

The History of the Letter "Command to Love"

by Church of God Group
(Christchurch, New Zealand)

PAGE 2 **Articles**

A Drop to Drink

by Joseph B. Baity
(Charlotte, North Carolina)

PAGE 3 **Articles**

No Erosion Between Rock Layers!

(Copyright) by David Rives
(Tennessee)

PAGE 5 **Articles**

A Basket of Summer Fruit

by Charles Whitaker
(Charlotte, North Carolina)

PAGE 6 **Articles**

Are Vaccines the Villain?

by Norman S. Edwards
(Perry, Michigan)

PAGE 11 **Articles**

Weather or Not

by James Steinle
(Swanville, Minnesota)

PAGE 12 **Articles**

To Unsubscribe from this newsletter:

Send a blank email to church-of-god-bismarck@hotmail.com with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line.

To Subscribe to this newsletter:

Send a blank email to church-of-god-bismarck@hotmail.com with "Subscribe" in the subject line.

To Submit Items for Print: Send to: church-of-god-bismarck@hotmail.com or Mail to Darwin & Laura Lee, PO Box 2333, Bismarck, ND 58502

The "New" Church of God Messenger is an independent publication. All newsletters may be copied and given to others if they are copied and sent in their entirety.

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

Contributors: Joseph B. Baity, Church of God Group, Norman S. Edwards, David Rives, James Steinle, Charles Whitaker

Website: Church of God, Bismarck <https://www.church-of-god-bismarck.org>

Articles

The History of the Letter “Command to Love” by Church of God Group (Christchurch, New Zealand)

Out of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) fell many groups, large and small. Often these groups splintered further still. This project, “Command to Love”, came out of a small bible study group investigating the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. We are bible students and disciples of Christ who tackle bible study, almost exclusively, through exploration of the bible itself, not through expansive tracts and sermons produced through the organized ministry. We allow the Holy Spirit to reveal the hidden truths not apparent at a cursory reading of the Word.

We see the Church as a living organism, made up of many parts. It is the body of Christ, of which our small group is a part. We are all suffering from the mighty blows the church has received.

In our study of the miraculous gifts and through reading and re-reading the first letter to the Corinthians, particularly chapters 12-14, it became evident to us that the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit, is primarily for the edification (teaching) and building up of the Church, i.e., for the “common good”. Unfortunately, the larger body of WCG was discouraged from seeking these gifts. Partly, this was because the ministry itself adopted the roles of evangelism, prophecy, teaching, and healing, but also because the miraculous gifts were not really acknowledged as having a role in today’s world.

Our readings however, proved otherwise. It was clear that the gifts were a means of the church caring for each other, for building up each other and the edification of the collective group. The gifts are therefore timeless and relevant in each age. They are to teach, to comfort, to heal, to warn, to project, to care, to help – they are powerful expressions of love for one another through the manifestation of the Spirit of grace.

This truth had been overlooked by ourselves and the larger fellowship in which we had our roots.

As a supernatural tool from God that empowers the brethren to care for each other more effectively, the gifts of the Spirit, therefore, are expressions of love of the brethren, one for the other.

With this realization, it became painfully obvious that the gifts – message of wisdom, message of knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in all kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues, which are to be utilized in the appointments God directed – i.e. apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, gifts of healing, help, administration, and speaking in tongues – are not and will not be expressed or manifest until the church faithfully responds to the commandment to love one another.

Our “cell” groups are ideal places to express this love and no doubt this is well developed in many home groups and larger groups. However, with even a very cursory glance over the wider WCG fellowship (WCG has had a name change to Grace International and also has many offshoots under different names) and all its splinter groups great and small, reveals great chasms and rifts between brethren. Many harsh words have been spoken. Many of us have cast off brotherhood and love.

We cast off the brethren. We sever relationships and maintain distance for a range of reasons, seemingly justified, but all are contrary to Christ’s command to love. Love is the “sign” that we are his disciples, yet in our fellowship (or lack of fellowship) we so fall short of this tenet and are clearly not able to be identified through this one hallmark – brotherly love.

Hence, this letter “Command to Love”. This letter is an invitation to all who will hear that we need to beseech God our Father, to restore and strengthen love in our fellowships. The cavernous rifts must be healed. The severed relationships must be restored. Vanity, pride, and affront must take a back-seat to humility, mercy, forgiveness, tolerance and love. May God have mercy on us, and may God work with us in this, the greatest miracle in this age, where love has waxed cold in a world steeped in sin.

The “New” Church of God Messenger
A Newsletter for the People of God
September 18, 2021 --- Issue No. 33

Each of us has a role to play in this. Each of us can learn to let love rule supreme in our interactions with each other. Each of us can allow tenderness, compassion, co-operation, collaboration, and care to replace pride.

It also became evident in this study, that our common enemy has all but destroyed the glorious power of the Bride of Christ. Let us stop turning on each other and let us rally together and fight this most important spiritual battle together. Cast out Satan and his attitudes which disrupt harmony and peace. Let us not be his weapons of war. Let us be tools in Christ’s hands as he leads us to victory, harmony, peace, and love which needs to begin in the church of God, the body of Christ, the Bride.

When we do this, the Bride of Christ will rise up glorious and powerful, a mate suitable to the Saviour, the Lamb of God, who, in humble subjection to the Father’s will, allowed himself to be led to slaughter, because in love, God wished to save the world.

Brothers and Sisters, we are the Church, his body, and his bride. Let us live worthy of this calling, rightly perceiving the body. Let’s learn to love one another and let’s build strong ties now that will not and cannot ever be severed for the glue of the Holy Spirit’s love is beyond Satan’s ability to destroy, but it is up to each one of us to earnestly seek repentance in this and learn new and better ways of managing our relationships with each other.

We contend, that once we, as a church, have rejected Satan’s influence and have overcome pride, vanity, and harshness, that love will bloom and grow and thrive, and that the people of God will shine again like beacons in the night. We contend also, that once we are doing this more perfectly, the powerful workings of the Spirit, working miracles amongst us will be clearly evident and each of us will have our place, our role, and our “fruit” as we contribute fully and wholeheartedly to the edification, building up and common good of the whole church.

May God be with you all. **(To Be Continued in Issue #34)**

A Drop to Drink

by Joseph B. Baity (Charlotte, North Carolina)



Water is growing markedly more precious with the extended and expanding droughts of the American West. Some sub-regions count 2021 as the twenty-first consecutive year of too little rain. Currently, 95 percent of the West—the most extensive area ever on record—is officially in drought, with 65 percent rated “extreme” or “exceptional,” the two direst categories.

The “New” Church of God Messenger
A Newsletter for the People of God
September 18, 2021 --- Issue No. 33

As a result, hydrologists and other water experts are anxiously preparing for an unpleasant announcement, expected later this month, of the first-ever federally declared water shortage on the Colorado River. This declaration includes Lake Mead, the nation’s largest capacity reservoir, and Lake Powell, the second largest, just a few hundred miles upstream.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, charged with managing the nation’s reservoirs, is expected to project that—due to record drought conditions, ongoing demand, and unrelenting heat—the water levels’ disheartening decline will continue to accelerate, triggering the declaration. For years, many affected communities, municipalities, and states have voluntarily restricted their water usage. However, the shortage declaration would require more drastic—and mandatory—cuts.

It would be difficult to overestimate the frightful implications of these shrinking water supplies. The Colorado River and the reservoir system it fills provide water for over forty million people—more than ten percent of Americans—across seven western states and Mexico. Moreover, the hydroelectric power—over four thousand megawatts of capacity—generated by the series of dams that make up the system provides electricity to countless rural communities, small towns, and major cities like Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Las Vegas. Millions of people count on the Colorado River whenever they flip on the light switch.

As essential as drinking water and hydroelectric power generation are, the river also provides crucial irrigation water to nearly six million acres of farmland while providing critical habitat for many wildlife species. The Colorado River is directly connected to nine national parks and seven national wildlife refuges.

All seven states that make up the Colorado River Water Basin—Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Wyoming—would suffer mandatory “Tier One” rationing starting in January 2022 as a result of the upcoming cuts in water allocation. However, Arizona and Nevada rely on the Colorado River as their most significant single source for water, and Arizona will lose nearly twenty percent of its quota, a painful cut.

Elsewhere, California is shutting down the Edward Hyatt Hydroelectric power plant this month—for the first time—due to low water levels in the state’s second-largest reservoir, Lake Oroville. This closing comes at a time of increased electrical demand during the heat of the wildfire season.

Just under 25 percent of the state of Oregon is experiencing “exceptional” drought, the most ever, while fires continue to rage. What is more, over 33 percent of Washington State suffers “exceptional” drought. Until July, Washington had never seen “exceptional” drought conditions in the 21-year history of the U.S. Drought Monitor.

The following six states suffer drought conditions in their entirety: California, Idaho, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, and Utah. All in all, nearly fifty percent of the United States is experiencing some level of drought. One year ago, in July 2020, that figure stood at only 25 percent. In the past month alone, the territory under “extreme” or “exceptional” drought grew by sixty thousand square miles—an area roughly equal to the state of Georgia.

A trend has formed that is impossible to ignore. Without quick and plentiful rainfall this summer and autumn, followed by bounteous snowpack this winter, the unpleasant cuts to precious water resources will soon turn to something far more draconian. All Americans—not just those of the West—would be well-advised to remember, recognize, and submit to the almighty Source of their water. How easily a parched valley could turn verdant and fruitful once again with their sincere repentance (Job 5:10; Jeremiah 5:24; Hosea 10:12).

Reprinted with permission from: Church of the Great God
<https://www.cgg.org/>

Holy Days 2021

Passover - March 28, 2021 (Observed at Sunset the Evening Before)

Unleavened Bread - March 28, 2021 to April 3, 2021

Pentecost - May 17, 2021

Trumpets - September 7, 2021

Atonement - September 16, 2021

Tabernacles - September 21 to 27, 2021

Last Great Day - September 28, 2021

No Erosion Between Rock Layers!

(Copyright) by David Rives (Tennessee)



You've probably heard the conventional story of how the rock layers formed. The most popular story is that rock layers form slowly over millions of years by the same geologic processes we see operating today. Weathering and erosion then produced hills, valleys, and the other topographical features we see today. But a quick trip into the Grand Canyon, perhaps the most spectacular place to view rock layers, shows this narrative can't be right.

If this old-age view is indeed a correct interpretation of the evidence, we'd expect to see weathering and erosion between rock layers. After all, if those rock layers are being deposited and exposed to the elements for hundreds of thousands or millions of years, you'd expect there to be evidence of it.

But we don't find this evidence. What we see instead is rapid or no erosion between layers. Between various sediment layers in the Grand Canyon the boundaries are clean and flat. There aren't gullies, hills, and valleys that were slowly filled by the next layer of sediment. There's just a flat, featureless rock layer with another flat and featureless rock layer on top of that.

For example, the boundary between the Coconino Sandstone and the Hermit Formation is completely flat and featureless from one side of the Grand Canyon to the other.

How did the soft Coconino Sandstone manage to resist erosion for vast eons of time?

The logical answer is that it didn't. The long ages view of the rock layers simply fails to explain the evidence. But there's a model that does explain why we see very little erosion between layers. In the book of Genesis, we read about a violent global Flood that destroyed the world that then was. The raging floodwaters would've ripped up miles of sediment and redeposited it in layers. These layers were laid down minutes, hours, or, at most, days apart from one another. There was no time for slow and gradual erosion to wear down the layers!

The "New" Church of God Messenger
A Newsletter for the People of God
September 18, 2021 --- Issue No. 33

The Biblical historical accounts explain what we see in the world – but the man-made theories of geologic evolution do not.

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

Reprinted with permission from: David Rives Ministries
To learn more, visit: <https://davidrivesministries.org/>

A Basket of Summer Fruit

by Charles Whitaker (Charlotte, North Carolina)



"In the Good 'Ol Summertime," the local oldie-but-goodie radio station broadcasts Nat King Cole's song:

Give me those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer,
Those days of sodas and pretzels and beer.
Give me those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer;
You'll wish that summer could always be here.

How well these words express the natural man's response to summer! He feels release, even exuberance, as winter loosens its cold grip, and the land again becomes fruitful. As the days grow longer and warmer, human nature cries, "Let's make hay while the sun shines" and characteristically turns summer into a time of "give me," as the song puts it: Give **me** those long days to "catch some rays," to spend time at the beach or to make money in my business. Give **me** those warm nights to "eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12:19).

God's people are not immune from summer's contagion of self. Each of us can all too easily *misuse* summer, devoting ourselves to "sodas and pretzels and beer." If we dedicate summertime to our *own* pleasure or to our *own* business, we turn the blessing of summer into a marathon distraction. *We have fallen into idolatry.*

Summer can be a real blessing. It is a time of teeming fruitfulness, the land becoming alive with grain and vegetables and fruits. But in this abundance lies summer's snare. Speaking in a more general context, Moses cites the problem:

And it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, . . . to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant—when you have eaten and are full—then beware, lest you

The "New" Church of God Messenger
A Newsletter for the People of God
September 18, 2021 --- Issue No. 33

forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. (Deuteronomy 6:10-12)

The snare is forgetfulness. Depending on our nature, we can make summer either "crazy" or "lazy," as we fill every waking hour with work, play, or sloth. In the midst of everything that competes for the limited resources of our time and energy, how do we ensure that we remember God? The basket of summer fruit is a symbol or emblem God uses to help keep our focus on Him during summer. It teaches us two lessons: one of remembrance, the other of fear.

Exceedingly Abundantly

God connects the basket of summer fruit with its lesson of remembrance in Deuteronomy 26:1-10. We should note several factors.

The Setting: The Israelites, having endured decades of Egyptian slavery and wilderness wanderings, are poised on the threshold of the Promised Land. Moses instructs them: "And it shall be, when you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground . . . and put it in a basket" (verses 1-2).

The Symbol: a basket of the woven, wicker sort, filled with summer produce. We might visualize a cornucopia. God instructs the Israelite to bring the basket "to the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide" (verse 2b), and there he is to make two declarations, the first to the priest, the second to God.

The Ritual: To the priest, the offerer briefly declares, "I have come to the country which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us" (verse 3). The declaration succinctly affirms that God has honored His promise to the patriarchs. After handing the basket to the priest, who places it before the altar (verse 4), the offerer makes his second declaration, this one to God. This affirmation recognizes God's faithfulness to carry out what He has promised: "My father was a Syrian about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous" (verse 5).

The declaration also rehearses Israel's "affliction and our labor and our oppression" (verse 7) in Egypt and mentions God's deliverance "with great terror and with signs and wonders" (verse 8). Then comes that timeless characterization of the Promised Land:

"He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, 'a land flowing with milk and honey': and now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, O LORD, have given me." Then you shall set it before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God. (Verse 9-10)

The basket of summer fruit served as tangible evidence of God's faithfulness to deliver them. Its existence stood as firm proof that He was "able to do exceedingly abundantly *above* all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20; emphasis ours throughout). Remember, God *promised* the patriarchs land (Genesis 12:7; 13:14-15; 15:18-21; 17:8). But what He actually *gave* His people was so special, so grand, that only "a land flowing with milk and honey" could properly describe it.

The "worship" mentioned in Deuteronomy 26:10 was praise and thanksgiving to God for His works "exceedingly abundantly above all that [Israel could] ask or think." Yesterday or today, the basket of summer fruit teaches the same lesson: Remember your God in the midst of His blessings to you. Do not neglect Him.

Pretzels and Beer—or Milk and Honey?

Is not God's "land of milk and honey" a whole lot better than that created by those who have forgotten Him, a land "of sodas and pretzels and beer"?

Perhaps Peter had Deuteronomy in mind when he penned his second letter. In II Peter 1:3-4, the apostle mentions God's divine power . . . , by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Peter then urges us to add diligently to our faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (verses 5-7). What is the result of this growth process? "For if these things are yours and abound, you will be

The "New" Church of God Messenger
A Newsletter for the People of God
September 18, 2021 --- Issue No. 33

neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 8).

In verse 10, Peter cries for "more" diligence in fulfilling God's calling of us out of this world and into His way of life. Doing so, "an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (verse 11).

Israel's possession of the land serves as an emblem of our possession of God's Kingdom. Indeed, the Israel of God has already entered that Kingdom in type. Notice the astounding truth God reveals in Ephesians 2:4-6:

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Because Christ dwells in us, God sees His people already sitting with Him in heaven! No wonder Paul exults, "[W]e are more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37). But—it takes diligence. Forgetfulness will not do! This is the first lesson of the basket of summer fruit: *Remember God's blessings, especially His greatest gift, the promise of salvation.* He is the God of our salvation, Christ having given Himself "for our sins, that He might deliver us from the present evil age" (Galatians 1:4).

Fruitfulness to Famine

What of the basket's second lesson? As for the other side of a coin, it is a lesson in fear. Notice Amos 8:1, 11:

Thus, the Lord GOD showed me: Behold, a basket of summer fruit. . . "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord GOD, "that I will send a famine on the land."

Amos 8 opens with an image of fruitfulness but closes with a prophecy of famine. Here, the image of the basket is ironic: Seeing it, we are to fear. It is as though the basket is a harbinger of trouble. God makes that meaning clear in verse 2:

And He said, "Amos, what do you see?" So, I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the LORD said to me: "The end has come upon my people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore."

Isaiah 28 best illustrates the link between summer fruit and an impending end, that is, the time of God's judgment for sin. The context is Isaiah's prophecy that Ephraim (Israel) will fall (verse 3). Notice carefully verse 4:

And the fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is at the head of the fertile valley, will be like the first-ripe fig prior to summer; which one sees, and as soon as it is in his hand, he swallows it. (*New American Standard Version*)

"First-ripe" (*bikkoor*, *bikkoorah*, or *bakkoorah*) is a variant of the word "firstfruits." A first-ripe fig is a delicacy begging for attention *now*. When one sees such a "fruit to maturity" (Luke 8:14), dripping white sweet through splitting skin, he should eat it promptly. It does not remain long in one's hand because it is at its peak; it will never taste better. Thus, Ephraim's fall will be at "noontime": Her enemies will pluck her at her zenith of power and glory and suddenly devour her.

English readers miss the Hebrew pun between the words "summer fruit" (*kahyitz*) and "end" (*kehtz*). But even modern-day Israelites understand that vine- or tree-ripened fruit, picked at its best, does not last long. It has come to the end of its course; the rotting process will soon begin. So, we feel a sense of *urgency* to act upon the fruit now—to eat it before it is too late. In fact, we use such idioms as, "The time is ripe for action" or "That person is ripe for a fall" to convey the idea that the *end* of the present circumstance is at hand—and deservedly so. Biblical examples of this metaphorical use of "ripe" occur in Joel 3:13 and Revelation 14:15, 18.

In Amos 8, God cites examples of the social injustice rife in Israel's society (verses 4-6) and asserts that He is ready to bring the violent civilization to an end: "I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist, and baldness on every head" (verse 10).

An End—The End

If that is not strong enough, what about God's words through Ezekiel?

The "New" Church of God Messenger
A Newsletter for the People of God
September 18, 2021 --- Issue No. 33

[T]hus says the Lord GOD to the land of Israel: "An end! *The end* has come upon the four corners of the land. Now the end has come upon you, and I will send My anger against you; I will judge you according to your ways, and I will repay you for all your abominations." (Ezekiel 7:2)

Not just any end! *The end (kehtz)*! To drive home the urgency of His message, God reiterates it in verses 6-7:

An end has come, *the end* has come; it has dawned for you; behold it has come! Doom has come to you, you who dwell in the land; the time has come; a day of trouble is near.

God says, "Now upon you I will *soon* pour out My fury" (verse 8; see verse 12). Israel, God says, is ripe for destruction (compare Lamentations 4:18).

The story Amos, Isaiah, and Ezekiel tell—the story all the prophets tell—is the same. They speak of a rich, glorious people, blessed of God, caught up in everyday life, immersed in the around-and-the-about. Their self-absorption brings their downfall, for they forget God's faithfulness to bless the obedient *and* to curse the disobedient. The greatest Prophet of all makes the same point in Matthew 24:37-39:

But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Noah's pre-Flood contemporaries were ignorant of their spiritual wretchedness. Revelation 3 makes it plain that we can be in the same boat. Thinking we are "rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" (verse 17), we are blind to our true spiritual state.

Putting God on the Back Burner

In Ezekiel 7:11, the prophet makes plain why the end he describes so vividly is near: "Violence has risen up into a rod of wickedness [lawlessness]." Because of rampant sin, "The time has come, the day draws near" (verse 12). He pursues the same thought in chapter 12:

Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, eat your bread with quaking, and drink your water with trembling and anxiety. And say to the people of the land, 'Thus says the Lord GOD . . . "They shall eat their bread with anxiety, and drink their water with dread, so that her land may be emptied of all who are in it, *because of the violence of all those who dwell in it.*"'" (Ezekiel 12:17-19)

When will this time of trouble come? Years in the future? Read the answer in verses 22-28. The violent, hedonistic Israelites dismiss Ezekiel's comments on two grounds:

1. The gainsayers contend that "every vision fails" (verse 22). They call God a liar! To this claim, God asserts, "I speak, and the word which I speak *will* come to pass" (verse 25).
2. The scoffers declare, even if the prophet's words are true, "The vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off" (verse 27). To this God answers, "The days are at hand; . . . none of My words will be postponed any more" (verses 23, 28).

With this witness, do we dare put the things of God on a back burner between the Feast of Firstfruits and the Feast of Ingathering? Do we honestly think we can get away with playing spiritual catch-up in the fall, a week or two after Trumpets? Can we defer study and prayer until winter's long nights and cold days keep us home? Not on our eternal life!

We dare not become distracted by the wealth of summer's activities. Review these Old Testament witnesses against neglecting God—any time (Zephaniah 1:14-17; Joel 2:1; Habakkuk 2:3). For a New Testament witness, notice Matthew 24:32, where Christ echoes Ezekiel's comments, "[I]n your days, O rebellious house, I will say the word and perform it" (Ezekiel 12:25):

Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So, you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near, at the very doors. Assuredly, I say

The "New" Church of God Messenger
A Newsletter for the People of God
September 18, 2021 --- Issue No. 33

to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled.

His reference to the early fig is reminiscent of Isaiah 28:4.

Remembrance and Fear

So much happens during the summertime that it is easy to place God second or third—or lower—in our lives. That is deadly. James, using an agricultural metaphor, exhorts that we counter this natural, downhill tendency by making a conscious decision to await patiently our soon-coming redemption:

Therefore, be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. (James 5:7-8)

Peter also recognizes the threat of spiritual entropy, the tendency to let the things of God slip away. Although his words in I Peter 4:7-8 allude to the imminent fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in AD 70, they certainly bear on our situation today:

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore, be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

Peter's solution—sobriety in the face of distractions—stands in stark contrast to the craziness and laziness of which Nat King Cole's song speaks. We can express this spirit of serious expectation for God by dedicating our summer nights to prayer rather than to parties and our summer days to looking after others' needs rather than after our own pleasures. Peter describes how the truly God-fearing spend their summers—and their lives.

In his second epistle, Peter describes in more detail the attitude we should all steel ourselves to adopt in the face of summer's activities. He begins chapter 3 by mentioning one of the reasons he wrote the letter: To "stir up your pure minds by way of *reminder*" (verse 1). Then, in verses 3-4, Peter foretells of scoffers . . . in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

Scoffers indeed! These were the children of the "rebellious house" of whom Ezekiel wrote, those who called the prophet into account for prophesying "of times far off" (Ezekiel 12:25, 27). "They willfully forget," charges Peter in verse 5, the great Flood of Noah's day (verse 6). He sets them straight in verse 7:

But the heavens and the earth which now exist are kept in store by the same word [of God], reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

In verse 11, Peter asks rhetorically,

Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God . . . ?

The answer is clear from verse 13; We need to live by faith in the *promises* of God: "[W]e, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." Peter ends his letter as he began it, calling for our intransigent diligence in the faith. His conclusion should set the tone for the way we spend this coming summer:

Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless. . . . You, therefore, beloved, since you know these things beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (Verses 14, 17-18)

Peter takes us back to the lessons of the basket of summer fruit: *Remember* that God keeps His promises and bestows blessings on us. *Fear* lest the end come suddenly, and we have been too busy or too lazy to see the ripening fruit—too caught up in the around-and-about to prepare.

This summer, amid all the things we do—and *before* all the things we do—call to mind the two lessons of the basket of summer fruit. Make this a summer of thanksgiving, praising God for the above-all-we-think-or-ask cornucopia of blessings He continues to bestow on us. At the same time, always recognize that today's world is ripe for judgment, ready for picking. The end is near. Refusing even the most appealing distractions, let us diligently prepare for the fall harvest so soon to begin.

Reprinted with permission from: Church of the Great God
<https://www.cgg.org/>

Are Vaccines the Villain? by Norman S. Edwards (Perry, Michigan)

Ever since my wife and I were expecting our first child, I developed an interest in vaccines: What is in them? What will happen if we take them? What if not? The more I studied, the more convicted I became that I did not want to subject my family to them. Indeed, our last child never had any, and was our healthiest.

Now that grandchildren are a prospect, I have been studying vaccines again. It is a good time to study. Almost every day, there are news stories about the H1N1 swine flu and the vaccines for it. Some days they tell us how important it is that everyone get it. Other days, they tell us there are shortages of production and we can't get it. On October 24, 2009, the President's office declared a national state of emergency for the H1N1 "swine flu".¹

While I have the legal right to make medical decisions for my family, I am not a doctor and am not legally qualified to give medical advice to others. But anyone can do historical research, report facts, and document their sources. And I think research is the key.

In all the years that I have discussed vaccines with people, both pro and con, they seem to be divided into two categories:

- 1) People who are willing to research vaccines to learn about their effects, both good and bad. Nearly all of these people decide to get less or no vaccines.
- 2) People who rely on the advice of their doctor or the popular media. Nearly all of these people take whichever vaccines their doctors strongly recommend.

There is so much information on vaccines, that one cannot possibly read it all. There are many competent people who are good at their own job, so they expect the medical professions to be good at their job and to sort out the vaccine issue for them. It would be nice if it worked that way. But historically, it has not.

In 1976, there was a major effort to immunize the USA population against a previous "swine flu".² Only one person died from that flu and 13 were hospitalized. But 500 people got Guillain-Barré syndrome, a crippling disease, from the vaccine and at least 25 of those died from it.³ Yes, more people died from the vaccine than from the disease itself. This human tragedy is well documented in a "60 Minutes" program.⁴

Unfortunately, vaccine statistics and information on their side-effects are not available until months after they have been administered. When a person becomes gravely ill or dies, there is no label upon them that says: "a vaccine caused this." Since a new vaccine is not "known" to cause major illness or death, all other causes must be eliminated first. It also takes a while to discover that the same illnesses are occurring in certain people across the country, and to show the vaccine as the common link.



The “New” Church of God Messenger
A Newsletter for the People of God
September 18, 2021 --- Issue No. 33

Yes, we have been assured the present-day swine flu vaccine is safe, but people were assured the 1976 swine flu vaccine was safe. By 1979, 4000 people had claimed damages from that vaccine amounting to 3.5 billion dollars.⁴ There is already a lawsuit filed by a group of doctors alleging the 2009 swine flu vaccine is unsafe!⁵

Vaccines and Autism

While the safety of swine flu vaccines is a concern for us all, it is dwarfed by the concern that childhood vaccines might be causing Autism. The debate is huge; a Google search for **autism vaccine** produces 13 million hits. The Autism Society of America estimates that autism is growing by 10 to 17% per year.⁶ About 1% of U.S.A. children ages 3-17 have an autism spectrum disorder.⁷

Most governments and medical establishments insist there is no link between vaccines and autism. But thousands of parents have seen their children develop normally until they took their first vaccine, then they immediately exhibit the developmental delay common to autism. In the case of *Banks v Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (02-738)*⁸, the US Court of Federal claims awarded damages to Kenneth Banks because the evidence indicated the MMR vaccine caused his son, Bailey Banks, to develop PDD (Pervasive Developmental Delay) “with autistic features”—so close to autism that one doctor actually gave that diagnosis.

You have a right to wave vaccines. Make an informed choice! These websites might help:

nvic.org
vactruth.com
tinyurl.com/flu09upd
tinyurl.com/VacH1N1no

Sources of Information

Whitehouse official website: www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/declaration-a-national-emergency-with-respect-2009-h1n1-influenza-pandemic-0

Center for Disease Control & Prevention website: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/emergency/swineflu.htm>

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1976_swine_flu_outbreak

www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14433

www.healthfreedomusa.org/?page_id=3619

www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about_what_is_factsstats

Pediatrics, October 5, 2009, based on a National Children’s Health Survey done with 78,000 parents in 2007.

www.uscfc.uscourts.gov/sites/default/files/Abell.BANKS.02-0738V.pdf

Weather or Not

by James Steinle (Swanville, Minnesota)

What is with all the weather, or lack of it? Record heat, drought, crop failures, gardens that we can’t keep up with in watering. It seems like the curses found in Deuteronomy 28 are coming to our nation. Give Deuteronomy 28 a read and see what you think. Are we reaping blessings or curses?

Verses 22-24 are especially telling: “The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish. 23 And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. 24 The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed.”

What is the answer for blessings? 11 Chronicles 7:14 gives the answer: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”