

CHURCH OF THE  
G E T E R N A L

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

June 23, 2011

Dear Members, Co-Workers and Friends:

We are living in a world of awesome progress and accomplishments, but we are at the same time confronted with violence, misery, pain, suffering, appalling evil and awful squalor. Decades ago, Herbert W. Armstrong, the late human leader of the Church of God, used expressions like these to convey an incredible paradox—that man, capable of sending a human being to the moon and bringing him back safely to this earth, is seemingly unable to solve his most fundamental problems on his planet. Since Mr. Armstrong died in 1986, the magnitude of this paradox has even increased at least one thousand times over.

Mr. Armstrong spoke repeatedly about the two trees in the Garden of Eden—the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the Tree of Life. These trees, even though real, were of symbolic significance. They represented the wisdom of this world and the mysterious hidden knowledge of God. The first man chose to eat from the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, thereby rejecting and losing the possibility to eat from the Tree of Life. He elected to decide for himself what seemed to be right in his own eyes, and he lost thereby the privilege of accepting from God the knowledge of the true, eternal and never-changing values of the right way of life. Man acquired human wisdom—including the wisdom of relying on himself and of creating terrible weapons of mass destruction; but he could not and does not understand the way to peace, happiness, prosperity and reliance on God (Romans 3:10-18), as this is spiritual wisdom which only God can grant (1 Corinthians 2:7-12).

Throughout the times of human existence, God specifically called certain ones out of this man-made and Satan-inspired civilization to give them the opportunity to understand and accept and live what is truly right, and to reject what is so terribly wrong. These are the “called-out-ones”—those whom God chose out of this world and placed in the body of Christ—the spiritual organization which is the Church of God. These are the ones who conduct themselves as ambassadors for Christ—who are citizens of a better world to come, whose names are recorded in God’s heavenly books, who live a different lifestyle and who show the world what could have been—and what will be, once Christ rules this earth with love, righteousness and justice, as well as with a rod of iron reserved for those who reject peace and happiness, while craving for and delighting in dissension, rebellion, war and destruction.

And still, having grown up in this world and living in this world, the “called-out-ones” must constantly be on guard to become and remain faithful. They must consistently reject the tempting and enticing influences of this present evil age (Galatians 1:4) and the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4)—that serpent of old, called Satan the Devil, who deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9). They must persistently conquer their old carnal nature, which is unwilling and unable to submit to God and His timeless Law (Romans 8:7). They must grow in God’s faith and their reliance on Him, while overcoming self-reliance and their passion and lust for self-aggrandizement. It is (and must be) a constant struggle—truly a battle that begins in their minds. This spiritual warfare can only be won if they are clothed with the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-17)—and not only that, but also, if God the Father and Jesus Christ live, reside and dwell in them through the Holy Spirit (John 14:23). Where Adam and Eve failed, God’s disciples must succeed. While the first man and his wife

ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and were barred from access to the Tree of Life, God's followers today must decide to continuously eat from the Tree of Life, while barring for themselves any access to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

God's true followers must not be "Christian" in name only, while denying God by their works. But as truly converted and obedient Christians, they are learning to place every thought into captivity to the obedience of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5)—always willing to submit their will to the Will of God. They realize that man's ways are not God's ways, even if they think they are right. They accept the fact that God's ways, deeds and thoughts are so much higher than the words, deeds and thoughts of man (Isaiah 55:8-9). To the degree that they subject themselves under God's wise hands, they agree more and more that God works out His plan for them in their lives (Proverbs 20:24), even though they might have other plans, ideas and desires (Proverbs 16:9). In retrospect, they will understand that God's Way was indeed the right one—the only one that really brought and brings lasting success and accomplishment.

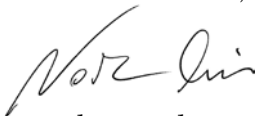
Sometimes, they don't quite see it yet. Sometimes, they think they know it better. Sometimes, they feel there must be a different way—an easier alternative. But in time, they will realize, regardless of the odds and the unpleasant direction that their life may be taking, that God is their Father who knows best and who loves them and wants them in His Kingdom—and that for all eternity.

You and I are those special people whom God has called today, to understand and practice His Truth. With our calling comes responsibility. We have been called to make right choices. There is one of Mr. Armstrong's many articles which I remember very well. It is called, "Let God Fight Your Battles." We all must learn to do that. Then, our victory is assured.

Yes, we must go through many tribulations or trials to enter the Kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). It is not an easy way, and we must count the cost before we decide to commit. But let's not focus too much on the aspect of the trials. Rather, let's think of what we are to enter—the Kingdom of God. THAT is something to reflect on! To be in God's Kingdom—in His ruling Family. To be a glorified Spirit being, as the Father and the Son are Spirit beings, full of power and glory and might. To be immortal and eternal, unable to die or to get sick! To be sinless, immune to sin. To be able to always choose the right way. To never again have to fight against and to conquer the temptations of sin, society or self. To be perfect. To be God's child—and a brother or sister of Jesus Christ. To be able to help others—including our loved ones—to choose the right way. To heal all sicknesses and diseases—not to allow sickness anymore. To enforce true peace, prosperity, happiness and gladness on this earth... and so much more...

If we concentrate on these things, the God of peace will be with us (Philippians 4:7). Always. Forever and ever.

In Christian love,



Norbert Link