satan is the god of this world and has the whole world deceived. Just because his sister is deceived it doesn't mean that God is going to condemn her. God will give everyone a chance to learn his ways, and most of that will happen after Satan has been bound.

While that should be comforting, the woman is enslaved now and doesn't know it. In fact she is probably miserable. As Christians we should be building bridges rather than walls. Don't argue doctrine, which she wants to do all the time, but make yourself available to her and let her know you love her. Be a light and lights don't make noise. Jesus said he waits at the door and knocks, and whoever wants to can open that door. Just keep knocking and be patient. There are also some good materials out at various Bible bookstores on how to deal with this particular cult. This cult is particularly a problem because the Bible is not their source of doctrine, so one cannot refer to the Bible as common ground.

There are so many things to learn from these studies, and it is so important to have God's presence with us and Satan's hand restrained. Please pray that we can have wisdom in dealing with whatever comes down the interstate.

September 20, 1998: After three weeks of nobody showing up, we had three truckers. We tried a new strategy today. Rather than relying on the sign and PA announcement, truckers were approached personally, offered a copy of John's Gospel, and personally invited. Had this not been done, we would not have had anyone today, either. The reality is that there are more people potentially interested in what we are doing, but simply do not know that we are upstairs.

Too many subjects were touched upon to summarize here. But some general perceptions might prove interesting:

1. Mentioning the Sabbath is often not a shock to these people. Again we had a participant who knows which day is the Sabbath and even how it was changed.

2. Instinctively people know that Christianity is a way of life. People want to talk about personal problems and concerns, knowing that Christians should be able to provide help and answers. This reminds me of the Zig Ziglar line that I do believe is correct: People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

3. You never know when you will meet someone at a life crossroads—someone who is looking for answers. A gift of a Bible, a few audio tapes, and a chance to talk is sometimes the best tool of evangelism. It does not take much money, but it does take God's spirit. This is preaching the Gospel the old fashioned way, one disciple at a time.

—Lenny Cacchio, e-mail: lcacchio@unicom.net

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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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NOTICE: The people listed above do not necessarily endorse every article in this newsletter.

Servants' News accepts articles for publication. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope for items that you want returned. We are happy to print corrections for any significant errors. Address articles, letters and subscription or literature requests to:

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Subscription and literature requests **may** be sent to the following addresses. Contributions received at these locations will be used for duplicating and mailing. Please make checks out to the name shown with the address:

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Most scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Circulation: 2400

Servants' News is published monthly except for combined January/February, March/April and September/October issues. Subscriptions are free to people who request the publication and are genuinely interested in it. *Servants' News* is published by Norman S. Edwards, 202 Pearl St, Charlotte, Michigan 48813. He reserves the right to refuse subscriptions for any reason. Periodical postage pending at Charlotte, Michigan. Postmaster: send address changes to *Servants' News*, PO Box 220, Charlotte, Michigan 48813-0220.



News from

Local Congregations



Steven Collins to Australia

Steven Collins, internationally renowned for his superb book "Lost Ten Tribes of Israel—Found!", will be visiting New Zealand and Australia next year. He will be presenting a series of lectures on the migrations of the 'lost' tribes of Israel from the Middle East to their modern locations. Steven's style is to put together a highly complex subject into a very readable form for the average person. We highly recommend his book as one of the best ever published on the subject. His historical background tracing the tribes' migrations is fascinating.

At this stage, he will be speaking in 2 or 3 locations in Australia and probably about 2 in New Zealand. We are also hoping for a further guest speaker who will be giving talks on what prophecy has to say about the future of the lost tribes. We will announce that later, if it can be secured. In Australia, he will definitely be presenting his talks in Melbourne over a weekend before moving up the coast to other cities.

Should you wish to be kept up-to-date with the organisation of the trip and would be interested in assisting in some way, please contact us:

GPO Box 864, Sydney 2001

e-mail: craig@triode.net.au

—Craig White and the Organising Committee (we will need all the assistance we can get).

Kentucky Feast Canceled

Due to the lack of interest and speakers, the Feast at Kenlake State Park (near Paducah, Kentucky) has been canceled. —Henry Anderson

Groups Combine for Services

On the Sabbath of August 15th, UCG congregations from Bloomington, IL, Terre Haute and Lafayette, IN and the Biblical Church of God, an independent fellowship in Danville, IL, met for a combined service and potluck meal at the Danville Area Community College. After

a sermonette by Tom Damour, pastor of the Bloomington, Canton, and Springfield, IL congregations, Mike Mayfield and Joan Osborn performed an inspiring rendition of "People Need the Lord."

Following a few brief announcements by Vic Kubik, pastor of the Terre Haute and Lafayette churches and a UCG council member, fellow council member Dennis Luker gave an encouraging sermon on seven keys to building and maintaining a positive Christian attitude. He repeatedly emphasized the importance of enduring trials and tests while keeping our minds focused on what God has called us to be. Mr. Luker also reminded us that UCG is not the only church of God and that we need to recognize and reach out to others who are part of the body of Christ.

As the day progressed, a number of people from the various congregations enjoyed renewing old ties, one man remarking that he had met someone he had not seen in over twenty years. There were many positive comments about the meeting with the hope expressed that we could do it again. This was an excellent example of what God's people can do when they put church politics aside.

—Larry Evans

UCGIA Rules of Association

The United Church of God An International Association released its long-promised *Rules of Association*. The following excerpts from those rules show that a local congregation essentially has the choice of being completely governed by the UCGIA (to the point that the local pastor could be replaced against the local group's desire) or not associating with the UCGIA at all. The document contains no provision for a group that would like to work with the UCGIA, but not be completely controlled by them.

Rule 1-100 Membership: A member of the association shall be any duly recognized entity operating under the name United Church of God (or its approved equivalent) agreeing to abide by these Rules of Association and the Constitution

of the UCGIA. Congregations within the United States (US) must also agree to abide by the Bylaws of UCGIA. Each entity outside the US will be constituted as a National Council (or some equivalent), or Local Congregation. Each member must be accepted by the Council of Elders and must be willing to be fully a part of the association. Congregations in the US which are pastored by an elder recognized by UCGIA are a part of the United Church of God, an International Association and operate under the direction of the duly appointed administration and the Council of Elders. Any association between the UCGIA and an entity that is not pastored by an elder recognized by UCGIA and not desiring full membership must be approved by the General Conference of Elders (Article 4.1 of the Constitution).

Rule 1-140 Qualifications for Membership: Each member [church group] must be willing to adhere to the following standards. Each member of the association must: 1) Support the consensus of the General Conference with respect to the fundamental beliefs of the UCG as enunciated in the Constitution. 2) Support the consensus of the General Conference and the Council with respect to the goals and purposes of the UCG. 3) Support the consensus of the General Conference and the Council with respect to matters of governance.

Rule 2-130 Ministerial Transfers: All elders employed by UCGIA are subject to transfer and/or changes in job description.... The administration does reserve the right to replace a pastor who is not employed by UCGIA if there is a compelling need to do so.

COG (Hulme) in Phoenix

Sabbath Sept 5, 1998 found Brian Orchard of the Church of God (Hulme) addressing a group of about 20 adults in Phoenix, AZ. Brethren who decide to affiliate with the new group can look forward to hooking up by phone to listen to the organization's weekly Southern Calif.

Sabbath services, and being visited monthly by a live speaker, beginning with Steven Andrews on the Day of Atonement.

Mr. Orchard spoke about the connection between character and leadership, and said that the pursuit of consensus tends to lead to mediocrity. Making the point that "human nature being what it is, if we all seek to agree on common ground—it'll be a lower common ground. Leadership, on the other hand, is about taking people to places they hadn't dared to go." Encouraging those assembled to strive to successfully fulfill our callings to become kings and priests, Mr. Orchard described our recent past as containing incredibly good learning opportunities that we should make the most of.

He identified the universal access to the flood of information available to people today as having a weakening effect on systems of government and the authoritative administration of the affairs of state. He envisioned that as people withhold the granting of authority to their leaders, a tendency toward anarchy develops, which could coincide with a strong European combine taking to itself the very authority that individuals had resisted granting.

Mr. Orchard decried the gap between leaders and followers in the COG, repeatedly stressing "it's not about superiority and inferiority." He also lamented the familiar striving or "upward climbing"—even calling the various WCG splits "the masters of division and confusion". He said if God were to shine a spotlight on these groups now, the world would not benefit from what they saw.

In spite of those frank admissions, Mr. Orchard also said that "we need to work within the proper framework today in order to rule in the World Tomorrow." He maintains that there is a valid parallel between the Levitical Priesthood of ancient Israel (where we have the nation as a whole described as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" in Ex. 19:6) and the need for the Body of Christ today to have a subset of its members available to focus on spiritual matters, full time.

Unfortunately, his expounding of I Pet 2:9 (where the Church is likewise referred to as "a royal priesthood, a holy nation") was limited to "getting the job of gospel proclamation done"—presumably by way of a centrally directed media program, since his organization aspires to have one. Apparently Mr. Orchard does not yet

understand that the scriptures, as they should be translated, do not require these conclusions; and it was ironic that he appeared to not recognize that this line of reasoning actually causes the very same division he so eloquently lamented earlier.

He reminded us that the core of Christ's commandment to His people was to go into all the world to make disciples. He said that we were called for the purpose of getting the true, centuries-suppressed gospel out to a world that desperately needs to hear it, but is running out of time to hear it. He described the uphill battle to accomplish this as having been made all the more difficult by the fact that the world had been powerfully presented with "another" emotionally-based, fraudulent and deficient gospel which causes people to turn against God.

At the conclusion of the meeting there was much upbeat fellowship and all were invited to one individual's home for refreshments.

—Jon D. Pike, Phoenix, AZ

New congregations of the COG (Hulme) are forming in many places all over the country and world. Most of them are small: 10-30. Some seem genuinely committed to Hulme's concept of preaching the Gospel. There have been other cases where some of the local UCG-IA leaders were apparently not getting along, so one contacted Hulme and asked him to send someone to start a congregation. Without taking a lot of time, it would be very difficult for the COG (Hulme) to determine if they are starting a new congregation that is committed to their way, or simply being used as an excuse for division whose real root is a local squabble. —NSE

German Reunification?

We received the following news item from Paul Kieffer in Bonn, Germany: The United Church of God an International Association in Germany and the Global Church of God in Germany will jointly publish an article in German in their respective German-language publications in the month of October.

We have also heard reports of other joint UCG-IA and GCG activities in Germany. In countries where there are few Sabbath keepers, it only makes sense not to be further divided into similar corporate groups. We hope that the leaders in the various group headquarters will stop

"protecting their turf" and encourage more cooperation between groups.—NSE

Ambassador University Sold

The Ambassador University campus is in the final phase of being sold. La Roche College of Pittsburgh, PA has entered into an agreement to purchase, that includes three months to determine if the campus will be suitable to their needs. La Roche, a coeducational Roman Catholic college presently has only one other campus, in Pittsburgh. "The WCG is very pleased to know that the prospective buyer is an educational institution with a philosophical commitment to comparable values and vision for which we have used the property," said WCG spokesman Bernie Schnippert. The potential sale includes everything on the campus, including furniture, fixtures, equipment and library books and magazines.

WCG—Holy Days of Convenience

The WCG began to keep their promise in their doctrinal statement to observe the annual Holy Days on the nearest convenient weekend. We heard reports from Detroit, Michigan; Olympia, Washington; Big Sandy, Texas; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Sarasota, Florida. Nearly all of them scheduled Trumpets services on Saturday, September 19 and Atonement services on Saturday September 26. Big Sandy had Trumpets services on Sunday night, September 20. Some also had services on the Hebrew-calendar Holy Days (Sept 21 & 30). The reasons given for such a change were "we can worship God at any time" and "some people might need to work on the Hebrew-calendar dates."

It appears that many of the WCG members were not happy with the new dates. A vote for the service date was taken in Olympia and about 85% wanted to continue on the Biblically-assigned date. Offerings were taken up at all services. More than one participant speculated that this is the main reason that the WCG continues the Holy Day services.

This writer believes that the Eternal will honor the keeping of Holy Days on different dates due to different understandings of the biblical calendar. Will He similarly honor the WCG Holy Days which make **no effort** to correspond to biblical instructions? —NSE ☐

Book Review: Tortured for Christ

by Richard Wurmbrand, 1998 reprint of 1967 original. Published by Living Sacrifice Book Company, PO Box 2273, Bartlesville, OK 74005-2273.

Genuine Christianity is demonstrated under the fires of persecution, rather than picky theological debates. In our lax and wealthy western world, we often forget that professing Christians are being martyred today in countries such as China, Egypt, and Sudan. Like the sleeping disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, who were unaware of the Savior's agony, we are often oblivious to the fact that more Christians have been martyred in the Twentieth Century than all other centuries combined. It is estimated that in 1997 alone, some 160,000 professing Christians lost their lives for their faith. Perhaps few of them understood the Sabbath and other doctrines as well as I believe I do. Yet, I admire the strong faith and conviction of those who were faithful unto death. Would we stand up for our faith as they did?

Richard Wurmbrand, a Romanian Jew who converted to Christianity, suffered persecution under both the Nazis and Communists. Wurmbrand was imprisoned twice for spreading his faith, for a total of more than thirteen years, undergoing unbelievable torture and near starvation. And yet, when he was ransomed from Romania by Norwegians, Wurmbrand expressed love for his Communist tormentors. He hates the sin of totalitarian governments, but loves the people, especially the Russians, whom he believes have a deep need for the Truth of the Gospel. Today, Wurmbrand heads the international work of The Voice of the Martyrs, and is called "the voice of the underground church." VOM, active in forty countries and thirty languages, provides Bibles, literature and radio broadcasts in restricted nations where Christians are persecuted; relief to families of Christian martyrs; seeks to win to Christ those who are opposed to the Gospel; and informs the world about atrocities committed against Christians and about the courage and faith of the persecuted.

The book, *Tortured for Christ*, other literature, and their free newsletter, is available from The Voice of the Martyrs, PO Box 443, Bartlesville, OK 74005. Telephone: (800) 747-0085. Internet: www.persecution.com.

Tortured for Christ, written shortly after Wurmbrand was released from

Romanian prison, is one of the most significant books that I have ever read. He vividly tells his experiences in the underground church. Wurmbrand knows first-hand that "A man really believes not what he recites in his creed, but only the things he is ready to die for." He recounts many true stories of others who willingly died for their faith. By the grace of the Almighty, Wurmbrand lived to tell about it. It was even a joy to be in prison, to be beaten, and to suffer. This was not masochism, but a life of true faith in the Creator.

In repressive countries, such as China, there are "official" registered Churches. However, their leaders are picked by the government, their teachings are under constant government scrutiny, and unless the leaders inform the government of activities of the members, the leaders are replaced. Thus, the underground church forms around those who refuse to be ruled by the State. One of the worst "crimes" is teaching youth about God and the Bible. If caught, believing parents are sent to prison, where they are severely and repeatedly beaten, and their children are removed from them and given wholly to atheistic education. If a husband is sent to jail for his faith, his wife and family often starve, because it is illegal to give any aid to families of jailed believers. Many western people refuse to believe that such atrocities exist in today's "modern" world. I believe Wurmbrand because he was there.

Even in the official state churches, Wurmbrand believes, there is some real spiritual life, despite many treacherous leaders. "I have the impression," Wurmbrand writes, "that in many churches of the West the situation is similar. The congregations are faithful sometimes not because of, but in spite of, their top leaders." This matches my own experience among Sabbatarian churches.

Theologians in the West, Wurmbrand notes, argue over trifles. The story is given than in 1493, when the troops of Mahomet II surrounded Constantinople to decide whether the Balkans would be under Christian or Mohammedan dominion for centuries, a local church council in the besieged city discussed the following "problems": "What color were the eyes of the virgin Mary? What gender do the angels have? If a fly falls into sancti-

fied water, is the fly sanctified or the water defiled?" This sounds ridiculous, but no more so than some of the theological drivel being discussed in Sabbatarian circles today. Wurmbrand nails us when he notes, "The menace of the persecutors and the sufferings of the Underground Church are scarcely ever mentioned. There are endless discussions about theological matters, about rituals, about nonessentials."

Wurmbrand reports that when the Russians occupied Romania, two armed Russian soldiers entered a church with their guns in their hands. They said, "We don't believe in your faith. Those who do not abandon it immediately will be shot at once! Those who abandon your faith, move to the right!" Some moved to the right, and were then ordered to leave the church and go home. They fled for their lives. When the Russians were alone with the remaining Christians, they embraced them and confessed, "We, too, are Christians, but we wished to have fellowship only with those who consider the truth worth dying for." Some people play Church. A separating test would be helpful to us today. It appears that the underground church is ahead of its time. We can learn from persecuted believers. Are we remembering our persecuted brethren? Are we willing to be tortured for Christ?

Two inspiring videos produced by VOM are available for 14-day loan from The Bible Sabbath Association (\$5 loan each). Faith Under Fire, describes Christians facing persecution today. Leaping China's Great Wall describes house churches in China. How well will our faith hold under fire?

—Richard C. Nickels
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Servants' News has spent little time investigating the book and video's in this review—nor have we checked into the many other groups who claim to help suffering Christians. However, we are convinced many historical accounts of suffering Christians are true and believe some are certainly suffering today. We at *Servants' News* barely have enough time to do an adequate job of the ministry that the Eternal has given us, so we have no plans to investigate or assist organizations that help suffering Christians. But if some of our readers feel that their life is most miserable or that there is little they can do to meaningfully serve others, we recommend that you look into some of these organizations for a new perspective! —NSE

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.

Is Christ God of Old Testament?

LETTER: September 16, 1998:

Dear Mr. Edwards,
At one time I thought I learned that Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament. If that is true, I would like to know where it is located. I cannot seem to find it. Others in our Sabbath Bible study would like to know, too. Thank you for your help.

We really like Servants' news.
—Homer Frazier, Oregon
e-mail: hbfrazier@harborside.com

RESPONSE: Thank you for your letter. There are many questions on this topic at this time. We hope to have an article on it in the next few months. —NSE

Deeper Understanding After Leaving

LETTER: September 2, 1998

Dear Servants' News,
Thank you for the research paper on government. Please send me a copy of your paper on tithing.

I've been a member of the Body of Christ for 30 years (Dec. 1968) now, and feel like I've recaptured the first love! I've been doing much research and study on my own and have learned more than the WCG was either unable or unwilling to teach on many subjects. Maybe I should say I've gone into more depth. My mother let me read her copy of the tithing paper, and I just have to have my own copy to study and mark! Enclosed is a small gift.
—Jan Grounds, Ohio

RESPONSE: We receive many letters and phone calls expressing similar feelings!
—NSE

Fellowship is Needed

LETTER: Aug 26, 1998

Dear Norman,
It has been awhile since we last wrote you. Thank you for sending us the *Servants'*

News. We need to be truly informed.

We still attend the UCG; we are frustrated with it. We need the fellowship of the brethren. Other brethren feel the same as we do—no place else to go except to God and the Bible. We need to build more unity in the body of Christ, not disunity.

Enclosed is a donation to help spread the news.

—RS, Illinois

RESPONSE: We agree with the need for unity in Christ. It will come from individuals looking to Him, not from human plans.

—NSE

Interested in Splits and Doctrine

LETTER: May 26, 1998

Dear Norm,
I really enjoy the Servants' News. I'm still amazed though at people who ask why are there so many spin-offs from the WCG. Isn't it obvious? It's because the majority of people who make up these groups and organizations are by nature contentious and have a spirit that is not from God. From my 20 plus years in a few of the COG's and attending many feasts I've seen personally how the "brethren" love talking splits and arguing over doctrine. Serious discussion and study of scripture take a back seat to the more titillating subjects. If you don't believe me just look at the "feeding frenzy" that's followed the UCG since its inception. In fact, if the *Servants' News* didn't carry news of splits and infighting, I doubt you'd have anywhere near the readership you presently have.

—D.C., New York

RESPONSE: We agree that there are some people who seem to be interested only in groups and their politics—usually trying to convince themselves that they are in the "right group". This is probably a mistake. On the other hand, there is a need for people to know whom they should fellowship with, and whom they should not. The New Testament contains dozens of references to individual and "church" problems—some talking about "who" is fellowshiping with "whom". Sometimes, there is a need to write or talk about groups and splits.

—NSE

Is WCG Really God's True Church?

LETTER: June 21, 1998

Dear Norman,
Thank you and all your staff for their hard work in producing *Servants' News*.

On Page 6 of the May 1998 edition, you have listed various subjects you would

like material on.

While I do not want to be a writer, I would like to share some observations with you as I would appreciate your input on some thoughts about, "What is the church?"

We were always taught by Herbert Armstrong that Worldwide was God's one true church. Christ gave a clear statement of intent in Matt 16:18: "And upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." So we can be absolutely sure and confident that Christ is keeping His word.

Christ also told us in Mark 3:25: "and if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand." That is also a true statement.

Sadly Worldwide Church of God as we knew it, has become exactly that, divided many times over against itself. The division has not come from outside, but within the church. The conclusion if we are to believe Christ, is that it cannot stand (ie Strong's "abide" or "continue").

So we have to ask the question is it really God's true church?

I myself, and I know many others have come to see that God's Church is a spiritual organism, not a physical organization. Hence it is spiritual and cannot be seen.

I have come to the conclusion that none of the man-made organizations constitute the true church that Christ promised He would build. But I do believe many if not all of these groups or churches, may have spirit-led Christians within them. Those individuals constitute part of God's true church, not the organization they may be a part of.

Romans 8:14-16 shows that if a person has been given God's Spirit, they are a child of God. That is the defining factor.

I ask the question could God the Father and Jesus Christ also be working with people who are a part of his true Spiritual Church but who have never had any contact with the "church of God", as we have known it?

I'm beginning to see this could be possible, although we were always taught it wasn't.

I don't think we should limit God, because in the light of what has happened to Worldwide, we should consider that God will decide with who and what He builds His church, not men. Thank God for that.

—Mike Hurst, England

RESPONSE: Most people in the WCG believed it was the "one true church" because it 1) had the "right doctrines", 2) was "preaching the Gospel to the world", and 3) was "led by God's apostle, Herbert Armstrong". However, all of these points prove that the WCG was **not** what Christ was talking about in Matt 16:18. Why? The WCG defined doctrine very narrowly. For example, if a member believed that Pentecost should

be kept on a day different than the one taught by the organization, that member could not openly practice or talk about his Biblical conviction—he would have been put out as a heretic. Unfortunately, the WCG itself changed doctrine during its limited existence, and we certainly cannot find any church with doctrine that would be acceptable to the WCG during the 1900 years before the WCG. Even the Apostle Paul would have been ejected as a minister from the WCG for publicly teaching that members were not required to tithe or contribute to his ministry (1Cor 9:11-12; 2Cor 11:9; 1Th 2:9; 2Th 3:8). Similarly, we cannot find Sabbatarian churches throughout history that preached the Gospel in the way that the WCG did, nor can we find a continuous line of groups each of which was led by “an apostle”.

In short, if the above 3 claims are the proof that the WCG was “God’s Church”, then Matthew 16:18 is not true, because their have not been churches throughout history that matched these WCG “proofs”.

Indeed, we find that throughout most of history, most people were lucky to hear the Bible in their own language—few owned a Bible. Only in the last two centuries have the common people had access to original language study materials. The signs of true believers were not doctrine, but love for others and the fruits of the spirit (John 13:34-35; Gal 5:22-23). Scattered throughout history, people can be found who followed these verses. Christ certainly knows exactly which ones were part of his body.

Most ex-WCG members are unaware that there are about 200,000 members of the Church of God, Seventh day. There are over ten million Seventh Day Adventists. Some of these people have studied the Bible and rejected non-biblical doctrines of their organization, but they do not want to stop attending with their friends. (Does that sound familiar?) Also, we have no way of knowing how many independent Bible readers there are—who have learned that the Church is a spiritual body, who do not belong to a church organization—yet hold doctrines very similar to ours. We have no sure way to know what percentage of people in any group—including our own—have the Holy Spirit.

Christ has built and is running His Church. We can be content with knowing that.

—NSE

Where Do We Keep The Feast?

LETTER:
Greetings,

August 27, 1998:

In my 20 yrs of Keeping the FOT I have noticed that some brethren have had to

borrow money to keep the Feast. This has always troubled me because it just didn't seem right to have to borrow money when times are bad.

God's love and mercy for us would cover our inability to attend. Many of us have always been taught that we had to keep the FOT where God put His Name, and that is true. However there is a provision in the Bible for those among the brethren who can't go the FOT to keep it at home.

Deut 12:21 (NIV): “If the place where the LORD your God chooses to put his Name is too far away from you, you may slaughter animals from the herds and flocks the LORD has given you, as I have commanded you, and in **your own towns** you may eat as much of them as you want.”

By all means if we do have the capacity to attend please let us do so. The point here is to remove a guilt and or burden that has been placed on the brethren from sincere yet mistaken understanding.

Sincerely,

—Robert Pinto, Newman, California

RESPONSE: Thank you for shedding new light on this verse for me. The entire chapter of Deuteronomy 12 is about not offering sacrifice or other worship to false gods. Since people with other beliefs sacrifice animals to their gods. The Eternal very clearly states that he does not want His people involved in any of these false sacrifices, but only where the Eternal designates (v 13-14). However, they were allowed simply to kill meat for personal consumption (v 15).

Now, verses 17-18 indicate that things that were specially set apart (tithes, firstlings, vowed items, freewill offerings, heave offerings) must be eaten “before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God chooses”. This was to make sure that worship of the Eternal was carried out at the right place, not just in any place where people may have been offering sacrifice to false gods.

As far as I can tell, verses 20-28 provide an exception condition to the verses above. “When the LORD your God enlarges your border...” and “If the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you...” are the conditions of exception. No matter how one looks at it, the borders have been enlarged: Jews, Israelites and the Church are scattered throughout the world. The second condition, “if the way be too far from **you**” is a matter of economics. If a person can afford their own private jet, they are only a day's travel from almost anywhere in the world. But believers with little money may find a 50-mile journey “too far”. Somewhere in the middle, are most modern-day believers who can probably afford to go as far as they can drive in one or two days. But there are certainly some who,

due to loss of a job or other factors, cannot travel to Feasts at all.

Verse 21 certainly appears to allow people who cannot afford to go to Feasts to consume tithes and possibly firstlings “within your gates as much as your heart desires”. However, there are “exceptions to the exception”: “But take your consecrated things and whatever you have vowed to give, and go to the place the LORD will choose” (v 26, NIV). Things specifically dedicated or vowed to the Eternal had to be taken to the “place the LORD will choose”—a person ought not to vow or dedicate things unless he is sure he can take them to that place to pay the vow (Eccl 5:5). But it appears that tithe for the festival could certainly be consumed at home if the place “is too far from you”. I will admit that this passage is difficult—it seems to say nearly the same thing three times in slightly different ways.

If this understanding is correct, does it mean we can simply stop saving for the Feasts and that we need not plan to go? If our spiritual goal is “to do as little as possible”, then the answer may be, “Yes!” We can probably always find an excuse not to go to the Feast. But, what kind of Servant of Jesus do we want to be? Are we trying to do as little as possible or as much as possible? “So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do’ (Luke 17:9). If our physical circumstances prevent us from keeping the Feasts, our Father in Heaven knows. However, if we are simply more interested in our job, school, or simply “appearing normal” than we are in the Feast, our Father also knows. The apostle Paul said: “I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem...” (Acts 18:21). —NSE

Blow Shofar on the Feasts

LETTER:

September 9, 1998

Hi All,

This FOT in Gatlinburg will be our third. My Question is: “Shouldn't the Shofar be blown at the beginning of the Feast and at the times of gathering?” I am wondering based on the scriptures in:

Num 10:8-10: And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations. And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the LORD your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trum-

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pets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God.

Num 29:1: And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you.

Inquiring minds want to know. ☺

A humble servant,

—Don Berkey, Pennsylvania

RESPONSE: Thank you for your good question. I believe the answer is in the first few words of the scripture that you quote. It is the Sons of Aaron who were commanded to blow the trumpets. This was a commandment given to the Aaronic Priesthood—along with sacrifices and other rituals. The Aaronic Priesthood has been replaced by the Melchizedek Priesthood, with Christ as High Priest (Heb 7), and all of the brethren are the priests (1Pet 2:5,9). I do not believe that the command for the Aaronic Priests to blow trumpets on the Feast days is in any more force than the command for them to offer sacrifices.

However, Christ is the head of the Church (Eph 5:23) now, and He has promised that He will do things that we ask in His name. If He shows you that you should blow trumpets on the Feast days, then I think you should do it. I would not recommend that you blow trumpets in the presence of those who do not want to hear trumpets, unless Christ specifically commands you to do that. When a person believes he has discovered a truth in the Bible, there is a great tendency to try to get others to accept the idea, even before he begins to practice it. I suppose that if enough people believe something, the person who discovered it will feel more comfortable doing it. But, this is the opposite of what the Bible teaches. If we are convicted of a truth from the Bible, we should first put it into practice in our own lives, and then begin to teach it to others. If you feel trumpets should be blown on the Feast days, you might want to do it in your own home for a while and see if you and your family learn from it.

One final note on the “Feast of Trumpets”. The first article of our August 1997 issue was entitled “The Feast of Loudness”. There is no Hebrew word for “trumpet” in the two verses that identify the “Feast of Trumpets” (Lev 23:24; Num 29:1). The word means “loud sound” and is translated “shout” in many places. We believe the message of trumpets is a warning, a time to wake up. A “Feast of Trumpets” service is certainly a time for loud music and rousing messages, it is not a time to be lulled to sleep.

—NSE

LETTER:

September 3, 1998:

I really appreciated the letters about feast observance in the last issue of *SN*. For the past few years my family has stayed home for the feast. I have been unable to find any basis in the New Testament for the manner of observance of the feast that HWA instituted. None of the first century Christians are recorded to have kept it in a remote location. My opinion is the Feast observance as it evolved in WCG was in reality a mechanism for controlling the membership. It was the WCG's major marketing tool. I remember watching the video showing the passing of the baton from one church era to the next. Not Biblical, but very powerful propaganda.

RESPONSE: We agree that some big church organizations used the Feast partly as a marketing tool to control members. There is no scripture that dogmatically states that the Feasts were kept outside of Jerusalem by the New Testament Church, but there are many strong hints that they were. First, realize that the Jews dispersed abroad did observe the Feasts locally, without sacrifices or temple rituals. Therefore, if the early New Testament believers stopped observing the Feasts at all, they would be an exception to the Jewish community with which they were intermingled for a number of years. In the scripture, we get the “continued as usual” feeling about the Holy Days, as well as the Sabbath. In Acts 27:9, Paul uses **only** the term “fast”—the Day of Atonement—to indicate that it was a dangerous time of year to sail from Crete to Rome. This is probably 20 to 30 years after the death of Christ. If the Church was no longer fasting on the Day of Atonement, why would Luke use this term, especially when writing to a Gentile (Theophilus) about events that took place far from Jerusalem? Also, Paul tells the Corinthians they are “unleavened” in connection with Passover (1Cor 5:7) and that he must “keep this coming feast in Jerusalem” (Acts 18:21). If the only place where Feasts were kept was Jerusalem, why not just say “keep this coming feast”? The Hebrew and Roman calendars were not any better synchronized with each other back then than they are today. Just as the average “Christian” today has no idea when these feasts are, neither would the Gentile New Testament believers unless they were keeping the Feasts regularly.

LETTER: I was struck with one of those rare “Moments of Clarity” while sitting in “services” at my first UCG-AIA feast after the breakup. It was a Tuesday, not a High Day. Everyone was dressed in their Sabbath best listening to the sermon. Then it hit me: “We think we are in a church service.” HWA had convinced us that we needed to attend at

least one “solemn assembly” each day during the fall festival. He had commanded this assembly, **not** God. We were all there observing a **man-ordained** service! As I have said many times since then, “It ain't in the Book!”

RESPONSE: You are right and some brethren today realize it. I have attended Feasts that have had free days, scheduled tours, seminars, and other things—they did not have a service at all on those days. We are not bound to follow HWA's decisions that he made about the Feast.

LETTER: There are two High Days during the Feast of Tabernacles and usually a weekly Sabbath. Only God can designate a Sabbath Day. But through our observance of eight days during the Feast we treated each day as a Commanded Assembly—Sabbath. I know the children at the services thought they were at a Church service. But a service commanded by man is **not** a church service. We have created a great deal of confusion by our observances on days **not** commanded by God!

I am not saying that there is anything wrong with gathering on the non-High Days during the feast for a bible study. However it should be made clear that they are not Commanded Assemblies. Self-deception is the most difficult type of deception to overcome.

RESPONSE: This is all true. There is a lot that we can learn at the Feast. Praising the Eternal and studying should always be a part of it, but we should not deceive ourselves and say there is a commanded assembly each day.

LETTER: All of the corporate “Churches” have held onto WCG's best marketing tool and revenue generator—The Feast as observed by the old WCG! From a financial stand point they must, in order to appeal to their audience. HWA used Levitical models to demand first, second and third tithes out of his people. At Christ's death God the Father made it plain to all that the Levitical priesthood was dissolved by ripping the veil to the Holy of Holies from top to bottom. Men have been trying to repair that torn veil ever since! Always for their own benefit. They will answer to God for this! Levitical models are not fit for Christians.

RESPONSE: You make an interesting point. “New Testament ministers” often try to tie themselves to Old Testament Priests in order to exert authority and to collect tithes. I know of people who had thousands of dollars of leftover “second tithe” at the Feast and were told that they “had to turn it all in to headquarters”. The church organizations tell people that they could not spend it for non-festival purposes, yet the organization would usually take this “excess second tithe” and place it in their own general fund—use it for

whatever they wanted to. There was little scriptural example involved in any of this.

You bring up an interesting method of analyzing the Old Testament Law. For years Sabbatarian Christians have disputed exactly how much we should strive to obey (not that law obedience saves us, but how much is really good for us?). Much of the law for how to get along with our neighbor still applies, but very few Sabbatarians offer sacrifices or participate in the Old Testament cleanliness rituals. The Eternal certainly brought an end to the Levitical priesthood in 70 A.D. with the destruction of the temple. It may be possible that all of the various rituals for which a Levitical priest was needed were also ended at that time. The Sabbath, Holy Days, 10 commandments, and many other laws can all be kept without a Levitical priest. The temple has been replaced by the believers—we can assemble wherever there are other believers. This is an interesting concept that we may explore in a future article.

LETTER: I am grateful to God for showing me the error of my former observance of the feast. I would appreciate some input from SN and your readers, of ways the feast could be kept in the local area. Thanks.

—Steve Burleson, Birmingham, Alabama

RESPONSE: Some of the fruit of the WCG Feast observance was very good. People made friends with other believers in a way that they could not during most of the year. Many people met the person whom they would eventually marry at the Feast. In these times when congregations are very small, it makes even more sense to try to get together with a larger group of people at the Feast. This can be done on a regional basis, however, not with just a few sites across the country. For example, Darrell West and others who attend with us regularly near Lansing, Michigan did not want to go to Gatlinburg, Tennessee this year, so they are sponsoring a Feast in Michigan. Over 70 people, mostly from Michigan, plan to attend there. I see no need to fly or drive half-way across the country to attend the Feast, nor do I see any reason to stay at expensive accommodations. But it seems that the fruit of getting together in somewhat larger groups for the Feast has been good. Nevertheless, if you believe the Holy Spirit is leading you to observe the Feast in your local area where only “two or three are gathered together”, I cannot find a scripture to refute you. —NSE

Who are the Nicolaitans?

LETTER: September 10, 1998
Dear Norm,

I would like to bring an interesting theory to your attention. Turn to 3 John 9-11 and now turn to Rev 2:6. I'm not sure where you

stand on the doctrine of Nicolaitans, but I believe Diotrefes practiced the doctrine of Nicolaitans and those practices were a part of WCG and I believe they are still being practiced by the WCG clones.

If truly Nicolaitans means “lord over” then truly it is a practice of all hierarchy churches. Jesus says, we should hate their deeds.

In Rev 2:15 the Pergamos church held to the doctrine of Nicolaitans and Jesus told them He hates the practice of the doctrine of Nicolaitans and to repent of their deeds. I just wonder, in the previous verse, if the Pergamos church is into idolatry and sexual immorality because they practice the Nicolaitans doctrine. Do you think Jesus is telling us to avoid hierarchical churches because it seems to me hierarchical churches “lord over” the brethren? He commends the church at Ephesus for resisting the Nicolaitans doctrine which I believe was started by Diotrefes.

This brings to mind what has just taken place in Big Sandy with Dave Havar.

Sincerely,

—Will Blair, Ohio

RESPONSE: Most Bible dictionaries that I read say the Nicolaitans were a sect, possibly led by someone named Nicolas. However, there is never any historical evidence cited for this, and the Bible does not give any definition for the doctrines of the Nicolaitans. Since the book of Revelation is a revealing by Christ, since people are blessed for reading the book (1:3), and since everyone is told to listen to every message to every church, I believe that we must be able to figure out what the doctrine of the Nicolaitans are from the name. The name means “conquering of the people” or “destruction of the people” as one dictionary had it. The second half of the word, “laitan”, is the same root that we get our word “laity” from. The most fitting explanation I can find is that the doctrines of the Nicolaitans are those of some people (“clergy”) who rule over the “laity”. Indeed, most Bibles do not contain the words “clergy” and “laity” at all, unless you count “Nicolaitan.”

I understand why you tie 3Jn 9-11 into this. Diotrefes clearly did love the preeminence over others, and cast out those who disagreed with him. I cannot say for sure whether Diotrefes was the first “Nicolaitans”, or if he was part of what Revelation was talking about or not. But we can see many good examples of people being cast out of a congregation in the Bible that involved the whole congregation (Matt 18:17; 1Cor 5:4; etc.). Even in the case of 3 John that you quoted, the Apostle John does not take it upon himself to disfellowship Diotrefes by letter, but says that if he comes, he will call to mind his evil deeds.

Diotrefes was undoubtedly a “smooth talker” who had convinced many local brethren that he was righteous. John would have to spell out all of his problems to the congregation to convince them that it was Diotrefes who should be cast out.

The Bible encourages us to fellowship with other brethren, and to leave those where the doctrines are so bad that we cannot accomplish much. One congregation of a hierarchical group may have wonderful local leaders who really serve their people and encourage them to use their gifts. On the other hand, a congregation of a “democratic church” may be run by a “local dictator” of a pastor. The Bible does not give us rules for “finding a church organization”, but commands us to have a personal relationship with Christ, to follow his direction in our lives, and to be effective Christians. Some of the first century members were slaves; some were free. Some were rich; some were poor. Some were highly educated; some were not.

Today, some of us may serve best by remaining in hierarchical groups and helping others to see more truth. Others may need to leave them to serve in some other way. We cannot tell you the Eternal’s will for your life. The Eternal knew what He was doing when He called each one of us. It is up to us to seek His will and do it. —NSE

What Does “Watch” Mean?

LETTER: September 2, 1998
Dear Norman,

Years ago (20+) I used to listen to the leaders of the WCG on radio and TV, as well as in church congregations quote from Matthew 24:42, “Watch...!” and then ask rhetorically, “Watch what?” and then answer their own rhetorical question, thunderously, “Watch world events!”

It wasn't until years later that I noticed that world events wasn't what Christ was telling us to watch. Rather, it was our own spiritual condition and that of our fellow brethren that we were to be watching (v 43-51 and all of chapter 25). I made a study at one point of all the places we are exhorted to watch by Christ or Paul, and that is the context every time.

We need to be aware of local and world events only to gain wisdom through the spirit of what this present world is like and, with common sense and prudence, to see danger coming and flee, if necessary, as it is written in the proverbs. Until the erection of the third temple, the prophesying of the two witnesses, and the abomination that makes desolate, our own mortality is more imminent than the Second Coming.

Although I am in substantial agreement

with your editorial position on most areas, what makes SN most valuable, in my opinion, is allowing me to read and meditate on the state of God's people beyond my local church assembly, as I don't travel much. I can't say it's always a very heartening view, as so many of us are divisive, confused doctrinally, and lukewarm (and I don't entirely exclude myself). It is, however, a vital component of "watch!"

Thanks for providing this service.

—Glen Fleming, Tennessee

RESPONSE: Thanks! We agree with you. There are five Greek words translated "watch" in the New Testament and none of them specifically means "to watch world events". When we look at the verses where all of those words are used, none of them specifically tells us to watch world events. But we also agree that the overall wisdom of the Bible is that we should look where we are going and avoid future evil if possible. If we are short of time, however, we are better off to watch ourselves rather than world events—we will be judged for what we do; not what the world does. —NSE

Accuracy of Luke's Gospel

LETTER:

August 31, 1998

I would like to share with you some of my personal opinions concerning the gospel accounts, especially Luke. It might change altogether the way you previously looked at the gospel's account. Please continue!

It is generally thought the gospel according to Luke is the most reliable chronological account, given the fact that much of the content is shared with Matthew and Mark. It is also generally agreed Mark was one of Luke's major sources. Almost all Mark is included in Luke but it has been rewritten in Luke's more developed literary style. "The beloved physician" (Col. 4:14) also includes much of Jesus' teaching which is in Matthew but not in Mark, and it is generally assumed this came from a common source or collection of sources, rather than one of the gospels being dependent on the other.

The date of composition depends on the date assigned to Mark and whether the "fellow worker" (Phm.24) was writing before or after the fall of Jerusalem which Jesus had prophesied. As Acts finishes before Paul's death and has no interest in Jerusalem's fall, Luke was probably written before AD 70.

I have found major chronological inconsistencies in the gospel. This is based upon careful study and examination.

RESPONSE: Before considering these historical questions it is important to realize several facts about the Gospels:

1) All of the Gospel accounts are only a summary of what the writers believed to be important. Jesus' ministry lasted several years. A diligent reader can read all four Gospel accounts in one day. When the Son of God was on earth, everything He did was righteous and important. But we only have four summaries of His actions and teachings. Even though the Eternal inspired these writings, He allowed each writer to tell the story as he understood it. Writing was a slow and expensive process. These writers were focusing on what was necessary to understand the truth of Christ's life and teaching, not on writing a historical account that would cover every possible detail.

2) When the gospels were written, there were certainly many oral traditions about Jesus in existence at the time of their writings. To the extent that these oral traditions were accurate, the Gospel writers may have treated these subjects sparsely—because people already understood them. However, in areas where false stories were circulating, the Gospel writers may have written more extensively to "clear up" the errors. Today, we have lost all of those oral traditions, and are left to wonder why the Gospel writers give great detail on some seemingly less important areas, and give very little information on some very important areas.

3) There was no printed or electronic media in the first century. Christ's teachings were not printed in the local paper, tape recorded by synagogue attendants, or broadcast on the national news. As He traveled to different places, He had to repeat many of His teachings. Some of His teachings came in the form of object lessons—a certain person did a certain thing, and Christ responded with a certain miracle or teaching. While it would be beyond human capability to cause a paralyzed man to be brought to you when it was time to teach a certain lesson, it is easy for the Father in heaven to do. The scripture indicates that some people were born with the very purpose of being healed by Christ (John 9:3). Even though much of the recorded teaching was to the apostles, He had to repeat things to them because they did not understand it the first time. This fact should help us understand why very similar incidents and teachings seem to happen at different times and places in the Gospels. If a Gospel writer describes one such incident well, why should he need to describe other similar incidents?

LETTER: Consider!

(1) There are instances in which Luke omits parts of Jesus' ministry, whether intentional or unintentional. E.g., Jesus' changing water into wine (Jn. 2:1-11) and John the Baptist's death (9:7).

RESPONSE: Luke had to omit most of

Jesus' ministry! There was too much to record in such a short book. After the resurrection, we can ask him why he did not include these stories.

LETTER: (2) Luke decides to disperse throughout his gospel portions of Jesus' teachings that would otherwise be intact. See 6: 20-49; 11: 2-4; 12: 22-31, 33-34.

RESPONSE: These are foundational teachings that Christ probably repeated often. These teachings make sense as a whole, but they also fit nicely into the context where Luke presents them. There is no real need for Luke to present them twice.

LETTER: (3) Luke deliberately shows chronological inconsistency. Compare 4:23 with v. 31.

RESPONSE: I do not see any inconsistency here. Luke 4:14-15 says that Jesus returned to Galilee and "taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all." Galilee is a region in Northern Israel, but these verses do not say exactly where He was teaching. Verse 16 shows that He went to Nazareth, and verse 23 mentions that he been to Capernaum before Nazareth. Since Capernaum is in Galilee, it makes sense that that must be one of the places referred to by verses 14-15. Verse 29 says that the people "thrust Him [Jesus] out of the city." It should be no surprise that He went back to Capernaum (verse 31) where he was well-received. The distance is about 25 miles and could be covered in a long day.

LETTER: (4) The most egregious difference is when the gospel writer places Jesus being anointed by a sinful woman not in Bethany, but in Galilee, and in the middle of the Messiah's ministry (7:36ff); not at the end, where Matthew, Mark and John show irrefutable agreement (Mt 26:6-13; Mk.14:3-9; Jn. 12: 1-3). This positioning of the sinful woman's anointing is of paramount importance, since we usually use John 12:1ff in order to acquire a clear and thorough chronological account of Jesus' "Passion Week". If Luke's version is the "orderly account" (1:3), then all of the gospel writers are wrong and, we could no longer use Jn. 12 as a cornerstone for the Messiah's last week. Either Luke is wrong or Matthew, Mark and John are right!

RESPONSE: I am a little puzzled at why you believe that these are the same incident at all. As you note, the time is different and the place is different. Also, the message that Christ gives after the incident is completely different. They both occurred in the house of someone named Simon, but Simon was a common name at that time. Luke clearly says its Simon a Pharisee whereas Matthew and Mark say "Simon the Leper". Finally, the lesson given by Christ is totally different. In Luke, the woman is an unknown sinner and

Christ explains how those who have sinned much are more thankful because they have been forgiven much. In Matthew, Mark and John, the woman was Mary, sister of Lazarus, and Christ had to explain that it was all right to use expensive ointment to anoint him for His burial—that they would always have the poor with them.

LETTER: Accordingly, there are several explanations. (1) "An orderly account" (1:3) might portray a different meaning in first century koine Greek that we are not aware of. (2) Luke might have conferred all of the available sources for his recollection, but some of them being incomplete in order. Therefore, for him, it would be "in complete chronological order," but in reality it was not. It is imperative to understand that the gospel accounts were written by imperfect men, susceptible to error, and that the accounts only supplement and complement each other.

—Angel Oyola, Puerto Rico

RESPONSE: Before going further in your studies of the New Testament, I highly recommend that you look into the scholarly works on these subjects. A.T. Robinson's *A Harmony of the Gospels* covers most of the questions that you raised. Other books have been written that deal with "bible contradictions". While I would not say that any one of these books is perfect, they will certainly help you clear up many problems. You must ask for understanding from the Holy Spirit to guide you in all of your study.

It is obvious that the Eternal has allowed some error to creep into Bible translations, and into the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. Many righteous people lived their entire lives not knowing about the errors that they were reading in their Bible. However, the proportion of error is very small and the basic message of the Bible is still clear in nearly every translation or version. If the Eternal has allowed a little error in Bible manuscripts and translations, is it also possible that he allowed a little error into the original writings? Maybe. We will not know until we see Christ in His Kingdom. You can learn what you need to do to be in that Kingdom from almost any Bible!

If there are contradictions in the Bible, they are very few and on matters of little importance. We are called to preach the Truth of the Bible to others, not to endlessly debate its historical merits. While there is much value in digging deep in the scriptures to understand as much as possible, we must be careful that we do not overthrow the faith of some by raising numerous questions about contradictions—especially when they are not contradictions at all. —NSE ☞

"First Trumpet Blast" from page 1 beginning. How thankful we are that God shares with us the vision of the future He has planned for us! Our hopes are buoyed beyond expressing. We are confident we will receive eternal life through His Son Jesus who has said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6) And again, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." (John 11:25-26) and "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

Yes, we are able to comfort each other with these words...

Unless.....

Unless.....

Unless.....

we go to sleep.

God knows our frame. He knows we may drift off if he doesn't keep waking us up at regular intervals.

Nobody likes to hear the alarm go off in the morning, unless by chance we have such a great job that we can hardly wait to get there. But we have to be awakened! Something has to jar us to our senses that the day is about to dawn and we have to get moving.

There is a tendency to tap the snooze alarm and get more zzzz's, but there is a great danger in doing so. We may be late and miss out altogether on an important meeting.

So it is with God. What is the first Biblical record of trumpets being blown? It is recorded about an important meeting, the very first meeting of the new nation of Israel with God, who had just delivered them from slavery and led them through the Red Sea to Mt. Sinai.

Beginning in Exodus 19:10-11:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people."

Note that the people had to make themselves ready to be presentable to God.

...When the trumpet sounds long they shall come near the mountain. So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed

their clothes. And he said be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives (Ex 19:13-15).

Verses 5 through 8 showed that the people understood that God was about to make a covenant with them, but they were totally unprepared for the fireworks and **clamorous sounds** that were about to break forth when they came near the presence of the mighty Creator, God.

Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain (Ex 19:16-17).

Now, not only were the people trembling, but the ground under them was about to shake.

Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly (Ex 19:18).

And now, to announce that God himself was about to speak, a mighty trumpet blast pierced through all the thunderings and God, no doubt, had their undivided attention. The **trumpet of God** was sounding.

And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by voice (Ex 19:18).

The mighty voice of God began to enumerate the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments (Ex. 34:28). After the tenth commandment was given,

Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off (Ex. 20:18).

The whole scene had made quite an impression! The people would not soon forget the sound of the trumpet. And God **wanted** them to **remember** it.

Speak to the children of Israel, saying: "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a Sabbath rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation" (Lev. 23:24).

This was to be a memorial, an earth-shaking event they would have remembered and called back to mind each year. Ear-splitting trumpet blasts that got their attention. A meeting with God himself, a holy convocation.

Why? Because God is so kind! He knows the flesh is weak. He knows people forget. He would remind them every year by a special day of trumpet blowing to refresh memories of the covenant, to awaken them to what is important, to sound an alarm—lest they forget what was agreed upon at that first momentous meeting.

And God wants us to know His plan, and be able to annually rehearse what will happen in the future, when a trumpet blast will again announce the presence of God. So a day of blowing was included as one of the seven annual festivals.

We love these festivals, these rehearsals that help us catch the vision. We are to rejoice in these festivals, **celebrate** them! Indeed they are enjoyable rehearsals! Singers who have sung in festival choirs for many years learn that the rehearsals **are** almost as much fun as the actual performances. The thrill of learning a musical part so well that it can be memorized—so that one can concentrate only on following the director and blending in harmony with the voices of the people standing next to you—is nearly indescribable! We truly hate for the rehearsals to end. So it is with the annual festivals. And although we may sing the same song again next year, we find that with another director, it can be sung in a new and even better way. Yes, there is great beauty and exhilaration in keeping the feasts.

Nevertheless, the Day of Trumpets, among other things, should be a reminder and a warning to **stay awake!** And we must remember that the plan of God isn't just for **our** salvation, but that God wants to save the whole world. That's part of the agreement we made. We are to love God **and neighbor.** We aren't just to rehearse, we are to **share** the joy. We are to **live** the way that attracts others to God's way. We are to be prepared to help others understand the way to salvation as God gives us opportunity.

The world at large is almost totally distracted from paying attention to God. We, too, are easily distracted. We become jaded and lazy, let's just **face** it.

But God is kind, he sets the alarm, he blows the trumpet, he wakes us up and we must repent, repent, repent! We jerk awake and turn to Him and turn to the task. But don't we rather suspect that God would like us to set our own alarm clock and **stay** zealous for His work? We should **constantly** fan the embers and add another log to the fire. Then our warmth will radiate out and others will come to be comforted.

It is very sobering to think that our occasional slumbering might cause a few to miss the boat for the first resurrection, that a few we **could** have influenced to walk the walk, won't repent when the last trumpet sounds and Christ returns. The harvest is white **now!** We must **go into the fields** and **join in the harvest.** We can't just rehearse at the festivals. We can't waste time congratulating ourselves, in that we think we know something about God's plan of salvation. Instead, let's rouse ourselves into action daily, and pray that God will show us the opportunities for doing **His** work, for helping bring in **His** harvest.

As the love of many waxes cold, we should be careful that we don't consider lukewarm as better than cold. Our love of neighbor today must heat up hotter than it was yesterday, regardless of what the trend is in the general populace. When we help a neighbor, whether he be friend or stranger, we are helping Christ (Mat. 25:40).

We have the best vocation in history, the best employer, 100% job security, the best product, the best opportunity to be profitable, the best of all rewards! It's incredible that we could doze off on such a job. And God won't let us drift off if we will heed His trumpet call. We should not wait to get to work! Let's respond to "reveille" at the Feast of Trumpets, and daily as well, and give thanks to God who gives us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Suggested additional reading:

Article: "Repentance, Judgment, Awe, & Reconciliation," by Dean E. Wheelock, July/August, 1996 issue of *Hebrew Roots*, P.O. Box 98, Lakewood, WI 54138.

Article: "The Feast of Loudness," by Norman S. Edwards and Pam Dewey, August 1997 issue of *Servants' News*, P.O. Box 220, Charlotte, Michigan 48813-0220. 

"Overcome Sin" from page 1

derful feeling. I sensed that I was now spiritually clean. It came from knowing that I had a Savior and that all my sins were washed away. It was a great feeling! I knew Jesus and the Father loved me, and that this was a clean new start, it was the beginning of a life-long journey.

I was now expected to live a good life, and I would need to overcome sins that not too long ago I had knowingly tolerated.

Over the years there have been lots of battles with sin. Some have been won and others have been lost. When I was baptized I didn't appreciate how many battles there would be. Nor as I stood there soaking wet did I understand how I was going to overcome sin. Yet I knew I had to overcome sin.

We all start our walk with Jesus in similar fashion: anticipation, excitement, joy, and the feeling of being really clean. But many of us didn't at baptism fully understand how to overcome sin. Some of us don't learn to overcome sin until much later in life. I've learned, and I'd like to share what has worked for me.

Years After Conversion

Years after conversion many mature Christians still feel beset by sins. At baptism, when they came under the blood of Christ, they expected a clear and certain victory over sin. Many didn't think that they would be struggling against sin years and decades after baptism.

Many Christians fight mightily to overcome sin, but too often they just don't seem to make progress. Too often sin wins the battle and Satan is the victor. Many of us find that there are times when we are still the servants of sin, and sin does continue to reign over us.

Maybe you are fighting bad habits. Maybe there are secret sins. Or maybe you find that there are old sins that you thought you had overcome a long time ago, sins that once again have become a significant problem in your life

Coexisting with sin is not what Jesus Christ wants for us. The Lord does not want us to live side-by-side with major sins that hurts us and that hurt those around us. Satan of course loves this kind of situation. He rejoices when we are in bondage to sin.

Two Choices

We are presented with two very

simple choices in the scriptures. One is to overcome sin and live forever. The other is to live in sin and face a loss of reward or even possibly eternal punishment.

Two simple choices.

On the one hand we are promised great reward if we overcome sin. Jesus tells us that we will be rewarded according to our deeds. If we do well, if we seek glory and honor, we will be given immortality and we will be given eternal life. Notice Romans 2:6-7

Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.

Also notice Revelation 2:11. Jesus tells us that if we overcome we shall not be hurt by the second death:

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

In Revelation 2:26-27 we read that rulership over the nations is promised to those who overcome sin:

And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

On the other hand, if live sinful lives, where we coexist with sin, we will be confronted with the sure punishment that will come upon all of those who purposefully break the commandments of God. We may be looking at the very real possibility of a reduced reward in the Kingdom of God or not being in the Kingdom of God at all.

Why face the prospect of a greatly diminished reward? Why face the potential of the lake of fire?

In Matthew 5:19 we read that we are to keep the commandments of God, and we are to teach men to keep the commandments. If we do not keep them and teach them we will be called "least" in the Kingdom of God—a greatly diminished reward:

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of

heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

There is a terrible penalty to be paid by those who refuse to repent of sin and refuse to overcome sin. In Revelation 21:8 we find that some will be cast out the kingdom and face the frightening reality of the second death.

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

So we have two simple choices, to live in sin and face certain punishment, or to overcome sin and be given a reward in the Kingdom of God.

Some Sins Overcome On Our Own

At baptism most of us were determined to overcome sin. Most of us found that there were some sins we could overcome on our own strength. It might have been difficult, but we could do it.

Even people in the world who don't know God, overcome bad habits, things the scriptures would classify as sin.

But the bitter reality is that **some** sins are **impossible** for us to overcome **on our own strength**. There is no way! Jesus knew that. Jesus knew that each of us would have some sins that would be veritable monsters, they would loom much bigger than our ability to overcome them. But He made a way of escape, a way of victory. As our personal savior He offers His personal and individual help to overcome sin. He knew that with His help we could overcome whatever monstrous sins seek to overpower us. He offers help to overcome **any** sin.

There is one simple key to overcoming sin. **It is the strength and personal intervention of Jesus Christ!**

Jesus is the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, John 1:29. Jesus by His own power and by His own might takes sin. He does it for us at baptism, and He does it for us throughout our lives. But we must ask Him to do it. You must ask Him to help you overcome sin. You have to ask Jesus, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, to take away your sin when it is too great for you to overcome.

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29.

It is a battle and Jesus is our Savior. He wants us to believe that, He wants us to look to Him as Savior. So when the battle with sin rages we call on His name and He saves us. Then we see His deliverance, and we know that He cares for us personally. The struggle with sin goes away. He gets **all the glory**. That is how it works.

Then we are free of sin and we know why. It is because of His personal intervention in our lives. He gets the credit for the victory, it is His victory and **no flesh can glory!** He wants us to experience His deliverance, and to feel His victory, and to know it comes from Him.

But it is still a battle. The apostle Paul experienced this battle against sin many years after conversion. As an older man He felt the deliverance that came from Jesus' personal intervention on his behalf.

The Example of Paul

Even the apostles of the first century had to struggle against sin. They were no different than you and I. Their battle against sin wasn't easy. Paul is a case in point. He had to continue to struggle against sin many years after he was converted.

In Romans 7:22-25 we read about Paul's renewed struggle against sin. The Lord caused this episode in Paul's life to be recorded for our benefit. It shows us how Paul overcame sin and how we too can overcome sin. Notice Paul's words. They ring of struggle and battle. They end with victory!

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Just like Paul, many mature Christians find they, too, experience a renewed struggle against sin. Paul gives the key to overcoming sin in verse 25, where he says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord". When we are beset by sin we need to do what Paul

did.. We need to look to Jesus Christ.

Paul goes on in chapter 8 of Romans to explain that we are "more than conquerors" through Jesus Christ our Lord. There is suffering. In fact, suffering is expected. At times we are to suffer with Jesus, so that we can be glorified with Jesus.

But we are still conquerors. We overcome through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He "...indeed intercedes for us". His love for us is steadfast. **Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ**, absolutely nothing. It is precisely because Jesus loves us that He helps us overcome sin. Our Elder Brother loves to deliver us, His brothers and sisters.

Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jesus truly looks on us as brethren. He is a personal savior who watches over each one of us. We are His. He loves us and He wants to help us. **The way to overcome sin is through the direct and personal intervention of Jesus Christ.** Jesus Christ is the key to overcoming sin!

Jesus is the Key

So then how does Jesus help us to overcome sin? What must we do to have Him intervene for us? He is always there, His eyes behold our every action. His love is constant and unwavering. How do we get Jesus to help us?

It is really very simple. Ever so simple. The key to overcoming sin is to call upon Jesus Christ to deliver you from sin. We read in Romans 10:13

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

This scripture is an ongoing promise to all Christians. Whenever there are

troubles, whenever there are problems, when we are beset by sin, we need to call on the name of the Lord and we will be saved. You don't just "call on the name of the Lord" at baptism.

It is Jesus Christ who strengthens us. It is Jesus who intervenes for us. It is Jesus who frees us from every sin... but only if we call on His name.

In 2 Timothy 2:22 Paul tells us to do just that. Notice this is after we are converted. This is after we have been baptized. This is after we have been a member of the Church of God. We are to call on the Lord out of a pure heart. We are to call on Jesus.

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

It does take a "pure heart". We must call upon our Lord out of a "pure heart" and ask Him to deliver us. Our heart must be pure, sincere, dedicated to following our Friend and Savior! It is Jesus Christ who then takes away the sin. In Philippians 4:13 Paul says:

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

The strength is the Lord's strength. The power comes from the Lord. This seems so very simple, to just look to Jesus Christ. But it works. It is the only way to overcome sins that are too powerful for us. Paul realized this. He said in Romans 7:24:

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Paul knew that he could not stop sinning on His own strength. Freedom from sin comes through the direct intervention of Jesus Christ. At one time we were the servants of sin, and Jesus made us free from sin. Notice John 8:34-36:

Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

What do you think Jesus has been doing for the past nearly 2000 years?

Jesus is the author and finisher of our salvation. That is His role in the church, anciently and today. For almost 2000 years He has been leading His church. He has been helping His people. He has been bringing His will to pass in world

events.

Jesus has been a very personal savior to those in His church. He has been helping His people overcome sin. That is one of His main responsibilities. He is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Your sins and my sins. Before baptism and after baptism.

Paul looked to Jesus to overcome sin and told congregations of the churches of God to do exactly the same thing. In Hebrews 12:2 Paul exhorted Christians:

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

In times of need, in seasons of trial, when we are beset by sin, we need to come boldly before the throne of God and call on Jesus Christ to help us. It is solely by the Lord's mercy and grace that we win the victory over sin. Notice Hebrews 4:14-16:

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

When we come before the throne of grace we are looking to our personal High Priest, Jesus Christ, to deliver us. This is personal. It is one-on-one. No man needs to intervene for you. No man can do this in your place. You must go to the throne of grace and ask Jesus to help you in times of need to overcome sin.

Jesus Forgives Our Sins When We Stumble

Jesus understands! He is touched by our trauma. He is touched by our pain. He feels our hurt. He knows what it is to have tears running down His cheeks.

It is true that Jesus never sinned, but He had many very good close friends on this earth who did sin. So He understands our weaknesses and He forgives all our sins if we repent, just as He forgave the sins of His good friends. There is plenty of grace. Jesus applies abundant grace.

Jesus is our judge, John 5:22-23:

The Father judges no one but has

given all judgment to the Son, so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

There are times we will stumble and fall. Times we will sin. At those times we ask for forgiveness and Jesus forgives our sin. There is plenty of grace. At those times, just like Paul, we need to ask our Savior to help us not to sin.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1Jn 1:8-10).

Overcoming sin is not just a one-time event. If it were we would only have to call on Jesus once, and then we would be free of sin the rest of our lives. But that is not how it works. Since we are to follow Jesus all our lives, and He continues to lead us all our lives, we find that temptation and sin may come often. That means that we need to call on Jesus for help just as often. When He helps, and He does help us, He becomes a real and very personal Savior.

We learn to walk with Him, and He wants us to learn to walk with Him.

The Power of the Lord Is a Gift of Grace

We know that forgiveness of past sins is a gift of grace, but did you know that deliverance from sin is also a gift of grace?

When we call on Jesus to set us free from sin, Jesus doesn't tell us how He is going to remove sin from us. That is where faith comes in. We must believe we will be made free from sin, that Jesus will free us from being slaves to sin. In Romans 6:22-23 we read:

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The scriptures don't tell us how we will be made free from sin, the scriptures do not explain the details of how Jesus does things. Jesus does it and that is all we really need to know. It is a matter of grace. We are saved by grace, and we are

freed from sin by grace. Notice Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Also notice Romans 5:15. The grace Jesus gives us is free. There may be battles and some suffering, but there is always free grace, i.e. "The free gift in the grace of one man, Jesus Christ".

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many.

Notice also what Peter said in the book of Acts

On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will (Acts 15:11).

Grace is any gift of God. Remember that **all gifts from God** come through Jesus Christ. One of the Lord's greatest gifts is His removal of sin from each of us. That is grace. Lets take a look at Romans 6:14-18:

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

We are made free from sin. Read that again. **We are made free from sin.** How does Jesus do it? It is by free grace. It is not a matter of works lest any man should boast. In other words, we do not overcome on our own strength apart from Jesus Christ.

The Role of the Holy Spirit

It is important to understand that we don't call on the Holy Spirit to overcome sin. The Holy Spirit does not work that way. It is not the vehicle by which we overcome sin.

At baptism we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. One of the functions of the

Holy Spirit is that of comforter. It comforts us in times of trouble and stress. The apostle John wrote in John 15:26:

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

The Holy Spirit also gives us qualities of mind and a quality of life that are not available to the unconverted. In Gal 5:22-23 there is a listing of these qualities:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

The Holy Spirit makes life a joy and it gives us peace. It provides a link to the Father and to His way of thinking and to His attitudes. We become directly connected to the Father by the Holy Spirit. We share the same qualities of mind that the Father enjoys. The world does not have peace. But we have peace and comfort through the Holy Spirit that abides with us or is in us.

In John 14:16-17 the apostle John tells us that the Holy Spirit is a spirit of truth, it teaches us what is right and what is godly:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

The Holy Spirit is our very own personal teacher, John 16:13:

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.

But, the Holy Spirit on its own does not give us the power to overcome sin! Let me say that again: **the Holy Spirit does not give us the power to overcome sin!**

We cannot, whenever we choose, just call on the Holy Spirit and use it as the power to overcome sin. It does not work that way.

The Holy Spirit is not a personal power source for overcoming sin. If it were, then we would not need Jesus. All we would need to do would be to call on the Holy Spirit and then we could simply overcome sin. If we did that (and

many have tried this in the churches of God) where would Jesus be in all of this? He would be excluded.

The Lord gives us the Holy Spirit so that we can have love, joy, and peace in this life. He gives us the Holy Spirit so we can be comforted in trials. He gives us the Holy Spirit to teach us the things that we as Christians need to learn.

But the Holy Spirit, on its own, apart from Jesus, cannot help us overcome all sin. That is Christ's job and we must call upon Him to do it!

What Does Christ Expect?

Jesus does not have to help us overcome every sin. There are some sins that we can overcome by ourselves. People in the world do it all the time. Jesus expects us to do what we can for ourselves.

Just because Jesus intervenes and takes away sins that we are not able to overcome on our own, does not mean that we don't have to be careful about our actions. We do have a major role in overcoming sin, and we do have an important part in the process. We must be careful as to what we allow ourselves to see and do.

One of the most important things we as Christians do in this life is build righteous character. Through Jesus Christ we literally become a new creation, a "new creature" who is righteous and pleasing to God, 2 Corinthians 5:17:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

The scriptures and the Holy Spirit teach us what is right behavior, and we have to learn to walk that way. Jesus wants us to live good lives. We need to do what we can.

For example we need to flee from temptation. If a man has a problem with lust he should avoid anything that would aggravate the problem. He should avoid pornography, immoral movies, and anything that would cause him to lust. The Lord tells us to flee from temptation. Notice the following examples, first 1 Corinthians 5:18:

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

Also notice 1 Corinthians 10:14

Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

Also 2 Timothy 2:22:

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

If some one has a problem with eating to much, with stealing, with lying, with fornication, with idolatry, and on and on it goes, that person must flee compromising situations. These are choices we must make. They are ours alone. And the Lord expects us to make right choices.

We must also resist Satan, who is the author of sin. Notice James 4:6-7

But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

But when you have done all that you can do to resist sin, then it is the time to call on the name of the Lord and ask for deliverance. The Lord can take the wrong desire away. If there is a wrong spirit present causing some compulsive behavior, such as the "spirit of jealousy" or a "spirit of whoredom", the Lord will make that spirit leave.

When you aren't able to overcome certain sins on your own, then it is time to put the problem in Jesus' hands. Resist the sin and let Him remove the sin.

Rejoice! Jesus Delivers!

In the book of Acts we read that the early church talked with Jesus. They prayed to the Father, but they often did talk to Jesus. Notice Acts 2:21-22. The early church knew that they had to call on the name of the Lord to be saved.

Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—

In Acts 1:21 the apostles were picking a replacement for Judas, and they discussed the qualifications for a replacement. The new apostle had to have "accompanied" the other apostles "during all the time the Lord Jesus went in and out among" them, verse 21. They prayed to the "Lord" in verse 24. They were asking Jesus to make a choice as to who should take Judas' place as an apostle. Matthias

was chosen. The point is that they asked the "Lord" and these scriptures indicate that they are talking to Jesus.

Acts 1:21 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection. So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."

When Stephen was being stoned and about to die an extremely painful death, notice what Stephen did. He called on the name the Lord, Acts 7:59. Stephen talked to Jesus.

Stephen asked Jesus to "receive my spirit". He also asked Jesus not to "hold this sin against them", those doing the stoning. Stephen talked to Jesus in this time of extreme duress. He knew Jesus was there with Him. He knew it was Jesus' job as the head of the church to help Him personally in time of need. Stephen **knew** that. So he called on Jesus to help him as he was dying, and Jesus did help him.

While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

We can look to Jesus and call on Jesus for help just as the early church did, just as Stephen did. And we can be certain that Jesus will answer.

So rejoice! If you are having troubles, if there are trials, or if you are fighting sin and not making progress, then call on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart and ask Jesus to help you, to free you from the troubles and sin. This is not saying that our sins do not matter, but that a solution is available if we are willing to ask Jesus for it and give Him the glory.

Don't worry how He will do it. It is up to Him. Just have faith that He will do it! It is one of His responsibilities as our older Brother. By His grace and by His power He will deliver you from trials and remove the sin from you. 

“Don’t Appear Empty” from page 1 collecting money to cover Feast expenses or to support various ministries, though we would not use Deuteronomy 16 to justify this practice. On the other hand, most of the corporate churches teach that these gifts **should** be money, and they regularly include “holy day offerings” as a significant part of their yearly budget. Without these offerings, they would have to greatly cut back their “work”—publishing magazines and booklets, sponsoring television programs, paying staff and their “ordained ministry”. These groups frequently speak of such offerings as a “shot in the arm” to boost their flagging income. Some even have to borrow money before the spring and fall Feasts, then pay it back from holy day offerings at certain times in the year.

But is this the only “application” that could be made of the Old Testament principle of bringing tithes and offerings to the feasts to modern circumstances? The ancient offerings spoken of in Deuteronomy weren’t offerings of money in the first place—they were animals to be sacrificed at the temple. The meat was eaten by the family bringing the sacrifice, by the priests and Levites, and also shared with the poor. But we no longer kill bulls and goats and sheep at the Feast. Even in the Psalms there is a hint of a different kind of offering:

Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments (Ps 119:108).

And this theme continues in the New Testament:

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess His name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased (Heb 13:15-16).

The New Testament never speaks specifically of “how” to observe the Holy Days at all. But here is one passage that clearly speaks of meeting together, so perhaps it can also give us a hint of what sort of “gifts” are appropriate in our time:

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience

and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Heb 10:22-25)..

How might one “spur others on” to love and good deeds?

So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church (1Cor 14:12).

I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith (Rom 1:11-12).

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good (1Cor 12:4-7).

The command in Deuteronomy 16 says we are to give in proportion to the “blessing”—the gifts—we have received from the LORD. In the New Testament that blessing, those “gifts” of God, are referred to as “spiritual gifts” which He distributes as He will among the brethren. And what are we to do with such a gift we share in our meeting together?

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms (1 Pet 4:10)

In the past, have you experienced going to a feast where the only ones actually using personal, individual spiritual gifts were those on a “speaking schedule” or those appointed to offer “special music” during services? Have you assumed that the only “gift” you were to bring was some money to put in the offering plate as it passed?

No spiritual ability is required to go to a Feast of Tabernacles and contribute only money. If all that mattered were money, people could save money by keeping the Feast at home and just send it all in to their corporate headquarters.

But if you plan to “appear before the Lord” and do not want to be “empty”, think about your spiritual gifts this year. The true value of bringing “your gifts” to the Feast is so that they may be used there to edify, build up, encourage and serve other brethren! Rather than just view the Feast as “a vacation with sermons”, focus on the opportunities that will abound in a group setting to use your gifts. Listen to what Paul says on the matter:

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality (Rom 12:6-13).

Does this sound like just so much theory? How does one put it into practice? We cannot give a formula, because everyone has different gifts and every situation is different. However, these points should help.

1) Pray for spiritual gifts. Pray for the Eternal to send you where you can use them, or to send people to you whom you can help.

2) Study your Bible often, especially at the Feast. This will give you something encouraging to say to others.

3) Be friendly and talk to others. There may be people sitting right next to you at the Feast who need some knowledge or wisdom that you have or whom you can physically help, but you may never know it unless you talk to them.

4) Do not be afraid to accept opportunities that “find you”. If you are asked to pray for a sick person, take care of a handicapped person or do something else you have not done before, pray for the ability to do it, and “walk through the door”. 

Partial Literature List

This list contains some of our most current and our most-requested literature. Many people have told us that these items have been helpful to them. **If you see something that you think will interest either you or a friend,** we hope you will ask for it.

Mature Literature:

- The Apple of God's Eye** by Jim Rector, 13 pages. God's love is 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.
- 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.)
- Cornerstone Publications List of Back Issues** by Jim Rector, 2 pages. Articles of encouragement, motivation, prophecy, and in-depth Bible Study.
- Eight Studies: Ordination, Laying on of Hands, Tithing, Nicolaitans, Cain, Balaam, Korah, Teachers** by an anonymous author, 60 pages. Bible studies shows the problems with religious organizations that are often more like businesses.
- Freedom and Christian Responsibility** by Dale Stogner, 14 pages. Freedom, morality, love and liberty cause peace and prosperity. We are responsible for our actions and our inactions. We need to use the literature available from a variety of ministries to help ourselves and others grow.
- The Heart of the Matter** by Jim Rector, 31 pages. Our calling is to spiritual growth, not just attendance, socializing, politeness or legalism.
- Herbert W. Armstrong: 1892-1986** by Richard Nickels, 22 pages. Respectful, balanced biography giving good and bad.
- How Does The Eternal Govern Through Humans?** by Norman Edwards. *Revised Version*—much new information including charts of usage of "ordain" in 7 translations. What does the Bible really say about church government?
- How Do We Give to the Eternal?** by Richard Tafoya & Norman Edwards, 36 pages. Biblical study of giving and tithing.
- Is Christianity a Fraud? A Preliminary Assessment of the Conder Thesis**, by Eric V. Snow, 136 pages. Now includes effective rebuttal to Conder's *By Gosh Josh*.
- Pastoral Guide on True Shepherding and Caring for the Flock of God with Servant Leadership and "Being Helpers of Their Joy!"** by Bill Swanson, 16 pages. Bible verses and practical points for anyone who ministers or desires to minister to others. This book would radically change the image of corporate churches if it were followed.
- The Remnant of Israel, An Analysis of G.G. Ruppert** by Richard Nickels, 36 pages. In the early 1900s, Ruppert taught doctrines similar to those of Herbert Armstrong.

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.

The Theological Marketplace of Ideas or, the Three "C's" of Ministry by F. Paul Haney, 11 pages. What is necessary for former WCG members to reach the world with the Gospel?

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:

- Anchor Magazine** edited by Melvin Rhodes. One free 16 page sample issue. Reaching out to recovering homosexuals.
- CEM Correspondence Course** edited by Ronald Dart, 8 pages. First lesson from SN, others free from CEM.
- The Christian Beacon** One issue of free quarterly magazine on inspiration, Bible education, and personal growth.
- Computer and Internet/World Wide Web Guide** by Alan Ruth, 18 pages. For novice through expert: how to buy a computer, how to use software & the Internet for Bible study.
- The Fellowship Commentator** by F. Paul Haney. Sample 8 page issue of free quarterly newsletter.
- Freedom Biblical Information Center Catalog** by Wayne Schatzle, 12 pages. Primarily Sabbatarian groups that give away free literature, tapes and/or catalogs.
- Friends of the Family Lending Library Order Form** by Rod McKown, 2 pages. Check out family books and tapes.
- From Prison to Praise** by Merlin Carothers, 118 pages. Stories of miracles resulting from simply praising God. If nothing else, it shows Sabbatarians the difficulty they may have if they try to tell a Protestant that God has not worked in his life.
- Hebrew Roots** Sample 24-page issue of free newsletter with emphasis on the Hebrew roots of "Christian" belief.
- 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. 32 pages.
- Learning Together Newsletter** by Ron Wilson, 20 pages. Bible study, inspirational, and personal growth articles written by a variety of Sabbatarians.
- Living Room Church of God (LRCOG) Directory, 5th Ed.** by Robert Bodkin, 24 pages. Find a place to fellowship!
- The Sabbath Sentinel** One free sample issue of 16 page glossy magazine—doctrinal & human interest articles. With Bible Sabbath Association order form: Sabbath books & tracts.
- The WAY Newsletter** Sample of 24-page free quarterly of doctrinal articles relating to the Biblical way of life.
- Servants' News Statement of Receipts and Expenses**, 2 pages. (Sent automatically to SN supporters.)
- Servants' News Complete Literature List & Index**, 40 pages. Lists all SN articles and literature with index.

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