

Church of God News

Positive News of the Churches of God

December 2003, No. 10

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Christ the Firstfruits

When the Apostle Paul was making his defense before King Agrippa, he made a fascinating statement in **Acts 26:23**, "That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the *first* that should rise from the dead." What did Paul mean by this? Certainly there had been people who were raised from the dead prior to the resurrection of Christ. Instances of individuals rising from the dead before Christ, are strewn throughout Scripture: the son of the widow of Nain, **Luke 7:11-15**; the daughter of Jairus, **Luke 8:49-55**; Lazarus, **John 11:1-44**; the dead man lowered onto the bones of Elisha, **II Kings 13:20-21**; to name just a few. What did Paul mean that Jesus was the *first* to rise from the dead? The answer to that question is intertwined in a feast day often overlooked, **Leviticus 23**, the feast of early firstfruits.

In **Leviticus 23:10-11**, the Eternal told Moses: "When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it."

This ceremony is also briefly mentioned in **Exodus 23:19**: "The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God."

The Hebrew word for "firstfruits" in **Leviticus 23:10** and for "first" in **Exodus 23:19** is *reshiyth*, meaning the first in order,

rank, or preeminence. "What," or more properly, "Who" is represented by the sheaf of the firstfruits, and what does this ceremony of waving the sheaf before the Lord represent?

A sheaf of grain is sometimes used in Scripture to represent a person. Notice in **Genesis 37:7-8**, where Joseph and his brothers are represented by sheaves of grain in Joseph's dream. Who then is represented by the sheaf of firstfruits? The Bible gives the answer in **I Corinthians 15:20, 22-23**: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the *firstfruits* of them that slept For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: *Christ the firstfruits.*" Christ is also called "the *firstborn* from the dead," **Colossians 1:18**; and, "the *first begotten* of the dead," **Revelation 1:5**; and, "the *firstborn* among many brethren," **Romans 8:29**. There is no question that the risen Christ is represented by the wave sheaf of the firstfruits in **Leviticus 23:10-11**. Remember that the Hebrew word for sheaf is *reshiyth*, which means first in order, and or preeminence. Paul says that Christ is "the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence"!

What is meant then by this ceremony of waving the sheaf before the Lord "to be accepted for you"? **Leviticus 23:11**. Notice the timing of this ceremony. It took place after the Passover (**Leviticus 23:5**) on the morrow after the Sabbath, i.e., on the first day of the week. In addition, the Eternal instructed Moses that the Israelites were to count from this day fifty days, to the next feast day (**Leviticus 23:15-16**) which is referred to as the *feast of weeks* (**Deuteronomy 16:10**), because the Israelites had counted seven weeks from the day of the wave sheaf offering and this festival.

All of the Gospel records recount that the women found the empty tomb of Christ, early on the first day of the week, **Matthew 28:1, 5-6**; **Mark 16:2**; **Luke 24:1**; **John 20:1**. You will notice, however, in each verse mentioned above, the word *day* is in italics — that means it was added by the King James translators.

– continued on page 3

From the Editor...

“An horse *is* a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver *any* by his great strength,” **Psalms 33:17**

They shoot horses, don't they? A horse that is badly crippled is mercifully dispatched.

The old nag I'm talking about is that swayback steed called the place of safety we clung to in days gone by. Now there wouldn't be much use in shooting a dead horse, but what if the horse ain't as dead as we thought?

We Americans love security. Now let's be specific; we people of the Church of God love the comfortable feelings of security. But, as Luke tells us, “Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it,” **Luke 17:33**.

As I mused on the concept of “Homeland Security,” it occurred to me that we still have “The Safety Syndrome” in the Church. True, I don't believe anyone thinks we are still going to Petra on a fleet of DC9s, but there are many places and ideas that folks dream about as a place of safety. Some may call it the comfort zone, but either way, it is only Camelot (**1.** In Arthurian legend, the site of King Arthur's court. **2.** A place or time of idealized beauty, peacefulness, and enlightenment).

Is it even possible that we have looked, or do look, at the Church itself as a place of safety? If so, the events of the last decade or so should have made us question that assumption. Real safety is in the Lord. **Proverbs 29:25** says: “The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.”

A staggering number of the called have already abandoned the faith. Could it be because they had false expectations of the Church as some sort of sanctuary or refuge?

Then, we must ask, what have we done to give them that image? Let's press it further. Do I hold that picture? The test is simple. Ask yourself:

- Do I have it made?
- Is my religion just a few hours on Sabbath and a potluck?
- What have you done lately for others or for God?

Sometimes I think we still cling to the false idea of heaven where we will waft around unmolested with nothing to do. The Church, or even the Kingdom of God for which we yearn, are not such places. We are

Church of God News

“For the edifying of the body of Christ,”

Ephesians 4:12.

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qualifying now for positions, or jobs, and this life is “On the Job Training.”

Colossians 3:2-4 says: “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.”

Can we say: “When the horse dies, then we shall dismount?” Alas, let us pray that it is not too late. Perhaps this horse is one we should never have mounted.

— by Steven J. Kieler

Continued from page 1...

It does not appear in the original Green manuscripts. In addition, the word *week* in the original Greek is plural, i.e. weeks. What the text should read is “the first of the weeks” or the first day of the weeks counting toward the next festival — “The Feast of Weeks,” also known as Pentecost in the New Testament, **Acts 2:1**. *This day then, “the first of the weeks,” mentioned by the Gospel writers, is the very day the priest was to wave the sheaf of the firstfruits before the Lord!*

Notice **John 20:16-17**, when Mary Magdalene sees the risen Christ! “Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, *Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father, and to My God, and your God.*”

We know, later on that same day, Jesus allowed the women to hold him by the feet and worship Him, **Matthew 28:9**; and He told His disciples, “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have,” **Luke 24:39**.

Why then did Jesus tell Mary Magdalene in **John 20:17** not to touch him? Jesus gives the answer — He had not yet ascended to the Father! He had not yet presented His body as the perfect sacrifice “to be accepted for you” as the wave sheaf was waved before the Lord on this very day!

Notice **Hebrews 9:12-14**: “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood He [Christ] entered in once into the holy place, *having obtained eternal redemption for us*. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

Also **Hebrews 10:10, 14**, “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the *body* of Jesus Christ once for all For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

On the very day the priest waved the sheaf of the firstfruits before the Lord “to be accepted for you,” our High Priest and Savior

ascended to the Father, to present His body as the perfect sacrifice so that we may be redeemed from our sins and sanctified for the Father’s use.

Notice how perfectly our Messiah, Jesus Christ, fulfilled this feast of firstfruits to the most minute of details. In **Leviticus 2:14-16**, the Lord said: “And if thou offer a meat offering of thy firstfruits unto the Lord, thou shalt offer for the meat offering of thy firstfruits green ears of corn dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears. And thou shalt put oil upon it, and lay frankincense thereon: it is a meat offering. And the priest shall burn the memorial of it, part of the beaten corn thereof, part of the oil thereof . . . it is an offering made by fire unto the Lord.” This meat or grain offering of the firstfruits was to be “of a sweet savour unto the Lord,” **Leviticus 2:9**.

How perfectly is Christ represented by this offering of the firstfruits. The offering was to be made of green ears of corn dried by the fire. Was not our Lord tried in the fire, tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin? **Hebrews 4:15**. The corn of the firstfruits offering was to be beaten out of full ears. “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him: and with His stripes we are healed,” **Isaiah 53:5**. Oil was poured upon the firstfruits offering. Oil is often used as a symbol of the Holy Spirit in Scripture. “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power,” **Acts 10:38**. Jesus, reading a prophecy of Himself from the scroll of Isaiah said: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor,” **Luke 4:18**. Frankincense was among the gifts offered to the Christ-child by the wise men, **Matthew 1:11**.

Finally, a memorial portion of the firstfruits offering was burned on the altar as a sweet savour unto the Lord. Paul used this imagery in speaking of the offering of the Messiah in **Ephesians 5:2**: “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.”

To return to the original question asked at the beginning, how can Christ be the first to rise from the dead? He was the first to rise in a spiritual resurrection, a resurrection to immortality. He is the first in rank, order, and preeminence of all those, who would be made

alive in Him *forever*, the firstborn of *many* brethren! All the resurrections prior to His were physical resurrections, and those individuals ultimately died again. But Christ's was a spiritual resurrection, a resurrection to life eternal, **I Corinthians 15:45**. And because of His resurrection, all those who believe in Him shall rise, and never die again! **John 11:25-26**.

That fact is the cornerstone of our Christian faith, **I Corinthians 15:13-14**. And the fact that Christ, the Firstfruit, perfectly fulfilled the feast of firstfruits, by entering into the holy place to present His body as the perfect sacrifice for our sins, we can now have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which He had consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh," **Hebrews 10:19-20**.

— by David Miller

Article...

In the Beginning

Did God create the earth to be a formless chunk of rock floating in space? The first chapter of the Bible seems to indicate He did. What is the truth?

"In the beginning [of all beginnings] was the Word," **John 1:1**. "All things were made by Him," **verse 3**. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth," **verse 14**.

These three verses tell us someone called the Word made everything that's ever been made. (No, He didn't make your computer, but He created the atoms and electrons and such that man has learned to use to develop the things we have.) Then we are told the Word became flesh and lived among us. We know Him as Jesus of Nazareth.

In **Genesis 1:1**, we're told that the Word created the heavens and the earth, but then we run into a problem. When the Word was talking to Job, He asked, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars [angels] sang together and shouted for joy?" **Job 38:1-7**.

Would the angels shout and sing over a formless chunk of rock floating in space? Not likely, but **Genesis 1:2** seems to indicate that's what was created. So what's the story?

Since the Word created everything, the angels must be included in the creation. One

glorious angel was placed in charge of the earth, and lived in splendiferous beauty. In **Ezekiel 28:12**, someone is called the King of Tyre, but this wasn't a human king, as **verse 13** says he was in the garden of God in Eden. Only two humans, Adam and Eve, lived there.

This non-human king was the signet of perfection (Revised Standard Version), full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. He was covered with gold and precious stones, and walked among flashing precious stones. God anointed him as a covering [in Hebrew, means protecting] cherub, **verses 12-14**. In **verse 15**, we learn he was perfect in all his ways until iniquity was found in him. His ego got the better of him, and corrupted him, **verse 17**, and God said he would be cast out of the mountain of God [heaven], **verse 16**.

So who was this cherub-king, and what was his sin? **Isaiah 14:12-14** says, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars [angels] of God. I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be *like* the most High."

Lucifer planned a coup to take over God's throne. (The adjective 'like' is in italics because anyone who attempts a coup doesn't want to be like the president. He wants to be the president. Lucifer wanted to be God.)

But it wasn't a one-angel coup: Lucifer massed an army of a third of the angels of heaven, **Revelation 12:3-4**. Lucifer is now known as Satan, and his armies of angels are demons.

Toward the beginning, we opined that the angels wouldn't shout and sing over a formless chunk of rock floating in space. When Lucifer, renamed Satan, meaning destroyer, invaded heaven, Jesus witnessed him cast out in a magnificent flame of fire, **Luke 10:18**. Naturally he wasn't going without a fight, and what a battle it must have been!

No doubt the entire universe had been created in the same magnificence seen on earth, but with hundreds of millions of powerful angels doing battle, the universe, including earth, became formless and empty, **Genesis 1:2**.

What is commonly called the *creation story* is really the *re-creation story*, in which the Word renewed the earth for human

habitation, and populated it with our two first parents.

— by Leslie A. Turvey

News...

Africa Update

May the grace of the Almighty our God be with you always as we do the ministry of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, our soon-coming King and Lord of Lords. And as we, continuing teaching the gospel, came to realize the Sabbath as the rest day of our Almighty.

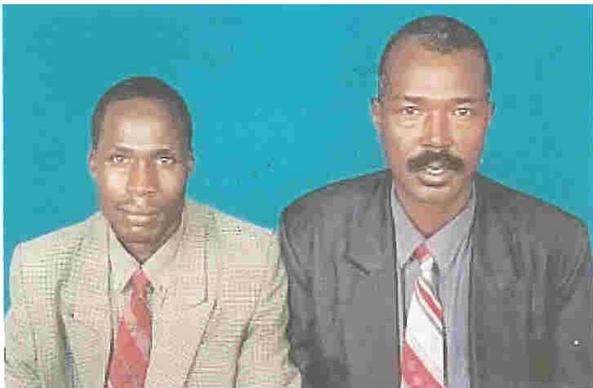
As I am an evangelist, my duties are as follows:

- To maintain the administration of the whole Church in Kenya.
- Spreading the gospel.
- Giving seminars to families and Church elders or deacons in Kenya.

My prayers are for the evangelistic mission to be expanded to East African countries like Tanzania, Somalia, and Uganda.

The ministry of evangelism needs support in order to succeed in spreading the gospel to the nations of the world as in the time of the Apostles, **Nehemiah 12:44-46, Acts 4:32-37, Acts 6:1-6, Acts 13:1-4.**

The team of evangelists is: Joseph Too, Thomas Soi, Joel Rotich, and Brother Edwin Nyole.



Edwin Nyole and Andrew Koech

The Church here in Kenya continues to expand. Our beloved new friend, Reuben Kibet Koech, visited us at the Chepkosiom local Church Sotik on September 27, 2003, where I happened to have made a visit. I had sent an E-mail to him to meet there. We talked at length with him and I was convinced that he has decided to part ways with SDAs despite their trial to woo him back. He promised to visit the Church the next Sabbath

along with his brother and their family members. We want to thank you most sincerely for the role you have tirelessly played towards directing him to the Church of God and us. From this planned visit, we shall arrange to visit them with a team of evangelists. I also thank you in a special way for the work we have in common. May God Bless you richly.

I have a board of elders here in Chepkosiom (Sotik) and other local Churches who assist evangelical work. They include John Bartore, Thomas Soi, Edwin Nyolei, and Joel Rotich. These are the main people who deal with Church projects and other Church business.

Once again, thank you very much.

May the grace of our Lord be with you always. Your humble servant in the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

— by Elder Andrew Koech and Brother Edwin Nyole, Kenya, joskomix@yahoo.com. Koech is Giving & Sharing's representative in East Africa.

Perks of being over 60...

Your supply of brain cells is finally down to manageable size.

Penned from prison...

When We the People Begin to Learn

When I came to prison, I had a lot to learn. Actually, life was basically the same, just with more concentrated criminal activity. But, still, to come to prison requires an adjustment. You might stop for a moment to ponder this, and unless you personally experience what I'm about to tell you, by no means will you comprehend it.

The greatest threat to being in prison is not from those incarcerated. It is from the ones who control it. They are called warden, major, captain, Lt., Sgt., and correctional officer. In reality, they are nothing more than employees of an agency operated by the state. One of the favorite names given to these employees is "boss."

The true criminal that comes to prison cannot do any criminal activity of any real consequence unless he is "permitted" to do so. You see, the real threat in coming to prison is that the prisoner must learn that the employees make the rules and laws that

govern the society we live in. If the employees of the institution did not bring in tobacco, drugs, or money, no inmate could get involved in these things, none of them!

The really bad part is that even the lower ranks exhibit the same power and authority that comes from the approved illegal activity that permeates the prison society. Should a person come to prison wanting to change and repent, turn from his evil way of life to God's way, persecution becomes a severe and stark reality, for this individual is faced with either doing as he is told by the inmates, who in turn are operated by the "bosses," or this inmate becomes an outcast.

There are ways that are meant to aid inmates in protecting themselves. One is the grievance procedure. If it is used successfully, the one using it still suffers because again, the employees that oversee these kangaroo courts and investigations are the reasons the injustices occur in the first place.

In reality, while in prison, especially here in Texas, unless we accept the organized crime established by the agency's employees, one's lifespan, freedoms that are federally and state approved, also being constitutionally protected, diminish with every breath. This is the stark reality. This is what one must learn when he or she comes to prison. For a criminal that comes to prison with no intention of recovery, or with change in mind, finds greater freedoms, and more immunity from the laws that brought him to prison. "They" call it paradise. I have now learned why.

— by Billy C. Blanton #750531 Eastham
PO Box 16, Lovelady, TX 75851

Hmmm...

Can u read this???

Just read the sentence straight through without really thinking about it.

Acocdrnig to an elgnsih unviesitry sutdy the oredr of letetrs in a word dosen't mtttaer. The olny thnig thta's iopmrantt is that the frsit and lsat ltteer of eevry word is in the crcreot ptoision. The rset can be jmbueld and one is stlil able to raed the txet wiohtut dclftfuiiy.

Feast reports...

India

I am so happy to report about the Feast. God blessed two Feast sites this year, one in the city and another one away from the city.

We had an attendance of about thirty-six in the city and about thirty outside the city. The brethren were so happy and excited with the sermons and activities.



At the site outside Madras were brethren who were affected by HIV, and caregivers of spouses affected by HIV or AIDS.

We had a family and talent night and the children were so happy. We had a special meal served for all after the services. Let me state that God is blessing this work. We need more of your prayers and support. Thanks.

— by M. R. Hubert, India

Lake Texoma

Beautiful Lake Texoma, OK was blessed with the presence of the Holy Spirit for the Feast of Tabernacles along with beautiful weather. God brought us all together with inspiring sermons and Bible studies. Some of those attending were:



Coordinator, Steve Kieler
Fort Dodge, IA



Floyd & Neva Dodson
Arkansas City, KS



Bobbie Goff
Fort Smith, AK



Winston & Sammy Cope, Dallas, TX
Keith Besch, Omaha, NE

— by Suzanne Kieler

Church news...

Living Church of God Growth

LCG's Charles Bryce reports, "Our mailing list is pushing 200,000! Steady growth in the Work is taking place in many other areas as well. For instance, the final attendance figures are now in for the Feast of Tabernacles 2003. The Living Church of God had a 2.92% increase in total Feast attendance around the world this year over last. Even more encouraging is the 7.24% increase at the U.S. Feast sites. Although, in some ways, we are just now 'picking up steam' in doing God's Work, as you can see, much is already being accomplished as we try to follow where Christ leads. There is, also, inspiring news about Church attendance around the world in the LCG. From January to September this year, we had a 9.58% increase in total average monthly attendance. There is a 10.7% increase just in the U.S. So as we continue to press forward in the Work of God, excellent fruit is being borne."

LCG's Gerald Weston sent in this report about Canada, "We started distributing the Internet Ad cards following the Feast. It is too early to assess any results, but our goal is to distribute 50,000 by the end of November. We started Leaders of Tomorrow (a Spokesman Club designed for teens and young adults) here in Toronto, and will be starting up adult Spokesman Club again November 9 after a summer break. I took a trip to Saskatchewan at the end of October and have plans for a trip to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia the first part of December."

— by Robert Thiel

Of interest...

POVERTY How to Reverse It

One of the front-page headlines in today's *Tyler Morning Telegraph* reads, "Nearly 1.4 Million More People in Poverty." Is this poverty brought about because of the present recession? Is it because so many people are unemployed? What age group is most likely to be poor, and why? What would it take to turn this around in your family?

According to this article, "About 6.8 million households in 2002 received Food Stamps, up from 6.1 million in 2001.

"The number of people employed in the manufacturing industry dropped by almost 5 percent, or 830,000, to under 17.1 million. There were also slight decreases in the retail trade, information, transportation, and warehousing industries.

"There was roughly a 4 percent rise in the number of people working in the fields of education, health, or social services to nearly 27.1 million. An increase was also seen in the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and the food services category.

"While the poverty rate for children rose, it declined for people 65 and over, from 10.2 percent to 9.6.

"Older Americans have become more immune to economic downturns because of Social Security," Danzinger said.

"And even though the stock market swoon of recent years wiped out many retirement accounts, today's 65-and-over crowd overall have larger retirement nest-eggs from which to draw on than previous generations."

Of all age groups, children are the most likely to be poor. Why? Because of our modern-day family structure. Single-parent families are six times more likely to be poor than married-couple families with children. What does this say? "The best anti-poverty program for children is a stable, intact family.

"About 50 percent of all unwed teenage mothers go on welfare within one year of the birth of their first child. More than 75 percent go on within five years," *The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators*.

We have President Lyndon B. Johnson to thank for perpetuating poverty with his "War on Poverty." Before this social and morally crippling "Great Society" program was

launched, nearly one-third of all poor families were headed by adults who worked full-time. Forty years later only 15 percent of all poor families had working heads of households. Half of poor, non-elderly adults don't work at all. Qualification requirements to receive welfare are passive in nature and require no action except to apply. For a single mother to qualify for welfare she must not work, and she must not be married to a male who is employed. To say the least, this does not motivate the indolent, slothful, slow going, workshy woman to find a job. And of course, these are women with children who see her example and grow up thinking that receiving welfare is the norm. So, the system is perpetuated.

You may not be able to change our nation's system that ensures a high poverty rate, but the following are some proactive things you can do to see to it that your children are not in poverty:

1. Teach your children that sex out of wedlock is the single greatest cause of poverty in America — it's the fast track to becoming poor.

2. Teach your children to be responsible with money. They should avoid debt like the plague. The only two things they should ever go in debt for are basic transportation and basic housing.

3. Teach your children the principle of deferred gratification. That means that a person waits until he can afford something and pay cash for it before he buys it.

4. Make sure your children fully understand the credit card trap, that they can find themselves paying only on the interest and never lowering their debt total.

5. Ingrain good work ethics in your children. Teach them to be responsible and always to do more than is required of them.

6. Teach your children to consistently save a portion of their paycheck every month even though it may be small.

7. Teach your children the pros and cons about investing in stocks, bonds, and real estate.

But teaching only physical principles falls far short of what a Christian parent should do. To give yourself and your children a competitive edge against poverty, call 1-888-BIBLE44 and order Ronald L. Dart's free booklet titled, *The Lost Keys to Financial Security*. Read it from cover to cover. Explain these keys to your children often. Proactively

teaching these things to your children can mean the difference between poverty and wealth for them and their children.

— by Allie Dart
Christian Educational Ministries

Health...

The Need for Connection and Communication

The emperor Frederick, who ruled the Roman Empire in the 13th century, thought it would be a useful experiment to discover what our original language was — Hebrew, Greek, Latin, or whatever. So he decided to isolate a few infants from the sound of any human voice. He reasoned that, if the children talked, it would be in the universal, natural tongue of the human species.

Wet nurses were obtained to care for these infants. But they were sworn to absolute silence and could not engage in any socializing with these infants in any way. From the moment they were born, these infants never heard the sound or hum or song of a human. Within a year, they were all dead.

— by Earl A. Loomis, Jr. M.D.
The Self in Pilgrimage

Letter to the Editor...

I enjoyed the guest editorial by Richard Nickels in the Church of God News about Truth, titled "Truth or Lies." I have been fascinated with men who are convinced they, and often they alone or their organization, have the Truth and I have written and preached studies about this phenomena at such meetings as the Feast of Tabernacles and how destructive it can be.

In the spirit of its admonition on accuracy, I would suggest you review the use of the word "improvable" in the eighth paragraph which begins with the word "speculation." Is it what you intended? This is a real nitpick, just for the fun of it, and with love.

God be with you and shine His face upon you,

Kenny Kitzke

Dear Beloved Brother Steve and Sister Suzanne Kieler in Christ Jesus:

Thank you very much for your kind reply.

At this moment I want your prayers. It is the strength of my ministry and my life. I also

pray for you and your ministry. Our Great God can solve all our problems and needs because we are the sons of God. I strongly believe with faith. He cannot forsake us. Amen.

Thank you very much. Your brother in Christ,

Madhu
India

Richard:

My husband and I responded to Mr. Hubert's article that you had in the *Church of God News*. We sent over to India a box of toys for the children, perfume for the women, and other things they requested. We received a wonderful and thankful E-mail from Mr. Hubert. We have also talked to him by phone. We have pictures that he sent us by E-mail from their Feast that I could forward to you if you wish. The reason I am E-mailing you is that Mr. Hubert has a need to help brethren over there. They need to buy goats to raise, as a way to make money. I could forward Mr. Hubert's E-mails that explain things further, but I mainly wanted to know if you could get this information out to other brethren. He seems like a very sincere, compassionate man. He takes the street kids to the zoo. We are a small, unorganized group of about 15 or 20, and meet a couple of times a month for fellowship and Bible study on the Sabbath. We are going to save up our donations to send him the money to start one family with the goats needed, but we can't do much more than that. Mr. Hubert's E-mail address is: mrhubert72@yahoo.com if you could help. I would appreciate it if you could let us know if you can help him. Thank you.

— by Karen and Tom Schluter
Duluth MN

Poem...

The Cover of Wings

At Yellowstone a fire rages fierce
as a mother bird prepares to save her young;
she lifts them one by one out from the nest
and flies them from the branches to the ground.

Between the gnarled roots close to the trunk,
they quietly wait until she brings them all
and finds a hole that she can tuck them in.
Obedient, they trust her judgment call.

She settles over them while flames draw close
as if she knows her time on earth is short;

they huddle in the shelter she has formed
as she spreads her wings around them like a fort.

She keeps resolve and does not fly away
to safety high above the tongues of hell;
the holocaust then turns her body black
and leaves the price of love, a cindered shell.

At last the fire dies, and men return
to walk while ashes crunch beneath their feet;
they see the charcoal statue of the bird
and marvel that she did not try to flee.

A ranger gently moves her with a stick,
Surprised, as chicks crawl out, into the light;
they bore the days of terrifying heat
but live because their mother paid the price.

Because our Savior thought not of Himself
but of mankind, for whom He paid the price;
with repentance from the heart, we seek His
wings, His death, His life, for ours, the sacrifice.

We trust Him to protect us in each trial
as day by day, our praise to Him we bring;
although our sins had earned Gehenna's fire,
grateful, we flock beneath His wings.

— by Barri Armitage

True tales to live by...

A Poetry Pick-me-up

“Give and it shall be given unto you,”
Luke 8:30.

This morning Marion went to work at the clinic. I felt a bit depressed because even with my walker I have a feeling that my legs are a bit weaker than usual. What would I do if I didn't have this walker so I am able to get around on my own two legs?

Suddenly, Dr. McCrary approached me. He asked me if I intended to write another book. He mentioned how he had enjoyed my last book, “True Tales to Live By.” He probably didn't realize how it lifted my spirits. He was the one who gave me the inspiring story of the man who failed at every occupation in his lifetime, but he had almost forgotten a song he had once written for his grandchildren at Christmastime. It was entitled *Jingle Bells*.

You may not believe this, but in his brief but friendly conversation, it made my legs, when I started to walk, feel a bit stronger. I am sure it is because what he said lifted my spirits.

I must say that while I am being grateful to the people who cheer me up, I should mention Marion who does that for me. She is so patient with my problems.

Usually when I go with her to work, I take with me a small devotional book. I forgot it this morning so I decided to browse through a book written by William Stidger, an old friend of mine. It is entitled *There are Sermons in Stories*. To my surprise, my eyes fell on the first page of a story.

When I lived in New Hampshire years ago, I often passed by this lake but I didn't remember its story. If one is a good singer, and went there at sunset, he could sing a verse of the old hymn *Nearer My God to Thee*, and the great mountain cowering over the lake would return his voice.

If another one would sing a ribald song, it would come back to him just like he had sung it. That is the reason for the lake's name, *Echo Lake*.

The author told a story about a daughter who used to marvel at the number of letters her father received. She seldom received letters. When she returned home from school, she would eagerly say: “Did I get a letter?”

One day her father said: “Betty, I received a lot of letters because I send out a lot of letters. People usually get letters because of the amount of letters they send.” Then he told her the story of Echo Lake.

This story reminds us that hate begets hate. Indifference begets indifference. Anger begets anger. Friendship begets friendship! Love begets love! Have you ever thought of the fact that if you give a smile, a smile usually comes back to you? If you give friendliness, it will come back to you, and usually will warm the heart of the person who gives it.

I have a poem on my desk. I don't know who wrote it, but it expressed that thought.

“There are loyal hearts, there are spirits brave,
There are souls that are pure and true;
Then give to the world the best that you have
and the best will come back to you.

Give love, and love to your life will flow,
A strength in your utmost need; have faith,
and a score of hearts will show their faith in
your work and deed.

Give truth, and your gift will be paid in kind;
and honor will honor meet; and the smile which is sweet will surely find a smile that is just as sweet.”

— by Skip Westphal

Book Review...***The Indestructible Book***

by W. Kenneth Connolly

The Bible is the most remarkable piece of literature this world has ever seen. It has outsold every other publication. It has been translated into more languages than any other, and has become part of the fabric of society. Humanly speaking, it took more than 1,500 years to compile the Bible. About 40 authors contributed to it. Some used poetry, others wrote history, and yet others biography. Some were kings, but others peasants; some were warriors, and others priests; some were devoted patriots, and others members of an outlawed underground organization. Some people were so committed to the belief that the Bible is God's book that they were even willing to die for that proposition.

Strangely, others have been willing to put them to death. Supporters of the Bible have been hung, drawn, and quartered; they have been burned, boiled, and beheaded. Even in the 20th century in some countries, men and women have been imprisoned and tortured for reading this forbidden book.

How are we to classify the Bible? Each of us must make up our own mind about this extraordinary book. Why have so many people willingly sacrificed so much so that everyone can read the Bible? Why did so much need to be sacrificed for a book that has proven itself to be "indestructible"?

The Indestructible Book tells the story of the Bible from its beginnings to its translation into English, a story filled with heroes who believed nothing is more important than learning what the Bible has to teach us. One of those heroes was John Wycliffe. This Oxford scholar and priest translated the entire Bible into English, eventually becoming chaplain to the King of England. Wycliffe's controversial views ultimately offended both Church officials, and palace authorities.

Wycliffe stood alone; defending himself against charges of heresy. He died while preaching in his Church. Believers in England and on the Continent who spread his message and beliefs were executed by burning.

Another hero whose story is told in *The Indestructible Book* is William Tyndale. Converted to Christianity through his study of the Greek New Testament, Tyndale had English Bibles printed on the Continent, and smuggled into England in sacks of flour. People

caught reading this contraband were burned at the stake with the Bible hung around their necks. Tyndale himself was eventually apprehended and burned. His final prayer was this: "Open the eyes of the king of England." Three years later, that prayer was answered.

Dramatic narratives about Wycliffe, Tyndale, and many others fill *The Indestructible Book*. The text is complemented by 123 illustrations, nearly all of them reproduced in color. Here is a beautiful book to treasure, even while it points us to a still more valuable book — the Bible, "the indestructible book"!

Baker Book House, 1996, 192 pages. ABR wishes to get this book into the hands of as many people as possible and is making it available for the special reduced price of \$9.95, plus postage and PA sales tax. Call 1-800-430-0008 to place an order by credit card.

— by James McBride, England

Hmmm...

He who angers you, controls you.

Story...**You Can't Please Everyone**

An old man, a boy and a donkey were going to town. The boy rode on the donkey and the old man walked.

As they went along they passed some people who remarked it was a shame the old man was walking and the boy was riding. The man and boy thought maybe the critics were right, so they changed positions.

Later, they passed some people that remarked, "What a shame, he makes that little boy walk." They then decided they both would walk!

Soon they passed some more people who thought they were stupid to walk when they had a decent donkey to ride. So, they both rode the donkey.

Now they passed some people that cast there eyes on them and railed on them by saying how awful to put such a load on a poor donkey.

The boy and man said they were probably right, so they decided to carry the donkey. As they crossed the bridge, they lost their grip on the animal and he fell into the river and drowned. The moral of the story is if you try to please everyone, you might as well kiss your donkey good-bye.

— by author unknown

“Establishing the Children”

In this issue, we are concluding the series about teaching and disciplining our children from the booklet, *University Of The Home*, written by James McBride. The following is Part 3, a continuation of excerpts from the above booklet. (This booklet is available in its entire form at www.cgom.org.)

Disciplining Your Child

It is an essential part of growing up that parents or guardians must correct and indeed punish their children. In fact, let's be quite clear that exercising discipline is an act of loving concern for our children. Too often, we feel that to take a disciplinary measure represents a failure on our part. This is absolutely not so! Well-considered and properly administered discipline is the first choice. It's the best course! A neglected garden reverts to the wild!

God compares disciplining of His children to parents' disciplining of their children. “Have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you, His child? He said, My son, don't be angry when the Lord punished you . . . For when He punished you, it proves that He loves you.

“Let God train you, for He is doing what any loving father does for his children . . . Our earthly fathers trained us for a few brief years, doing the best for us that they knew how . . . Being punished isn't enjoyable while it is happening — it hurts! But afterwards we can see the result, a quiet growth in grace and character,” **Hebrews 12:5-11**, The Living Bible.

Let's not fear to properly discipline our own children.

Finally, a few guidelines on how to set about it:

- **Begin early** — Once a child is old enough to show signs of gross behavior, tantrums, etc., a small measure of correction is called for and needs be used according to the following principles.
- **Be consistent** — A child will be confused if allowed to behave one way today, and tomorrow is corrected for the same behavior. Keep notes of your decisions to correct, and how you correct.
- **Be clear** — Every correction must be understood by the child — he must be able to link the offence and the correction.

The younger the child, the closer to the event must be the correction.

- **Be selective** — Ensure your list of behavioral goals isn't a game of trivial pursuits. Within a disciplinary frame, leave space for self-expression.
- **Be concise** — Teach “NO”! The younger the child, the more vital is this coded message. Lives have literally been saved where children have to respond immediately to this simple command. Use the word sparingly and consistently.
- **Be calm** — Don't correct a child in anger . . . better still, aim to correct before you are driven to irritation and anger!
- **Be fair** — The world certainly isn't “fair” . . . but they (our children) must see our example of even-handed correction . . . and make the punishment appropriate to the offence!
- **Be loving** — It's wrong to correct a child outside a loving relationship, freely expressed through hugs and kisses.

Effective Correction

How you discipline is a matter you must determine for yourself. Some nations have legislated against any form of corporal punishment, not only in school, but also in the home!

You must take account of our national situation. Perfect upbringing won't always have the desired outcome. A child can ‘turn out bad,’ perhaps affected by their genetic inheritance! Parents can only do their best.

Know Your Children

Each child is different. There are no ‘one fits all’ disciplines. There are measures we can take besides physical correction, but don't send your child to a dark room or deprive them of their meals, etc.

Learn what is appropriate for each child. Tailor extra chores effectively according to age and ability.

Solomon said: “He who keeps the law [of God] is a discerning son,” **Proverbs 28:7**. That implies teaching the child the Law. It teaches respect for God; and for parents, non-violent behavior, honesty, and self-discipline — all ignored by so many of today's parents and their children.

Moses, in his final guidance to the children of Israel, passed on this message from

God: "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds. . . . Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up . . . so that your days and the days of your children may be many," **Deuteronomy 11:18-21**, NIV.

So apply diligently the points listed here, use wisdom and common sense, and do not neglect loving discipline of your precious little ones. But parents, please start by first taking a long and careful look at your own behavior.

— by Shelby Faith

This concludes this three-part series of *University of the Home*.

Again, if you would like this booklet you can order it or download it at www.cgom.org. If you would like me to send you a copy of the three-part series, either E-mail me at sfaith@mindspring.com or send a request to: Shelby Faith, PO Box 183, Highridge, MO 63049.

Note to Parents: Please watch how you discipline your children in public. Some may say you are abusing your children and call the authorities.

While at the Feast this year, we were renting a theatre for services. About the third day of the Feast, there was an announcement that the Management said "you are not to discipline our children in the bathrooms or anywhere in the theatre or on the property."

We are no longer able to always discipline our children the way we should if we are out in public. So be aware that this could be a problem if your child acts up in public. Teach your children at home the proper kind of behavior you expect of them when you are out in public.

From the Mouths of Babes...

The cute statements below are said to have been written by actual students and are genuine, authentic, and not retouched or corrected:

In the first book of the Bible, Guinnessis, God got tired of creating the world, so He took the Sabbath off. Adam and Eve were created from an apple tree. Noah's wife was called Joan of Ark. Noah built an ark, which the animals come onto in pears. Lot's wife was a pillar of salt by day, but a ball of fire by night.

The Jews were a proud people and throughout history they had trouble with the unsympathetic Genitals.

Samson was a strongman who let himself be led astray by a Jezebel like Delilah. Samson slayed the Philistines with the axe of the Apostles. Moses led the Hebrews to the Red Sea, where they made unleavened bread which is bread without any ingredients.

The Egyptians were all drowned in the dessert. Afterwards, Moses went up on Mount Cyanide to get the ten ammendments.

The first commandment was when Eve told Adam to eat the apple.

The fifth commandment is to humor thy father and mother.

The seventh commandment is thou shalt not admit adultery.

Moses died before he ever reached Canada. Then Joshua led the Hebrews in the battle of Geritol.

The greatest miracle in the Bible is when Joshua told his son to stand still and he obeyed him.

David was a Hebrew king skilled at playing the liar. He fought with the Finklesteins, a race of people who lived in Biblical times.

Solomon, one of David's sons, had 300 wives and 700 porcupines.

When Mary heard that she was the mother of Jesus, she sang the Magna Carta.

When the three wise guys from the east side arrived, they found Jesus in the manager.

Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.

St. John, the blacksmith, dumped water on his head.

Jesus enunciated the Golden Rule, which says to do one to others before they do one to you.

He also explained, "a man doth not live by sweat alone."

It was a miracle when Jesus rose from the dead and managed to get the tombstone off the entrance.

The people who followed the Lord were called the 12 decibels. The epistles were the wives of the apostles.

One of the opossums was Matthew who was also a taximan. Paul cavorted to Christianity. He preached holy acrimony, which is another name for marriage.

A Christian should have only one spouse. This is called monotony.

—by Anonymous

FOR AGES 8-12

David “The Boy King”

Youth Bible Study: Ages 8-12



Lesson: I Samuel 16

David was just a young boy when God chose him to be the next king. God allowed the first king of Israel, Saul, to remain as king for awhile, even after He had already chosen David to be the next king. King Saul was not a good king, and he had sinned against God's laws, and God was very displeased with him. David became the armor bearer for King Saul and played music for him when he was troubled by an evil spirit.

1. What was the name of the prophet who came to anoint David? _____
2. What was the name of David's father? _____
3. What was David doing when he was summoned by his father?

4. What did Samuel use when he anointed David as King? _____

Fill in the blanks in the following scripture (Verse 7)

“The Lord _____ not as a man sees; for man _____ on the _____ appearance but the _____ looks on the _____.”

Which instrument below did David use to play music for Saul?



FOR AGES 4-7

David “The Boy King”

Youth Bible Study: Ages 4-7



Lesson: I Samuel 16

David was just a young boy when God chose him to be the next king. God allowed the first king of Israel, Saul, to remain as king for awhile, even after He had already chosen David to be the next king. King Saul was not a good king, and he had sinned against God's laws, and God was very displeased with him. David became the armor bearer for King Saul and played music for him when he was troubled.

1. Do you know what a king looks like? _____
2. What does a king wear? _____
3. Does a king rule over people? _____
4. What is armor? _____
5. Would you like to be a king someday? _____
6. Circle the instrument below that David played for Saul.



What can you do? . . .**Tomorrow Television**

Me, assisting in preaching the gospel? It was the easiest thing I ever did. I wrote to Howard Davis for several VHS copies of the one-hour television program, *Tomorrow*.

Then, I went to our local public access television station and gave them the video tapes. They began airing the program every Thursday at 7 PM on Channel 36 in Gillette, Wyoming. The cost to air this program is nothing.

With the help of a score of volunteers, the Portland, Oregon, United Church of God for the past seven years has produced and edited over 300 programs, which are aired on forty cable access stations across the United States. Each one-hour program is divided into six segments of seven to eight minutes with commercial breaks to feature the Church's literature and the *Good News* magazine. Viewers are frequently given a toll-free number to order free literature.

The format is interactive, with a moderator and one or two guests discussing topics of Biblical and prophetic interest. Various UCG ministers join Howard Davis in a lively and interesting discussion. So far, the television program has resulted in some 10,000 telephone requests, 25,000 booklet requests, and thousands of subscriptions to the *Good News*.

I believe that the interactive format can be an effective means of reaching people who are turned off by the normal religious sermon format of television. Are the messages lightweight? By no means! The first one I watched advertised booklets on the Sabbath and Holy Days, and had a strong message emphasizing repentance. If you would like to help in airing *Tomorrow* in your area, contact Howard Davis at howard_davis@ucg.org, or telephone 503-760-0973.

Another UCG local congregation, in Beloit, Wisconsin, produces the *Good News* television program. About a third of the programs deal with Christian living, a third with prophecy, and a third with news and current events. Forty-three programs have been produced, and they are aired on twelve stations in seven states, also on public access stations.

Contact steve_nutzman@ucg.org, 608-758-9228.

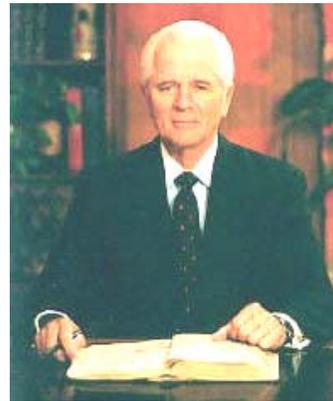
Becoming a sponsor for these free public access television programs is an easy way for

the brethren to become directly involved in spreading the good news of the kingdom.

— Richard C. Nickels

Obituaries...**What is a Real Christian?**

On September 15, 2003, Garner Ted Armstrong died at the age of 73. Many Sabbath-



keepers today were introduced to the Almighty's Truth by GTA's silver tongued voice on the *World Tomorrow* radio broadcast in the 1960s and 1970s. Perhaps the most helpful article Garner Ted Armstrong wrote was the in-

spiring, "**What is a Real Christian?**"

For a free copy, write: Giving & Sharing, 3316 Alberta Dr., Gillette, WY 82718, E-mail, Rich.Nickels@giveshare.org.

Buck Hammer

Buck Hammer died suddenly and unexpectedly on November 15, 2003. He will be buried using the Croley Funeral home in Gladewater, TX, the same funeral home the family of Garner Ted Armstrong used in September. He was the brother of Mrs. David (Molly) Antion. He was preceded in death by his wife last February.

Buck Hammer was among the first deacons to be ordained in the early 1950s. He donated the property that later became the first "Tabernacle" or Redwood library building for Ambassador College, Big Sandy, Texas. He was a visionary and business entrepreneur. It was his idea to build a lake on the Ambassador College property.

Buck Hammer grew up in East Texas and was instrumental (along with Roy and Pearl Hammer, his parents) in winning the acceptance of the people of the community and fostering their respect of the Church of God, its festivals, and practices in the Gladewater, Longview, and Big Sandy communities. Church of God stalwart Buck Hammer was friendly to all with whom he came in contact with. Another era has ended with his passing.

Alma Pistole

Alma Pistole, 1716 James Drive, Sherman TX, 75090, passed away on November 16, 2003. She was diagnosed with cancer just after the Feast of Tabernacles this year. She is survived by her husband, Fred, daughter, Flo Richardson and family, as well as a son and his family. Please remember her husband, Fred, and the family in your prayers. We are all diminished by her passing.

E. B. Vance

E. B. Vance, 81, died on November 15, 2003. He is survived by his wife, Colleen, 1407 Rodessa Drive, Tyler, TX 75701.

New Book Release...

Bible Blessings and Steven M. Collins announce the release of two new books by author Steven M. Collins about the history, migrations, and modern locations of the twelve tribes of Israel!

The new books are the first two of a four-book set, that we hope will be the most comprehensive, accurate and revealing history of the tribes of Israel yet written. The first book, *The Origins and Empire of Ancient Israel*, documents the divine blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant, from the time they were first given to Abraham through the "glory days" of the united Israelite Kingdom under Kings David and Solomon.

The second book, *Israel's Lost Empires*, reveals the locations where the Israelites migrated after the fall of the biblical Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and the new kingdoms and empires which were built by the descendants of the scattered tribes of Israel. These books will provide readers with an entirely new perspective on the history of ancient nations and empires!

The third book in the series, *Parthia: The Forgotten Ancient Superpower*, will fully document the Israelite origins of the Parthian Empire and its centuries-long reign as an Asian "superpower" empire that rivaled the Roman Empire.

Modern readers will marvel that a powerful ancient empire existed for almost half a millennium, but it is rarely discussed in the modern world. A portion of the book is devoted to the "missing years" of Jesus Christ, and his overlooked role in the geopolitical

relationships between the Roman and Parthian Empires. Expected release date: early 2004.

The fourth book in the series, *Israel's Tribes Today*, will identify the modern locations of the tribes of Israel and examine the migrations that brought them to their current locations.

Modern world geopolitics are presented in an entirely new light as a result. The Bible promised that the tribes of Israel would never die out, and that they would re-emerge with international power and prominence. This book documents the fulfillment of the Bible's prophecies about the tribes of Israel. Expected release date: mid-2004.

The above books expand upon Mr. Collins first book, *The "Lost" Ten Tribes of Israel . . . Found!* and reveal much new information about the tribes of Israel. They are fully indexed and contain many photographs, illustrations, narratives, and maps not in Mr. Collins' first book.

Steve Collins' books are available at a cost of \$18 each, plus \$2 postage, from:

Giving & Sharing

PO Box 100

Neck City, MO 64849.

In Search of . . . The Origin of Nations

Have you read **Genesis 10's** Table of Nations, and wondered where all these peoples are today? Since the Flood, all peoples have descended from Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Why does the Bible mention Nimrod, grandson of Ham, **Genesis 10:6-10**, and why does the Bible emphasize the line of Shem down through Abraham, **11:10-32**? Who are the fearsome Assyrians today, so prominently mentioned in Bible prophecy? These, and many more questions are effectively answered in the new book, *In Search of . . . The Origin of Nations*, 496 pp., \$22 plus \$2 postage, from **Giving & Sharing, PO Box 100, Neck City, MO 64849.**

This well-researched book by Craig Martin White is packed with charts, maps, and extensive footnotes and has over 700 bibliographical references, yet is written in a clear, easy-to-understand style. A key to understanding Bible prophecy is to identify the nations for which those prophecies are given. Israel and Assyria are key players in end time prophecy, and we need to know where they are today. Further information on the *Origin*

of Nations may be found on Mr. White's Web site www.originofnations.org.

Far from supporting racism, identifying the peoples of the earth shows the handiwork of the Creator God, and His purpose for mankind. We need to know and appreciate our roots. Today, sub-races and tribes are disappearing at an alarming rate as the world hurdles toward globalization and the infamous "universal man." Knowledge of where we came from is essential to know where we are going. The Eternal will preserve ethnic groups into the Millennium, **Zechariah 14:16-19**, **Isaiah 19:23-25**.

"Every nation, however small, is a unique part of God's plan for mankind," said Alexander Solzhenitsyn. "When a nation goes down [or] a society perishes, one condition may always be found. They forgot where they came from," said Carl Sandberg.

— by Richard Nickels

Article...

The Box

There is an expression that is being used today by many individuals in the Churches of God and in other groups which says: "Think outside the box." This expression means to think outside the normal or accepted ideas, and try to understand another meaning to whatever concept or idea that you are researching. Many have used this expression to change past concepts and ideas that may have been perfectly okay to believe.

But is the "box" as bad as many individuals in the Churches of God seem to imply? This is the question that I will be exploring from a Biblical view.

In **II Timothy 3:15-17**, Paul states: "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect." The Word of God gives us parameters for our behavior and ideology that we live by.

In **II Corinthians 10:5**, Paul says: "Casting down imaginations [reasoning], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." We are to remove the reasoning, and other things

that go against the Knowledge that we learn in the Word of God.

We will also find that in **Matthew 4:4**, Jesus quotes from **Deuteronomy 8:3**: "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

As we can see from just these few verses alone, our instructions are to use the Word of God as a guide to our reasoning and views on life. It is by God's instructions and written Word that we are to become "perfect." There are many other verses that prove this point, and I would encourage you to continue this study.

The Bible is black and white on various concepts, but some topics can have unclear or multiple meanings.

The Bible has a clear parameter on moral issues such as slander, stealing, and so forth. Many moral concepts are very clear cut and are set with borders. There is no thinking outside the box on these issues: they are black and white.

But other items such as the spiritual realm and prophecy are concepts we can muse over, as they are limited in what we understand in the first place. We can consider other possibilities as we research the facts.

In using this expression, you should use wisdom to know when you can "think outside the box," and when you cannot. For many areas in the Bible, we have clear explanations and we should accept the facts as they stand. Some topics can be pondered over, based on facts, and you can let your imagination wonder about them.

Next time you hear this expression, remember that the Bible defines the box that shapes your views on life and that we should use wisdom in examining any subject.

— by Doyle J. Carter

Health...

SARS and God's Law

You cannot break God's law, but if you disobey God's law . . .

The recent Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak terrified the world like no other disease in recent history.

Death was almost certain, and came in a matter of days. Not one doctor or medical association was ready for this new disease. Fortunately, through a concerted world-wide

effort, the outbreak was contained and, for the time being, SARS is no longer a threat.

Hindsight has 20/20 vision, so it is said. Looking back to the SARS outbreak, it's evident that disobedience of God's law gave SARS its start.

The World Health Organization visited Foshan City, Guangdong Province, China, where the first known case of atypical pneumonia occurred. After considerable research, it was determined the causative agent was an entirely new corona virus. The infected person unknowingly spread the disease to others. With modern travel, SARS quickly arrived in Toronto, Ontario, and almost shut the city down.

Research teams in Hong Kong and China then announced detection of a SARS-like corona virus in the masked palm civet and raccoon dog. These and other wild animals traditionally consumed as delicacies are sold for human consumption in markets throughout southern China. This is where God's law enters the scene.

Leviticus 11 and **Deuteronomy 14** list which animals, birds, and sea life are safe, and which are unsafe for human consumption. Search as you will, you'll not find any of the cat or dog families listed among the clean animals, as safe for humans to eat.

Hark! Is that the voice of dissent I hear? Is someone saying those musty Old Testament laws were nailed to Jesus' cross, **Colossians 2:14**? Do I hear someone else saying Paul claimed nothing is unclean of itself, **Romans 14:14**? Ah, yes, and methinks I hear someone muttering about Peter's vision of a sheet full of all sorts of critters descending from heaven, **Acts 10:9-16**.

Regardless of the arguments one might proffer, God's dietary laws of Moses' day are equally applicable today as they were four thousand years ago. The proof reveals itself in discoveries which link SARS with the eating of such animals as the palm civet and the raccoon dog.

A similar discovery was made several years ago when the source of the AIDS virus was traced to Africa where yet another unclean animal was eaten regularly by humans. Monkeys, according to **Leviticus 11** and **Deuteronomy 14** have the characteristics of unclean animals, unfit for human consumption.

You may rightfully argue that nearly everything you can eat provides some nu-

trition for the human body, even monkeys. But monkeys also carry the Simian Immunodeficiency Virus (SIV) which, when it infects the human body becomes HIV, commonly called the AIDS virus. Yes, monkey meat, cat meat, dog meat, pig meat, and such, all provide some nutrition for the human body; but so does milk laced with cyanide.

God created animals for various reasons. Horses and elephants are working animals. Pigs and shell-fish are part of the world's ecological garbage system. Cats, dogs, and alligators were all created for their particular roles in the scheme of life; but they were not created to be food for human beings, and God has so decreed.

God gave us his dietary laws in **Leviticus 11** and **Deuteronomy 14**, not to stop us from enjoying such "delicacies" as the masked palm civet and the raccoon dog, but to show us what not to eat so we wouldn't destroy ourselves with animal-borne disease.

The linking of the SARS virus and the AIDS virus to the ingestion of unclean animals supports God's law. And, as one minister told his congregation, "You cannot break God's law, but if you disobey God's law, it will break you."

— by Leslie A. Turvey

Article...

Defining the Face of Persecution

What image comes to mind when I say "the face of persecution" or "the face of martyrdom"? A robust man, standing resolute and Luther-like, saying "Here I stand," while a firing squad takes aim?

Let me put the face of persecution into better focus as we prepare for this Sunday, the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. Who are the more than 200 million being persecuted as Christians?

The face of suffering is a child's face. Last month, in Buddhist Burma, militia and insurgents destroyed a Christian hospital and orphanage, using rocket-propelled grenades. In North Korea, great-grandchildren are punished for their great-grandparent's "crime" of following Christ.

International Christian Concern reports, "if there is even a hint of Christianity, the person and their entire family to the fourth generation are killed outright or sent to a prison camp to be [starved and killed]."

Several Muslim countries have intensified

persecution since September 11, mistakenly equating Christianity with the United States. Attackers beat, burned, and sexually abused a nine-year-old Pakistani girl — saying it was “revenge for the American bombing of Iraqi children . . . because you are an infidel and Christian.”

“The face of suffering is a female face,” observes Marli Spieker, founder of Trans World Radio’s “Women of Hope” broadcast. In Indonesia, she met a young woman who had refused to deny Christ. So a jihad member put a gun into her mouth and said “Let’s see your God help you now.” Then he pulled the trigger. Miraculously, she survived, but she was horribly disfigured.

It’s the face of Soon Ok Lee, a Christian and former prisoner in a North Korean concentration camp. She testified before the Senate that Christians are assigned to the cast iron factory, the most dangerous place in the gulag. She saw a group of elderly Christians killed, one-by-one, doused with molten iron because they would not deny Christ.

In Vietnam, Christians are denied jobs, promotions, and medical benefits — even

water from the community well. When a Vietnamese pastor was beaten to death, authorities pressured his brother to sign a confession that he had done it.

News stories from around the world read as follows: “Mexico: Assailants Kill Evangelical Pastor;” “Israel: Bible Shop Trashed;” “Nigeria: Two Catholic Priests Assassinated.”

But other faces involved are yours and mine. In the body of Christ, after all, when one suffers, we all suffer. And therefore, we feel it when our brothers are being persecuted.

Go to www.BreakPoint.org to find links there to additional information, including a link to an audio clip of a song portraying a prisoner wondering whether anyone cares enough to pray for him. Well, prayers matter.

Irina Ratushinskaya, my friend, the Russian dissident and gifted poet, was in prison for seven years because of her Christian faith. She told me that every day in that cold, dank gulag she felt the prayers of believers offered for her around the world. Let the believers around the world feel our prayers. **Numbers 6:24-26.**

— by Charles Colson