



Shepherd's Voice[®]

Fall 2016

The Doctrine of the Stones

The Right Hand of Fellowship

Just What Do You Mean Binding, Loosing?

New Testament Sabbaths and Prophets

Managing Editor: Jim Patterson
Editor: Norman Edwards
Assistant Editor: Jean Duperreault

Contributing Writers: Norman Edwards
Dave Havir
Jim Patterson
Jim B. Petersen
Richard Traver

Webmaster: Jeremiah Patton
Circulation: Norman Edwards
Proofreader: Bill Buckman
Layout & Design: Marcia Nicol

All contents of Shepherd's Voice Magazine unless otherwise stated are property of the Chicagoland Church of God.

Copyright ©2016

The writers of the articles and photographers of photos in the Shepherd's Voice Magazine may own copyrights to their work.

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the King James Version (public domain) or from the New King James Version®, Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Shepherd's Voice Magazine is a production of the Chicagoland Church of God in a cooperative effort with other individuals and church organizations in the Sabbath-keeping community in the United States and Canada. This magazine is distributed and made possible by tithes and offerings of the readership and of those who support this work.

Shepherd's Voice Magazine publishes entries from regular and guest writers from a diverse range of people within the Church of God community, and covering a variety of subjects. While we invite or select our content, it may not necessarily reflect the position of the magazine or of the members of the Chicagoland organization.

COPYRIGHT FAIR USE NOTICE:

In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, any copyrighted material contained herein is distributed for nonprofit educational and other fair use purposes including, but not limited to, teaching, scholarship, research, news reporting, criticism, review, or comment.

Photos: GoodSalt.com; iStockPhoto.com; BigStockphoto.com

Editorial mailing address: Shepherd's Voice Magazine
PO Box 858
Plainfield, IL 60544-0858

Circulation office: Shepherd's Voice Magazine
PO Box 474
Port Austin, Michigan 48467-0474
SVM@portaustin.net (989) 738-7700

Canada Office: Shepherd's Voice Magazine
PO Box 74
287 Tache Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2H 3B8

Email us at: info@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

Send Ask Norm! questions to:
asknorm@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

Visit our web site: www.shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

Periodical mailed: 956. Other mail classes: 108. Internationally re-mailed: 169 e-mail: 800. Identification Statement: Shepherd's Voice Magazine is published quarterly (4 times per year). Issues are regularly sent free to people who requested the publication and are genuinely interested in it. Shepherd's Voice Magazine is published by the Chicagoland Church of God, 11308 Highland Dr., Plainfield, IL 60585; circulation office: 8180 Port Dr, Port Austin, Michigan 48467. CCOG reserves the right to refuse service to anyone for any reason. Periodical postage paid at Plainfield, Illinois and other mailing offices (USPS 016-995). Postmaster: send address changes to Shepherd's Voice Magazine, PO Box 474, Port Austin, Michigan 48467-0474



Shepherd's Voice[®]



The Doctrine of the Stones

4

The Right Hand of Fellowship

10



Ask Norm!

13

Just What Do You Mean Binding, Loosing?

16



New Testament Sabbaths and Prophets

18

Greetings!

Over time I have realized one advantage of being an independent ministry, producing a publication that is not under corporate church oversight, is simply the ability to say what is needed to be said. We do not have a need to filter material to maintain uniformity or “protect” members from things they have not heard before. I am not a fan of the word “independent.” But upon reflection, Jesus Christ Himself had an independent ministry that exclusively served the Father and not other interests; not even His own. The Pharisees on the contrary were a sect that started out well to help restore the tenets of the law to the people, but over time they institutionalized. This group should have been pointing to Jesus the Christ as the Messiah who would restore the people’s hearts to God, but instead they perceived John the Baptist’s ministry and even Jesus Christ’s ministry as threats. Similarly, we too can have a tendency as humans to make judgments that we feel serve God, but in reality serve the preservation of the institution we may belong to.

As an independent non-denominational publication, we are not intent on building or maintaining a Church organization, a following, or a subscription list, nor are we concerning ourselves regarding our financial security with a volunteer staff. This is a freedom we appreciate, and as a result we are not handcuffed concerning ourselves with popularity and perception.

The Word of God gives life, and in doing so it can challenge and confront us, even debilitate us by piercing the joints and marrow. Since that is the case, should not the content of a Christian publication that draws from the Word of God and the writer’s experience do the same? Do you or I want to receive a publication that simply feeds our current thinking and paradigms, or would we rather be challenged for our betterment?

The above comes to mind as this issue came together and with reflection of the last six years we have been in print. The subject material, particularly in this issue will perhaps strike a chord with some, but if the Spirit is leading the writers and, you the readers, we trust that God will bless the outcome.

Concerns Over the Darkness

On at least three recorded occasions Jesus warned His disciples to take heed regarding their walk. We should take heed how we learn and hear (Mark 4:24, Luke 8:18), and we should take heed not to confuse darkness with light (Matthew 6:23) and that the darkness not overtake us (John 12:35).

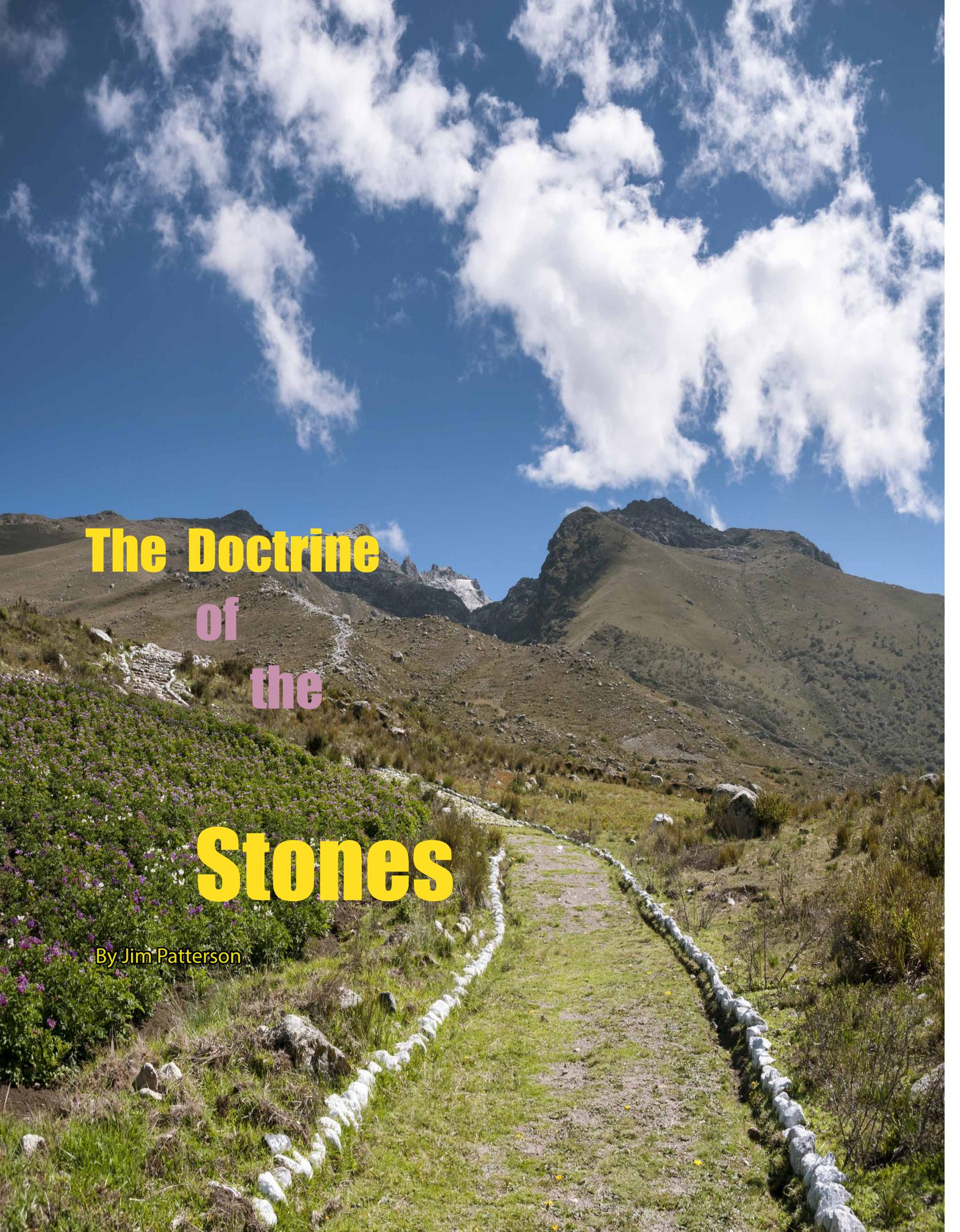
The darkness, from the beginning, has tried to overcome the light (John 1:5), and this is something Jesus did feel and experience in His life, so He knows what He was talking about. The darkness still carries on its campaign against Christians who are called to be lights in the world. So in the last two issues of *SVM* we have dealt with this subject, and in this issue in *The Doctrine of The Stones* we look at where we as Christians can get derailed by unbalanced learning and erring in our own self confidence. When our self-confidence starts to direct our walk, it becomes more difficult to keep pace ahead of the darkness. We are appealing to those who will listen to and take heed to Christ’s words on this matter more seriously than perhaps we have in the past.

In the article *New Testament Sabbaths and Prophets*, the first thing that may become evident early in the article is that perhaps, whether by tradition or perhaps lack of faith, there is a segment in God’s Church that thinks God is not willing to work with prophets anymore in His church as He did in the day of the apostles. As Norm Edwards points out, some feel the readily available printing of the Old and New Testaments made prophets unnecessary, also citing Matthew 11:13 and Hebrews 1:1-2. If this is how you feel as well, please consider reading the article and decide for yourselves the relevance and need for prophets today.

Lastly, in this issue we have Feast reports from *SVM* friends in the Philippines and in Penticton, British Columbia, Canada. If there are other readers who host Independent Feast sites we would like to hear from you in 2017.

In Christ’s Service
Jim Patterson





The Doctrine
of
the
Stones

By Jim Patterson

Anyone exposed to the Church of God culture long enough will become aware of the various contentions that arise over doctrine, often surrounding points of view about the nature of God or proper worship. Although in this article we will touch on a couple of specific teachings that give birth to contentions and controversy, we do so only to illustrate and shed light on a greater over-riding perspective of the New Covenant regarding worship and proliferation of the gospel that may be often lost on us. The intent here is to step back for a moment to hopefully get a proper healthy perspective on learning and growth, and to re-affirm our appreciation of the scope of the gospel message that was intended to transcend generations and nations.

We are not attempting to enter into the arguments with exhaustive proofs often demanded by those involved, nor do we have a vested interest in proving or disproving a particular doctrinal point of view.

Some may meet this article with some resistance, however we would like our readers to take an open mind to the content, as it is written to promote a more mutual understanding. We are not going to advocate tolerance of those who take contentious doctrinal positions that are not supported by scripture.

In my experience, the longer a person has had an adamant position, the more difficult it is for them to see their error. It seems there is an unhealthy situation in the Church of God where it has become more about being right and correct on an issue or a doctrine, than actually giving glory to God and giving Him the credit that He alone is right and had the foresight to ensure that His offering of the gospel was to reach everyone. After all, when we appear before the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:10-12, 2 Corinthians 5:10), do we plan to say "Yes, Master" or do we plan to argue our doctrinal understanding? When we admit error in our own thinking and accept the correction of scripture and the work of the Spirit, we give God the glory. So is it not better to admit error than to try to defend wrong thinking?

Be Careful How You Learn

To begin, given all the ideas that have proliferated in the Church of God and the Sabbath keeping world, and all the teachers making themselves available, let us turn to the Savior on His advice that we would be well to heed regardless of our self-confidence:

"Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him" (Luke 8:18).

Regardless of the century in which the Christian lives, Jesus Christ foresaw the potential in our nature to lock into erroneous mindsets regarding the faith that limit our potential to experience and share the gospel. Notice that I use *erroneous mindset*, not doctrine as we traditionally understand doctrine, which can limit our potential. The reality is your doctrine is what is truly sewn in your heart and mind that controls your behavior. A devout Sabbath keeping individual who refuses to love his enemies as Christ commanded has an element of false doctrine. A devout Sabbath keeping individual defending the faith who refuses to love his brother is a liar (1 John 4:20) and does not represent Christ on this earth, no matter how well he confidently espouses sound doctrine otherwise.

Another trap seems to be finding doctrinal security through a man rather than in the One, the Christ, Who saves. We have seen more than a few who find security in the group they associate with, repeatedly being told they have the most doctrines right and others are disobedient for not recognizing their teaching. Some on a more individual basis can begin to identify with their particular doctrine or revelation they believe brings them closer to God and have zeal to promote their truth by any means possible.

All of this happens to varying degrees, but any deviation from security in Jesus Christ invariably leads to arrested development. Jesus Christ even tells us by this verse the believer is unaware of what he is losing, even though he still believes he has it, or growing in it; a sobering reality.

So in the zeal for their own teachings some have brought their growth in Christ to a grinding halt or have derailed their walk altogether. More fruitful learning and the joy in the Christian experience in Christ has eluded them. From what I have witnessed over the years they seem to have plenty of knowledge and experience, but Christ's prophecy of losing what they seem to have has already come to be.

Let us look into more detail how this may be occurring. I believe there are two approaches we can take a look at as to where we get derailed in doctrine that leads to unnecessary division. One is failure to grow in grace alongside doctrine, and the other is confidence in the flesh.

Knowledge AND Grace

Knowledge must grow together with grace (2 Peter 3:18). The knowledge, if not understood with the grace that God has in Himself and given to us, can actually become a detriment to our ability to freely worship. Knowledge that has not grown with grace will also limit our fruitful interactions with both believers and unbelievers.

Grace may be best described as divine enablement, it is something that comes from God and increases from God. Even beyond unmerited pardon, it is the ability to overcome in our lives for the purpose of realizing greater possibilities (As Paul recognized in 2 Corinthians 12 for example). It is given with perfect wisdom, and allows us to live more peacefully with others and our lot in life. Grace is a word that describes the multifaceted condition under which the Christian lives.

If knowledge is not balanced with grace, we will find ourselves spending a great deal of our energy proving a doctrinal point, and disproving anything that opposes us. Knowledge without grace must be a frustrating and perhaps a lonely experience in increasing isolation. The grace of God understands our limitations that knowledge alone cannot correct. Even with the right knowledge, without grace we may not be able to apply it correctly.

Conversely, grace without knowledge lacks structure and direction.

Worship and obedience requires the knowledge of God's expectations.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6).

The good Christian that has wisely learned the law of God and has balanced his learning with grace will be effective in communicating the gospel:

*Then He said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his **treasure things new and old**" (Matthew 13:52).*

With that background, let us advance our discussion on the subject of grace and the extent of its implications with our covenant with Jesus Christ.

It takes a while for a developing believer to understand the totality of the following verse as recorded by John:

*And of **His fullness** we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:16,17).*

This statement shows the superiority of New Covenant over the covenant that Moses inaugurated. John was contrasting the dominant characteristics of the two covenants. Whereas law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Christ. Scripture reveals to us that the law expresses God's standards and structure, but grace and the truth behind these His laws help us to fulfill His will. Grace existed in the Old Covenant, but it is now expressed fully to us through Jesus Christ.

There are two examples in this article of the grace of God that believers today have substantially overlooked. I believe the Church as a whole would have benefited greatly regardless of what side of the fence they were on regarding these two doctrinal matters. Not only these two examples, but also in numerous others. Before we look at them, the second item we need to discuss is confidence in the flesh.

Confidence in the Flesh

Every one of us at some point has carried ourselves in the faith with some confidence in the flesh and not in God, and it is likely to some degree we still do. It is in our nature to do so, and any degree of self-awareness should bring us to admit it. God's grace has made provision for us in this regard, but it does not give us permission to continue with fleshly confidence, or to try to build with it. If we can still be taught and are willing to submit ourselves to the will of God, which is to say to be led by the Spirit of God, we will come to this awareness and find and accept the correction that is needed. This is not always the case, as experience has taught us, as there are those who have arrested their growth in Christ by not letting go of their own confidence in themselves, but have developed a self-confidence in:

- Secular knowledge of evil and scandal (see *SVM* Winter 2016 *The Spirit of Truth and Light vs. The Knowledge of Evil*).
- By the group they belong to and their leader(s).
- A unique observance or understanding of the Holy Days, accusing others of being in error.
- Attempting to orient their faith with Hebrew roots—either in language, dress, or identification with a Tribe of Israel.
- Self-exalting ideas about their calling.

Confidence in the flesh is a common occurrence in Church of God circles, and scripture tells us this is nothing new. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul spoke of a right to claim confidence in the flesh:

*For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, **rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.***

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:3-11).

As Paul excelled in the law and the prophets, it is fair to assume he also knew the Psalms and Israel's history well. As a Pharisee he dressed the part, wore the right clothes and hats, and probably had an appropriately trimmed beard. He knew and practiced his stuff.

There are at least a couple of important things for us in this passage that we need to bring our attention to. The first is that it suggests worshipping God in the Spirit and rejoicing in that same Spirit is not in union with confidence in the flesh. Confidence in the flesh limits worship and rejoicing, regardless how we might try to stir up worship. Anything that we allow to interfere with our worship is disobedience.

Secondly, even with the extent in which Paul confidently excelled in the knowledge of the law and Judaism, he compared it as rubbish to knowledge of the Person of Jesus Christ, and the power of His resurrection. So here we have an example to consider for us all: whatever confidence one may have in the Old Testament scriptures, their own genealogy to Jacob, what is really going on in the world, Biblical symbolisms and typologies, when a new moon is appearing or when the barley is ripe in Palestine, they do not compare to a personal relationship with God, the gratitude, the simple joy in salvation, and the power that comes by faith in His Son. Worship comes about naturally this way.

Knowledge of the scriptures, genealogies, symbolisms and typologies and all that we listed

above and more are *not in opposition to our faith in Jesus Christ*. Some of these topics *SVM* has dedicated numerous articles on in the past.

Understanding the power of His resurrection includes understanding the grace of God that came by His resurrection. There is a power behind the grace! Grace is not a weak word expressing tolerance of ignorance; it is a powerful presentation of God's capacity to enable a true believer in his overcoming and his walk with God.

It is unlikely anyone would disagree with the preceding paragraph, or admit confidence in the flesh, but let us bring this closer to home.

Let us be clear: nothing, no religious system or association, ancient or original language, or some kind of religious discipline of rules will add to your experience of your life in Jesus Christ.

Paul in reference to the law, does in fact include proper and correct observances of new moons, Sabbaths, God's annual Holy Days at their most appropriate times, and all the ways to say the various Names of God; why and when. What we have just listed here is a sample of the things in which some today have developed an unhealthy confidence.

In regards to the Holy Days, they can be exaggerated in the mind of some to such an extent they would have others to believe that if they were not kept on the appropriate days, and for the right reasons, and even in the right way, an individual will fall under a category of disobedience, falling short of some kind of definition of acceptability, and subject to a new form of accountability. These kind of assertions may have had a place in Israel under the Old Covenant, particularly as it pertained to Israel as a national theocracy, but they are entirely inappropriate for sincere Christians and their personal covenant under grace they have made with their Savior.

We want to emphasize at this junction

to our readers that a personal belief in how to observe a day, a sacred name, or timing of spring or fall festivals is between you and your Savior. If your conscience guides you in regards to these observances, then let your conscience be your guide, for that which is not done in faith is sin (Romans 14:23). We will point out however that experience has also taught us that certain belief practices are less innocuous than others in this regard, and we are looking at a couple of them in this article.

Confidence in the flesh is an attractive and alluring path as it does give a degree of self-assurance that one is saved and in good standing in Christ,

so it does become prevalent. The carnal mind feels more in control, building on its own self-confidence. Submission to Jesus Christ, faith, hope and love are things the believer must instead yield to continually. They are weapons against fleshly confidence.

Paul makes an effective generalization regarding confidence in the flesh:

These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh (Colossians 2:23).

We may think the kind of things Paul is talking about in Colossians 2 are of no concern to us, but anything that creeps in our thinking, regardless of how we might justify it Biblically or otherwise, must not enable confidence in the flesh. How do we detect it in ourselves and how do we prevent it from happening?

It is not hard to detect it in others. This writer has encountered it repeatedly, and the symptoms can

become evident if we are paying attention. These symptoms vary but they all seem to revolve around adding some form of regulation into their faith. Often this seems to lead to attempts to promote such a regulation on others.

On one occasion I had a fellow at a feast site tell me of his past findings regarding the proper Passover date of observance, and proudly told me of his past contentions with ministry over the matter, eventually being asked to leave a congregation or two because of his continued assertions. He was quite proud in this regard. He then advised that if I believe the way I did regarding the day and way of observance that is perfectly fine, *but I better be ready to explain myself to the Lord when I see Him*. Is this what our faith is all about? Is it not better to be ready to accept what the Lord says, rather than to have confidence in our flesh that we will be right, no matter what He says?

Let No One Judge You

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ (Colossians 2:16,17).

The context of this verse deals with Judiazers and Gnostics that were attempting to forward their doctrinal agenda on the brethren in Colossae. I am even confident that this short list is not exhausted in what we should not allow others to impress on us to doubt our worship. We know this as this encouragement comes from the simple fact expressed in a few verses earlier:

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power (Colossians 2:8-10).

Those who argue the need for a certain calendar observance, name pronunciations, or adherence to rituals and dress rooted in Hebrew

culture should soberly consider what the scriptures teach us above, which transcends generations of believers, evolution of languages and circumstances.

Let us be clear: nothing, no religious system or association, ancient or original language, or some kind of religious discipline of rules will add to your experience of your life in Jesus Christ.

Time to grasp the meaning of “To the Ends of the World”

Let us refresh ourselves on the scope of the Great Commission.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen (Matthew 28:18-20).

And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: “Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world” (Romans 10:18).

When Jesus instituted the New Covenant, it was instituted in a distinct form that opened the door wide for an international church, where neither Jerusalem or the Temple were at its physical worship center, nor the Levitical priesthood as the center of “worship authority”. The individual is now part of a chosen priesthood, and Christ promises His presence anywhere in the globe where 2 or 3 are gathered together, at any time for any reason under His authority (Matthew 18:20).

The gospel of the Kingdom of God is not custom centric, Jerusalem centric, harvest centric, moon centric or language centric. The gospel is Christ centric. This is necessary for the gospel to move forward without unnecessary restriction.

Sabbath/Holy Day observing Christians who are by nature sincerely looking to obey and worship God in an appropriate biblical manner without man-made influences may eventually be challenged to investigate the Hebrew Calendar. We find the same or others who come to terms for the same reasons on what really is the pronunciation of the name of their Savior and perhaps of the Father. This in itself is perhaps a good thing, but again, *be careful how you learn.*

How can we properly observe Holy Days without a central authority, and how do we justify modern languages in worship that pronounce the name of the Messiah differently than the original? Should we be concerned because Hebrew names have meaning, and that the Name of God as supposedly assumed, loses meaning in modern languages? God has made full provision for this by the fullness of His grace expressed to us.

In case the reader might be concerned or needs clarification regarding the direction this article is heading, realize that we are not rejecting the Ten Commandments or other clear commands of Scripture. We are discussing grace-covering questions of Scriptural interpretation and application. There is no section of the bible saying: “These are the rules necessary for calculating your calendar.” There is no section of the New Testament explaining how to teach the pronunciation of divine names to those who do not speak Hebrew. If there were such Scriptures, and we ignored them, it would be a sin. But the actuality is numerous bible teachers interpreting various scriptures and history in numerous ways, each concluding that they know Father’s will on the matter. **The grace of God gives us confidence not to fear these uncertainties.**

The Hebrew Calendar

It does happen when looking into the calendar that there seems to be the conclusion by some that those following the calculated Hebrew calendar are being disobedient, not being blessed, or falling short in some capacity for accepting the

influences of man-made calculations and postponements. Those following the calculated Hebrew calendar have done their fair share of finger pointing as well.

In regards to the annual Holy Days it was Israel’s religious authorities who were to declare, announce or officially proclaim the beginnings of the months and the precise days on which God’s Feasts were to be observed (Leviticus 23:4). It was first given to Aaron and Moses, and then to the lineage of Aaron’s offspring.

Both biblical and secular history show that the Jewish religious leaders (the priests) had a solemn duty, as well as God given authority, to make binding decisions concerning the Hebrew calendar. It was they alone who declared the New Moons. If it was agreed necessary to make an adjustment to observation, then they did so. Jesus Christ even acknowledged that those who sat in Moses’ seat carried this kind of authority:

“Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do ...” (Matthew 23:1-3).

Those days are gone now, so who has the authority? If I am not mistaken in reading my New Covenant scriptures, **you have the authority:**

*Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, **a holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:4,5).*

And

*But you are a chosen generation, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may **proclaim the praises of Him** who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy (1 Peter 2:9,10).*

The above scriptures are not light hearted religious speak to make us

feel good. They are a powerful presentation of the authority we have in Christ in our worship and service toward God. Here is the grace of God to the believer, which is the divine enablement to do His will. These amazing words elevate reality of the believer in Christ beyond measure. In these brief passages of scripture, Peter lays hold of the entire wealth of Israel's identity and applies it to Jesus Christ and the believer. When we come to Jesus we come to a Living Stone, not the city of Jerusalem and not to Judaism. A royal priesthood is a priesthood *with authority, and it is given to us to exercise this authority.*

If the Levitical High Priest who had the authority to proclaim the Feasts, and alone had limited access to enter into the physical Holy of Holies, how much more authority does the believer who now boldly enters into the real Holy of Holies (Hebrews 10:19)?

Therefore in regards to worship practices, collectively believers who are being lead by the Spirit can agree within themselves as groups just how they observe the Feasts of the Lord, and have the authority to do so. It is of little value now to try to argue there is an ultimate more God honored New Moon or calendar that only more obedient Christians will be observing.

Language and Sacred Names

Part of the enticement of the Hebrew roots movement is that the Hebrew language has meaning with its words, so the use of *Yeshua*, *Yahshuah* or *Yehoshuah* for the name of the Messiah, meaning salvation, or *shalom* (meaning peace) is getting more common, particularly among Sabbath keepers wishing to be as authentic as possible. This writer does not take exception to the use of Hebrew names or words if the believer does feel more comfortable with their use, nor do we wish to enter into the arena of arguments surrounding sacred names. Some folks here at our local congregation use "*Yeshua*" as they feel more comfortable with this pronunciation of the name. However, what is important to us, because it is important to Jesus Christ and the Father, is that the scope of the gospel is understood, and that no one limit

that scope in any fashion, even if in ignorance.

On Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given, Jesus Christ sent a strong signal to all those present and to generations to come. The message was that language will not be a barrier to the expression of the Gospel. That famous message was heard "*each in our own language in which we were born*" (Acts 2:8)—not in their own language with added Hebrew words. No language, past present and future has any insufficiency in expressing the greatness of God as far as He is concerned.

This includes the fact that languages transliterate names and places. Do we think God did not anticipate this occurring? Jesus is an eventual transliteration of the Greek Ἰησοῦς (*Jesus*) and Greek was the language of the original gospels and commonly spoken at the time as the language of the people. If someone uses Jesus (English), with all its variants in pronunciation in English in the world it is of no less value than its pronunciation or writing the disciples used. Any argument to the contrary denies what the Lord mandated on Pentecost. Again, do we see and appreciate the grace of God?

*Therefore He is also able to save to the **uttermost** those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them* (Hebrews 7:25).

All Christians wishing to serve God and the brethren must come to terms with the overriding truth that Jesus Christ can save to the uttermost as High Priest. If there are those who continue to insist on presenting arguments for proper or better worship tied to the pronunciation of the Name, observation of new moons, genetic lineages or other distractions, they may be causing harm and division, and harm and division are things that *will weigh in* on God's judgment of us.

Let Us Hear the Conclusion of the Whole Matter

This sub-title is drawing from the conclusion of Ecclesiastes, where after the Preacher, having set his heart out by wisdom to set in order all things done under heaven, ended

only knowing the vanity of trying to figure it all out and getting it all correct, and the weariness it is to the flesh in all that he may have done researching to get there. There are limits to wisdom and knowledge. This seems to be appropriate parallel to those who have an honest appreciation of the way in which they were called. An experiential awareness of Christ over time reveals the grace of God and what it does mean to live by faith.

Living by faith is by definition living a life without knowing. You do not know all that is happening and why, and you only see through a glass darkly. If there is something you really need to know, then through your study of His Word God will see to it you know it, and this especially applies to your overcoming.

The grace of God also tells us by definition that there will always be some degree of error in our thinking, whether it be about God, ourselves, the Church, or where we are in the universe. **So we all need to get over trying to prove it all out and figure it all out.** Your ultimate decision in life, and in every day of your life, is that you continue to believe in His Son and what He did for you and what He will do, and this you can ONLY do by faith. This is not to be done without knowledge so that we do not believe in vain.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

However, if you want to take the above appeal by Paul to its very end, then consider that eventually your last proof or test will be that it is in the end by faith you are what you are in Christ, and you are saved by grace in spite of all the errors that still reside in your thinking and your ways, and the inaccuracies in even what you have right! So there is no room for confidence in the flesh.

*But let him who glories glory in this, that he **understands and knows Me**, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the Lord* (Jeremiah 9:24).

continued on page 25

The Right Hand of Fellowship

As the Early Church began to Develop its Outreach, Decisions were made that also give us a glimpse into the relationships among and between Leading Ministers. Is there anything in their approach we ought to consider appropriate for our time?

Rich Traver

While Christ's Great Commission to "go you into all the world and preach the Gospel" was recognized then and still is recognized as an unquestioned mandate, it was not entirely clear from the onset just what it was to involve or how it was to ultimately be carried out.

To the Jew First

The early Church was oriented to involving themselves with 'the circumcision' for the most part, those who either were ethnic Jews or who were proselytes of Judaism. That would help explain the origin of the controversy we read of in Acts 15 where the question of a requirement for circumcision involving the Gentiles came to be at issue. There were few, if any at that time, who had been 'called' (to their awareness) who were not.

Further clarification of the issue: that of taking the Gospel outside of the primitive Community of Faith, is addressed involving one chief obstacle, Peter, in Acts 10. Cornelius was not a Jew. Peter would have reacted differently had he not first been given the vision that he was given while there in Joppa. (People not understanding the point being made there have incorrectly interpreted this as involving eating 'unclean meats'.)

Unlawful Association?

Cornelius was a Gentile, well known in Judaea, as he was a renowned commander of a prominent band of soldiers. Peter, to this point, would have been inclined to reject association with such a person, despite his solid God-fearing reputation. But, a profound change of attitude and approach was now in order. God was calling new people from outside of the early Church's limited ethnic sphere of association.

The previous regard for "common

Gentiles" was deemed to be becoming passé as it involved the scope of the greater Commission. Peter acknowledged this prohibition, against eating with or associating with "common" men, (those not of their religious/ethnic orientation) in verse 28 of Acts 10. "Then said he unto them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean." (NKJ) But, this new thinking isn't the only development in this regard, but as history shows, one of a series of profound developments.

Reaction in Antioch

Saul and Barnabas, on one of their evangelistic missions, presented the Gospel in a Synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia where there was a mixed ethnicity gathered. Apparently, despite the event we read of in Acts 10, Peter didn't fully comprehend the full implications of that experience, because he's shown disassociating himself from uncircumcised Gentiles when a delegation from Jerusalem arrived. While he appears to have none of his former aversions up until the time they came, his apprehension of being reprimanded by this 'party of the circumcision' delegation caused him to pose as though he was of their persuasion. He apparently didn't yet fathom the broader implications.

We read of that situation in Galatians 2:11-13. "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation."

In this also we can see that the matter wasn't generally resolved in everyone's minds.

Peter Is Pointedly Corrected In Public!

What we can discern from these situations in both Antioch and Joppa, and from Peter's own words, is that he didn't yet fathom the full implications of his personal experience. The 'unclean animals' vision in Joppa, as Peter understood it, is further explained when Peter spoke to Cornelius and his household there in Caesarea.

- Peter still regarded himself as a Jewish man, as he explains in Acts 10:28.
- Peter didn't at first see his experience as extending beyond his personal actions.
- His vision in Joppa wasn't yet seen as initiating any formal outreach TO non-specific Gentiles.
- Those of Cornelius' household were Gentiles, but he first was a devout Jewish proselyte.¹
- The event in Joppa preceded the scene in Antioch by some 17 years.²
- Those Gentiles present among the gathering in Antioch had not

¹ My use of the term 'proselyte' here may imply to some that he was fully incorporated into Judaism, which would strongly imply that he was already circumcised. That may not have been the case.

² Jameison, Fausset & Brown Commentary, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., Volume Three, Part Two, First printing: 3/97, pages 73 & 377.

all been Jewish proselytes previously.

- The idea of taking the Gospel generally to those outside of the community of faith as a formal ‘ministry’ was as yet not under consideration.
- Peter’s reaction in Antioch shows that he still regarded himself somewhat as a “Jewish man” even at that late date.
- And, the situation there in Antioch shows that Peter didn’t regard himself as the Chief Apostle, in unquestioned authority, exempt from critique of this “party of the circumcision” even by 58 AD, more than a quarter century after the Day of Pentecost!
- Further, Peter accepts being publicly corrected by a man (formerly a devout Pharisee) called much later than he, a man who had begun his ministry less than two decades before!³

A Jerusalem Conference

Now, it’s the conference we read of in Acts 15 that addressed the major question being raised at the time. This conference in Jerusalem occurred in 52 AD, eleven years after Peter’s vision at Joppa. The delay in addressing this particular question shows that Jerusalem was not yet in full embrace of the Gentiles whom Paul had preached to. As can be seen from the question itself, these Gentiles were not fully accepted within the community of faith unless they first were circumcised. But with the question resolved, some attitudes changed. It just hadn’t moved on to the next obvious stage.

The WORK Expands

Despite the evidence that God was calling Gentiles, a distinction hadn’t been made to specifically target the “pagan” world.

It was at this gathering in Antioch

³ Paul was ‘called’ on the road to Damascus in 35 AD, but delayed some 3-years in Arabia (Gal. 1:18) and another 14- years before formally being accepted among the leading ministry in Jerusalem. (Gal. 2:1)

near Pisidia⁴ that caused the leaders to realize that more should be done with regard to pointedly extending their evangelistic efforts to involve non-Jewish audiences.

But there was an interesting thing that took place as a result of this event. It was fortuitous that the three principals were present. It apparently was a pre-arranged gathering for these all to be present at the same time. We aren’t told what the reason was, or what the agenda had been, but something was done at that occasion which shaped the outreach efforts of the early Church from that point on.

Right Hand of Fellowship

“And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.” (Galatians 2:9) We can safely deduce that there had been prior discussion of the responses, from within the ‘heathen’ community, to the Truth for this action to be regarded as appropriate.

But what is obvious is that the leading ministry from Jerusalem took a particular action that was not often mentioned as being all that common.

This was apparently not a ‘laying-on-of-hands’ situation where those anointed to a recognized ‘office’ would convey authority upon someone else. The act of extending the ‘right-hand-of-fellowship’ acknowledges the prior anointing of the other party by the Higher Power, like what had been conveyed upon themselves at some point in the past. Nor was this any ordinary handshake!

Recognized As Equals

In this situation, with both parties extending their right hands, it suggests an acknowledged equality! It also shows a recognition of the legitimacy of the ministries of each other, but made a point of there being two different spheres of oversight from this point forward, as God provided

⁴ There were other Antioch congregations in Syria (Ac. 11:19) and Seleucia (Ac. 13:4). Seleucus Nicator, founder of the Seleucid Dynasty, built numerous cities, naming them after himself or his relatives.

opportunities and as His Spirit was directing them. The ‘right-hand-of-fellowship’ acknowledges the authority and leading of the Holy Spirit as much as anything else.

Recognizing the legitimacy of the other ministry is one thing, but it also acknowledges publicly that one party is not posing as being in control of or in authority over the other. That’s a point not easily acknowledged in our current ‘state of the Church’!

For example, IF Peter was regarded by these present as being in sole and full authority, their being commended to the “Gentile Work” would need only Peter’s authorization. But this action was not one of authorization. It was one of acknowledgment. God had already provided authorization! Paul’s calling was personal and direct. (Acts 9:3-15)

Their act of extending a right hand of fellowship was an acknowledgment of and a formal statement of support of Paul’s and Barnabas’ commission to the pagan and Gentile world, as opposed to their own particular focus involving primarily Jewry.

What Does This Mean for US?

So, should we be – and are we seriously remiss to not be – extending a right hand of fellowship to all like-believing individuals and groups? (Emphasis on “like-believing”) There are many. There have been many throughout history, but particularly in our time since the dissolution of a large organization that disintegrated under its own theological overthrow. And, can we pose that what happened was what God intended?

The early Church was more of a loosely organized institution in its first generation. More so than some would like to admit! As it matured, and as its Message spread, a wider ethnicity found their witness to be appealing. That led to the inclusion of non-Jews (and not previous proselytes) into the family of fellowship.

Extending the right hand was toward more than just Paul and Barnabas at the time, but through them also to those ‘called’ under their evangelism.

In later centuries, the Church sank into many years of a Dark Age of apostasy, persecution and suppres-

sion. Congregations which retained the Truth were small, persecuted, scattered and remained generally isolated.

By the seventeenth century, the stranglehold held by the preeminent church of that age was lessened. Bibles began being translated (at the behest of a particular civil authority) into common languages. This created a new environment. The religious world changed, moving into what is now regarded as 'the Reformation'.

In the modern era, God's Church was to a degree 'reformed' being re-focused around one particular ministry. That Church was, of necessity, some-what isolationist and, as time progressed, increasingly exclusive. Perhaps that was a good thing at first, as it kept 'new' disciples from doctrinal pollutions of religiosity in general that they were not yet equipped to handle. But with the dissolution of that organizational structure, is its exclusivist posture appropriate?

And, what motivates its preservation? Anyone familiar with our condition will realize that it is, for the most part, to preserve the status of a group's leadership, more than to preserve its grasp on the Truth! This we need to acknowledge and remedy.

Recognizing our scattered and purposely isolated situations, is it not now time we recognized ourselves as having achieved a maturity level in which we can confidently fellowship with and extend hands to any like-believing brethren? Should we now be extending a 'right-hand-of-fellowship' to any and all who are of the same religious persuasion as we are? The reasons for NOT doing so are what? Is it just perceived 'organizational superiority'?

How Extensive the Love?

Christ, through the beloved John, left a standard by which we can self-assess on this. He said, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1st John

1:5-7) "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:34-35)

The question now is, are we facing the time for another 'reformation'? With our current stage of experience, and with our 'issues' fairly well worked-out as congregations, can we now begin reaching through the walls of separation imposed by our culture? Is it now TIME to begin extending a 'right-hand-of-fellowship' to any and all who possess and exhibit God's Spirit? Why would we NOT do so if we are truly His Disciples?

Malachi 3:16-18 describes the situation with and among God's people as it ought to be. They speak often with one another, not with just 'officially approved' sayings, but with relevant and truthful dialog. "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."

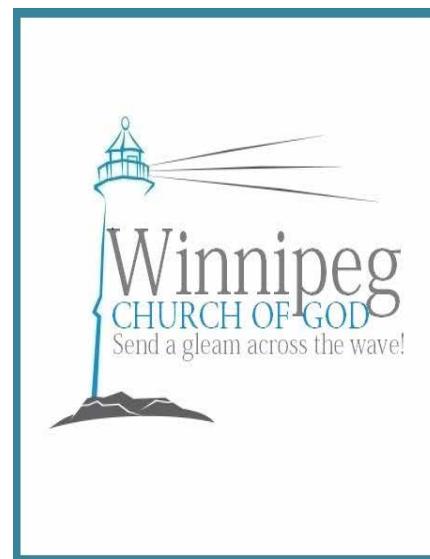
What is missed in these verses, and what is obviously absent within many of the current Church of God groups is the freedom to interact with like-believing Brethren, as this passage commends. Not only do these do so openly and freely, but they are singled-out by God for a special remembrance! He hears when His Name is mentioned among His people! That fact alone suggests what kinds of conversations these are.

As it exists now in our overall Church Culture, the ministry – upon seeing members doing this – likely will 'single-out' those members and identify them as some kind of threat, not a congregational asset. Their view of this can be quite different from that of Christ! Have we noticed that? He sees them as "His Jewels"! The current ministry often has a very different take on their value.

But, more than that, He indicates that when they are "brought back" they will be used in a judgmental capacity to discern those who are God fearers and who are in fact reprobates. This is not just to discern the situation as it involves the world at large, but a process of evaluating those within the greater fellowship! These who "speak often with one another" are pointedly special with God, though at present aren't always regarded so highly among the current leadership!

Those presently "on top" in the leadership echelon need to be aware that the kind of job they are doing, or have done (which all too often results in harm to individuals and congregations) will not be dismissed. They will answer for the harm they've done.

That being the case, it is incumbent upon each of us who are called of God to be 'in the game'. It may require that we do an end-run around the wishes and demands of our overcontrolling ministry in this regard. And, if so, keep in mind that it is God who we need to obey, not men! 



Visit our website at
<http://www.cogwinnipeg.com>

or visit our
youtube channel <https://www.youtube.com/WinnipegChurch>

Ask Norm!

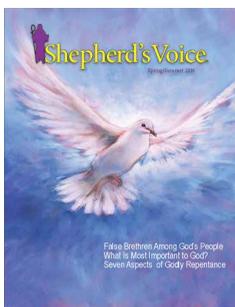


asknorm@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

July 5, 2016

Hello Jim Patterson and Greetings to the staff:

I want to say that I really like Jim's latest article *False Brethren among God's People* (Spring/Summer 2016 Issue).



Reader comments from SVM Summer 2016

What else can I say? We have a problem. It is one of the biggest "church problems". We bury ourselves in our little group and divide the people. God knows we are divided and He does not approve of it—but He allows it, for now. I do not have a solution—but would just say church "leaders" and brethren, too, really need to use God's Spirit. We may not have been there, historically. People are not just ministers, pastors, etc.—they are politicians!

We have the same doctrines—most of us—but cannot fellowship freely together. This is the saddest irony of your time. No, we cannot blame God.

Take Care,
V. Singh

Dear Mr. Singh,

I think your insight is very good. The church is divided because too many do not use God's Spirit and become politicians, seeking to promote their own doctrines, followings and offerings. Our church groups and their members are getting what they deserve. If we put our faith in a group, whether it is huge or tiny, we will end up divided against other groups. If our validation as a Christian is tied to being in the "right group", then we must put other groups in a lower status to validate our own.

We must "play politics" to get people and money in our church—because God is not sending them. If our faith is in the Father and Jesus Christ, then we can be unified. We can be willing to work with all other believers. Sure, some might reject us—simply because we are not a part of their group or do not hold all of their doctrines. But at least we can work with every other believer who is willing to work with us!

We should not let ourselves be

worried by exclusive church groups—they have always existed. God can raise up stones to do his work if necessary (see Jim's article this issue). We need to make sure we are part of the answer, not part of the problem. We can seek out real Christian work and be ready to do it. God is able to answer our prayers and show us what to do.

Norm

I want to thank you for the many hours of great and informative reading & studying your magazine has given me.

Since my husband passed away, I have relied on you all for lots of truth and praise of our Lord God.

I would appreciate it if you would send my daughter your magazine as I stay here often & do not want to miss one magazine. [name and address not printed]

God's Blessings to you all

J.C., Texas.

Dear J.C.,

Thanks for your kind words. We will gladly send a second copy to another place where you stay—as long as your daughter is willing to receive it for you. (We do add people to our mailing list who do not want our magazine in the hope that they might get interested in it some day.)

We hope to continue to be a blessing to you.

Norm

Dearly Beloved:

Tell everybody! They seek my life. Mt 24:9! John 15:13! Acts 5:29! Rom 11:3! Phil 1:12-23! 2 Tim 4:1-8! Rev 2:19; 6:9-11!

Please get the NFL football schedule and contact all Christian organizations like: Youth with a Mission, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Campus Crusade, Teen Challenge, Youth for Christ, etc. And “on fire” churches!

Get somebody to go to games in cities with Sunday, Monday and Thursday night games using MT24.US, YHWH’s Website. Put signs on twin bed sheets in end zones, on extra points and field goals! Fill whole sheets on 2 lines! Also do world series.

Work with: [Several emails and phone we do not know if they would want that. This letter included a few articles clipped from publications about how to help people suffering in prison and other predicaments,].

Transformation 10/2/2016 – 10/4/2016 Feast of Trumpets? Now comes the End! Your final chance!

Thank you,

Rock ‘N Rollen Stewart H87708
Mule Creek State Prison
PO BOX 409099
Ione, CA 95640.

Dear Mr. Stewart,

We receive several letters each year from people urging us to get involved with various Christian actions. Like yours, some of them contain mostly exhortation without clearly explaining the mission, and some of them are from prisons. I will be honest. Most magazines just file them or just throw them away. But every writer of these letters is a person made in God’s image, for whom Christ died. Christians often forget. While Jesus was hanging on the Cross, with the most important mission in the universe and weight of the sins of the world upon Himself, He still paid attention to two criminals and their needs (Luke 23:39-46).



I took time to look at the <http://mt24.us> website you mentioned and watched the ESPN documentary about you. I remember seeing your “John 3:16” signs at sports games when I was younger. I think your zeal is something that many Christians could learn from. You are in prison, but you are busily handwriting letters to spread a message about the Bible. Most Christians have a lot more resources at their disposal and are doing a whole lot less. They do not write letters to people they do not know, and encourage them to live godly lives and get involved in Christian ministry. But you do!

The documentary as well as your writings also explained how you got in prison—essentially for kidnapping a woman while armed with a gun and holding her hostage—demanding a live TV feed so that you could spread the Gospel to viewers for a few minutes and then let her go. I read your website, where you say that you should be released from prison because you did not hurt anybody and because it was for a good cause. The following verses were applied to first century Israel, but I believe they fit your situation:

For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God (Romans 10:2-3).

Neither Jesus nor his apostles ever kidnapped or threatened anyone to

gain attention to preach the Gospel. They healed the sick, fed the hungry, cared for the poor, encouraged the broken-hearted and taught those who hungered for God. That is how one should gain attention to preach the Gospel. You had no right to hold that woman against her will—terrifying her, making her wonder if she will be killed by you or by an accidental law enforcement shot. That is why you are in prison. Jesus authorized the ongoing punishments of civil governments (Romans 13).

The Old Testament gives the death penalty for kidnapping (Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7). God gave these laws because he realized that these situations are very dangerous and people are frequently hurt or killed in them—or suffer for years afterward from PTSD, etc. Have you ever thought, what would happen if the laws of God or man did not punish kidnapping if “nobody got hurt”? It would quickly become a preferred means of people gaining public attention to run for office, advertise businesses or make demands to others—just or unjust.

When you personally chose to kidnap this woman, you ran the risk of paying the penalty—and now you are. It is a blessing that nobody was killed in the process. We all have sins, and the solution is the same for all of us:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Be a good example to others. Take down your website writing justifying what you did and admit it was wrong. Tell people you have been forgiven and that they can be forgiven, too. Ask God to show you if any of your teachings are wrong—if they are leading anyone astray. Remember that your mission is not to simply get people’s attention or to focus it on yourself, but to lead them to God.

We publish this letter in *Shepherd’s Voice Magazine* because we know there are others who at times try to preach the gospel through ungodly means. Even Jesus disciples had trouble at times.

... And as they [Jesus disciples] went, they entered a village of the

Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." And they went to another village (John 9:52-56).

Even though these Samaritans refused Jesus, He would not hurt them. There are other places to preach. Jesus will judge mankind later. Today's message is one of love and kindness. Prisons are excellent places for concentrated Bible study. Soak it in. Pray for understanding. Learn its truths and wisdom. Do not lose your zeal. And God will bless you and use you in His service.

Dearly Brother Norman:

There has always been the question of when did Job live? It looks to me like he lived during the time Israel was in Egypt. These are the "clues" I found:

- Elihu's lineage: Job 32:2
- The Pharez lineage: Ruth 4:18-22; Gen 38 (Judah & Tamar), Exodus 6:23
- Job a son if Issachar: Genesis 46:12-13

"After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations" (Job 46:12).

So Elihu was the son of Barachel the Buzite (Nahor) "of the family of Ram" (Judah). Abraham's brother, Nahor, was the father of Huz and Buz, his brother. So Elihu was of Nahor and Judah. Just as Isaac and Jacob took wives from Abraham's family in Padan Aram, those in Padan Aram must have come and taken a wife or 2 from "the relatives" in Canaan. It works both ways. Elihu is proof of that!

A timeframe can be somewhat established by Aaron taking Elishaba as a wife. Her being

the daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon and then Job "seeing" four generations would put his death somewhere during Nahshon's life. Probably around the time Israel was leaving Egypt. I can't prove that Job was the son of Issachar [Son of Jacob], but the timeframe fits. It is interesting that only in Genesis 46:13 does it say Issachar had a son named Job and then to have the Pharez lineage mentioned in verse 12. A clue? Jo and Elihu existed at the same time and Elihu was partly from the tribe of Judah. That tells me a lot about when Job lived. Anyway, I just wanted to mention it.

I hope things are going good at PABC.

Grace, Peace Love
Jean C.

Dear Jean,

Thank you for your analysis of Job's possible history. Finding references to people named Job and Elihu outside the book of Job may tell us when Job lived—if they are the same Job and Elihu! Unfortunately, there are many people in the Bible that have the same name. In order to be more certain, we usually need a person's name and their parent's or children's names. Job, son of Issachar, son of Jacob is quite certain (Genesis 46:12-13). But the man in the book of Job is just "a man in the land of Uz, named Job".

It seems that the sons of Issachar—including Job—would have gone to Egypt when Jacob and his family left to join Joseph there. The Bible has two other references to the land of Uz and it seems to be east of the Jordan River (Jeremiah 25:20, Lamentations 4:21). Wikipedia has a quote from the War Scroll, one of the Dead Sea Scroll, stating, "they shall fight against the rest of the sons of Aramea: Uz, Hul, Togar, and Mesha, who are beyond the Euphrates". Other Bible verses mention a man named Uz, and some of his relatives match those in the War Scroll, above (Genesis 10:23; 36:28; 1 Chronicles 1:17, 42). If Job were a son of Issachar in Egypt, the Bible gives no hint as to how he would have traveled east of the Jordan or Euphrates River while the rest of Israel was still in Egypt.

Nevertheless, locating Job in the East of the known world would fit

Job 1:3: "... Job was the greatest of all the people of the East." But then, there are others who seize on the word "greatest", believe that "east" means the entire "middle east" and think Job was a Pharaoh in Egypt. That position would probably be considered the "greatest". But that doesn't fit the "land of Uz", unless there is more than one "Uz"?

Job was probably at least 50 years when the events of the Book occurred, since he had 10 children who appeared to be grown up (Job 1:2-5). He lived 140 years after this (Job 42:16). This would mean that he lived to be 190 years old, 15 years older than Abraham who died at age 175. Many individual's lifetimes are over 900 years prior to the flood, but then they quickly get shorter after the flood. Job's nearly 200-year lifetime would logically put him before Abraham. Then He could have been a powerful Pharaoh of the Old Kingdom of Egypt!

We can complicate matters further by looking at God's spoken reference to "Noah, Daniel and Job" as righteous men (Ezekiel 14:14, 20). We know that Noah and Daniel are in Chronological order here, and it is common to mention people from the eldest to the youngest. Do these verses mean that Job is younger than Daniel? That would put him over 1000 years later.

The truth of the matter is that we really do not know. I sure do not know. This does not mean that the Bible is somehow deficient. Job was not intended to be a history lesson, but a spiritual lesson about how even the best of human efforts all fall short of the righteousness and power of God. It also shows how people can talk "till they are blue in the face" and still not solve human problems. (I may be doing that now.) We can learn all the spiritual lessons without knowing when and where Job lived.

Even so, "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter" (Proverbs 25:2). As long as we do not mix up the things about the Bible that we "do know" with the things we "think we know", study is good. Between more Bible study and more historical studies, we may some day know without doubt when and where Job lived. We may better reach the skeptic. Keep studying! 

Just What Do You Mean Binding, Loosing?

Dave Havir

A misconception is causing much trouble among the Churches of God. Many people do not understand “binding” and “loosing” from Matthew 16:19. Because of this misunderstanding, people are putting the words and ideas of men above the words and ideas of the Holy Bible. Apparently many of these people are sincere. Nevertheless, even sincere mistakes can be serious mistakes.

Upon What Rock?

During His life Jesus asked the disciples who people were saying He was (Matthew 16:13-14). Then He asked the disciples who they thought He was (verse 15). Peter’s response: “*You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God*” (verse 16). Jesus told Peter the Father in heaven had revealed that information to him (verse 17). Then Jesus told Peter (in verse 18): “*You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church . . .*”

Upon what rock was the church built?

- Upon Peter? Was Peter the first pope, as the Catholic Church teaches?
- Upon any one man? Look and you will see many men among the Churches of God who behave with authority like the pope. Does any man among the Churches of God have the authority of the pope? (Notice the reference to Acts 15 later in this article.)
- Upon a group of men? Look around and you will see a few examples of councils or boards among the Churches of God that behave with authority like the pope. Does any group of men among the Churches of God have the authority of the pope? (Notice the reference to Acts 15 later in this article.)

- Upon Christ? Yes, upon Christ! Peter spoke in verse 16 and is indeed correct: “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*”

“And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”

Matthew 16:19

Binding and Loosing

In verse 19, Jesus continued His talk with Peter. He talked about giving Peter the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Then He talked about binding and loosing.

Notice the King James wording about binding and loosing:

“And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 18:18).

Let me you give three options to consider in analyzing the concept of binding and loosing.

Option No. 1: When a man or a group of men makes a proclamation on earth, God is required to bind or loose that proclamation in heaven, no matter what it is.

Option No. 2: When a group of men makes a proclamation on earth, God has already bound or loosed that proclamation in heaven, no matter what it is.

Option No. 3: When a man or a group of men makes a proclamation, it is bound or loosed on earth only if it has already been bound or loosed in heaven. Following is a simple test with four questions. The test is multiple choice. Each question has three options. Choose the answer that most accurately reflects the truth about the historical statement.

An Ancient Change

1. Centuries ago the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church changed its doctrine about the Sabbath.
 - a. God really didn’t want the change, but He was stuck with it and had to bind it.
 - b. God wanted the change and inspired the pope and cardinals to proclaim the change.
 - c. Christians need to compare the proclamation back to the Bible to see if Scripture supports the proclamation from men with religious titles.

Déjà Vu

2. Two decades ago the leaders of the Worldwide Church of God changed its doctrine about the Sabbath.

- a. God really didn't want the change, but He was stuck with it and had to bind it.
- b. God wanted the change and inspired the pastor general and advisers to proclaim the change.
- c. Christians need to compare the proclamation back to the Bible to see if Scripture supports the proclamation from men with religious titles.

Contradicting Variations

3. Throughout the years the leaders of the Worldwide Church of God occasionally changed the administration of its teaching on "divorce and remarriage." Oftentimes a new policy contradicted an old policy.
 - a. God really didn't want each of those changes, but He was stuck with each variation and had to bind each variation as it occurred.
 - b. God wanted each of those changes (no matter how contradictory) and inspired the pastor general and advisers to implement each of the variations.
 - c. Christians need to compare each proclamation back to the Bible to see if Scripture supports each proclamation from men with religious titles.

Bound in heaven

This little test crystallizes some obvious conclusions:

- God is not trapped by the statements of men.
- God does not inspire every proclamation of apparent leaders
- God expects saints to prove which proclamations are from Him.

Following a proclamation that is bound or loosed only by men is not the same as following a proclamation that is bound or loosed by God. The King James translation does not help to make Matthew 16:19 as clear as it could be. Notice some clearer versions.

The Amplified Version of the Bible quotes Matthew 16:19 this way:

"... Whatever you bind—that is, declare to be improper and unlawful—on earth must be already bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth—declare lawful—must be what is already loosed in heaven."

The Williams translation of the Bible quotes Matthew 16:19 this way:

"... Whatever you forbid on earth must be what is already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth must be what is already permitted in heaven."

What about Acts 15?

Some people claim that Acts 15—the account of the Jerusalem conference about circumcision— proves that apparent leaders make the decisions of binding and loosing for the people of God. Is that really what it says?

It is important to realize physical people did not make the decision in Acts 15. It is also important to realize this decision was not a spur-of-the-moment decision by God. When God made a promise to Abraham, He fully intended to open the door of salvation to the gentiles. God had a timetable.

Some people use Acts 15 to support their view of the existence of one special leader. They claim James was the chief apostle. There are two problems with this theory.

- First, the New Testament model does not conclusively show that James was a one-man ruler. Peter and Paul had major roles (Galatians 2:7-8). James, Peter and John were listed as pillars (verse 9).
- Second, Jesus Christ is our Apostle (Hebrews 3:1).

Some people use Acts 15 to support their view of a special group of leaders. They claim a chosen group of leaders has the authority to make binding decisions for saints. There are two problems with this theory.

- First, Acts 15 was an example of servants acknowledging God's will. Misapplications of Acts 15 are often about rulers justifying themselves in determining and enforcing man-made policies.
- Second, Acts 15 was about God giving blessings to gentiles in general (Galatians 3:14), liberty for saints (Galatians 5:1) and unity among the Body of Christ (Ephesians 2:19-22). Misapplications of Acts 15 are often about men using policies and procedures to divide saints and control their perceived portion of the flock.

Can you see the tragic irony?

Misapplications of Acts 15 are often about rulers justifying themselves in determining and enforcing man-made policies.

Sometimes it's Difficult

Among the Churches of God are many intelligent and sincere saints who still become mesmerized by people with religious titles.

- Without realizing it many saints put a man or a group of men into the role of the Old Testament Levitical priesthood.
- Without realizing it, many saints put a man or a group of men into the role of the vicar of Christ (as practiced by the Roman Catholic Church).
- Without realizing it, many put a man or a group of men into an exaggerated role of binding and loosing on earth.

Pray For Our Friends

Sometimes it's difficult to help our friends who hold to these concepts, but at least we can pray for them. 

New Testament Sabbaths and Prophets

By Norm Edwards

1 Thessalonians 5:19-20

**19 Do not quench
the Spirit**

**20 Do not despise
prophecies**



...A Lesson for Everybody!

This article can be a great blessing to many. It also might “step on some toes”. But if we are willing to accept the truth of God and the patience of God, it will be a great blessing, for ourselves and all we meet.

Some people believe the Old Testament Seventh-Day Sabbath-keeping continued into the New Testament and through today, but others do not. Similarly, some people believe God continued to prophesy—speak through believers in the New Testament through today, but others do not. Some accept both and some believe in neither.

What does the Bible say? What can we do about this? We will see.

It is interesting that the same arguments are used against both modern-day Sabbath-keeping and prophesying:

- God is not working this way any more.
- Christianity has not traditionally done these things, so they must not be necessary.
- We do not do this in our church organization, so God must not be either requiring or inspiring it any longer.
- These things are not well-respected any more—or just plain weird.

Alas, but *Shepherd's Voice Magazine* is a voice from the Scripture and therefore we will consider what the New Testament says about Sabbaths and Prophets.

Not a Trivial Issue

Remembering the Sabbath is the fourth of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8-11). When a man knowingly and willfully broke this commandment, not dealing with any emergency or coercion, he was sentenced to death (Numbers 15:32-36). Blessings are promised for those who honor the Sabbath (Isaiah 56:1-7; 58:8-14). Judgments and eventually captivity were given to ancient Israel for

dishonoring the Sabbath (Jeremiah 17:19-27; Ezekiel 20:12-24). So what about prophets and prophesying? Are they in the Ten Commandments? Yes!!

The first two commandments are that the LORD (“Yahweh”, “Jehovah”, etc.) is God and that we should not have any idols in place of Him. The Bible contains massive evidence showing that the true God is superior to idols because **He speaks to man and idols do not!** (See box.) To say that God is unable or unwilling to speak to mankind puts Him in the same category as these dumb idols. When we have trouble communicating with God, it is because of our sins, not God's unwillingness: Believing God cannot speak to us is certainly a sin.

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear (Isaiah 59:1-2).

God speaks to man: Genesis 1:28-30; 3:9-17; 4:6; 12:1; 17:1-22; Exodus 3-4, 20; Numbers 12:6-8; Joshua 3:7; Judges 1:1-2; 7:1-2; 1 Samuel 3; 23:2; 1 Kings 9:1-9; Job 38-42; Isaiah 8:1; 36:10; Jeremiah 1:4-19; Ezekiel 1:1-3; Hosea 1:1-4; Amos 7:1-9; Malachi 1:1-3. (These are a small sample—there are over three times as many more references to God speaking directly to man in the Old Testament. Beyond this, there are dozens more examples of God's messages in dreams and visions or spoken by angels.)

Idols do not speak Judges 6:31-32; 1 Kings 18:24-29; Psalm 115:2-9; 135:13-18; Jeremiah 10:5; Habakkuk 2:18-19; 1 Corinthians 12:2

Old Testament Sabbath Setting

The Sabbath was made at creation (Genesis 2:2-3) and then demonstrated to ancient Israel through the miracle of manna (Exodus 16). The Ten Commandments do not introduce the Sabbath, but tell us to “remember it” (Exodus 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15). It is the first of God's Feast days or “appointed times” (Leviticus 22:2-3). The Sabbath was a sign showing Israel to be God's people (Exodus 31:13-17). When a community works six days and rests one, it is obvious to outsiders—a sign. Obedience to other commandments is not so obvious: people who murder, commit adultery, steal, and lie usually try to keep it a secret.

When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, everyone was keeping the Sabbath together. God provided their physical needs—there were no non-Sabbath-keeping businesses, governments or neighbors to deal with. Their government—Moses and the seventy elders—commanded the Sabbath. The peer pressure was toward keeping the Sabbath, not ignoring it. When a man decided to go out and work on the Sabbath—doing work unnecessary on that day—God had the people stone him to death (Numbers 15:32-36).

Centuries later, after some of Israel had been taken captive then returned under the governor Nehemiah, the agreed to incorporate the Law of God into their civil law (Nehemiah 10:28-31). They realized non-Israelite people were in the land and would try to sell to them on the Sabbath (v 31). What did Nehemiah do when some of his people got involved with those not keeping the Sabbath? Did he order a mass stoning? Here is the story:

In those days I saw people in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions.

Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, “What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day? “Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.” So it was, at the gates of Jerusalem, as it began to be dark before the Sabbath, that I commanded the gates to be shut, and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath. Then I posted some of my servants at the gates, so that no burdens would be brought in on the Sabbath day.

Now the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice. Then I warned them, and said to them, “Why do you spend the night around the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you!” From that time on they came no more on the Sabbath (Nehemiah 13:15-21).

Nehemiah recognized the difference between Sabbath-breaking in an isolated nation keeping the Sabbath, and Sabbath-breaking in a society mixed with those who do not keep the Sabbath. He issued warnings, he took provisions to make Sabbath keeping easier, he was briefly tolerant, and he strengthened his weak people without bloodshed.

Sabbath Continued in New Testament

In the New Testament, the Sabbath was taught and enforced by the Pharisees, Sadducees and other religious leaders of the day. Like Nehemiah, they also had the problem of Romans, Greeks and other peoples living in their land who did not observe the Sabbath. Sabbath-keeping was further complicated by numerous extra-biblical laws added by the religious leaders. The leaders were forbidden by the Romans to carry out a death penalty (John 18:31), but they could cast people out of Synagogues (John 9:22; 12:42)—which would mean the loss of most

of their friends and places to buy and sell.

Most of the Sabbath-related controversy in the New Testament regarded the added ordinances of the religious leaders, not the biblical keeping of the Sabbath. They complained about Jesus and His disciples healing and eating grain on the Sabbath. Their rules were so well known, that the book of Acts measures a distance as “a Sabbath day’s journey” (Acts 1:12)—even though it is not in the Old Testament, but an invention of the Rabbis. The Jewish leaders tried to enforce their added rules on Jews, but were not concerned about non-Jews observance.

While many Christians continued to meet in synagogues, those who were expelled and who assembled on their own were treated like non-Jews, so the Jewish leaders again did not care. Lastly, the Roman government was not concerned about Sabbath observance by either Jews or non-Jews—as long as it did not get in the way of their laws and purposes. For these reasons, we find little New Testament controversy about lack of biblical Sabbath observance.



The 56 New Testament verses referring to the Sabbath can be easily classified like this:

- **17 verses showing Jesus’ positive teaching about the Sabbath, including the phrase, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath”** (Matthew 12:5, 8, 10, 11, 12; 24:20; Mark 2:27, 28; 3:4; Luke 6:6, 9; 13:15, 16; 14:3, 5; John 7:22, 23).
- **16 verses about religious leaders’ complaints regarding Jesus and his disciples not following their man-made Sabbath traditions** (Matthew 12:1, 2; Mark 2:23, 24; 3:2; Luke 6:1, 2, 6, 7; 13:14; John 5:9, 10, 16, 18; 9:14, 16)
- **13 verses showing Jesus and his disciples assembled and taught on the Sabbath. They did this even when they were teaching non-Jews—Acts 13:42** (Mark 1:21; 6:2; Luke 4:16; Luke 4:31; 13:10; Acts 13:14, 27; 42, 44; 15:21; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4).
- **6 verses mentioning other events occurring on the Sabbath** (Matthew 28:1; Mark 15:42; 16:1; Luke 14:1; 23:54; John 19:31).
- **3 verses demonstrating on-going Sabbath resting by believers: (Luke 23:56; Acts 1:12; Hebrews 4:9—NIV, ESV, CSB, NET, NASB, etc.).**
- **1 verse explaining that believers should not judge each other in how they observe the Sabbath and other important days: “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ”** (Colossians 2:16-17).

Of interest, there are times when Jesus and the apostle Paul list some of the Ten Commandments (Matthew 19:18-19; Mark 10:19-20; Luke 18:20-21; Romans 13:9). None of those lists include the Sabbath commandment. However, they do not contain first three commandments, either. These commandments are not obsolete—these lists deal with how we treat our neighbors, things that our neighbors experience from us and that become our reputation for better or for worse.

The New Testament contains no passage ending the Sabbath or changing the day of the week. It is a memorial of Creation and a vital need of human beings to spend one day per week resting from their labors and seeking God. Those who assemble with believers and/or rest on another day—Sunday being the most common—certainly reap much of the benefit. But it is still an error.

When Christ returns, what day will He call the people to assemble and teach? Can a millennial society function when people are trying to keep different rest days? Obviously not! The Sabbath will be kept with its biblical blessing and simplicity—not with the complex regulations of misguided teachers.

With all these verses showing the continuing of Sabbath keeping in the New Testament Church, and no definite teaching that the fourth Commandment has been ended or changed, the biblical Sabbath—without the Pharisees' added regulations—clearly continues as a true teaching of God.

Old Testament Preponderance of Prophets

Remove prophets from the Old Testament and there is not much left. In the Pentateuch—the first five books—Enoch, Abraham, Moses and Aaron were all regarded as prophets (Jude 1:14; Genesis 20:7; Deuteronomy 34:10; Exodus 7:1). After the Pentateuch, almost everything else is the words of a prophet. Jesus recognized the Old Testament Scripture divisions of the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; John 1:45) and “Law, Prophets and Psalms” (Luke 24:44).

Indeed, the Jewish Scribes classify Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Chronicles and several small books as “The Writings”. These are possibly the least prophetic books, but there are many Psalms that are prophetic of Christ—David being a prophet (Acts 2:29-30). Chronicles contains some of the same prophets as Kings and the five “Festival Books” are also treated as prophetic allegory.

The Jewish Scribes have long regarded the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings as the “Former Prophets”, including the stories of the prophets Samuel, Nathan, Gad, Elijah, Elisha, etc. The “Latter Prophets” are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and the twelve “Minor Prophets”. Whether it be the writing of Scripture, or a spoken but unwritten prophecy (1 Kings 22:8), these prophets were the communication between God and mankind.

The scripture gives us a definition of a prophet—showing that there are different kinds of them:

Then He said, “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?” (Numbers 12:6-8).

Some prophets hear from God in visions or dreams. A very few—like Moses—speak to him face to face. Other scriptures show that some prophets hear from angels (Judges 6:11-12; Numbers 22:35; 1 Kings 13:18; Zechariah 1:1 – 6:9). But the common thread of all of this is that it is a message directly from God. Occasionally, people will think this verse means that an exhortation or exposition of the Scripture is prophesying: “But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men” (1 Corinthians 14:3). This scripture gives the effect of prophecy, not the definition of it. Every place in the scripture where we have the words of a prophecy, it is something that God gave that would otherwise not be known. Every place

where the Scripture gives the words of a prophecy, we can see that it was the words of God—something people would not know on their own. It is not simply a sermon, teaching, or repeat of other Scripture. The Apostle Peter concurs:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:20-21).

If a person prophesies once, does that make him a prophet? Probably not! A person can prophesy a time or two, but not be able to do it whenever he wants, whereas the major prophets of the Bible often went to God with a variety of questions and received answers. The Scripture contains no clear definition of how many times a person must prophesy to become a “prophet”. King Saul is an interesting example. Twice, the Spirit of God came upon him and he prophesied, but near the end of his life he sought the word of the Lord and did not receive it (1 Samuel 10:10-12; 19:20-24; 28:6). The people of his day made a saying: “Is Saul among the prophets?” They did not know for sure if Saul was a prophet, and we may not always know who is a prophet today. But we know we can trust the prophecies of Scripture, and the New Testament tells us how to deal with the prophets of our day.

Prophets Continue in New Testament

The words “prophet”, “prophecy”, “prophesy”, and their various forms occur in **202 verses** in the New Testament

- **40 refer to specific Old Testament prophets or their prophecies** (Matthew 1:22; 2:5, 15, 17, 23; 3:3; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17, 39; 13:14, 35; 15:7; 16:4; 21:4; 24:15; 27:9, 35; Mark 1:2; 7:6; 13:14; Luke 3:4; 4:17, 27; 11:29; John 1:21, 23, 25; 12:38; Acts 2:16, 30; 3:24; 7:42, 48; 8:28, 30, 34; 13:20; 28:25; Jude 1:14).

- **36 refer to prophets in general—could be Old, New or between Testaments** (Matthew 13:57; 23:29, 30, 31, 34, 37; Mark

6:4, 15; Luke 1:70; 4:24; 6:23; 11:47, 49, 50; 13:28, 33, 34; John 4:19; 7:52; Acts 3:18, 21, 25; 7:52; 10:43; Ephesians 2:20; 3:5; James 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:15; 2 Peter 1:19; 3:2; Revelation 10:7; 11:18; 16:6; 18:20, 24; 22:6).

- **24 are references to the portion of the Old Testament Scripture known as “the Prophets”** (Matthew 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; 26:56; Luke 16:16, 29, 31; 18:31; 24:25, 27, 44; John 1:45; 6:45; Acts 13:15, 27, 40; 15:15; 24:14; 26:22, 27; 28:23; Romans 1:2; 3:21; 16:26).

- **23 verses show that prophesying is a gift of the Holy Spirit which Christians should seek and use in Christian congregations as instructed** (Acts 2:17, 18; 19:6; Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 11:4, 5; 12:10, 28; 14:1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 22, 24, 31, 39; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:20; 1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14; Revelation 19:10; 22:9).

- **19 refer to false prophets which often tried to deceive believers** (Matthew 7:15, 22; 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22; Luke 6:26; 7:26, 28; 20:6; Acts 13:6; Titus 1:12; 2 Peter 2:1, 16; 1 John 4:1; Revelation 2:20; 10:11; 16:13; Revelation 19:20; 20:10).

- **18 verses refer to 19 specific New Testament prophets or their prophecies:** Zecharias (father of John the Baptist), John the Baptist, Anna, Caiaphas, Agabus, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, Saul, Judas, Silas, Philip’s four daughters, the apostle John and the “two witnesses” (Matthew 11:9, 21:26; Mark 11:32; Luke 1:76; 2:36; John 11:51; Acts 13:1; 15:32; 21:9, 10; Revelation 1:3; 11:3, 6, 10; 22:7; 10, 18, 19).

- **16 verses refer to the Old Testament prophets generally** (Matthew 5:12; 11:13; 13:17; 16:14; Mark 8:28; Luke 9:8, 19; 10:24; John 8:52, 53; Romans 11:3; Hebrews 1:1; 11:32; 1 Peter 1:10; 2 Peter 1:20, 21).

- **16 verses call Jesus a**

“prophet” (Matthew 14:5; 21:11, 46; 26:68; Mark 16:65; Luke 7:16, 39; 22:64; 24:19; John 4:19; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17; Acts 3:22, 23; 7:37).

- **7 verses give cautions to prophecy:** It is not the most important; It is not necessary for every believer; It may require other believers to judge its validity and agreement with Scripture; Prophets should have control of themselves when they prophesy (1 Corinthians 12:29; 13:2, 8, 9; 14:29, 32, 37).

- **3 verses refer to unidentified New Testament prophets** (Matthew 10:41; Acts 11:27; 19:6).

In summary, the Gospels and Acts make many references to the Old Testament prophecies of Christ and to the Pharisees and Sadducees’ ancestors who persecuted the Old Testament prophets. In Romans through Revelation, most of the verses are about the spiritual gift of prophecy and its use in the church.

We will cite a few examples:

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith (Romans 12:6).

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

Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge (1 Corinthians 14:29).

Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:39-40).

Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:20).

“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. ... These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with

all plagues, as often as they desire (Revelation 11:3, 6).

The exact same words are used for both Old and New Testament prophets and prophecies. There is not a big powerful word for Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah, and a “little prophet” word used for Agabus and Philip’s four prophesying daughters. They all prophesy—speak for God at times. For those who have studied New Testament prophets, it seems so natural. But for many believers, especially those in big church organizations, it is a point of difficulty. Why?

Prophets Do Not Come Easily

Obviously, one cannot prophesy by one’s own will. God has to do it. But most Christians do not pray for the gift and would be skeptical of others who claim to have it. Why? Because the message God gives to prophets is sometimes hard to take. It may not be in agreement with what we want or think. It will often not be in agreement with today’s religious or political leaders. Church organizations usually function by making goals, budgets, doctrinal statements, evangelistic plans, growth targets, etc. Leaders can control these things, but they cannot control God or His prophets and prophecies. Prophets speak God’s words and may or may not agree with the teachings and practices of a church group. Notice these New Testament prophecies that were not easy for the leaders and the people to accept:

Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” So the Lord said to him, “Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. “And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.” Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. “And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.” But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of

Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel (Acts 9:10-15).

And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea (Acts 11:27-29).

Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them (Acts 16:6).

“And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.” (Acts 20:22-25).

These messages would be hard to accept, but they were from God and they were true. The Church believed them, acted accordingly and God’s work was done. But it is easy for Christians to seek congregations that tell them: “God loves us the most”, “we have the most truth”, “everything is getting better for us”, and “all will go well for us in the future.”

In spite of this overwhelming New Testament teaching, some will still point to verses, such as the following, and claim that God stopped providing prophets at some time in the first century. Some say the writing and copying of both Old and New Testaments made prophets unnecessary. Here are two verses they cite:

“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John” (Matthew 11:13).

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds (Hebrews 1:1-2).

There is no doubt that Jesus Christ is greater than all of the prophets, and that His message is more important. The Gospels are vital revelations and so is the dwelling of Christ in us (Colossians 1:27). But these verses **do not** declare the end of prophets and prophecy—they introduce the greater revelation of Christ. Christ is greater than our fleshly bodies, but we still have them and will be judged for how we use them (2 Corinthians 5:1-10). Christ is greater than our civil governments, but the Scripture teaches obedience to them (Romans 13). Christ is greater than the law—including the Sabbath, but that law is still used; it is written in our hearts (Hebrews 8:10). Christ’s ongoing use of prophets and prophecy is taught throughout the New Testament—whereas no verses teach that it has ended. Even the very testimony of Jesus is called “the spirit of prophecy” at the **end of the Bible**:

*“... I [an angel] am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the **testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy**” (Revelation 19:10).*

With dozens of New Testament Scriptures explaining and encouraging the ongoing prophecy in the New Testament and with no scriptures clearly declaring its end, one must conclude that prophets and prophecy are something that God wants for His Church today!

Implementing These Truths

In this 21st century, most who call themselves Christian neither observe the Sabbath nor seek prophets or prophecies in their congregations. A few teach and practice one or the other. Only a tiny fraction accepts both.

The single biggest difficulty in acquiring any truth, no matter how

valuable, is overcoming our own human pride. It is very difficult to accept that we have been wrong about something for many years—especially when we have been right on other things. The lessons of the books of Kings and Chronicles come to mind. Each king’s life is frequently summed up in a single statement—explaining what he did right and where he fell short. If we hunger and thirst for God as King David did (Psalm 63:1; 107:9), we can receive all that he has for us—and obtain a good report (Acts 22:12; Hebrews 11:2, 39).

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to **cleanse us from all unrighteousness** (1 John 1:9).*

Beyond our personal decision to accept a biblical truth, we find difficulty dealing with Christian friends with whom we will differ. From our long friendships, we see each other as fellow believers. But our difference in Biblical understanding raises the questions in each person’s mind: If I do this and they do that, am I wrong? Are they wrong? Should I continue to fellowship with them?

These things often require prayer and patience by all involved. When the Gospel was taken to non-Jews, many Jewish believers had trouble with the concept (John 4, Acts 10 & 11). When the apostles taught that circumcision was not necessary for salvation, again, some believers could not accept it and formed a “circumcision” subgroup within the church that was sometimes helpful and sometimes not (Acts 15; Colossians 4:11; Titus 1:10). We need to learn to coexist in peace, in spite of our differences, as the Apostle Paul encouraged (1 Corinthians 1:11-15).

Finally, for members of a church group with a doctrinal statement that is decades or centuries old, growth is rarely quick or even possible. Both religious and civil leaders struggle with prophets today for the same reason they did in the Old and New Testaments. The prophets speak for God, not for the religious or civil leaders of the day. People who always prophesy what the leaders want are probably false prophets.

This writer heard a church leader

put forth this argument against prophets in the church: “If there are real prophets today, then we could ask them and know for sure when Christ will come back. But the Bible says that no man knows that time, so there cannot be prophets today.” We should never underestimate God. He is quite able to not answer the questions we do not need answered now. Jesus already explained this leader’s question:

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:6-8).

Individual believers can choose to accept and practice the Scriptural truth about prophets quietly. But if they speak openly and often, they will probably be required to depart for a new congregation. This takes faith to “walk in the wilderness” until new believing friends are established.

The practice of resting and assembling on the Sabbath is generally evident to all. Some Christians who learn about the Sabbath begin to rest on that day but continue to fellowship with their same congregation. This helps them to share their truth, and in about a dozen cases, this writer knows of entire congregations that began to observe the Sabbath from such a witness. But most often, either the Sunday congregation asks them to go elsewhere or the person needs to use Sunday to accomplish necessary work. After all, the Fourth Commandment teaches us to work six days and rest one.

One can quietly come to understand that God grants the gift of prophecy today and continue to fellowship and serve with the same brethren. But when a believer receives a prophecy in a church meeting (1 Corinthians 14:30) or makes important life decisions based on a current prophesy, then division often arises. Is this person hearing from God? Should we

take action on what he says?

For example, when Agabus prophesied the famine throughout the world (Acts 11:30-31), should the believers have agreed to send relief to the brethren in Judea? Or should they have been suspicious that someone was going to profit from that operation—maybe steal some of the offerings? Or was this giving simply unnecessary? When we think about it, there is no reason for God to speak unless His people are going to listen to what He says and act upon it. We also need to realize that God gives the congregation the responsibility of judging prophecies:

“If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’—which you have not known—‘and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 13:1-3).

Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge (1 Corinthians 14:29).

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21).

Hearing from God by a current prophetic word can be an awesome experience. It can be a frightening one. This writer has experienced both. Keeping the Sabbath can be an awesome experience—rest, relaxation and leisurely fellowship with God’s people. It can also be a doctrine of contention with one brother judging another. This writer has experienced

both.

With the Judgment You Judge, You Will Be Judged

Brethren who have practiced both of these Biblical teachings know what a blessing they can be. Even so, most probably did not understand these things on the day when they were baptized. We have to grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). So we ought to not be judgmental of others who take time to learn these things.

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you (Matthew 7:1-2).

Unfortunately, many Sabbath-keeping church groups judge others as unbelievers because they do not observe the Sabbaths. Also, many “charismatic” or “Pentecostal” groups judge others as unbelievers because they do not accept the gift of prophecy in their congregations. Furthermore, many other groups consider both teachings obsolete, legalistic, Jewish, phony or just plain weird. We all need to get back to the Scriptures and learn. But more specifically, we need to ask ourselves, if we judge others as unbelievers because of a truth they are missing, will we be judged by God as unbelievers for a truth we are missing? Will God be merciful to us and not to all the others? Why?

Some people dismiss one of these truths by simply saying, “God obviously is not working that way anymore” because He has not worked that way among them. But how many really seek God and ask Him, “Do you want our congregation to meet on the seventh day Sabbath?” or “Do you want our congregation to seek the gift of prophecy and allow prophets to speak in our meetings?”

One of the most dangerous things we can do is begin thinking we already have everything important (Revelation 3:17-19). We must forever be humble before God and realize that He is bringing about His will. He is not there to back up our will or the policies of our church group. He also knows when is the right time to teach each truth to each person. Even Jesus could not teach His apostles everything at once:

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now” (John 16:12).

There is so much in the Scripture. This writer realizes he will not master it all before he dies. But he will be thankful for what He has given, and trust Him for the future.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen (Jude 1:24-25).

The Shepherd's Voice is a free offering.
It is made possible by the tithes and offerings of the Chicagoland Church of God members, participating churches, and individual contributors. Donations are welcome and may be tax deductible.

continued from page 9

This statement helps to embody the work and life of Jesus Christ. I believe that as a people we need more room for rejoicing that has been too often taken up by this need to be right about what it is we believe.

If Not Us, Then it Will be The Stones

Luke made the following account of Jesus's approach to Jerusalem on a colt:

*Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him. And as He went, **many spread their clothes on the road.** Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying:*

“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.”

But He answered and said to them, “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out” (Luke 19:35-40).

Let us ask ourselves where we find our place in this account. How sophisticated in doctrine were those who enthusiastically and selflessly proclaimed blessings and glory to God, laying out their clothes as an act of homage? On the opposite end of the spectrum, the sophisticated and learned Pharisees found themselves restricted in their praise, and wanted His disciples disciplined. Whose feelings did Jesus appreciate the most? Evidently the dead lifeless stones would do a better job of worship than the Pharisees. Confidence in the flesh leads to pride and eliminates selfless worship, so where would we really place ourselves in this account?

This answer depends on where you might spend much of your heart and mind these days. If you have been directing your attention to the evils of the world and conspiracies, or on past church grievances, or if you impose on others and even on yourself the kind of doctrinal discipline exposed in this article regarding Holy Day

observances, calendars, genealogy to a tribe, or some form of Hebrew root/Christian syncretism (among other such things), or in summary trying to be all researched and right about it all, then the stones around you may be clearing their throats in preparation for praise.

If you have learned carefully and have not sabotaged your faith, and have not suppressed the inner joy God has granted you, but have cultivated love, giving, and mercy, in the knowledge of God, then I congratulate you. These things are the spirit of worship, which is to have the desire of what He desires.

“... but whoever does and teaches them (the commandments), he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:19).

“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”(John 4:24).

May the stones be left silent, and may God's people glorify Him freely without restriction under the grace of God in which they live.

Feast at Penticton, British Columbia

Rejoice during your festival....

(Deuteronomy 16:14)

For the sixth consecutive year in Penticton, British Columbia, brethren gathered from areas inside Canada (BC, Alberta, Manitoba), and from the USA to do just that. From the first day luncheon, to the now traditional bowling and pizza events, all who attended had an inspiring and truly joyful time.

There had been forecasts of poor weather just prior to the Feast, however we were blessed to enjoy mild fall climates throughout the festival. This was beneficial as we were able to hold the yearly Feast Potluck outdoors. The outdoor potluck has become a favorite event over the years, providing an excellent opportunity for fellowship. Fellowship like this is as encouraging as it is important, especially when it fosters peace and harmony among brethren who (when at home) attend with a variety of Church of God groups.

Happily this ecumenical spirit has become the reputation for this Feast site, which has been sponsored by the Independent Church of God Winnipeg since it's inception. With help from *Shepherd's Voice Magazine* and the Chicagoland Church of God, news of this site reaches many folks who continue to travel to Penticton year after year, because of the cooperative and friendly nature that exists. There are many sights to see in Penticton, and brethren were able to take advantage of the many fruit stands that were still open, restaurants, wineries and breweries, as well as the ever present, scenic lake country of the Okanagan Valley.

We had a variety of speakers (five from three Provinces in Canada, two from Illinois in the US), and services

Frank Bean with
Special Music on the Trumpet



Ordination of Eric Leader



Donna Turcotte accompanied on the piano



Frank Bean Delivering Message



Chowing Down on Pizza Night!



Kimberly Kozak sings *Lower Lights*

were well attended all eight days. Services were augmented by a number of musical offerings in the form of vocal and trumpet solos, and a choral arrangement of “Joyful Joyful” performed by Colin, Rebecca and Andrea Leader, with Julita Gonzales and Alyssa Kennedy.

Janice Kennedy’s festival decorations again adorned the stage and podium area. Throughout all eight days, Armstrong, BC resident Donna Turcotte accompanied hymns and musical offerings on the piano. Special thanks to Donna for all of her musical work!

Services on the sixth day (October 22) were also augmented as we witnessed the ordination of Eric Leader of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Through his many years serving God and the

Winnipeg congregation, it is clear that Eric has been divinely separated to continue in that service. Therefore Winnipeg and the overall church of God has a new deacon! Eric’s wife Andrea joined us on the stage as Alex Kennedy Sr., Duane Nicol, Frank Bean, and myself assisted with the laying on of hands while Jim Patterson officiated the proceedings - Congratulations to Eric and family!

Services were broadcast daily via YouTube, and brethren online were able to tune to the daily services. Andrea Leader oversaw the YouTube feed, while Rebecca, Colin and Michael Leader took care of the video recording for our archive on Sermon.net.

Another hallmark of the Penticton Feast site is how the young people can really make a difference. The majority of day to day functions of the festival were looked after by our young folks. The aforementioned Leader family ran the video, Evii Connery looked after photography and Aonghus Connery served as one of our regular worship & song leaders, and all of them are under the age of 17! It is encouraging to see young people set stepping up and assuming the key roles involved with our observances. We couldn’t have done it without them.

Thanks to Frank & Bonnie Bean of the Calgary congregation who were two of the first to arrive and help with the setup of chairs and sound equipment etc., and were there with Keri, myself, Alex and Janice Kennedy when we shut out the lights at the end of the Eighth Day.

God has richly blessed the Feast of Tabernacles in Penticton and we pray He’ll continue to do so in the years to come.

We look forward to Festival 2017!

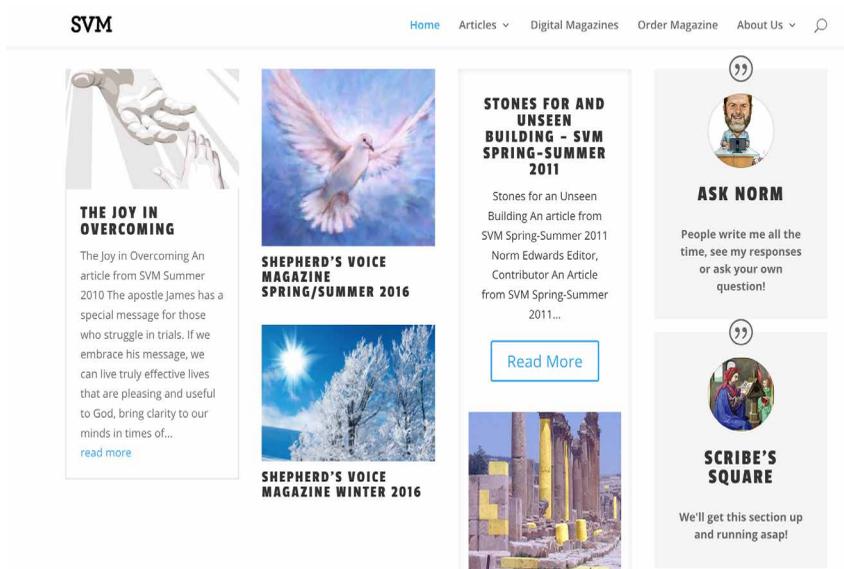
Darren Connery



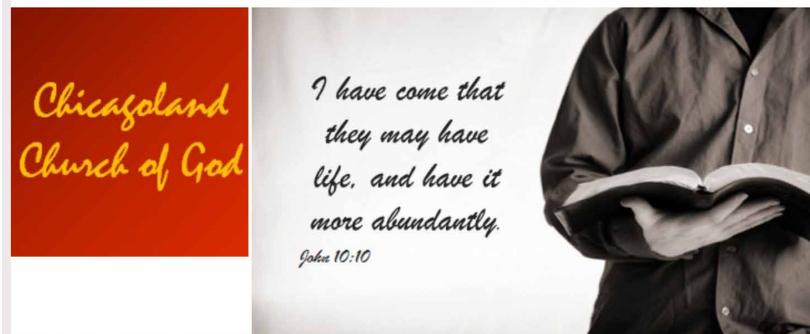
Shepherd's Voice Magazine Online...

Visit Shepherd's Voice Magazine on the Web
www.shepherdsvoicemagazine.org
 and interact with the site to read articles on your computer, tablet or phone!

Download past issues and send your questions to Ask Norm!



Visit the Chicagoland Church of God website
www.chicagolandcog.org
 and listen to past audio sermons from Jim Patterson, Duane Nicol and others



[Holy Days](#) | [Sermons](#) | [Shepherd's Voice Magazine](#) | [Contact Us](#)

Welcome to the Chicagoland Church of God

The Chicagoland Church of God is a culturally diverse Sabbath keeping community who endeavor to hold fast to the truths of the original Christian church. We seek to strengthen our relationship with Christ through prayer, Bible study, hearing God's message, fellowship with brethren, and keeping ordained Holy Days as direct by God. It is our desire that His Spirit guide us in all that we do and to grow in grace and knowledge.



Norman Edwards

PABC Update – Making of a Ministry

When God trained Moses for his pivotal role in the Old Testament, He let him spend 40 years in Pharaoh’s house and 40 years tending sheep. Joseph was prepared for leadership by growing up as his father’s favorite son then becoming servant and a prisoner for about a decade. David slew Goliath and led the armies of Israel, then spent a decade fleeing from a jealous King.

These times of training are necessary to form the character that God is seeking. Trusting God for our “daily bread” builds faith. There is nothing like suffering under unjust leadership to remind us of the need for good leadership. And so Christians today sometimes need to undergo drastic change in order to become the men and women God wants them to be. The Call of Christ ended a perfectly good fishing business, but trained eternal rulers for the Kingdom.

And so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were [fishing] partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.” So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him (Luke 5:10-11).

The conventional wisdom would be to encourage people to keep

their jobs so that a group could raise money to start a ministry. But Jesus’ approach was simply to end the jobs and plunge into the ministry. What value was returned for this seemingly reckless decision? Peter asked Jesus that question:

Then Peter answered and said to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?” So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:27-28).

Our Christian lives make the most sense when understood in terms of eternal life. But even now, the Christian can receive the love of God, give out the love of God to a hostile world and have great peace in doing so.

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:17-19).

These same lessons can be learned through many Christian ministries, though probably on a smaller scale. One learns to suffer trials, trust God, receive the peace and love of God, and convey it to others who are not always appreciative or immediately responsive. Ministries of God are both a blessing to those being served and those serving. The question to each is: Can they receive the blessing?

Lessons from Ministry:

Port Austin Bible Campus provides the following to people in need:

- Emergency housing: 50,000 bed-nights to 500 Guests so far.
- Food, mostly received from food banks or grown in our garden.
- Help getting lost documents (State ID, birth certificate, Social Security Card, etc.)
- Assistance to finding jobs, applying for government programs, etc.
- Transportation to jobs (essential

to those with no money to get to their first job)

- Location accountability to discourage Guests from “hanging out” with people in negative environments that cause self-destruction and homelessness.
- Access to recovery groups for those suffering from substance abuse
- 8 hours per week of Bible classes to teach principles that most Guests have never heard.
- Firm correction—sometimes dismissal—for those who will not learn their lessons by love and need to be returned to reap the fruit of their own ways.

Sharing the Blessing with Guests

Most of the PABC homeless Guests are glad to find an emergency place to stay. They take on the tasks of finding a job, securing other payments due them, and finding new housing. Some can do that in a few days or weeks, others have more hurdles to jump, and can take months. They are generally thankful for what PABC has provided.

Other Guests have more difficulties. Some of the reasons for their homelessness become quickly evident. They do not want to follow the campus rules, even though they could without much difficulty. They have frequent excuses for not doing what they should do—some of which turn out to be totally false. Some percentage still want to engage in substance abuse, stealing or promiscuity—but will go to great efforts to try to keep it secret.

PABC attempts to take the “loving father” approach with these guests: “We want to help you, but you need to understand that you did not become homeless because your landlord or former-partner was mean. You were sent out because you have not made your rent/utility payments for 2 months, for getting drunk, for threatening someone, for committing a crime or some other serious problem that you need to change. God is very interested in helping you change, but you need to repent to Him and ask Him to change you.” As we see in the Scriptures, some listen and some do not—but all receive a witness of love, law and eventual judgment of God.

The number of people served by PABC has continued to increase. The accompanying graph shows the number of men women and children who have stayed at PABC each year. Some of the children are “part-time”-they go back and forth between separated parents. Why would a child stay with a homeless parent when the other has a home? Many of the children actually prefer the peace and relative orderliness of living at PABC compared to their other home, which may have fighting, substance abuse, or a stream of party guests coming through. Also, if the homeless parent does not use their scheduled parenting time, they can lose it.

Over its past 6½ years of operation, PABC has become well known in the three counties of Michigan’s “Thumb”: Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola. Local judges, sheriffs, police, probation officers, parole officers, hospitals, Department of Health and Human Services workers, and many others have referred people to PABC when they have no place else to go. This is especially important for families, as Michigan law requires them to report any parents who cannot provide their children a home for as little as one night. Usually

those children will be taken away by Child Protective Services—and it may take many weeks for the parents to get them back.

Members of other nearby churches have started the Port Austin Homeless Coalition—an effort to help us serve the Homeless people, but without actually living on the campus. They procured a number of specific things that the ministry needs and have raised several thousand dollars each year through fund-raising projects. Some provide jobs and transportation for Guests. Due to their efforts, and those of distant supporters, our electric bill—once thousands in arrears—is now caught up.

Sharing the Blessing with Fellow Believers

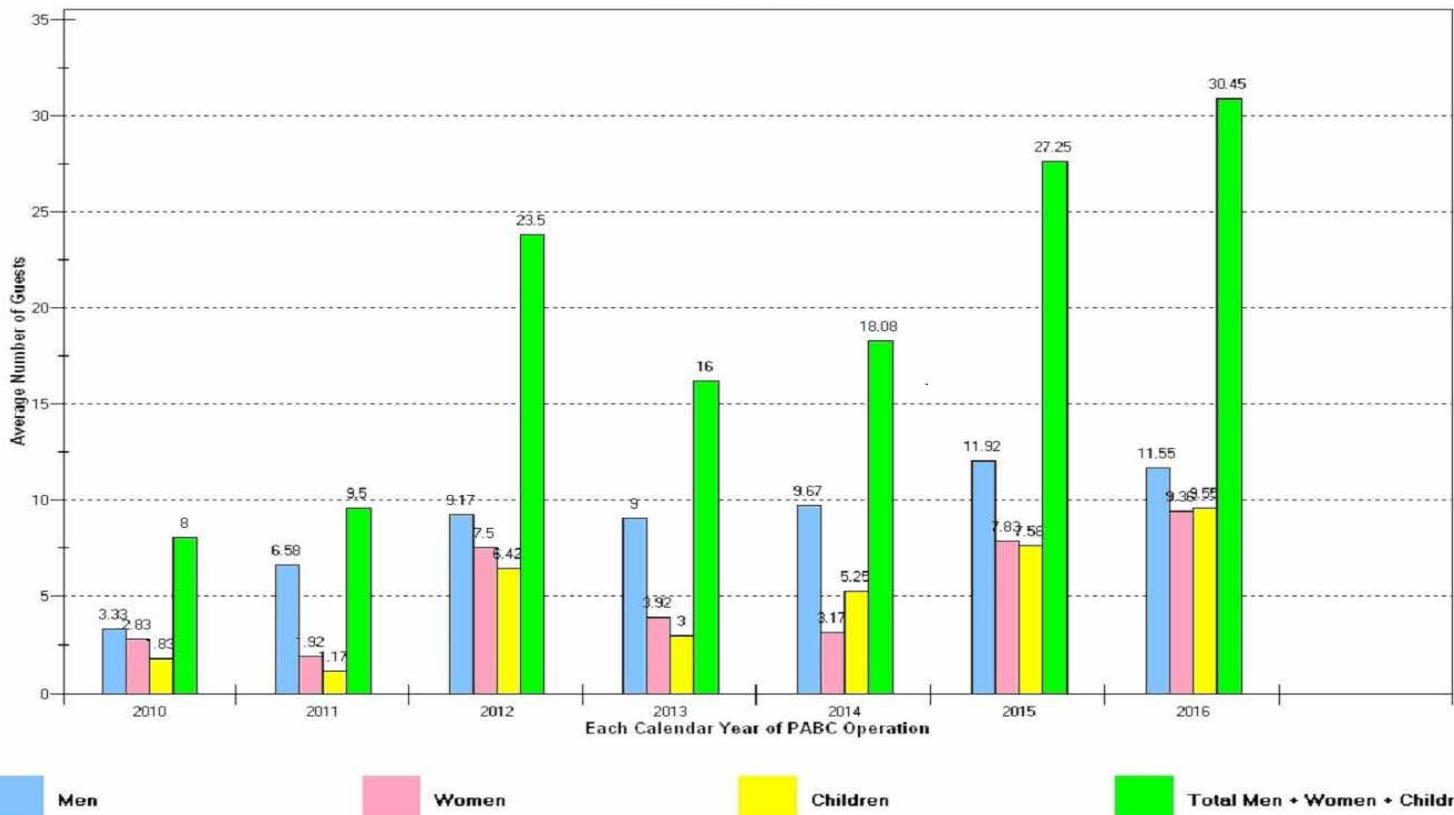
Norman and Marleen Edwards, who have lived in the PABC property since 2004, are now in their 60s. Bill Buckman, who has also assisted since that time is 70 years old. We are realizing that we will not be able to run the sometimes day and night operations of the ministry for many more years. The Edwards have three children and five grandchildren in Tennessee. God willing, they hope to serve in a less physically demanding

ministry there.

PABC is now on a two- to four-year mission to find fellow believers to continue the ministry in Port Austin. For someone with a heart to serve others and represent the love and law of God to them, it is a powerful experience. This writer has spent years studying and writing about Scriptures. Learning to live them and use them in the administration of other people—made in God’s image, struggling as they may be—is a far surpassing experience.

The details of such an undertaking are indeed complex, but they will start with prayer and faith that God will provide the needs as they come. There will be a need for a time of training and transition, hence the two to four year plan. Since our prayers to make this decision, one Church of God member who has recently moved to help at PABC and others have expressed interest. But we are still praying for the majority of the new team to arrive. If you think that you might be led to be a part of it, please contact us at 989-738-7700 or email PABC@portaustin.net.

Average PABC Guests for Each Year
from 7/2010 to present



Shepherd's Voice Magazine®
Fall 2016

Shepherd's Voice Magazine®
PO Box 474
Port Austin, MI 48467-0474
USA

Looking for previous issues of Shepherd's Voice?



Please request using the
email or mailing addresses listed on the inside cover