

PREVAIL

M A G A Z I N E

December 2010
FREE!

WHY WAS
JESUS CHRIST BORN?

REPRODUCING
THE CHARACTER OF GOD

TESTIMONIAL:
PASTOR GEORGE RAMOCAN

T'WAS GRACE THAT
BROUGHT ME HERE THUS FAR

Managing Editor: Bill Watson

Editor: Horane Smith

Layout & Design: Shey Smith

Contributing Writers: Horane Smith
Odette Burton
Dilhani Niles
Merika Ramocan
Bill Watson

Copy Editors: Jasmin Smith
Lois Keane
Adrian Davis
Stephanie Chin

Production: Noel Scoburgh

All Are Welcome!

The Church of God, International has many congregations and we always welcome visitors and newcomers. Our worship services are open to the public. We hope you will join us for Sabbath services soon. For further information about a congregation near you, please call our office at 903-939-2929.

Our Canadian home office mailing address is:

Church of God International of Canada
1299 Oxford Street East, P.O. Box 33034
London, Ontario N5Y 5L4

Our U.S. home office mailing address is:

The Church of God, International
P.O. Box 2525
Tyler, Texas, 75710

Email: info@cgi.org
Or visit our web site: <http://www.cgi.org>

All contents of *Prevail Magazine* unless otherwise stated are the property of the Church of God, International. Copyright © 2010.

Photos: iStockphoto, stock.XCHNG, stock.XPRT

The writers of the articles and photographers of photos in *Prevail Magazine* may own copyrights to their work. Unless otherwise noted, all scriptures are quoted from the King James Version or New King James Version Bibles.



Subscribe via RSS and view all our issues online at: <http://www.previlmagazine.org>

Email us at: info@previlmagazine.org

This magazine is distributed freely and is made possible through *your* tithes and offerings.

PREVAIL

M A G A Z I N E



06 Reproducing the Character of God



08 T'was Grace That Brought Me Here Thus Far



12 Why Was Jesus Christ Born?



18 Testimonial: Pastor George Ramocan

04 Editorial: Fact or Fiction

10 The Touch: A Short Story

21 Questions and Answers

24 Character Makes the Difference

27 Poetry



**"BEHOLD I STAND
AT THE DOOR
AND KNOCK...**

**...IF ANY MAN
HEAR MY VOICE
AND OPEN THE
DOOR, I WILL
COME INTO HIM..."**

WATCH THE ARMOR OF GOD!

Learn how to open that door that leads to life eternal...
life without sorrow or pain! (see listings on back cover)



EDITORIAL: FACT OR FICTION

by Horane Smith



“The most wonderful time of the year,” is a phrase we’ll continue to hear throughout this season.

We’ll also hear repeatedly salutations associated with Christmas and many and varied interpretations of why Jesus the Christ was born. However, what we don’t often hear is whether He was truly born on December 25th, and why is His birthday celebrated.

The streets are often busy — so are the highways and byways, the stores, the malls, the homes and of course, the places of entertainment. Entertainment plays an integral role in Christmas celebrations. If one were to reflect on the significance of Christ’s birth, the world surely has missed out on this, because of the commercialism and entertainment associated with the season.

The December 25th birth date is not a *fact*. The Bible does not confirm the date and neither does secular history. The Anointed One, the Christ, came into this

world to save sinners. That’s a *fact*. To be more precise, Christ came into this world to die for sinners, and do you know why? Because, if He didn’t die as the sacrificial Lamb of God we would die in our sins and remain dead—with no chance of resurrecting to everlasting life. That’s as *factual* as you can get. This is why it is important that we heed His call.

This may come as a surprise to you, but here’s another fact: the Word of God commands us to observe Christ’s death, not His birth.

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.” (1 Cor. 11:26.)

The world should be observing the New Testament Passover, as commanded in the Holy Bible, but it does not. Instead, it celebrates, in all kinds of questionable ways, the false birth date of the Saviour of the World, which He didn’t tell us to do. The Eternal is a God of detail and precision. Just take a look at the laws and statues of the Old Testament and you will see just how exact He is at all times. He never changes! Assuredly, if Jesus wanted us to celebrate His birthday, the manual for humanity, the Bible, would have told us to do it and plainly disclosed the date. God is not adverse to explaining, or commanding observance of Holy days like the Passover (or Lord’s Supper) and the other Holy Days in Leviticus 23. Thus, He surely would have told us about Christmas: but He didn’t!

but simple logic has been thrown through the door. When He wants something done or obeyed by the creatures of His creation, it is recorded in scriptures for all to see. What He gives to us is bare fact. Anything that runs contrary to the Word of God—in other words invented by man—comes with a warning from God (Matt. 15:9).

Conceivably, there are a vast number of people who couldn’t care less whether Christ was born on December 25th or not. Equally, there are many people who have no desire or interest to learn more about Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection and its significance to the future of humanity. All they want is to have a jolly good time every year. But is that all there is to life?

As one created by a loving, merciful, and awesome God, it’s incumbent on you to take some time out this season to reflect on the consequences of His sacrifice. Jesus committed no sin while He was on Earth, yet at this time of the year, the sins of drunkenness, sexual perversion, greed, envy, robbery and idolatry will

reign supreme. These very sins will be forgiven not by His birth, but by His death on Calvary.

The Second Adam has now become the Worthy Lamb of God, after He was slain from the foundation of the world, into an exalted position where He has claimed the glory He had with the Heavenly Father before time began. Jesus, the Christ, is worthy to wear the crown as Saviour of all humanity, King of all kings, Lord of all lords, a *fact* He accomplished through His death, not His birth.

The December 25th birth date is not a fact.

Yes, He was born a human being to take on flesh so He could die for our sins. That’s important! No one can deny the importance of His birth. However, the more critical point of His death, burial and resurrection rise above any other event of His incarnate human history. The redemption for the sins of humanity was the major purpose for His coming. It is through the sacrifice of His death that we’ll ultimately gain *eternal* life. Therefore, we can see why the Bible places such emphasis on His death, and not His birth.

God is not the author of confusion, according to the Bible. For centuries, there have been continuous debates to try and pin down a likely date for the birth of Christ,





REPRODUCING THE CHARACTER OF GOD

by Odette Burton

God is reproducing His character in us through His son Jesus Christ. But this reproduction takes time and involves conception—beginning with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We need to develop God’s character because it shapes our personality in hope of our ultimate destiny (Rom. 5:3-5). As living epistles (2 Cor. 3:1-3) and ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20) for Christ, this is what is expected of us, as we strive for spiritual growth and maturity (Eph. 14-16).

In order to understand how to develop godly character, we must first understand sin. Sin is defined as the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). There are two paths involved. These two paths are first seen in the Garden of Eden where they are symbolized by the tree of good and evil. Like Adam and Eve, we have a choice in which path to take and consequently, the kind of character we are going to develop.

Character is expressed in the spiritual fruit we bear (of good or evil). It is produced through obedience to a particular law. It involves our attitudes, actions and thoughts. The person, who is developing good character, is considered “upstanding” before God. They are seen as blameless (Phil. 2:15), faithful (Rev. 17:14), godly (2 Pet. 2:9) and holy (Col. 3:22). These people hear (John 10:3-4), follow (John 10:4-5, 27), receive Christ (John 1:12) and bear fruit consistent with the nature of God (Gal. 5:22-23). Conversely, those reproducing the character of evil (Gal. 5:19-21), cannot fulfill the law of God.

Only God is good (Matt. 19:17; Mark 10:18). God’s character is self-determined by His choice to continually do good. This good is demonstrated in His love towards humanity. 1 John 4:8-16 sums up the character of God: “God is love” and this is what we are called to reproduce—the love of God. Those God considers good are those who express God’s character through the power of His Holy Spirit.

To reproduce this godly character, our motive must be love. Almost everyone agrees love is important, yet so few of us really understand or even practice it as we should. Love, in the eyes of unbelievers, is a warm, tender feeling. True love however, is the love that God has demonstrated to us through His Son Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:8). This love is not an easy or painless process. In fact, it is costly—so costly that the price was His only begotten Son (John 3:16).

Though God’s love may involve emotions, it also includes the mind and the will to obey.

Christ said,

“if you love me, keep my commandments.” (1 John 3:21-23)

It cannot be willed nor does it just happen; it requires the presence of the Holy Spirit, which comes by repentance and through baptism (Acts 2:38). Love is faith in action (Rom. 5:8; Jas. 2:14-26; 1 John 3:16-18), and giving (John 3:16; Eph. 5:25), henceforth, it can be learned (1 Thess. 4:9). God’s love focuses on meeting the needs of others and often involves sacrifice, pain, and discomfort—it doesn’t wait for the other person to ask for help or to be helpful, it takes the initiative. It is something we are commanded to do whether we like it or not—even if it means to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44).

As Christians, our relationships with one another are the primary grounds for reproducing godly character. If we enter a relationship primarily for what we can *get*, we miss the joy of God’s love and set the stage for mutual hurt and disappointment. When we approach a relationship with the goal of *giving*, we gain the joy of pleasing God and the satisfaction that comes from growing in His likeness.

HOW DO WE REPRODUCE GOD’S CHARACTER?

Godly character develops by mankind *exercising the choice* given to him to obey God. It is not automatically acquired upon accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. This takes practice as we learn to kill (mortify) our self-will (our fleshly desires) and surrender to the will of God (Rom. 8:13). Philippians 2 tells us how we can go about this seemingly mountainous task. Verses 1-4 say we need a certain mindset and verse 5 explains why: because Christ had this mind. Christ had the mind to be obedient to the Father, demonstrating His love and so should we. Christ became a servant, not just any servant, but a bondservant.

The Bible uses this concept of a servant in expressing mankind’s relationship with God, our heavenly Master, the One to whom the believer owes unreserved service (Rom. 12:12). The servant’s situation humbles him; he has nothing to boast about and this is what Jesus exemplified. Phil. 2:8 says;

“And being found in appearance as a man He humbled himself and became obedient unto death.”

Our humanity should humble us because without God, it only brings us into slavery and death when we yield to its desires. The Bible is clear that we are either slaves to God or we are slaves to sin (Rom.6:16). We have to rid ourselves of the fleshly desires because we cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). We either serve God or we serve sin. Jesus presented Himself as a willing servant when He washed His disciples’ feet at the Last Supper (John 13:1-20). He said He came *“not to be served but to serve”* (Mark 10:45).

Continued on page 17



T'WAS GRACE
THAT BROUGHT ME
HERE THUS FAR

by Dilhani Niles

1983—it was a beautiful sunny July day in Sri Lanka.

But as I stepped out of my house to go to work I felt that something was very unusual. Normally, there would be a lot of hustle and bustle in the busy town where I worked, but on this particular day, the street was very quiet. Too quiet.

My father had left for work and I was going for my afternoon shift at one of the country's most prestigious hotels. After waiting half an hour for a bus, I decided to walk another block to the closest intersection. While walking, I felt there was something wrong because there were only a few people around and everyone looked tense. Once I reached the intersection, a young girl ran up to me and asked if I worked at this hotel. I replied, "Yes." She warned me not to go downtown, as the Sinhalese were killing Tamils and the city was burning. Black smoke covered the whole sky.

I became scared when I learned what was happening. I did not know who to trust or who to turn to. Jesus Christ became my faith and hope. I asked God to take control of my life, as I belonged to Him and I knew that He wouldn't allow anyone to harm me. Marauding mobs were attacking, maiming and killing Tamils. The minority Tamils have been engaged in a civil conflict with the majority-ruling Sinhalese for many years, as they seek their own independent country.

I stood still. My feet couldn't move. I felt numb, and fear had taken control of my body. At that moment, I only could whisper, "Lord Jesus." I felt like someone was holding my hand and leading me through the valley of the shadow of death. I got into a bus, confused and in fear, not knowing where I was headed. I debated whether I should go to work or to my aunt's house.

Meanwhile, mobs were stopping the buses. As my bus slowed to stop, one of the thugs

shouted at everyone to leave and our brave driver just took off. My heart was beating rapidly and the only thing I mumbled was, "Thank God, you saved me today!"

Eventually, I decided to get off near my aunt's house. I was moved by the sheer terror of the moment because I was still in the midst of the rioters. My aunt rushed out and hugged me. "Your mother is in England," she said. "And I was hoping you would come here. After all, this is your home too."

She and my cousins were moving to a kind-hearted Sinhalese neighbour's home for refuge. Our lives continued to be in danger as the gangs were walking to and fro, threatening all who gave refuge to Tamils. Those who helped the Tamils were in equal danger. Every moment of our lives was in the hands of Jesus. Prayer kept our hopes alive.

The next morning, the violence escalated. The noise of killing and mayhem indicated to our friends that sheltering us was a threat to their own lives. Things were falling apart. I didn't know where to go, but it was all in God's hands.

Suddenly, two of my colleagues from the hotel appeared outside. They had come to rescue me and take me back to the hotel where we worked. It was a point of refuge for Tamils who were seeking a safe place. When I saw them I started crying and asked them about my father's whereabouts. They assured me that he called to inform them I was missing and that he was safe.

I was concerned about my home. They assured me it was fine, and also warned me that it was too dangerous to go back. At that time, I was not aware, but our house had been looted and burned down. My father was waiting at the police station to ensure that I was alright.

Eventually, I said goodbye to my father, not knowing if I would ever see him again. My friend immediately took me on the pillion of his motorbike to rescue me from the danger I was in. We were stopped at checkpoints where my friend was questioned. At these checkpoints he advised me not to speak, as I was Tamil. He explained, my pronunciation of certain words would reveal that I was a Tamil. While sitting on the back of the motorbike I could see burnt bodies and bloodshed all around.

After two weeks at the hotel, we had to find alternate safe places to stay. A colleague of mine came to my rescue and invited me to their place. With all the communal violence, staying with Sinhalese friends made me realize we were one large family after all. Finally, the time came for me to leave Sri Lanka, which I did, but with a lot of mixed feelings. Though it was sad to leave my dad and all my good friends, I knew I was going to join my mother and sister in England—a land where there was the rule of law.

Three years later, the reality of moving to a cold weather, four season country was very difficult at first. But eventually I adjusted and made new friends here in Canada. I am presently surrounded by my two beautiful teenage twin daughters, my sister, and mother. I now understand that God had a purpose for me with this new life He has given me.

I learned a lot, but most importantly I learned faith conquers all! If you have faith as small as a mustard seed you can move mountains. I always remind my children that they are just a prayer away from God. Do not take life for granted, because you never know what may happen next. In an instant everything can change. The only constant in our lives is our belief and trust in God. When in doubt, stretch your hand out and you will feel peace in the calm comfort of His hands.





THE TOUCH: A SHORT STORY

by Horane Smith

An eagle hovered above gracefully; its outstretched wings sliced through the cloudless early morning sky along the coast of Galilee with little or no effort.

The piercing eyes of Rebecca, a middle-aged woman from Gadarena, a small village perched on the rugged coastline, followed the eagle as it flew past her window and disappeared into the blueness of infinity. She was a troubled woman and she wished her daily challenges could disappear as quickly as the eagle.

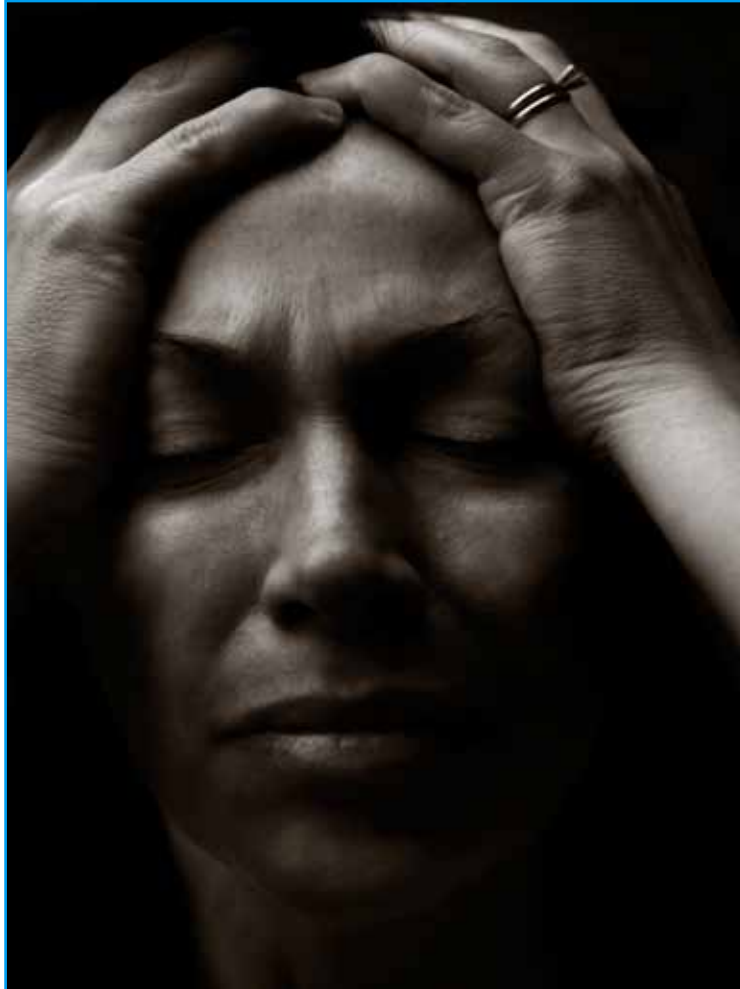
Rebecca had been suffering from a mysterious illness that had been a menace in her life for the past 12 years. Repeatedly, Rebecca, accompanied by her husband Mathias, had gone to Ozi, Gadarena's lone physician, only to be told there wasn't much he could do for her. Any sickness that involved blood was difficult to treat, he had said.

"The issue of blood is a complex matter, my dear, and you can only hope the body will heal itself. I've witnessed this happening from time to time," Ozi had told her on the first trip.

On the last visit, the physician gave her some herbs, a concoction of various types of plants that had reportedly helped a lot of his patients with a similar problem. *"This is the best I can offer Rebecca,"* he

had said, *"if it doesn't work then your only choice is to let your body heal itself."*

this menacing problem. *"What's next?"* Rebecca asked herself.



Rebecca had been suffering from a mysterious illness that had been a menace in her life for the past 12 years.

The presence of the eagle in the cloudless, cobalt sky reminded her that today was going to be a special day. Jesus of Nazareth would be passing through the village. She got word a few days ago from a relative that Jesus would be passing by Gadarena on his way from Galilee, where this Jesus had been performing miracles never seen before. Word was spreading like wildfire that he had been making the blind see, the crippled walk and most incredible of all—raising the very dead! Rebecca saw Jesus as her only hope to get rid of this sickness.

"I've got to see this Jesus," she told Mathias. *"If he's the Son of God, and I believe he is, all I want to do is to touch him."*

As Rebecca changed her clothes to walk into town with Mathias, her mind was on nothing else but this Jesus. If he can let the blind see and raise the very dead, he must be the Son of God, she told herself. *"If I could only touch him, I know I'll be healed,"* she said, almost aloud.

Mathias watched his wife getting a little excited as she muttered something under her breath.

continued on page 21

Those words echoed back into Rebecca's ears now because that was about a month ago, and here she was, still suffering from



WHY WAS JESUS CHRIST BORN?

by Bill Watson



Many people have asked this question. Some think He simply came for only one specific reason: to die for mankind, as Saviour of the world. Of course this is a major reason; but, was it the only purpose for His physical birth, or were there additional reasons that if understood, would enrich our Christian outlook and faith?

Upon Jesus' arrest and return to Pilate after His meeting with Herod, Pilate asked Him: "Art thou a king then?" Jesus answered,

"Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

Pilate saith unto Him, "What is truth?" (John 18:37-38).

This communication between Pilate and Jesus is a very interesting exchange of words. It discloses two very important items concerning the purpose of Jesus Christ's *physical* birth. First, it plainly confirms He was born to be a King. But secondly, that He came into the world for the purpose of bearing witness unto the truth. This caused Pilate to rhetorically remark: "What is truth?" (John 18:38).

This is understandable, since truth is subjective when there is questionable definitive knowledge about a subject. Unless the knowledge surrounding the subject is considered the legitimate basis of defining the *absolute truth*, then and only then, is it validated. Otherwise, if it's questionable, whatever the topic might be, it remains doubtful and thereby debatable. This was at the heart of Pilate's comment and therein lies what underpins the cause of doubt Pilate and so many of us have today: what *absolute truth* can we rely on that is central to this information about the real

reasons and value of Christ's physical birth and sacrificial death?

Jesus said,

"Everyone that is of the truth hears my voice."

In other words His voice, what He said, is truth! He was claiming the words He said and things He did were a witness to and for the truth. He was informing us that He came to reveal knowledge that is true: to establish some absolutes by revealing specific knowledge. This was achieved throughout the course of His preaching ministry; but, these activities and statements, also naturally illustrate evidence for extra reasons regarding Jesus' birth. These activities and discourse are *recorded* for us in the Bible. This information generated by these dynamics, conditions, circumstances, and inter-action with those He contended with add insights for His coming that extend beyond His sacrifice, which unquestionably, was a primary objective of His incarnation; but definitely, as we will see, was *not the only* purpose for His visitation.

SUBSTANTIVE TRUTH ABOUT LIFE AND GOD: REVEALED KNOWLEDGE

Throughout the New Testament and in particular the gospels, Jesus Christ's life and teachings are explained. It's in the course of these narratives where we begin to understand the additional reasons for His incarnation. Unfortunately, because of the disbelief of accepting Jesus Christ of Nazareth to be the person He claimed He was, many of the truths His life and ministry *reveal* are not embraced, or even so much as believed. Sadly, this has led to much of the *spiritual* darkness mankind has experienced over the centuries.

Conversely, the rejection of this revealed knowledge contained in the Bible has been advantageous for the "*powers of darkness*"

and those with the "*spirit of disobedience*" (Eph. 2:1-3; 6:12-13). This underlines the cause for much of humanities overwhelming problems. The hesitation and suspicion of accepting both Old and New Testaments as the basis of revealed knowledge for the truth has also contributed enormously to the chaotic challenges humanity has experienced down through history. Admittedly, if mankind would *accept* the Bible as the revealed knowledge of truth it is intended to be, many questions about life and God that have consistently remained *unanswered* would be answered. Clearly, as a result, if formally acknowledged this would generate some natural benefits.

For example, an infusion of human purpose would occur around the world due to this sanctioned knowledge of truth. Mankind would immediately begin to enjoy enhanced degrees of freedom from so many destructive behaviours like war, murder, racism, deceit, disease, divorce, vandalism, thievery, delinquency, and many more counter-productive and negative lifestyles and worldviews. There would be a recognizable difference in the quality of human life throughout the world, if for no other reason, but due simply to the improved mutual respect and appreciation of our God-given human differences. We would learn to sincerely serve and care for each other, as we would want others to serve and care for us. This is the royal law (Jas. 2:8-9).

But sadly, the vast majority of the world does not recognize, endorse, affirm, or welcome the Bible to be the unquestionable and infallible word of God. Most will not honour the information contained in it as the *absolute revealed truth* it is; and this is unfortunate. If only we would accept and embrace these truths surrounding the extended reasons for Jesus Christ's human incarnation, our lives would take on new meaning. We would become unique beneficiaries, possessing *true knowledge* that surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4:6-7)

and it would allow us to comprehend the deeper richness of what it really means to be set free by the truth (John 8:31-32).

So let's take a moment and see how we can benefit from this *revealed knowledge* by reviewing some of the additional reasons, written in the scriptures for Jesus Christ's visitation as a human being to this planet some 2000 years ago. Let's also consider how it would make a difference in our *personal* outlook and lifestyle, if we would believe, accept, and uphold them. Remember, the only way you will begin to adopt them is to read them. Take some time to study the following categories and the attached texts. It's the only assured way to gain insight and clarity of the value and benefits of these additional reasons for Jesus Christ's incarnation. The salvation program, which is a process, has many parts; in Christ they have all been fulfilled and completed (Matt. 5:17; Rom. 4:10; Gal. 3:24-29).

ADDITIONAL REASONS FOR JESUS CHRIST'S INCARNATION

1 He died for mankind as a propitiation for sin (1 John 2:1-2). Upon accepting His sacrifice as a personal gift, we are now covered by His shed blood (Heb. 9:11-22) and no longer guilty of sin, deserving death (John 3:16-18; Rom. 6:23). We are free from the death penalty! Because of this, He tells us to be of "*good cheer*" (John 16:33). This should provide us with a peace of mind that surpasses human understanding (Rom. 8:6; Gal. 6:16; Phil. 4:7).

2 He came to qualify as a personal High Priest (Heb. 6:20). Jesus Christ is the confirmation of the prophetic promise that was made to Abraham. It was this visitation, which fulfilled the promise to Abraham that assured his lineage to be the seed that would come to provide the means by which mankind would be

redeemed (Gen. 12:3). This Priesthood is unlike any before and was purposefully made superior and different from the Levitical Priesthood (Heb. 7:1-17). The experience that Jesus Christ went through to qualify for this position has made Him a sensitive High Priest who can identify with our human frailties and infirmities (Heb. 4:14-16; 2 Cor. 5:21; Isa. 53:1-12). He is our brother and friend and is offering us to be co-heirs with Him (Heb. 2:6-13; John 15:12-17).

3 Jesus Christ's coming also revealed He has the power over death (John 5:25-29; Matt. 27:52-53). He came to provide eternal life (John 17:1-3). Jesus clearly illustrates this when confronting Martha, Lazarus' sister, about the resurrection (John 11:21-26). In addition, He has been delegated authority over all things by the Father (John 3:35-36; John 6:52-59; Phil. 2:5-11) and has the authority to give everlasting life (John 6:47). Death has no claim on our lives. We have been cleared of all transgressions and should no longer fear death (Heb. 2:15-18; 2 Tim. 1:7; Rom. 7:24-25; Rom. 8:1-4, 10-11).

4 Jesus Christ provides mankind a condition of grace (Eph. 2:8-9). This allows humanity to avoid condemnation. Notice,

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus..." (Rom. 8:1-2)

However, this is not to be interpreted as a *license to sin*. Instead, it's a calling that demands and requires change or conversion. Notice,

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:1-2)

Read the rest of Romans 6. It's quite the illustration of God's expectations for humanity (each of us personally) considering the price that's portrayed in the passion and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God expects results (behavioural changes) that are worthy to be considered as the righteousness of the law (Rom. 8:3-10). It is the Christian duty to follow Christ's example (1 Pet. 2:21; 1 John 2:6; Gal. 2:20-21, 5:24-26; 2 Cor. 5:15).

5 Jesus Christ came to be the first born of many brothers and sisters, paving the way for the God-Family to multiply (Col. 1:12-18). Christ was sent to further illustrate that God the Father is building a family and that Christ is the first born Son to the Father (John 10:34-36; Heb. 1:4-12; Rom. 8:14-17; Phil. 2:11; Eph. 3:13-19; 1 John 3:1-3; Heb. 2:10; 12:7-10; Phil. 2:15; Gal. 4:1-7; 2 Cor. 6:17-18). The Bible is clear on this point: *we are* the sons of God and are destined to be co-heirs with Christ of all the Father has given Him (Rom. 8:17; Heb. 1:2,14; Gal. 3:29; Titus 3:7; Jas. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:7). This includes eternal life as literal *spirit born* family members of these deities who are reproducing themselves. We are promised that this love of the Father categorizes us as sons of God, which if we repent and accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour, will afford us to "*be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is*" (1 John 3:1-3).

6 Jesus came to illustrate mankind can be "born again" as a literal embodied spirit being. In the discussion with Nicodemus late one evening, Christ explained this stunning truth! This conversation was designed to clarify for this "*ruler of the Jews*" (John 3:1) the distinction of what flesh and spirit composition is (John 3:5-8). Apparently, Nicodemus, who understood the context to be molecular, physical, fleshy, became confused (John 3:4). He wasn't quite clear on just what Jesus was actually saying. This is obvious by his surprised response (John 3:7). He

clearly became incredulous at times (John 3:9). But the message was made plain and simple when Christ emphatically told him,

“... no man hath ascended up to heaven, but ... the Son of man which is in heaven.” (John 3:13)

Paul illustrates this truth throughout 1 Corinthians 15. This chapter is known as the “Resurrection Chapter.” The reason is simple: it’s all about how God intends to change our mortality to immortality (1 Cor. 15:50-55). Unmistakably, the Bible states very plainly:

“...so also is the resurrection of the dead. ...It is sown a natural [physical, fleshy] body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural [physical, fleshy] body, and there is a spiritual body.” (1 Cor. 15:42-44)

We will see God, Job assures us: *“out of [apart from] my flesh shall I see God”* (Job 19:26-27).

7 Jesus came to reveal the Father.

It was plainly stated that no man has ever heard or seen the Father (John 1:18, 6:45-46, 7:28-29), but Jesus came to reveal Him (Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:21-24). There was confusion surrounding this detail concerning the Godhead. However, with the truth Jesus revealed concerning this matter, we are afforded clarity that the Old Testament didn’t provide. Scriptures like Daniel 7:9-15 and Psalms 110, which imply duality are now, in light of the revealed truth of the New Testament, clarified regarding the relationship of these God Beings and just how “Elohim,” this uni-plural Hebrew word, is to be comprehensively understood.

8 Jesus also came to disclose that He, not the Father, was the God of the Old Testament.

It was Jesus Christ who led the Israelites out of Egypt (1 Cor. 10:1-4 & 9). It was the Old Testament and the books of Moses that spoke of Jesus,

not the Father (John 5:44-47). Also, in the course of a public debate, Jesus was brutally direct in stating the fact that He existed before Abraham was born. The Jewish religious leaders considered this blasphemy, because Christ was indicating He was superior to Abraham and was assigning Himself to be a deity. This was what caused them to get so upset (John 8:52-59, 10:24-42).

9 Jesus Christ also revealed that He is the Creator.

Prior to His human birth, He was considered the Word of God who created all things as directed by the Father (John 1:1-3 & 10 & 14). It was He who on behalf of the Father gave Himself for His creation (John 10:24-31; John 14:8-14). Christ is clearly identified as the creator of all things and has been given the right to inherit all things in the future and has been assured there will be no end to His kingdom (Col. 1:13-20; Heb. 1:1-3, 2:9-10; Eph. 3:9; Isa. 9:6-7).

10 Jesus Christ also came to qualify and claim He is a King and will reign on Earth.

He answered Pilate correctly and directly. There was no hesitation in His answer. He said He came for that purpose: to announce that He was a King and was born for that reason (John 18:37). He also mentioned in this exchange that His Kingdom was not of this world, and it isn’t. It’s a spiritual kingdom that will rule and reign upon His return (Acts 1:10-11; Matt. 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:27-28; 1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 19:11-21) It will also be a time when the Christians who qualified to be resurrected will be awarded their rewards (Rev. 11:15-19; 1 Pet. 3:9-14; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-58).

The Bible is explicit about the Kingdom of God on Earth. The Old Testament is filled with descriptions of this coming utopia that will at first, last for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4). But, it is also ultimately intended, for the long term, to be a Kingdom that will last

for eternity and never end (Isa. 9:6-7). It is described to be on Earth *not* in heaven and we Christians will reign on Earth with Him (Rev. 2:26, 5:10; Isa.2:1-5; Dan. 7:17-18, 26-28; Joel 3:11-20; Micah 4:1-5; Zech. 14:1-9)

11 Jesus Christ came to prepare the Earth for the Father’s arrival.

In the last chapters of the book of Revelation we are told about a New Heaven and a New Earth, which is intended to be the new habitat for the Family of God. This futuristic world condition is distinctly described in Revelation 21 and 22. The most profound understanding about these two chapters is that they explain that the Father will move from where He is currently, to “tabernacle” with mankind *on Earth*; that the Father is going to make Earth His heavenly abode. The implication is that planet Earth will become the *centre of operations* for the universe. It will be where the Temple of God, the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, with the members of the Family of God, will reside.

12 Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of the Devil.

Last, but certainly not least, the Bible is quite clear on this point: Christ came to destroy the works of the devil (Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8). It’s important to realize that we cannot have a restitution of *all* things (Acts 3:20-21) until Satan the devil and his minions are blamed, judged, and punished. This will occur for a short and *temporary* time at the beginning of the millennium (Rev. 20:1-3), but Satan will be released *after* the thousand years are finished (Rev. 20:7). The Bible describes he will set out to repeat his evil ways and immediately go out to deceive the nations again (Rev. 20:8), attempting to initiate another insurrection as he originally did with the angelic community (Rev. 20:8-9; 12:9). However, God will prevail and Satan will finally be disposed of and removed out of the “camp” (the Kingdom of God); but this time, for good (Rev. 20:10; Jude 12-13;

Isa. 14:12-15). Satan will be captured, restrained, and prevented from ever having any influence within the realm of God and mankind. This will vindicate the plan of God and the salvation process that results in God reproducing Himself. This completes the task of accomplishing the final item of business to be conducted before the Father arrives with the New Jerusalem described in Revelation 21:10-27.

THE BENEFITS OF EMBRACING REVEALED KNOWLEDGE

These twelve additional reasons are definitely not intended to marginalize any of the significance regarding the magnitude of scope and priceless value in Jesus Christ's personal sacrifice for humanity. Undeniably, it is the greatest achievement that has ever been accomplished in the history of the Universe: the Creator God becoming a man so He can undeservingly and selflessly suffer death, making a means to redeem His creation, so they can share in His eter-

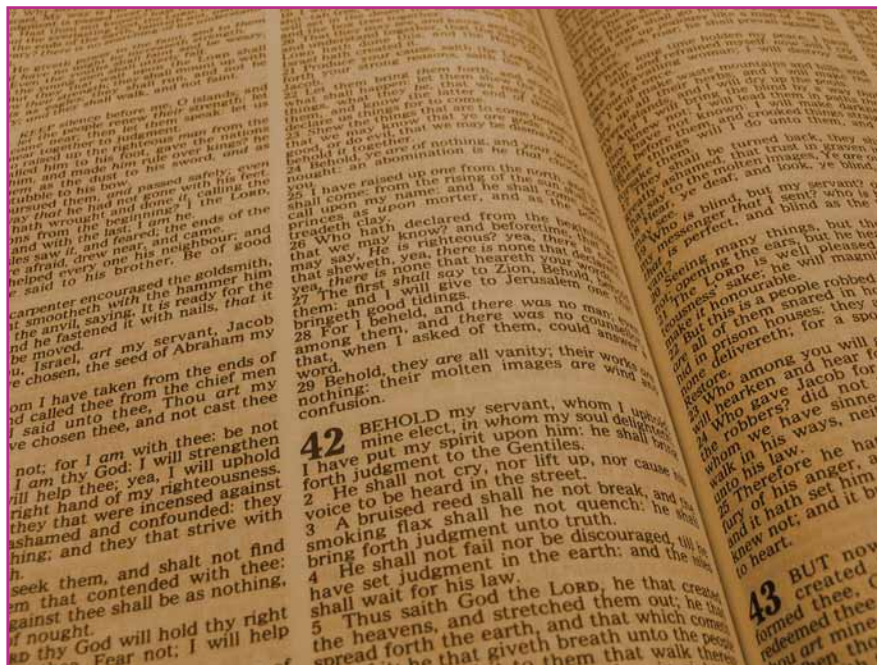
nal existence as sons of God, co-heirs with Him in a Kingdom without end! That is a stunning destiny! If only mankind could comprehend this as the truth for which it is—as their single most common understanding for life, undoubtedly, the world we live in would be astoundingly different!

The truth contained in the word of God is designed to allow us to better understand our Creator and His purpose for us (John 15:26-27). Within this *revealed knowledge* are the secrets of life and how to understand the Godhead, which remains for most, a mystery, but for those who accept and embrace these truths: they are assured eternal life and an intimate, understanding

who understand these truths are really blessed and have a unique opportunity to be set free from the cares and concerns that troubles all of us who “*contend with the flesh*” (1 John 2:15-17), not the least of which is death. We are instructed that it should be viewed as having no claim on our life because we have the assurance of a High Priest who has been empowered to have authority over death. He has the power to provide eternal life to whom the Father chooses (John 10:28; 17:2-3; Rom. 5:21, 6:23; Titus 1:1-3; Heb. 5:5-11, 9:11-15). There is great mental, emotional, and spiritual freedom from the captivity of this fear of death upon accepting this revealed knowledge.

So, be of “good cheer.” Christ has overcome the world and has qualified to be the rightful King of kings and Lord of lords of this planet (Rev. 19:16). He is on a countdown to come back and claim those who are His. So, what about you: will you be ready for the change He offers when He returns with the

rewards He's been authorized to give? It's time you consider this question and give it some serious thought, awakening from your spiritual sleep, because the night is far spent (Rom. 13:11-14).



The truth contained in the word of God is designed to allow us to better understand our Creator and His purpose for us.

relationship with God and how He intends to accomplish the redemption of His creation (Eph.1:3-14, 3:1-15; Col. 1:23-29, 2:1-3; 1 Tim. 3:15-16).

The added reasons for His visit, as stated above, should enhance and improve our insight and sense of value about the magnitude and scope of His visitation. Those



Reproducing a Character of God

Continued from page 7

Based on His own example, Jesus encourages His disciples to be servants, one to another (Mark 10:44; John 13:14). Christians are encouraged to serve conscientiously, out of pure motives and not as pleasers of men (Col. 3:22), but with sincerity of heart in reverence to the Lord.

WHAT HINDERS US FROM ATTAINING OUR GOAL?

Though the devil influences us, it is our choice—our selfish choice—to do evil that keeps us from achieving this godly character (Gen. 6:5). We selfishly choose to withdraw from growing in love because it requires commitment and sacrifice. Growing in godly character means that some changes will have to take place and these changes will expose us to emotional pain. Philippians 2:3-4 says,

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain deceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also the interest of others.”

Selfish ambition is seen as the expression of the selfish nature (Gal. 5:19-21) that has its root in pride. Pride makes us self-centered. Self-centred people are motivated by their *desires*. The desires of a selfish person can vary slightly, but usually they include wanting more than one already has or desiring something one doesn't really need.

Selfishness can also affect people around us. James 4:1-4, explains that fights and quarrels are caused by selfish desires, covetousness, and not getting what one wants. If we want something badly enough,

it is highly likely that we will hurt others around us, and even those we love to get it. We have to deny ourselves (Luke 9:23) and learn to show honour to others (without becoming idolaters) so we can imitate Christ's love by following His example (Phil. 2:3; Rom. 12:10). We honour people because every person is special, created in the image and likeness of the Creator (Gen. 1:27). Honouring others compels us to guard against prejudice and jealousy towards one another because the Bible tells us God opposes the proud, arrogant, the lustful, or envious, but gives grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5-6). Without humility, there can be no love.

In addition to our acceptance of false ideas about love, another hindrance that prevent us from reproducing Godly character

- to seek and grant forgiveness rather than merely apologizing (Eph. 4:32)
- to contemplate God's love for us daily and seek to love others out of gratitude to God for His love (Rom. 8:38-39).

Too often we worry about our 'position' or 'status' or getting proper recognition for things we have done. However, we should remember, God's recognition is more important than human praise. To develop the character of God, we need to activate the love of Christ in our minds that will encourage genuine concern for the interest of others. Looking after our interests is fine, but we should have an equal concern for the interest of others.

Jesus demonstrated His love for us by bearing our sins when He died on the stake. If

we are to reproduce Christ's love, we must demonstrate to others the love that He has shown to us. At times, it will involve sacrifice. God's love involves more than just a *feeling*—it reveals itself in action!

Like Christ, we should have a servant's attitude, serving out of love for God and others. Jesus washed His disciples' feet, representing His servitude to His church and by extension, mankind; therefore, Christians, following His example should be willing to perform the most menial services for others, Christians, and non-Christians alike. We should remember that even when we choose humility over pride, it is only by God's grace and love that we have the ability and desire to serve others. When we seek Christ's humility we are not seeking recognition or a pat on the back, but we do it for God's glory; and in so doing, we develop the character of God (Matt. 5:16).

Without humility,
there can be no love.

is finding excuses for not reaching out because we are afraid of risks. This leads to a lack of a genuine relationship with God. Remember, God takes no pleasure in those who draw back (Heb. 10:38).

WE CAN GROW AND REPRODUCE GODLY CHARACTER BY LEARNING:

- to think of others more than ourselves (Phil. 2:3-4)
- to communicate the truth in ways that help rather than hinder others (Eph. 4:15, 29)
- the lesson of giving (Acts 20:35)
- to carry out loving deeds and actions as well as speaking kind words (1 John 3:18)



TESTIMONY:
PASTOR GEORGE
RAMOCAN

by Merika Amoy Ramocan

This column features testimonies from brethren in the faith, with the intention of encouraging both new and older converts to Jesus Christ. Our first testimony comes from CGI Pastor George Ramocan.

George Ramocan is an ordained elder of the Church of God International (CGI), the local Pastor for the CGI Toronto Congregation, a former deacon and National Spokesman for the CGI in Jamaica, a radio presenter for the Armour of God Weekly Broadcast and coordinator for the PALM (Peace and Love in Marriage) Ministries. He holds a Masters of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary Studies from the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology.

Mr. Ramocan served as a Senator in the Government of Jamaica as Executive Director for the Jamaica Institute for Political Education, and as director of the largest Radio and Television network in the English speaking Caribbean—the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation.

In 1967 he was special guest of the Government of Canada, a special guest of the German Government in 1987 and a special guest of the U.S. Government in 1984. Mr. Ramocan is presently the Consul General for Jamaica to Toronto. He is married to a distinguished educator, Lola Bonita Ramocan, and the father of four beautiful children.

Q. GEORGE, WHEN DID YOU FIRST LEARN ABOUT THE CHURCH OF GOD INTERNATIONAL?

A. The way I came in touch with the CGI is very interesting. At the age of 46, I was knocked down by chicken pox—a childhood disease. I quarantined myself to protect the rest of my family, and in my isolation, I developed an interest in reading about the Sabbath because there was an

ongoing unease in my mind about whether the Sabbath was to be kept by Christians.

I was a staunch defender of Sunday-keeping based on teachings I received from my father, who was a Minister in the Assemblies of God. But there were questions—questions that I could not answer with a free conscience, and my reading about the Sabbath was more with a view to scrutinize the arguments for Sabbath keeping to find their weakness.

I got some deeper insights into the validity of Sabbath keeping but I was quite tentative since I wanted to further my research on the subject. Lo and behold, on the very day I was out of my chicken pox illness I saw an advertisement in Jamaica's Sunday Gleaner by a group describing themselves as The Garner Ted Armstrong Ministries captioned, "Should Christians keep the Sabbath?"

I was struck by this coincidence and remarked to my wife that I want to attend this presentation which would be at 4 PM that day. But somehow the day passed on and at about 6 PM, while I was at dinner, I suddenly remembered that I should have attended this presentation and I remarked to my wife, "*Oh my goodness I should have gone to that presentation.*"

My wife said, "*but it must be finished*" and I remarked, "*I am still going.*" Upon my arrival, I was just in time for the benediction; however, I met the presenter Ian Boyne, someone I knew before because he is a popular journalist and we made arrangements to have a series of meetings and discussions to clarify the keeping of the Sabbath. Hence, my contact with the CGI.

Q. WHEN DID YOU START ATTENDING THE CGI?

A. I began attending Bible studies with Ian Boyne and later, on the Sabbaths, I would turn up to services just in time to hear the presentations which addressed other doctrines of the Church—The Holy Days, Is this the Only Day of Salvation?, Is Heaven the reward of the Saved? Does man have an immortal soul? and so on.

More and more I was struck by these strange, but true doctrines, and I took an interest in studying them. I hardly had time for anything else even though I had the responsibility of running a business and served on several public boards and headed an internationally-based institute for political education. I found myself on a path where I was absorbed and engrossed in learning these new and exciting truths.

Mr. Boyne later gave me a print-out of "The systematic Theology Project" with all these doctrines. I felt as though I found a treasure trove—I feasted on it. I was so moved I began attending church regularly but I did not invite my family because I wanted to be sure about this move before uprooting them from our regular worship setting. But there was a momentum that kept me going and six months later on the morning of Pentecost 1997, I was baptized.

I was somewhat concerned that I had said nothing to my family about this, but for me this was not up for discussion nor could I waver. I was absolutely sure and convinced that this was the will of God. I had found the pearl of great price and there was no time for delay. I received my baptism with joy.

Q. DESPITE HIDING IT FROM THEM, YOUR WIFE AND CHILDREN ARE NOW PART OF THE CHURCH. HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

A. This is also interesting. After my baptism, I invited my wife and children to church because it was Pentecost and I wanted to

gradually introduce them to the faith. We turned up for services as a family. To my surprise, after a few songs were sung the deacon asked all newly baptized members to stand.

“Oh my goodness,” I said to myself, *“how could he do this—and I had said nothing to my family.”* I rose to my feet almost in an apologetic manner as my family stared at me in astonishment and disbelief. *“Never mind,”* I said to my wife, resting my hand on her shoulder, *“I’ll explain later.”* It was a most uncomfortable moment because I didn’t know if they were now in a state of mind to listen to the sermon.

They sat through the services as if they couldn’t wait for it to be finished. Then came the questions: *“How could you do this?”* The questions were legitimate because some time earlier I had an encounter with my second-eldest daughter who was at university and was being influenced by the Kingston Church of Christ to become a part of their movement. She was about to become part of that faith and to be baptized. My response to her was, *“Alki, that’s not the way we do things. We move together as a family.”* How can I now explain my own deviation from the rules? How can my family trust or even believe me anymore?

I was perplexed, but I was comforted by the fact that this was God’s calling. I know this was the truth and that when God calls He demands a prompt response. Even at the expense of family, God’s call must be obeyed. I was therefore consoled that God would work things out. I humbled myself. I explained to my family that I respected and understood their feelings toward me

and that I would accept if they choose not to be a part of what I was doing. I made a simple request of my wife and four children that they at least try to understand what it is that I came to believe. I assigned each a booklet dealing with a doctrine of the church and asked that over a period of time at our weekly family devotions (which by coincidence was on Saturday mornings) each would take a turn in explaining what they understood and also raise any concerns with the teachings in light of scripture.

I was perplexed, but I was comforted by the fact that this was God’s calling. I know this was the truth and that when God calls He demands a prompt response.

The focus was shifted (thank God) from complaining, to campaigning my family members for Christ. The end result is that today my wife and four children are all baptized in the Church. My wife Lola and my first child were baptized one year later in 1998. In 2001, the other three children were baptized. At the same time, my brother-in-law, a minister for 40 years in the Sunday-keeping Church to whom I had witnessed, travelled from Baltimore to Jamaica to be baptized. My sisters, Sisley, Petal and Apple were also baptized and my mother (now deceased) who was a minister in the Baptist Church, in Baltimore, finally accepted the truth and was baptized. When you do God’s will no matter how difficult it may seem He will work things out beyond your expectations.

Q. DO YOU PLAN TO SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH MORE FAMILY MEMBERS?

A. My plan is to share the Gospel with family and beyond as God gives me strength. I have frequent Bible studies with family members and visit the Feast-sites, and congregations in North America. I believe my role in the Church of God is more of an evangelistic rather than a pastoral role.

In Jamaica, after being in the Kingston congregation for a while, I played a role during 1997-1998 to raise up a congregation in the Ocho Rios area which meets regularly, despite challenges they face from time to time. The same thing happened in Baltimore after a series of visits and systematic teaching there is now a congregation which meets regularly on the Sabbaths. Two years ago they began hosting

a Feast-site in that area. They have been given affiliation status with the CGI.

In Kingston, I founded the PALM (Peace and Love in Marriage) Ministry to help nurture and counsel married couples and families in the church. I feel privileged to have had the benefit of mentoring and teaching under the ministry of Pastor Ian Boyne in Jamaica. He is one of the Church of God’s foremost teachers and apologists and this has had a far-reaching impact on my ministry in the international arena.



He didn't hear exactly what she had said; nevertheless, it was the first time in many weeks he had seen her this excited.

As the sun climbed into the mid-morning sky, Rebecca's belief in the notion of being healed grew stronger and stronger. She had heard about the Messiah who would come to take away the sins of the world, but she had little knowledge of anything else about Jesus.

The walk into town didn't take that long. By the time they reached, the burgeoning crowd was growing by the minute. The crowd was gathered around a figure that Rebecca couldn't see clearly.

"That must be him!" she said excitedly, clinging to Mathias' arm, as they moved closer to the crowd.

"It's him," Mathias confirmed. *"Only the Messiah could get so many people out here."*

"If I could...only touch..."

A burly-looking man bumped into Rebecca forcing her to stop in mid-sentence, but they both wormed their way closer to where Jesus was standing while addressing the crowd. The silence was deafening.

Rebecca edged closer, not realizing that she was no longer holding Mathias' arm. Somehow, she had lost him in the swelling

crowd. God was on her side, Rebecca reminded herself, as she was getting closer and closer...and closer. *"That touch..."* she kept saying under breath.

All the heads were turned in one direction, so people in the crowd didn't bother to see who was stepping on a toe, a sandal or a shoulder rubbing against another. Rebecca took advantage of that situation to reach within touching distance of the man everyone was attentively listening to.

Rebecca made a step, then another, and another. As she moved forward, her out-

Rebecca finally made that step and she did it. Her firm hand reached out to touch his garment. She felt her fingers as they touched cloth. Instantaneously, something happened— something she could not explain. Rebecca felt a different sensation coming over her; she felt different and most of all, she felt anew.

Suddenly, Jesus turned around. *"Who touched me?"* he asked calmly.

No one answered his question. One of his followers Peter told him it must have been the crowd pushing against him.

Rebecca finally made that step and she did it. Her firm hand reached out to touch his garment. She felt her fingers as they touched cloth. Instantaneously, something happened— something she could not explain.

"Someone has touched me; for I perceive that virtue has gone out of me," Jesus replied.

Rebecca was still very close to Jesus. *"I touched you Master,"* she said.

Jesus smiled. *"Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. Go in peace."*

"Thank you Master," she managed to say with a smile. *"I knew*

stretched hand guided her toward her target. She was adamant she must touch him.

that touch would heal me."

(Based on the account in Matthew 8)

"I must...I must..." she whispered. A man beside her looked up into Rebecca's face as if to say why this woman is forcing herself so close to the Son of God?

"One more step," Rebecca said. *"Just one more step and this problem will just disappear from my body."*



The background consists of several white rectangular pieces of paper scattered across the frame. Each piece of paper has a large, bold, black question mark printed on it. The papers are overlapping and slightly crumpled, creating a sense of depth and movement. A solid blue horizontal band is positioned across the middle of the image, containing the text.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

The following questions were taken from our booklet **The Q&A Book – Questions and Answers.**

Q. THE SABBATH IS NOT MENTIONED IN ANY OF THE LISTS OF EVILS OR LISTS OF VIRTUES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. DOESN'T THIS SUGGEST THAT THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT IS NO LONGER IN FORCE?

A. It is a mistake to view the New Testament as a “systematic theology” or “statement of beliefs” or “creed” compiled by the apostles for the purpose of proving church members with an exposition on all the laws, commandments and doctrines of the New Covenant. The church already had access to the Old Testament and believed it to be “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

One reason the Sabbath is rarely mentioned in the epistles is that there was no conflict over which day to keep or whether to keep it. At first, the church was entirely Jewish. Aside from the Samaritans, who were also Sabbath-keepers, the earliest non-Jewish Christians were people biblical historians describe as “God-fearers.” They were Gentiles who, though uncircumcised, worshipped the God of the Hebrews. Many of them first heard the gospel while in the synagogue on the Sabbath day (see Acts 13:14-16, 26:38-45; 14:1; 16:13-14; 17:2-4; 18:4) Thus, the church, from its foundation, was a Sabbath-keeping church.

The silence of the New Testament epistles on the subject of Sabbath, if anything, supports the Sabbath-keepers’ position. Had the church – with its Jewish leaders, thousands of Jewish converts, and growing number of God-fearing Gentiles, - not been keeping the Sabbath, it is extremely doubtful that we would find such silence in the New Testament. Surely, the Pharisaic

believers, who caused such a stir over circumcision (Acts 15) would have vigorously and loudly voiced their objection had the early Christians abandoned the Sabbath. Yet, no such objection is recorded in the New Testament.

Large sections of the Old Testament make no mention of the Sabbath, though we know that the Sabbath was in full force and was being observed during the times those sections were written. Therefore, New Testament silence on this subject by no means indicates that the apostles and early Christians regarded the Fourth Commandment as obsolete.

Q. I HAVE READ OF THE CHURCH KEEPING THE FEAST DAYS AS WELL AS THE SABBATH DAYS, AND HAVE ACCEPTED THESE TEACHINGS. HOWEVER, AFTER READING GALATIANS 4:9-10, I AM HAVING TROUBLE WITH WHY WE ARE TO KEEP THESE DAYS. IS PAUL SAYING WE ARE NOT TO BE BOUND BY THE FESTIVALS AND SABBATHS SET FORTH UNDER THE LAW IF WE ARE IN CHRIST?

A. Paul writes,

“But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain” (Gal. 4:8-11).

Since the problem was that some of the Galatian believers were being persuaded to adopt some form of Judaism as a means of salvation or spiritual perfection, many have thought that the “days and months and seasons and years” were the Sabbaths, new moons, festivals, and

sabbatical years described in the Law of Moses. But let's remember that Judaism is not precisely the same as the Law of Moses or religion of the Old Testament. Some forms of Judaism revised the Law considerably, and picked up certain pagan elements along the way.

Daniel G. Reid states, “From Second Temple Judaism there comes ample evidence of speculation about the universe and how the heavenly bodies were related to angels. The Book of the Heavenly Luminaries in 1 Enoch 72-78, a work dating from perhaps the first century B.C., testifies to Jewish astrological ideas and the association of an angel, Uriel, with the stars. This is set within a context in which particular attention is paid to times and seasons” (Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, 1995, p.231).

These astrological beliefs were probably held by some Jewish sects during the time of the apostles. In all likelihood, the astrological “times and seasons,” are the “days and months and seasons and years” Paul has in mind in Galatians 4:10. The apostle warns these former pagans that those who were taking up astrological observations common to certain Jewish and pagan sects, were returning to the base and worthless elements they had served before they became believers in Jesus Christ.

Paul fully recognized the Christological significance of the weekly Sabbath and annual holy days. By no means was he condemning the observance of these divinely ordained institutions.





CHARACTER MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

by Ken Allen

Bret was your typical Type-A personality—very goal-oriented, highly motivated and driven to succeed at all costs. He graduated summa cum laude from an ivy-league university. A partner in a successful law firm, he was a happy husband and father of two children. Bret was revered by his peers and respected as a model citizen within his community where he championed the cause of the underprivileged. However, he had a serious addiction—women. His craving for extra-marital pleasures led to an affair and subsequent impregnation of the teenage daughter of his best friend.

Bret's lack of character, as evidenced by his secret immoral life-style, caused the breakup of his marriage and family and put an ugly blot on his reputation. It left him with a stigma he would carry for the rest of his life.

This story, though fictitious, is played out almost every day in some city around the world.

CHARACTER DEFINED

Webster's Dictionary defines character as "a distinguishing mark or feature, moral constitution, reputation." I like the definition given by Chuck Swindol in his sermon series *Character Counts*. He says character is "the moral, ethical and spiritual undergirding that rests on truth that reinforces a life and resists the temptation to compromise."

Others have defined it as the ability to distinguish between good and evil, between right and wrong and to choose what's right, even to your own detriment.

Character or personality

Personality is the icing on the cake. Character is the scrumptious carrot cake beneath the icing. Character is like the foundation and pillars that sustain a building. Whereas, personality is its façade, which makes it look beautiful. Character is what makes the difference between transient accomplishments and success that outlives us. That quality speaks for you.

Abraham Lincoln:

"Character is like a tree and reputation is like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it, the tree is the real thing."

We need both character and personality, but the emphasis should be on building character, since that is what will outlive us.

EXPRESSIONS OF CHARACTER

Everybody has character—good or bad. It stays with us from the cradle to the grave. Let us look at some ways in which we can show Godly character.

personal conviction not to follow friends in doing wrong. Proverbs 20:11 says even a child is known by his ways or deeds.

Singles: Can you keep your ways pure while dating? Your "character..." as Dwight L. Moody said, "is what you are in the dark."

Total commitment and honesty in dealing with others

The following examples show a lack of character, which calls for honesty and integrity in our business and other relationships:

- Business partner secretly siphoning off funds from the partnership into his personal bank account.
- One partner secretly working with a competitor, giving away confidential info and assets from the partnership.
- Partner secretly scheming and planning to leave his current partnership and join a competitor.
- A marriage where one partner is cheating on the other or concealing information that should be shared with their spouse

Personality is the icing on the cake. Character is the scrumptious carrot cake beneath the icing.

Refraining from abusing power and betraying trust

Leaders: Do you take advantage of your subordinates or mistreat those under your care? Do you betray trust or manipulate others for your personal advantage?

Any such behaviour by a leader demonstrates a lack of, or poor character.

"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan." (Prov. 29:2)

Resisting the prevailing tide of immorality

Young people: do you give in to peer pressure to cheat on exams, try drugs or engage in illicit sexual behaviours? The youth who has character will show the courage of

Taking correction without self-justification

Can you take correction from someone without resisting or asking: *“How can she be correcting me when she has so many faults herself?”* Humility and a teachable attitude are hallmarks of a person of character. In fact, it is a mark of greatness.

“Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 18:4)

HOW DO WE DEVELOP GODLY CHARACTER?

In the same way it takes time to construct a building; it also takes time to develop Godly character. Moreover, the interesting thing is, it is honed in the valley of adversity as much as in the penthouse of prosperity. Our character is tested when we are enjoying the blessings of a prosperous trouble-free

life as it is when we are labouring and agonizing under the weight of adversity and severe trials. How we handle wealth and power will test our character just as how we respond to seasons of adversity or poverty. No wonder Solomon prayed in Proverbs 30:8-9:

“Give me neither poverty nor riches...lest I be full and deny You, And say, “Who is the LORD?” Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God.”

The apostle Paul was able to rejoice not only the hope of the glory of the God but also in trials because he understood that

“tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Rom. 5:3-4).

Character: Impeccable integrity at all cost

Daniel was a man of flawless character. No one could point a finger at him for any wrongdoing. The only charge against him was that of his faithful obedience to God! He stood head and shoulders above his peers *“because he possessed an extraordinary spirit”* (Dan. 6:3, New American Standard Bible).

in all points tested, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Character is shaped and perfected through suffering (Heb. 12:1-4, 11). Again, Hebrews 5:8 tells us:

“Even though Jesus was God’s Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered” (New Living Translation).

In the words of the late A.W. Tozer:

“It is doubtful that God can bless a man greatly until he has hurt him deeply.”

Jesus Christ was so focused and totally yielded that he reined in the invincible might

of His God-power with the gentle hand of humility in order not to go against the plan of His Father (Phil. 2:5-11).

CONCLUSION

God gives us daily opportunities to build character (Deut. 30:15-16, 19) by calling on us to make choices. By making the right choices of right over

wrong and life over death, we develop God-like character. The choices you make today will determine your tomorrow for better or for worse.

The longevity of our success hinges on character. It remains long after personality fades away. Without character, our hard-earned success can be quickly reduced to a pile of rubble.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The longevity of our success hinges on character. It remains long after personality fades away. Without character, our hard-earned success can be quickly reduced to a pile of rubble. One little act of indiscretion could wipe away your hard-earned fortune and ruin your life.

OUR PERFECT EXAMPLE

Character must be tested to prove its worth. Jesus Christ passed the character test by not yielding to temptation. *“He was*



POETRY

A MINDSET

The universe is a vast place,
the thought to be creative you should embrace.
A vision should not just be a vision,
but an actualization.

“That which is conceived,
can be achieved,”
with a mindset and a firm belief.
From the mind to reality.

Believe in yourself for you have the ability
to accomplish great things in life,
to do it or not is your choice.
Would you want to miss out on what could have been,
not just an idea but a great thing?

By Cordel Reid

THY KINGDOM COME

O' God we pray each day
for a new age to come our way
when we shall no more be grief-stricken or sad
but forever be comforted and be glad.

O' Father give us strength to endure
so that when thy kingdom come we'll be sure
to be a part of your family
living in love and harmony.

O' Jesus please come quickly we pray
we are counting the hours each day
when you will open the seventh seal
and release us from this distressing ordeal

O' God thy kingdom come, thy will be done
silver and gold we have none
but a solid hope that humanity cannot provide
we have in your Son Jesus, our Saviour, the Heavenly Guide.

By Horane Smith

ARMOR OF GOD



Television

United States

The Word Network
Sunday,
7:30 am Pacific
8:30 am Mountain
10:30 am Eastern
9:30 am Central

3:30 pm Central - Lincoln, Nebraska,

Channel 13
Tuesday, 12:30 pm Central

Uplift TV
Saturday, 9:30 am Eastern

Philippines

Studio 23
Sunday, 7:30 a.m.

Canada

VISION (National Cable)
Sunday, 12:30 am Eastern
Friday, 3:30 am Eastern

Christian Channel
Sunday, 12:30 pm Central

CIIT Channel 11
Sunday, 10:30 pm Central - Winnipeg

CHNU Channel 10
Sunday, 10:30 pm Pacific - Vancouver

Australia

Briz 31
Sunday, 7:00 am - Brisbane

Radio

Jamaica

Radio Jamaica
Thursday
4:45 am

Online

<http://www.cgi.org/>