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BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY

Did EARLY CHRISTIANS
Keep the *SPRING HOLY DAYS*?



What to Do Until the Kingdom Comes

*What did the old Good News
magazine suggest doing?*

Dressing for Church

*Should you 'dress up' when you
attend church services?*

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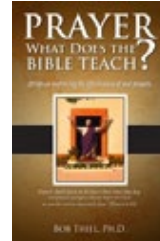
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Back Cover: Internet and Radio This shows where people can find the message from the Continuing Church of God.

About the Front Cover: This is a photograph Joyce Thiel set on a timer and took during Pentecost in New Zealand last year. The photograph pictures people from New Zealand and the USA as they were dressed for services.

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Bible News Prophecy

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PALESTINE AND GAZA IN THE BIBLE AND PROPHECY

The Palestinian-dominated areas of the West Bank and Gaza have been in the news a lot. The terrorist group known as Hamas essentially runs the region called Gaza. Does the Bible have anything to say about Gaza and/or the Palestinians?

Gaza is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments. And some of those statements are prophetic.

What will happen to Gaza? Does the Bible teach anything about the Palestinians?

Gaza and the Philistines

Gaza, `Azzah (az-zaw'), is the feminine form the Hebrew word 'az that means strong, vehement, or harsh (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.).

Here is some information about Gaza:

The Gaza Strip (/ˈɡɑːzəstriːp/; Arabic: **قطاع غزة** Qiṭāʿ Ġazza [qɪtˤɑtˤɑzzɑ]), or simply Gaza, is a Palestinian region on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea that borders Egypt on the southwest for 11 kilometers (6.8 mi) and Israel on the east and north along a 51 km (32 mi) border.

In 1994, Israel granted the right of self-governance to Gaza through the Palestinian Authority. Prior to this, Gaza had been subject to military occupation, most recently by Israel (1967–94) and by Egypt (1958–67), and earlier by Syria when Gaza had been part of the Ottoman Empire. Since 2007, the Gaza Strip has been de-facto governed by Hamas, a Palestinian group claiming to be the representatives of the Palestinian National Authority and the Palestinian people. In 2012, the United Nations General Assembly "accorded Palestine non-Member Observer State status in the United Nations". Gaza forms a part of the Palestinian territory defined in the Oslo Agreements and UNSC Resolution 1860. (Gaza, Wikipedia, viewed 07/26/14)

Basically, Israel took Gaza in the 1967 war and later turned it over to the Palestinian Authority to govern, though Israel

technically considers it part of its territory. Most in Gaza are Palestinian Muslims who do not wish to be part of Israel. Around two million Palestinians live in neighbouring Jordan.

According to the commentary at Nelson's Study Bible Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron are major cities of the Philistines and Cherethites is simply another name for Philistines. The land mentioned is currently primarily occupied by the Palestinians.

Notice what the Bible says about the origin of the Philistines:

6 The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. (Genesis 10:6)

13 Mizraim begot Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, 14 Pathrusim, and Casluhim (from whom came the Philistines and Caphtorim). (Genesis 10:13-14)

Basically the Palestinians seem to have come from descendants of Casluhim (Genesis 10:14) who likely mixed with descendants of Ishmael (cf. Genesis 16:10-12).

As far as the word Palestine goes, notice also the following:

Though the definite origins of the word "Palestine" have been debated for years and are still not known for sure, the name is believed to be derived from the Egyptian and Hebrew word *peleshet*. Roughly translated to mean "rolling" or "migratory," the term was used to describe the inhabitants of the land to the northeast of Egypt - the Philistines. The Philistines were an Aegean people - more closely related to the Greeks and with no connection ethnically, linguistically or historically with Arabia - who conquered in the 12th Century BCE the Mediterranean coastal plain that is now Israel and Gaza.

A derivative of the name "Palestine" first appears in Greek literature in the 5th Century BCE when the historian Herodotus called the area "Palaistinē" (Greek - Παλαιστίνη). In the 2nd century CE, the Romans crushed the revolt of Shimon Bar Kokhba (132 CE), during which Jerusalem and Judea were regained and the area of Judea was renamed Palaestina in an attempt to minimize Jewish identification with the land of Israel. (Origins of the Name "Palestine". Wikipedia,

accessed 07/26/14)

The term Philistines in the Bible refers to people who tended to occupy regions including Gaza. The NKJV uses the term Philistines 252 times and the term Philistine 34 times.

The Bible Tells of Gaza

The NKJV has the term “Gaza” 21 times and “Gazites” twice. All of which are quoted in this article.

Here is the first time:

15 Canaan begot Sidon his firstborn, and Heth; 16 the Jebusite, the Amorite, and the Girgashite; 17 the Hivite, the Arkite, and the Sinite; 18 the Arvadite, the Zemarite, and the Hamathite. Afterward the families of the Canaanites were dispersed. 19 And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; then as you go toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. 20 These were the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands and in their nations. (Genesis 10:15-20, NKJV throughout unless otherwise specified)

The first biblically mentioned inhabitants of Gaza were Canaanites that descended from Noah’s son Ham. But as it was a border region, over time, the ethnic character apparently mixed. And there were changes:

20 (That was also regarded as a land of giants; giants formerly dwelt there. But the Ammonites call them Zamzummim, 21 a people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim. But the Lord destroyed them before them, and they dispossessed them and dwelt in their place, 22 just as He had done for the descendants of Esau, who dwelt in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites from before them. They dispossessed them and dwelt in their place, even to this day. 23 And the Avim, who dwelt in villages as far as Gaza — the Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and dwelt in their place.) (Deuteronomy 2:20-23)

The Bible shows that Joshua later conquered in that region:

41 And Joshua conquered them from Kadesh Barnea as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even as far as Gibeon. (Joshua 10:41)

22 None of the Anakim were left in the land of the children of Israel; they remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod. (Joshua 11:22)

21 The cities at the limits of the tribe of the children of Judah...33 In the lowland:... 47 Ashdod with its towns and villages, Gaza with its towns and villages — as far as

the Brook of Egypt and the Great Sea with its coastline. (Joshua 15:21, 33, 47)

1 Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the Lord said to him: “You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed. 2 This is the land that yet remains: all the territory of the Philistines and all that of the Geshurites, 3 from Sihor, which is east of Egypt, as far as the border of Ekron northward (which is counted as Canaanite); the five lords of the Philistines — the Gazites, the Ashdodites, the Ashkelonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avites (Joshua 13:1-3).

As God called for, the time also came when Gaza was conquered to become part of the Israelite territory of Judah:

18 Also Judah took Gaza with its territory, Ashkelon with its territory, and Ekron with its territory. 19 So the Lord was with Judah. And they drove out the mountaineers, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland, because they had chariots of iron. (Judges 1:18-19)

But the situation changed:

1 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years, 2 and the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made for themselves the dens, the caves, and the strongholds which are in the mountains. 3 So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up; also Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. 4 Then they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey. (Judges 6:1-4)

Samson had interest in a Gentile woman in Gaza and once had to escape from the city of Gaza:

1 Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her. 2 When the Gazites were told, “Samson has come here!” they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. They were quiet all night, saying, “In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him.” 3 And Samson lay low till midnight; then he arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron. (Judges 16:1-3)

After he was betrayed by Delilah, Samson was brought to Gaza where his eyes were removed:

18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart." So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand. 19 Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. 20 And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" So he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!" But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.

21 Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison. 22 However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven. (Judges 16:18-22)

Samson was brought out of that prison to the temple of Dagon during a sacrifice to Dagon. There he asked to be put between the two pillars that held up that temple, pushed them down, and died with the Philistines (Judges 16:25-30). It was apparently close to the prison, and hence Samson seemingly died in Gaza.

After they attained, then returned the Ark of the Covenant to the children of Israel, the Philistines offered something for each of their five main cities/regions, one of which was Gaza:

17 These are the golden tumors which the Philistines returned as a trespass offering to the Lord: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron; 18 and the golden rats, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both fortified cities and country villages (1 Samuel 6:17-18)

Solomon, who was of the tribe of Judah, extended the reign of Israel to Gaza:

22 Now Solomon's provision for one day was thirty kors of fine flour, sixty kors of meal, 23 ten fatted oxen, twenty oxen from the pastures, and one hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl.

24 For he had dominion over all the region on this side of the River from Tiphshah even to Gaza, namely over all the kings on this side of the River; and he had peace on every side all around him. (1 Kings 4:22-24)

After some territory was lost, Hezekiah, the king of Judah extended his reign to Gaza:

1 Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the

son of Elah, king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign... 7 The Lord was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. 8 He subdued the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city. (2 Kings 18:1,7-8)

Thus, history indicates that the Philistines would gain and lose territory near Gaza, as did the Israelites, although that seems to show that it was mainly dominated by the Philistines.

The New Testament mentions Gaza:

26 Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert. (Acts 8:26)

On this road Philip met the 'Ethiopian eunuch' and after speaking with him, baptized him.

Bible Prophecy Tells About Gaza and the Philistines

Zechariah had a prophecy of change coming to Gaza and other lands of the Philistines:

5 Ashkelon shall see it and fear; Gaza also shall be very sorrowful; And Ekron, for He dried up her expectation. The king shall perish from Gaza, And Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. 6 "A mixed race shall settle in Ashdod, And I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. 7 I will take away the blood from his mouth, And the abominations from between his teeth. But he who remains, even he shall be for our God, And shall be like a leader in Judah, And Ekron like a Jebusite. 8 I will camp around My house Because of the army, Because of him who passes by and him who returns. No more shall an oppressor pass through them, For now I have seen with My eyes. (Zechariah 9:5-8)

Some (see Matthew Henry's Commentary, etc.) believe that this was fulfilled in the past.

However, as future prophecies tell of a time Gaza and the Philistines having problems (see below), the above could still have future fulfillment. If so, it shows that some in Gaza/Palestine will be converted.

Bible prophecy tells of calamity coming to Gaza and other lands:

17 Then I took the cup from the Lord's hand, and made all the nations drink, to whom the Lord had sent me: 18 Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, its kings and its

princes, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, a hissing, and a curse, as it is this day; 19 Pharaoh king of Egypt, his servants, his princes, and all his people; 20 all the mixed multitude, all the kings of the land of Uz, all the kings of the land of the Philistines (namely, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod); 21 Edom, Moab, and the people of Ammon; 22 all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon, and the kings of the coastlands which are across the sea; 23 Dedan, Tema, Buz, and all who are in the farthest corners; 24 all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mixed multitude who dwell in the desert; 25 all the kings of Zimri, all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes; 26 all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another; and all the kingdoms of the world which are on the face of the earth. Also the king of Sheshach shall drink after them.

27 "Therefore you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Drink, be drunk, and vomit! Fall and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you.'" 28 And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: "You shall certainly drink! 29 For behold, I begin to bring calamity on the city which is called by My name, and should you be utterly unpunished? You shall not be unpunished, for I will call for a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth," says the Lord of hosts.' (Jeremiah 25:17-29)

Many of the lands above are listed as supporters of the final King of the South (Daniel 11:40-43) and/or part of a confederation that will be destroyed that will involve Egypt (Ezekiel 30:3-8).

Some of those lands, Ashkelon (located 50 kilometres south of Tel Aviv, and 13 kilometres north of the border with the Gaza Strip), Ekron (modern Tel Miqne, which is 35 kilometers west of Jerusalem), and Ashdod (located 32 kilometres south of Tel Aviv, 20 km north of Ashkelon, and 53 km west of Jerusalem), are currently dominated by the nation of Israel.

The entire 47th chapter of Jeremiah is a prophecy against the Philistines, including Gaza:

1 The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Philistines, before Pharaoh attacked Gaza.

2 Thus says the Lord: "Behold, waters rise out of the north, And shall be an overflowing flood; They shall overflow the land and all that is in it, The city and those who dwell within; Then the men shall cry, And all the inhabitants of the land shall wail. 3 At the noise of the stamping hooves of his strong horses, At the rushing of

his chariots, At the rumbling of his wheels, The fathers will not look back for their children, Lacking courage, 4 Because of the day that comes to plunder all the Philistines, To cut off from Tyre and Sidon every helper who remains; For the Lord shall plunder the Philistines, The remnant of the country of Caphtor. 5 Baldness has come upon Gaza, Ashkelon is cut off With the remnant of their valley. How long will you cut yourself? 6 "O you sword of the Lord, How long until you are quiet? Put yourself up into your scabbard, Rest and be still! 7 How can it be quiet, Seeing the Lord has given it a charge Against Ashkelon and against the seashore? There He has appointed it." (Jeremiah 47:2-7)

Problems were thus prophesied for Gaza--since there is a duality to some prophecies (e.g. Malachi 4:5 & Matthew 17:10-13), this may have future application. It should be noted that Ashkelon is currently part of Israel, and possibly the Palestinians will either control it again or be so numerous in it that they are affected.

Amos specifically recorded a prophecy against Gaza:

6 Thus says the Lord:

"For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because they took captive the whole captivity To deliver them up to Edom.

7 But I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza, Which shall devour its palaces.

8 I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, And the one who holds the scepter from Ashkelon; I will turn My hand against Ekron, And the remnant of the Philistines shall perish," Says the Lord God. (Amos 1:6-8)

Ezekiel had a prophecy against Edom (mentioned also above) and then the following about the Philistines:

15 'Thus says the Lord God: "Because the Philistines dealt vengefully and took vengeance with a spiteful heart, to destroy because of the old hatred," 16 therefore thus says the Lord God: "I will stretch out My hand against the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethites and destroy the remnant of the seacoast. 17 I will execute great vengeance on them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I lay My vengeance upon them." (Ezekiel 25:15-17).

Vengeance belongs to God (Romans 12:9; Hebrews 10:30), and apparently (along with the Edomites, Ezekiel 25:15-17, Joel 3:19, Obadiah 8-11, and Psalms 137:7-9, the Palestinians are subject to punishment in the future for their vengeance. Zechariah 9:6 tells of punishment for their pride.

Isaiah seems to speak of this as well:

14 But they shall fly down upon the shoulder of the Philistines toward the west;
Together they shall plunder the people of the East;
They shall lay their hand on Edom and Moab;
And the people of Ammon shall obey them.
15 The Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt;
With His mighty wind He will shake His fist over the River,
And strike it in the seven streams,
And make men cross over dryshod. (Isaiah 11:14-15)

This seems to include not only those in Gaza, but possibly those in the West Bank (“the people of the East”) and beyond.

Also notice what Zephaniah prophesied:

4 For Gaza shall be forsaken,
And Ashkelon desolate;
They shall drive out Ashdod at noonday,
And Ekron shall be uprooted.
5 Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast,
The nation of the Cherethites!
The word of the Lord is against you,
O Canaan, land of the Philistines:
“I will destroy you;
So there shall be no inhabitant. (Zephaniah 2:4-5)

Though there was a partial fulfilment near the time this was written, the time has not yet been when there was no inhabitant in Canaan, hence this prophecy is for the future. Gaza will change and be forsaken! (Years ago, because of what Zephaniah 2:4-5 teaches, I concluded that the place of protection Jesus promised the Philadelphians in Revelation 3:10 would NOT be in the direction of Gaza nor the land of the Palestinians.)

The Palestinians, apparently along with some Syrians, are prophesied to be involved in war, apparently a terroristic one:

8 The Lord sent a word against Jacob, And it has fallen on Israel. 9 All the people will know -- Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria -- Who say in pride and arrogance of heart: 10 ‘The bricks have fallen down, But we will rebuild with hewn stones; The sycamores are cut down, But we will replace them with cedars.’ 11 Therefore the Lord shall set up The adversaries of Rezin against him, And spur his enemies on, 12 The Syrians before and the Philistines behind; And they shall devour Israel with an open mouth. (Isaiah 9:8-12)

Since the above prophecy involves Ephraim and Samaria, this is indicative that the UK and USA will be attacked (hitting them before and behind).

The Bible shows that terrorism is prophesied:

14 ‘But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, 15 and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, 16 I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. 17 I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you. (Leviticus 26:14-17)

25 The sword shall destroy outside; There shall be terror within (Deuteronomy 32:25)

12 “Cry and wail, son of man; For it will be against My people, Against all the princes of Israel. Terrors including the sword will be against My people; Therefore strike your thigh. (Ezekiel 21:12)

12 Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches...19 Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. (Psalms 73:12,19)

25 Because you disdained all my counsel, And would have none of my rebuke, 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, 27 When your terror comes like a storm, And your destruction comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. (Proverbs 1:25-27)

5 Also they are afraid of height, And of terrors in the way (Ecclesiastes 12:5).

Jihadist gains in various parts of the world are a prelude to more terrorism and change.

As far as Palestinian support of terrorism, notice the following:

A new generation of angry, disillusioned Palestinians is driving the current wave of clashes with Israeli forces . . . some say they want to emulate those killed or wounded in confrontations or attacks on Israelis – like Mohannad Halabi, the 19-year-old law student from the West Bank who stabbed to death two Israelis in Jerusalem’s Old City on the weekend before being shot by police.

“We are all impressed by what he has done,” said Malik Hussein, the 19-year-old friend and fellow law student at Quds University near Jerusalem. “The day after the attack, the university took to the streets and clashed with Israeli soldiers. Mohannad’s way is the

only way to liberate Palestine.” (Daraghmeh M, Laub K. Disillusioned Palestinian youth drive unrest. National Post, October 7, 2015, A1)

Of course, the solution to Palestine and Jerusalem is not war and terrorism, but the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the kingdom of God. Malik Hussein and others should, “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (Psalm 122:6).

A confederation against the USA, its Anglo-Saxon allies, and Israel involving Arab and European forces is coming (Psalm 83). And I have long believed that terrorism will have to be part of this.

Goals of Hamas Do Not Include Peace With Israel

As mentioned earlier, Gaza is primarily ruled by a group known as Hamas.

Here is some information about Hamas’ official goals:

THE COVENANT OF THE HAMAS - MAIN POINTS . . .

Goals of the HAMAS:

‘The Islamic Resistance Movement is a distinguished Palestinian movement, whose allegiance is to Allah, and whose way of life is Islam. It strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine.’ (Article 6)

On the Destruction of Israel:

‘Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it.’ (Preamble)

The Exclusive Moslem Nature of the Area:

‘The land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf [Holy Possession] consecrated for future Moslem generations until Judgment Day. No one can renounce it or any part, or abandon it or any part of it.’ (Article 11)

‘Palestine is an Islamic land... Since this is the case, the Liberation of Palestine is an individual duty for every Moslem wherever he may be.’ (Article 13)

The Call to Jihad:

‘The day the enemies usurp part of Moslem land, Jihad becomes the individual duty of every Moslem. In the face of the Jews’ usurpation, it is compulsory that the banner of Jihad be raised.’ (Article 15)

‘Ranks will close, fighters joining other fighters, and masses everywhere in the Islamic world will come forward in response to the call of duty, loudly proclaiming: ‘Hail to Jihad!’. This cry will reach the heavens and will go on being resounded until liberation is achieved, the invaders vanquished and Allah’s victory comes about.’ (Article 33)

Rejection of a Negotiated Peace Settlement:

‘[Peace] initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement... Those conferences are no more than a means to appoint the infidels as arbitrators in the lands of Islam...

There is no solution for the Palestinian problem except by Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are but a waste of time, an exercise in futility.’ (Article 13)

Condemnation of the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty:

‘Egypt was, to a great extent, removed from the circle of struggle [against Zionism] through the treacherous Camp David Agreement. The Zionists are trying to draw other Arab countries into similar agreements in order to bring them outside the circle of struggle. ...

Leaving the circle of struggle against Zionism is high treason, and cursed be he who perpetrates such an act.’ (Article 32) . . .

‘The HAMAS regards itself the spearhead and the vanguard of the circle of struggle against World Zionism... Islamic groups all over the Arab world should also do the same, since they are best equipped for their future role in the fight against the warmongering Jews.’ (Article 32) <http://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/880818a.htm>

Hamas has more goals, but the above ones give an idea of what it is all about. Hamas is an Islamic terrorist organization and has no interest in peace with Israel.

Despite its claims and hopes, a type of temporary 'peace deal' is expected according to Bible prophecy (cf. Daniel 9:27) Hamas has agreed to temporary cease-fires in the past and, thus, would be expected to do so in the future.

Koran Does Not Teach What Many Muslims Seem to Think

It may be of interest to note that the area of Palestine is not mentioned in the Koran. Thus, not all Muslims believe that they are to acquire Jerusalem. Notice the following:

Sheikh Ahmad Adwan, who introduces himself as a Muslim scholar who lives in Jordan, said on his personal Facebook page that there is no such thing as "Palestine" in the Koran. Allah has assigned the Holy Land to the Children of Israel until the Day of Judgment (Koran, Sura 5 – "The Sura of the Table", Verse 21), and "We made the Children of Israel the inheritors (of the land)" (Koran, Sura 26 – "The Sura of the Poets", Verse 59).

"I say to those who distort their Lord's book, the Koran: From where did you bring the name Palestine, you liars, you accursed, when Allah has already named it "The Holy Land" and bequeathed it to the Children of Israel until the Day of Judgment. There is no such thing as 'Palestine' in the Koran. Your demand for the Land of Israel is a falsehood and it constitutes an attack on the Koran, on the Jews and their land. Therefore you won't succeed, and Allah will fail you and humiliate you, because Allah is the one who will protect them (i.e. the Jews)."

The sheikh added: "The Palestinians are the killers of children, the elderly and women.

They attack the Jews and then they use those (children, the elderly and women) as human shields and hide behind them, without mercy for their children as if they weren't their own children, in order to tell the public opinion that the Jews intended to kill them. This is exactly what I saw with my own two eyes in the 70's, when they attacked the Jordanian army, which sheltered and protected them. Instead of thanking it (the Jordanian army), they brought their children forward to (face) the Jordanian army, in order to make the world believe that the army kills their children. This is their habit and custom, their viciousness, their having hearts of stones towards their children, and their lying to public opinion, in order to get its support."

It is worth mentioning, that the above mentioned sheikh visited Israel and met Jewish religious scholars. The "Israel in Arabic" site conducted an interview

with him, in which he said that the reason for his openness towards the Jewish people "comes from my acknowledgment of their sovereignty on their land and my belief in the Koran, which told us and emphasized this in many places, like His (Allah's) saying "Oh People (i.e the Children of Israel), enter the Holy Land which Allah has assigned unto you" (Koran, Sura

5 – "The Sura of the Table", Verse 21), and His saying "We made the Children of Israel the inheritors (of the land)" (Koran, Sura 26 – "The Sura of the Poets", Verse 59) and many other verses.

He (Adwan) added: "(The Jews) are peaceful people who love peace, who are not hostile and are not aggressors, but if they are attacked, they defend themselves while causing as little damage to the attackers as possible. It is an honor for them that Allah has chosen them over the worlds – meaning over the people and the Jinns until the Day of Judgment. I made the reasons for Allah's choice clear in my books and pamphlets. When Allah chose them, He didn't do so out of politeness, and He wasn't unjust other peoples, it is just that they (the Jews) deserved this." (Cohen E. Jordanian Sheikh: 'There is no "Palestine" in the Koran. Allah gave Israel to the Jews.' Jews News, August 15, 2014. <http://www.jewsnews.co.il/2014/08/15/jordanian-sheikh-there-is-no-palestine-in-the-koran-allah-gave-israel-to-the-jews/> viewed 09/24/14)

Of course, just as many people who claim to be Christian believe as doctrines positions contrary to the Bible, Islam has similar issues. But the reality is that the Bible has promised lands that the Palestinians want, including in Gaza, to the descendants of Israel in the Bible.

Psalm 83, Daniel II, Ezekiel 30

There are some agreements/confederations that the Palestinians will be involved in. The one in Psalm 83 may involve terrorism and specifically includes the Philistines, the modern Palestinians:

3 They have taken crafty counsel against Your people,
And consulted together against Your sheltered ones.
4 They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation,
That the name of Israel may be remembered no more."
5 For they have consulted together with one consent;
They form a confederacy against You:
6 The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites;
Moab and the Hagrites;
7 Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek;
Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;
8 Assyria also has joined with them;

They have helped the children of Lot. (Psalms 83:3-8)

Notice the following:

Vast Confederacy...

Notice especially prophetic Psalm 83. Here we find described a coming coalition of nations of the Middle East whose purpose will be to eradicate the name of Israel! They will say, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance" (verse 4).

This prophecy could never have been fulfilled until this 20th century. Why? Since ancient times (the 8th century B.C.) there has not been -- until this century -- a nation in the Middle East recognized officially by the name Israel. But there is an Israel today. This is clearly a prophecy for these latter days!

Among the participants in this wide-ranging confederacy revealed in Psalm 83 will be Gebal (ancient Byblos, modern Jubayl) and "the Philistines [Palestinians centered in the Gaza Strip] with the inhabitants of Tyre" (verse 7).

Here we see that it was anciently — and accurately — prophesied that Palestinian Arabs would in these tumultuous last days become associated in some way with the cities of Lebanon. The prophet Jeremiah (47:4) also speaks of the Philistines and their allies from Tyre and Sidon.

But this prophesied alliance in Psalm 83 will not endure long. The Bible reveals that meanwhile, in our time, a great European military dictator — known in the book of Revelation as the "beast" and in the prophecy of Daniel as the "king of the north" — will arise and ultimately descend upon the Middle East. ...

The beast's intervention will have dire consequences for Israeli and Arab alike. Both Israel ("the glorious land") and Egypt will be occupied by the beast's troops (Dan. 11:40-42). (Stump K. LEBANON'S FUTURE Foretold in the Bible! Plain Truth, September-October 1982)

While the above author was correct that the fulfillment of Psalm 83 was not before the 20th century, it was not fulfilled then as this appears to be a prophecy for the 21st century.

Notice also something from the Book of Ezekiel from Catholic and Protestant translations:

5 Cush, Put and Lud, all Arabia, Cub and the children of the country of the covenant will fall by the sword with them. (Ezekiel 30:5, NJB)

5 "Ethiopia, Libya, Lydia, all the mingled people, Chub, and the men of the lands who are allied, shall fall with them by the sword." (Ezekiel 30:5)

As the Gazites/Palestinians seem to be related to the other Arabic peoples, prophecies related to the Arabic peoples will also apply, such as Ezekiel 30:2-8..

There have been rockets, retaliations, and other fighting between Israel and the Palestinians.

Although there have been temporary cease-fires, it has been stated that, "Neither side appeared ready to accept the other's conditions for a permanent cease-fire" (<http://www.voanews.com/content/israel-hamas-resume-fighting-as-cairo-talks-break-down/2419518.html>). A multi-year temporary peace deal will come about per Daniel 9:27.

Biblical prophecy teaches that the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank will support confederations which will not end well in this age. They will, for a time, believe that they will be protected by a temporary 'peace deal' (Daniel 9:27) that will not end well (Daniel 11:31,40-43) according to biblical, and even Islamic prophecy. When the 'peace deal' of Daniel 9:27 comes, many will be lulled into falsely believing that real peace has been attained (cf. Luke 17:26-29), but that will not be the case (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:13).

That being said, Jesus will come and straighten out this world (Revelation 19-20).

The Bible also tells of an age to come and that all whoever lived, Palestinian, Gazite, or not, will be offered salvation. Until then, we can expect problems to come to Gaza and other parts of Palestine.

WHAT TO DO UNTIL THE KINGDOM COMES



By D Paul Graunke Originally published in the Good News, January 1975

IN HIS model prayer, Christ instructed His disciples to pray “Thy kingdom come.” And so we do — at least some of us do — perhaps perfunctorily, perhaps fervently — but we pray for it.

And we hope it will come soon — or we hope it will come later so as not to pre-empt our plans and worldly pursuits. Or we don’t hope at all.

And we speculate about it. And argue over it. When will it come? Will it come at all? What sequence of events will lead to its arrival?

But who among us is really preparing for it?

Preparing to meet our God is something most of us would consider seriously only on our deathbeds or if we believed that Christ’s return were very, very imminent. Otherwise, forget it for now — we’ll think about it some other day.

Such a don’t-bother-me, devil-may-care (Satan takes the second coming of Christ very seriously, by the way) attitude is extremely short sighted. In the first place, if Christ does return in your lifetime, you, of course, could be in real trouble.

But should you die before He returns, as billions have before you, the question of preparation is still important. For the Bible teaches that the dead in Christ — and you do hope to be numbered among that privileged group — will be resurrected to immortality when Christ returns, when the Kingdom comes!

Wising Up

So no matter how you figure it, the coming of the Kingdom is of immediate concern to you. When you pray “Thy kingdom come,” you should also pray the prayer of Moses: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Ps. 90:12). You should take to heart the exhortation of the Apostle Paul: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16).

How do we wise up? How do we know what Christ’s will for us is in these crucial times? Fortunately, we don’t have to guess. For Christ not only told us what would happen (which everybody worries about), but also what to do about it (which most people ignore). Let’s take a look at His important — and often overlooked — instruction.

Future Shock

In 1970, Alvin Toffler, in his bestselling book *Future Shock*, proclaimed the gospel of rapid change and predicted a radically different world of the future. Toffler warned of massive future shock — bewildering anxiety, frustration and disorientation — for those who don’t change their modes of thinking and living to prepare themselves for the changes to come.

Toffler is one of a new breed of thinkers called futurists. They attempt to predict the future based on past and present conditions and trends.

Over 1900 years earlier, Jesus Christ preached another gospel of change and prophesied of a different — better — world to come. You can read about it in His best-selling book, the Bible. As the first and foremost futurist, Christ predicted the coming Kingdom of God and told people to change — repent — in order to be prepared for its arrival (Mark 1:14-15). He also warned of extreme future shock — often summed up in the expression “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” — for those who didn’t heed His message.

Some of Christ’s strongest warnings about future shock are recorded in Matthew 24 and 25. First, He foretold the sequence of traumatic events that would culminate in His return. Then He warned:

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.... Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come” (Matt. 24:36, 42).

Second-Guessing the Second Coming

In spite of these emphatic statements of Christ, there have

always been some who have tried to second-guess God the Father about the return of His Son. And who wouldn't want to know? After all, the return of Christ is the focal point of all prophecy, the hope and expectation of all true believers.

But those who try to outguess God are setting themselves up for an unpleasant dose of future shock — the trauma and disillusionment of being wrong.

Prophecy is interesting and informative, but it is plain from the words of Christ that there is only so much we can know beforehand. So it's futile to try to second-guess God. Besides, there are more important things for a Christian to do than play guessing games.

Take a word of advice from Paul:

“... Yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.... And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge... and have not charity [love], I am nothing” (I Cor. 12:31; 13:2).

Concentrate on matters that really count.

Eat, Drink While the Lord Doth Tarry

At the opposite extreme of the second-guessers are those who give up hoping or believing Christ is coming. They comprise a much larger group, and their problem is far more serious. Second-guessing is foolish — but skepticism and doubt can be fatal!

The Apostle Peter predicted that as we drew closer to Christ's return, there would be, ironically, greater and greater skepticism that He would return.

“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (II Pet. 3:3-4).

Peter explained that God does not view time as we mortals do and any “delay” is for our benefit.

“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night...” (verses 8-10).

The smart Christian realizes this and keeps himself busy doing what Christ says.

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods” (Matt. 24:45-47).

But the doubter or skeptic, lacking conviction and motivation, is liable to misuse the precious time afforded him. He adopts an eat-drink-while-the-Lord-doth-tarry life-style — with fatal consequences. “But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (verses 48-51).

Avoid future shock. Don't be caught off guard. If you let down in your spiritual responsibilities, you may be left out of the Kingdom.

The “Fuelish” Virgins

Another group of people in danger of suffering future shock is portrayed in the parable of the wise and foolish — or “fuelish,” as we shall see — virgins.

Ten virgins go out to meet the bridegroom — Christ (Matt. 25:1). Half of them are well supplied with oil; half aren't. While the bridegroom is delayed, they fall asleep. At midnight the cry goes out to meet the bridegroom.

“Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not” (Matt. 25:7-12).

Spiritual Energy Crisis

Christ tells us to be lights to the world (Matt. 5:14). “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (verse 16).

Your light can shine if you have plenty of oil — if you have and use God's Holy Spirit daily, if you have a close one-on-one relationship with God, and if you are doing His will.

But if you aren't "on fire" for God, then you, like the "fuelish" virgins, are suffering from a spiritual energy crisis.

The problem with them was not that they did anything particularly evil — but rather that they didn't do anything at all! They were spiritually apathetic and complacent. Maybe they didn't dive off the deep end of the cesspool of sensuality and sin — like the wicked servant in Matthew 24 — but neither were they fervent and zealous for the things of God.

The foolish virgins couldn't make up their deficiency by borrowing oil from others. This shows that you can't make it into the Kingdom — you can't be saved — on someone else's coat tails. All of your friends and good connections won't do you any good at the time of judgment. You will be judged on your own merits — or demerits.

Christ ended the parable with this warning:

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 25:13).

Watch what? Certainly world conditions. But Christ also meant we should watch our own spiritual condition. The literal Greek carries the connotation of being vigilant, awake, alert, prepared. We should post a continual watch on our own lives — what we think and what we do — and have plenty of fuel on hand through contact with God and His Word. Then we will be prepared for future salvation instead of future shock.

The Parable of the Talents

Now that you're awake, you need to keep yourself busy. You need to be doing something constructive with your life. This is Christ's advice in His next parable — the parable of the talents.

A talent in Christ's time was a unit of currency worth several hundred dollars at today's rates. In this parable Christ used it to symbolize a person's abilities and natural aptitudes. Etymologists tell us the modern use of the word "talent" is derived from the use Christ made of it in this parable.

The parable begins in Matthew 25:14 with a man (Christ) taking a long journey into a far country (heaven). Among his servants (Christians) he distributes his wealth for them to invest; some get more than others. Upon his return he calls for an accounting.

"And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful

over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (verses 20, 21).

The servant with two talents also doubled his amount and was similarly commended.

"Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 25:24-30).

Don't Sell Yourself Short

The lesson to all is to make the most of the talents and opportunities God gives you. This message is especially important to those who think they possess only one talent — or less. Focusing their minds on what they don't have instead of what they do, they are fond of quoting Paul's statement in I Corinthians 1:26-27: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world... the weak things... and base things of the world, and things which are despised." Identifying themselves with this description, they short-sell themselves, bury their talent, and wait, wait, wait for Christ to come.

It's too bad they don't read and identify with Paul's response to his own weaknesses. In II Corinthians 12 Paul prayed three times for relief from his physical afflictions. But God answered: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." To which Paul responded: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (verses 9-10).

The short-sellers should also read, the parable of the pounds in Luke 19:12-27. It is identical to the parable of the talents except for the fact that each servant is given only one

pound to work with. (For those who like to discount their ability, it should be pointed out that a pound was worth much less than a talent.) The profitable servants were able to show Christ a 1,000% and 500% return on His investment in them. What you start out with is Christ's responsibility — and what you end up with is yours.

The criterion for Christians to keep in mind is that Christ will only hold you accountable for what you do with what you have — not what you haven't. So get busy!

The Ice Age Cometh

In Matthew 24, Christ predicted that as the end approaches there would be an Ice Age — of the human heart. "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (verse 12).

The Apostle Paul elaborated on this chilling of human emotions and relationships in II Timothy 3:1-4:

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves... unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good ... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

One of the great challenges facing Christians today is to give love, to be concerned and involved in people's problems and needs.

Thus the parable of the sheep and goats. The time setting is the judgment when Christ sorts out the sheep (righteous) from the goats (wicked).

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

The righteous ask how this could be so.

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:34-40).

The goats on the left are left out of the Kingdom of God because they never took the time and effort to care. They took their motto from the first murderer, Cain:

"... Am I my brother's keeper?"

Endangered Species

If you were in the sorting pen now, on which side of Christ would you be placed? If you can't say confidently that you'd end up on the right side, now is the time to do something

about it.

There are too few sheep in the world — in fact, they are becoming an endangered species! Any additions to their depleted ranks will help a love-starved humanity and be well rewarded by Christ when His Kingdom comes.

The concept and practice of brotherly love is such a vast one that it could scarcely be covered in a whole article, much less in these few paragraphs. But for a working definition read Romans 13:8-10. ...

Warn the World

We have seen that Christ instructs us to watch, to develop our talents, and to love our fellowman. These are things we as individuals can — and must — do. There is yet another responsibility Jesus places upon us. But it is a collective responsibility — a job that He has assigned to His spiritual organism — the Church. And that is to warn the world that He is coming.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," said Christ (Mark 16:15).

The gospel is the good news of the coming Kingdom of God — see Mark 1:14-15.

He also commissioned His Church to:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in [into] the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20).

This is the work given to the Church to perform until Christ returns. It is being- accomplished today... on {YouTube} TV, radio, in print, and now in evangelistic campaigns. . . Through the printing and mailing of millions of magazines and booklets each year that proclaim the gospel and instruct people in all the teachings of Christ.

The {Continuing} Church of God is doing something more than pray "Thy kingdom come." As the collective body of Christ it is striving to make this important prophecy of Christ a reality: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14). ...

We have no religious axe to grind, no quotas to meet, no pressure to exert. We simply have a message of hope and salvation, and a mission to broadcast that good news to the world. We intend to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God until that Kingdom comes. For as Christ said: "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

What will you be doing when Christ comes?

We all need to watch and pray, build character, support the work, use our talents, and love as Christians until the kingdom comes—editor.

SHOULD YOU KEEP GOD'S HOLY DAYS OR DEMONIC HOLIDAYS?

DID EARLY CHRISTIANS KEEP THE SPRING HOLY DAYS?




Unleavened Bread

www.ccog.org April - June 2016

BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY

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By Bob Thiel

Are you familiar with Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost? Should you be observing them?

The 23rd chapter of the Book of Leviticus lists God's festivals and Sabbaths. There were several that occur in the Spring of the year. Did early Christians keep them or did they consider that they were only for the Jews?

The Spring Holy Days

Here is the place in the Bible where all the Spring Holy Days are listed in the same chapter:

4 'These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. 5 On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Lord's Passover. 6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. 7 On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. 8 But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.'

15 'And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. 16 Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord.

21 And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. (Leviticus 23:4-8,15-16,21-22)

These festivals and Holy Days are basically known by

Christians who keep them as Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost. Jewish writings sometimes call Pentecost "Azeret," which means solemn assembly (Pentecost. Jewish Encyclopedia of 1906).

Jesus and the Passover

Jesus kept the Passover. On Jesus' last Passover as a human being, He not only continued to keep it at the time of the late evening, He told His disciples to keep it (Luke 22:14-19; cf. John 13:2,12-15) and on what was the 14th of Nisan/Abib (cf. Luke 22:14; 23:52-54).

The evening before He was killed, Jesus changed several of the practices associated with its observance. Jesus made the bread and wine an integral part of Passover (Matthew 26:18, 26-30) and added the practice of footwashing (John 13:12-17).

Jesus in no way taught that it was not to be an annual Passover, nor did He change the time of day of its observation to a Sunday morning like those who follow Greco-Roman traditions do. Even Greek Orthodox scholars admit that 1st and 2nd century Christians kept Passover at night (Calivas, Alkiviadis C. The Origins of Pascha and Great Week - Part I. Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1992. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America) like we in the Continuing Church of God do in the 21st century.

The Apostle Paul taught that Jesus Christ was the Passover lamb sacrificed for us and that we are to keep that Feast with unleavened bread:

7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

Notice that the feast is to be kept with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The Apostle Paul realized that that Jesus was a substitute for the Passover lamb that the Jewish people used. He also taught that Christians should still continue to observe Passover:

But basically how were Christians to keep Passover?

The Apostle Paul explains:

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in

remembrance of Me." 25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23-29)

So, the Apostle Paul taught that Christians were to keep the Passover in the manner that Jesus observed His final Passover with the bread and wine (which also includes footwashing). And that was at night as a remembrance or memorial--a memorial is an annual, not a weekly event.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states the following:

1333 ... "He took bread...." "He took the cup filled with wine...."

1339 Jesus choose the time of the Passover...And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them (Catechism of the Catholic Church. Imprimatur Potest +Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. Doubleday, NY 1995, p. 373)

Notice that it is well known that Jesus broke bread and passed it to His followers to eat. Jesus also passed the wine to His followers to drink. We in the Continuing Church of God also pray, break and distribute bread, and distribute wine for His followers to consume. Yet, the Church of Rome no longer breaks bread nor distributes wine for its followers to drink. It should also be noted that the Eastern Orthodox and some Protestants intentionally use LEAVENED bread which was not the practice of Jesus nor His early faithful followers.

It probably should be added that the 'Mother' (Revelation 17:5) Church of Rome and many of its Protestant and other 'daughters' officially teach that they keep Passover, though they call it something different in the English language (they call it 'Easter' after the Babylonian goddess Istarte) and do not keep it as Jesus did.

Sources Outside of Scripture

It is not just in the Bible that we see that Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread were kept annually by Christians. History records that the faithful kept Passover annually on the 14th from the time of the original apostles and throughout the ages.

History records that the biblically-listed apostles (including Paul) as well as Bishops/Pastors Polycarp, Thraseas, Sagaris, Papirius, Melito, Polycrates, Apollinaris, and others kept the Passover annually on the 14th (Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book V, Chapter 24 verses 2-7, pp. 114-115; Apollinaris. From the Book Concerning Passover.). I should

mentioned that the Roman, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglican Catholics all consider those leaders to have been saints, yet none of those faiths follows their examples on this.

Notice something that Bishop/Pastor Apollinaris of Hierapolis in Phrygia of Asia Minor wrote around 180 A.D. trying to encourage people to keep Passover on the 14th:

There are, then, some who through ignorance raise disputes about these things (though their conduct is pardonable: for ignorance is no subject for blame -- it rather needs further instruction), and say that on the fourteenth day the Lord ate the lamb with the disciples, and that on the great day of the feast of unleavened bread He Himself suffered; and they quote Matthew as speaking in accordance with their view. Wherefore their opinion is contrary to the law, and the Gospels seem to be at variance with them...

The fourteenth day, the true Passover of the Lord; the great sacrifice, the Son of God instead of the lamb, who was bound, who bound the strong, and who was judged, though Judge of living and dead, and who was delivered into the hands of sinners to be crucified...and who was buried on the day of the passover, the stone being placed upon the tomb (Apollinaris. From the Book Concerning Passover.).

Jesus ate and kept the Passover on the 14th, was killed on the 14th, and was buried on the 14th. This was not on the 15th, and it that year it was NOT on a Sunday.

Bishop/Pastor Polycrates of Ephesus sent a letter to the Roman Bishop Victor when Victor tried to force the observance of Passover on a Sunday instead of the 14th:

We observe the exact day; neither adding, nor taking away. For in Asia also great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord's coming, when he shall come with glory from heaven, and shall seek out all the saints. Among these are Philip, one of the twelve apostles, who fell asleep in Hierapolis; and his two aged virgin daughters, and another daughter, who lived in the Holy Spirit and now rests at Ephesus; and, moreover, John, who was both a witness and a teacher, who reclined upon the bosom of the Lord, and, being a priest, wore the sacerdotal plate. He fell asleep at Ephesus. And Polycarp in Smyrna, who was a bishop and martyr; and Thraseas, bishop and martyr from Eumenia, who fell asleep in Smyrna. Why need I mention the bishop and martyr Sagaris who fell asleep in Laodicea, or the blessed Papius, or Melito, the Eunuch who lived altogether in the Holy Spirit, and who lies in Sardis, awaiting the episcopate from heaven, when he shall rise from the dead? All these observed

the fourteenth day of the passover according to the Gospel, deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, do according to the tradition of my relatives, some of whom I have closely followed. For seven of my relatives were bishops; and I am the eighth. And my relatives always observed the day when the people put away the leaven. I, therefore, brethren, who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord, and have met with the brethren throughout the world, and have gone through every Holy Scripture, am not affrighted by terrifying words. For those greater than I have said 'We ought to obey God rather than man'...I could mention the bishops who were present, whom I summoned at your desire; whose names, should I write them, would constitute a great multitude. And they, beholding my littleness, gave their consent to the letter, knowing that I did not bear my gray hairs in vain, but had always governed my life by the Lord Jesus. (Eusebius, The History of the Church, Book V, Chapter 24 verses 2-7, pp. 114-115)

Note that Polycrates:

- 1) Claimed to be a follower of the teachings passed on from the Apostle John
- 2) Claimed that he was being faithful to the teachings of the Gospel
- 3) Relied on the position that teachings from the Bible were above those of Roman-accepted tradition
- 4) Claimed that he was being faithful to the teachings passed down to him
- 5) Was then the spokesperson for the faithful in Asia Minor
- 6) Claimed he and his predecessors observed the time of unleavened bread
- 7) Refused to accept the authority of a non-biblical Roman tradition over the Bible
- 8) Refused to accept the authority of the Bishop of Rome--he preferred to be separate (cf. Revelation 18:4)
- 9) Claimed that his life was to be governed by Jesus and not opinions of men

Because early Christians kept Passover on the 14th, they and others who did so were labelled Quartodecimans (Latin for fourteenths) by many historians.

Passover was kept annually on the 14th of Nisan by the faithful and others in later centuries. Catholic scholars record this occurred in the 4th (Epiphanius. The Panarion

of Epiphanius of Salamis, Books II and III (Sects 47-80), De Fide), 5th (Socrates Scholasticus. Ecclesiastical History, Book V, Chapter XXII; Ephiphanius. The Panarion of Ephiphanius of Salamis. Section IV, Verses 1,3;1,6;2,6. EJ Brill, New York, 1994, pp. 23-25), 6th-8th (Bede. The Ecclesiastical History of the English People. Oxford University Press, NY, 1999, pp. 152-159), and later centuries. Various Church of God writers have traced its observance from the time of the apostles to modern times (e.g. Dugger AN, Dodd CO. A History of True Religion, 3rd ed. Jerusalem, 1972 (Church of God, 7th Day). Thiel B. Continuing History of the Church of God. Nazarene Books, 2015).

Although I believe that portions of the text were corrupted (and the extant editions contain what seem to be fanciful and non-original additions), there is some interesting information in a writing called The Life of Polycarp. This document seems to be based upon writings in the second century, but the extant version contains information/changes that seem to be added in the fourth century (Monroy MS. The Church of Smyrna: History and Theology of a Primitive Christian Community. Peter Lang edition, 2015, p. 31). But interestingly, it suggests that this Passover "tradition" in Asia Minor may not have first come to Smyrna from the Apostle John, but even earlier from the Apostle Paul:

In the days of unleavened bread Paul, coming down from Galatia, arrived in Asia, considering the repose among the faithful in Smyrna to be a great refreshment in Christ Jesus after his severe toil, and intending afterwards to depart to Jerusalem. So in Smyrna he went to visit Strataeas, who had been his hearer in Pamphylia, being a son of Eunice the daughter of Lois. These are they of whom he makes mention when writing to Timothy, saying; Of the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and in thy mother Eunice; whence we find that Strataeas was a brother of Timothy. Paul then, entering his house and gathering together the faithful there, speaks to them concerning the Passover and the Pentecost, reminding them of the New Covenant of the offering of bread and the cup; how that they ought most assuredly to celebrate it during the days of unleavened bread, but to hold fast the new mystery of the Passion and Resurrection. For here the Apostle plainly teaches that we ought neither to keep it outside the season of unleavened bread, as the heretics do, especially the Phrygians... (Pionius, Life of Polycarp, Chapter 2. Translated by J. B. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers, vol. 3.2, 1889, pp.488-506)

Hence the above seems to suggest that the New Covenant practice of taking the bread and wine was to be taken during the season of unleavened bread, which would specifically

include Passover. It states that heretics did it another way. And that writing is also supportive of the idea that the bread AND wine were taken, and were taken ANNUALLY.

Perhaps it should be added that the 17th verse of the spurious 3rd century Epistula Apostolorum claims Jesus taught His followers should keep the Days of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost until He returns. While we cannot rely on that document, it does indicate that some Christians were keeping those days into the 3rd century.

Greco-Roman scholars recognize that aspects of Passover, like footwashing, were observed by those they considered to be early faithful Christians (Thurston, H. Washing of Feet and Hands. In The Catholic Encyclopedia. 1912, New York: Robert Appleton Company; Hardinge, Leslie. The Celtic Church in Britain. Teach Services, Brushton (NY) 2000, pp. 111,116).

As far as the Days of Unleavened Bread go, the Greco-Roman faiths use this time to calculate their Spring observances, but do not keep these days. Their supporters declared with Canon 38 of the Council of Laodicea of the fourth century (c. 363-364) a prohibition on the observation of the days of unleavened bread (Synod of Laodicea. Translated by Henry Percival. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 14), which demonstrates that some even associated with them were trying to keep them. Those in the Church of God could not comply with many decrees of this Council which went against the Bible as well as the early traditions of the faithful.

Various Sabbath-keepers also continued to keep the days of unleavened bread afterwards (Pritz. Nazarene Jewish Christianity. Magnas, Jerusalem, 1988, p. 35; Jerome as cited in Pritz, pp. 58,62,63; Ephiphanius. The Panarion of Ephiphanius of Salamis: Book II (sects 1-46) Section 1, Chapter 19, 7-9. Frank Williams, editor. Publisher BRILL, 1987, p. 117-119) and into the Middle Ages and beyond (Liechty D. Sabbatarianism in the Sixteenth Century. Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs (MI), 1993, pp. 61-62; Falconer John. A Breife Refutation of John Traskes Judaical and Novel Fanyces, pp. 57-58, as cited in Ball B. Seventh Day Men: Sabbatarians and Sabbatarianism in England and Wales, 1600-1800, 2nd edition. James Clark & Co., 2009, pp. 49-50)

As we in the Continuing Church of God do not accept that the Council of Laodicea spoke for the true Christian church, we also still keep the days of unleavened bread. We eat some unleavened bread for each of the seven days as the Bible admonishes (it perhaps should be mentioned that one can eat foods other than just unleavened bread during this Feast, it is just that no leavened breads are to be eaten) and have a holy convocation on the first and last days as the

Bible enjoins.

Who changed them and why?

But most who profess Christianity do not keep the days of unleavened bread nor properly keep Passover.

The Apostle John warned that there were people who came from contact with the true Christians, but would not continue in the proper practices:

18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. (1 John 2:18-19)

Some of the earliest changes had to do with Passover.

John's disciple Polycarp, who continued John's practices as well as the proper date of Passover, warned of "the vanity of many, and their false doctrines" (Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians, Chapter VII). Polycarp was referring to those who professed Christ, but were not faithful.

There were several changes that the Greco-Roman churches adopted related to Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread which not were scriptural.

One of the first documented changes appears to have been a change in the date of Passover from the 14th of Nisan to Sunday.

In Judea, the Jews under the leadership of Simon Bar Kokhba revolted against Rome from 132-135 A.D. After the Jews were defeated, Emperor Hadrian declared that no Jewish were allowed in Jerusalem (cf. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem. <http://www.holylight.gr/patria/enpatria.html> viewed 11/30/07). An apostate leader rose up named Marcus of Jerusalem who told the Christians if they were to compromise and basically adopt Sunday for Passover and eat unclean meats, etc. that they could remain in Jerusalem (Gibbon E. Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Volume I, Chapter XV, Section I. ca. 1776-1788; Pines S. The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity according to a New Source. Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Volume II, No.13; 1966. Jerusalem, pp. 14-15).

Those who compromised went with this Marcus, while the faithful Christians had to leave Jerusalem. The allegorizers in Alexandria and the cowardly in Rome also adopted this change to apparently try to distance themselves from the

Jews in the eyes of the Roman authorities (cf. Lightfoot JB. Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes and Dissertations. Published by Macmillan, 1881, pp. 317, 331).

Also near this time, from what has been called an 'unknown source', some pagan practices similar to those used in Mithraism were incorporated into Passover ceremonies of the Greco-Romans (cf. Latourette KS. A History of Christianity, Volume 1: to A.D. 1500. HarperCollins, San Francisco, 1975, pp. 198,200). The practices were also very similar to those adopted by another Marcus (not the one of Jerusalem) that Irenaeus condemned (Irenaeus. Adversus Haereses, Book I, Chapter 13, Verses 3-7). This Marcus had ties to Valentinus, a leader who was tolerated for decades by the Church of Rome (Tertullian. The Prescription against Heretics, Chapter 30), even after being condemned by the Church of God leader Polycarp of Smyrna (Irenaeus. Adversus Haeres. Book III, Chapter 4, Verse 3). Much compromise occurred in the Greco-Roman churches.

By the time of the early third century, a Greco-Roman supporter named Tertullian wrote that Satan must have inspired the Mithraic pagans to have some of the same 'Passover' practices as the Greco-Romans before Jesus was born (Tertullian. The Prescription against Heretics, Chapter 40). But since the Greco-Roman practices did not come from the Bible, it is they who seemingly copied the pagans.

But not all the Greco-Romans had adopted the change of Passover date nor perhaps all the pagan practices. This caused some divisions for the Greco-Romans.

In the fourth century, Mithras-worshiping Roman Emperor Constantine summoned the Council of Nicea to try to change that. No Church of God leaders were in official attendance (it is not clear if any were invited). Constantine presided over the Council which decreed that Sunday was to be the day of worship (as was the practice of the Mithras religion) and that Passover was to be observed on a Sunday, as opposed to the biblical date of the 14th of Nisan (First Council of Nicæa (A.D. 325) Translated by Henry Percival. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 14. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900).

Notice some of Emperor Constantine's logic as he declared:

Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Saviour a different way. (Eusebius. Life of Constantine, Book III chapter 18)

Of course, that statement related to Jesus is false. Jesus kept Passover on the 14th, He was the one that used and

taught breaking of the bread and distribution of the wine, and of course Jesus was also Jewish (John 4:9).

Anyway, the Greco-Romans latched on to Constantine. Distancing themselves from the Jews (and original Christians) is probably the real reason why the Eastern Orthodox adopted the use of leavened bread for Passover (though they claim it is from the Bible).

And as for the Days of Unleavened Bread, the Greco-Romans use that period to determine the date(s) of their Easter. It is also possible that the pagan practice of Lent was partially intended to replace the Days of Unleavened Bread (although the timing and practices, of course, were not consistent with those of the faithful early Christians).

Pentecost

The last of the Spring Holy Days is known as Pentecost.

Most who profess Christ know something about Pentecost. Many properly consider it the start of the New Testament church.

After Jesus died, His disciples were told to wait to receive the power of the Holy Spirit:

4 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; 5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:4-5)

So they waited and:

1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place (Acts 2:1).

Notice that the emphasis is on the fact that the Day of Pentecost had fully come. The Bible is making it clear that the events that follow were directly related to the fact that the Day of Pentecost had fully come. And, it happened to the disciples because they were all observing it together.

Here is what happened then:

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. ...

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the

remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ... 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:2-4, 38-42, 47).

They received some of the power of Holy Spirit. And this is considered to be the start of the Christian church by the Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, most Protestant, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Church of God groups. So the Holy Spirit was given at a certain time (the same time that many of the Jews observed Pentecost) and Jesus' disciples were still observing it.

The Apostle Paul Kept Pentecost

The Feast of Pentecost was kept by Christians after the initial one, but with no mention of speaking in tongues. The Apostle Paul continued to keep Pentecost decades after the Pentecost mentioned in the second chapter of the Book of Acts. Notice what he wrote, about 56 A.D.:

8 For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits. But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost (1 Corinthians 16:8).

This shows that Paul knew when Pentecost was, that he felt that the Corinthians must know when Pentecost was, and that the Ephesians would have known when Pentecost was. Thus, it apparently was being observed by Paul and the Gentiles in Ephesus and Corinth.

In another year, the Apostle Paul also wished to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost, around 60 A.D.:

16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 20:16).

Thus, Christians in Jerusalem were still observing Pentecost and Paul was observing it too. Otherwise, there would be no obvious reason why Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

Can It Be Kept Outside of Jerusalem?

Some have indicated that the biblical Holy Days cannot be kept now as they would require that everyone would go to Jerusalem.

But that was not the case historically, even with Jesus.

Towards the start of His ministry, Jesus spoke on the “day of the sabbaths” (Luke 4:16). Pentecost is also called the Feast of Weeks/Sabbaths (Deuteronomy 16:10,16). That Luke meant the plural can be confirmed by looking at the actual Greek term. The actual word (not the Strong’s grouping of like words) for sabbaths, σαββάτων, is plural (σαββάτω, as in Luke 14:1, is singular). The passage is literally translated as follows:

16 And He came into Nazareth where He was brought up. And according to His custom, He went in on the days of the sabbaths, into the synagogue, and stood up to read. (Luke 4:16. Green JP, Sr. Interlinear Greek-English New Testament, third edition. Baker Books, 2002 printing, p. 187)

So, this helps show that one could keep a Holy Day, as Jesus did, in a location other than Jerusalem (He also seemed to possibly keep another holy day in Galilee in Luke 6:1-2, see Green, p. 194. Gill’s commentary point to this as Pentecost; whereas Benson’s and Barnes’ commentaries points to this as the first Day of Unleavened Bread).

Even the Greco-Roman churches recognize that Pentecost, also referred to as the feast of weeks (Leviticus 23:15-16) and the day of firstfruits (Number 28:26) in the Old Testament, had Christian significance.

The idea of Christians being firstfruits is confirmed in the New Testament (James 1:18). In ancient Israel, there was a smaller harvest in the Spring and a larger harvest in the Fall. The Spring Holy Day Pentecost, when properly understood, helps picture that God is only calling some now for salvation (John 6:44; 1 Corinthians 1:26; Romans 11:15) with a larger harvest coming later (John 7:37-38).

Some Protestant groups and the Church of Rome refer to Pentecost by the name Whitsunday and recognize that Pentecost was observed by Christians from the first century (e.g. Holweck F.G. Pentecost (Whitsunday). The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume XV. Copyright © 1912).

Although many Greco-Roman churches observe some version of Pentecost, because they do not observe certain other biblical holy days, they fail to understand why God is only calling some now, and that He does have a plan to offer all salvation (Luke 3:6; Isaiah 52:10). Oddly, they also tend to claim that they keep it coincidentally on, but not because of, the biblical date (cf. Ibid).

Sources After the New Testament

The idea that Pentecost was to be kept by those who professed Christ was confirmed by a variety of Greco-Roman sources such as Irenaeus (who claimed to have met Polycarp), Tertullian (Tertullian. On Baptism, Chapter 19), Origen of Alexandria (Origen. Contra Celsus, Book VIII, Chapter XXII.), and others. That actual Christians were keeping it in the fourth century appears to be confirmed by writings from people such as Jerome and Ephiphanius.

The Continuing Church of God keeps it in this 21st century.

Concluding Comments

There is no question that early Christians kept the Spring Holy Days.

This is shown in the New Testament, as well as in many historical post-New Testament sources.

We in the Continuing Church of God continue to keep the Spring Holy Days at the same time and in the basically same manner that they were kept by the early faithful Christians.

Although the Greco-Roman churches do profess that they observe a version of some of them (though usually with Passover on the wrong date), the reality is that many of their practices did not derive from the Bible nor the original apostles, but were adopted because of compromise with paganism.

True Christians, those who are willing to forsake “the vanity of many, and their false doctrines,” keep them in the 21st century, in the biblical manner, and on the biblical dates. Shouldn’t you?

DRESSING FOR CHURCH

Should you 'dress up' when you attend church services?



Christians after church services in New Zealand

By Bob Thiel

Last Summer, someone asked me why people should try to be dressed up when they attend church services. He wondered about outside vs. inside appearance.

Inward character is important (2 Corinthians 4:16). God is much more impressed with what is going on internally, than externally (Matthew 23:27-28; 1 Peter 3:4-5). That is clear from scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments (1 Samuel 16:7; Luke 18:9-14).

The internal truth is always more important than the external appearance.

As far as dress for church services goes, basically, the historical Philadelphia era view has been that since we are to be God's ambassadors and a royal priesthood, that the way one would dress as such is appropriate. This has had side benefits as well. Historically, this helped the church to be able to rent places for meetings as well as for the Feast of Tabernacles as communities feel better about those who dress in a more professional-appearing manner.

Here are some scriptures that would tend to relate to our individual roles that way:

20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20).

9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9).

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Nice attire tends to please the outside community and is a way to let our light shine.

While the Continuing Church of God (CCOG) does not mandate suits and ties, that is the normal attire for those males who attend the Feast of Tabernacles or other services in Western societies. Women normally wear skirts or dresses, and of course should not be wearing ones that are excessively short, or otherwise be dressed immodestly (1 Timothy 2:9). Immodest clothing is clothing that tends to be sexually provocative (such as being too sheer, too tight, or not covering enough skin) or intended as an excessive display of wealth (like certain outrageously-priced custom-designer items or excessive jewellery). The Bible, in Deuteronomy 22:5, also forbids what is known as 'cross-dressing.'

As far as appearance goes, consider also the following:

9 But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; 11 that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, 12 that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing. (1 Thessalonians 4:9-12)

We are to have Philadelphian love (which is what the original Greek for "brotherly love" 1 Thessalonians 4:9 literally says) so that we may walk properly toward those who are outside the church.

Notice something that Jesus taught:

11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. 12 So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

14 "For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:11-14)

If one is expected to dress appropriately to be a guest at a wedding, is it not reasonable to think that God would expect people to dress nicely attend public worship services for Him?

Notice also that the Apostle John said that when we fellowship, we essentially come in the presence of God:

3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:3)

How would you dress if you were to meet a major political leader? Would you act in a less appropriate manner before the Creator?

Realize that God sees you:

13 The Lord looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. 14 From the place of His dwelling He looks On all the inhabitants of the earth; 15 He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works. (Psalms 33:13-15)

God knows what you wear and your attitude towards Him and His services. Consider also the following:

31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, 33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. (1 Corinthians 10:31-33)

Some in the Church of God, and I am going back to my days in the old Worldwide Church of God (WCG) and other COG groups, do take offense if one dresses sloppily at services as I have heard comments in the past.

On the other hand, people are not supposed to try to impress people with their possible wealth, etc. either (1 Timothy 2:9).

In Zechariah 3:1-7, the Bible teaches that the high priest Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and Satan standing beside him. Apparently Joshua (a type of one who is to be here today at least according to the old WCG) was in the grip of Satan, unable to wrest himself free from Satan. Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, typical of SIN, under Satan's grip, unable to loose himself. Then Jesus came and rebuked Satan. Jesus freed Joshua from Satan's grip on him. Then Christ gave order to remove the filthy garments on Joshua (picturing freeing him from satanic SIN, due to Satan's grip on him). Jesus said He caused Joshua's sin to be forgiven and ordered them to clothe Joshua with clean garments and set a turban on his head, saying to Joshua, "If you will walk in My ways, And if you will keep My command, Then you shall also judge My house, And likewise have charge of My courts" (verse 7). God's courts would be the temple or the synagogues, now commonly called churches or church services.

Perhaps it should be mentioned that God's angels are shown

in the Bible to appear in WHITE garments (John 20:12) as a symbol of purity and righteousness. Clothes seem to make a difference to God, or at least the right attitude towards them does.

Again, we do not mandate a suit and tie for males in CCOG, but we do believe that such dress in certain Western cultures is consistent with the scriptures that I have quoted here.

Let it also be stated that some people WANT to look poor and unkempt. Notice also the following:

18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. (Colossians 2:18-19)

While no one in the CCOG could be a true member if they worship angels/demons, people also need to guard against false humility.

As far as dress goes, basically we expect people wear clean clothes (not improperly sheer or tight) and dress nicely, though not more nicely than they can reasonably afford. If you are doing that, you meet what the Bible teaches (though I would add that most can afford to buy used ties, which is part of Western culture).



Christians participating in an activity during the Feast of Tabernacles in Canada

Now this DOES NOT mean that anytime you meet with other Christians you need to 'dress-up.' For casual dinners and various church activities, that would not be appropriate. Also, people do not need to 'dress-up' if they have services by themselves in their homes without others coming.

The Bible teaches "whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Dress as God would have you do.

STUDY THE BIBLE COURSE

TEST NUMBER 2 LESSONS 5-8



Bob Thiel, Editor-in-Chief

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Preface: This course is highly based upon the personal correspondence course developed in 1954 that began under the direction of the late C. Paul Meredith in the old Radio Church of God. Various portions have been updated for the 21st century (though much of the original writing has been retained). It also has more scriptural references, as well as information and questions not in the original course. Unless otherwise noted, scriptural references are to the NKJV, copyright Thomas Nelson Publishing, used by permission. The KJV, sometimes referred to as the Authorized Version is also often used. Additionally, Catholic-approved translations such as the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) are sometimes used as are other translations.

This examination is given to help you better understand your Bible.

You are now reading the QUESTIONS SECTION. It CONTAINS the INSTRUCTIONS and the QUESTIONS you will be asked. Note that there are 80 questions and that they are numbered consecutively 1, 2, 3 etc. Note also that there are four possible answers given under each question. These are labeled A, B, C, D. ONLY ONE of these four possible answers is considered to be the RIGHT one!—the other three are false unless stated otherwise.

YOU ARE TO SELECT THE ONE RIGHT ANSWER FROM AMONG THESE FOUR POSSIBLE ANSWERS.

You are to repeat this process for each of the questions asked. This comprises your test. (Generally speaking, the incorrect answers are false ideas which are taught and believed about the subject.)

Our objective is to give all who have determination to know God's Word the opportunity to understand the true meaning of the Bible.

By the answers you give to our examination questions, you help show if you have the desire to learn and are doing your best. We are here to aid just such people and we are thrilled to do so.

The final judge as to whether you know your Bible and are living by it will be God Himself. He is the One you had better seek to please. It is He who is able to give you eternal life.

Your eagerness to study and to make the most of your opportunity is what really counts. The exact grade you might make is not too important to you or to us. Naturally, however, we would expect a somewhat high percentage of correct answers from you.

Answer as many questions as you can without referring to the previous lessons you have studied. If you find any difficult questions, then refer to the lessons. We expect you to do so!

Notice that these questions are divided into four parts—corresponding to the four lessons. We advise you not to cover more than one lesson at a sitting. Take sufficient time to understand each question.

Here are two EXAMPLES TO SHOW YOU HOW to answer the questions:

Read the first question of this test. The right answer to select, of course, is "C." Here is the second example: Notice question number 2 on the next page. The correct answer is "B." That is all there is to it! It is very simple and fast.

The procedure is always the same. Now continue with question 3 in the same manner...

God's Millennial Government

1. How will Utopia finally become a reality?
 - A. Only through a true revival in all churches and their union into *one church*.
 - B. When people of goodwill everywhere combine their efforts toward this end.
 - C. Through God's intervention, as He only has the power and wisdom to set up a Utopia.
 - D. By international cooperation implementing the United Nations' "New Universal Agenda" that was adopted in the Fall of 2015.
2. When Christ is King over all the earth, how will He govern it?
 - A. Through elected representatives of all nations.
 - B. By God's law, which will then be the law of the whole world.
 - C. By allowing people to reason out the specific laws and regulations best for each nation under the circumstances.
 - D. By applying the wise principles men has formulated through their various governments and the United Nations.
3. Why is God allowing men to establish their own forms of human government?
 - A. Because He is not concerned with politics.
 - B. Because different races need different types of government.
 - C. So, people will be able to develop good traditions.
 - D. So they will ultimately learn how wrong their ways and ideas are.
4. When Christ comes to rule the world, He will
 - A. govern gently and sweetly at all times.
 - B. place a man over Israel that has never had any military experience.
 - C. rule with a rod of iron and be very severe with the rebellious.
 - D. take no interest in education as education has nothing to do with a better way of life.
5. God's ways are
 - A. firmly believed in by most calling themselves Christians today.
 - B. superior to our ways.
 - C. promoted in the public schools today.
 - D. properly taught by the world's main religions today.
6. False or improper education
 - A. helps to enslave us.
 - B. may result in a little discomfort to us but it does not enslave us.
 - C. results when God's Word is taught in the public schools.
 - D. is not one of the ills today in the United States and Britain, for we have relatively modern schools.
7. Which *one* of the following four statements is *false*? When Christ's government is established on earth
 - A. transformed saints will be priests.
 - B. some saints, in addition, will have other offices.
 - C. humankind will be taught the right way to live.
 - D. multiple religions will be encouraged so people can follow their hearts.
8. Repentance means
 - A. not to turn from the wrong way in which one is living.
 - B. turning to an evil way of life.
 - C. turning from our ways to God's way.
 - D. to keep on living as you are living.
9. The final fate of those who, in the millennium, cannot be taught obedience under any circumstances will be
 - A. that they will be left to shift for themselves.
 - B. eternal removal from both God and man called the second death.
 - C. removal to another planet.
 - D. an opportunity to receive more chances.
10. What will be the objective of God's program of re-education during the millennium?
 - A. To reform only our economic system.
 - B. To develop the **WHOLE** character of humanity—to perfect humanity's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual life.
 - C. To re-educate humans to understand their responsibility in a *democratically* governed society.
 - D. To remold only the social life of the community.
11. God's re-educational program will teach humans
 - A. to become healthy, happy and prosperous.
 - B. that God wants us to be poor.
 - C. that true spirituality is developed by being miserable and unhappy.
 - D. that it is natural to be sick.

12. What method will God use to re-educate the world?
- He will merely reform the present educational structure, making as few changes as possible.
 - He will abolish all falsehood and institute a new system teaching obedience to God's laws.
 - He will teach everyone to follow whatever he/she thinks is right.
 - He will keep religion out of the schools.
13. How will God's educational program be supervised?
- By political parties.
 - By school boards, the same as today.
 - By leaders elected by the vote of the people.
 - By God's government ruling from the top down.
14. How is God now preparing a trained teaching staff for the future?
- By calling individuals out of the ways of this world and training them, through His word and experience, that God's laws are best.
 - He isn't training any—there won't be any need for teachers during the millennium.
 - By training teachers in today's worldly top flight colleges to teach a man how to live.
 - By preparing the various denominations to take over the educational program.
15. Re-education will be successful because
- it will be supervised by denominational churches instead of the government.
 - the people will vote on what they wish to be taught.
 - teachers won't be allowed to punish children.
 - there will be a power invested in teachers to keep order and to make people learn the truth.
16. During the millennium, which one of the following will be established?
- Parochial schools to supplement God's system.
 - Government by God which will regulate humanity's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being.
 - Military academies to train an efficient army.
 - 'Rainbow' education to support those with different gender preferences.
17. As a result of God's educational program, there will be
- toleration extended to all religions.
 - universal knowledge of the really important things of life.
 - scientific advances in military technology.
 - confusion in the methods of instructions.
18. What is the fundamental BASIS of a right education?
- A child-centered training program.
 - The scientific method of study which limits itself strictly to physical things revealed only by man's five senses.
 - The truth, including God's revealed laws which define right from wrong.
 - A democratically controlled educational program.
19. People have been taught the wrong way of life
- ever since the days of Adam.
 - only since the time of Christ.
 - they have never been taught the wrong way.
 - because they have been following God's laws which are bad for them.
20. What steps is the true Church to take today to prepare for God's future educational program?
- The Church is to train its members to qualify as teachers for the millennial reign of Christ.
 - The Church is to force God's way on the world now by a campaign to reform this world's school systems.
 - The Church is not to be concerned about it.
 - The Church is to teach that God's laws regulating life have been abolished.
21. Jesus was born to ultimately
- teach all people to celebrate Christmas and Easter.
 - set forth principles the nations should use in electing their officials.
 - be a king and sit on David's throne.
 - picture to all people the worth of rugged individualism and rejection of authority.
22. Jesus wants men and women to
- renounce all earthly interests.
 - have abundant, happy lives
 - work through the "accepted" political and religious channels for world peace.
 - strive through denominational churches to bring about Utopia.

Utopia!

23. How did the world, in general, accept Christ's message?
- Nearly all accepted it except the Jews.
 - The Roman world accepted the *true* Christian message, and it now permeates our western society.
 - Only about half the world has accepted Jesus' message.
 - They spoke evil of it and rejected it.
24. From *where* will Jesus receive His crown and His kingdom?
- From God the Father in heaven.
 - From His saints and His churches.
 - Since His kingdom is not literal, His coronation takes place only in the hearts of humans.
 - From the United Nations and all men of good will.
25. Jesus' actual coronation
- took place when He ascended to heaven.
 - will take place *after* He conquers the Anti-Christ.
 - will take place just *before* His second coming.
 - takes place when each of us pledges Him our allegiance.
26. As King of kings, how many great crowns will Jesus have?
- Only one.
 - Three, to show His sovereignty over heaven, Hades, and earth.
 - Seven, the "perfect number."
 - Many—the exact number is not described.
27. When do the saints receive their crowns?
- After Jesus returns during the millennium.
 - When we die "in Christ."
 - At Christ's return.
 - Just after we are raptured to heaven.
28. After His return, Jesus' dominion
- will be only in Palestine.
 - will extend to the ends of the earth.
 - will be over Christian nations only.
 - will actually be in heaven, where the saints are raptured.
29. In the millennium, Christ will
- let the weather cycles function normally upon the disobedient.
 - see that Israel and all other peoples are blessed with proper rainfall and other physical blessings.
 - bless *only* the Jews.
 - not attempt to control the weather
30. In the millennium, devastated cities in Palestine
- will be rebuilt and repopulated.
 - will in no case be rebuilt.
 - are to be swallowed up by such great earthquakes that they will be forgotten forever.
 - will be used primarily as dumping grounds.
31. During Christ's rule, Israelites will
- build new homes with an abundance of lumber from Lebanon.
 - again dwell in tents so they can be close to God.
 - all be living in palaces as world-rulers.
 - not have modern cities.
32. Palestine is destined to
- become mountainous through great earthquakes.
 - remain arid.
 - blossom forth as the Garden of Eden.
 - be covered by the Dead Sea.
33. The life-giving stream flowing from Jerusalem into the Dead Sea
- will be constructed by the city for commercial purposes.
 - shows that humankind's genius will continue to control natural forces.
 - signifies Jesus' weeping tears over Jerusalem.
 - symbolizes the "healing" of the nations through Christ's Spirit going forth to all peoples.
34. During Christ's reign, the nations will
- all be destroyed, except the Israelites.
 - preserve their individual ways and "accept the Lord."
 - each be allowed to continue their own systems of government.
 - all learn God's way and obey His laws.

Ending FINANCIAL Troubles

35. During Christ's reign material blessings
- will not be given as a reward
 - will not be bestowed upon the Gentiles.
 - will be showered on Israel and all other nations that obey.
 - will not be withheld as a punishment.
36. Will there be highways in the millennium?
- Yes, there will be great superhighways.
 - This is not revealed in the bible.
 - No, because fast transportation will not be permitted
 - Yes, but only small ones as there will little "running to and fro."
37. In the 'world tomorrow,' people will
- not need to be educated.
 - continue using their present languages without any change.
 - all be taught one new language.
 - not need to speak since even their thoughts will be made manifest.
38. The farmers in Palestine will then
- have to rely on irrigation even to raise meager crops.
 - be forced to move into the cities for protection.
 - be blessed with superabundant crops.
 - have very few good crops because of soil depletion.
39. Will humans lose their just reward for their labor and toil?
- No. God says He will not permit His people to be pillaged any more.
 - Sometimes, because human nature will still cause men to steal and plunder.
 - Only when the heathen nations attack and pillage.
 - Yes. God will still let men learn their lessons.
40. In the millennium, animals will
- have their natures changed and will all become peaceful.
 - sweep over the land in rebellion against human rule.
 - largely have been destroyed and therefore be almost non-existent,
 - become more ferocious.
41. The United States has a great national debt because
- the American citizen is motivated by a Godly desire to see that all people live as well as we do.
 - the United States, knowing other nations can be trusted to pay back our loans with interest, believes it to be a good business venture.
 - God has commanded us to make allies of other nations by giving them money, so they will aid us if we are attacked.
 - God has put a curse upon the USA for its disobedience to His laws.
42. God is
- not interested in your financial affairs.
 - interested in people's finances only to the extent that He knows that they are giving something to charity.
 - desirous that all fulfill His commands for tithes and offerings.
 - leaving it up to each individual as to what he wishes to give to the church.
43. We owe money to God because
- God wants to see to it that we remain "just poor folks."
 - God is the owner and sustainer of all we use.
 - God knows there is not enough money for all, and He plans to see that it is properly distributed.
 - governments of men command us to.
44. God's plan calls for furthering His work here on earth by
- means of tithes and offerings.
 - such offerings as people they feel they are able to give.
 - seeing that large endowment funds are set up to further His work, thereby making it independent of the support of the people.
 - having people do nothing now, but letting them wait until Christ comes in person to direct them.
45. If we tithe, God has promised
- nothing in return.
 - He will see that we can also pay more taxes.
 - we will gain eternal life by this means.
 - He will pour us out such a great blessing there will not be room enough to receive it.

46. Tithes
- concern only the Jews.
 - do not mean tenths.
 - have been commanded by God from the earliest times.
 - are taken from your profits after you deduct your personal living expenses.
47. In these end times, God has commanded the tithe be used
- primarily to build church hospitals in foreign lands.
 - to further the gospel and warning of the imminent return and rule of Christ on this earth while also supporting the poor.
 - to gather the churches of the world into one great, tremendously powerful political organization.
 - to tell people the urgent necessity of believing that Christ is the Savior and informing that keeping the Ten Commandments is no longer necessary.
48. God the Father
- is a working God—He has work to do.
 - is “retired” and has been doing nothing since the earth was created.
 - is not now interested in our activities and has gone way off.
 - has turned all things concerning this earth over to Christ, and allowing no thought concerning them to enter His mind.
49. Which *one* of the following four statements is *false*?
In God’s government there is rank,
- for the Father gave orders to Christ.
 - for Christ bears the title of High Priest of the Father.
 - for Christ gave orders to His apostles or ministers.
 - but the ministers and their congregants are on an equal footing as to authority in the Church.
50. Melchizedek is
- a personage in the Old Testament who has never been identified.
 - the High Priest of the Father and the Christ of New Testament times.
 - just another human being who lived in Old Testament times.
 - a divine being who lived on earth in Old Testament times, but who has not been known to have existed on earth since that time.
51. Which *one* of the following four statements is *false*?
Melchizedek conducted His office of High Priest by
- instructing Adam and Eve in all the laws of God.
 - not instructing Adam and Eve in all the laws of God.
 - personally contacting Cain and Abel.
 - blessing Abraham for his tithes.
52. Which *one* of the following four statements is *false*?
- Isaac tithed.
 - Abraham tithed.
 - Jesus said that tithing was not necessary.
 - Jacob tithed.
53. After God called the descendants of Abraham out of their captivity in Egypt and they disobeyed Him, He changed His previous Melchizedek-priesthood tithe system by
- stopping the tithe system entirely.
 - letting the people pay whatever they thought was right to His newly appointed priesthood.
 - letting the tithes go to further civil government activities.
 - appointing a Levitical priesthood to receive His tithes.
54. The priests of the Levitical priesthood of Old Testament times used the tithe to
- further the preaching of the gospel by means of the printing press.
 - conduct health research.
 - support themselves so that they could be free to perform services in the tabernacle.
 - further charity.
55. According to the Bible, a “tithe” means
- a sixth
 - an indefinite amount
 - a third
 - a tenth

56. Today, under the New Testament,
- the tithing is taught (and in modern times, considered 1/10th of net income after taxes, but before personal expenses are deducted)
 - inasmuch as there are no more animal sacrifices to be offered, no tithes are required
 - God dropped His tithing law when Christ nailed all the laws to 'the cross.'
 - the churches are right when they say "it is better if you tithe, but you will not be held accountable by God if you do not."

57. Since animal sacrifices were done away with as a result of Christ's sacrifice, God has ordained another priesthood to take the place of the old ritualistic priesthood. It is most closely a type of
- the Universal Church priesthood.
 - the Levitical priesthood.
 - chosen in such a way as to identify it with the various Protestant religious denominations in the world today.
 - the Melchizedek priesthood.

58. The New Testament Melchizedek priesthood has arisen as a result of
- men being born into it, as was the case in the Old Testament priesthood.
 - Levites who decided to be Christian.
 - Christ calling men who have had hands laid upon them.
 - a sudden miraculous vision from God.

59. Which *one* of the following four statements about the end-time warning message is *true*?
- Christ finished giving it in His day.
 - Christ commanded His true called ministers in our day to finish giving it.
 - Christ never gave any command at all regarding it.
 - Christ expected His apostles of that day to finish giving it.

60. Which *one* of the following four statements is *true*? You can tell *which* church is God's Church and therefore which church should receive your tithes to carry out the gospel and warning message because
- it will not bear God's name—Church of God.
 - it will cry out boldly the very Word of God as it is given in the Bible and will bear good fruit.
 - it will be a little group which will not have worldwide reach in these last days.
 - it will be great church bearing another name than that of God.

Why Are Natural Disasters Increasing?

61. What is God saying to this desperately wicked world?
- "Earth shaking, imagination-defying catastrophes of nature are coming because of your sins, but escape is possible through divine protection."
 - "I find all mankind to be my good and faithful servants."
 - "Organize movements for world brotherhood and you will prevent annihilation of human life from the earth."
 - It is ridiculous to think that God is speaking to modern-day nations.

62. How is God speaking to you personally?
- God is not speaking to you personally today.
 - Through His inspired Word—the Bible—and through increasingly severe disruptions of nature, as well through His ministry.
 - Through the statesmen of your government.
 - Through the philosophy and poetry of great men like Emerson.

1. Is God fair—is He a God of love?
- He is fair and loving whenever He doesn't punish us.
 - The Bible does not tell us.
 - No, He is a God of wrath.
 - Of course, because He is a loving Father who corrects His children when they go astray.

64. God BEGAN to foretell the cataclysmic disruptions to befall our present generation
- before the time of Noah.
 - during the time of Moses.
 - during the time of Jesus Christ.
 - just before the very end-time.

65. The people of Sodom
- are not a WARNING reminder for us today.
 - were basically good people who didn't know better than to continue in their sins.
 - were practicing evil and are a WARNING for those who would live as they lived.
 - were spared destruction for their sins.
66. Which ONE of these have heeded God's warnings?
- Only the few who have feared and respected God's authority down through the ages.
 - The vast majority in Noah's day.
 - The overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - All who ever heard the truth.
67. Which method did God use to warn the Egyptians?
- God gave no warning, but immediately sent devastating plagues.
 - God first spoke His warning through His chosen ministers of that day.
 - God mainly used the pagan Egyptian priests to warn Pharaoh.
 - God told the Jews, who thought they were called to be preachers, to warn the Egyptians.
68. How must God loosen man from bondage to his wicked human nature so that he may be freed to seek God?
- God will be forced to pour out fierce plagues upon rebellious and stubborn humankind similar to how He did to free ancient Israel from enslaving Pharaoh.
 - God will be able to do so by using moderate means with everyone.
 - God must use gentle means with everyone.
 - God will not interfere in human affairs today, or in the future.
69. What does "to know the Lord" signify?
- To join a church denomination.
 - To shed tears in an evangelistic meeting.
 - To believe the Father sent Christ to abolish His Law.
 - To recognize and act on the fact that God is Creator, Sustainer, Law-giver and Ruler.
70. Why will God severely PUNISH the nations today?
- Because God has pleasure in seeing humans suffer.
 - Because that is the only way they will ultimately turn to God and learn the right way to live.
 - Because He wants to destroy human lives.
 - Because the people are keeping God's Law.
71. Which *one* of these four statements is *true*?
- The white horse of Revelation 6 pictures Jesus Christ.
 - The pale-green horse of Revelation 6 pictures Islam.
 - The black horse of Revelation 6 pictures the curse of atheistic communism.
 - The red horse of Revelation 6 increasing warfare.
72. Which *one* of these four statements is *true*?
- The "beginning of sorrows" precedes the Great Tribulation.
 - The United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand will be the only nations to escape famine and disease epidemics.
 - The prophesied darkening of the sun and moon and the occurrence of spectacular meteor showers have already happened in the 19th century.
 - Earthquakes are gradually diminishing in frequency and intensity.
73. Which *one* of these four statements is *false*?
- God will temporarily withhold the trumpet plagues until the 144,000 are "sealed."
 - Having the "seal"—the Holy Spirit—in their foreheads will protect the 144,000 from further plagues.
 - The 144,000 were sealed by 1917.
 - A great multitude will repent and be sealed when God shakes the very heavens.
74. Between which great world powers will the terrible "east-west" war soon be fought?
- Russia and the United States of America.
 - Europe and Russia.
 - Great Britain and Europe.
 - Great Britain and Egypt
75. What do the "locusts" of Revelation 9 symbolize?
- Modern Europe's weapons of warfare which will have power to torment men.
 - Huge hordes of insects.
 - Massive armies of foot soldiers.
 - Hand-to-hand combat.

FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

Keep this question section. File it in your notebook at the end of the Lessons it covers. Review these questions now and then. Why? Because the review will give you the opportunity to impress the true answers more firmly upon your mind.

Also, a review of the three false answers given here for each question will aid you to realize more clearly some of the false ideas which you may have taken for granted. You will thereby grasp and retain the truth much better when it is presented to you.

ANSWERS TO TEST 2:

1-C	10-B	19-A	28-B	37-C	46-C	55-D	64-A	73-C
2-B	11-A	20-A	29-B	38-C	47-B	56-A	65-C	74-B
3-D	12-B	21-C	30-A	39-A	48-A	57-D	66-A	75-A
4-C	13-D	22-B	31-A	40-A	49-D	58-C	67-B	76-B
5-B	14-A	23-D	32-C	41-D	50-B	59-B	68-A	77-A
6-A	15-D	24-A	33-D	42-C	51-B	60-B	69-D	78-C
7-D	16-B	25-C	34-D	43-B	52-C	61-A	70-B	79-D
8-C	17-B	26-A	35-C	44-A	53-D	62-B	71-D	80-C
9-B	18-C	27-C	36-A	45-D	54-C	63-D	72-A	

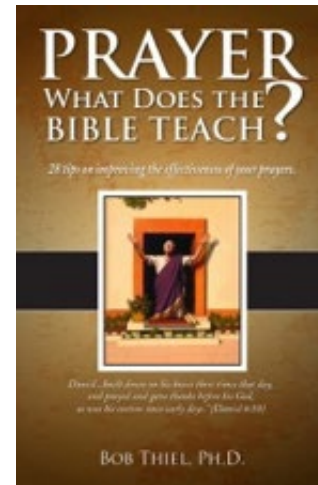
76. Who will escape the horrifying plagues just ahead?
- Those who are able to flee from the centers of population.
 - Those who begin obeying God now as Philadelphian remnant Christians.
 - Those who become the allies of Europe.
 - Those who quickly become the allies of Russia.
77. Which *one* of these four statements is *false*?
Immediately following the great “east-west” war, those unwilling to repent
- will be spared from suffering God’s painful plagues.
 - will suffer painful sores.
 - will suffer from polluted, bloody waters and subsequent parching thirst.
 - will suffer the scorching heat of the sun as the earth careens in orbit.
78. After the earth’s orbit-shaking disruption, what will rebellious, unrepentant mankind do?
- Turn joyously to God and His rule.
 - Meekly accept Christ as their Ruler.
 - Turn in a frenzy of hatred to fight against their Creator.
 - It is not revealed in the Bible.
79. Which *one* of these four statements is *false*?
- A gigantic worldwide earthquake is to occur in the near future.
 - Tremendous volcanic eruptions will darken the sky causing men to fear further disruptions.
 - Hailstones weighing 130 pounds will pummel the earth with utter destruction!
 - The majority of humankind will quickly turn to God after the great hail.
80. Does it “pay” to “give in”—surrender – to God and His ways quickly?
- No, because you will have to forfeit your self-respect.
 - No, because God can’t respect someone who gives up and surrenders to Him easily.
 - Yes, the swiftness and totality with which you turn to God and His ways will determine how many of these terrible events you will be spared from.
 - No, because the more stubborn you are, the more merciful God will be to you.

TWENTY-EIGHT TIPS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE PRAYERS: PART 3

Grade Yourself:

Simply count the number of questions you missed. Your grade percentage will be next to that number below:

1-99	9-89	17-78
2-97	10-87	18-77
3-96	11-86	19-76
4-95	12-85	20-75
5-94	13-84	21-73
6-92	14-82	22-72
7-91	15-81	23-71
8-90	16-80	24-70



Continuing Church of God booklet on prayer

By Bob Thiel

This is the third part of a multi-part series on prayer.

It has been said that, “The Church of God goes forward on its knees.” This has basically been used as an admonition to tell Christians that they need to pray. But how?

In the previous articles, prayer was defined, and thirteen tips were discussed. In this article, four additional tips, starting with what we will call tip fourteen are covered.

Tip Number 14: Recognize God’s Spirit

Despite forgiveness you might still feel unworthy. Notice the following:

2 And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. 3 So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. 4 And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, 5 “for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue.”

6 Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, “Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. 7 Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 For I also am a man placed under authority,

having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

9 When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" 10 And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick. (Luke 7:2-10)

Jesus, Himself did not go over to heal that servant. God's Spirit did. Remember also:

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26-27, KJV)

We do not always know how to pray as we ought to, but if we have God's Spirit, it assists.

But also notice what the next verse teaches:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28, KJV)

What many Christians fail to realize is that God ALWAYS ANSWERS YOUR PRAYERS, though not always as YOU WANT THEM to be answered. ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD—in accordance with God's will for you.

The problem is that most do not realize how much sin they need to truly repent of. Part of the reason that God does not answer prayers the way Christians want is because what they want is not always best for them.

Tip Number 15: Pray for What the Bible Says to Pray For

Would you like to be certain about what God's will is for you to pray for?

Then pray for what the Bible tells you to pray for!

Wisdom is one thing that the Bible says to ask for:

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)

GOD PROMISES TO GIVE YOU WISDOM IF YOU ASK! Don't we all need to be wiser? It most certainly is God's will for you to have wisdom.

You should also pray for discernment and understanding:

3 Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, 4 If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; 5 Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, And find the knowledge of God. (Proverbs 2:3-5)

169 Let my cry come before You, O Lord; Give me understanding according to Your word. (Psalms 119:169)

God promises if you truly seek discernment and understanding, according to God's word, He will grant understanding and allow you to find the knowledge of God.

You can also pray that others will have wisdom and spiritual understanding as the Apostle Paul did:

9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; (Colossians 1:9-10)

Notice something else the Bible says to pray for:

37 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. 38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (Matthew 9:37-38)

2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; 3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. (Colossians 4:2-4)

The work of God is important. Pray for it and what God wants.

Tip Number 16: Ask for Spiritual Gifts

There are various types of spiritual gifts to pray for. In my normal morning prayer, I tend to ask that I may have:

22...love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

I also add wisdom, understanding, as well as to be a proper example and witness to that list.

And yes, I also pray as Paul wrote to:

1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. (1 Corinthians 14:1)

This does not mean that all will become prophets or that all will prophesy, though it concludes that some will, but that we all need to pursue love and spiritual gifts. It also means that we will allow God to use us to speak rightly on His behalf when we should (1 Peter 3:15).

Spiritual gifts vary, but love is what we all need:

4 There are different spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. 5 There are different ways of serving, and yet the same Lord is served. 6 There are different types of work to do, but the same God produces every gift in every person. 7 The evidence of the Spirit's presence is given to each person for the common good of everyone. 8 The Spirit gives one person the ability to speak with wisdom. The same Spirit gives another person the ability to speak with knowledge. 9 To another person the same Spirit gives [courageous] faith. To another person the same Spirit gives the ability to heal. 10 Another can work miracles. Another can speak what God has revealed. Another can tell the difference between spirits. Another can speak in different kinds of languages. Another can interpret languages. 11 There is only one Spirit who does all these things by giving what God wants to give to each person. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11, GOD's WORD translation)

12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. 28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. (1 Corinthians 12:27-13:2)

We all are to pray for wisdom and grow in grace and

knowledge (2 Peter 3:18), but the amount of each varies. We all have different roles and gifts.

The Bible says that God did not call many wise, mighty, or noble in this age, lest any should boast (1 Corinthians 1:26-29), but that He would grant gifts like wisdom.

The Bible also says that an important part of God's work will be done by His Spirit (Zechariah 4:6-7). Pray for spiritual gifts.

Never forget that love is the most important gift.

Do you really pray for love?

Tip Number 17: Don't Pray for Show

Many seem to wish to pray to be seen by others. I have also seen various 'evangelicals' somewhat dancing around with their arms raised to indicate that they are praying or somehow worshiping God. I also have witnesses of people crawling on their knees, possibly praying, at the shrine in Fatima, Portugal.

Jesus warned against praying for show:

5 "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Matthew 6:5-6)

You pray to draw closer to God, not to try to impress others. It is not that there are not times for public prayer (biblically there are), but we are not to pray just to impress others.

While I am not opposed to people praying out loud over meals (and have done this from time to time as it seemed appropriate), normally I privately thank God for my meals in a silent prayer. Therefore, normally I do not consider that public prayer in small restaurant settings is needful.

Public prayers over church services are not done with the intent for outward show. These short prayers should help get the attendees better focused for the service. Jesus is there when two or more are gathered in His name (Matthew 18:20) and the public prayer normally will be asked in Jesus' name.

More information on prayer can be found in our booklet Prayer: What Does the Bible Teach?

Fulfilling Matthew 24:14 and Matthew 28:19-20



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