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(but will it work this time?)**

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The "New" Church of God Messenger
A Newsletter for the People of God
December 14, 2024 --- Issue No. 202

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Publisher: Church of God, Bismarck, Darwin & Laura Lee, **Editor:** Laura Lee, **Assistant Editor:** Darwin Lee We do not necessarily agree with all contributors, or their works submitted and printed in this newsletter. It is up to you to get out your Bible and see whether these things are true. Iron sharpens Iron

Contributors: Curtis Dahlgren, Dwight Fleming, William P. Goff, Eddie Hyatt, Obed Mambwe, Rod Reynolds, Richard T. Ritenbaugh, David Rives, Warren Zehrung

Websites:

<https://darwin-laura.com/> **Links**

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Commentary:

Hi Everyone,

Good news, Musket is doing better. We had worried that she may have a kidney problem because she was drinking a lot of water which can also indicate diabetes and yes cats do get diabetes. I had a cat named Mous who was losing a ton of weight. We took him to the vet and a couple of vets wouldn't even let me buy the vet prescription cat food for diabetic cats because they said he was going to die. Finally, I found a vet that would give me the high protein vet food needed for diabetic cats, and I had to buy an auto feeder because he had to eat every 4 hours. I had to keep him in a cage to keep the other cats from eating his food. Within 3 months Mous gained all his weight back and no longer tested as diabetic. He then went on to live for another 3 or 4 years as a healthy cat.

So with Musket we covered all the main bases. The miracle vet weight gain liquid in case it was old age. The probiora in case it was a dental issue and high protein wet cat food twice a day in case it was diabetes. After only a week, she no longer drinks a ton of water, which is good. She would hardly eat before and last night she ate a half a can of cat food, 2.6 ounces. In the morning I put the miracle vet and probiora in a quarter of a can of cat food or 1.3 ounces because I want to make sure she eats the whole thing and she has been doing really good at that. I may not know exactly what is wrong with her but I did notice that she has been chewing her food much better since being on the Probiora so there was probably a dental issue which is now being worked out with the Probiora. Time will tell and I don't expect her to gain weight back in a week, but she is now eating well which over time should help that problem.

Funny thing, not only can you purchase the Probiora for cats and dogs, but you can also get it for people, so we ordered some. The company posts a before and after picture at Walmart.

For Dogs: [PROBIORA PET Probiotic Dog Oral Care Powder, 1-oz bottle - Chewy.com](https://www.chewy.com/probiora-pet-probiotic-dog-oral-care-powder-1-oz-bottle)

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For People: [ProBiora Mint Oral Probiotic - Fresh Breath, Healthy Gums, Dental Health - 30 Tabs - Walmart.com](#)

Below are the links for what we bought for Musket:

[MIRACLE VET Weight Gain Liquid Supplement for Dogs & Cats, 16-oz pouch - Chewy.com](#) (This one is for Dogs or Cats)

[PROBIORA Probiotic Oral Care Cat Supplement, 1-oz bag - Chewy.com](#) (This one is for cats only, but they have it for Dogs also – Just put "Probiora Probiotic" in the search engine at Chewy.com to find the dog version.)

Some of these seem to be cheaper on the Probiora web site but you may not get free shipping:

[Home - ProBiora Health | ProBiora Health](#)

Remember that if you have a prayer request or a time dated article to please mark it urgent in the subject line otherwise they just go unread into a folder waiting for their turn to be printed.

Please pray for our brethren in Kenya, Israel and all around the world. Even though some of us have peace right now, others do not. Pray for Donald Trump and His Family, that they may be safe during these trying times.

Again, we are grateful to all the people who contribute to this newsletter.

Hope you all have a happy Sabbath,
(Written by Laura)

1Co 14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

Drunk on power, the power of lies (but will it work this time?)

(Copyright 11-05-2024) by Curtis Dahlgren (Stephenson, Michigan)

"If a political party does not have its foundation in the determination to advance a cause that is right and that is moral, then it is not a political party; it is merely a conspiracy to seize power." – Dwight Eisenhower

"The lie in the Soul is a true lie." – Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893)

**This life's five windows of the soul
Distorts the Heavens from pole to pole,
And leads you to believe a lie
When you see with, not thro', the eye.
– William Blake (1757-1827)**

**To lapse in fullness
Is sorer than to lie for need, and falsehood
Is worse in kings than beggars.
– Wm. Shakespeare (1564-1616)**

DISCLAIMER: Can't say I've never told a lie. Didn't call it a "talking point" though. Shakespeare wrote:

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"The web of our life is of a mingled *yarn*, good and ill together: our virtues would be proud, if our faults whipped them not.... Dare to be true: nothing can need a lie; a fault, which needs it most, grows two thereby."

"The people never give up their liberties but under some delusion.... Kings will be tyrants from policy, when subjects are rebels from principle." – Edmund Burke (1729-97)

I was just given a book, "YOU SAID WHAT? Lies and propaganda throughout history," by Bill Fawcett (Harper, 2007), and he says:

"The lie was the keynote deception for one of the darkest past of European history. I am not sure what so many Germans' believing it says about them or the world over half a century ago. What do we believe that is just as wrong today?"

Burke said: "Among a people generally corrupt, liberty cannot long exist.... Tyrants seldom [lack] pretexts.... Falsehood has a perennial spring."

"The lie that flatters I abhor the most.... Stamps God's own name upon a lie just made, to turn a penny." – William Cowper (1731-1800)

"An ambassador is an honest man sent to lie abroad." – Sir Henry Wotton (1568-1639)

That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright,
But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight.
– Tennyson (1809-1892)

CONCLUSION: "Whosoever loveth and maketh a lie won't be in God's Kingdom." – Revelation

Unlike George Washington, we've all told them, but I never *loved* one. A few words more from the Scriptures:

"They have set up kings, but not by Me."

"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice."

"Woe unto that nation whose king is a boy . . . Women and babes shall rule over them."

"For so is the will of God that you may put to silence the foolishness of ignorant men, not using your liberty as a cloak for malice, but as bond-servants of God."

"Where the spirit of the Lord is, *there* is Liberty."

To re-phrase the passage above, written by Peter to the scattered Tribes in Asia Minor: "Use your Freedoms to put to silence the ignorance of foolish people."

P.S. "A few honest men are better than numbers." – Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658)

PPS: Liars think you are stupid. Some people *are*, but I think the sheep are beginning to recognize the sound of the wolves.

See Curtis Dahlgren's other articles at:

[Dahlgren, Curtis – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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David Hume – The Evolution of Evolution (Copyright 11-06-2024) by David Rives (Lewisburg, Tennessee)

In the days before Darwin and naturalistic scientists like him, there were philosophers theorizing about God, the supernatural, and miracles. One such philosopher was David Hume, who lived during the eighteenth century. This Scottish thinker is best remembered for his influential system of thought that included empiricism, skepticism, and naturalism.

Hume disregarded miracles and argued against religions founded on the miraculous. For example, he argued against the idea of cause and effect. He said that we often view a cause as creating an effect, but this may not be the case. Instead, it may simply be a habit of association that we make. We see cause and effect because that's how we've been conditioned.

There is a popular theistic argument from causation that basically states—that the universe operates on cause and effect and therefore must have a First Cause, the Creator God. But if Hume were right, this argument is false. He was actually turning the Causality argument around and claiming the world doesn't operate on cause and effect — therefore we don't need to appeal to a Creator.

He, like so many before and after him, fell into the trap of trying to explain life, religion, morality, and more without God. Sadly, his work was highly influential in shaping Western thought.

One such person that he influenced was Charles Darwin. He regarded the works of Hume as influential in shaping his thoughts and opinions. And, of course, it was the acceptance of Darwinian ideas about the origin of the species that opened the floodgates for skeptical, atheistic, and naturalistic thinking to sweep through science and society.

Hume's thinking foolishly rests on human opinion instead of the Word of the infallible Creator. The Apostle Paul wrote in Corinthians that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God because he knows the vain thoughts of people who try to deny Him. People just like David Hume.

I'm David Rives. Truly, the heavens declare the glory of God.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ILRsNGK41A>

See David Rives other articles at:

[Rives, David – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](https://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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Political Coalition or Christ-Centered Unity? (Copyright 11-06-2024) by Eddie Hyatt (Grapevine, Texas)

Why The Church Must Now Step Up to the Plate

Donald Trump astounded the American media and political world by cobbling together a coalition of Blacks, Whites, Asians, Hispanics, Women, Men, Muslims, and Christians for a resounding victory over Kamala Harris and the Democrat Party. But in our euphoria, we must not forget that this is a very tenuous political coalition that could quickly dismantle at

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the next election or economic crisis.

The deep hostilities, although in abeyance at the moment, are still there waiting for the next opportunity to erupt in an inferno of rage at Donald Trump and everyone who supported him. Only a Christ-centered national Awakening can bring healing to a deeply divided America.



Donald Trump's election was a great victory, but the job of the American Church is just now beginning. An Awakened Church is the instrument God will use to heal the deep divisions in our nation, and such a healing actually happened at the time of America's founding.

In the early 1700s the 13 American colonies seemed hopelessly divided. There existed a mutual hatred and distrust that stretched back to their forefathers in England. They seemed destined to forever exist as 13 divided colonies. God, however, had a plan.

The Deep Divisions of Colonial America

Most do not realize the deep divisions that existed in colonial America between the Anglicans who settled Virginia, the Puritans who settled New England, the Baptists who settled Rhode Island, the Quakers who settled Pennsylvania, and so on.

In the Old World, Anglicans (as the state church) had imprisoned Puritans, even putting some to death. They had also persecuted Baptists and Quakers. In the New World, Puritans had persecuted Quakers and Baptists, banning them from their colony and even putting some to death. Anglicans in Virginia jailed Baptists preachers who came into their colony to preach the gospel. Baptists and Quakers did not get along and considered Puritans and Anglicans to be part of the false, harlot church of Revelation.

It seemed that these groups could never reconcile. Their history was too long and their pain too deep. God, however, had an answer. His answer was a great, spiritual awakening based on the preaching of the gospel wherein Jesus was presented as the central object of faith.

God's Instrument for Change

God's instrument to ignite this Awakening and carry the revival flame from Georgia to New Hampshire was a 25-year-old Oxford graduate who had just been ordained with the Anglican Church. At Oxford, George Whitefield had been part of the Holy Club (Methodists) and had experienced a radical conversion to Jesus Christ. After his ordination, he ignited great revival in England while John and Charles Wesley were away on a mission to Georgia. Although ordained with the Anglican Church, Whitefield did not have a denominational bone in his body. He freely fellowshiped with all true believers, including Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, and any who honored God and confessed Jesus Christ as the true Lord of

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the Church.

Whitefield came to America on his first of seven visits in 1738. He came with a burden for the colonists and a prayer that they would no longer live as thirteen divided colonies, but as “one nation under God.” (Hyatt, *America's Revival Heritage (Second Edition)*, 59).

His impact on America was astounding. Most of his meetings were in the open air because there were no buildings large enough to accommodate the thousands that came to hear him. In his *Autobiography*, Benjamin Franklin tells of the incredible change that came over his hometown of Philadelphia when Whitefield came there on his second of seven visits to America. He wrote,

In 1739 there arrived among us from Ireland the Reverend Mr. Whitefield who made himself remarkable there as an itinerant preacher. The multitudes of all sects and denominations that attended his sermons were enormous, and it was a matter of speculation to me, who was one of the number, to observe the extraordinary influence of his oratory on his hearers. From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seemed as if all the world were growing religious so that one could not walk through the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street (Hyatt, *America's Revival Heritage (Second Edition)*, 59-60).

Although accounts of his meetings often describe the multitudes as standing and listening in rapt silence, accounts also reveal intense emotional responses at times, as things eternal were made real to their hearts and minds. On one occasion, after preaching to a huge throng gathered outdoors, Whitefield surveyed the crowd and noted the amazing response. He wrote in his *Journal*;

Look where I would, most were drowned in tears. Some were struck pale as death, others wringing their hands, others lying on the ground, others sinking into the arms of their friends and most lifting up their eyes to heaven and crying out to God (Hyatt, *America's Revival Heritage (Second Edition)*, 62).

Whitefield Confronts the Divisions

Whitefield addressed the divisions of the colonists head-on. In one of his sermons, for example, as he was preaching in the open air to several thousand, representing various sects and denominations, he pretended to converse with Father Abraham, whom he pictured as looking over the banister of heaven at the gathered multitude.

Whitefield cried out, “Father Abraham, are there any Anglicans in heaven?”

The answer came back, “No, there are no Anglicans in heaven.”

“Father Abraham, are there any Puritans in heaven?”

“No, there are no Puritans in heaven.”

“Are there any Methodists in heaven?”

“No, there are no Methodists here either.”

“What about Baptists or Quakers?”

“No, there are none of those here either.”

“Father Abraham,” cried Whitefield, “What kind of people are in heaven?”

The answer came back, “There are only Christians in heaven, only those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb.”

Whitefield then cried out, “Oh, is that the case? Then God help me, God help us all, to forget having names and become Christians in deed and in truth!” (Hyatt, *America's Revival Heritage (Second Edition)*, 60-61).

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Sectarian Walls are Broken Down

In Boston, when the population was around 17,000, an estimated crowd of 20,000 gathered on the Boston Common to hear Whitefield preach. Differences were melted, denominational walls were broken down, and for the first time, the colonists began to see themselves as a single people with one Divine destiny, “One Nation Under God,” as Whitefield had prayed.

By his incessant travels, Whitefield made the Great Awakening America’s first national event. It was the first time the scattered colonists of various denominational and theological persuasions had participated together as one people in a single event.

Historian, Benjamin Hart, points out that when Whitefield visited America for the final time in 1770, even the Episcopal (Anglican) churches, which had initially rejected him, opened their doors to him. He goes on to say,

The true Spirit of Christ had dissolved sectarian differences. America considered itself to be a nation of Christians, pure and simple, as Whitefield noted with satisfaction. “Pulpits, hearts and affections,” he said, were opened to him and any preacher of whatever denomination who had a true Christian message to share (Hyatt, *1726: The Year that Defined America*, 87-88).

The late Harvard professor, Perry Miller, surely had Whitefield in mind when he wrote, “The Declaration of Independence of 1776 was a direct result of the preaching of the evangelists of the Great Awakening.” Through Whitefield’s ministry the Divided Colonies of America became the United States of America.

We Hold the Key

In Ephesians 2:14, Paul says of Jesus, *For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one and broken down the middle wall of separation.* For Paul, the greatest gulf in first century humanity was the one between Jew and Gentile. He was convinced, however, that Jesus, and only Him, could span that gulf and bring the two together. This is what brought the divided thirteen colonies together--the Christ-centered preaching of Whitefield and others of the Great Awakening. This happened to such an extent that a British-appointed governor in Connecticut wrote to his superiors in England, “If you ask an American who is his master, he will tell you he has none, nor any governor but Jesus Christ” (Hyatt, *1726: The Year that Defined America*, 81).

They answer for a deeply divided America is not political. We, as the church, hold the only message that can restore civility and harmony to this nation. We, therefore, must not allow ourselves to be intimidated by the anti-Christian rhetoric of the modern world.

We must be bold! We must preach Jesus! And we must pray for the rain of the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon this nation once again. A national unity centered in Jesus is the only thing that will save America.

See Eddie Hyatt’s other articles at:

[Hyatt, Eddie – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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Kenya Update November 6, 2024 – FOT Report
(Copyright 11-06-2024) by William P. Goff (Myrtle Beach, South Carolina)

Greetings Brethren,

The November 6, 2024, Kenya Update is now posted at:

[KHOFH – Kenya Hands of Hope](http://KHOFH.org)



Thank You.
Bill Goff

See William P. Goff's other articles at:
[Goff, William P. – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](https://www.church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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Trump's Victory Speech

(Copyright 11-09-2024) by Dwight Fleming (Oroville, California)

This video goes back to a speech that President Trump gave in 2017 during his first term. After Trump's 2024 election win, this is the speech that everyone needs to hear and draw inspiration from.

Thank God for His gracious mercy to our nation and for hearing the prayers of many Americans who desire leaders who will protect our Constitutional rights, especially the freedom to worship Almighty God. May we always praise God and give Him the glory for the blessing of His Word and the Hope of Salvation provided through His son, Jesus Christ. May this Thanksgiving be a true day of remembering and thanking God for His many blessings and works of healing for our nation and all peoples of the earth.

"O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever" (Psalm 107:1).

Video link:

"Never Give Up!": <https://youtu.be/OSJDhZvLtak?si=Q1cuz5IV9LbIzGqh>

See Dwight Fleming's other articles at:
[Fleming, Dwight – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](https://www.church-of-god-bismarck.org)

Worship of the Dead

(Copyright 11-10-2024) by Rod Reynolds (Wentzville, Missouri)

Heathen cultures and religions in many parts of the world involve some form of worship directed toward dead heroes or ancestors.

Religious observances such as Hallowmas, which begins on the evening of October 31, or Halloween (All Hallows' Eve), preserve to one extent or another, depending on the region, widespread ancient customs and superstitions directly associated with the worship of the dead. As does the "secular" observance of Halloween itself.

Does God's Word have anything to say about customs involving worship of the dead? Should Christians participate in the Halloween custom, or similar customs? It's important to consider the Bible's answers to these questions.

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Sermon Link: [Worship of the Dead | COGMessenger](#)

See Rod Reynolds other articles at:

[Reynolds, Rod – The "New" Church of God Messenger \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](https://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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Teachings

(Copyright 11-10-2024) by Obed Mambwe (Unknown)

Thank you for your wonderful teachings and we are much beneficiaries of your teachings. Therefore, we are in need of free literature e.g. Bibles in our local languages for free distribution to unsaved souls. Additional by this, we have a threat of food insecurity following a long drought caused by EL NINO weather and about 2 millions of hectares which cultivated this rain season are destroyed. We are here humbly request with you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to support us Bibles and food. Hebrew 6:10. Galatians 6:10. Thank you and it's more encouraging to hear from you soon.

With much of love,
Mambwe Obed

Editor's Note: First of all, in order for anyone to send you anything we would need an address that can be published. Second, no one knows what language you speak so no one would be able to send you anything in your language if it is different from English. If your language is English, you can email or print and send our newsletters to people in your congregation.

Just to clarify, we do not collect money from anyone and if we spent our own personal money to send things to you, then we would have to do it for others and we do not have that kind of money or that kind of ministry for us to do that. There are only two of us here.

We publish a weekly newsletter which is distributed via email. The money we use to have a website and whatever expenses we have in regard to this newsletter come from our own personal money. We are not rich. Our newsletter is

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free to you and anyone else in your congregation who wishes to receive it. People can sign up on our website to receive our newsletter via email each week for free.

This is the same note I attached to your last email, and we still do not know where you are from or what language you speak. We have no address to publish for you so this makes it impossible for anyone to send you anything even if they would have it to send. Laura Lee

See Obed Mambwe's other articles at:
[Mambwe, Obed – The "New" Church of God Messenger](#)

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(Copyright 11-11-2024) by William P. Goff (Myrtle Beach, South Carolina)

Greetings Brethren,
We hope all of you are doing well. As many of you know, the schools in Kenya are closed until January. And currently our funds are totally depleted. If you can possibly help, it will be much appreciated.

Website: <http://www.khofh.org>

E-mail: goffb50@aol.com

Phone: +1-843-447-0140

Thank You.
Your brother in Christ,
Bill Goff

See William P. Goff's other articles at:
[Goff, William P. – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](#)

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A Bride Prepared (Chapter 16)
(Copyright) by Warren Zehrung (Little Rock, Arkansas)

[Chapter 16: A Magnificent Reality](#)
A Bride Prepared

A Magnificent Reality

Our Church wedding ceremony begins with the words, "Marriage is a natural union, but a divine institution, ordained of God." God created the marriage covenant, not only as the basis of social order for mankind, but also to foreshadow His eternal plan. The marriage of Adam and Eve as husband and wife was the prototype of the eternal spiritual covenant between Christ and His Bride – the Church.

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That first marriage contract between Adam and Eve was a prophetic sign of Christ’s ultimate goal to enter into a perfect spiritual union with all the members of His Body. In Ephesians 5, Paul speaks of how the Bride of Christ and the Church of God are one and the same. Even now, Christ is preparing His **Wife-to-be** for their wedding day, *“That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”*

The language is decidedly matrimonial in comparing a husband’s love for his wife – to the love of Christ for His Wife, *“He nourishes and cherishes her, even as the Lord the Church.”* (Ephesians 5:29) God established the intimacy attainable within a blessed marriage as a mere indication of the transcendent unity and oneness achievable only in the spiritual realm of the God-plane marriage.

Then, Paul reveals how God is showing us through the *physical* marriage bond, His intent for all the Church brethren to be joined eternally to Jesus Christ in an eternal *spiritual* covenant: *“A man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.”* (Ephesians 5:32)

There are those who consider themselves to be “doctrinal experts” today who deny that any such marriage will take place. Clearly, God records the first covenant wedding with Israel as being typical of the soon-to-be-fulfilled New Covenant wedding supper with the resurrected Israel of God (Exodus 24:7-11, Galatians 6:16). *“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”* (Hebrews 10:16-17)

The Bible distinctly shows the objective of our going on to perfection: *“ I have espoused you to one Husband [Jesus Christ], that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”* (2 Corinthians 11:2) There will be a heavenly wedding!

“Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me, these are the true sayings of God.” (Revelation 19:9) Some claim that there will be no wedding supper at all, and that these words of God are merely an allegory. Is the Church of God literally going to enter into an eternal covenant relationship with Jesus Christ – or did God simply want us to get our hopes up with these alluring sentiments? The real problem is the destabilizing inference that Jesus overstated our potential, and that the reality of Christ’s teaching does not measure up to His claim.

Make no mistake about it, *“These are the true sayings of God.”* (Revelation 19:9) Be very careful of those who water down the truth of God in these last days. *“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall... have a form of godliness but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”* (2 Timothy 3:1, 5)

When we read of the future fulfillment of God’s Plan – never assume that it is possible to grasp with our carnal minds – the awesome, majestic, and incomprehensible meaning of what God has promised. Jesus Christ is not selling us a bill of goods. Let us always recognize that the fulfillment of the promises that God speaks of will far surpass our greatest expectations.

The critics’ proof that the *marriage supper of the Lamb* was only allegorical was said to be in Revelation 21. They snidely asked the question, “Is Jesus going to marry **a city**? Chuckle, chuckle!” What does the Scripture mean when it speaks of a new heaven and a new earth? *“I John saw the holy city, **New Jerusalem**, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a **Bride adorned for her Husband.**”* (Revelation 21:2)

Something magnificent is being revealed here – *the Holy City, prepared as a Bride* – what does it mean? Those who used worldly wisdom deduced that it was a foregone conclusion that Christ could not possibly marry New Jerusalem – because no one can marry *a city*. They could not understand “New Jerusalem” to be a reference to the **spiritual saints of God**. They failed to include the next few verses in their study, and they neglected to ask themselves the question, “Who is New Jerusalem?” Again, please understand – Bible language points to the spiritual reality to come. Let us gather a little here and a little there and see if we can figure out **who** Jesus Christ is speaking of when He uses the term, “New Jerusalem.”

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Zion

First of all, let us understand what Zion is. (Sion, in the New Testament) The first mention of Zion is when David captured this temple-mount stronghold from the Jebusites (2 Samuel 5:7). The meaning of the word “Zion” goes through a series of Scriptural expansions in its conceptual development from representing ancient Israel as the people of God (Isaiah 51:16), to include the all-encompassing concept of God’s everlasting reign, and all that entails (Micah 4:7). “*The Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.*” (Psalm 132:13-14) Make the connection here that God **dwells** in both Zion and the saints – because they are one and the same! The saints are, “...*an habitation of God...*” (Ephesians 2:22)

Isaiah equates Zion with the Holy City, Jerusalem. “*Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the Holy City.*” (Isaiah 52:1) And, the **saints have the name** of the city of God, which is New Jerusalem – because they are also one and the same! “*I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem.*” (Revelation 3:12). When we put these few verses together, we see that **Zion is the Church**.

What we find shows that the Old and New Testament Scriptures are consistent in confirming that Jesus Christ will marry the Bride – the Church – Spiritual Israel – Mount Zion – The Firstborn – New Jerusalem – the City of the Lord. Zion is the eternal city Abraham sought (Hebrews 11:10). Notice how Paul ties some of these descriptive terms together when speaking of the resurrected saints – the Bride of Christ. “*You are come unto Mt. Zion, and unto the City of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the General Assembly, and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.*” (Hebrews 12:22-23) That includes the saints! “*The spirits of righteous men made perfect,*” is an ideal picture of the **prepared Bride of Christ**.

This is how Isaiah describes the glory and riches of New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ: “*The Redeemer shall come to Zion...My covenant [is] with them, says the Lord; My Spirit is upon you... and they shall call you, the City of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.*” (Isaiah 59:20- 21, 60:14) New Jerusalem is called the Bride because it encompasses all who are the Bride. Jesus shares his intimate feelings for His Bride with us – because it is His intent that we be His Bride. He says to Zion – the Church and the Bride – “*You shalt be called ‘Hephzibah’- [My Delight is in Her] ...for the Lord delights in you.*” (Isaiah 62:4)

Individually, we are each a *temple of God* (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19, 2 Corinthians 6:16). Peter shows that collectively we are *as lively stones, built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood* – and yet, Jesus is not going to marry a temple, city, stones, or a house (1 Peter 2:5). It is plain, that once we are placed in the Body of Christ, we become “*Fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God ...in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*” (Ephesians 2: 19-20).

This **holy temple in the Lord - a dwelling place of God**, is the Church – Spiritual Israel – Mount Zion – The Firstborn – New Jerusalem – the City of the Lord. So, who is this New Jerusalem **prepared as a bride adorned for her husband?** It is the resurrected – spiritual saints of God. Notice Revelation 21:3, “*And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*”

Jesus knew about these perilous times when men would say “God is just kidding” – so He added this certification, again. “*He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*” (Revelation 21:5) Let the Bible interpret the Bible. “*Come hither, I will show you the Bride, the Lamb’s Wife...and he showed me that great city, the Holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.*” (Revelation 21:9-10) The Bride of Christ and Holy Jerusalem are one and the same!

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Halloween

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Each year, as the last day of October nears, members of God's church begin making plans to avoid Halloween. Some plan a trip to the local mall to do some shopping, even though the malls teem with kids and their parents trick-or-treating. Others hope to escape to the movie theater to watch whatever happens to be in distribution at the time. A few seek out various other amusements from miniature golf to autumnal carnivals. Those of us with either less imagination or less motivation simply make ourselves appear to be somewhere else, putting the car in the garage, turning off all the lights at the front of the house, and creeping around on tiptoe so that no sound gives away our presence.

These plans coincide with a feeling of resigned dread that the holiday season—now stretching from mid-October to early-January—is upon us. We used to catch a break between the Feast of Tabernacles and the annoyances of the Christmas season, but no longer. Halloween has just become too big for kids, partygoers, and retailers alike, to pass over so easily.

Each year, roughly 65-70% of adults participate in Halloween, which includes wearing a costume. About 80% of households distribute treats to an average of 37 trick-or-treaters, and sadly, despite their best intentions, 7% of children

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eat all their candy on the first night.

In terms of retail sales, Halloween is second only to Christmas. Americans spend over \$3 billion on Halloween items and activities, with nearly \$2 billion spent on candy and the rest on costumes, decorations, and party favors. The average household shells out an average of \$81 to celebrate this evening, mostly on candy and decorations.

As a party day, Halloween is third behind Christmas and Super Bowl Sunday. Bottlers sell more beer around Halloween than around Saint Patrick's Day, when the beer flows like water. In many ways, Halloween is becoming a favorite of adults across America, a time when they can shed their inhibitions behind a mask and costume.

Many professing Christians have considered Halloween to be innocuous, an evening of innocent fun. However, there is a great deal more to this holiday than darling children dressed in cute costumes shouting for candy at the neighbors' doors. Once the facts are known, no sound argument justifies Christians observing this most unchristian holiday—an unholy mixture of rank consumerism with outright paganism, occultism, vandalism, hedonism, and demonism.

Foundational Principles

Jeremiah 10:1-5 reveals a principle that we need to consider in terms of Halloween. The context is the heathen practice of idolatry. In this sense, it is ironic that Halloween comes primarily from the Celts, descendants of the Israelites.

Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel. Thus says the LORD: "Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are futile [vain, worthless]; for one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple. They are upright, like a palm tree, and they cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot go by themselves. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, nor can they do any good."

God commands us not to learn the way of the Gentiles, the nations who do not have the revelation of God. The Israelites were different from all the nations chiefly because God had revealed Himself to them, made a covenant with them, and given them His law (Deuteronomy 4:5-8; Amos 3:1-2). The Gentiles invented their own futile, meaningless ways of worship because they did not have the truth.

This is the first reason why we should not keep Halloween. It adds nothing good, that is, nothing of God or godliness, to our character. Being devoid of God's truth, it is simply worthless and a waste of time.

Deuteronomy 12:29-32 provides a second reason to avoid Halloween. God says this to Israel just before they entered the Promised Land:

When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, "How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise." You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.

Halloween is a custom of the nations. God Himself calls such things abominations, practices that He hates. If we strip away its façade of revelry and feasting, it is idolatrous false worship, honoring spirit beings that are not God. In addition, God never tells us to celebrate this day or in any way to honor the spirits of the dead.

Notice that He warns us not to be "ensnared to follow" the practices of the nations. A snare is a trap designed to catch an unwary animal. The trap itself is hidden, but what is visible is a kind of lure, an attractive trick designed to fool prey into entering the trap. Once the victim takes the bait, the gate comes down, a hook comes out, or a spring slams closed on a limb, and it is trapped.

God is alerting us to the fact that heathen or ungodly practices—customs, ways of worship, traditions, celebrations—usually have characteristics that appeal to our human nature. They are the lures. We can become caught up in them

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before we are aware of it. God advises us to watch out for the hidden dangers, the appealing entrapments, that are designed into these holidays.

Halloween's Origins

Many cultures have a form of Halloween in their tradition. It seems that most of this world's people's desire to celebrate the dead. The holidays or feasts may vary from place to place, falling on different days and following different customs. The common denominator is that they all honor or remember the dead or unseen spirits.

Mexico has its "Day of the Dead" in which participants give out candies in the shape of skeletons and visit graveyards to commune with the dead by leaving them food. In Japan, they honor their ancestors with various celebrations. Certain African tribes set aside days to honor the unseen spirits, warding off the evil ones and placating the good. German, Scandinavian, Spanish, Italian, and many other cultures have a Halloween-type holiday.

In English-speaking countries, Halloween derives primarily from the Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced "sow-in"). Samhain, held on the three days around November 1, was a kind of New Year's celebration and harvest festival all rolled up into one.

The Celts believed that these three days were special because of the transition from the old year to the new. They felt that during this time the boundary between the physical and spiritual worlds relaxed or lifted, allowing spirits to cross over more easily. This idea, of course, terrifies superstitious people—that departed spirits could walk among us, especially those who died in the past year as it was thought these spirits desired to return to the mortal realm. For this reason, they believed they had to appease the spirits to make them go into the spirit world and stay there.

The Celts did this by putting out food and treats so that, when these spirits came floating by their houses, they would pass on. They thought that, if they did not appease the spirits, they would play tricks or put curses on them. Whole villages would unite to drive the evil spirits away, ensuring that the upcoming year would be good. Others among them would hold séances or conduct other kinds of divination by incantation, potion, or trance to contact dead ancestors in hope of receiving guidance and inspiration.

An interesting aspect of this transition time—the three days of Samhain—is that the Celts considered it to be "no time," a time unto itself. Thus, it became a tradition that the order and rules people lived by were held in abeyance during them.

All laws went unenforced. The social order was turned upside-down—the fool became king, and the king became the fool. Men dressed as women and vice-versa. People took on different personas, dressing in disguise and acting the part. No work was done during this period of total abandon, for it was a time for revelry, drinking, eating, making and taking dares, and breaking the law. In a word, it was chaos.

Then Roman Catholicism arrived on the scene and "converted" the pagans. It also decreed a day to honor departed saints: May 13, All Saints' Day. The priests instructed the "converted" pagans to keep All Saints' Day, but they continued to celebrate Samhain because it was so much more fun than attending church to pray for the hallowed saints of yesteryear.

To keep them in the fold, in AD 835 Pope Gregory IV officially authorized moving All Saints' Day to November 1 to coincide with Samhain. He allowed the pagan "Christians" to keep their old customs as long as they put a Christian gloss on them. Thus, they kept Samhain in the name of Christ to honor the departed saints.

Like Samhain, All Saints' Day began the evening before, which was called All Hallows' Eve, All Saints' Eve, or Halloween. Since then, Halloween has evolved into its present form, in which nothing remotely Christian remains. It is known for all its pre-Christian Celtic practices—particularly the recognition of the spirit world in the form of fairies, witches, ogres, goblins, demons, ghouls, vampires, etc.

Today, "trick-or-treating" is the most recognized of Halloween activities, and it is simply a form of extortion. Children, whether they know it or not, are acting as the spirits who will play a trick or put a curse on the one who does not pay up in food or treats. Divination and séances are also commonly held on October 31. Finally, hooliganism—tricks resulting in vandalism—often reaches its high point on Halloween. For many years, Detroit was the scene of "hell night," in which

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rampaging young people trashed large areas of the city, setting fires, smashing cars and windows, looting, and generally creating havoc.

The Celtic feast of Samhain still survives in Halloween. It has simply reverted to our ancestors' Celtic practice.

Simple Idolatry

The Bible plainly denounces all of these practices in many places. For instance, God forbids spiritism, witchcraft, and the occult in numerous passages. Notice Deuteronomy 18:10-12:

There shall not be found among you anyone . . . who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead [a necromancer]. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives [the heathen] out from before you.

God considers these things to be idolatrous. They honor demonic spirits, and thus He calls them abominations or detestable things, things that He hates. Interestingly, He says these practices are a reason why He sent Israel in to dispossess these people. We do not want to practice customs that ultimately bring on God's wrath and destruction.

In Leviticus 20:6, God likens spiritism to prostitution, the physical counterpart to spiritual prostitution, idolatry. To God, witchcraft and occultism are similar to sexual immorality, but one is physical and the other is spiritual. Which is worse—physical or spiritual prostitution? Both defile the purity God desires in our flesh and in our spirit (II Corinthians 7:1). This linking of spiritism with sexual sins and idolatry occurs elsewhere (Exodus 22:16-20; I Samuel 15:22-23). Witchcraft is equated with them because it is both prostitution and idolatry.

When a Christian meddles in spiritism of any kind, whether witchcraft, sorcery, divination, consulting a medium or fortune-teller, or even reading a horoscope, he undermines his relationship with God—just as a man who visits a prostitute damages his relationship with his wife. Someone else is coming between the two covenanted parties, causing division. Occultism puts a wedge between God and the Christian; he might as well bow to an idol. It produces the same result: to drive him away from God.

The New Testament takes the same approach as the Old:

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, . . . of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

The apostle Paul speaks of adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and licentiousness—all with at least overtones of sexuality—then he mentions idolatry and immediately thereafter sorcery! It cannot be just a coincidence that they all fall in this order. Those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God because they are not fulfilling their covenant with God.

Intriguingly, "sorcery" is the Greek word *pharmakeia*, from which we derive our words "pharmacy" and "pharmaceutical." Diviners, enchanters, witches, and sorcerers employed drugs and other potions to put them or their clients "in the spirit" so their "magic" would work. The drugs, then, came to stand for sorcery of all kinds. For the same reason, drug use is part of the celebration among the more serious Halloween devotees today.

The Bible's teaching on this is consistent. Spiritism, the occult, is a form of idolatry, a kind of spiritual prostitution. Its end is separation from God and eventual destruction.

Paul writes in Ephesians 5:8-13:

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), proving what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light.

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God's truth shines on ungodly practices and exposes them for the darkness and evil they are. This is why all we need to know is which way is the one right and good way because the light that shines from it will expose the unfruitful works of darkness and give us wisdom in how we should behave.

We were once dead in our sins, living in darkness, asleep to the things of God. Now, however, God has revealed His truth to us, and the truth in turn has revealed the evils of Halloween and spiritism of every kind.

See Richard T. Ritenbaugh's other articles at:
Ritenbaugh, Richard T. – Church of God, Bismarck (church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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New American Standard Bible (Proverbs 27:17)
As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Holy Days 2025

Passover – April 13, 2025 (Observed at Sunset the Evening Before)

Passover/Unleavened Bread – April 13-19, 2025

Pentecost – June 2, 2025

Trumpets – September 23, 2025

Atonement – October 2, 2025

Tabernacles –October 7, 2025, to October 13, 2025

Last Great Day – October 14, 2025

Notes