

CHURCH OF THE
E T E R N A L
G O D

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." – Matthew 24:14

February 11, 2004

Dear Brethren and Friends,

By the time you receive this letter, the U.S. ministry will be close to finalizing the arrangements for the 2004 Feast of Tabernacles in the area of San Luis Obispo, this being our second year to keep the feast on the Central California Coast, a very beautiful and inspiring setting, giving us a foretaste of the millennium for this festival. As you will remember, the feast for the U.S. and Canada in the previous two years was kept in Canada in the province of British Columbia. The feast in England this year is being observed at Chatsworth.

We have had several proposals from a few brethren for a feast site in either Northern California, Oregon or Colorado. Having considered all the information we have received, for which we are thankful, we have decided that we cannot go to one of those areas this year because of time constraints in establishing a feast site. We understand the excellent reasons for considering one of these feast sites and plan to spend the required time to investigate whether to establish such a site for the feast in 2005.

Mr. Link, my wife Joan, and I were in the area of San Luis Obispo for a couple of days this week and are now considering the various options and will be in touch with you with final details in the very near future. In the meantime, we appreciate, very much, your continued co-operation, support, and prayers that we will be able to complete these arrangements for the 2004 feast very soon.

But now, as we draw near the end of the winter season with all its pagan holidays we must be preparing to get our spiritual houses in order in preparation for God's Spring Festivals, which are just around the corner, Spring itself being just five weeks away and Passover, the first of God's Annual Festivals, just two weeks beyond. Thus, God's Spring Festivals actually begin less than two months from now. The question we need to ask ourselves is: "Are we ready, mentally, physically and spiritually for these days?"

We have had two sermons in recent months outlining our obligations in the areas of repentance and forgiveness. Of course, a proper attitude in this regard is required if we are to be ready for Passover. Immediately following Passover are the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, which represent the second of God's Annual Festivals in the upcoming Sacred Year. The first day of the New Year falls on March 23 in 2004. These annual festivals have great significance for all of God's people.

We must never forget that none of God's festivals are merely suggestions that should the mood hit us just right we might attend and be a part of them. These days are a command of God Almighty, to be kept, each in its season (Lev 23:1-44; Deut 16:1-17). We are not to forsake the

assembling of ourselves together at the time of any of God's festivals unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as serious illness or the like.

In preparation for these two festivals, we must each ask ourselves: "Am I doing all that I can do to keep sin out of my life?" We know that sin begins in the mind. Sin begins as a seed—a thought. "Should I or shouldn't I? Will I or will I not—allow a particular thought to fester and build until sin is born?"

Satan was the first to sin. He is the author of sin (Isa 14:22). Satan made an attempt to take over the very Throne of God! Notice in Isaiah 14:13-14, that the problem began in Satan's heart—in his mind. That is always where sin begins!

When Eve was enticed by Satan to eat of the forbidden fruit, where did the sin begin? Notice in Genesis 3:1-7, especially verses 6-7, that Eve saw, in her mind's eye, that the fruit was good for food, as Satan had said, and she ate of it, going against the commandment of God. She then convinced Adam to try the fruit and rather than following God's command, Adam followed his wife's bad example, thus sinning as well. Yet God never gave man of that tree for food. God describes in Scripture what things are proper as food for man to eat. This fruit was especially not good, in that God specifically said, "Of it, you shall not eat." We must not, brethren, let our minds lead us in Satan's ways, which are the ways of this world.

Paul tells each of us, "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col 3:2). If we follow this rule, sin will not have a birthplace in our minds. Otherwise, we are putting our spiritual lives in danger. We can overcome sin only through the Power of God's Holy Spirit as it works in our lives. God has given us Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread to help instill within us this truth.

So we each need to begin preparing now for this upcoming season so that we are ready to observe the Passover and receive the instruction and help as we begin this season in God's new Sacred Year. And we need to be mindful of our responsibility which God has given to each of us in this great calling we have received.

We must each do our part, and as we do God will do His part in building the righteous character that He desires in each of us. We must continue to overcome and master sin's desire to use the instruments of our bodies for its selfish purposes.

God tells us in Genesis 4:7 that sin's desire "... is for you, but you should rule over it." If we do not rule over sin as it begins or develops in our minds—it will rule us! The Days of Unleavened Bread are a reminder that we must rule over sin in our lives!

In brotherly love,



J. Edwin Pope